



6 August 2024

To: All Ministers

Dear all,

**Ministerial involvement in Civil Service recruitment**

Congratulations on being appointed as a member of the government. As Cabinet Secretary and First Civil Service Commissioner, we wanted to outline how you can play your part in the important process of making appointments to the Civil Service for roles in which you might have an interest.

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010) (CRaG) sets out the legal requirement that the appointment of civil servants in England, Scotland and Wales must be made on merit, after a fair and open competition. The legislation permits and empowers ministers to be involved in these selections.

The Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles<sup>1</sup> explain how Civil Service appointments should be made in order to meet the legal requirement. They set out how ministers can be involved in relevant appointments and outline how ministerial involvement is most valuable at the early stages of a recruitment process.

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<sup>1</sup> Civil Service Commission, Recruitment Principles, 2018. Available at: [https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02a\\_RECRUITMENT-PRINCIPLES-April-2018-FINAL-.pdf](https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02a_RECRUITMENT-PRINCIPLES-April-2018-FINAL-.pdf).

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Where you have an interest in an appointment, the Principles outline that the panel chair - who will be a Civil Service Commissioner for most Director (SCS Pay Band 2) and all Director General (SCS Pay Band 3) and Permanent Secretary (SCS Pay Band 4) roles - must ensure you are consulted on, and agree to, the final role and person specification. Any views you have about the desired expertise, experience and skills of the candidates must be conveyed to the selection panel. You should also agree the composition of the selection panel, with particular focus on ensuring it features sufficient challenge from outside the Civil Service. Early involvement therefore provides considerable scope to shape the process.

If you wish, the Principles set out that ministers may meet shortlisted candidates to discuss their priorities and the applicants' proposed approach to the position. This must be done for all shortlisted applicants and not just a selection. You should then feed back your views, and suggest areas that could be further probed at interview, to the panel. It is important that these meetings are attended by a representative of the Civil Service Commission.

The statute is clear in prohibiting the involvement of special advisors, as outlined by Section 8 (5b) of CRaG, at any stage of the process to appoint civil servants.

The panel must test issues raised by ministers while assessing the merit of applicants and before deciding on their recommendation of the best candidate for appointment.

In very exceptional circumstances, ministers may ask the panel to reconsider their recommendation. The panel may then consider revising its order of merit and, if they agree, must record their reasoning before proceeding to request the Civil Service Commission's approval for the change. Such instances are very rare.

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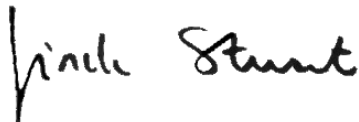
For Permanent Secretary roles (SCS Pay Band 4), the First Civil Service Commissioner (or nominated Commissioner) is responsible for ensuring that ministers, including the Prime Minister, have full involvement in the process; that candidate assessment includes whether they can work effectively with the relevant minister; and that the names of all appointable candidates are provided to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister decides on the final appointment from the appointable list, in consultation with the First Civil Service Commissioner and the Head of the Civil Service.

The Civil Service Commission can answer any queries about how the Recruitment Principles should be upheld and these processes followed. In your department, you may wish to put in place a process to ensure that you are given the opportunity to engage with your department's SCS appointments at an early stage.

We hope you find this a useful outline of how you can inform selection into these important roles and the Civil Service Commission is always ready to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Case', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Simon Case**  
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gisela Stuart', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct loop at the beginning.

**Rt Hon Baroness Gisela Stuart of Edgbaston**  
First Civil Service Commissioner

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