

Cabinet Office

11 March 2026

**Unpaid appointment with Leukaemia UK: Application under the Business Appointment Rules from Mr James Lyons, former Director of Strategic Communications at the Prime Minister's Office.**

Thank you for submitting an application for advice under the Business Appointment Rules (the Rules) to the Civil Service Commission (the Commission) on behalf of **James Lyons**, formerly Director of Strategic Communications at the Prime Minister's Office. The application is for an unpaid, part-time role as a **Trustee at Leukaemia UK**. Further detail on the content of the application is in the Annex. The Commission's advice is required as Mr Lyons is a former special adviser at Special Adviser Pay Band 4. His last day of service was 1 September 2025.

The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. They aim to avoid any reasonable concerns that: a civil servant may be influenced in their official duties by the risk of reward; a civil servant may improperly exploit access to information; and an organisation may gain an improper influence through the employment of a civil servant.

The Commission's advice<sup>1</sup> is that the appointment should be made subject to the following conditions:

1. Privileged information – Mr Lyons should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to him from his time in office.
2. Lobbying – For two years from his last day in office, until 1 September 2027, Mr Lyons should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of Leukaemia UK (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients). He should also not use, directly or indirectly, his contacts in the government and/or civil service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Leukaemia UK (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).

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<sup>1</sup> See [Advice under the Business Appointment Rules](#) for details applying to all advice issued by the Civil Service Commission.

3. Bids and contracts – For two years from his last day in the civil service, until 1 September 2027, Mr Lyons should not provide advice to Leukaemia UK on a bid or contract relating to the UK government or its arm's length bodies.

The Rules set out that civil servants must abide by the Commission's advice. It is Mr Lyons' personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment and to understand any other rules and regulations he may be subject to in parallel with the Commission's advice.

Mr Lyons must seek advice if he proposes to extend or otherwise change his role with the organisation. Once this appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, the letter will be published on the Civil Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. K. Owen." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

**Kate Owen**  
Chief Executive

## **Annex A: The application**

### Applicant assessment

1. According to its website, Leukaemia UK is a national charity that funds medical research into the causes and treatments of leukaemia and other blood cancers. The organisation also focuses on raising public awareness of the disease's symptoms and advocating for improvements in diagnosis, patient care, and healthcare policy.
2. As a Trustee, Mr Lyons will sit on the Board responsible for the charity's overall governance and strategic direction, ensuring it remains financially viable and operates in accordance with its charitable mission and UK law.
3. Mr Lyons confirmed his role will not involve contact with, or lobbying of, government.
4. As Director of Strategic Communications at the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Lyons was responsible for overall government communications strategy.
5. Mr Lyons stated he was not responsible for regulatory, funding or any other decisions affecting Leukaemia UK at any time in his last two years in the civil service.

### CSC analysis

6. *Application level.* As a Level 1 application for an unpaid role, the Commission's analysis applies the principle that this category of appointment is generally recognised as posing a lower risk to government integrity.
7. *Risk of reward.* The role as a Trustee at Leukaemia UK is unpaid. Mr Lyons stated he had no involvement in policy development or contractual or commercial decisions affecting Leukaemia UK while at the Prime Minister's Office. Therefore, the risk that the offer was made as a reward for decisions made during his time in office is low.
8. *Access to information.* As a special adviser at the centre of government, Mr Lyons would have been exposed to some privileged information about the government's legislative and policy programme. The standard privileged information ban mitigates any risks around his access.

9. *Improper influence.* Leukaemia UK has worked with the Department of Health and Social Care to develop the National Cancer Plan.<sup>2</sup> As a special adviser, Mr Lyons would have a network of contacts in government that could provide an unfair advantage to Leukaemia UK. He has stated there will be no contact with government in his proposed role. The risk of the perception of lobbying the government is therefore mitigated by the standard conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> Leukaemia UK, 'National Cancer Plan', <https://www.leukaemiauk.org.uk/news/together-we-are-changing-lives-heres-how-your-support-is-making-it-happen/#:~:text=The%20results%20speak,the%20political%20agenda.>