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Civil Service Quarterly opens up the Civil Service to greater collaboration and challenge, showcases excellence and invites discussion. If the Civil Service is to be truly world-leading, it needs to collaborate more, learn from experts outside the Civil Service, listen more to the public and front-line staff and respond to new challenges with innovation and boldness.

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# Editorial

Sue Owen, Permanent Secretary, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Champion

**As Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Champion and straight ally of our LGBTI community, I'm delighted to welcome you to this special Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) edition of Civil Service Quarterly.**

In the Civil Service we are aiming to be the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020, so that everyone who works here feels valued, supported and able to be themselves, and in turn bring their best to their role. I know I speak not only for myself but on behalf of all our Permanent Secretary Diversity Champions when I say I'm really proud of the progress to date, particularly in becoming more representative of the population we serve. Equally, we can't underestimate the importance of embedding diversity and inclusion in everything we do. A diverse workforce is unarguably a good thing, but only when combined with an inclusive culture will it enable our people to achieve their full potential and deliver better services and outcomes for those we serve.

This autumn we launched a new, more ambitious, Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion strategy, which recognises that a truly inclusive culture is essential for diversity initiatives to succeed. I guarantee you that these issues generate the most passionate discussions among my Permanent Secretary colleagues. But we need civil servants at all levels to commit to this strategy: we know from the People Survey that behaviours that leave people feeling excluded are often demonstrated by their line managers or a colleague.

If you only do one thing as a result of reading this edition of Civil Service Quarterly, I would ask you to read the new D&I strategy. Then, ask yourselves what is it that you can do to create an inclusive culture where you work, and what changes – even apparently small ones – could make the big differences in your daily working lives.

**Sue Owen**, Permanent Secretary, Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
Let us know what you think by email ([csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)) or on Twitter [#CSQuarterly](https://twitter.com/CSQuarterly)

# Diversity + Inclusion = A Brilliant Civil Service

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, on how the the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will help us reach our ambition to become the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020.

Welcome to this special edition of CSQ. I am delighted to contribute, because delivery of real and measurable improvement in diversity and inclusion (D&I) is one of my top priorities as Head of the Civil Service.

As an organisation we have the – unashamedly – ambitious aim of making the Civil Service the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020. Elsewhere in this edition you will find detailed accounts of some of the practical steps the Civil Service is taking – and some of the challenges we face – in realising this ambition, including our new Diversity & Inclusion Strategy. I want to take this opportunity to examine why diverse and inclusive workplaces are so important – particularly for the Civil Service.

## **A faithful reflection**

We need to be more comfortable talking about diversity and inclusion and recognise that greater diversity benefits us all. First, there is an existential reason why we civil servants should be a diverse group. A national institution like the Civil Service, which aspires to serve the whole country, must look like the country it serves. Society should see in its public servants a faithful reflection of itself, in all its diversity. We should always be looking to hire and to give opportunities to the best, most hard-working, most dedicated people we can attract, irrespective of background, and to ensure that all feel accepted and valued in their workplace. There

is a moral imperative here. Second, it's clear that diversity by itself is not enough. It's not just that we need to recruit more people from underrepresented groups. We also have to ensure that everyone who works in the Civil Service feels supported, respected and able to contribute to their best. Elsewhere in this edition, Jazz Bhogal quotes an American diversity advocate:

“Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

There is plenty of evidence that diverse and inclusive organisations perform better<sup>1</sup> and have happier people. As an example, such organisations deliver better outcomes in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

customer-facing roles, in Jobcentres and on our borders, for example, where they are serving people from a wide variety of different backgrounds. Joanna Parry's work (as an Entry Clearance Officer in Pretoria, South Africa) on the RESPECT programme for increasing understanding of different ethnicities, as well as collaborating to achieve a common goal, won her the 2016 Civil Service Championing Inclusion Award. RESPECT has already been rolled out across the UK visa network in Africa.

“Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

Diversity and inclusion is not just about external factors, but about differences in thought and outlook. We artificially narrow our vision and our understanding of the world if we surround ourselves only with people who look and think like us. This will tend to produce ‘Groupthink’: conclusions that reflect a shared, closed outlook. The evidence shows that diversity – of background, of life experience – creates challenge, provokes thought and encourages change and innovation if it is free to flourish in an inclusive environment. This is because it allows different insights – especially valuable in tackling the sort of complex, ambiguous problems that government faces every day. And it produces better advice to ministers and better decisions – better because they are more attuned to the needs and interests of all groups. Quite simply, we are cutting ourselves off from a rich source of talented people if we don’t appeal to, attract, retain and engage staff from all corners of society. I want the Civil Service to be a true engine of social mobility in Britain. We are addressing this in a variety of ways, including through a more flexible employment offer, implementing shared parental leave for all civil servants, the introduction of the award-winning Civil Service Job Share Finder, and through outreach initiatives. These include our support for the Inspiring the Future scheme, under which Civil Servants go out to schools as advocates of a civil service career in one of the unrivalled range of roles it offers.

### **Inclusion is essential**

It’s now almost commonplace in the debate around equality to observe that an organisation can be diverse without being inclusive; or inclusive without being diverse. For all the research that shows diversity making a positive difference to a team’s performance, other findings show that it makes no difference, and other evidence again that it can actually be detrimental, when it is not coupled with inclusion or an inclusive culture. A government that works for everyone, should be a government (and a Civil Service) where anyone, whatever their background, can expect to feel valued and respected, and go as far as their ability will take them. This means from top to bottom of the organisation. The Civil Service today is

more diverse than at any time in its history. The proportions of civil servants who declare a disability (9.9%) and those who are from ethnic minorities (11.6%) are at record highs; and women make up over 40% of senior civil servants – better than many (if not most) large private sector organisations in this country. However, representation of society’s diverse groups is much less evident at the higher grades and varies across different departments, agencies and professions. Of the 34 permanent secretaries, 10 are women – not nearly enough – and none is currently from an ethnic minority. There is much to do on the inclusion front. Our comprehensive annual staff engagement surveys tell us that our employees can have very different lived experiences in their work environments. For example, civil servants with a disability are less likely to say they are treated fairly at work, compared to those without a disability; and those who are both from an ethnic minority and LGBO (lesbian, gay, bisexual or other)<sup>2</sup> say they have experienced a higher level of discrimination in the last year compared to heterosexual staff. These are unacceptable differences and highlight that increasing diversity needs to be coupled with an inclusive environment where everyone is treated fairly.

### **Dismantling Barriers**

Inclusion is about ensuring everyone feels they belong. It is about giving space to and valuing all the different kinds of life experience and opinions I spoke of before. For example, this means ensuring that there is not a dominant ‘macho’ or ‘posh’ culture of senior leaders in the organisation that makes female or ethnic minority staff, or those from working-class backgrounds, feel ill at ease or out of place. But dismantling long-established behavioural or cultural ‘norms’, and other institutional barriers that allow pernicious attitudes the team with a disability; and officials addressing the issue of radicalisation should include someone who understands the communities and individuals most vulnerable to it. This looks like common sense; but like most things we describe in this way, it is not nearly as common as it ought to be.

### **A role for everyone**

Over and above this, there’s a role for every one of us in creating an inclusive culture in the Civil Service and making it a truly great place to work. That’s why I made sure that diversity and inclusivity targets are part of my own objectives and those of all Permanent Secretaries to ensure greater leadership and accountability here. The value of mentoring by senior civil

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<sup>2</sup> The Office for National Statistics reports Civil Servants’ sexual orientations as Heterosexual / Straight, Gay / Lesbian, Bisexual or Other. The term LGBO is used to refer to staff who report belonging to one of the last three groups.

servants, sharing knowledge and advising colleagues from underrepresented groups on advancing their careers, should also be recognised and valued as mutually beneficial. Certainly, I have found my own experience of mentoring young, enthusiastic ethnic minority staff to be both personally fulfilling and enlightening. It gives me a different and invaluable take on the organisation I lead.

It is the dedication of brilliant individuals – as well as the collective commitment from the top – that is driving inclusion in the Civil Service. Individuals like Mushtaq Raj, who won the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Award for Championing Minority Ethnic People. He has been described as the ultimate role model for ethnic minority causes for his leadership of THE NETWORK, the Home Office’s ethnic minority staff network, with around 3,000 members. An inclusive workforce is one where people, whatever level they work at, feel free to be themselves and that they do not have to change to ‘fit the system’. They can express their opinions without fear of recrimination, because they are treated with respect. It shouldn’t then surprise us that they are also more motivated, innovative, productive and often healthier, both physically and psychologically.

On her return to No. 10 after the June 2017 General Election, the Prime Minister rededicated her government to: “put fairness and opportunity at the heart of everything we do, so that we fulfil the promise of Brexit together and – over the next 5 years – build a country in which no one and no community is left behind. A country in which prosperity and opportunity are shared right across this United Kingdom.”

To support the Government in this, the Civil Service must itself be representative of the whole country. There is still some way to go, but everything you read in this edition of Civil Service Quarterly underlines our commitment to achieving that goal.

We should all be asking ourselves what we can do to make this happen, so that all of us in our brilliant Civil Service can talk about – and benefit from – diversity and inclusion.

# ‘Applied’ – eliminating bias from recruitment”

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and Civil Service HR (CSHR) are working together to apply the latest diversity and inclusion research across the Civil Service. This includes efforts to design a bias-free organisation and use of the latest evidence and evaluation techniques when designing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Building on the work of Harvard Professor Iris Bohnet and wider academic research, BIT, in partnership with the Cabinet Office and the innovation charity Nesta, recently launched ‘Applied’. Now spun out from BIT, Applied works to eliminate bias from recruitment. The order of candidates, identifying characteristics like gender and university attended, the quirks of individual reviewers and the ‘halo effect’ (the tendency to let a good impression of a person in one area colour our opinion of them in others) as you read through an application can all impact progression through recruitment rounds. Applied helps organisations use the latest evidence to combat these biases without having to read the newest studies. Some features of Applied are simple. For example, people sifting applications never see a candidate’s name or other background markers. Others are more complex. Reviewers read all responses to each question at the same time, helping remove any ‘halo’ effect that occurs from reading an individual’s entire application at once. This is helped by the anonymisation of every response and randomisation of participant responses for each reviewer.

## **Improving and evaluating**

The Civil Service is an early adopter of Applied and departments are already using it to help hire a more diverse workforce. BIT is also working alongside CSHR to apply the latest evidence on improving and evaluating diversity and inclusion initiatives. For instance, Professor Frank Dobbin’s findings suggest diversity training leads to only a fleeting positive impact and can even “activate bias or spark a backlash”. This evidence has informed the CSHR Diversity and Inclusion Strategy’s emphasis on areas that have a proven positive impact, such as mentoring, diversity task forces and diversity managers.

Reviewing the evidence, trialling new ideas and evaluating programmes rigorously means we understand what really works in making our civil and public services more diverse and inclusive. Working in partnership with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, BIT helped increase the probability of applicants from a black or minority ethnic background passing a key part of the police recruitment process by trialling a small intervention at a critical moment. CSHR is applying this experimental approach to test and iterate new initiatives and

ensure our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy evolves to meet the needs of our changing workplace.

## **Why inclusion is for everyone - and why I want you to put me out of a job**

Jazz Bhogal, Deputy Director of Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion, explains how the new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy sets out to realise the Civil Service's ambition of being the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020.

### **I want you to put me out of a job.**

Allow me to clarify: there are some caveats to this bold statement. In an ideal world, my team and I would not be needed. My job heading up Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) exists because the Civil Service is committed to reflect the society that we serve and be an inclusive organisation where everyone can be who they are and perform at their best.

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Head of the Civil Service, has set diversity and inclusion as one of his top three business priorities for the Civil Service, and in the Civil Service Workforce Plan 2016-2020 we set out a challenging ambition for the Civil Service to become the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020. It is my job to make evidence-based decisions on the shifts in policy or behaviours required to achieve this. But it's you, all of us, who will need to deliver the change.

### **What do we mean by diversity and inclusion?**

In the context of the Civil Service, we measure diversity by representation and the extent to which we reflect the communities that we serve. (See page 13.) We are making steady progress on the representation of women: nearly 42% of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) is now made up of women, compared to just 35% in 2010. In 2016 almost 49% of newly appointed SCS were women. However, although the proportion of women in the SCS is greater than the representation of female executives and board directors in FTSE 100 companies (26%), this masks much lower representation in the most senior roles and variation between departments. On ethnicity and disability the picture is stark. When we compare the Civil Service with the UK's economically active population, we find that people from ethnic minority backgrounds continue to be under-represented at all grades except EO (Executive Officer).

In the SCS the proportion of staff who are from an ethnic minority background (4.6%) has only changed very slightly in recent years. As with gender, representation is lower at the most senior levels. Representation of disabled staff is increasing at Grade 6 and below. However, representation is well below that in the economically active population at all grades, and representation of disabled staff in the SCS has barely changed since 2010. We cannot accurately measure how well lesbian, gay and bisexual staff are represented, as fewer than half of civil servants report their sexual orientation and we do not routinely gather information on gender identity. Making sure that people can record their information easily, and that they feel comfortable doing so, will be an important aspect of our future work plan. However, the real question is not how many people we are recruiting from under-represented groups, but rather the quality of their experience working in the Civil Service<sup>3</sup>. Or, as American diversity advocate Vernā Myers puts it, “diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

On inclusion, the experience of different groups varies quite dramatically. The biggest gaps are for disabled staff, who are much more likely to experience discrimination, bullying and harassment and have much lower engagement scores. Yet we don't see inclusion as being solely about under-represented groups: it is so much more than that. When we talk about inclusion, we are talking about all of our people. Everyone wants to be included at work, and when we exclude people we diminish their input and their potential to contribute.

Inclusion is about the introvert in a room full of extroverts struggling to be heard. It's about the person who always misses the team meeting because it's on their home working day. It's about the assumption that only young people have fresh and creative ideas. It's about you. Inclusion creates the quality of environment where we are all able to 'be ourselves' at work: able to be different from each other in many ways and to feel supported, empowered, valued, respected and fairly treated. Organisations that are more inclusive are also more attractive to prospective talented employees and are places where we can all thrive. Getting this right means all of us being able to build successful careers and achieve our potential – which in turn makes us a better Civil Service, delivering better services and outcomes for citizens.

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.americanbar.org/publications/gpsolo\\_ereport/2012/june\\_2012/diversity\\_invited\\_party\\_inclusion\\_asked\\_dance.html](https://www.americanbar.org/publications/gpsolo_ereport/2012/june_2012/diversity_invited_party_inclusion_asked_dance.html)

## **Diversity without inclusion simply cannot happen**

With all our evidence clearly pointing to a persistent lower quality of experience for many of our employees (see page 14), we have designed a new Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which balances our efforts between;

a. increasing the **representation** of under-represented groups at all levels within all parts of the Civil Service; and b. focusing on **inclusion** to build an organisation that attracts, retains and nurtures the best and most diverse talent possible, making us a better Civil Service, delivering improved services and outcomes.

The new strategy pushes us out of our comfort zone and challenges the cultures – and micro-cultures – of the vast organisation that is the Civil Service. This is a strategy for the people, by the people. In designing it, we have sought the views of civil servants at all levels. The team attended ten sessions at Civil Service Live this year and received feedback that was both really positive but also challenging, highlighting the concerns staff had in relation to D&I.

Clear themes for improvement emerged from our discussions, including:

- a. issues around age (younger and older staff) and disability discrimination;
- b. lack of understanding around carer responsibilities and carer's passport availability;
- c. exclusive behaviours resulting from team hierarchy;
- d. unconscious bias affecting equal opportunities for development; and
- e. the use of careless, unprofessional and discriminatory language in the workplace relating to gender, faith and sexual orientation.

We have taken this feedback seriously and used it to shape our strategy. We have also consulted with employee networks, heads of diversity, functions and professions.

**I was asked to go to lunch with colleagues, it's a small gesture but it made me feel welcome.**

**If inclusion is about quality of experience, how do we measure it?**

We will work with other employers to agree a clear definition and a common set of measures of inclusion. We will lead, in partnership with the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD), the establishment of a new framework for the measurement of

inclusion. This will be used across the Civil Service and by other employers, to assess and benchmark performance. In doing this, we will build on the path-breaking work done on measures of Socio-Economic Background (SEB).

Inclusion is an indicator and product of good leadership and management. We will establish quality standards for inclusive leadership, valuing and embedding inclusion within our capability standards and performance measures for all Civil Service leaders. These standards will be threaded through the work of the Leadership Academy, our selection processes, career pathways and performance management approaches. (See *Inclusive Managers*, page 15.)

Our data tells us that staff from under-represented groups have poorer outcomes on a range of measures associated with inclusion, such as discrimination, bullying and harassment; and engagement varies hugely between groups. We cannot get the best out of our staff if they feel excluded, bullied or disengaged, and we will not tolerate negative behaviours. Therefore, we will take forward a programme of culture audits across the Civil Service, working with departments, professions and functions to identify where action should be taken. We will take an evidence-based approach towards inclusion, but not be slow to innovate where required.

### **So when am I out of a job?**

We know we will have got there when the Civil Service is not only representative of our society, at all grades and across all departments, but when everyone's dance card is full.

### **Inclusive Managers**

An inclusive manager or leader will:

**Include.** They will adopt inclusive leadership and working practices, such as ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute when chairing team meetings or considering the impact of proposed organisational changes, such as the introduction of new IT/working practices for disabled staff, staff with caring responsibilities or alternative hours.

### **Nurture untapped talent.**

They will ensure that all employees are treated fairly and are offered the same opportunities. Inclusion Confident line managers will have no preconceptions about the abilities of staff, offering stretching work, career development moves, and encouraging staff to apply for promotion and talent programmes, based on their knowledge of individuals' development needs.

**Show commitment.** Inclusive managers and leaders are committed to inclusion because they recognise the real benefits to the business. They recognise that an inclusive environment enables their whole team to bring their whole selves to work and perform at their best.

**Lead from the front.** They will set clear standards for acceptable behaviour, acting as role models. They will challenge and tackle inappropriate behaviour that constitutes bullying, harassment and/or discrimination.

**Understand.** They will work to understand their staff, their needs and working styles, and adapt their own management styles accordingly. They will respect that information on an employee is confidential, unless the employee has made it clear that they are content for the information to be shared or disclosure is necessary to safeguard the individual or others.

**Be self-aware.** They will recognise their own biases and preconceptions and be able to self-regulate. They will acknowledge that their staff, despite best intentions, have inherent biases and put in place processes and working practices to mitigate against bias in their environment.

**Invite challenge.** They will create an environment where it is not only safe to challenge, but expected. They will encourage all staff to speak, ensuring all views are known to be important.

**Be vulnerable.** Inclusive managers and leaders share their vulnerabilities and are willing to admit their own limitations. They admit they don't know everything and take opportunities to learn from people with different experiences and perceptions.

**Establish positive relationships to build engagement.** They are skilled in building positive relationships to ensure that all staff have a motivating and inclusive experience at work. They understand that this can have a significant impact on their engagement, reducing work-related stress and improving organisational commitment.

# Digitising the Government's ethnicity data:

## The race disparity audit

The UK collects a vast amount of data about the ethnicity of public service users. What do we actually do with the data, and what does it tell us? Zamila Bunglawala, Deputy Director, and Marcus Bell, Director, Race Disparity Unit, Cabinet Office, explain.

### The Issue

The purpose of the Race Disparity Audit<sup>4</sup> is to collect and publish, on one purpose-built government website, data about ethnic disparities, including in education, employment, health, housing and the criminal justice system. By ethnic disparities, we mean differences in treatment or outcome affecting people of different ethnicities. Are black people more or less likely to do well at school or university? Are Asian people more or less likely to be unemployed? Are white people more or less likely to experience poor health?

In order to improve public services for all ethnic groups, we need to take a long, hard look at questions like these, and to understand if services are getting better or worse. In announcing the audit in August 2016, building on work on the Home Office Stop and Search data, the Prime Minister asked us to shine a light on these disparities and to identify where services needed to be improved for people from every background – even where that meant uncovering “uncomfortable truths”.

### THE FOCUS

The audit is an innovative data project. In an increasingly digital age, the UK Government is presenting data about ethnicity in an accessible way. The aim is to inform the public, to contribute to a more well-informed debate about how ethnicity affects outcomes, to influence policy, programme or funding decisions, and ultimately to help improve services.

The audit publishes, in one place, a wealth of data about the experiences of people of different ethnicities across public services. Where possible, it will provide additional depth by breaking down the data by socio-economic status, income, geography, gender and age. While much government ethnicity data is published already in reports and on websites, it can be very hard to find and even harder to interpret. Even when it is accessible, it is often published in formats designed for expert users, or in ways that only make sense to people already very familiar with the sector in question – for example,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit>

education or housing. The audit aims to address these issues by presenting a mass of data in a consistent way that is easy to understand.

## **THE APPROACH**

Because the audit had no design blueprint to follow during its early stages, we agreed two important principles with ministers: first, that the data should meet high quality standards, so as to command the confidence of users; and second, because it would have to meet the needs of a wide variety of users – from members of the public to academics – that it should be extensively tested with real-world users before it was launched. Throughout the project, to help ensure data quality, build trust and transparency, and improve the quality and added value of the website, we engaged with the leading national data and digital organisations (the Office for National Statistics, the UK Statistics Authority and the National Audit Office) and the expert open data community.

To understand the interests and needs of a diverse range of potential and existing data users, we regularly consulted a wide range of partners. These included leading academics, non-governmental organisations, think tanks, central and local government officials and analysts, and members of the public across the UK. Engagement was variously conducted through bilateral discussions, labs, roundtables and access to our private beta test website.

From the outset, the audit has been a cross-government project, with contributions from colleagues in many departments. While the bulk of the work in collecting, analysing and presenting the data has been done by statisticians and digital experts, we have additionally engaged with the policy community, who are also important customers for the insight the data will provide. It is on the basis of these discussions and extensive in-depth testing of statistics, charts, tables, labels and language, that we have built the audit website.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

No major undertaking is without its challenges, but building a website that will house such a large volume of government data on ethnicity was no small task. The sheer scale of the audit was a significant challenge and there were multiple technical and practical challenges to overcome.

Building a website takes a multi-disciplinary team with strong statistical, digital, policy and programme capabilities – we all needed to develop some cross-sectoral and cultural learning, and an understanding of the complex subject matter of ethnicity.

## **THE OUTCOME**

By putting all ethnicity data and highlighting disparities on one website, the audit may indeed highlight “uncomfortable truths” but it also has the potential to be a game-changer. It will shine a light on how ethnicity affects outcomes from public services. It will challenge departments to consider why there are disparities in outcome for different ethnicities and add pressure to improve outcomes where disparities are significant or persistent. It will also challenge government to improve the quality of the data it collects, improve the data infrastructure to ensure data is published in accessible ways, and to fill data gaps where they exist.

The audit is intended to establish a permanent website<sup>5</sup> – the initial launch includes a limited number of data measures and has the capacity to be extended and improved over time as new data across government becomes available and existing data is updated. It would also be consistent with the user-driven approach we have taken for the website to enhance it through continued user feedback and testing.

Much will depend on how the public and those in public services respond to and use the data that the audit will make transparent.

“The audit will shine a light on how ethnicity affects outcomes from public services.”

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/>

# Diversity in Public Appointments

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution, discusses the steps being taken to ensure that opportunities to lead UK public bodies are open and accessible to all.

There is no question that we need to have the brightest and best at the helm of our public bodies, particularly as we begin to deliver a smooth and prosperous exit from the European Union. However, we can only be sure that we are appointing the most talented individuals to our public bodies if we can be confident that the appointments process itself is open and accessible to all.

## What we have done?

Going back to 2013, the Centre for Public Appointments (CPA) committed to improving the system through which public appointments were made, including a focus on how to make this more accessible.

Since then we have freed the application process from reliance on lengthy and complex forms, cutting it down to a simple CV and covering letter. Recruitment campaigns are also now more transparent than ever, with all roles advertised on a central website. Applicants can even track competitions as they progress, with real-time updates.

Getting the nuts and bolts of the application process right has only been part of what's needed to achieve real change in the diversity of our public boards. Over the last few years we have been working to change the culture of how we approach recruiting people with the right skills. Prioritising years of senior board-level experience can often disproportionately impact women or ethnic minority candidates. By shifting the focus from experience to ability, we have opened up opportunities to candidates who may not yet have had significant levels of board experience but could nevertheless provide valuable scrutiny and challenge at board level.

The CPA was established in the Cabinet Office to drive innovation and support departments in the application of the Governance Code for Public Appointments. Now, this has gone even further, with dedicated teams set up in each department to focus on strategically managing the range of their regulated public appointments.

## **Where we are now?**

The Commissioner for Public Appointments, Peter Riddell, found in his recent annual report: On gender diversity, we set ourselves a target of achieving 50% of new appointments being made to women, and our progress remains steady with 48.5%. Overall, across both new appointments and reappointments, the representation of women has reached 45.5%. In this area in particular, the commissioner was particularly encouraged, reflecting that just 5 years ago this figure was 34%. The number of minority ethnic candidates appointed or reappointed rose to 9% per cent, this was higher (just over 10%) for new appointments. The number of candidates from ethnic Minority backgrounds appointed or reappointed rose to 9% per cent, this was higher (just over 10%) for new appointments. 6% of candidates who declared a disability were either newly appointed or reappointed, compared to 4% last year. Encouragingly, across the total number of candidates reaching the interview stage who have declared a disability, we have seen good levels of success, with 43% being appointed. This is good progress, but we recognise there is still quite some way to go.

## **WHERE WE ARE GOING**

The data shows progress but it also highlights new challenges. For example, the appointment and reappointment figures for women candidates are at their highest level and have increased by 5% at chair level. However, the overall percentage of women chair appointments stands at a disappointing 28%. Improving the quality of our own data will of course be important in helping to drill down into where remaining barriers in the process may be and determining the appropriate solutions. I have discussed with the commissioner exploring what further we could do in this area, and the CPA will be working with departments in the coming months.

## **AWARENESS**

The public appointments process begins well before a candidate submits an application, and there is work to do in drawing applications from under-represented groups. In 2016-17, 30% of applications were from women, 10% from ethnic minority backgrounds, and 5% from those with a declared disability.

One of the biggest challenges we face is the continued lack of awareness and, in reality, trust in the public appointments system, despite all the work we have done to demystify the process. At events I often hear that potential candidates are reluctant to apply because they are daunted by what the process may entail.

As the responsible minister, I believe this is one of the areas where we can make significant strides forward. I have taken the opportunity of the revised Code for Public Appointments

having come into force in January to renew our focus on increasing diversity in public appointments and launch a campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of public boards and create a talent pipeline. The campaign has given me the opportunity to meet existing appointees, leaders in the field of diversity and people from the private and public sector's who are already making changes in their respective industries. If we are to capture the attention of the widest possible range of candidates, we need to continue to think creatively about how we promote public appointments. We must take advantage of what digital technology can bring to the appointments system in making it more open, transparent and accessible. We will build on the success of the central Public Appointments website<sup>6</sup>, explore new social media opportunities, continue to work closely with existing partners, and build new links with networks in order to tap into a truly broad and diverse talent pool. Achieving change takes leadership and commitment from those with the responsibility for the recruitment of boards to create an inclusive culture. It is important that we work with chairs and board members to showcase their achievements and explore new ways to attract, support and retain new talent at board level.

## **WHERE DOES THIS FIT WITH WIDER GOVERNMENT**

Whilst the public appointments process can often present unique challenges, I do not see the work we are doing in isolation from the efforts being made elsewhere in government, such as the work we are doing with the private sector.

We are encouraging FTSE-level businesses to focus on diversity, identify and support ethnic minority groups in the workplace and achieve gender parity on boards (e.g. the Parker Review, the Hampton Alexander Review, and the McGregor Smith Review).

With a concerted effort across all sectors, we can only increase the pipeline of future talent and continue to remove barriers. Be it public or private sector, no one should feel they could not one day progress to board level because of their ethnicity, background or gender, or have the opportunity to serve in some of the most exciting and rewarding roles in the UK.

## **PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS CASE STUDY: CAMILLA POULTON**

I was appointed a member of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HM Prison Pentonville in July 2014 and have been Chair of the Board since January 2016. A public appointment like this is made by the Secretary of State (SoS) for Justice, and my role (as part of a team) is to independently monitor how fair, decent and humane the treatment of those in custody is.

IMB members are unpaid volunteers from the local community, who organise themselves

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<sup>6</sup> <https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

such that every week of every year someone is in the prison talking to prisoners and staff about how the regime is working – in other words, monitoring how the prison is run. As a public appointee I have the privilege (and am empowered by law) to spend time in this usually ‘hidden’ environment so that as a board we can try to ensure that proper standards of care and decency are maintained. We write weekly reports to the Governor about what we find, as well as a formal annual report to the SoS.

I saw the appointment advertised in the Public Appointments monthly newsletter, and applied to join in February 2014. The first part of the selection process was a tour of the prison. After that, I had a short interview with a panel of three IMB members.

There are many different types of voluntary work but, for me, a public appointment is worth applying for because it is a special kind of opportunity to do good, and one that carries responsibility and weight. Working in a prison won’t be for everyone, but I find it totally absorbing, and the IMB colleagues I work with are dedicated and professional, as well as being great fun. I didn’t have any experience of prisons when I applied, but I had done different types of voluntary work over the years, including in law centres, Rainbow Guides and being a school governor. A proven interest in helping different types of people and my local community were essential to my success in applying to join the IMB. If you are interested to learn more about our work, visit [www.imb.org.uk](http://www.imb.org.uk).

# Interview: Selvin Brown

In July 2017, the Government Communication Service (GCS) launched its second Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. We interviewed Selvin Brown, MBE, Director, Engagement and Policy, HSE, and GCS Diversity & Inclusion Champion, to put the strategy in context.

## **WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND TO YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE NEW GCS D&I STRATEGY?**

In January I sat down with some friends from within the Civil Service to discuss the state of race equality and diversity and inclusion in the organisation. Being a new father (my son Sam is one year old), I was also interested in how my friends' children were getting on. Most were either at university or have just completed their studies and are entering the world of work. I asked my friends how many of their children were considering joining the Civil Service, which had provided such great career opportunities for most of us, and opportunities to serve both our country and our communities. I was very surprised by the answer. Not one of my friends' children had considered joining the Civil Service. Despite my obvious disappointment I resolved to redouble my personal efforts to help the Civil Service attract, retain and pull through talented colleagues, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

## **WHAT DO THE WORDS 'DIVERSITY' AND 'INCLUSION' MEAN TO YOU?**

I believe inclusion is a critical step towards making the Civil Service a brilliant place to work. Part of the challenge comes when 'diversity' and 'inclusion' are put together. They can sometimes be seen to mean the same thing, when in fact they are very different, albeit complementary.

For me, diversity in a workforce context is about equal representation. It has its roots in the fairness and open recruitment aspects of our Civil Service tradition and relates to our values, which can be traced back to the Northcote-Trevelyan Civil Service Reforms of 1854. But without inclusion, the crucial connections that attract diverse talent, encourage them to participate, and foster innovation, won't happen.

Those of us who are passionate about Civil Service diversity and inclusion all know the research: creating an inclusive environment helps colleagues bring their best to the work they do. Ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to be in the top-performing quartile<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> McKinsey, 2015, Why diversity matters: <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

The term 'inclusion' is contested, not because most people argue against it – most agree it's a good thing – but there is a considerable amount of interpretation involved. I think it is important to define 'inclusion' when we communicate around it, and therefore make explicit what we mean when we use the term.

For me 'inclusion' means ensuring that our work reflects and represents the views and expectations of people across the UK regions and nations (my work for HSE involves me working in our HQ in Bootle, Liverpool). Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection – where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives is harnessed to create value.

### **ARE THERE TRENDS IN SOCIETY AND IN PERCEPTIONS OF EQUALITY AND D&I THAT THE CIVIL SERVICE CAN BENEFIT FROM?**

Organisations need both diversity and inclusion to be successful. Without including the new colleagues we are beginning to attract, many of them from a younger generation, we will likely not gain the benefits of our improved recruitment outcomes. A recent study by Deloitte and the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative<sup>8</sup> found that there were differences between the generations (boomers, gen-Xers and millennials). They found that millennials are refusing to check their identities at the doors of organisations. They strongly believe that these characteristics bring value to organisations' outcomes. 86% of millennials surveyed felt that differences of opinion allow teams to excel. A more inclusive Civil Service will better represent the full spread of public opinion by bringing different points of view to the centre of decision-making. In my view, this is part of the answer to the 'why bother?' question. When reviewed by independent inquiries, group-think was found to be a critical factor in most public policy failures.

### **WHAT'S THE OVERALL AIM OF THE NEW GCS D&I STRATEGY?**

The 2017/18 strategy<sup>9</sup> commits the GCS to recruit, promote, train and support a diverse and inclusive profession. The vision for the GCS is to be a communications profession that is representative of modern Britain, actively supporting talented individuals to succeed, regardless of race, gender or socio-economic background. D&I are central to how we communicate government policy to the people we serve to make the UK a fairer and more equal place to live and work in. Importantly, this vision is shared by the whole GCS

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/radical-transformation-of-diversity-and-inclusion.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/diversity-and-inclusion/>

leadership team, comprising all of the Directors of Communications across government.

## **WHAT, IF ANY, NEW INSIGHTS HAVE INFORMED THE STRATEGY?**

This year, for the first time, GCS introduced diversity questions in the annual GCS Skills Survey. This was in direct response to feedback from the newly established Shadow Board (a cross-government group of communicators appointed to shadow the Directors of Communications Board and give us real-time feedback on our challenges and decisions).

The aim was to:

establish a baseline of diversity and equality data; build a better understanding of the link between diversity and self-assessment of skills in each of the Modern Communications Operating Model (<https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/mcom/>) capabilities; and investigate whether there is any link between diversity and the self-reported ability to demonstrate the leadership behaviours outlined in the Civil Service Leadership Statement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-leadership-statement/civil-service-leadership-statement>) [to be Inspiring, Confident, Empowering].

## **WHAT SORT OF BASE DOES THE STRATEGY BUILD ON?**

It reports on the excellent progress we have made over the last year since our first diversity and inclusion strategy.

There have been some encouraging results. Our centralised recruitment campaigns attracted over 9,000 applicants, leading to 20% of successful applicants coming from an ethnic minority background. Launching the first profession-led diversity internship resulted in 26 interns across 14 departments and public bodies. And 20 of our 29 apprentices come from either a lower socio-economic or ethnic minority background.

We have been encouraged by this early success and have set ourselves some stretching objectives: to improve SCS diversity to ensure that it represents the society we serve; to improve ethnic minority background and women's representation at all grades; to attract and retain GCS early talent from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

## **HOW WILL YOU ACHIEVE THIS?**

As set out in the strategy, we aim to do this by:

fostering a culture of inclusion – incorporating flexible working, nurturing personal leadership styles, and learning from others across all regions of the UK;

growing our diverse talent – addressing diversity and inclusion in our talent pipelines by offering a wider range of development; building home-grown senior and diverse talent

through greater support to reach our top leadership positions, particularly women at Director of Communications level; and recruiting inclusively – improving the future diversity of our profession by growing the number of apprentices and improving our recruitment practices.

Accountability is also built into the process, with Alex Aiken, our Head of Profession, holding Directors of Communications to account for our performance via a clear leadership objective and our performance reviews. Again, as a leadership team, Directors of Communications have made a commitment to improve our approach to inclusion by championing difference, celebrating our role models, and understanding – and acting on – what our colleagues tell us. A great example of this has been the GCS support for a newly created GCS part-time network, which was first proposed by one of our talented female communicators. We launched the network in July, alongside the new strategy.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE?**

As one of the GCS's diversity and inclusion champions, I'm proud of the work we have begun. In some respects we have been leading the way for the Civil Service professions – if not the Civil Service as a whole – with our forward-thinking and innovative approaches.

We have some way to go before we can really say we have a fully inclusive culture. When Sam graduates from university (in 2040) I hope he will consider joining a truly inclusive Civil Service.

# Diversity and inclusion case studies

The Fast Stream, Fast Track and Early and Summer Diversity Internship Programmes aim to recruit more candidates from diverse backgrounds. The following stories show how important these programmes are to the Civil Service becoming the UK's most inclusive employer. "Whoever you are, whatever your background, the Civil Service wants and needs your input."

## **ROSIE MELVILLE**

Until I started my Criminology and Social Policy degree at Kent University, I didn't know what the Civil Service was or what it did. In fact, I didn't properly grasp this until I undertook a nine-week internship with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2014, as a part of the Summer Diversity Internship Programme (SDIP), which I was eligible for because I am from a lower socio-economic background.

When I was growing up, everybody around me was just like me. I didn't really know anyone who had much money, or who didn't go to their local comprehensive. It was normal to me that my school was failing and that my teachers told me to "just aim for a C" when I was in the top set. It's only when you break out of the world in which you grew up that you realise that not everyone is like you. I began to feel different to other people at university, and really different to other people when I went to LSE to do a Masters. I doubted myself a lot and always thought that other people were better than me.

I was therefore nervous about applying for the Fast Stream; I never thought I'd be good enough. When I started my internship at DCLG, at first I was intimidated by the Fast Streamers, some of the other interns, the jargon, and just about everything! However, my fears were soon allayed as I was welcomed in and accommodated so warmly by everyone around me. The Civil Service has a huge and wonderful focus on diversity. Whoever you are, whatever your background, the Civil Service wants and needs your input, and you are made to feel this from your first day.

The first time that I applied for the Fast Stream I didn't get past the e-Tray stage, however, after completing the SDIP I was offered support and help from the SDIP team that helped me to successfully get through on my second try. I am now in my third six-month placement on the generalist scheme and I have found it to be a rewarding and challenging experience. The transition from education to work has been incredibly smooth, thanks to the focus on continuous learning and professional and personal development on the Fast Stream. The skills that I've learned from the Fast Stream have allowed me to excel in my roles and to feel much more confident in my own ability.

My first posting was at the Department for Work and Pensions, where I worked on the programmes that get people off benefits and into work. I travelled all over the UK, from Edinburgh to Cornwall, meeting a variety of colleagues and stakeholders. I then moved back to DCLG where I worked on the Neighbourhood Planning Bill team. This role was very exciting and fast-paced, and I worked closely with ministers and Parliament. I'm now on secondment with Hackney Council, working on community and economic development. In all of my roles I have found that my background has in some ways helped me to succeed, allowing me to see things from a different point of view to many of my colleagues. I would really encourage anyone with an interest to think about joining the Fast Stream, even if you don't think you're good enough. There's a good chance that you are, and that the Civil Service is looking for someone just like you!

## **ANDREW WRIGHT**

I joined the Fast Stream aged 38 after 15 years spent teaching in comprehensive schools. I lost my hearing in my late 20s and whilst I battled on in the classroom, my employer did not go out of their way to include or develop me. I felt I was treated as a liability rather than an asset. Deciding to leave the teaching profession was a huge decision for me. I have a young family and a mortgage, alongside my deafness and problems with my health. For some months after leaving the classroom I thought I may never work again. I had applied to the Fast Stream the day after leaving school because I'd read how it was an employer who judged you on what you can do, rather than what you cannot. The application process was quite long (it has got shorter) but the further I got the more confident I felt. The application team worked with me to arrange reasonable adjustments so I could join the process as an equal, and this sense of inclusion made me realise that the Civil Service was the employer for me.

Upon joining the Home Office, the diversity team were helpful in ensuring that I had access to the support I needed to do my job. However, it is also important as a disabled person that you are proactive. I produced a handout for my team explaining how best to communicate with me, as it is unreasonable to expect everyone I meet to automatically know the best approach. I think that 'fitting in' will only really happen if you are prepared to open up and tell people what you need.

I've found the Civil Service to be an amazingly diverse place that really does value difference – but being diverse isn't enough, the organisation has to be inclusive too. Diversity is about getting a mix, inclusion is about getting the mix to work. Inclusion is about all of us and I think that whilst we have a responsibility to each other to be inclusive, some of it is also about how we believe we fit into the organisation.

After a year in the Civil Service, I'm starting to feel a bit more comfortable being me. The Civil Service has shown me that I am valued, that I can achieve and it's right to have high aspirations regardless of any disability I might have.

The Civil Service also recognises the importance of being a diverse organisation. Not because it's got a moral obligation to be diverse, but because it's important to draw on views from people who think differently. Disabled people are amongst the most resilient and entrepreneurial people I've met – they have to be to get on in life. It makes good business sense for the Civil Service to welcome them, because those staff will think outside the box and come up with solutions to problems that others might miss.

By being proactive and proud of my differences, I have been involved in the most stretching and engaging work imaginable. During my time on the Fast Stream I have represented the Cabinet Office at events helping employers to recruit disabled people; attended meetings on social mobility with Permanent Secretaries; and become the communication lead for an entire cross-government support network. This is in addition to my day job, where I offer strategic HR support to a core directorate of Border Force.

My advice is to seize the day. The Fast Stream, Early Diversity Internship Programme (EDIP) and SDIP offer fantastic opportunities for those who want to make a difference, regardless of their background or disabilities. Have confidence in yourself because you are welcome. The Civil Service is looking for people like us precisely because we are different. Be proud of those differences and use them as a tool to teach others how to overcome adversity.

## **ZEBEDEE NARTEY**

I have worked in the Civil Service since 2001, and consider myself incredibly privileged to work in a dynamic, supportive and flexible environment. I have worked with many gifted colleagues on a broad range of issues, including economic appraisal of government policy, economic modelling and forecasting, and the development of domestic and international policy for four Whitehall departments and the European Commission in Seville, Spain.

I am encouraged by the fact that the Civil Service has seen an improvement in the overall numbers of employees from an ethnic minority background in recent years, but there is still room for improvement. I am eager to see more appropriately qualified people from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds appointed at higher staff grades in the next decade. The flexibility of the Civil Service has afforded me the benefit of working compressed hours so that I can participate in UCL's PhD programme. I am also pleased to be able to achieve a life goal of starting an economic consultancy company while working full-time, because of the skills I acquired during my time at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and on secondment to the European Commission.

## **KATHERINE TOOMEY**

“...the Civil Service is a pretty unusual place, where people appreciate me for the brain cells I have that do work rather than those don't.”

I joined the Civil Service as part of the SDIP in 2017. Prior to joining, I was expecting the programme to simply provide me with an insight into life as a Civil Service Fast Streamer and give me something constructive to do during the summer. However, it became clear very quickly that the programme would provide me with opportunities for personal development as well. I have been disabled for 20 years, and for much of that time the internal relationship between me and my disability has not been a particularly happy one. In spite of this, within a couple of days of starting the placement I realised something that felt very different to anywhere else I had spent time at – it occurred to me that no one seemed to notice my disability.

Initially, I was so keen to be treated as ‘normally’ as possible that I tried to hide elements of my needs that I thought would single me out, and as a result I almost missed some great opportunities. Once it became clear that the unusually accepting attitude shown to me – not just by my unit or even my department, but by most of the Civil Service – was embedded within their culture, it became easier and easier to admit what I needed in place to make things work.

What I found most striking was just how easy it was to get the additional requirements I needed to carry out my work. Previously, I have waited long periods of time and had to consistently struggle to even get close to what I needed, but this was not the case here. Whether it was training me up on the specialist IT software I need to be able to read and write, or sorting out the logistics for my assistant to come with me to the away day, everything was done quickly, efficiently and with very little fuss.

It's actually pretty ironic; everyone who vaguely knows me knows that I absolutely hate the social model of disability (i.e. the idea that disability is caused by society, not your impairment), but it really does feel as if I leave my disability outside the office. It's the only place I've been defined by just being me rather than my disability. It is surprising how quickly I have become accustomed to it. I'm now having to remind myself that the Civil Service is a pretty unusual place, where people appreciate me for the brain cells I have that do work rather than those that don't, when the rest of the world sees my chair before they see me. The work was the easiest part for me – well, at least easier than trying to accept that people actually meant it when they told me I had done well, or liked my ideas

rather than just saying that because they didn't want to upset 'the disabled girl'. The placement gave me a brilliant opportunity to test the boundaries of my independence in ways I probably wouldn't have attempted otherwise. It has demonstrated that I can pass for a self-sufficient person – with help from total strangers to hold doors or from colleagues who are willing to share their meeting notes. There have been times that I have tried things and it hasn't worked, or they have presented too much of a risk to me, but the limits are much more infrequent and therefore easier to accept.

As weeks rolled by with lots of work alongside mini personal achievements, the more I didn't want the experience to end and the more keen I became to do this full time.

In conclusion, the programme I had originally applied for because I didn't want to have nothing to do all summer became a light at the end of a very long tunnel. With that came an internal shift, where I have begun to accept that some things may always be limited by my circumstances, but that does not mean everything is.

Additionally, I have seen that the world I grew up in – one that portrayed disability rights activist, wheelchair athlete or 'on benefits' as my only career options is no more. People who see your working brain cells before your disability will generally help you reach your potential; and people who view you the other way round are not worth your time.