

# EXTERNAL HIRES RESPONSE

1. In 2014, the Government commissioned research into the key issues external hires face when joining the senior levels of the Civil Service. The Baxendale report makes a number of recommendations for improvements to the Civil Service culture, our process of recruitment and selection, induction and how we manage our talent.
2. If the Civil Service is to continue providing the best service that it can – to the public and Ministers - it is critical that we are receptive to external experience, so that we can continue to recruit and retain the best talent and maximise the skills and capabilities available to the Civil Service. This document sets out the steps we have already taken, and those we intend to make quick progress on.

## RECENT PROGRESS

3. The Baxendale report raised concerns about the culture of the Civil Service. The Civil Service Reform Progress Report (October 2014) recognised that insufficient change had been made to the culture of the Civil Service, and said that greater effort and stronger leadership were required to build a modern organisation ready to tackle the challenges of the future. Since the research was undertaken, we have:
  - **Launched the Civil Service Leadership Statement.** This sets out the behaviours that we expect all leaders across Civil Service grades to exemplify, and takes as its starting point opinions from staff on what good leadership looks like, what they value in their leaders, and what behaviours need to change. Staff and colleagues will assess their leaders against these behaviours through robust 360 feedback.
  - **Published the Talent Action Plan.** This set out the steps we would take to remove the barriers to success faced by those from under-represented groups, and has been refreshed in response to new evidence. The themes from this work - on the importance of stronger leadership and openness to different views and approaches – and the measures that the senior leadership are taking in response, are relevant to some of the cultural barriers observed in the Baxendale report.
4. The Baxendale report recommended a more personal and engaging approach to recruitment and selection, as well as improvements to data collection. We have already made progress on this, for example:
  - **Civil Service Resourcing now provides a centralised recruitment service for six departments, and will continue to expand coverage during 2015/16.** We have rolled out a bespoke single point of contact (an Account Manager) service to six departments, with pilots running for a further six. This Account Manager advises the recruiting manager on all

aspects of the campaign, designs a selection process providing candidates with a more personal experience, and sources informal and formal opportunities for candidates to find out more about the role and the Civil Service.

- **Running tailored campaigns for a number of functions**, including HR, Communications, Commercial and Digital, not only to recruit for immediate roles but also to strengthen our succession pipeline. The Government is obtaining specialist external support with these campaigns to ensure a more modern and engaging approach.
- **Exit interviews**. We have introduced exit interviews for all Senior Civil Service leavers, and HR Directors now report on the feedback (such as reasons for leaving) so it can be reviewed and acted upon by the Senior Leadership Committee.
- **Better data collection**. The data already collected on the SCS, including the picture of the skills and experience across the senior leadership team, will be utilised better centrally to inform deployment and development decisions.

## NEXT STEPS

5. We will continue to build on this work to drive improvements across the areas the Baxendale report identified. As a matter of priority we will take forward the following actions:
6. On recruitment and selection we will:
  - **Establish strong alumni networks**. We have already set up internal networks for alumni of the Civil Service talent schemes. We will hold networking events and put in place a digital forum for SCS who have left the Civil Service to maintain contact with them, generate further outward secondment opportunities, and encourage more open interchange with the private sector. **By September 2015.**
  - **Review the use of psychometric assessment**. We are reviewing our current practice to develop a richer selection process, which gives greater weight to the experience, strengths, development needs and motivations of potential recruits. **The review will conclude by June 2015.**
7. On induction, the report highlights inconsistent and patchy induction as a particular weakness. Based on best external practice, we will make the following changes to further improve standardisation across the Civil Service:
  - **Establish an interactive induction website**. This will be available to all new starters a month before they start and will include content on areas such as understanding the Civil Service, how we do business, working with Ministers and Civil Service Reform. Alongside this, we will provide an induction checklist for all line managers of new starters, including guidance on how to conduct entry interviews. **By May 2015.**

- **Provide additional support for new SCS.** This will include: networking events on essential topics such as Civil Service Leadership and priorities, and one-to-one buddying or coaching arrangements to provide tailored confidential advice during new entrants' transition into the Civil Service.  
**By May 2015.**

8. The Baxendale report recognises the recent improvements to our talent management processes but sets out that more could be done, particularly around developing the talent of people from specialist backgrounds. To ensure greater leadership ownership and focus of our talent management, we will:

- **Develop stronger career paths for specialists.** Under the Chief Executive of the Civil Service, Heads of Functions will have clearly defined roles in managing talent within their profession (including through controlling recruitment, deployment and setting career pathways) and building capability by setting the learning curricula. ***We will take stock on progress in June 2015.***
- **Focus more resources and attention on leadership training.** We will explore whether parts of the current offer might be brought together and enhanced as part of a Civil Service Leadership Academy. This work is being led by the Chief Executive of the Civil Service.
- **Maximise the mechanisms in place for internal and external secondments.** We will encourage the flow of people between the Civil Service and other sectors in order to give our people wider external experience.