



# Refreshed Talent Action Plan: Removing the barriers to success

# Foreword: March 2015

In September 2014, we published the Civil Service *Talent Action Plan*, part of our ongoing Civil Service Reform programme. The Plan set out concrete measures to remove barriers to our most talented civil servants succeeding, informed by the Hay Group's study into *Women in Whitehall*. Our priority was, and remains, to understand the actual issues people are facing and design specific remedies.

Since September, the Leadership Statement has been published, setting out the behaviours that we expect of all Civil Service leaders. Today, we publish research on the challenges facing three under-represented groups of staff: those declaring a Black, Asian or Minority-Ethnic (BAME) background, those declaring a disability or health condition, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGB&T).

The findings of these reports demonstrate that while there are things we can rightly be proud of - and where we outperform other sectors - we still have a distance to go. This has to improve, not simply because of the waste of talent and potential it may represent, but because we know that difference of thought, background and culture leads to improved decision-making and innovation in organisations. Without drawing fully on the talents of all, we are selling ourselves short.

The report findings, when combined with the data we already hold, give us our strongest evidence base yet from which to take action. This will not change the longstanding principle of recruiting on merit, irrespective of factors other than the individual's ability to do the job. But it does mean we will act to ensure people are not held back because of who they are or their background.

The findings we publish today help us to take a look in the mirror and recognise where we have more to do. We will be judged by our results rather than our aspirations.

Francis Maude.

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**Rt Hon Francis Maude  
Minister for the Cabinet Office**

**Sir Jeremy Heywood  
Cabinet Secretary and Head of  
the Civil Service**

# Foreword: September 2014

The Civil Service Talent Action Plan: Removing Barriers to Success is another plank in the Government's ongoing reform programme designed to build on the Civil Service's many strengths and address directly its persistent weaknesses. The Civil Service already employs many of Britain's brightest and best. But we need to ensure that every talented, committed and hard-working person has the opportunity to rise to the top, whatever their background and whoever they are. That's a cultural change that many big organisations are working to implement. It will be challenging but it is needed.

When Dame Mary Smieton was appointed as the most senior civil servant at the Ministry of Education in 1953 – only the second woman to reach this grade – she was paid the same as a man. Not because her department was an early advocate of equal pay, but because they hadn't worked out a women's rate at this grade. These were the days when women were not expected, let alone encouraged, to reach the top.

Thankfully society has changed enormously since then – and the Civil Service with it. More than half of civil servants are now women. The numbers declaring ethnic minority backgrounds, with disabilities or who are openly LGB&T have risen too. Today's Civil Service looks more like the country it serves and is undoubtedly better for it.

This record puts us head and shoulders above most organisations. Ministers and the Civil Service can be and are proud of this, but we know there's more to do.

Our starting point was to try to understand why some groups continue to be under-represented at the higher levels. We are proud that women now account for almost 40% of our senior appointments and make up over half our entire workforce. But why do women only fulfil a third of the very top management posts in the Civil Service? Although this is more than most FTSE100 companies, it can and should be better.

A core principle of the Civil Service is its recruitment and promotion on merit. This must never change. Previous efforts to address a gender imbalance focused on targets, and met with limited success because they didn't address the underlying problems. Our priority has been to identify the obstacles that stop bright, capable, hard-working women from fulfilling their potential. This new Talent Action Plan builds on the research we commissioned into the issues faced by senior women in the Civil Service. The Plan sets out practical steps to remove these barriers and complements our existing reform programme and our work to develop the skills of civil servants.

We will support take up of shared parental leave, improve recruitment and promotion of talented women by stopping all male interview panels and ensure that the collective leadership takes greater responsibility for the organisation.

We want to see an open, inclusive environment where the best people, brimming with ideas and bursting with enthusiasm, can thrive irrespective of who they are.

We cannot allow a climate in which some groups of staff could be discriminated against, unconsciously or not.

Starting a family shouldn't mean the end of your career ambitions. Indeed many civil servants already take advantage of measures such as flexible working. Where flexible working is managed in line with business need, it can help unlock employees' full potential and challenge traditional ways of working.

But we want to make it easier for women to continue their careers if they choose to take time out to have children. When women return from maternity or adoption leave they can too often be treated as if their skills have diminished, and be placed in less demanding roles. So we are introducing greater support to ensure they can quickly get back into the most challenging roles and continue to progress their careers.

The Civil Service will be an exemplar of the new entitlement to Shared Parental Leave, which allows working parents to decide how they share time off work after their child is born or adopted. We will pay Shared Parental Leave at the same occupational rate as maternity leave across the whole Civil Service. The move provides a boost for women who have said that taking a long break is detrimental to their career prospects. It gives parents flexibility around how they share childcare responsibilities and ensures that both parents can retain strong links with the labour market.

Other changes include greater mentoring for under-represented groups, stronger support for staff networking in line with best practice across the private and public sector, and ensuring that a member of every department's board has responsibility for monitoring progress.

To inform our next steps three further reports have been commissioned to examine the barriers faced by other groups - those who declare disabilities, or that they are from a minority-ethnic background, and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Each group faces their own challenges, even if some will overlap. Within a year, when we have considered all this new evidence, as well as other work to examine how we can close the gender pay gap, we will publish a refreshed talent strategy to ensure we draw on the very best of our staff, whoever they are.

Alongside our diversity work, we have also announced that we are doubling the Fast Track Apprenticeship Scheme which we launched last year. We don't want departments full of employees who think and sound the same. The Fast Track

Apprenticeship Scheme was created because we recognise that young people who leave school and go straight into the world of work have much to offer. It has been wonderful to see new energy and fresh ideas enter the Civil Service over the last year, which is why we will double the size of the scheme to 400 apprentices by 2015/2016. The Apprenticeship scheme is designed to run in parallel to our well-regarded Fast Stream programme for graduates. It's our hope that in twenty or thirty years' time some of these apprentices will have risen to fill the very highest posts – this will be a litmus test for talent management in the Civil Service.

None of this cultural change will be easy. It requires strong leadership and concerted action from Civil Service leaders and Ministers. But this Plan won't sit on a shelf. Too often in the past we created grand strategies but were left puzzled when they didn't implement themselves. This time our most senior leaders will be directly responsible for making sure these changes happen. The challenges we face as a country aren't going to disappear anytime soon.

Taxpayers, users of public services and Ministers deserve the best Civil Service. Quite simply, we can't afford not to make full use of the energy, skill and commitment of the best we can recruit. This is a step to putting this right.



**Rt Hon Francis Maude  
Minister for the Cabinet Office**



**Sir Jeremy Heywood  
Cabinet Secretary and Head of  
the Civil Service**

## (A) Our Vision: A Diverse Civil Service

1.

To build a world-class, 21<sup>st</sup> century Civil Service we need to recruit and retain the very best civil servants, irrespective of their background. Civil Service appointments must always be made on the basis of merit, blind to any factors other than the individual's ability to do the job. But we cannot afford to exclude people because of – for example – their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, social background or disability.

2.

From a diverse workforce – comprising talented people of diverse backgrounds – we must identify the most talented and help them progress quickly. We should value all talented employees irrespective of who they are and any visible or non-visible differences. Barriers that can prevent talented individuals succeeding have to be removed. And we must ensure the way we nurture and reward our people and our talent management processes allow every civil servant to reach their full potential.

3.

For our people to thrive and deliver the very best the Civil Service must operate in an inclusive, open environment where everyone can draw on their talents to identify new and ever better ways of doing things. Our vision is of a highly

capable and creative Civil Service, constantly evolving and developing by drawing from the broadest range of talent: a Civil Service that is an exemplary employer in providing fair and equal opportunity for all.

4.

An open, inclusive and fair culture must be driven from the top. Our leaders must be able to get the very best from our people. We do not want departments full of employees who think and sound alike. So our leaders must look beyond bias and relentlessly seek out merit. There can be no place for divisive, opaque or biased behaviours; nor any form of bullying or harassment. The leadership must embody our culture and values.

5.

An open, inclusive and fair culture should be mirrored throughout our corporate talent pool – the Civil Service High Potential Stream – that brings together our most promising civil servants who demonstrate the ability, aspiration and engagement to form part of the pipeline for the Service's most senior leadership roles. If the actions in this Plan are effective, it will be reflected in the diversity of this group, encompassing Future Leaders (at Grade 6/7), the Senior Leaders Scheme (SCS1), and the High Potential Development Scheme (at director level).

## (B) How diverse is our current workforce?

6.

The headline statistics suggest that the Civil Service as a whole – around 439,000 individuals who work all over the country and overseas – already benefits from a more diverse talent pool than many UK employers. Over the last fifteen years, representation across gender, race and disability has increased:

- Women now account for 53% of the Civil Service, compared to 48.6% in 1998;
- 10.1% declare a minority ethnic background, a significant increase from 5.7% in 1998;
- 8.8% declare a disability, up substantially from 4.1% in 1998; and
- Some Civil Service departments are recognised by Stonewall as amongst the most lesbian and gay-friendly workplaces.

7.

Our recruitment statistics also suggest that we are drawing from a reasonably wide range of backgrounds, although we recognise that there is no room for complacency:

- 48.8% of Fast Streamers are women and 11.6% declare a minority ethnic background;

- On our Fast Track Apprenticeship programme, 48% are women and 12% declare a minority ethnic background.

8.

But in the Senior Civil Service (SCS), the picture is less encouraging:

- Only a third are women (37.9%);
- The pay gap between men and women is 5.3%<sup>1</sup>;
- Just 4% declare a minority ethnic background and only 3.4% declare a disability.

9.

While the Civil Service undoubtedly does better than many organisations, we know there is still much to do to ensure everyone can reach their full potential.

<sup>1</sup> This is the pay gap for the centrally managed SCS

## (C) Our Approach

10.

For several years different departments have worked to improve diversity and inclusion. Some good progress has been made and there is best practice which we must build on. But to make a real difference, particularly at the most senior levels, we need co-ordinated action from the centre too.

11.

As a first step, because we want to ensure we have the very best talent in place, we need to understand why some groups continue to be underrepresented at senior levels. For example: why is it that a majority of women in the Civil Service does not translate into an equivalent proportion in the SCS, and an even smaller proportion at the very highest levels? And: why are relatively few of the many talented Fast Streamers who declare a minority ethnic background promoted to Grade 7 level and above?

12.

It is always easy to fall back on targets, but there is a danger that these conflict with the principle of recruiting on merit. Our solution is that we should understand the actual barriers faced by underrepresented groups, and then examine what we can do to remove them. We believe that previous attempts to address diversity had limited success as they did not deal with the actual issues.

13.

We have focused on four groups: women; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; those who declare they are from a minority ethnic background; and those who declare a disability. Each group faces different challenges. We do not believe that a one-size-fits-all solution is necessarily the answer. Instead we have sought to examine them individually, recognising that there would inevitably be substantial overlap between the problems each face.

14.

We have commissioned four separate reports to examine each group. The first was conducted by the Hay Group on gender in the SCS and is published alongside this Action Plan. Women in Whitehall tells us that, while our policies are in line with best practice, many people, particularly women, do not believe that rhetoric matches reality. It concluded that “organisational performance is being held back by a leadership climate in which some groups of staff are unconsciously discriminated against”. This report draws on many of the recommendations made by the Hay Group.

15.

An important Hay Group recommendation was that any strategy to build diversity must be built around a proper talent strategy. It is indeed axiomatic that if we manage talent properly – and ensure the most talented are promoted – we will resolve many of the issues at play. It is our intention to refresh this Plan within a year once we have the conclusions of the remaining three reports, adding additional actions as necessary. At that stage we will

publish a revised talent strategy, incorporating the actions below and further steps to address the question of under representation.

16.

We also know there is further work to do to understand and address the pay gap. Across the whole Civil Service, this has closed somewhat from 12.5% in 2010 to 11% in 2013<sup>2</sup>. Yet it remains unacceptably high and we are determined to work to close it. We will undertake further analysis on the pay gap, and we will report our findings alongside those of the three further reports once they are complete.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the pay gap for full time staff

## (D) How will we achieve our vision?

17.

This Plan sets out the concerted action required to address the problems identified. This work falls into three themes: leadership and culture, talent, and capability.

We believe that **strong leadership** that embraces diversity will in turn allow an **open, transparent culture** to flourish: a culture that is embracing of different viewpoints and ways of working; where people feel safe to challenge the status quo (Section D).

We must be able to encourage diverse talent into the Civil Service, and **develop and promote our talent** irrespective of background, race, sexual orientation, gender or disability (See Section E).

Finally, we need to make sure the Civil Service as a whole has the **skills and capability** to promote and benefit from the full diversity of talent available to it (see Section F).

18.

This Plan sets out the concrete steps we will take to make this happen:

a. the **centre** must hold departmental leaders to account for delivering change against that framework;

b. **Permanent Secretaries**<sup>3</sup> must ensure that this framework is used energetically to foster an inclusive culture and focus on promoting and developing talent from the broadest pool; and

c. **managers and leaders across the Service** must ensure that they run their teams, offer services, and develop and mentor their colleagues to get the best from our people.

19.

This Plan is not a final and finished document. It is a dynamic plan which we will update in response to new evidence – in the first instance the other three strands of work we have commissioned.

<sup>3</sup> Including chief executives of agencies

## (E) Clear leadership and an open culture

20.

This section sets out actions we will take to develop our leaders to live our values and to lead. We will:

**Publish a single leadership statement that sets out the behaviours we expect in our leaders.** We will focus our leadership development on the behaviours set out in the statement. Performance will be monitored via 360 degree feedback that is rigorous, objective, professional and systematic.

**Nominate board-level diversity champions in each department with real power to drive change.** An existing member of each departmental board will be nominated as the department's diversity champion. Permanent secretaries and chief executives will ensure that champions are active within their organisations and that there is an open and constructive two-way dialogue in place with representatives of staff groups and associations. The champions will be expected to challenge the status quo and represent these issues at board level. They will also be able to bid for funds to cover the costs of research into priority problems – particularly where there are concerns over diversity at senior levels.

**Give permanent secretaries personal responsibility for ensuring the most talented, irrespective of background, reach the most senior levels of their organisations.** For example, they should identify and sponsor members of under-represented groups as part of succession planning. They should also ensure, so far as possible, that organisational boards are diverse. Where they are not they should set out their approach to achieve this in either their annual business plan or Departmental Improvement Plan. Where individual departments or agencies lag behind the SCS average, permanent secretaries and chief executives will set out to the Cabinet Secretary and Civil Service Board a clear and proactive plan for sustainable improvement.

**Value skills and experience gained outside the Civil Service and provide more support to people who join or return to the Civil Service from outside.** We have already commissioned a report on external hires to the SCS and will publish this advice. We must do more to encourage secondments as set out in the Civil Service Reform Plan. As part of this work we will look at the process, to make it more transparent and less bureaucratic so we can encourage more civil servants to gain wider experience that is of demonstrable value to the Civil Service as a whole. Taking the initiative to seek out external opportunities will be recognised as something positive in recruitment practices and should not be seen as putting your Civil Service career on hold.

**Ensure an inclusive culture which supports flexible working.** We will publish clear, simple guidance to ensure that flexible working is managed effectively. Whenever there is an appropriate business case for it, we will support flexible working because we know that it can improve productivity and benefit organisations.

**Understand our culture.** We need to understand whether our actions are effective. We don't need to know everything about our employees. Instead we need to know if civil servants feel their team is inclusive. We want to know if our people feel they are valued and promoted for what they know and what they do, not who they are. The People Survey already carries several measures on inclusion and tolerance, but we will look to get specific accurate feedback from staff on how tolerant and open our organisations are. We need honest, candid assessments – not whitewashes.

**Use this cultural data as a driver of reform.** Permanent secretaries should monitor progress regularly and take action when needed. Plans to ensure the best get ahead should be set out in Departmental Improvement Plans, departmental change programmes and existing HR processes.

As previously announced in the 2012 Social Mobility Strategy Progress Report, we will collect and publish data on the socioeconomic background of new entrants to the Fast Stream and Senior Civil Service on an annual basis. This will help us to understand how well we are doing in

terms of attracting talented new recruits from the widest backgrounds into the Civil Service, and to see how the diversity of our leadership changes over time.

**Encourage all departments to be signatories of the Social Mobility Business Compact, announced in 2011.** The Civil Service has already made changes to increase opportunities in the Civil Service for people of all backgrounds and create a Civil Service fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain through the work experience, internship and Fast Track Apprenticeship schemes.

Signing up to the Compact will continue to support departments to focus on following best practise, by supporting people from disadvantaged social backgrounds to pursue careers in the Civil Service.

## (F) Our Talent

21.

To improve talent management and help civil servants realise their potential whatever their race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or background we will take action at each stage in the talent identification and recruitment pipeline. We will:

**Review and address recruitment practices that can act as barriers to some groups.** We must value ability and relevant skills above generic experience. We will review a random selection of SCS job advertisements to ensure their requirements and specifications reflect this.

**All-male shortlists for SCS recruitment should be by exception only.** To encourage greater gender diversity in the SCS all-male shortlists for recruitment purposes should be by exception only. Where exceptions are made, a note should be sent to the relevant permanent secretary and departmental diversity champion setting out what efforts were made to reach out to a more diverse applicant field. The overall position will be reported to Civil Service Board.

**Clamp down on all-male selection panels.** All-male selection panels again should be by exception only. Where exceptions are made, a note should be sent to the relevant permanent secretary and departmental diversity champion setting out what efforts were made to

find a more balanced panel. The overall position will be reported to Civil Service Board.

**Reconsider the panel interview processes.** Panel interviews may not always provide the best assessment of an individual's skills and capabilities. So we will examine the merits of the panel interview process and consider industry best practice. If evidence supports it we will consider moving to consecutive interviews.

**Expand the Fast Track Apprenticeship scheme.** We think this scheme has the potential to help us reach a different and rich talent pool from the classic routes into the Civil Service. So to develop the diversity of our talent pipeline earlier in the organisation, we will double the size of the fast track apprenticeship scheme to accommodate 400 apprentices in the year 2015-16.

**Require members of the Top 200 to mentor one or more junior employees.** We will require the Top 200 to mentor at least one talented individual at grades SCS1 and below, and we will offer them coaching skills support to do so. Mentoring will be a corporate objective and this programme will be agreed with the departmental diversity champion. The focus will be on underrepresented groups, to help them put in place clear development plans to reach their potential. The Minority Ethnic Talent Association (META) "Growing Talent" programme will provide minority ethnic employees at Grade 6/7 level with high-level mentoring and leadership skills.

**Make greater use of the expertise of non-executive directors.** Non-executive directors will be invited to play an active role in mentoring, particularly focused on Grade 6/7 level and SCS 1, to get the most out of our talent.

**Identify and champion SCS role models from diverse backgrounds.** These role models must be visible and known to our staff to reinforce that talented individuals, whatever their background, can make it into the senior levels. They will be invited to help build staff networks.

**Increase opportunities for networking.** Networking opportunities can help talented people in under-represented groups reach their potential. Diversity champions will support departments to establish their own networks, highlighting examples of best practice, and draw these together at a cross- Whitehall level. There will be an expectation that members of the SCS in those under-represented groups (including women) should lead appropriate networks.

**Give greater support to women while on and returning from maternity and adoption leave and extended breaks to care for children.** We are aware that practices managing maternity leave vary across departments. While the Civil Service offers a good maternity leave package, some feedback suggests that the personal career and development support does not always match up. There is a risk that talented women may be left behind or frustrated. We intend to provide women with more tailored

support before, during and after maternity leave. This is especially important for those women who choose to take longer periods of leave, and who may have lost their ‘network’ by the time they return.

Before taking maternity leave, women will be offered the opportunity to agree a “keeping in touch” and development plan that identifies the development they need to reach their career goals. While on maternity leave, this plan will be reviewed and refreshed. We will also communicate opportunities for women on maternity leave to use their Keep In Touch days more flexibly and in line with their career aspirations, for example, by offering the opportunity to take forward short term, strategic projects if they wish.

Where women returning from maternity leave will be moving into a new role, their department will commit to approaching them proactively about each suitable role becoming available. The emphasis will be on encouraging stretch and challenge to those who want it.

Finally, three months after return date, every woman will be offered the opportunity to revisit and revise their plan. They will be offered a range of development opportunities, such as coaching.

**Boost support for women who take extended breaks to care for children.** Women who choose to take an extended career break to care for children will be offered a continuing twice-yearly opportunity to discuss their evolving career plans with an HR and

talent professional. This will include an up-to-date assessment of their aspirations, skills and development needs. On return to the Civil Service, they will be matched with a 'buddy' from relevant networking groups to help them re-establish connections across their department and the Civil Service more widely.

**Monitor our performance on maternity leave.** So that we know how well we are doing, all women returning from maternity leave, whether extended or not, will be asked to complete a questionnaire to capture their views on their experience and the department's management of maternity leave. The results of these questionnaires will be used to identify further issues and monitor the performance of departments.

**Encourage take up of shared parental leave.** We welcome the new entitlement to shared parental leave for all eligible parents working within the Civil Service from April 2015, and intend to ensure the Civil Service is an exemplar of this new initiative. We will pay shared parental leave at occupational rate across the Civil Service. This will give parents much greater choice and flexibility around how they balance child-caring responsibilities between them.

We want to encourage take up of shared parental leave because we believe it has the potential to reduce the gender bias in child-caring responsibilities that can impact negatively on women's careers and enable both parents to retain a strong link with the labour market. This in turn

should help equalise career progression opportunities. By further demonstrating our aim to be a modern and flexible employer, we hope this action will help the Civil Service retain qualified and talented employees. All of our steps to boost support for those on maternity leave will be applied to paternity leave as well.

## (G) Capability

22.

To build a talented workforce, investment in training and development for all staff is essential. In turn, this requires a culture where learning is valued, high quality and encouraged at every level. The Capabilities Plan sets out our ambition for developing a more skilled, unified, transparent and professional Civil Service. Much progress has been made but to maximise the benefits of having a truly diverse workforce, we will:

**Make diversity and inclusion learning part of any formal induction process for all civil servants.** We will look to improve manager capability at all levels, combining diversity learning with support to ensure that performance is assessed fairly and reported honestly and objectively.

As part of this, all managers will be required to do Unconscious Bias e-Learning. A new Race Awareness e-learning product will be available by November 2014 to support employees and line managers challenge prejudice, handle complaints of racism and remove barriers to progression.

**Ensure that best practice talent management practice apply across Civil Service professions.** Our first focus will be on understanding any unconscious bias in recruitment for all roles, particularly the most senior,

across professions. We will monitor those selected and successful for interview, and commit to take steps to address any serious imbalances across our priority areas.

**Promote access to coaching and mentoring.** We will support our people at key transition points during their career, such as return from maternity leave or change of working arrangements due to a reasonable adjustment, through coaching and/or mentoring. This will be delivered through existing schemes and networks and we will ensure any guidance for managers requires an offer of mentoring and coaching to be made.

**Promote success, achievements and sharing best practice across the Civil Service.** We will share and draw in best practice and benchmark our performance on all aspects of diversity and inclusion against the best in the wider public, private, voluntary and charitable sectors. We will do this through ongoing membership of the recognised professional bodies such as Stonewall, Race for Opportunity, Business Disability Forum and the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion. The Civil Service will aim to be an exemplar and recognised as a leader in the field. Benchmarking results, awards and best practice case studies will be published externally.

## (H) Who will oversee the delivery of this Strategy?

23.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office, as the Minister responsible for reform of the Civil Service, will oversee the implementation and update of this Action Plan.

24.

The Cabinet Secretary will be responsible for the successful delivery of this Action Plan. The Cabinet Office will support the Cabinet Secretary in developing the policies and measures set out in it, and help him monitor the impact of those measures and departments' performance. The Civil Service Board will review progress against this Plan collectively and on a departmental basis every six months.

25.

The Civil Service Diversity Champion, and the permanent secretaries who act as champions for each of the underrepresented groups, will actively promote this Plan and its implementation.

26.

We will be transparent and open about progress including by publishing a candid assessment of progress in a year's time. Benchmarking results, awards and best practice case studies will be published externally.

## (I) Clear leadership and an open culture

The three new research reports published alongside this update tell us that staff do not feel the Civil Service is consistently committed to diversity and inclusion, and that it is unclear where in government responsibility lies for diversity policy and delivery. We will:

**Introduce an intensive two-year programme to support departments and agencies to implement the Talent Action Plan and fully integrate diversity and inclusion into their business processes.** This will be led by one cross-government diversity and inclusion team, run from the heart of the HR function. This central unit within the HR function (reporting to the Head of the Civil Service, with a strong dotted line to the Head of Government HR), will bring together existing teams to join-up this agenda and improve ownership of Talent Action Plan implementation.

The unit will lead on data analytics, performance management, communications and awareness campaigns. It will act as a ‘centre of excellence’, identifying and replicating best practice to help bring all departments and agencies up to the standard of the best. Success after two years will be measured primarily by whether we are increasing the proportion of middle managers and senior civil servants from under-

represented groups, and by evidence of improvements in internal and external benchmarking. The unit will be expected to submit an annual report on progress to the Head of the Civil Service and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who will jointly update the Prime Minister and Parliament.

**Appoint Non-Executive Directors with established track records on diversity to serve in a cross-government capacity.** These individuals will provide external challenge and advice to departmental boards. They will sit on a new Talent Action Plan Implementation Board, alongside the Head of the Civil Service, the Permanent Secretary Champion for Diversity, the Permanent Secretary Diversity Champions and relevant ministers, including the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

**Increase the personal responsibility and accountability of our Permanent Secretaries, Chief Executives and Heads of Function for ensuring that the most talented, irrespective of background, reach the most senior levels of the Civil Service.** We will introduce new Permanent Secretary diversity objectives based on considered analysis of the data by departments and by under-represented groups. The Head of the Civil Service will agree these performance objectives with Permanent Secretaries once the analysis is complete and the issues that need to be addressed are understood. These will be agreed with the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister. These will not be quotas, but rather tangible actions that can be taken

to address the actual barriers under-represented groups face.

The [Civil Service Leadership Statement](#) set out 'championing both difference and external experience, recognising the value they bring' as one of the key behaviours leaders in the Civil Service are expected to exemplify. We will encourage senior leadership teams in each department and agency to set out what actions they will take to 'champion difference' in a public 'pledge', drawn up in partnership with and agreed by key stakeholders, such as employee networks. Employees could be given the chance to hold senior leaders to account for fulfilling the pledge at a 'town hall meeting' or similar forum. Senior leadership teams should encourage areas of the business to make similar pledges to improve ownership at all levels of departments and agencies.

The reports tell us that employee networks and the staff who run them are inconsistently valued in relation to the business outcomes they can deliver. We will:

**Ask each department or agency to agree a new 'business deal' with their employee networks.**  
Employee networks play a crucial role in advancing the interests of under-represented groups but are not always recognised for the valuable contributions they make. We will encourage departments and agencies to give greater recognition to employee networks, in return for networks contributing to business outcomes,

involving both people and service delivery. Recognition could include acknowledgement of contributions as part of appraisals and promotion panels, and appropriate support from line managers for members to take part in network activities. Representatives from employee networks will be given the chance to bid for a central pot of funding for events and investment in capacity-building. We will ensure that employee networks are strengthened and fully representative.

We know that there is a lack of clarity and uniformity on data collected relating to the under-represented groups and how it is acted on. We will:

**Collate and publish diversity data for the first time in a standard format (where possible) in one place on GOV.UK, to increase transparency on progress.** Instead of being used to set arbitrary targets, the data will be mined to understand and address the underlying problems that prevent these groups from succeeding. The published data will include existing information on:

- results on end-of-year performance assessments;
- diversity of Departmental and Agency Boards, Fast Stream and Fast Track; Apprenticeship programme applicants and acceptances and appointments;
- appointments into the Senior Civil Service;
- People Survey data broken down by the under-represented groups.

**Require departments and agencies to encourage employees to declare their personal**

**information, in particular addressing the low rates in the Senior Civil Service.** Deciding whether to declare information on disability, sexual identity and ethnicity is complex, and individuals should not be compelled to do so. Departments will be expected to learn from best practice on what works to encourage this and will be supported from the centre with communications and awareness campaigns explaining why sharing personal information is important and how it will be used carefully and appropriately.

The Civil Service People Survey indicates that under-represented groups experience higher levels of bullying and discrimination than other employees.  
We will:

**Ask the diversity Non-Executive Directors, working with Board-level diversity champions and employee networks, to identify business areas where levels of bullying and harassment reported by under-represented groups are high.** Specific managers and team leaders will be held accountable for addressing this.

## (J) Our talent

The reports tell us that there is a perception from employees from under-represented groups of not fitting the predominant ‘cultural type’.

To develop a more inclusive culture that embraces different perspectives, we must deal with bias and appoint and appraise on merit. Alongside the other actions set out in this plan, we will:

- introduce face-to-face inclusive leadership training for the leadership of the Civil Service and a new training package for senior civil servants involved in recruitment and selection, including unconscious bias;
- require assessors across all leadership and talent schemes to complete unconscious bias training;
- ensure that our future leaders are supported to develop as inclusive leaders who champion difference by making this a focus of the talent programmes (Future Leaders, Senior Leaders and the High Potential Development Stream), and by engaging participants in the task of identifying problems and solutions related to diversity and inclusion.

We will also ensure that all shortlists for non-executive appointments continue to include suitably qualified candidates from under-represented groups.

Of the staff surveyed, many respondents did not believe that appraisal and promotion decisions are fair. Some evidence shows that under-represented

groups are disproportionately likely to receive the lowest performance markings. We will:

**Review data on temporary promotions in the Senior Civil Service to ensure these are made fairly and respond accordingly. Require all departments to publish annual data on the results of end-of-year assessments, based on their own in-house analysis as part of the new minimum data standard, so that we can identify any trends in performance markings for under-represented groups for the data they already collect.**

**Open up the Civil Service Positive Action Pathway for employees from under-represented groups to LGB&T participants, and increase the current number of places in 2015-16 from approximately 220 to over 1,000 places.** Talent pipelines and corporate talent schemes are not sufficiently diverse, and positive action programmes need to have greater reach. The progress of those who graduate from the schemes will be tracked to evaluate success.

**Ensure our diversity development schemes are integrated into our corporate talent schemes: aligning curricula; ensuring quality; and encouraging participants with the highest potential to enter selection for our corporate talent programmes.** For example, in 2016 we will offer places in the selection process for the Future Leaders Scheme to high-performing G6/7 Positive Action Pathway participants. We will also trial self-nomination in our corporate talent

schemes to combat any bias in the nomination process.

Build on existing Talent Action Plan commitments to improve mentoring by:

- piloting a programme of 'reverse mentoring' between Top 200 Civil Servants/participants on the High Potential Development Scheme, and junior staff from under-represented groups on Positive Action Pathways;
- encouraging participants on our corporate talent schemes to mentor those on Positive Action Pathways schemes, helping to build partnerships between our corporate talent schemes and diversity schemes.

The reports tell us that the Civil Service needs to improve the development and progression of its talented BAME and disabled staff into senior management positions.

We are developing a greater pool of diverse talent through our Positive Action Pathway and by integrating our diversity schemes and corporate talent programmes for future leaders. However, we also need to go further to address the 'bottleneck' for talented BAME and disabled employees at Deputy Director and Director level in the Senior Civil Service. We will introduce an ambitious new talent programme, *Accelerate*, to address this:

- Accelerate will raise the visibility and aspiration of diverse talent in the Senior Civil Service. The programme will offer leadership training and development from an industry-recognised provider. The aim will be to produce a larger pool of diverse

talent for our corporate talent programme, the Senior Leaders scheme, which aims to boost development of the pipeline for future leaders for key Director and Director-General roles;

- as part of the programme we will also introduce high-prestige coaching and mentoring for our highest-performing diverse talent at Director level; the support on offer will include mentoring from our senior leadership (the Head of the Civil Service, Chief Executive or selected Permanent Secretaries), professional coaching and access to additional training and support.

The reports tell us that Civil Service recruitment portals could do more to learn from the best-performing private sector companies in how they attract diverse talent. We will:

**Re-brand the Civil Service's employee proposition on GOV.UK to make recruitment more welcoming to people of all backgrounds.** Role models and Permanent Secretaries will play a more visible role in promoting the Civil Service as a career of choice.

**Commission an external review of our Fast Stream and Fast Track brand and recruitment process in 2015**, to support our commitment in the Talent Action Plan to widen access to talent schemes for under-represented groups.

## (K) Capability

Unconscious (and sometimes conscious) bias, as well as a lack of experience, from line managers was widely reported by research participants. We will:

**Provide training on inclusive behaviour to all new line managers.** This is in addition to measures set out in the Talent Action Plan to improve the capability of managers, including diversity and inclusion learning as part of any formal induction process and mandating unconscious bias training for all managers. We will promote training and learning products on diversity and inclusion more widely through communications and awareness campaigns. We will ensure that all those involved in recruitment also complete this training.

Some research respondents with a disability or health condition reported that they are unable to perform to their best because workplace adjustments are not universally seen as 'business as usual'. We will:

**Introduce a new Centralised Workplace Adjustments Service from April 2015.** As part of this, we will:

- review performance across departments on the delivery of adjustments, making recommendations on how to improve performance, including by

rationalising contracts across departments where possible;

- issue a checklist of 'pre-approved' adjustments to improve the confidence of line managers in responding to employees with both physical and non-physical impairments, such as a mental health condition.

**Move to a single disability passport for all departments in 2015,** to improve the ease with which employees with a disability or health condition can move jobs in the Civil Service.

**Introduce pilots on flexible job design (or 'job carving') for employees with a physical or other health condition,** to maximise their skills and progress.

**Review how effectively sickness leave/disability absence policies are being implemented across the Civil Service to standardise activities,** such as the use of 'trigger points', as far as possible.

Of those employees with a disability or health condition, people with mental health or learning/communication impairments are least positive about their experience of working for the Civil Service. We will:

**Require departments to ensure there is a mental health 'first aider' in every business unit,** who will receive new face-to-face training on mental health and disability being rolled out in June 2015.

We have heard that the transgender community, through the employee network a:gender, has not been

sufficiently engaged as part of diversity and inclusion efforts. We will:

Agree several areas of further research with the Civil Service transgender and intersex employee network a: gender, in

order to deepen our knowledge and understanding of the specific issues faced by this community and how the Civil Service can respond.

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