



House of Commons
Public Administration
and Constitutional Affairs
Committee (PACAC)

**Government Response
to the Committee's 19th
Report: Strategic Leadership
in the Civil Service:
Sustaining Self-Governance
and Future Capability while
Supporting the Government
of the Day**

**Seventeenth Special Report of Session
2017–19**

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Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith; to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service; and to consider constitutional affairs.

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The current staff of the Committee are Libby Kurien (Clerk), Jonathan Whiffing and Sarah Ioannou (Second Clerks), Dr Patrick Thomas, Dr Philip Larkin and Moonisah Iqbal (Committee Specialists), Gabrielle Hill (Senior Committee Assistant), Iwona Hankin (Committee Assistant) and Ben Shave (Media Officer).

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Seventeenth Special Report

The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee published its Nineteenth Report of Session 2017–19, *Strategic Leadership in the Civil Service: Sustaining Self Governance and Future Capability while Supporting the Government of the Day*, as HC 1536 on 22 July 2019. The Government's response was received on 30 September 2019 and is appended to this report.

Appendix

The UK Civil Service is admired as one of the best in the world, and over the generations it has helped successive governments to overcome unique and complex challenges. Whilst the core purpose of the Civil Service remains the same, our ability to learn fast, adapt and manage change, has never been more important, and the provision of learning and development within the Civil Service is fundamental to its success. Our approach to learning has continued to evolve since 2012, recognising that the Civil Service must maintain its core values and traditional strengths, whilst continuously evolving to meet current and future needs. The Civil Service welcomes this enquiry and the support of the Committee for our ongoing work to professionalise the Civil Service, and build the expertise needed to deliver an increasingly complex agenda.

The Academy System

Recommendation 1 (Paragraph 33): *We regard academies as a useful way of promoting the visibility and coherence of Professions within the Civil Service. Those running the Policy Profession acknowledge that, in the absence of a policy academy, they have work to do to catch up with other professions in terms of visibility and coherence. While we recognise that it is up to the Professions themselves how they organise and brand activity in their area, we recommend those, such as the Policy Profession, that have not yet established academies consider doing so.*

A cross-government Head of Profession is responsible for building the capability of members of the profession. Whether called an academy, college or programme, learning is aligned to a robust professional development framework and accessible to members of the profession. The policy profession has delivered a wide programme of work over the last five years, notably:

- Development of Professional Standards (internally developed with input from all the other professions of government and some international colleagues) when the external market wasn't able to deliver.
- Development of a strong and far reaching development curriculum - ranging from free online core policy training through to the highly regarded co designed and delivered masters with the London School of Economics.
- Establishing the first Policy Apprenticeship Standard, bringing on average 115 level 4 policy apprentices into government each year.

- Development of an impactful knowledge sharing offer with leaders teaching leaders events, knowledge sharing events for G6/G7s, an annual policy excellence conference and partnerships to learn from and with universities.
- Wide engagement with the Devolved Administrations (including an annual event for senior leaders across the 4 Nations of the UK).
- Development of a model of sharing between departments - stealing with pride from one another (examples include Policy Schools and induction training).

We recognise that there is still more to do to maintain and grow policy-making capability, and are currently focused on developing a mid-career practitioner post graduate qualification for G6/G7 level policy-makers that we expect to launch in spring 2020.

To determine its future priorities as a profession, including capability building, the profession has launched a 'Policy Profession 2025' project which is led by 5 senior departmental heads of profession with over 50 volunteers. As part of this project, we will consult our fellow professions to learn from what has worked well. The project is also open to the option of a Policy School or Academy ensuring our emphasis remains on developing the best learning content, networks and opportunities to learn from peers across and beyond government. The final 'Policy Profession 2025' report is due at the end of March 2020.

The Civil Service Leadership Academy

Recommendation 2 (Paragraph 47): *The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) is a welcome recognition of the limitations of CSL and the need for a dedicated body to address leadership capability in the Civil Service. We also welcome the emphasis on Civil Service “leaders teaching leaders”. With the bid for core funding, the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) appears to be moving to a new phase. We regard establishing the CSLA on a firmer footing as an imperative and we support the bid for core funding in the forthcoming Spending Review. However, CSLA is still at an early stage of its development and there are important issues to be resolved, including whether it should have a single location or a series of regional ones, the nature of any faculty recruited, and how to integrate greater conceptual learning with its existing focus on reflective learning. That there are still significant issues to be decided is symptomatic of the piecemeal development of this area and the lack of a strong overall governance and strategy. This is fundamental to the ability of the Civil Service to sustain itself and its effectiveness.*

The continued growth and strengthening of the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) has the support of the Leadership and Talent Board (LTB). We are in the process of finalising our funding model for 2020/21 and will develop a strong case for further core funding via the SR20 spending review.

Location is also being explored through the CSLA Business Case. One option is for a single location. Another envisages CSLA equally effectively delivering its programmes regionally with a smaller central hub. This latter option would provide CSLA with a national footprint (in line with the policy to balance London and the regions) and, if linked to business schools, would provide accommodation and world-class facilities.

The principle of “leaders teaching leaders” will be sustained as CSLA develops, with SCS learning from each other, with the faculty largely composed of Permanent Secretaries and SCS. External leadership practitioners and academics will be brought in, in order to provide challenge and an external perspective. The option of partnering with business schools would provide access to seasoned executive education and leadership expertise to augment the faculty. Many of these business schools offer government / policy schools or courses as well, offering programmes already to the UK and abroad. The blend of SCS “leaders teaching leaders” with broader external academic and practitioner expertise will provide CSLA with a strong faculty to develop leadership capability across the Civil Service.

The governance of the CSLA is through the Leadership and Talent Board (LTB) established to ensure end-to-end oversight of leadership and talent in the Civil Service. It is chaired by Clare Moriarty. The CSLA Board reports to the Leadership and Talent Board and is chaired by Sir Stephen Lovegrove. The CSLA Board oversees the development and operations of the CSLA itself and promotes continuity in the delivery of leadership development across the Civil Service through the Cabinet Office, departments and professions.

The timeline for the CSLA, subject to confirmation of funding, is as follows:

- September 2019 – October 2020: Ongoing delivery of interim SCS programmes; piloting of concepts for full SCS leadership offer.
- October 2019 – March 2020: Develop learning objectives and outline design for full SCS leadership programmes; scope below SCS offer. Confirm CSLA’s 2- and 5-year plans.
- April 2020 - October 2020: work with internal and external partners to design full SCS leadership programmes. Develop below SCS programmes.
- November 2020: Launch full SCS leadership offer to be centrally delivered by CSLA. Continue to develop below SCS programmes, some of which may be delivered through CSLA and some through departments and professions. Central design authority and coordination to rest with CSLA.

Recommendation 3 (Paragraph 48): *If the funding model of the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) is based on fee income, there is always a danger that it will be tempted to maximise income at the expense of quality by expanding the range of courses it offers too widely. We acknowledge that charging for courses can encourage participants to value them more highly. But any core funding needs to be used in such a way as to ensure that the CSLA’s focus on nurturing future leadership is maintained, and the mistakes made with the National School of Government are avoided.*

Our model for funding the CSLA will be a blended one: a combination of core funding and recharging of departments on a pro rata basis for their candidates. This will ensure that we maintain our focus on the quality and integrity of our offer.

Recommendation 4 (Paragraph 49): *The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) should develop a clear mission statement which includes a strong emphasis on its focus on leadership and governance, against which CLSA’s effectiveness can be judged. Articulating a clear vision for the CSLA in such a statement will both promote its aim*

of developing leadership and guard against the dilution of focus which has affected predecessor bodies as the funding model creates an incentive for them to chase fee income.

The CSLA is developing a clear mission statement flowing from the Civil Service Leadership Strategy, which, in turn, is under review by the Leadership and Talent Board (LTB). The draft CSLA mission, to be agreed by the LTB, is as follows: The CSLA is the centre of excellence for leadership development across the Civil Service directly delivering, or coordinating the delivery of outstanding leadership development in order to build the capability required of a brilliant Civil Service.

National Leadership Centre

Recommendation 5 (Paragraph 59): We recommend that the government pursues the model envisaged for the National Leadership Centre, to ensure that it will include a permanent HQ location, some capacity to conduct research into how to build leadership capability across the public sector and provides a space for senior leaders to learn from each other and from outside experts. We regard these as elements as essential for the Civil Service Leadership Academy. We recommend that the bid for core funding for the Civil Service Leadership Academy should take these elements into account as a benchmark to aim for.

The National Leadership Centre (NLC) has made great progress in developing its flagship programme, peer network, and research agenda.

The flagship leadership programme is made up of three residential modules that support up to 100 senior public service leaders a year in stepping up to their first CEO role. External experts from world-class institutions will be facilitating these sessions and helping to create programme content. The first cohort of programme delegates will start this autumn.

We are building a digitally enabled network of around 1,500 of the most senior public service leaders. This will encourage them to work outside their silos, share peer-learning and to tackle isolation at the top. The network will be supported by a schedule of regional events, a national forum in January 2020, and an international summit in June 2020. Senior leaders and external experts will be invited to attend these events and share their insights. The Centre is actively investigating the recommendation of securing a long term permanent HQ location.

The Centre is leading high quality research into public service leadership by commissioning original place-based research pilots and evaluating the Centre's first-of-its-kind leadership interventions. We are commissioning an independent third-party to design a three-year evaluation to determine whether the Centre is succeeding in its aims, and to develop a longitudinal view of our impact.

The NLC convenes a working group with all the other public sector leadership academies (including CSLA, Police, Defence, Local Government, and NHS) to ensure the group can learn from each other and share research. CSLA has drawn on NLC research and experience to develop its own business case and this has helped focus the requirement for a significant uplift in CSLA funding to be requested in SR19.

Governance

Recommendation 6 (Paragraph 72): *Better coordination and accountability to the centre of government is required in order to maximise the impact of spending on Civil Service learning and development. Without the ability to show that money is being used effectively and efficiently, questions about value for money cannot be addressed.*

Recommendation 7 (Paragraph 73): *Earlier reports from this Committee and its predecessor have highlighted the lack of a central individual or body with responsibility for overall learning and development across the current, decentralised system. In 2015, we wrote that “we have not heard how this new academy landscape will be coordinated, or who is responsible for overseeing their collective development”. We reiterate that concern and recommend that the Government identifies an individual or body to be accountable for this.*

Each department is responsible for its own learning and development agenda, and Permanent Secretaries, with their senior teams, remain accountable for ensuring the right capability and talent to deliver the business goals of their department.

From 2016 Sir Stephen Lovegrove (Permanent Secretary for MoD) chaired a new cross-departmental group, the Civil Service Leadership and Learning Board. This had two responsibilities, the establishment of the new Civil Service Leadership Academy, and to drive further efficiency and effectiveness in L&D across the Civil Service.

With the completion of this work, the CSLA is now overseen by a CSLA Board, chaired by Sir Stephen Lovegrove. Responsibility for oversight of learning has passed to the People Board, (chaired by Melanie Dawes, Permanent Secretary at MHCLG) as part of its oversight of the overall Civil Service Workforce Strategy.

Learning and development for the SCS, and for talent development, is overseen by the Leadership and Talent Board (chaired by Clare Moriarty, Permanent Secretary for DExEU). The Board ensures consistency and quality of the Fast Stream and accelerated development schemes, and leadership standards across the Civil Service.

The coherence of the learning system is also maintained by a common vision of A Brilliant Civil Service, cross-government standards and expectations of excellence (Success Profiles, Professional Standards and Career Frameworks, the Civil Service Leadership Statement, and Indicators of Potential), a network of Programme Boards and Risk Committees, and a growing community of learning practitioners across government.

Recommendation 8 (Paragraph 79): *We welcome the steps the Civil Service is taking to address long standing concerns about learning and development. For its part, the Government should ensure that its efforts receive active ministerial support and, in particular, adequate resourcing. Whatever the day-to-day pressures on the government of the day, the Civil Service must have ministers’ full authority to implement a coherent policy for Civil Service learning and development. The Government needs to identify who is in charge of Civil Service learning and development. Ministers should encourage the Civil Service to take more visible responsibility for its own future and governance, albeit under the ultimate direction of ministers, and accountable to them. The governance and strategy for Civil Service Learning and Development should be set out in a White*

Paper, which should have the personal support of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet as a whole. We do not intend this to disrupt what is being established but rather to review, to consolidate and improve on what has been achieved in recent years.

Each department is responsible for its own learning and development agenda, catering to the individual skills, professions and needs of the department.

The Government recognises that the provision of learning and development in the Civil Service is fundamental to its success, which is reflected in our continued investment in learning. This includes the introduction of the Civil Service Leadership Academy, the new Learning Platform for Government (an enhanced digital platform, allowing learning to be accessed anywhere at any time), increased learning expertise at the centre of government, and our ongoing work to improve access to formal and informal learning across the Civil Service. The Civil Service is also demonstrating the strength of its learning and Development policy, by providing targeted learning to support thousands of civil servants rapidly redeployed to support EU exit.

Governance and direction of learning, leadership and talent in the Civil Service has been strengthened during the course of this inquiry, with the Civil Service People Board providing oversight, alongside the newly established Leadership and Talent Board.

Our learning model has the full support of Ministers, and will continue to be effectively resourced, to support the current and future needs of the government. We will seek ministerial support for our future learning strategy that will be published alongside the forthcoming Civil Service Workforce Strategy, and we will update the Committee as this progresses.

Recommendation 9 (Paragraph 80): *We conclude from the evidence gathered for this inquiry, and from previous inquiries, that the closure of the National School for Government still leaves a void that cannot be filled by Civil Service Learning and the new academies system on their own. We recommend establishing a new institution, building on the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), in a permanent location, capable, over time, of developing the full spectrum of Civil Service learning and development. It should provide residential courses where appropriate, which optimise opportunities for reflective learning which is almost entirely lacking at present. The Director should be a senior civil servant of appropriate rank, who would be part of the Cabinet Office, reporting to the Head of the Civil Service and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who represents the Minister for the Civil Service (the Prime Minister). This would become the central body which holds the key information about what learning and development provision is being made available, and for whom. Working through the Cabinet Office, it would inform coordination of provision across Whitehall, eliminate duplication, fill the gaps in provision and develop synergies with the separate provision of departments, Professions, and academies. It should work alongside and support the new National Leadership Centre. It should not impinge on the ownership that the departments and Professions have of their learning and development. This would also provide a space for Civil Service Leaders and others to enable the Civil Service as an institution to become more mindful of itself, of its values and ethos, and of how to strengthen its internal governance as well as its capability.*

Each department is responsible for its own learning and development agenda, catering to the individual skills, professions and needs of the department. We are confident that we have the most effective model for the Civil Service today. Given the size and complexity of the Civil Service, and the depth and diversity of capability needed across its many organisations, we have adopted a whole system approach to learning, creating a learning ecosystem, balancing centralised and decentralised provision. This recognises the many and varied ways in which adults learn, the need for civil servants to develop a blend of core Civil Service, profession and department specific skills, and the need for a meaningful balance of formal learning, learning from and with others, and the learning that comes from delivery experience in the workplace.

The National School for Government was of its time, and the learning ecosystem model we have implemented since its closure is reflective of modern workplaces and best practice. In our complex system, a single institution would not meet the needs of a diverse organisation or enable civil servants to develop the spectrum of capability needed in the modern Civil Service. The new CSLA will develop a world-class leadership capability for the Civil Service through direct delivery of programmes and providing coordination and a centre of excellence with departments and professions across government. Whether in a single home or in a number of excellent facilities across the UK, the CSLA will meet the challenge of leadership development for the present and future Civil Service.

We recognise that increased transparency of delegated spend on learning might increase value and we are taking steps to agree how we do that with our governing board. We will update the Committee as this progresses.