

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Strategic Leadership in the Civil Service, HC 1536

Tuesday 18 December 2018

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Members present: Sir Bernard Jenkin (Chair); Dame Cheryl Gillan; Kelvin Hopkins; Dr Rupa Huq; Mr David Jones.

Questions 115 - 183

Witnesses

I: Sir Chris Wormald, Head, Civil Service Policy Profession and Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Care, and Richard Banks, Head, Civil Service Policy Profession Unit, Cabinet Office.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Chris Wormald and Richard Banks.

Q115 **Chair:** I welcome our two witnesses to our inquiry on strategic leadership of the civil service. We are going to be discussing the policymaking profession today.

Could I ask each of you to identify yourselves for the record, please?

Sir Chris Wormald: I am Chris Wormald. I am the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Care and also Head of the Policy Profession for the UK Government.

Richard Banks: I am Richard Banks and I am Head of the Policy Profession Support Unit.

Q116 **Chair:** Thank you very much for joining us. We are very keen on this subject and have done a number of reports into the effectiveness of the civil service. We regard this session as crucial towards our next set of conclusions about strategic leadership and the sustainability of the civil service as an institution. The creation of the Policy Profession is perhaps just the latest attempt to professionalise policymaking in the civil service. What do you think will make this easier to achieve?



Sir Chris Wormald: I think the difference with the approach we have taken recently on this subject is to try to create an approach that is very heavily embedded in what Departments do, firstly. We have not attempted large central initiatives on policymaking. Our objective is to help Departments be as good as they can be at policymaking, and we think that has given us greater ownership of this agenda out in Departments.

In terms of what we do centrally, we have focused very heavily on how we train, induct, recruit and develop individual policymakers. Our focus has been very much on that individual level: how do we create people who are individually more professional at policymaking?

Those are the two things that are different from some of the approaches before. We have not gone out with, "Here is a brand-new model of how you make policy that we will try to apply everywhere." We are saying policy is very different in different places but the common bit is that we need to recruit, retain and train excellent people to do it. That has been the characteristic of our approach over the last four or five years.

Chair: Mr Banks, do you want to add anything to that?

Richard Banks: No, I have nothing to add to that.

Q117 **Chair:** How could we be confident this is going to prove more successful than previous efforts? Not that we wish to denigrate previous efforts, but what, incrementally, is it going to add to the capability of policymaking?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think there are two ways into that question; first, in terms of what we want to see and, secondly, in terms of how we tell if it is working, and both are pertinent to your question.

On the first, we want to see the development of policymakers who bring to the table some very particular skills and sets of knowledge. We have done a major piece of work on what are the things we would expect any policymaker to know about. We came up with 18 categories or things, and we are looking for policymakers who are capable in all of those areas, which does not necessarily mean expert but capable in all of those areas. That is what we should see changing.

In terms of how we tell if it is making a difference and is working, this is one of the toughest areas. We are, of course, looking at the quality of our policymaking processes as opposed to the quality of the substance of policy, which is of course a matter for Ministers, manifestos and all that. It is really difficult to measure. We have various things going on. There was, of course, the international benchmarking exercise that the Blavatnik School and the IFG did last year that did rank us as top on policymaking of the countries looked at. The evidence base was a little thin I have to say, but nevertheless it gives us a baseline.

We have been looking with individual Departments at, "How do you measure your policymaking capability?" That is a bit subjective. It does



involve going and interviewing Ministers, reviewing the types of submissions that go up and measuring the quality of the evidence that goes into submissions. There is not an absolute measure, but we are looking at what are those things where you can see progress.

Finally, we have invited the Australians and Canadians and we are looking at peer reviewing policymaking with some of the other jurisdictions around the world that have similar systems to us. The Canadians are here at the moment so we should get some insight from that.

That does not lead us to a point where our policymaking now scores 7.5 whereas last year it scored 7.2—it will not be that sort of measure. However, it ought to give us some indication of whether we are doing the things that we said we were going to do and of how we benchmark against our peers.

Q118 Chair: How many of those 18 things that you refer to—the professional qualities or capabilities of a policymaker—actually relate to subject specialisation?

Sir Chris Wormald: Several. We split it into three categories we are expecting to see. The first is analysis and use of evidence. That includes things like economics, subject knowledge in your policy area, statistics, how you use science and technology—those sorts of things. There is a category of things around politics and democracy, which involves working with Parliament, finance, devolution and those sorts of things. Then there is a set of things around delivery, which involves digital and commercial evaluation and so on. We have those categories that are a mix, as you will see from those things, of general skills you would expect anyone to have—you would expect any policymaker to understand the workings of Parliament—and then some subject-specific things that are about your individual policy area.

It is one of the reasons we run the Policy Profession as a co-operative of Departments as opposed to a central thing. What we specialise in centrally tends to be those general skill areas, and then you would expect individual Departments to be doing things on their own individual subject areas. If I looked within the Department of Health and Social Care, we run a Master in Health Policy with Imperial College that is, of course, very heavily focused on the substance of health policy. We run policy schools on health policy, and we do a policy certificate also in health policy that will be very much rooted in the departmental knowledge. What we do at profession level is more about those skills you would expect of any policymaker.

Q119 Chair: Going back to Fulton, there was a concern that there were too many generalists and not enough specialists, yet this is a cadre of generalists.

Sir Chris Wormald: We are trying to get away from being generalists, which is partly why we drew up the skills framework as we did. We are



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saying that there is a set of things you would expect anyone who describes themselves as a policymaker to know and that those are definable things. They are general in the sense that they look across lots of disciplines, but they are specific in the sense that we are trying to set some standards as to what you would be expected to know if you describe yourself as a policy analyst.

Q120 Chair: However, you do subscribe to the view that the best policymakers will be those who are familiar with the environment in which they are making policy. You would not expect a policymaker to be as good at making policy in an area in which they are completely unfamiliar and have no experience.

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes.

Q121 Chair: How is that reflected in the development of the profession?

Sir Chris Wormald: I say that slightly reluctantly as someone who has moved around Government quite a lot and worked in lots of areas. I think I would draw this at three levels. Again I will take the Department of Health and Social Care as my example. Within a Department you will want a set of people who are absolute subject experts and have done little else. On my Executive Committee, obviously, I have the Chief Medical Officer, I have the Chief Scientist, who is a practising doctor, and I have lots of people within the Department who have spent a lifetime in health and run bits of services or been clinicians.

Then you will want some people who are—I will probably put myself in this category—good at social policy. If you look at my career, I have largely dealt with the big, disaggregated public services—health, local government and education—and they have some common characteristics. Moving around between those Departments brings some advantages in terms of join up and whatever. You would not expect somebody like me to pop up in defence or foreign affairs, whereas you would expect a lot of interchange between those Departments, and likewise in the economic field.

I like to try to think of Departments in those skillset categories, and you would expect to see movement around those categories. You would expect to see some people who are absolute specialists, some people who are moving within that category. Then, of course, you want some people who bring countercultural thinking as it were—not very many, but you do want some people in a Department who are bringing a completely different skillset to the table.

Chair: I do not wish to alarm you, but can I thank you for a very, very useful answer?

Sir Chris Wormald: That does alarm me quite a lot. I do think it is an important concept because we have tended—as I say, we are trying to get away from this in the policy profession—to think it is either Department or civil service-wide. I think we have always done quite well



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on the concept of clusters of Departments on the national security and foreign affairs side; we have always seen a lot of movement between MOD, the Foreign Office, DFID and so on. The domestic policy Departments have not really thought about it in the same sort of way. Common to it is that you do need to know what skillset you are trading on. Obviously I came to health. I do not have a background in health, but I do know about big disaggregated public services with trade unions and so on.

Chair: I can see why the relevant skills would be very useful to you.

Q122 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Historically, interdepartmental co-operation has always been a most difficult thing when subjects fall across certain Departments. You are describing this multi-layered and multifaceted policy structure. How can you really judge the quality of the policymaking when you dig down into it? The Civil Service Reform Plan in 2013 said, "the quality of policy advice is not always consistent or designed with implementation in mind." How do you make that fine judgment as to what is going on in each of the Departments?

Sir Chris Wormald: I should say, at the profession level, we do not get into the substance of policy at all. We do not take a view in the profession about whether an individual Department is pursuing the right policy or doing it well. That is rightly a matter for individual Secretaries of State and individual Permanent Secretaries. As I said, we focus on the training and development of policymakers. Therefore we are not making fine judgments about individual policies.

Our way into judging—I will refer to my previous answer—to the extent that we can, the quality of policymaking that is going on is very much a peer review process. Was it the Foreign Office who was running the project for us?

Richard Banks: Yes, it was.

Sir Chris Wormald: We did have an objective to try to come up with a way of better measuring the quality of policy advice. Where we essentially got to is that it is going to be a subjective thing and peer review is the best way into it. There are a lot of things you can do that give you an indication—obviously you can go and interview Ministers, you can go and interview stakeholders, you can do surveys and so on—but we found the best way into it has been that set of peer review questions. Therefore some of the Departments that are the most advanced at this are where there are really established international benchmarks. In DFID, for example, there are very well-established international benchmarks made, so it has a lot to draw on; there are much less in, say, education policy. It is quite a mixed bag, but that is the approach of benchmarking.

Q123 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Is it a continuous assessment process or are there fixed times within each Department for the peer review?



Sir Chris Wormald: In most Departments I will not say it is, but it ought to be a continuous process. Again, to use my own Department as an example, we have a submissions review group that takes a percentage of submissions that go up to Ministers and analyses them for their policymaking. That is a continuous thing that we do throughout the year. Most Departments would do something like that—not necessarily that model but something like that. When we look profession-wide, it tends to be more one-off things. The thing we are doing right at the moment with our Canadian colleagues is to assess how far we think we have got on the 12 actions we announced in 2013, which is a one-off exercise.

Q124 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** We talk a lot about this notion of professionalising the policymaking area. Has that helped address specific problems and, if so, what problems were those?

Sir Chris Wormald: The first of the areas within our 18 skills areas where we think we have a particular challenge that we wish to make progress on is commercial skills. If I were to characterise where we have got to, we have seen a lot of improvement in the commercial functions of Departments, but what we now need to see is much greater commercial awareness among policymakers. We are at quite an early stage of that.

Second is digital policymaking, where I think you would see pretty much the same pattern. There are now some real centres of expertise of digital policymakers but not the wider understanding of digital.

On parliamentary skills—I see lots of smiles—we have been putting a considerable amount of effort into this, particularly around the management of secondary legislation. That has been a particular problem, and we now run a training course jointly with the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. That has now had how many people?

Richard Banks: I need to check the numbers on that, but they are quite large numbers.

Sir Chris Wormald: There, we had a very specific set of problems, particularly around explanatory memoranda and how impact assessments were used. That Committee reports that it has improved as a result, so that is an area where we think we are making progress.

The fourth area I will pick out is horizon scanning. Again, I do not think we are as good at it in domestic policy as we are in foreign affairs and international—that has, of course, a very-well established horizon-scanning system.

Of our areas, those are the ones I have always picked out as being of particular challenge. Some of them we think we are making good progress on, and for some we have a lot more to do.

Q125 **Chair:** You did not mention risk assessment?



Sir Chris Wormald: You can always mention everything. I think we have made quite a lot of progress, certainly around risk assessment. We are never as good as we should be at risk mitigation. However, I think the way we identify and analyse risk is considerably better than it has been previously. The Comptroller and Auditor General is next door doing his hearing, and that is certainly what we find with National Audit Office reports—our ability to identify risk and quantify it is considerably better. That is not always the same as having the right mitigations for it.

The other area the National Audit Office always picks out is that taking well-judged risks as opposed to attempting to eliminate risk is something we are traditionally not great at either. However, I would not put it in my top four. You can always come up with an endless list, but those are certainly the four I normally talk about.

Q126 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** You mentioned parliamentary skills. How do you feel about policymaking? Do you think there is more of a political element to the skill rather than a technical element?

Sir Chris Wormald: We say this pretty explicitly, we expect policymakers to understand politics, Parliament and all those things to be able to make policy in that context, but clearly not to allow those considerations to affect your analysis. You will know from being a Minister that you expect your civil servants to understand where you are coming from, and that is different from getting, "Here is the technical analysis." We have a policymaking model, that I have described, of evidence, politics and delivery. We do not shy away from the fact we expect people to understand the political system, how it works, how democracy works, how Parliament works and how devolution works, and we do expect that to be part of policymaking. That is different from remaining neutral, if you see what I mean.

Q127 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Do you think we should have declared an interest?

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes, I have worked for you twice, haven't I?

Q128 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Lastly on this, you mentioned analysis. Do you think the policymaking activity is separate from analysis and delivery, or do you see it fully integrated into both analysis and delivery?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think a really good policymaker is the person who is able to bring together all those different skills and build them into a single piece of advice from which Ministers can take decisions. I will take a personal example, I was lucky enough to be funded to do an MBA by the civil service. That means I have done my micro and macroeconomic course. No one is ever going to ask me to do a piece of economic analysis, but I do expect to be able to have a conversation with economists, understand what they are saying, ask the right questions and be able to build their answers into my policymaking. I expect to be able to do the same with law, the same with statistics and so on. Your best policymakers are the people who are able to bring together other professions, understand them to that level—i.e. they are not a



practitioner but they are sort of an expert client—and be able to put all those disparate things together into a single piece of advice. That is what we are really looking to develop—people at that level of expertise.

The last thing we want to do is create an exclusive profession where you have a cadre of policymakers. We also want economists to make policy, scientists to make policy and so on. The flipside of our skills framework is that it is hopefully useful to people from other professions. If I am a specialist scientist but I am in a policymaking role, what is it that I need to understand to add to advice? It is that sort of model.

Q129 Kelvin Hopkins: Following on from your answer, which was very interesting, do you observe a clear distinction between the philosophical and ideological parameters within which you work and the day-to-day policy work within those parameters? In 1945 there was a Labour Government elected that took a giant leap, in a sense, to the left—democratic socialism, social democracy, Keynes and Beveridge and all of that. Then there was a shift back—the Hayekian shift, if you like—in 1979 when Mrs Thatcher was elected. The civil service had to adjust to those big changes. It is not for the civil service to challenge those philosophical positions, is that correct?

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes, that is exactly right. Our job is to advise Ministers on how to achieve the manifesto they put to the population. It is obviously for the political parties to decide what goes into that manifesto and for the population to decide which one wins. The idea is we take that as a given and we are advising Ministers on, “If that is your objective, which is a matter for you, then the best way to achieve that objective is X, Y, Z.” We operate in that space, of taking as a given what the electorate delivers to us.

That is very easy to say. Obviously there are some challenges in practice, particularly when you get—as you have described—Governments that have been in power for a long time. That is one of the challenges the civil service has to manage. There are things that have become just assumed knowledge because you have done them for so long, and that are, in fact, pieces of philosophy and ideology. We have seen some of the tensions when you switch from one long-serving Government to another one. That is one of the things the civil service has to manage. In theory, it is exactly as you describe.

Q130 Chair: Picking up on your very interesting points about risk, risk assessment and horizon scanning, what about the capability that policymakers need—particularly in today’s modern age, where things are so fluid and complicated—to think about what you cannot see over the horizon, or about what you might be able to anticipate and then what you cannot see or anticipate—the unexpected events that determine most of what happens? How do you teach that capability? In our work on strategic thinking in Government, that was the area we felt was most neglected.



Sir Chris Wormald: It is a tough area. As I said, our colleagues in foreign affairs and international deal with those things the entire time, so there are a lot of skills you can draw on.

Chair: Take your own domestic experience.

Sir Chris Wormald: If I take health, health is rather a good example. There is a whole series of things that are simply locked in. The demographic change of the country we can predict; it is not very difficult. That is not down to the last person, but we will see a rapidly expanding population over the age of 75 that uses health and social care services more. That is all locked in, and we can build that into our policymaking extremely easily.

The bit we cannot predict, and therefore have to be ready to respond to, is mainly around technological change. At the moment, there are three or four potential technologies in health that could be completely game-changing, some of them negatively. In terms of my colleague, the Chief Medical Officer, with her campaign on antimicrobial resistance, we have the potential, but not the certainty, to go backwards technologically. Obviously with AI and genomics in particular we have the potential to go forward dramatically in technology. We do not know whether any of those things will happen or which of them will dominate over the other.

We have a certain set of things that are locked in and a certain number of things that are unpredictable but 'scopable', as it were. The health service tends to work on a prepare-and-respond model. We try to identify those things that we can prepare for and have the right plans for, and for those things where you have to be flexible enough to just respond to what happens. That is very easy to describe but, as you say, much more difficult to do in practice, because a lot of it is about the mindset of policymaking. I am not going to be able to predict the future. There are some givens I will be able to predict, but I have to be ready to play the field in front of me.

Q131 **Chair:** How do you address the risk that you are training a cadre of people all designed to think in the same way? How do you bring in the external challenge or the dissident voices that upset the apple cart and inconvenience the process of policymaking?

Sir Chris Wormald: There are three things there. The first is you are absolutely right, and I know this Committee has observed it before: groupthink challenges—which you and others have pointed to—are very real. With regard to what you do about it, we do two things. First is the promotion of open policymaking, seeing it as the policymaker's job to bring in people to think who are not in the civil service—be they from think tanks, universities, frontline delivery, the general public or wherever—and seeing the role of the policymaker as not to be sitting in a dark room having great thoughts, but reaching out. Where are the world experts on this subject? We are doing a series of things particularly with universities on that.



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There are, of course, systems for bringing countercultural thinking into the process. Red teaming, for example, is very, very important; taking a group of people and setting them the challenge of destroying the policy you have just identified as their job. I think it is a concept borrowed out of defence mainly, but it is making it people's job to think against the norm, as it were. It is the combination of those two things that you want to do.

Q132 **Chair:** Do you promote red teaming and blue teaming?

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes.

Q133 **Chair:** Can you give an example?

Sir Chris Wormald: We have been doing it around the Department of Health's policies on exiting the Union. We hold sessions where we have taken a whole series of assumptions about what will happen and we use people to basically attack those assumptions. What survives tends to be, hopefully, better.

We use our non-executive directors to do this as well. We have a very experienced team of non-executive directors. They are in a very good place to do that, being partly in the Department but not of the Department.

Q134 **Chair:** You have 20,000 or so members of the policy profession distributed across Whitehall Departments. What is their distribution by grade? We do not have that information.

Richard Banks: Bear with me, I do have the very specific numbers here. We glean the information from the People Survey data. We have about 1,100 by senior civil service grade; about 6,500 by grade 6/7; about 7,500 to 8,000 at HEO/SEO level; 2,500 at EO level and about 800 at the administrative officer level.

Q135 **Chair:** That is very interesting. It is also interesting that you need to find that out from the People Survey and nobody in Whitehall actually knows that.

Sir Chris Wormald: We call the policy profession a profession but, of course, it is not.

Q136 **Chair:** Therefore, that is self-identification?

Sir Chris Wormald: It is not a profession because it does not have an entry barrier. In the professions I deal with, you have a licence to practise; we do not. The people we call policymakers are self-identifying as policymakers. A number of them will be in other professions as well; they will have ticked both economist and policymaker. As I say, in some ways we want that type of profession.

Q137 **Chair:** What was the senior civil service?

Richard Banks: One thousand one hundred and twenty.



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Q138 **Chair:** A previous Minister for civil service reform said, "I do the policy. The civil service should do what I want." How do you settle that tension?

Sir Chris Wormald: Of course, they are right in terms of decisions and the substance of policy. Our job is to give excellent advice to decisions for Ministers. It is a very important distinction that we try to build into all our policymaking training: "Your job is to give excellent advice." It is then up to Ministers what they do with that advice, including reject it. Our test is whether we gave highly professional advice, not necessarily whether it is agreed with or not, because Ministers, of course, will wish to take a whole series of other things into consideration as well as the piece of paper that civil servants have put in front of them. That is our focus—whether we gave Ministers excellent advice to inform their thinking—and not whether they necessarily agreed with us on the substance of A, B and C.

Q139 **Dr Rupa Huq:** I wondered how much the policy profession has compared to the other service professions of the civil service such as finance, fraud, legal and those kind of things.

Sir Chris Wormald: How much in terms of?

Dr Rupa Huq: How much money? How much is spent on the policy profession?

Sir Chris Wormald: Centrally we spend very little. What is the number, Richard?

Richard Banks: It is around £800,000. I can give you the more specific—

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes, and this is partly deliberate because we expect the vast majority of the activity to be at individual Department level. What we do at the top is a very limited range of things that Departments ask us to do. Therefore, the money we have basically all comes from a levy on Departments; they put money into a central pot. We have a governing council—all the heads of Policy Profession of the individual Departments—and we collectively decide how that money is spent. It is not a top-down thing at all. Very little of the total resource that is spent on policymaking will be at profession level; we are doing those things right at the top.

Q140 **Dr Rupa Huq:** How does the £800,000 compare to the other professional services? Is that average?

Richard Banks: Two thirds of that budget, roughly, is spent on the staff within the unit. If you compare the staff teams across professions, I would estimate that the Policy Profession team is roughly a third of comparable professions. However, it does operate on a very different model, as Chris has said.

Q141 **Chair:** How much money do you really need?



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Sir Chris Wormald: As I say, we try to keep it quite light at the top because what we expect is for Departments to lead this themselves. We think there is a positive advantage in this being led by people who are actually doing it.

I should say there are some things where we just charge Departments. In terms of a place on the Master of Public Policy that we do with the LSE, Departments just meet the cost. What we normally do when we have a challenge is to ask a Department to lead it.

Q142 **Chair:** It is £40 per person in the Policy Profession.

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes.

Q143 **Dr Rupa Huq:** Is it value for money?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think it is excellent value for money. We have adopted a model, as I say, where we expect Departments to do things out of their own resources, as opposed to collecting them centrally, and we expect all Departments to contribute a bit of cash and also in kind. When we identify something we want to do centrally, we normally ask a Department or a set of Departments to volunteer to develop it.

We have just done our first cohort of policy apprentices; we have just recruited 110 onto a new apprenticeship scheme that was led by—

Richard Banks: Department of International Trade.

Sir Chris Wormald: The head of Policy Profession there led that piece of work, supported by a couple of other Departments and with a bit of support from the centre. Then we expect Departments to find placements for those 110 people, to meet their salaries and their training cost. That is the way we work, which is different from the other professions.

Q144 **Chair:** So £800,000—

Sir Chris Wormald: That is the central co-ordination and training.

Chair: That undersells how much resource is actually going into it.

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes.

Q145 **Dr Rupa Huq:** What is it spent on?

Sir Chris Wormald: Sorry, the £800,000?

Dr Rupa Huq: Yes.

Sir Chris Wormald: Two thirds of it is Richard's team, the nine people who are in the Policy Support Unit, and the rest is on costs for training, basically.

Richard Banks: Yes, developing the apprenticeship. One of the modules in the masters is communication and the act of running a network. There is a very active group of people. There is a Policy Profession board and a



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working-level contacts group across Departments, so there is work to facilitate their sharing and learning across. We do quite a lot of internal events programmes as well—a knowledge series for sharing, mainly pitched at the grade 6/7 level and the Fast Stream community. We now do the leaders teaching leaders programme in partnership with the Leadership Academy. We do quite a lot of internal events activity that has a cost to it.

Sir Chris Wormald: We do not pay for training other than the things we charge for directly. We are getting actual practitioners to do it for free, so we are not buying in courses except for the masters programme.

Richard Banks: The baseline curriculum is level 1, if you like, in the standard KPMG-delivered core curriculum. Then we build on that with an internal knowledge and sharing of knowledge series.

Sir Chris Wormald: That was part of the apprenticeship thing, wasn't it?

Richard Banks: Yes.

Q146 **Dr Rupa Huq:** How often is it that those involved in policymaking in the civil service self-identify as professional policymakers?

Sir Chris Wormald: That is a good question. I do think having it as a self-identified thing is really important because it is the way you stop it being an exclusive club and allow people in other professions to think of themselves as policymakers. However, I do think it is important people do declare themselves so we can direct the right stuff to them.

There has been quite an upturn in people who self-identify. Our initial top-down estimate of how many there should be was about 20,000, and we got about 18,000 people self-identifying, so we think we are in the right ballpark now.

Q147 **Dr Rupa Huq:** We have seen that many civil servants in policymaking do not self-identify as policy professionals. Do you think that can cause a weak identity and a lack of coherence?

Sir Chris Wormald: Undoubtedly. We have not, compared to most professions, been at this for very long. It is really since about 2012 that we have talked seriously about a policy profession. Most of the professions around the civil service would have existed for a lot longer than that and also have an identity outside the civil service. People will think of themselves as being a lawyer or an accountant and part of a wider community. There are other places that do policymaking, but the civil service is by a long way the largest of them. The other challenge is that we do not have that external identification that others have. We would definitely say it is a work in progress.

Q148 **Dr Rupa Huq:** Would you recruit people from think tanks and stuff like that?



Sir Chris Wormald: Yes, we do quite a lot. That is one of the reasons we are doing the policy apprenticeship. Opening up routes into the policy profession is hugely important. One of the many problems with it being an undefined generalist thing is that we find it is very difficult to imagine yourself doing it unless you happen to know someone who already does it or you think you are like them, as it were. When it was a very undefined thing—I will say this carefully, being a prime exponent of it—it used to be very, very “Oxbridgey”: “That is the sort of person we recruit as a policymaker.” The more different routes you can have into the profession—here is the apprenticeship route in, here is the external recruitment route in, here is the Fast Stream, here is the internal version of the Fast Stream and we have just started in health a health graduate programme for people who want to specialise in health policy—the more we can, hopefully, challenge the stereotypes of who becomes a policymaker.

Q149 **Dr Rupa Huq:** Lastly, how central do you think the policy profession should be to any civil servant making policy? How many of those engaged in policymaking are not members of that specific profession?

Sir Chris Wormald: I do not know the answer to the second one. I obviously think it is vitally important, but then I would.

Previously, certainly when I joined the civil service, it was very much that there was policymaking and then there was other stuff. That was clearly wrong. When you looked at the very top of the civil service 20 years ago, it was almost exclusively policymakers from very similar backgrounds, both outside the civil service and within it. That is definitely not the right model. We do want people right at the top of the civil service who are experts in things that are not policy, particularly in operations but also in law, science, digital and so on. We still need people at the top who are policymakers and we also need to be able to equip those people who are coming from other professions with the policymaking skills that you need to be at the top—it is that sort of dual objective. It is very important, but I think it has been overplayed in its importance in the past and needed rebalancing.

Q150 **Kelvin Hopkins:** In answer to an earlier question, interestingly, you said that what is described as the policy profession obviously is not, which anticipated my question really. It is slightly an overblown term. Why is there a policy profession rather than a policy function?

Sir Chris Wormald: It is not a profession, because it does not have an entry barrier. A formal profession is like medicine, teaching, accountancy or something, where you have to have a qualification in order to practise it. We are clearly not that. We describe ourselves as a profession because the things we are trying to achieve are professional-type skills. Some of this is a bit theological, as it were, but we are not a function, or I do not normally describe it as a function, because what we do not do is central management of policymaking or policymakers.



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If you think of it as a spectrum, right at one end of the spectrum is probably how we do legal—*[Interruption]* The Public Accounts Committee is getting rowdy next door. The Government Legal Service employs and manages the careers of all the lawyers. The lawyers in the Department of Health and Social Care are employees of the function, not of the Department. That is pure functional leadership, and various of the functions have some aspects of that. Finance is partly directly managed by the Treasury, and HR by the Cabinet Office. We are right at the other end of the spectrum. There is no central management of policymakers or central career planning of policymakers at all; it is the job of individual Permanent Secretaries within the Department. That is why we put ourselves at that end of the spectrum rather than where the lawyers or the commercial function are.

Q151 **Kelvin Hopkins:** I think you have implied an answer to my next question, which is, why is there no policy academy?

Sir Chris Wormald: This was sent across as one of the pre-questions. It was one of those questions that made me sit back and think, “Why isn’t there?” You could construct the things we have put together for the policy administration and call it that. We have a curriculum. We have a set of standards. We have a set of training courses, going through from apprenticeship up to the masters level. We do have a lot of the components of what you would call a policy institute or a policy academy. We have not really thought of it like that, and we have not structured it like that, but I have to say that, when I saw the question, I was thinking that is a good challenge. We could have developed it like that if we had wanted to, we have not so far.

Q152 **Kelvin Hopkins:** Given this concept of a policy profession and a policy academy as well, does it not imply a degree of rigidity that would be inappropriate? I am very hopeful we will have a Labour Government very soon, committed to re-establishing the sort of democratic socialism we had after the Second World War. I may be in a minority in Parliament at this moment, but I think that is something Government Departments ought to be thinking about because it is a real possibility. The Chairman talked about red team and blue team approaches to policy discussions within the Department. Someone ought to be looking at those policies that may be coming forward from a new Labour Government that will be rather different from what we have seen in the past.

Sir Chris Wormald: I will leave the political bits of the question to your side of the table.

Does the civil service need to be ready for whatever the electorate hands to us in general elections? Yes. As you know, there are some very formal processes that the Prime Minister of the day triggers to do that. We do not do that outside of those formal processes. We look at Opposition policies when the Government of the day entitles us to do so.



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We are in the business of trying to ensure that all civil servants have the skills to serve a Government of any type that emerges. I would say that, almost regardless of which set of policies or political philosophy you are following, hopefully you are still going to want civil servants who understand economics, understand law, understand how Parliament works, understand how to do a consultation with the public and understand how to develop a digital service. All those components you may be putting to a different end, depending on where the electorate comes out, but the underlying skills we would want civil servants to have are hopefully transferrable.

Q153 **Kelvin Hopkins:** Flexible, forward looking and quick on their feet, all that sort of stuff?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think it comes back one of the Chair's questions. Quite clearly, the pace of change and technological change is much quicker now than it has been previously. In the balance between what you can predict will happen and therefore prepare for, and what is unpredictable and therefore requires you have to have flexible skills to respond to, I would say it is undoubtedly shifting towards, "Do you have the flexible skills to respond to things?" We see this across the piece. Obviously, international relations is much more fluid than at various points, and technology is a lot more fluid than it has been at various points. I do think there are various trends that push you that way. That is one of the reasons why we want the skills-based approach that we have: what are the underpinning skills that allow you to respond to any situation, as opposed to, "I know what my career is going to be in the next 20 years."

Q154 **Mr David Jones:** The profession provides an executive master degree in Public Policy at the London School of Economics. How many policymakers have completed that?

Sir Chris Wormald: Eighty-six. Indeed, I was teaching at it on Sunday. It was quite fun.

Q155 **Chair:** What grade were those people?

Sir Chris Wormald: It is around entry level to the SCS, so there will be some new members of the senior civil service and some people who are expecting to go into the civil service. We do not have a grade specification, but we pitch it at that sort of level.

Q156 **Chair:** How many do you expect to get through each year?

Sir Chris Wormald: It is about 30.

Richard Banks: Between 25 to 30 each year.

Q157 **Mr David Jones:** The Better Government Initiative has offered some slight criticism, suggesting the skills delivered by the degree course should not be confined to a handful of highfliers but should be made available more generally. How would you respond to that?



Sir Chris Wormald: We largely agree. We set up the masters programme. It was a pilot; we said we would run it for four years and then we would evaluate it. When you compare us to our comparator jurisdictions, we have a much, much lower level of masters qualification than you would find in the Canadian civil service, the Australian civil service, the American civil service, the French civil service or the German civil service. It is one of the areas where we are a long way behind. The Canadians said to me it would be very, very rare to find someone in their senior civil service who did not have a qualification at masters level. The masters programme was a first step in doing something about that and, as I say, it was a pilot.

One of the things we are looking at is that you probably do want, as most jurisdictions have, to have your set-piece—which is quite expensive as it happens—executive masters programme for that sort of number, but also to have a lot of other products that you do in different ways that are available much more widely. Again, if I take the Department of Health as my example, we send one or two people a year on the LSE masters, we send people on our own masters in health policy and we send people to the Major Projects Academy, which costs roughly the same as a masters. Do you not like that one? Okay. We have also just introduced a policy where, to new members of the SCS, we say, “You have a training fund that is set at roughly masters level to invest in your career.”

My personal view is that pretty much everyone in the SCS ought to be getting masters level input into their career. That might be a set piece, an executive masters like the LSE one, or it might be a lot of other things. Is it King’s that is looking at a very modular masters that you might do over six years as opposed to the concentrated one that we do?

Richard Banks: Yes.

Sir Chris Wormald: What we really want to see are lots of product in the market that will suit lots of different people. The aspiration that anyone in the senior civil service should not necessarily have letters after their name, but should have had input that is at that sort of level, is basically right.

I do not think civil servants go back to school enough. In terms of getting the countercultural thinking the Chair was describing, going back to school—meeting a lot of academics, meeting people from other disciplines and so on—is one of the very good ways of doing that.

Therefore I do not take what they say as a criticism of our masters programme—which I think is very, very good—but I think they are right that we need a wider offer as well.

Q158 **Mr David Jones:** I do not think it was intended to be a criticism of the programme. I think the criticism was that not enough senior civil servants were in fact acquiring the skills that are provided in the model. Has anything been done to widen access to those skills?



Sir Chris Wormald: We are looking at this right now.

Q159 **Mr David Jones:** Are there any constraints, financial or otherwise?

Richard Banks: Historically there have been. One of the things that has been a really positive development is the increase in policy institutes and policy schools across UK universities. There has been a growth in those, and that has been good for us. Some of them do lectures for us. That growth is something we have been looking at, in terms of how we could start to scale up, particularly for people in the mid-career level, at the grade 6/7 level of the civil service. We know there is an appetite, both departmentally and individually, for more of a modularised and flexible learning programme that works up towards potentially a masters level. That is something we are looking at and exploring—both the capacity and capability of the UK academic world and the internal budget and appetite for it.

Sir Chris Wormald: Quite clearly there are cost constraints. Some of these things are, in the short term, very expensive but, of course, in the long term they are not. What does the LSE masters cost?

Richard Banks: Circa £23,000.

Sir Chris Wormald: Spending £20,000 on someone who might have a 20-year career in the senior civil service is not a very expensive investment. Getting the cash in year 1 can be a challenge for Departments in the current circumstances. However, as I say, if we did, "This is what you will get on entry to the SCS" so one of the things you get is an investment in your development of that sort of size—not necessarily in a masters programme; it could be in something else—I think that would be money extremely well spent.

Q160 **Dr Rupa Huq:** How far should professional standards for policymaking be defined by the whole of Government rather than individual Departments themselves? Should it be an overarching thing?

Sir Chris Wormald: What we have tried to develop is something that is a bit of both. Our standard framework is agreed across Government and, indeed, we ran a big cross-Government process to create it. How many Departments were involved?

Richard Banks: All Departments were involved. Over 500 people from various professions right across the civil service were involved in crafting this.

Sir Chris Wormald: Yes. We have an overall framework that is Government-wide. What we have then done is basically said it is at the discretion of Departments how they then use it. That bit we have left flexible to Departments, and they are doing different things with it. Most people—this is how we would be using it in the Department of Health and Social Care at the moment—use it as a training and development thing; it is about identifying skills. We have some Departments that are beginning



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to look at whether they can use it in performance management, in recruitment and in promotion. Is it the Home Office that is looking at these things?

Richard Banks: Yes.

Sir Chris Wormald: We have Departments that are seeking to use it in different ways. As it develops, we will need to take some decisions about whether we want to do that more universally. At the moment we have said we designed it as a training and development thing, and that is how we expect it to be used. We want Departments to try using it in different ways and, bluntly, if it works, then we would probably universalise its use rather more. We wanted to see it as an evolutionary thing that people would use, play with and see where they wanted to take it, as opposed to, "Here is a central rule that says you must do X."

For some of the reasons the Chair was pointing to at the beginning, I do think having quite a bit of discretion at departmental level about how it is used is really important. Because of the different nature of Departments, people want to emphasise particular bits of the skillset as opposed to others. If you are in one of the Departments that does big capital investments, some of the harder-edged economic and statistical analyses things and programme management things would come to the top. Whereas if you are in a service-delivery Department, then obviously those commercial and digital skills are really important—if you are the DWP or HMRC. We wanted to create a framework that covered everyone but so that an individual Department could say, "It is those five or six things we want to emphasise because they are important to our business." I certainly would not want to lose that bit—the ability to flex it to what is the actual policy problem in front of me.

Q161 **Mr David Jones:** We have touched on this already, but of course policy is ultimately dictated by politicians. To what extent do political imperatives impact upon the profession in terms of making policy?

Sir Chris Wormald: As I said before, it is very important that policymakers understand the political context in which they are working and can shape their policies accordingly. Understanding what the overall objectives of the Government are and what their overall philosophical approach is, is correctly a thing that policymakers should understand and be able to tailor their advice to. That is about understanding what it is the Government is trying to achieve. What you then advise on how to achieve it needs to be that very traditional, neutral, well-analysed civil service advice that weighs up options and gives Ministers some choices, as it were—having a clear recommendation, but saying, "There are several ways we could go at this. We recommend this one, but here are the other things you could choose." That is creating the space for Ministers to be able to take their philosophical and political judgments.

Q162 **Mr David Jones:** Obviously, it is formulated according to standards that are defined. Is it, or could it ever be, the case that those standards are so



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adversely impacted by political imperatives they could actually be frustrated?

Sir Chris Wormald: If you were in that situation, that would suggest you had your standards wrong. The standards we choose to set for ourselves are, of course, also matters of ministerial decision. The classic question is, what is the financial framework within which decisions are taken? It is at the discretion of Treasury Ministers, as they do, to change that financial framework. That would then affect our policy evaluation. It is completely right that Ministers are allowed to do those things. Ministers can also, of course, change the law, which is the legal framework in which we take our decisions. It is very, very important that those frameworks exist and that they are agreed politically, and then civil servants act to those standards. If there is a problem around achieving the Government's objectives because of the standards, then we really ought to look at the standards.

Q163 **Mr David Jones:** Again we have touched on this, but how important would you say are challenges in the formulation of policy?

Sir Chris Wormald: As I have said already, I think completely vital, and it is one of the areas on which we have been criticised by Chilcot and others. I think groupthink is one of the biggest dangers of policymaking, and you do need to actively have systems that mitigate the possibilities of groupthink.

Q164 **Kelvin Hopkins:** A question occurs to me: what kind of Minister do you prefer? There are two types in extreme cases. This may be apocryphal, but apparently, when Ernest Bevin became Minister of Labour, he said, "One sheet of paper. That is the policy. Please get on with it." At the other extreme, you have Ministers who are completely like lambs to the slaughter: they do not know anything about the particular Department and say, "Just tell me what I have to do." Do you like a bit of guidance?

Sir Chris Wormald: I have worked with exceptionally effective Ministers who take very different approaches to it. Rather as we should not have a one-size-fits-all type of civil servant, I do not think there is a way of being a Minister that is effective or ineffective. There are a number of routes to success.

What I always say in answer to this question is that the Ministers I find it easiest to work with and that achieve the most success give you a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve. There is a clear piece of political direction and vision so the Department really understands what the driving force of policy is. If I take my previous Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, it was very clear that patient safety and his view around that was a huge driver on policy. Everyone in the Department understood it. You knew if you gave advice that was not touching on the question of whether it was actually improving patient safety, it was not going to get a very good hearing. You want a clear vision.



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Clearly, from a civil servant's point of view, you want Ministers who will listen to all sides of the argument. The vast majority of Ministers, from all political parties, who I have worked with do actually want to have the argument and talk about it. Then, once the argument is over, you want a very clear decision so you know what you are going to get on with. It is always those three characteristics that make for an effective civil servant-Minister relationship. As I say, it has been the relationship I have had with the vast majority of the Ministers of all parties I have worked with.

Q165 Dame Cheryl Gillan: On challenging policy formulation particularly, the Minister and the policymakers do not operate in a vacuum. How much do policymakers take on board the views of, say, this House and other Members of Parliament as contributions to areas of policy?

Sir Chris Wormald: Sorry, how much do Ministers?

Dame Cheryl Gillan: How much do officials take on board what is happening outside? Some Ministers shut their ears because they are going to deliver this come what may and do not actually listen to what is happening.

Sir Chris Wormald: That is a choice for Ministers.

Dame Cheryl Gillan: What about the officials?

Sir Chris Wormald: Again, it is the job of a policymaker to understand what is going on. It is then the job of Ministers to decide whether that is a relevant thing for policy. It is one of the things civil servants are sometimes, for perfectly good reasons, slightly reluctant to do. If you are a really good policymaker, you do understand all facets of opinion, where the public debate is in the country, what Select Committees think, what parliamentarians think and what public opinion thinks. That should be part of your policy advice; it does not determine your policy advice.

Q166 Dame Cheryl Gillan: There really is an onus on policymaking officials to point out to a Minister when a particular policy is, for example, going off the rails?

Sir Chris Wormald: To take the specific thing you are talking about, parliamentary knowledge, you would certainly expect a piece of policy advice to Ministers to be very clear and very well informed about what the state of the parliamentary debate is, who thinks what and all those things. As I say, what you then do with that information is a matter of political will, but it is the policymaker's job to understand where opinion is and how that might affect your policymaking.

Q167 Chair: Given you are creating an infrastructure to support the development of how people think when they make policy, have you thought about making that available to Members of Parliament who aspire to being Ministers so they understand how the civil servants, who might support them in the future, are going to be thinking?



Sir Chris Wormald: Not specifically with Members of Parliament. We had a bit of this debate when we were developing our LSE masters on whether it should be civil service only or whether we should make it available more widely. The way we have eventually done it is that it is built out of the Master of Public Administration course the LSE runs. Half of the course is taught with whoever is on the Master of Public Administration—people from all over world and from the UK—and half is civil service only. One of the things we will consider when we evaluate the programme is whether we should open it up more widely to people who are involved in policy in other ways. We have been looking at this in various of our other areas, not specifically with Ministers. We do a number of things with the IFG, which of course has a specific remit in helping Ministers develop.

It is quite an interesting balance-up, isn't it? From one point of view, people who bring countercultural thinking into an organisation are very frequently new Ministers. In a way, you do not want your Ministers to have gone through exactly the same training as your civil servants and have been taught to think in exactly the same way. You do want to keep the balance so Ministers are one of the things that bring countercultural thinking to the system. However, as you say, there is also an advantage in Ministers understanding how civil servants have been trained. There must be a right balance in there somewhere. It is probably not my place to give some thought to what it is, but it is a question we could think about.

Q168 **Chair:** My apologies, David.

Mr David Jones: That is all right, I enjoyed the answer.

Sir Chris Wormald: I am slightly worried to hear of you enjoying my answer; it is always a very bad sign.

Q169 **Mr David Jones:** Could you tell us what the status of the Contestable Policy Fund is, please?

Sir Chris Wormald: I do not think it exists anymore. I certainly have not heard of it for quite some time.

Q170 **Mr David Jones:** Any reason why it should have withered on the vine?

Sir Chris Wormald: As you know, it was something that Francis Maude, the previous Paymaster General, was very keen on. It was addressing the right to challenge, which goes back to the challenge you have been raising all the way through about how you get countercultural thinking into Government. From memory it was really quite difficult to operationalise it. I do not think it had a huge amount of buy-in from other Ministers. From memory—this is entirely from memory—there were some Ministers who liked the idea and did quite a lot of it and others who did not do it at all. It was one of those things where I do think it raised the right to question and caused people to ask themselves, "How do I



build contestable thinking into my policymaking?" I think, in practice, it turned out to be not quite the right vehicle.

Q171 **Mr David Jones:** Has anything been done to replace it?

Sir Chris Wormald: At individual Department level—not in terms of funds but in terms of open policymaking more generally—yes, lots. One of the things you see in Government is that there are a lot more external experts and others in ministerial meetings. If I take the Department of Health, it is completely commonplace to invite in leading mental health experts or whatever to the policymaking discussions in a way that I did not see 20 years ago. Probably even more particularly, it is much more common to have in policymaking discussions people from an operational background. This is something I particularly observed when I was in education, which was a huge step forward. Having the people in the room who were going to end up implementing whatever it was, having them as a part of the policymaking process and not somebody you consulted afterwards, is a big step forward. It tends to be at that sort of level rather than, "Here's a fund by which you buy people in."

Q172 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Mr Banks, as Head of the Policy Profession Support Unit, what input have you taken from other professions and other functions into professional standards and into this area? Who have you talked to? Who do you bring in?

Richard Banks: I have had the privilege of having a lot of people very happy to help lean in and support the development of policy professional capability. I touched earlier on the standards development. All of the cross-Government professions helped lean in and write those. If you look at the science of horizon scanning and so on, the Government Office for Science and colleagues in the security sphere helped craft this collectively. When it comes to the actual delivery of learning and development interventions to underpin this, we run a Fast Stream policy basecamp that, again, is internally delivered. We have Government finance, Government legal, devolution colleagues, work centres, economists and loads of people involved in the actual delivery of these learning programmes.

Q173 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Including outside the civil service?

Richard Banks: Outside the civil service we have a very active partnership with academic communities that Sir Chris touched on earlier. We do a series at Blavatnik, in Whitehall, LSE do an EU-related events programme, and we have had input from Bath University. We have had quite a lot of input from universities that want to come and talk to the policy profession community. The knowledge series of events has a lot of input from people right across Government and in different places, like the What Works Centre for Wellbeing and stuff on Chilcot. We have had a real lean-in effort, I would say. That has been very fortunate, because, as you touched on before, that is how the profession is resourced to effectively do it, with input from lots of others.



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Q174 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** In most of our professions we have to do a lot of professional development work to keep the currency of our qualification. Are you looking at professional development in a very structured way? Are you making people go back and refresh on regular timescales?

Richard Banks: A lot of this comes down to the departmental central balance, and all of the policy professionals are managed within Departments. Loads of Departments have great examples of basecamps that they have introduced, induction-level programmes, continuous development programmes and linking into the levels of the professional development framework. For example, DWP has linked it into career progression, particularly trying to bring people up to the grade 7 level in the policy community and trying to very actively bring people in from operational delivery. It runs a programme called Facilitated Move, where it is trying to move 50 people and to plot careers against these professional standards and the professional development they would need around that. The short answer is yes, Departments do that very actively in trying to develop career pathways for policy professionals.

Q175 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Have you identified any weaknesses in this that you would like addressed?

Sir Chris Wormald: It is the mid-career bit. We have done a lot of work on induction and giving people a good start in policymaking. When you get to the senior civil service, there is now quite a lot of structured stuff you can do. We have been nothing like as good in the mid-career bit, the grade 6/7 bit. There is much less out in the market at that level. By the time you are in the SCS, there are a lot of masters-type programmes you can do. That is our particular focus at the moment—trying to create things at that level.

Q176 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** It is that mid-career civil servant that is, of course, so attractive to outside companies.

Sir Chris Wormald: It is where we lose a lot of people, yes. Once people are in the SCS, they tend to stay. We have an excellent graduate programme and Fast Stream. It is in the middle bit that we lose people.

Q177 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** Can I ask what percentage of policy professionals you are losing?

Sir Chris Wormald: I do not have a percentage; we can find you one.

Richard Banks: Turnover, as a rough figure, is about 10%, but I need to come back with something more—

Sir Chris Wormald: We do have numbers on that.

Q178 **Dame Cheryl Gillan:** I would be interested—when you invest so much in this area and then find you are losing them—to see what you are doing to address that.



Sir Chris Wormald: Part of it is about return. Like all employers, we are seeing a very big change in the labour market, where people do not expect to be in the same career for 40 years—they do not expect to do what I did. We do positively want the kind of turnover where somebody starts as a civil servant, might go off and do something else—do something in the private sector, do something in the voluntary sector or the wider public sector—and then come back and bring a lot with them. Therefore the other thing we need to do is to make it easier to return. This is common to all professions. We have exactly the same challenges in the medical profession. We used to have the same challenges in the teaching profession. We are going to have to work with the fact people do not want lifetime careers anymore. That bit is definitely where our offer is weakest and the external offer is weakest.

Q179 **Chair:** Thank you. I think it has been a really excellent session. We are very encouraged, at least I am, by what you have been telling us.

I am still a little teased by the problem that you are teaching quite a large group of civil servants what all civil servants should be very familiar with— things like how Parliament works, how democracy works, how to handle statistics and how devolution works. It is very contextual, a lot of what you are teaching. It begs the question, should we be teaching policy skills to subject specialists rather than creating a policy profession that then needs to learn the subject specialisation?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think it is a very good challenge. The way I tend to think about our skills framework is, clearly, you are not expecting everyone to be an expert in all 18 things. I think the future is you probably do expect policymakers to be experts at two or three of those things and then good enough at the other 15 to know how to talk to the experts in them. Then, when you are putting together policy teams, they are all policymakers but they have different specialisms. I think we will go much more that way myself. You will still have “generalist” policymakers, but within that they would have particular specialisms where they are particularly expert. I think that is the model.

Q180 **Chair:** With the training and development of policy specialists being so all--embracing and almost existential to the effectiveness of the civil service, to what extent do you feel that what you are embarked upon needs to be better integrated with all the other academies, training and development initiatives?

Sir Chris Wormald: As Richard said earlier, one of the strengths of the framework we have developed is that we did it with the other professions. The economics component—this is true of our masters programme as well—was basically developed by the Treasury and comes from the economists. It is what the economists think a policymaker should know about economics. That is the way into it, as it were—to involve all those other professions in actually designing what policymakers need to know. That is not trying to replicate what they do; it is about understanding enough so that you can make policy from it.



Q181 **Chair:** How should training and development be better integrated across all the professions and all the functions?

Sir Chris Wormald: I think it is getting people from the different professions to actually do the training. I am very keen on actual practitioner training as opposed to people who are professional trainers. Again, I will take a DHSC example. My Chief Scientist runs an absolutely brilliant science seminar programme for policymakers where he lectures on different aspects of medical science, pandemics and so on. That is not with the purpose that people will become as expert as hi, because he has spent 20 years becoming a professor of it. It is arming them with a level of scientific knowledge so, first, they can build it into their policymaking and, secondly, they can spot when they should go and talk to a scientist. The fact it is actually a scientist delivering that, not a trainer or a policymaker talking about science, is what makes the difference, if you see what I mean. I think we need a lot more of that—practitioners from other professions actually being the trainer.

Q182 **Chair:** That leads to the next question, which is to what extent the senior civil service, the leadership of the civil service, is thinking about the advantages of restoring a single institutional framework for training and development?

Sir Chris Wormald: I know this has been a long cause of yours.

Chair: Obviously it is not Government policy and you cannot endorse it.

Sir Chris Wormald: It is not. The focus on functions and professions that we have had over the last eight to 10 years has really put a focus on what are all those professional skills that we need people to have, and it does allow us to have the right conversations. To take the thing Richard was describing, of how we put together our skills frameworks, when we wanted a science component or a digital component, there was a professional to go and talk to and bring back the knowledge from. I do think that professions and functions structure gives you a lot more of what you are describing than what we had previously. You can argue it one way or the other, whether you want a central institution like the National School of Government or whatever. That professions and functions framework does give you a framework to replicate a lot of those advantages. It is not the same as having a single institution—which, as I say, has upsides and downsides—but it undoubtedly gets you towards the same questions.

Q183 **Chair:** Is it not something to be learned from France, for example, especially in terms of developing a kind of esprit de corps sense of collective values and so on?

Sir Chris Wormald: I discussed this with our colleagues in France. They, of course, are rather interested in some of the things we do on the ground—that it is different—and we are interested in what they do. The reflection of the people I have talked to, which is not a scientific view at all, is you either have to beat the house on that sort of approach or not



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do it. A halfway to an *énarque* system, I do not think anyone would want. You have either to decide, "We are going to train all our policymakers in an academic environment before they become policymakers," and go hell for leather for that or to have something that is like what we, the Americans and the Canadians do, which is much more that we recruit people and then train them. I do not think halfway houses between those approaches would be a good idea. There are obviously advantages and disadvantages to both.

Chair: As a French official might have said, we can see how that might work in practice, but we cannot see how it works in theory.

I would like to thank you both very much indeed for appearing before us. It has been an excellent session.

Sir Chris Wormald: Thank you. It is very important stuff, so it is great to come here and talk about it.

Chair: We will continue the conversation informally, I am certain of that. Thank you very much indeed.