



House of Commons  
Committee of Public Accounts

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**Non-executive  
appointments**

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**Thirtieth Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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# Contents

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<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 The appointments process</b>	<b>9</b>
Delays	9
Poor data	10
The lack of published information	11
<b>2 Recruiting the best candidates</b>	<b>13</b>
Diversity	13
Outreach activities	14
<b>Formal minutes</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Witnesses</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Published written evidence</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament</b>	<b>18</b>



## Summary

Non-executive directors (NEDs) provide government departments and arm's-length bodies with strategic leadership, scrutinising performance, promoting transparency and taking a long-term perspective. However, major issues remain with the appointments process which are taking too long to resolve. In particular, appointments take far longer than they should which is deterring candidates and posing a risk to the governance of government boards: on average, in 2022–23 appointments took over half a year—203 days to be precise—from the competition close date. The Cabinet Office's Governance Code states that appointments should be completed within three months but only 7% of appointments met this expectation in 2022–23, while nine took more than a year to complete, with the longest taking more than 400 days.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for oversight of public appointments, but only monitors and tracks 'regulated' appointments—those appointments to bodies or posts listed in the relevant Order in Council (see paragraph 14)—of which there were 4,476 in post as of March 2022. Some regulated appointments are for NEDs, but not all. Many other types of appointment are also classed as regulated appointments, such as trustees, commissioners, advisers, chief inspectors, and adjudicators. The Cabinet Office does not know how many of those 4,476 were NEDs. Moreover, the Cabinet Office does not currently track unregulated appointments so it cannot say how many unregulated NEDs there are across government, how diverse they are, or how long they take to appoint.

Before 2023, the Cabinet Office's only method of collecting data about regulated appointments was a manual exercise, requesting data from departments once a year. The Cabinet Office has recently introduced a new applicant tracking system and requires all departments to use it for regulated public appointments. This system should allow government to understand better where delays are occurring and help to improve its oversight of regulated appointments. However, the new application system is still in its early stages, and not all departments and arm's-length bodies are using it as intended, so the Cabinet Office still does not have the data it needs. While the Cabinet Office expects some departments will also use the system for unregulated appointments—so allowing the Cabinet Office to start collecting some data on those appointments—the Cabinet Office does not currently require them to do so.

We still do not have confidence that the public appointments process is efficient, transparent and fair. The Cabinet Office does not publish clear information about NEDs or the panels which select them. It launched a diversity action plan in 2019, with the ambition for 50% of all public appointees to be female and 14% of yearly appointments to be from ethnic minority backgrounds by 2022. It did not meet these targets by 2022 and has no plans to put in place a new diversity action plan or updated targets. While government has sought to strengthen its outreach activities, it cannot yet demonstrate how effective these have been in recruiting the best candidates for NED roles.

## Introduction

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Non-executive directors (NEDs) serve on the boards of government departments and arm's-length bodies (ALBs). The role of NEDs, and the process for appointing them, differ significantly depending on the body that they are appointed to. Departments and their ministers are primarily responsible for the appointment of their own NEDs, including those to ALBs.

The Cabinet Office has important oversight responsibilities and provides support and guidance to departments. The Cabinet Office also determines which appointments are regulated under the relevant Order in Council, and maintains the Governance Code for Public Appointments which sets out the rules that govern regulated appointments. The Cabinet Office also collects data on, and publishes an annual report about, regulated public appointments. Some regulated appointments are for non-executive directors, but not all. Many other types of appointment are regulated, such as trustees, commissioners, advisers, chief inspectors, and adjudicators. The Cabinet Office does not collect or publish data on 'unregulated' appointments. An unknown number of NEDs are unregulated appointments.

## Conclusions and recommendations

1. **It is taking far too long to make non-executive director appointments.** On average, across Government including arms-length bodies (ALBs), it took 203 days from a competition closing to a regulated public appointment being announced in 2022–23. The Cabinet Office’s Governance Code sets out that the aim should be to conclude the process within three months of a competition closing. However, in 2022–23, only 7% of appointments were completed within this time period. The Cabinet Office acknowledges that the current lengthy process is not acceptable. Delays in appointments can lead to vacancies on boards, creating a risk that boards cannot carry out their functions. Delays may also cause candidates to drop out of the application process, take up posts elsewhere or put candidates off applying for these positions in the first place.

### **Recommendation 1:**

- a) *The Cabinet Office should use data from its new applicant tracking system (see below) to report publicly by September 2024 on appointment delays, identifying average length of time for appointments and at what stages delays are occurring. In addition to aggregate data, consideration should be given to providing information at the departmental level, in particular highlighting the best performers to help encourage the sharing of best practice.*
  - b) *The Cabinet Office should set out in its Treasury Minute response what actions it will take to reduce delays in order to complete appointments within its three-month aspiration.*
2. **The Cabinet Office does not yet have the data it needs to oversee the appointments process effectively.** Until April 2023, the Cabinet Office’s only method of collecting data about public appointments was a manual exercise, requesting data from departments once a year, in which errors and inconsistencies were common. Its new applicant tracking system, introduced in April 2023, should allow it to build up a picture of how each department is performing on appointments, including timeliness and causes of delay. It currently requires departments to use the new system for all regulated appointments. However, the Cabinet Office does not yet have the data it needs because not all government departments and ALBs are adding accurate data to the system or using the system as intended. For instance, some departments are still running the recruitment process outside of the new system or making errors when inputting data. The Cabinet Office does not currently track unregulated appointments so cannot say how many unregulated NEDs there are across government, how diverse they are, or how long they take to appoint. While it expects departments to use the new system in the future to track unregulated appointments, it does not currently require them to do so.

### **Recommendation 2: In response to this report, the Cabinet Office should:**

- a) *confirm in the Treasury Minute that all regulated appointments are now being run through the new applicant tracking system and what steps it is taking where departments do not comply;*

- b) *write to departments mandating that they use the new applicant tracking system for all unregulated appointments.*
3. **The Cabinet Office does not publish transparent information about NEDs, the diversity of panels who select them, or the requirements for independence in these roles.** The Cabinet Office publishes an annual report on regulated public appointments, of which there were 4,476 in post as of March 2022. However, this report does not break the data down by role so we do not know how many of those appointments are NEDs as opposed to other types of public appointment. Furthermore, the Cabinet Office does not collect or publish any data on either unregulated public appointments (an unknown number of which are NEDs) or about those who serve on Advisory Assessment Panels (which interview applicants and produce a list of appointable candidates, such as their diversity characteristics). Advisory Assessment Panels are required to include independent panel members, with some “significant appointments” requiring a “senior independent panel member”. The Cabinet Office has not set out what determines a suitable level of political independence for NEDs, independent members, or senior independent panel members. It says that around 3% of all regulated appointments have declared a political interest, but it relies on self-declaration by candidates of, for example, conflicts of interest or donations to political parties.

**Recommendation 3: *The Cabinet Office should:***

- a) *Include data in its annual public appointments data report about numbers and diversity of:*
- *non-executive directors specifically; and*
  - *unregulated public appointments.*
- b) *Centrally collect data about those who serve on Advisory Assessment Panels, including diversity data, and publish the aggregate data at least annually.*
- c) *Set out clearly the standards of independence expected of non-executive directors, independent panel members, and senior independent panel members, including what matters must be registered.*
4. **The appointments process is not set up to encourage diversity amongst NEDs.** In June 2019, the government launched a Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan to focus on broadening access and improving the diversity and quality of appointees. The plan included an ambition for 50% of all public appointees to be female and 14% of yearly appointments to be from ethnic minority backgrounds by 2022. The Cabinet Office did not meet those targets, reporting that in 2021–22 47% of all serving public appointees were female and 12% of all appointments and re-appointments went to people who were from an ethnic minority background. We recognise that the National Audit Office’s analysis found that the diversity of new appointees has improved: it found that in 2022–23, 53.7% of new appointees were female and 14.6% were from an ethnic minority background. But the Cabinet Office has not put in place a new diversity targets and has no plans to do so. Nor could it point us to convincing examples of how it deals with conscious and unconscious bias within the appointments process. Without checks on any bias, the current



process—in which ministers appoint the Advisory Assessment Panels who identify appointable candidates on which ministers then make a final decision—risks seeming insular and circular. While Ministers can only directly appoint a non-executive director in “exceptional cases” when making regulated appointments, there is no such restriction for unregulated appointments and it is not apparent if this has occurred or how frequently.

**Recommendation 4:**

*In its Treasury Minute response to this report, the Cabinet Office should:*

- a) *state a date by when it will put in place a new diversity action plan for public appointments;*
- b) *set out the steps it has taken so far to review the feasibility and usefulness of compiling data on the diversity makeup of members of Advisory Assessment Panels, and the date by which it would report its conclusions to Parliament.*

**Recommendation 5:**

*It should be a requirement that all departmental and ALB job advertisements for NEDs are scrutinised for any bias before being provided to ministers for approval.*

**Recommendation 6:**

*The Cabinet Office should:*

- a) *carry out a review to identify in-built bias in the public appointments process and set out what it will do to tackle any bias identified. This review should be reported to Parliament within 12 months of the date of this Report’s publication.*
- b) *Within 6 months of the publication of this report, commence a public consultation on the appointment process of the Advisory Assessment Panels. The consultation should, among other things, seek the public’s views on the current process and how it might be improved to achieve greater diversity in the NED recruitment and selection process. The process should include a section that makes clear that any unsuccessful candidates will be provided with feedback on their performance. The Cabinet Office should publish the findings of this consultation and its response to it within 18 months of the date of this report’s publication.*

**Recommendation 7:**

- a) *The rules set out in paragraph 3.3 of the “Governance Code on Public Appointments” that apply when Ministers appoint a non-executive director without competition should apply to both regulated and unregulated appointments.*
- b) *the Cabinet Office should maintain a register of all non-executive directors appointed without competition by Ministers. This register should be*

*established immediately: it should be published three months after the date of this report's publication, and an updated version published every three months thereafter.*

5. **We are not convinced that current outreach activities are helping government to recruit the best candidates for NED roles.** The Cabinet Office, the Government Lead Non-Executive, and the Commissioner for Public Appointments have all publicly declared their interest in improving outreach in order to encourage diverse and talented applicants to apply for public appointments from a wide range of sectors, including the private and voluntary sectors, as well as veterans and disabled groups. The Cabinet Office has sought to strengthen its outreach activities to encourage people to apply for public appointments, for example, by holding in-person events around the UK and by running a Boardroom Apprentice Programme, whereby people with no experience on boards can serve as an observer on a board for a year to gain experience. The Cabinet Office could do more to demonstrate the effectiveness of these activities and to learn lessons to better focus its outreach work: for instance it does not have data of sufficient quality on the social and professional backgrounds of candidates. It is important that, as part of being fully effective, candidates to be a non-executive director should expect to regularly engage with ministers at all levels within a department.

**Recommendation 8:**

- a) *In its Treasury Minute response to this report, the Cabinet Office should set out how it is measuring the effectiveness of its outreach activities and what plans it has to develop them further to reach a wider pool of candidates.*
- b) *The selection and recruitment process for non-executive directors should cover the need for them to regularly engage with ministers at all levels within a department, and there should also be in-post training to support this objective. In addition, the Cabinet Office should draw up a new code of best governance practice, which should include a requirement that all ministers and non-executive directors attend departmental board meetings as a matter of routine – this new code should be published within 12 months of this report's publication.*

# 1 The appointments process

1. On the basis of a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, we took evidence from the Cabinet Office, the Government’s Lead Non-Executive, and the Chair of the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) about non-executive director appointments across government departments and public bodies.<sup>1</sup>
2. Non-executive directors (NEDs) serve on the boards of government departments and arm’s-length bodies (ALBs). They provide strategic leadership, scrutinise performance, promote transparency and take a long-term perspective. NEDs are one type of public appointment, part of a larger group that also includes members of many advisory committees, office holders and chairs of public bodies.<sup>2</sup>
3. There are different categories of appointments, including those that are regulated, unregulated, deemed significant and those requiring pre-appointment scrutiny by a select committee.<sup>3</sup> Regulated appointments are appointments to bodies or posts listed in the relevant Order in Council. Regulated appointments must abide by the procedures laid out in the Governance Code for Public Appointments (“the Code”) and are subject to independent regulation by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. From July 2023, this includes departmental non-executives. Unregulated appointments are appointments to bodies and posts that are not included in the Order in Council and are not governed by the Code. These appointments must follow the governance principles and procedures laid out in the founding legislation and framework agreements for the organisation they are being made for. The role of NEDs, and the process for appointing them, may differ depending on whether they are appointed to a department, a regulated ALB or an unregulated ALB.<sup>4</sup>
4. Departments and their ministers are primarily responsible for appointing their own non-executives. Cabinet Office has oversight of the public appointments process and provides support and guidance to departments. The Cabinet Office owns the relevant Order in Council and the Code; owns the applicant-tracking system used for all regulated public appointments; collects data on regulated public appointments; and publishes an annual report. The Commissioner for Public Appointments provides independent assurance of the appointments process; is consulted about all exceptional appointments; publishes an annual report on appointments; and acts as an advocate for diversity.<sup>5</sup>

## Delays

5. The NAO reported that for appointments made in 2022–23, on average 203 days elapsed between campaigns closing and a public appointment being made and announced. This is well beyond the three months that the Code states that officials should aim to

1 C&AG Report, [Non-executive appointments](#), Session 2023–24, HC 513, 2 February 2024. The Government defines the term “public body” as “a formally established organisation that is publicly funded to deliver a public or government service, though not as a ministerial department. The term refers to a wide range of public sector entities”. [GOV.UK, [Public Bodies: What is a public body](#), last updated 27 July 2023]

2 C&AG’s Report, paras 1, 2, 1.5

3 C&AG’s Report, para 2

4 C&AG’s Report, para 2, 1.6, Figure 1

5 C&AG’s Report, para 3, Figure 4

meet.<sup>6</sup> Only 7% of appointments were completed within that three-month target. Nine took more than a year to complete, with the longest taking more than 400 days. 2022–23 was not an unusual year and a similar pattern was evident in the past two years.<sup>7</sup>

6. The NAO and the Commissioner for Public Appointments have noted that delays can put off candidates, leading them to withdraw their application or deterring them from applying in the first place.<sup>8</sup> The Cabinet Office also told us that its outreach work showed that people can feel put off applying in the first place because they fear it will take too long. It said that executive search firms reported that people will take private sector posts instead of public appointments because they envisage the process for the latter will take longer to be completed.<sup>9</sup> Delayed appointments can also lead to either gaps on boards or necessitate that public bodies resort to temporary appointments or extensions to fill those gaps. The Cabinet Office acknowledged that this situation is not desirable.<sup>10</sup> The Government’s Lead Non-Executive told us that boards that are below strength are at risk of not being able to fully carry out their function with regards to governance. He also noted that if the chair of the audit and risk committee is vacant then there is a gap in the governance of the Department, so filling these roles promptly is important.<sup>11</sup>

7. The Cabinet Office agreed that it is not satisfactory that the appointments process takes so long. It noted that it is a ministerial priority to speed up the process. It reported that its latest data shows the number has fallen from an average 203 days in 2022–23 to 146 days, but acknowledged that additional work is needed to bring the number down to closer to the target of 90 days.<sup>12</sup> The Cabinet Office attributed some of the delays to ministerial turnover as well as security vetting and reference checks. It is optimistic that the new applicant tracking system will allow it to identify where delays are occurring and intervene as needed.<sup>13</sup>

## Poor data

8. Until April 2023, the Cabinet Office’s only method of collecting data about public appointments was a manual exercise once a year, so it did not hold real-time data on delays. Departments were required to provide information about all those serving in post as regulated public appointments on March 31 of the given year. Departments would also provide data on recruitment campaigns undertaken during the previous year, including information about the candidates who applied, those shortlisted, those found appointable, and those appointed. It did not provide granular data about where and when delays took place. As the data were produced and processed manually by departments, errors and inconsistencies were common.<sup>14</sup>

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6 C&AG’s Report, para 7

7 Q 59; C&AG’s Report, para 2.4

8 C&AG’s Report, para 2.6; The Commissioner for Public Appointments, [Annual Report 2022–23](#)

9 Q 65

10 Q 59; C&AG’s Report, para 2.6

11 Q 67

12 It should be noted that the latest figure of 146 days provided by witnesses (Q59) is unaudited. Furthermore, it is not clear how many appointments the figure of 146 days refers to, or when those appointments occurred. This report therefore uses the figure of 203 days throughout: this figure is an NAO calculated figure that relates to the latest complete financial year (2022–23) at the time of the Committee’s hearing on 18 March 2024.

13 Qq 59, 62

14 C&AG’s Report, paras 9, 2.3, 2.9

9. In April 2023, the Cabinet Office launched a new, centralised applicant-tracking system that consolidates the selection process for all regulated public appointments and some unregulated appointments. The centralised system makes it possible for the Cabinet Office to collect richer, real-time data on the appointments. The recruiting department is expected to manage the entire process through the applicant-tracking system and the system will keep detailed records of each step of the process. This should allow both the appointing body and the Cabinet Office to have a better idea of how long campaigns take and where the bottlenecks are, and to notify ministers of delays, where or when candidates might drop out, and which campaigns fail to fill the required posts.<sup>15</sup>

10. The NAO reported that some departments were still running the process outside of the new system and entering data into the system after the fact, instead of in real time. The NAO also noted that basic errors in data entry, such as inverting dates, meant that the data generated by the new system were not accurate.<sup>16</sup> We asked the Cabinet Office what it was doing to address these problems: it told us that it agreed that this was not satisfactory and shared our disappointment. It told us that it had written to all departments and all public bodies reminding them how to use the system correctly. It also told us that it had strengthened its guidance on how to properly use the system and had organised a series of training events.<sup>17</sup>

### The lack of published information

11. The Cabinet Office does not know how many NEDs in total are serving on all government boards, including ALBs and government companies. The Cabinet Office and the Commissioner for Public Appointments collect data on regulated public appointments. However, the available data do not differentiate between types of public appointments, so they do not show how many appointments are for NEDs. The government's *Public Appointments Data Report 2021–22* reported 4,476 chairs and members in post at regulated government bodies as at 31 March 2022, of which NEDs were a subset.<sup>18</sup>

12. We challenged the Cabinet Office on how it can provide effective oversight if it does not know how many NEDs there are serving on all government boards. The Cabinet Office responded that it does not recognise NEDs as a distinct category of public appointment. It told us that the vast majority of public appointments are non-executives but not all of them would be described as non-executive directors. They could, for example, be trustees, commissioners, advisers, board members, chief inspectors, adjudicators.<sup>19</sup>

13. The Cabinet Office told us that it does not have a central list of how many unregulated appointments there are.<sup>20</sup> It said that it does not currently have central oversight of any aspect on unregulated appointments and it is not mandatory for departments to put unregulated appointments on to its new applicant tracking system.<sup>21</sup> It stated that it would imagine that as its new applicant tracking system matures departments will start to use it for unregulated appointments, noting that 127 unregulated appointments had already

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15 C&AG's Report, paras 3.3–3.5

16 C&AG's Report, para 3.9

17 Q 90

18 C&AG's Report, paras 1.2, 1.3

19 Qq 6, 9

20 Q 25

21 Qq 26, 40

been run through the system since April 2023. The Cabinet Office told us that, as more departments use the system for unregulated appointments, it should start to build up a picture centrally of unregulated appointments.<sup>22</sup>

14. We asked when the Cabinet Office will decide what information it will provide to Ministers, and to Parliament, in order to improve transparency of the appointment process. The Cabinet Office acknowledged that the system was not working perfectly yet and said that it would be introducing some enhancements.<sup>23</sup> The Cabinet Office stated that it expected to outline a plan to Ministers on how the data should be used later this year, noting that the more confident it could be in the data the quicker it could look at how to share the data with the public and Parliament. It added that it hoped it would not be long before the data could be used to improve transparency and drive accountability.<sup>24</sup>

15. We questioned the witnesses about what standards of independence they would expect from NEDs, in particular how independent they should be from ministers with whom they will be working. The Cabinet Office told us that this is not set out explicitly and that it is a judgment call. It further clarified that “independence”, in this context, does not mean that they should be immune from politics, but it should be declared. The Cabinet Office told us that it relies on self-declaration. The Cabinet Office noted that about 3% of regulated public appointments have a declared political allegiance.<sup>25</sup> We further questioned the witnesses about whether NEDs could be political donors. The Cabinet Office told us that appointees would be expected to declare donations above £5,000 (from 1 January 2024 the limit was set at £11,180).<sup>26</sup> When we asked how many had done so, it told us that it did not track that information specifically. The Cabinet Office noted that public appointees are bound to follow the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies and there is an expectation that they will abide by the Nolan principles.<sup>27</sup>

16. We also questioned the Cabinet Office about the requirements for independent panel members and senior independent panel members who served on the Advisory Assessment Panels (“Panels”).<sup>28</sup> All Panels are expected to have an independent member. “Significant” appointments, as laid out in a particular list, are required by the Governance Code to have a “senior independent panel member” (SIPM) on the Panel. The Governance Code states that a SIPM should be independent of the department and of the body concerned, should not be currently politically active, and must be agreed by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.<sup>29</sup> The Cabinet Office told us that ministers select the independent Panel members. It also told us that there is usually a list of candidate SIPMs but Ministers ultimately select the SIPM for each Panel.<sup>30</sup>

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22 Q 25

23 Qq 94, 95

24 Qq 96, 98

25 Qq 48, 51, 52

26 Q 50; [Correspondence from Cabinet Office to Public Accounts Committee](#), 2 April 2024

27 Qq 51, 52

28 Qq 42–44

29 [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), 6.1

30 Qq 42–43

## 2 Recruiting the best candidates

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### Diversity

17. In June 2019, the Cabinet Office launched a Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan (the Plan<sup>31</sup>) to focus on broadening access and improving the diversity and quality of appointees.<sup>31</sup> The Plan set out ambitions for 50% of all public appointees to be female and 14% of all public appointments to come from ethnic minority backgrounds by 2022.<sup>32</sup> The Cabinet Office did not meet these targets. *Its Public Appointments Data Report for 2021–22* reported that 47% of all serving public appointees were female and 12% of all appointments and re-appointments were people from an ethnic minority background. However, the NAO’s analysis found that the diversity of new appointees had improved in recent years. In 2022–23 53.7% of new appointees were female and 14.6% were from an ethnic minority background. The Cabinet Office has not set aspirations beyond 2022 and does not have any plans to do so.<sup>33</sup>

18. We questioned the witnesses about their current approach to diversity. The Government’s Lead Non-Executive noted that he thought the only target that would make sense in the long-run would be a 50% split of gender between men and women.<sup>34</sup> The Cabinet Office told us that currently 48% of NEDs in post are women. The Cabinet Office also told us that the most recent numbers showed 14.5% of appointments made in the year were to people identifying as from an ethnic minority, slightly below the corresponding 15% of the economically active population.<sup>35</sup> The witnesses told us that they were also focused on increased diversity of thought, regional diversity, and social background. When we queried what data they used to measure diversity of background and what data they held on disability, the Government’s Lead Non-Executive noted that government did not hold this data for all NEDs because the system to collect the data was not in place for the entire population of current NEDs.<sup>36</sup>

19. We asked about what was done to address conscious or unconscious bias in the way jobs are advertised and described. The Cabinet Office said that the written description and criteria were vital and, indeed, served as the basis for judging who would be appointable.<sup>37</sup> It told us that it would expect job advertisements to be scrutinised for such bias before being provided to ministers for approval but it was not a requirement or something it tracked. It also said that it should include such considerations in its guidance and training.<sup>38</sup> The Cabinet Office undertook to review alternative options for applicants to supply information on their relevant skills and experience when applying for roles that did not rely on traditional CV and personal statement formats, in particular the use of anonymised application forms.<sup>39</sup>

20. Advisory Assessment Panels serve an important role in the appointment process. The panel determines the shortlist, interviews candidates, and produces a list of

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31 C&AG’s Report, para 14

32 Cabinet Office, Public Appointments [Diversity Action Plan 2019](#), page 5

33 Q 72; C&AG’s Report, para 14

34 Q 68

35 Q 72

36 Qq 62, 68–71

37 Q 74

38 Qq 82, 83

39 [Correspondence from Cabinet Office to Public Accounts Committee](#), 26 March 2024

appointable candidates. The appointing minister then chooses from among the list of appointable candidates.<sup>40</sup> We challenged the Cabinet Office on whether it was committed to making sure that Advisory Assessment Panels are diverse and reflect the experience and background that it wants to see in applicants for public appointments. The Cabinet Office responded that Ministers are responsible for agreeing the composition of Advisory Assessment Panels.<sup>41</sup>

21. We asked the Cabinet Office if it monitors and publishes a breakdown of the diversity of panel members, including gender and ethnicity details. The Cabinet Office said that it does not monitor the composition of Advisory Assessment Panels. It told us that Advisory Assessment Panels are dealt with within each department. However, it told us that there may be ways in which it could monitor panel composition more effectively that it could take away to consider.<sup>42</sup> One of the ways it could do this would be to proactively provide feedback for unsuccessful candidates.<sup>43</sup> The Cabinet Office undertook to review the feasibility and usefulness of compiling data on the diversity makeup of members of Advisory Assessment Panels, with a view to examining any diversity trends in the composition of those panels.<sup>44</sup> We challenged the Cabinet Office on whether the process by which the minister appoints the panel, the panel produces a list of appointable candidates, and the Ministers then selects from that list is an insular and circular process. The Cabinet Office responded that it could see how it could appear this way.<sup>45</sup>

## Outreach activities

22. The Cabinet Office told us that one of its priorities is outreach, to develop a talent pool of potential applicants. The Government’s Lead Non-Executive and the Commissioner for Public Appointments have also declared their intention to improve outreach. The Cabinet Office told us that it has reached out to private-sector professionals, volunteers, veterans, disabled peoples’ forums, and faith communities.<sup>46</sup> The Cabinet Office has also held “roadshow” events for prospective applicants, including in Darlington, Exeter, and Edinburgh.<sup>47</sup> A Boardroom Apprentice Scheme has been rolled out, led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which offers opportunities for people with no previous board experience to learn how a board works, both receiving classroom training and practical experience.<sup>48</sup>

23. We questioned the witnesses about their outreach initiatives and how success will be measured. When we asked how they measured success of “roadshow” events, the Cabinet Office told us that it tracks whether people sign up on the website and noted that 84% of attendees to the outreach events it has held so far strongly agree that they would recommend interest or involvement in the public appointments process to friends or colleagues. It told us that it was continuing to measure data against gender and ethnicity, but that its measures are less good for social background and it has not analysed by professional background either. The Government’s Lead Non-Executive noted that hosting outreach

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40 C&AG’s Report, para 3

41 Q 73

42 Q 81

43 Q 88

44 [Correspondence from Cabinet Office to Public Accounts Committee](#), 26 March 2024

45 Q 75

46 Q 77; C&AG’s Report, paras 13, 3.12, 3.13

47 C&AG’s Report, para 3.12

48 Q 84; C&AG’s Report, Figure 12



evens is a big cost to Government so it needs to be sure that what it is doing is working. He told us that it is important that Cabinet Office measures the impact and holds itself to account for whether these activities are successful.<sup>49</sup> When we asked how the new website might help broaden outreach, the Cabinet Office told us that it was recycling candidates from past searches who were found appointable but were not appointed. When we asked what was being done to reach new talent, the Cabinet Office assured us it was seeing fresh talent coming through but also want to make use of ‘near misses’ from past campaigns. When we asked if it was advertising opportunities in places where they would be seen by diverse audiences, the Cabinet Office told us that it was primarily using the official government website. It told us that 12,000 people had registered for the government website and approximately 5,000 had uploaded their CVs.<sup>50</sup>

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49 Q 80

50 Qq 77–79

# Formal minutes

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**Monday 29 April 2024**

## **Members present**

Dame Meg Hillier, in the Chair

Mr Mark Francois

Peter Grant

Ben Lake

Anne Marie Morris

Sarah Olney

Sarah Owen

Matt Warman

## **Non-executive appointments**

Draft Report (*Non-executive appointments*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 23 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Introduction agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Thirtieth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Wednesday 8 May at 1.00 p.m.

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Monday 18 March 2024

**Sir Alex Chisholm KCB**, Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office; **Michael Jary**, Government Lead Non-Executive, Cabinet Office; **Simon Madden**, Director, Propriety & Ethics, Cabinet Office; **Elizabeth Passey**, Chair, Rural Payments Agency [Q1-106](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

NED numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Cook, Mr Nigel ([NED0001](#))
- 2 The Institute for Government ([NED0002](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The New Hospital Programme	HC 77
2nd	The condition of school buildings	HC 78
3rd	Revising health assessments for disability benefits	HC 79
4th	The Department for Work & Pensions Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23	HC 290
5th	Government's programme of waste reforms	HC 333
6th	Competition in public procurement	HC 385
7th	Resilience to flooding	HC 71
8th	Improving Defence Inventory Management	HC 66
9th	Whole of Government Accounts 2020–21	HC 65
10th	HS2 and Euston	HC 67
11th	Reducing the harm from illegal drugs	HC 72
12th	Cross-government working	HC 75
13th	Preparedness for online safety regulation	HC 73
14th	Homes for Ukraine	HC 69
15th	Managing government borrowing	HC 74
16th	HMRC performance in 2022–23	HC 76
17th	Cabinet Office functional savings	HC 423
18th	Excess Votes 2022–23	HC 589
19th	MoD Equipment Plan 2023–2033	HC 451
20th	Monitoring and responding to companies in distress	HC 425
21st	Levelling up funding to local government	HC 424
22nd	Reforming adult social care in England	HC 427
23rd	Civil service workforce: Recruitment, pay and performance management	HC 452
24th	NHS Supply Chain and efficiencies in procurement	HC 453
25th	Scrutiny of sound financial practice across Government	HC 673
26th	The BBC's implementation of Across the UK	HC 426
27th	Government resilience: extreme weather	HC 454
28th	Student loans issued to those studying at franchised higher education providers	HC 455

29th	Progress in implementing Universal Credit	HC 458
1st Special Report	Eighth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 628

### Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2020–21	HC 59
2nd	Lessons from implementing IR35 reforms	HC 60
3rd	The future of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors	HC 118
4th	Use of evaluation and modelling in government	HC 254
5th	Local economic growth	HC 252
6th	Department of Health and Social Care 2020–21 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 253
7th	Armoured Vehicles: the Ajax programme	HC 259
8th	Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England	HC 257
9th	Child Maintenance	HC 255
10th	Restoration and Renewal of Parliament	HC 49
11th	The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme in England	HC 258
12th	Management of PPE contracts	HC 260
13th	Secure training centres and secure schools	HC 30
14th	Investigation into the British Steel Pension Scheme	HC 251
15th	The Police Uplift Programme	HC 261
16th	Managing cross-border travel during the COVID-19 pandemic	HC 29
17th	Government's contracts with Randox Laboratories Ltd	HC 28
18th	Government actions to combat waste crime	HC 33
19th	Regulating after EU Exit	HC 32
20th	Whole of Government Accounts 2019–20	HC 31
21st	Transforming electronic monitoring services	HC 34
22nd	Tackling local air quality breaches	HC 37
23rd	Measuring and reporting public sector greenhouse gas emissions	HC 39
24th	Redevelopment of Defra's animal health infrastructure	HC 42
25th	Regulation of energy suppliers	HC 41
26th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2021–22 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 44
27th	Evaluating innovation projects in children's social care	HC 38
28th	Improving the Accounting Officer Assessment process	HC 43

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
29th	The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015	HC 684
30th	Developing workforce skills for a strong economy	HC 685
31st	Managing central government property	HC 48
32nd	Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity	HC 46
33rd	HMRC performance in 2021–22	HC 686
34th	The Creation of the UK Infrastructure Bank	HC 45
35th	Introducing Integrated Care Systems	HC 47
36th	The Defence digital strategy	HC 727
37th	Support for vulnerable adolescents	HC 730
38th	Managing NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 729
39th	Excess Votes 2021–22	HC 1132
40th	COVID employment support schemes	HC 810
41st	Driving licence backlogs at the DVLA	HC 735
42nd	The Restart Scheme for long-term unemployed people	HC 733
43rd	Progress combatting fraud	HC 40
44th	The Digital Services Tax	HC 732
45th	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2021–22	HC 1254
46th	BBC Digital	HC 736
47th	Investigation into the UK Passport Office	HC 738
48th	MoD Equipment Plan 2022–2032	HC 731
49th	Managing tax compliance following the pandemic	HC 739
50th	Government Shared Services	HC 734
51st	Tackling Defra’s ageing digital services	HC 737
52nd	Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall	HC 1021
53rd	The performance of UK Security Vetting	HC 994
54th	Alcohol treatment services	HC 1001
55th	Education recovery in schools in England	HC 998
56th	Supporting investment into the UK	HC 996
57th	AEA Technology Pension Case	HC 1005
58th	Energy bills support	HC 1074
59th	Decarbonising the power sector	HC 1003
60th	Timeliness of local auditor reporting	HC 995
61st	Progress on the courts and tribunals reform programme	HC 1002
62nd	Department of Health and Social Care 2021–22 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 997

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
63rd	HS2 Euston	HC 1004
64th	The Emergency Services Network	HC 1006
65th	Progress in improving NHS mental health services	HC 1000
66th	PPE Medpro: awarding of contracts during the pandemic	HC 1590
67th	Child Trust Funds	HC 1231
68th	Local authority administered COVID support schemes in England	HC 1234
69th	Tackling fraud and corruption against government	HC 1230
70th	Digital transformation in government: addressing the barriers to efficiency	HC 1229
71st	Resetting government programmes	HC 1231
72nd	Update on the rollout of smart meters	HC 1332
73rd	Access to urgent and emergency care	HC 1336
74th	Bulb Energy	HC 1232
75th	Active travel in England	HC 1335
76th	The Asylum Transformation Programme	HC 1334
77th	Supported housing	HC 1330
78th	Resettlement support for prison leavers	HC 1329
79th	Support for innovation to deliver net zero	HC 1331
80th	Progress with Making Tax Digital	HC 1333
1st Special Report	Sixth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 50
2nd Special Report	Seventh Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 1055

### Session 2021–22

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	Low emission cars	HC 186
2nd	BBC strategic financial management	HC 187
3rd	COVID-19: Support for children's education	HC 240
4th	COVID-19: Local government finance	HC 239
5th	COVID-19: Government Support for Charities	HC 250
6th	Public Sector Pensions	HC 289
7th	Adult Social Care Markets	HC 252
8th	COVID 19: Culture Recovery Fund	HC 340
9th	Fraud and Error	HC 253

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
10th	Overview of the English rail system	HC 170
11th	Local auditor reporting on local government in England	HC 171
12th	COVID 19: Cost Tracker Update	HC 173
13th	Initial lessons from the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic	HC 175
14th	Windrush Compensation Scheme	HC 174
15th	DWP Employment support	HC 177
16th	Principles of effective regulation	HC 176
17th	High Speed 2: Progress at Summer 2021	HC 329
18th	Government's delivery through arm's-length bodies	HC 181
19th	Protecting consumers from unsafe products	HC 180
20th	Optimising the defence estate	HC 179
21st	School Funding	HC 183
22nd	Improving the performance of major defence equipment contracts	HC 185
23rd	Test and Trace update	HC 182
24th	Crossrail: A progress update	HC 184
25th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2020–21 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 633
26th	Lessons from Greensill Capital: accreditation to business support schemes	HC 169
27th	Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme	HC 635
28th	Efficiency in government	HC 636
29th	The National Law Enforcement Data Programme	HC 638
30th	Challenges in implementing digital change	HC 637
31st	Environmental Land Management Scheme	HC 639
32nd	Delivering gigabitcapable broadband	HC 743
33rd	Underpayments of the State Pension	HC 654
34th	Local Government Finance System: Overview and Challenges	HC 646
35th	The pharmacy early payment and salary advance schemes in the NHS	HC 745
36th	EU Exit: UK Border post transition	HC 746
37th	HMRC Performance in 2020–21	HC 641
38th	COVID-19 cost tracker update	HC 640
39th	DWP Employment Support: Kickstart Scheme	HC 655
40th	Excess votes 2020–21: Serious Fraud Office	HC 1099
41st	Achieving Net Zero: Follow up	HC 642
42nd	Financial sustainability of schools in England	HC 650



<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
43rd	Reducing the backlog in criminal courts	HC 643
44th	NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 747
45th	Progress with trade negotiations	HC 993
46th	Government preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons for government on risk	HC 952
47th	Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20	HC 994
48th	HMRC's management of tax debt	HC 953
49th	Regulation of private renting	HC 996
50th	Bounce Back Loans Scheme: Follow-up	HC 951
51st	Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system	HC 997
52nd	Ministry of Defence Equipment Plan 2021–31	HC 1164
1st Special Report	Fifth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 222

### Session 2019–21

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities	HC 85
2nd	Defence Nuclear Infrastructure	HC 86
3rd	High Speed 2: Spring 2020 Update	HC 84
4th	EU Exit: Get ready for Brexit Campaign	HC 131
5th	University technical colleges	HC 87
6th	Excess votes 2018–19	HC 243
7th	Gambling regulation: problem gambling and protecting vulnerable people	HC 134
8th	NHS capital expenditure and financial management	HC 344
9th	Water supply and demand management	HC 378
10th	Defence capability and the Equipment Plan	HC 247
11th	Local authority investment in commercial property	HC 312
12th	Management of tax reliefs	HC 379
13th	Whole of Government Response to COVID-19	HC 404
14th	Readying the NHS and social care for the COVID-19 peak	HC 405
15th	Improving the prison estate	HC 244
16th	Progress in remediating dangerous cladding	HC 406
17th	Immigration enforcement	HC 407
18th	NHS nursing workforce	HC 408

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
19th	Restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster	HC 549
20th	Tackling the tax gap	HC 650
21st	Government support for UK exporters	HC 679
22nd	Digital transformation in the NHS	HC 680
23rd	Delivering carrier strike	HC 684
24th	Selecting towns for the Towns Fund	HC 651
25th	Asylum accommodation and support transformation programme	HC 683
26th	Department of Work and Pensions Accounts 2019–20	HC 681
27th	Covid-19: Supply of ventilators	HC 685
28th	The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's management of the Magnox contract	HC 653
29th	Whitehall preparations for EU Exit	HC 682
30th	The production and distribution of cash	HC 654
31st	Starter Homes	HC 88
32nd	Specialist Skills in the civil service	HC 686
33rd	Covid-19: Bounce Back Loan Scheme	HC 687
34th	Covid-19: Support for jobs	HC 920
35th	Improving Broadband	HC 688
36th	HMRC performance 2019–20	HC 690
37th	Whole of Government Accounts 2018–19	HC 655
38th	Managing colleges' financial sustainability	HC 692
39th	Lessons from major projects and programmes	HC 694
40th	Achieving government's long-term environmental goals	HC 927
41st	COVID 19: the free school meals voucher scheme	HC 689
42nd	COVID-19: Government procurement and supply of Personal Protective Equipment	HC 928
43rd	COVID-19: Planning for a vaccine Part 1	HC 930
44th	Excess Votes 2019–20	HC 1205
45th	Managing flood risk	HC 931
46th	Achieving Net Zero	HC 935
47th	COVID-19: Test, track and trace (part 1)	HC 932
48th	Digital Services at the Border	HC 936
49th	COVID-19: housing people sleeping rough	HC 934
50th	Defence Equipment Plan 2020–2030	HC 693
51st	Managing the expiry of PFI contracts	HC 1114
52nd	Key challenges facing the Ministry of Justice	HC 1190

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
53rd	Covid 19: supporting the vulnerable during lockdown	HC 938
54th	Improving single living accommodation for service personnel	HC 940
55th	Environmental tax measures	HC 937
56th	Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund	HC 941