



House of Commons
Public Administration
and Constitutional Affairs
Committee

**Strategic Leadership
in the Civil Service:
Sustaining Self-
Governance and
Future Capability
while Supporting the
Government of the Day**

Nineteenth Report of Session 2017–19

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

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 16 July 2019*

HC 1536
Published on 22 July 2019
by authority of the House of Commons

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

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

Current membership

[Sir Bernard Jenkin MP](#) (*Conservative, Harwich and North Essex*) (Chair)

[Ronnie Cowan MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Inverclyde*)

[Mr Marcus Fysh MP](#) (*Conservative, Yeovil*)

[Dame Cheryl Gillan MP](#) (*Conservative, Chesham and Amersham*)

[Kelvin Hopkins MP](#) (*Independent, Luton North*)

[Dr Rupa Huq MP](#) (*Labour, Ealing Central and Acton*)

[Mr David Jones MP](#) (*Conservative, Clwyd West*)

[David Morris MP](#) (*Conservative, Morecambe and Lunesdale*)

[Tulip Siddiq MP](#) (*Labour, Hampstead and Kilburn*)

[Eleanor Smith MP](#) (*Labour, Wolverhampton South West*)

Powers

The committee is a select committee, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 146. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2019. This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament Licence, which is published at www.parliament.uk/copyright

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/pacac and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

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

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3268; the Committee's email address is pacac@parliament.uk.

You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsPACAC](#)

Contents

Summary	3
1 Introduction	5
2 The Evolution of Civil Service Learning and Development	8
Civil Service Learning	9
3 The Academy System	12
4 The Civil Service Leadership Academy	16
5 National Leadership Centre	20
6 Governance	24
Conclusions and recommendations	30
Formal minutes	35
Witnesses	36
Published written evidence	37
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament	38

Summary

The Civil Service is one of the great institutions of state which underpins our political and constitutional stability. It has no separate legal personality, and is accountable to ministers and to Parliament, yet it must also provide for its own sustainability and governance. It must provide itself with the leadership and capability which governments need, while remaining accountable to the government of the day.

Civil Service learning and development has undergone significant change since the closure of the National School of Government in 2012. This was a premature decision and has left a void which has not been filled by the body that replaced it, Civil Service Learning, and leaves the UK looking the odd one out, compared to other comparable countries which have retained a permanent institution for the learning and development of their civil service. Since then, a range of specialist academies have been established, reflecting the greater prominence of the cross-departmental Professions and Functions in the Civil Service. In addition, the Civil Service Leadership Academy and the National Leadership Centre have each been established to address leadership capability at more senior levels.

The Committee welcomes these developments, and the recognition of the importance of supplementing the Civil Service's traditional emphasis on experiential or "on the job" learning with more conceptual and reflective learning. However, these new bodies have emerged largely *ad hoc*, rather than as the product of coherent strategy. The Government refers to its "academy system" but there is little evidence of the coherence that would be implied by this term. There are academies for certain areas but not for others. How the various parts of the "academy system" relate to each other is far from apparent.

The Civil Service Leadership Academy was established in 2017 to improve leadership capability in the Senior Civil Service. The Committee supports its efforts, but it has very limited resources. It has no permanent location and no proper faculty. After nearly two years in operation, it now warrants some core funding which should be used to establish a permanent home and dedicated faculty. These measures would go some way to filling the void left by the closure of the National School for Government.

The National Leadership Centre is a separate, Treasury-led initiative intended to improve productivity by developing leadership capability across the public sector, not just in the Civil Service. It has been given £21m for the first three years, which makes the £800,000 for the Civil Service Leadership Academy look derisory. The National Leadership Centre's relationship with the emerging academies, including the Civil Service Leadership Academy, remains unclear, but we recommend the Government pursues the model envisaged to ensure it obtains a permanent HQ, some capacity to conduct research into public sector leadership, and provides a space for leaders to learn from each other. The Civil Service Leadership Academy should be given equivalent funding.

It is clear that significant efforts are being made to address concerns about capability and leadership development in the Civil Service. Overall, some £600m is spent across Whitehall on learning and development, but decentralisation has been at the expense of coordination and accountability. We find it astonishing that so little is known about

how this money is spent. This raises fundamental questions about the leadership and governance of learning and development in the Civil Service. This is central to the sense of the Civil Service as an institution and its idea of itself.

We have no idea who the Head of the Civil Service should hold responsible for Civil Service learning and development. We recommend that the government identifies an individual or body to be accountable for this responsibility. We welcome that the Civil Service is taking steps to address its learning and development, but ministers must also give active support. The governance and strategy for civil service learning and development should be set out in a white paper, with the support of the Prime Minister, who holds the title, Minister for the Civil Service.

Drawing on the evidence of this and previous enquiries, we recommend establishing a new institution, building on the Civil Service Leadership Academy, in a permanent location, capable over time of delivering the full spectrum of civil service learning and development, through residential courses. As part of the Cabinet Office, this would be the body to hold the key information about what learning and development provision is being made available, and for whom. It would fill gaps in provision and develop synergies with separate provision provided by departments and the academies. It should work alongside and support the new National Leadership Centre. This would also provide a space for Civil Service leaders to enable the Civil Service as an institution to become more mindful of itself, its values and ethos, and how to sustain its internal governance, as well as its capability.

1 Introduction

1. The Civil Service, alongside the Diplomatic Service, constitutes one of the great institutions of state. It underpins political and constitutional stability. It is a permanent and impartial official administrative service which also must adapt to changing times and changing governments. It has no separate legal personality from the government of the day, and is accountable to ministers and to Parliament, yet it must also provide for its own sustainability and governance. The governance, leadership and capability of the Civil Service is a topic to which this Committee and its predecessors have returned in several inquiries.¹ The Civil Service has undergone significant change in recent years in order to address concerns about its capability. This inquiry and this report address how the Civil Service can best provide itself with the leadership and capability which governments need: how it should provide for its own governance and leadership while remaining accountable to the government of the day.

2. The National School for Government (NSG) was abolished in 2012 as part of the Public Bodies Reform Programme by the then-Minister for the Cabinet Office, Lord Maude. It was only partly replaced by Civil Service Learning (CSL), a new body established under the Civil Service Reform Plan.² Since then, a number of academies have been established to fill gaps left in the absence of NSG. NSG had also provided a forum for people, aside from line management, who had the time to think about the Civil Service as an institution, and about its future leadership and governance.

3. As well as learning and development in specialist areas where the Civil Service wanted to strengthen its capability, the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) was established to develop leadership capability in the Senior Civil Service (SCS). It is now approaching its second birthday and the National Leadership Centre (NLC) has also been established as a separate initiative to address senior leadership capability across the wider public service. We address the relationship between these two initiatives in this report.

4. The 2012 Civil Service Reform Plan laid emphasis on the specialist, cross-departmental Professions and Functions, and this development is proving to be a significant and lasting reform. The Professions established frameworks of skills required by those in their area throughout the Civil Service. Functions have been established to better coordinate the corporate functions that departments have in common, in areas such as HR, digital, or contracting.³ Both the Functions and Professions are working across Government in areas that have traditionally been dealt with by individual departments. Meanwhile, less thought was given to concerns about Civil Service governance and leadership and capability which have been tested by the preparations for leaving the European Union.

5. Some consistent themes have emerged across our previous reports. The most immediate of these is the continuing concern about issues relating to Civil Service capability. The Civil Service needs the skills to do the demanding job it faces and these need to be actively nurtured. But a coordinated and coherent strategy to deliver this has

1 See, for example: PASC [Truth to Power: How Civil Service Reform can Succeed](#) 8th Report of Session 2013–14 HC74; PASC [Civil Service Skills: A Unified Approach](#), 4th Report of Session 2014–15, HC112; PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497

2 HM Government [Civil Service Reform Plan](#) June 2012, p. 23

3 We discuss the roles of Functions and Professions in our report, [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, chapter 4.

been lacking.⁴ In addition, the leadership and organisational culture to ensure that these skills can be properly deployed is just as significant.⁵ In particular, officials need to be equipped to give Ministers honest advice; to “speak truth to power”. We addressed this in our recent report, *The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness*.⁶

6. We have been concerned with the over-reliance on “experiential” or “on the job” learning at the expense of conceptual and reflective forms of learning (see Box 1 below). The closure of the NSG was significant because it deprived the Civil Service of a safe space in which this experiential learning could be supplemented with conceptual and, in particular, reflective learning.⁷

Box 1. Types of Learning

The Public Administration Select Committee’s (PASC) report on Civil Service Skills drew on the distinction between four types of learning that formed part of Professor Colin Talbot’s (University of Manchester) evidence to that inquiry. We reproduce part of that evidence here.⁸

Experiential learning is simply ‘learning on the job’—gaining knowledge and skills by doing the job, and possibly by observing those around you doing similar jobs. Historically this has been the principal way of developing civil service leaders. This includes the convention of moving aspirant leaders around between different (mainly policy) jobs which they do for relatively short periods (typically 2–3 years at most).

Reflective learning is an approach that involves individuals engaging in roles and then reflecting on what did and did not work. Most often this involves some sort of mentor who helps with the reflection and is akin, in some ways, to an apprenticeship. The approach has a well-developed theoretical and research base and is widely used in professional development: teaching, medicine, nursing, architecture, etc.

Conceptual learning is the more traditional training and educational, classroom-based, style of development in which participants acquire knowledge, concepts, and theories from more knowledgeable teachers or trainers. This was described as “the forte of the Civil Service College, and its successor organizations”, which provided this sort of development to tens of thousands of civil servants. Of course, there has always been a lot of non-Civil Service College provision of such training and development: in-house courses run by departments and agencies; external courses from a range of providers; and higher education courses linked to qualifications.

4 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, chapter six; PASC [Civil Service Skills: A Unified Approach](#), 4th Report of Session 2014–15, HC112

5 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, chapter one; PASC [Truth to Power: How Civil Service Reform can Succeed](#) 8th Report of Session 2013–14 HC74

6 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497

7 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, chapter six

8 PASC [Civil Service Skills: A Unified Approach](#), 4th Report of Session 2014–15, HC112, para.38

Experimental learning originated in the ideas of a British educational innovator, Reg Revans, in the post-War National Coal Board. Revans pioneered ‘action learning’, an approach which involved managers engaging in ‘active experimentation’ in their jobs and then discussing the results with a group of peers (‘action learning sets’ in the jargon). There have been many variants on this idea and the practice has waxed and waned several times over the past half-century, but it still has many adherents.

7. In the course of this inquiry, it has become apparent that the landscape continues to evolve. The CSLA has been active since its establishment but still has no permanent location. There are plans to develop one, but this is dependent on money being made available. There remain outstanding issues to resolve with the NLC before it becomes operational. Furthermore, we have found no evidence that thought has been given to the way in which these two bodies complement the Professional academies. The Government’s written evidence said that “Our model is built on a system of dedicated professional Academies”,⁹ but we could not find anyone who is accountable for this “model” or who has designed or has a settled concept for such a “system”. Nonetheless, the leadership of the Civil Service are making efforts to address long-standing problems, such as the over-reliance on experiential learning and the lack of skills and capability in key specialist areas. The overall purpose of our inquiry and of this report is to make recommendations on how to strengthen the coherence of learning and development of civil servants, and in particular, to identify how a more strategic leadership and better governance can underpin a stronger, more self-sustaining Civil Service

8. Over the course of this inquiry, we have held four oral evidence sessions. We received ten written submissions. A list of those contributing evidence is included at the end of this report. We thank all those who contributed to the inquiry, including our specialist adviser, Dr Gillian Stamp.

2 The Evolution of Civil Service Learning and Development

9. Concerns about the technical proficiency of the Civil Service have been a recurring theme. Key features of the modern Civil Service—permanence, non-partisanship, merit-based recruitment and advancement—established following the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854), were a response to concerns about its competence.¹⁰ Over fifty years later, the Haldane Report concluded that:

... in the sphere of civil government the duty of investigation and thought, as preliminary to action, might with great advantage be more definitely recognised. It appears to us that adequate provision has not been made in the past for the organised acquisition of facts and information; and for the systematic application of thought, as preliminary to the settlement of policy and its subsequent administration.¹¹

10. In a similar vein, the 1968 Fulton Report criticised the “philosophy of the amateur” or “gifted layman” that was considered to dominate.¹² The Civil Service primarily recruited those with no prior expertise or specialism and gave them little formal training. Fulton was critical of the pre-eminence of generalists at the heart of the Civil Service and the institutional scepticism of specialist knowledge. One of the proposals to remedy this culture of amateurism was the establishment of the Civil Service College (CSC). The CSC was clearly inspired by the French *École Nationale d’Administration* (ENA). In France, ENA was established to provide postgraduate, pre-recruitment training in public administration and policy for aspirant public service leaders and was a key part of post-Second World War efforts to ensure recruitment to senior public service roles was meritocratic rather than dependent on patronage. Since the establishment of ENA, senior public service roles in France have been dominated by ENA graduates (known as “les Énarques”). Whereas ENA provides pre-recruitment training, the CSC was established to provide training for those already in post. However, ENA’s focus on both improving skills and on inculcating a particular professional ethos were apparent within the CSC model:

... the emphasis on professionalism in the Fulton Report did point to a Civil Service College of the ENA calibre.¹³

11. Although the CSC lasted until 1999, it never established itself at the heart of Whitehall in the way that ENA has in the French public service.¹⁴ The CSC struggled to strike a balance between the provision of mass introductory training for new recruits

10 [Report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service 1854](#)

11 [Report of the Machinery of Government Committee 1918](#) p.6

12 Fulton Committee *The Report of the Committee on the Civil Service* Cmnd 3638, 1968, p.11

13 G.K Fry *Reforming the Civil Service: The Fulton Committee on the British Home Civil Service 1966–1968* Edinburgh University Press, 1993, p.272

14 It has been argued that ENA has become too central and it has been the subject of heavy criticism. Although ENA initially succeeded in removing the discredited aristocratic dominance of the French public sector and replacing it with a fiercely meritocratic system, Énarques have increasingly been portrayed as a self-perpetuating, remote, intellectual elite, dominating the highest echelons of public and corporate life in France. At the time of writing, ENA’s future appears far from assured. [President Macron](#), the fourth Énarque to become president after Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Jacques Chirac and François Hollande, recently suggested abolishing ENA. See V. Mallet “Emmanuel Macron’s plan to close ENA shakes French elite” [Financial Times](#) 18 April 2019.

and higher-level training for senior grades (apparently its originally intended purpose).¹⁵ This was exacerbated after it moved to a “hard charging” model in 1989, making it reliant on income from fees charged to departments rather than its own core funding, a change which incentivised the delivery of mass training.¹⁶

12. This tension between mass and higher level training was also apparent in complaints made about the training provided by the CSC, with some Permanent Secretaries reportedly complaining that course content was too abstract. They themselves did not participate in CSC training, apparently on the grounds that they already knew enough.¹⁷ The result was that departments were often ambivalent about the CSC and sometimes reluctant to release staff for training. This ambivalence transmitted to civil servants more generally, who never regarded it as a significant part of their career development. Unlike the students at ENA, those attending the CSC had already embarked on Civil Service careers, progress in which they felt depended on on-the-job performance rather than continued professional development.¹⁸

13. In 1999, the CSC was absorbed into the newly established Centre for Management and Policy Studies (CMPS) in the Cabinet Office as part of an attempt to draw together and improve management, leadership and policy capability. However, in 2005, CMPS was closed and the National School of Government (NSG) established along similar lines to the CSC.¹⁹ Largely based at Sunningdale Park in Berkshire, the NSG was, like the CSC, reliant on income from course fees which meant that it faced the same incentive to offer mass training to maximise its income at the expense of training for senior leaders.²⁰ The NSG proved no more long-lived than its predecessor: it was closed in 2012 under the Coalition Government’s Public Bodies Reform Programme.

Civil Service Learning

14. With the NSG’s closure, responsibility for Civil Service-wide learning and development moved to a new body, Civil Service Learning (CSL).²¹ CSL was established on a different model. In sharp contrast to CSC or NSG, CSL has no physical location. It has little institutional presence and is not intended to lead thinking about the Civil Service. It acts primarily as a central commissioning body for mass training, rather than as a delivery body. It was established to make greater use of external providers and of online delivery rather than more expensive, face-to-face teaching. The Civil Service Reform Plan claimed that this would lead to substantial savings:

15 P. Hennesy *Whitehall* Pimlico, 2001, p.525

16 C Haddon [Reforming the Civil Service: The Centre for Management and Policy Studies, 1999–2005](#) Institute for Government 2012, p.7

17 G.K Fry *Reforming the Civil Service: The Fulton Committee on the British Home Civil Service 1966–1968* Edinburgh University Press, 1993, p.272

18 G.K. Fry *Reforming the Civil Service: The Fulton Committee on the British Home Civil Service 1966–1968* Edinburgh University Press, 1993, p.269

19 A study of the birth and death of the CMPS suggests it failed to deliver the improved policy capability that was hoped for, with that failure attributable, in varying degrees, to a lack of clarity of purpose, tensions between the centre of government and departments, leadership issues, and number of competing initiatives. The failure did not lie in its learning and development, though the recurrence of similar issues under the National School of Government suggests it did not cure them either. See C Haddon [Reforming the Civil Service: The Centre for Management and Policy Studies, 1999–2005](#) Institute for Government 2012.

20 J. Burnham and R. Pyper *Britain’s Modernised Civil Service* Palgrave, 2008, p. 204

21 Cabinet Office [Shake-Up of Civil Service Training](#) 1 March 2012

Through making greater use of technology, collaborating across departments and extracting best value from suppliers, CSL will not only provide a better service but will realise annual savings of £90m (compared to 2009/10).²²

15. CSL was itself run by a commercial provider, with Capita awarded the initial contract to run it. Lord Maude who, as Minister for the Cabinet Office, had closed the NSG and established CSL, also questioned the need for much Civil Service-specific learning and development, particularly for leaders who he thought would benefit from training alongside their private sector peers.

There are some specific bureaucratic skills that need to be done in a Civil Service context, but a lot of the other skills should not be delivered just for civil servants. It is about getting the senior leaders into the top leadership programmes in top business schools, where they are learning alongside big figures in their peer group in the private sector and other sectors, because they learn from each other.²³

16. The Cabinet Office claimed that closing the NSG and establishing CSL had achieved almost all of the anticipated savings (£89 million of the predicted £90 million). The NAO was unable to verify the figure though it did confirm that some savings had been achieved.²⁴ However, whether CSL constituted better value for money than the NSG is more doubtful. The new modes of delivery by CSL do enable wider access to courses than the NSG did. However, a 2015 report by the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) suggested that the cost of this has been the provision of a “lighter and narrower” training offering.²⁵ Furthermore, PASC’s report concluded that CSL had not properly continued aspects of training previously offered by the NSG, with the provision for enhancing “skills, expertise and culture required to lead and manage change in ... complex situations” particularly suffering in the absence of a dedicated, residential location.²⁶ PACAC has also studied the civil service in comparable countries. The Canada School for Public Service, which our predecessor Committee visited in 2017, has both a dedicated residential location as well as providing for distance learning (so necessary in such a geographically large nation). Germany educates its civil servants at the German University for Public Administration, a postgraduate college that aims to educate future senior civil servants. Many large companies also make in-house provision for their learning and development. The UK appears now to be the odd one out, lacking any institution analogous to these which is dedicated to the learning and development of our civil servants. In his written evidence to this inquiry, Julian McCrae (King’s College London) was critical of CSL’s role:

The abolition of the National School of Government (NSG) and replacement with Civil Service Learning (CSL) was probably a mistake, largely because of the serious weaknesses in the CSL model. This included an overly centralised, complex commissioning model. Its provision was also underfunded. For example, e-delivery was used as means of cutting costs, rather than a way of opening access to high quality provision.²⁷

22 HM Government [Civil Service Reform Plan](#) June 2012, p.23

23 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) Fifth Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC 497 para. 127

24 NAO [Our enquiries into Civil Service Learning’s contract with Capita](#) March 2015, para. 61

25 PASC [Developing Civil Service Skills: A Unified Approach](#) 4th Report of Session 2014–15 HC 112 para 70

26 PASC [Developing Civil Service Skills: A Unified Approach](#) 4th Report of Session 2014–15 HC 112 paras 62–7

27 [SLC005](#), para. 9

17. In evidence to our inquiry into Civil Service Effectiveness, Rupert McNeil, the Civil Service’s Chief People Officer, told us that he did not think the way in which CSL was established “was right”.²⁸ The Cabinet Office’s written submission to this inquiry seems to concede that earlier efforts to rely on the market to deliver Civil Service learning and development, with CSL as the commissioning portal, had not been fully effective and that decisions to outsource were driven by cost rather than quality:

... the correct balance between in-house and outsourced provision is determined by cost-effectiveness. Quality of provision is the primary concern alongside cost. We recognise that in iterations of provision since 2012, the balance has at times favoured outsourcing, and we have attended to feedback from users across the Civil Service on implications of this for the quality of delivery and content.²⁹

The Cabinet Office’s written evidence goes on to say that, now, “the balance has been reset between in-house and outsourced provision”, particularly with the “leaders teaching leaders” approach that we were told had particularly been emphasised by the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) and in the training provided by the Policy Profession.³⁰

18. We reiterate the conclusion of our earlier report, as well as those of our predecessor Committees, that, despite its shortcomings, the closure of the National School for Government was premature and left a void that has not been filled. In particular, the need for a dedicated facility where Civil Servants can reflect on their experiences and share them with their peers is as significant now as it was when the Civil Service College was first established. We also note how the closure of National School for Government has made the UK the odd one out, compared with countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, France, or New Zealand. Most have a permanent institution, dedicated to the learning and development of civil servants. However, the closure of the NSG has also acted as catalyst to some of the positive developments that we go on to discuss in the remainder of this report.

28 PACAC [Civil Service Effectiveness](#), HC497, Q621

29 [SLC03](#)

30 See paras 35–37 below

3 The Academy System

19. An apparently unintended consequence of Civil Service Learning's (CSL) shortcomings has been that individual departments and Professions have taken their own steps to address their learning and development issues. This has seen a number of specialist academies established within the Civil Service. The Government lists the current ones as:

- the Defence Academy;³¹
- the Government Finance Academy;
- the Commercial College;
- the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA);
- the Government Digital Academy;
- the Diplomatic Academy; and
- the HMRC Tax Academy.³²

20. In addition to these, there is also the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), which aims to develop leadership skills in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) grades.³³ The CSLA is discussed in detail in chapter four of this report. For the most part, these academies have been established *ad hoc*, as autonomous operations to address specific requirements, and then run, with limited involvement from CSL even where external partners are involved.³⁴

21. A criticism of the CSC and its successors was that learning and development activity was not well integrated with career progression. Advancement was seen as depending on in-post performance, and training was viewed as an imposition rather than an investment in a civil servant's professional future. It seems that the new system of academies has emerged partly in response to these existing shortcomings, but also as a result of the development of cross-departmental Functions and Professions. Julian McCrae (King's College London) told us that these recent initiatives have better integrated learning and development activity with career progression.³⁵ Catherine Haddon (Institute for Government) also suggested that the NSG's closure had coincided with a greater institutional focus on building and integrating learning and development:

There are signs that, since the abolition of the NSG, there has been an increased focus at the top of the civil service in thinking through how learning and development works alongside career progression and future capacity and in focusing on what support and career pathways are needed to build varied skills able to be applied in the right ways at the right time.³⁶

31 Though included in the list, the Defence Academy differs from the other civil service academies. It was established through a consolidation of a number of other military and defence bodies, with a substantial residential campus at Shrivenham. It and provides learning and development for the armed forces as well as for civil servants.

32 [SLC0003](#) (Cabinet Office), p.13

33 There are around 4500 officials in the various SCS grades. See Institute for Government [Grade Structures of the Civil Service](#) August 2018

34 [Q259](#) (Rupert McNeil)

35 [SLC005](#), para. 13

36 [SL0007](#), para. 11

22. Although some of the curriculum of these specialist academies is delivered by outside bodies—the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA) is delivered in partnership with Oxford University’s Saïd Business School, for example—this clearly differs from a simple reliance on market provision. Furthermore, there is evidence to substantiate claims that the academies have gone some way to resolving the longstanding failure to integrate formal training with career progression. For instance, officials managing major government projects are expected to have graduated from the MPLA; and those entering the SCS will pass through the CSLA and will do so again at key transitional stages of their career. With training tied to cross-government Professions, there is a degree of consistency of standards and approach in areas such as commercial, digital, major project management, HR and finance that has previously been lacking.

23. The greatest steps have been taken in more specialist areas such as digital, project management and HR, some of the areas where Civil Service capability has been identified as lacking.³⁷ By contrast, areas that have traditionally been regarded as the Civil Service’s core business have lagged. For instance, Sir Chris Wormald, the head of the Civil Service’s Policy Profession, suggested that it was less coherent than others.³⁸ It was only in 2018 that the Policy Profession’s Standards Framework was published, outlining the key skills and knowledge that those engaged in policy making in the Civil Service should attain.³⁹ The Framework, he told us, is not prescriptive and the ways in which it is used is left to the discretion of individual Departments:

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.⁴⁰

24. Developing such a Framework, even one which permits considerable discretion to Departments in relation to how it is used, had initially been resisted. To attempt to develop a common framework would, it was claimed, fail to recognise the different approaches and needs of Departments.⁴¹

25. The lack of any external definition of the required skills by a professional association or chartering body has also contributed to the Policy Profession’s relative lack of coherence.⁴² In the absence of this, the Civil Service has had to establish the contents of the Framework itself, setting out “what it means to do policy well” from scratch and doing so in a consensual way that encourages departments to “opt in”.⁴³

26. Sir Chris is apparently mindful of this, adopting a consensual approach to the design and delivery of the Framework. He told us that “we run the Policy Profession as a co-operative of Departments as opposed to a central thing”.⁴⁴ This consensual approach is reinforced by the lack of any core funding for the Policy Profession, meaning it lacks both

37 HM Government [The Civil Service Reform Plan](#) 2012, p.9

38 [Q150](#)

39 Policy Profession [Policy Profession Standards: A Framework for Professional Development](#) 2019

40 [Q160](#)

41 Policy Profession Board [Twelve Actions to Professionalise Policy Making](#) 2013, p.14

42 [Q147](#) (Sir Chris Wormald)

43 [Q21](#) (Julian McCrae)

44 [Q118](#)

the money and capacity to develop and deliver its learning and development activity on its own. Instead it has relied on various Professions to contribute the relevant components in their area. Richard Banks, from the Policy Profession Support Unit, told us:

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 ... We have Government finance, Government legal, devolution colleagues, work centres, economists and loads of people involved in the actual delivery of these learning programmes.⁴⁵

27. The product of these collaborations is a comprehensive Standards Framework encompassing, on the one hand, range of skills grouped under the headings of “the analysis and use of evidence”, “politics and democracy”, and “policy delivery”, and, on the other hand, clear levels of knowledge that range from attaining skills, through applying knowledge, to leading.⁴⁶ Judged by the Standards Framework, the Policy Professional will be something of a polymath.

28. Despite having the main elements in place, the Policy Profession has not, as yet, established an academy of its own, highlighting the lack of a common approach across the Civil Service. There are central guidelines establishing what constitutes a Profession but, once established, Rupert McNeil, the Civil Service’s Chief People Officer, told us that it is largely up to the Professions to decide how to organise their learning and development activities.⁴⁷ Some have used this autonomy to establish academies where others have not, even where the essential components of an academy appear to be in place. Sir Chris told us that there was no particular reason why there was no policy academy: “We could have developed it like that if we had wanted to, we have not so far”.⁴⁸ Reviewing progress, the Policy Profession has conceded that it needs to increase the visibility of its activities and the “embeddedness” of its Standards Framework.⁴⁹ The profile of initiatives such as the MPLA suggests that establishing a Policy Academy might usefully contribute to that by increasing its visibility and “brand”.

29. More fundamental than whether a learning and development framework is packaged as an academy or not, however, is the varying levels of resource apparently available. Some Professions, such as Project Delivery and HR, receive core funding from the Cabinet Office.⁵⁰ The Policy Profession does not and instead relies on a small budget of £800,000, funded through contributions from individual departments. It amounts to around £40 per Profession member per annum.⁵¹ Richard Banks, from the Policy Profession Unit, told us that his unit only has around a third of the staff of comparable Professions.⁵² Profession activity has been collaborative, relying on individual departments to lead cross-departmental initiatives. Whilst a collaborative approach is to be welcomed, the lack of resources means that there has been little alternative.⁵³

45 [Q172](#) (Richard Banks)

46 Policy Profession [Policy Profession Standards: A Framework for Professional Development](#) 2019

47 [Q272](#)

48 [Q151](#)

49 Policy Profession [Looking Back to Look forward: From ‘Twelve Actions’ to ‘Policy Profession 2025’](#) 2019

50 J. McCrae and J. Gold [Professionalising Whitehall](#) Institute for Government 2017, p.40

51 [Q139](#) (Richard Banks)

52 [Q140](#)

53 [Q143](#)

30. The result is that the Policy Profession's activity has apparently lacked profile within the Civil Service. An internal review by the Profession found that only 35% of Profession members felt themselves part of a Civil Service-wide policy community. Less than half knew who their departmental Policy Profession head was, and only 19% knew of the existence of the Policy Profession Unit (though awareness is higher in the SCS).⁵⁴ Attendance at the MPLA is a requirement for those wishing to progress to senior levels in Project Management in the Civil Service. More than 600 have enrolled to date.⁵⁵ By contrast, the Policy Profession's Executive Masters programme, run in conjunction with the London School of Economics and Political Science, is limited to 25 to 30 students a year.⁵⁶

31. Learning and development in the Civil Service has changed significantly since the closure of the National School for Government in 2012. In particular, while departments continue to oversee the development of subject knowledge, this is increasingly supplemented by technical knowledge driven by cross-departmental Professions and Functions, including through a number of new academies. They are now taking responsibility for developing the content, for overseeing its delivery, and for ensuring that it is properly integrated into career progression. Even in the area of policy, which in the past has apparently been both guarded by departments and regarded with a degree of scepticism as a Profession in its own right, there is a clear approach to the development of technical skills alongside subject-specific knowledge. This can only be of benefit in policy development.

32. A system of academies is still evolving but the decentralised approach that has emerged since 2012 has apparently helped to redress the disconnect between learning and development on the one hand and career progression on the other. However, decentralisation has come at the price of consistency of approach and, in particular, in the availability of resources. We regard this as a very significant failing, since this loss of consistency leads to lack of coherence and thus of reputation and public confidence in the Civil Service as a whole. This is a theme we return to in the final chapter of this report.

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

54 Policy Profession [Looking Back to Look forward: From 'Twelve Actions' to 'Policy Profession 2025'](#) 2019, p. 13

55 IPA submission to PACAC inquiry into The Government's Management of Major Projects ([MMP014](#)), para. 83

56 [Q156](#) (Richard Banks)

4 The Civil Service Leadership Academy

34. Most of the Civil Service academies are tied to one of the cross-government Professions (such as digital, HR or project delivery) or a particular area of policy (such as defence or diplomacy). The CSLA had its origins in the Civil Service Workforce Plan (2016) which identified as one of its main tasks the need to “... develop world-class leaders, who are inspiring, confident and empowering”.⁵⁷ Central to achieving this was the establishment of a Leadership Academy that would:

... develop world-class leaders. The academy will work with leading educational institutions and thought leaders to promote an ethos of excellence, where leaders learn from each other. This will help develop leaders who are confident, inspiring and able to create a culture where staff are empowered, listened to and valued.⁵⁸

35. Unlike the National School for Government (NSG) and its predecessors, the CSLA has not combined elite leadership development with mass training. Its focus has been exclusively on the Senior Civil Service (SCS). Within that, it has focussed on preparing SCS members for “transitional phases” in their career. These transitional phases might include initial entry to the SCS but also subsequent moves where progression entails a significant step-change in leadership responsibilities. It also has a role in helping those newly recruited to senior Civil Service roles from outside to acclimatise, addressing some of the concerns of the Baxendale Report on external hires to the Civil Service and that this Committee considered in its report on Civil Service Effectiveness.⁵⁹

36. The CSLA became operational in October 2017 and it appears to have been very active since then. There are around 4500 members of the SCS and, to date, around 3000 of them have had at least some engagement with the CSLA, although this has mainly been through induction sessions and some workshops.⁶⁰ It has been using the facilities at the Defence Academy campus at Shrivenham, though in May last year Oliver Dowden, Minister for Implementation in the Cabinet Office, told the Committee that that “is probably not good in the long run” and that there was a case for establishing a permanent location for it.⁶¹

37. As the Minister for the Cabinet Office in the Coalition Government who introduced the Civil Service Reform Plan, closed the NSG, and established Civil Service Learning (CSL), Lord Maude had downplayed the need for Civil Service-specific leadership development. When he gave evidence to this Committee’s inquiry into Civil Service Effectiveness, Lord Maude said that he had wanted to send senior officials to study at the most prestigious management schools where they would be exposed to developments in the private sector.⁶² The CSLA is a recognition of the limitations of that approach of the continuing need for dedicated Civil Service leadership provision.

57 [Civil Service Workforce Plan 2016–20](#), p.6

58 [Civil Service Workforce Plan 2016–20](#), p.6

59 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) Fifth Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC 497, paras 46–58

60 [Q291](#) (Nick Borwell)

61 PACAC [Civil Service Effectiveness](#), HC497, Q618

62 PACAC [Civil Service Effectiveness](#), HC497, Q253 (Lord Maude)

38. The emphasis on Civil Service-specific leadership training is most notable in the principle of “leaders teaching leaders”—current and former senior Civil Service leaders teaching the future generations—around which the CSLA is centred. In its written submission to this inquiry, the Government said:

We recognise that the Civil Service is a unique environment in which to work, lead, and learn. We recognise the importance of sharing tacit knowledge gained via experience, and the need to do so beyond individual departments, so we enable leaders at all levels to share their stories through a range of CSLA and Policy Profession products.⁶³

39. Sir Stephen Lovegrove, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence who headed the Civil Service Learning and Leadership Board, also noted the benefits of the “leaders teaching leaders” approach for the leaders themselves:

I have found it immensely valuable for myself, as a senior leader in the civil service, to be put in a position where I have to reflect on what are the most important ways in which you can get your job done, listen to the challenges for people slightly earlier in their careers, and take a bit of time out to concentrate on, codify and formulate the kinds of things that are successful.⁶⁴

40. Utilising the “leaders teaching leaders” approach also ensures that Civil Service values, and the way they are put into practice, are passed on from the current leadership to future leaders.⁶⁵

41. The Civil Service-specific focus is also evident in the central role that case studies play in the CSLA’s provision, with students working on real world examples such as the successful response to the Ebola outbreak, the failure to recognise the uncertainty about Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, and the failure of the contracting process for the West Coast Mainline rail franchise.⁶⁶

42. Evidence to this inquiry about the CSLA’s offering thus far has been broadly positive, if largely impressionistic, and there has been no formal review yet. Julian McCrae (KCL) said that the CSLA seems to have the right ingredients to address the Civil Service’s leadership capability but that “it is not there yet”.⁶⁷ Sir Richard Mottram (Better Government Initiative (BGI)) was also positive, though cautiously so:

Insofar as there is public knowledge about it and insofar as I anecdotally talk to people about it, I think it is doing a reasonable job. The interesting question is why did it have to be recreated? I think it sort of existed before. It might be that it had to be recreated on a different model. The model they are using, which has a lot of involvement by senior civil servants themselves and practitioner-based ... development, is a good model.⁶⁸

63 [SLC0003](#) (Cabinet Office), p. 6

64 [Q264](#)

65 [SLC0003](#) (Cabinet Office), p.8

66 PACAC [Civil Service Effectiveness](#), HC497, Q534 (Rupert McNeil)

67 [Q47](#) (Julian McCrae).

68 [Q100](#) (Sir Richard Mottram)

43. This good performance would appear to be in spite of the CSLA's relatively meagre resources. In December, John Manzoni, Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, told us that the CSLA cost around £2.5 million to establish and under £1 million a year to run. The start-up costs were from the Cabinet Office's existing budget and ongoing running costs are now covered through charging departments and agencies for participation.⁶⁹ By contrast, the new National Leadership Centre, which will cater for a relatively small number of senior leaders across the whole public sector, has been given £21 million over the next three years.⁷⁰

44. Sir Stephen Lovegrove acknowledged that the CSLA's budget was low and would need to be increased if it was to develop in line with expectations.⁷¹ He told us that a bid for core funding is being put together as part of the next Spending Review.⁷² The bid is some way from completion, although we were given an indication of some of the priorities that the money might be used for should the bid be successful. These include establishing permanent training headquarters for the CSLA, either at a central location or several regional locations; developing the curriculum, including in ways that involve being less reliant on existing, internal resources and drawing on the experiences of other countries; and establishing a faculty with a permanent, core staff.⁷³ We were also told that the aim is to expand the CSLA's scope beyond the SCS.⁷⁴

45. Taken together, these measures would appear to go some way towards transforming the CSLA into a much more direct replacement for the NSG. Nevertheless, there are important questions that need be resolved. For example, like our predecessor Committee, we have criticised the lack of a residential location since the closure of the NSG, a place where civil servants can "reflect and build on their experiential learning".⁷⁵ However, it has to be resolved whether the CSLA should have a single "hub" location or a series of regional bases. This is a question that will become more pertinent as the Government Estate Strategy, which aims to reduce the Civil Service's "footprint" in Central London to a single "campus" of no more than twenty buildings, progresses.⁷⁶ This will see thousands of Civil Servants moved to a series of multi-departmental, regional hubs so the case for co-locating CSLA in some of these regional hubs is strong. The importance of establishing cross-departmental cohorts was emphasised to us and establishing the CSLA regionally would have the benefit of facilitating the development of strong cohorts within each hub.⁷⁷ However, developing these regional cohorts might equally be at the cost of building genuine cross-departmental cohorts across those regions, especially if not all departments are present in each hub. Similarly, it needs to be decided whether the faculty will be drawn from academic or other research backgrounds or from the Civil Service itself. Recruiting teaching staff from research backgrounds and making greater use of external expertise would alleviate any concern that the CSLA might be too inward-looking and would be a means of promoting increased conceptual learning. However, it is not clear how this would fit with the current emphasis on leaders teaching leaders.

69 PACAC [The Work of the Cabinet Secretary](#) HC1250 Q103

70 The NLC is discussed in the next chapter.

71 [Q308](#)

72 [Q307](#) (Stephen Lovegrove).

73 [Q307](#) (Stephen Lovegrove)

74 [Q308](#) (Stephen Lovegrove)

75 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, para 136.

76 Cabinet Office [Government Estate Strategy: Better Estate, Better Services, Better Government](#) July 2018, p.12

77 [Q279](#) (Clare Moriarty)

46. It is the intention that access to the CSLA should be extended beyond the SCS. However, if it is to rely on fee income to some extent, it will have to find ways to resist the pressure to focus on mass training at the expense of narrower leadership training that its predecessor institutions faced. While fees can encourage participants to place a higher value on training,⁷⁸ some core funding will be needed to ensure that training for senior leaders is not sacrificed for mass training.

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

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

49. The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) should develop a clear mission statement which includes a strong emphasis on its focus on leadership and governance, against which CLSA’s effectiveness can be judged. Articulating a clear vision for the CSLA in such a statement will both promote its aim of developing leadership and guard against the dilution of focus which has affected predecessor bodies as the funding model creates an incentive for them to chase fee income.

5 National Leadership Centre

50. The incremental progress being made with the Civil Service academies, including the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), contrasts with the bold steps being taken to establish the new National Leadership Centre (NLC).

51. The 2017 Autumn Budget included a commitment to establish a Public Service Leadership Academy (PSLA) to “complement existing provision, create networks and share best practice across the public services” and committed to establishing a taskforce to consider how this might best be realised.⁷⁹ Though jointly badged with the Cabinet Office, it is driven by HM Treasury’s efforts to improve public sector productivity. The Budget Report prefaced the announcement of the establishment of the PSLA by saying:

Raising the UK’s public sector productivity is a prerequisite for maintaining control of public finances while meeting growing demands for world class public services. With public services accounting for around 20% of the UK economy, public sector productivity also plays an important role in the UK’s productivity growth overall.⁸⁰

It went on to say that “Great leadership is crucial for improving productivity”.⁸¹ Following a review by a taskforce chaired by Sir Gerry Grimstone, the then-Chairman of Standard Life, Deputy Chairman of Barclays, and a former civil servant, steps to establish the Centre for Public Service Leadership (CPSL), as the PSLA had by then been rebranded, were taken. Shortly after the Taskforce reported, a commitment of £21 million for the establishment of the new CPSL was included in the Autumn 2018 budget.⁸² In September 2018, Kristina Murrin CBE was appointed to head the new body. Following a further rebranding as the National Leadership Centre (NLC), it is due to become operational in Autumn 2019.

52. How this new body will complement the Civil Service academies and, in particular, the CSLA, is unclear. The Taskforce’s terms of reference included mention of an umbrella structure for existing provision.⁸³ In our report on Civil Service Effectiveness, we emphasised the need for a body to coordinate Civil Service leadership training.⁸⁴ In evidence to that inquiry, and before the Taskforce reported, Oliver Dowden, the Minister for Implementation in the Cabinet Office, suggested that the NLC (at the time still known as the CPSL) might, to some extent, play that coordinating role:

The challenge we have now is how we co-ordinate all of that, so we have a unified approach, not a dispersed approach, of how we look at the lessons that can be drawn across all of them, how we can use that to drive productivity, which was one of the reasons why the Chancellor established jointly—we are doing this between the Treasury and the Cabinet Office—the Centre

79 HM Treasury [Autumn Budget 2017](#), HC 587, 22 November 2017, para 6.26

80 HM Treasury [Autumn Budget 2017](#), HC 587, 22 November 2017, para 6.20

81 HM Treasury [Autumn Budget 2017](#), HC 587, 22 November 2017, para 6.26

82 HM Treasury [Autumn Budget 2018](#) 2018 HC 1629, para. 5.24

83 Cabinet Office/HMT [Public Services Leadership Taskforce Terms of Reference](#) November 2017

84 PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) Fifth Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC 497 para. 136

for Public Service Leadership, so that we both get the benefit of areas where there is a need for that specific subject knowledge, but also make sure we act coherently, including with the Civil Service Leadership Academy.⁸⁵

53. As the plans for the NLC have progressed, it has become apparent that it will not play the coordinating role for the Civil Service the Minister seemed to suggest. The NLC's remit will be both narrower and broader than the CSLA's. Its focus is narrower insofar as it is aimed exclusively at the most senior levels in each sector: those "very close to the top of the pyramid".⁸⁶ It will be broader because it will not be focussed on leadership in the Civil Service alone. Civil Servants are included in the NLC's target audience, but the majority will be from the wider public service, including health, emergency services and Armed Forces. Insofar as it does have any coordinating role, it will be across the existing public service bodies responsible for learning and development in each sector such as the NHS Leadership Academy, the Fire Service College, the College of Policing, as well as the CSLA: a "horizontal thin line at the top of these verticals".⁸⁷ Similarly, Rupert McNeil, Civil Service Chief People Officer, described the NLC as the "capstone" for public service learning.⁸⁸ He went on to say:

... the National Leadership Centre fills a gap, which I think has perhaps been better filled in some other countries, for a place where people from different parts of the public service can come together and share their experiences, learn about common problems and learn about leading the complex systems that they are responsible for.⁸⁹

54. Although both based in the Cabinet Office, the CSLA and the NLC are separate entities. It is clear that the NLC sits above the CSLA and the other "vertical", sectoral bodies. However, it is less clear how it will work with them or the process for aligning resources and building synergies into the system. Sir Gerry told us that he was hopeful that the NLC would indirectly benefit the sectoral bodies such as the CSLA, with "trickledown" benefits from the NLC through people from the sectoral bodies attending the NLC and taking ideas or material back to their own institutions.⁹⁰ Civil Service Chief Executive John Manzoni told us that he was hopeful that the CSLA might benefit if the NLC were to draw on CSLA course material. With both bodies housed in the Cabinet Office, it should be possible to align the two sufficiently to allow this.⁹¹ However, we have gained no understanding about how this will work. We were told, however, that NLC staff are convening a regular working group of these sectoral bodies.⁹²

55. The NLC's nominal focus on productivity suggests a narrower remit than the Civil Service academies' focus on "leadership". However, when we raised this matter with Taskforce chair, Sir Gerry Grimstone, his response suggested the concept of productivity is being interpreted broadly. He considered productivity to be inextricably linked to

85 PACAC [Civil Service Effectiveness](#), HC497 [Q624](#) (Oliver Dowden MP)

86 [Q197](#) (Sir Gerry Grimstone)

87 [Q207](#) (Sir Gerry Grimstone)

88 [Q326](#) (Rupert McNeil)

89 [Q326](#) (Rupert McNeil)

90 [Q207](#)

91 PACAC [The Work of the Cabinet Secretary](#) HC1250, Q106 (John Manzoni)

92 [Letter from Nick Borwell, Interim Principal Civil Service Leadership Academy, and Kristina Murrin, CEO of the National Leadership Centre to Chair, regarding evidence session on Strategic leadership in the Civil Service on 7 May 2019 - dated 20 June 2019](#)

leadership. He told us that, based on research that the Taskforce commissioned from the Behavioural Insights Team, “good leadership makes organisations work better”.⁹³ He went on to say:

... you can only achieve productivity if you have a strong culture; if you have a strongly engaged workforce; if you have clear views as to what you are trying to achieve; if you have the ability to influence the environment in which you are operating to achieve it.⁹⁴

In the context of the NLC, the issues of leadership and productivity are, evidently, closely entwined. The NLC is, as its name suggests, focussed on leadership.

56. We welcome the establishment of the National Leadership Centre (NLC). For a learning body with a prospective market of fewer than 2000 people, the NLC’s £21 million budget is generous. We are not critical of this—if it achieves even a small improvement in public service productivity, it will easily cover its costs. However, in comparison with the much smaller amounts given to the Civil Service Leadership Academy, the budget is striking.

57. The National Leadership Centre’s horizontal focus on those at the most senior levels across the public service marks it out from the range of vertical, sectoral academies which focus more on preparing people at a variety of levels for their next promotion. We support the principle that even those established in leadership roles should continue to learn from their immediate peers, from those who have been in similar roles across the public service, and from those with particular, specialist knowledge that they can draw on. We are pleased that there is to be a place where they will have the opportunity to reflect constructively on their experience in a structured environment.

58. The National Leadership Centre is still some months from opening for business and there remain details to be resolved. It has yet to establish a location, for example, and the relationship with the existing sectoral academies that it is supposed to sit above is unclear. Yet, with a number of bodies focussed on the issue of leadership, a degree of coordination is required to ensure the matter is addressed with a degree of consistency throughout. As the “capstone” of public service leadership training and development, it will be in a position to coordinate the activities of the existing sectoral bodies. We recognise that the sectoral bodies are autonomous and this “capstone” role should not suggest that the National Leadership Centre should have authority over them. However, it will be in a position to disseminate its research findings and promote best practice, to share lessons learned and, perhaps, to use its relatively plentiful resources in a way that is mutually beneficial to it and those sectoral bodies, such as the Civil Service Leadership Academy, that have rather less. The working group that has been established is a useful first step in this direction. We will be watching the development of the National Leadership Centre with interest and will consider its progress in more depth once it is fully operational.

93 [Q191](#)

94 [Q196](#)

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

6 Governance

60. Our report has highlighted how much learning and development for Civil Service leaders changed in recent years. It is seven years since the closure of the National School of Government (NSG). The new system for learning and development has emerged *ad hoc* with specialist academies which reflect the emphasis on the horizontal Functions and Professions across the Civil Service.⁹⁵ The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) and, to follow soon, the National Leadership Centre (NLC) are the most recent additions.

61. The closure of NSG left a void to be filled. Sir Stephen Lovegrove told us that:

What we have now is a slightly cleaner slate to devise interventions and institutions that are going to be durable for a longer period of time.⁹⁶

62. Through the emergent system of academies and Professions, the Civil Service is now building its capability in the specialist areas where it was left lacking. For example, academies in the digital and commercial fields and in project management, have addressed shortcomings in these areas and promoted consistency in practice across the Civil Service.⁹⁷ The more general focus on skills frameworks aims to professionalise areas, such as the Policy Profession, where experiential or “on the job” learning has been the norm. These developments aim to integrate learning and development with the actual work being done by civil servants.⁹⁸ This has all been facilitated by the decentralised nature of the academy system, with measures to build, for example, commercial or project management skills owned by the relevant Profession.

63. However, there is no robust, central estimate of total learning and development spend in the Civil Service. On the basis of a review of the Annual Accounts of individual departments, we were told that a total of around £600 million is spent on learning and development across the Civil Service, though this may be an underestimate.⁹⁹ However, that could include everything from training staff to use new a IT system to developing senior leadership. It leaves the £7 million for the NLC looking modest, and the resources devoted to the CSLA looking even more so

64. Neither can we establish a clear idea of precisely what the £600 million is being used for. Catherine Haddon (Institute for Government) told us:

Where I think [the system] is struggling ... is sharing of data through a decentralised model, what different Departments are doing when they are purchasing in their own learning and development versus what Civil Service Learning are providing to them. They are not necessarily keeping the data in such a way that they are able to look across the broad aspects of it.¹⁰⁰

95 [Q267](#) (Rupert McNeil)

96 [Q335](#)

97 See PACAC [The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness](#) 5th Report of Session 2017–19 5th Report of Session 2017–19 HC497, para. 37

98 [Q258](#) (Rupert McNeil)

99 [Q259](#) (Rupert McNeil)

100 [Q9](#) (Catherine Haddon)

65. The senior officials we heard from conceded Dr Haddon’s point. Sir Stephen Lovegrove said that:

If I had a reservation—we have discussed this on a number of occasions as a group—it is whether at a central level we have sufficient visibility as to what the 90% is actually going on: whether there are efficiencies, whether everything is being done to the same standard in different Departments, and whether there are different approaches that are obviously more successful than others. We do not have a good enough line of sight into that area, which is something for us to work on.¹⁰¹

66. One of the complaints before the closure of the NSG and the establishment of Civil Service Learning (CSL), was that activity was duplicated across departments. A Cabinet Office review of training conducted in 2009 reported that there were 250 different Civil Service leadership courses on offer across departments.¹⁰² CSL was intended to help reduce duplication, yet only around 12%, or £75.6 million, of the estimated £600 million spent on learning and development goes through CSL.¹⁰³ In this decentralised system, where is oversight of the remaining £600 million of spending? There is no single line of accountability for it. What is this £600m being spent on, and for what measurable benefit? We have not found answers to these questions. At the same time, initiatives such as the CSLA and the Policy Profession, which we regard as central to the issues of Civil Service capability, have gained little in the way of resources.

67. Sir Richard Mottram (BGI) posed the question:

... who is the individual in the top management of the Civil Service whose day job is to answer the question, “Are the leadership and development plans and programmes and the philosophy of the Civil Service up to scratch?”¹⁰⁴

He confessed that he did not know the answer and that the “governance of all of this is really quite unclear and probably not sufficiently strong”.¹⁰⁵ Permanent Secretaries are accountable for the capability in the departments they head. But heads of Profession are responsible for learning and development in their specialist areas and there are Profession leads in each department beneath them. As Chief People Officer, Rupert McNeil nominally has responsibility for professional development, as well as the whole raft of human resource concerns for the entire Civil Service. Overall strategic direction has been through the Leadership and Learning Board, a sub-board of the Civil Service Board.¹⁰⁶ However, this is currently being reorganised, with the Leadership and Learning Board’s functions moving to the Leadership and Talent Board and the People Board.¹⁰⁷ This may help streamline board oversight but does not really address Sir Richard’s question about who has overall accountability. Ultimately, it is the Cabinet Secretary, as head of the Home Civil Service (and notwithstanding Ministerial interventions, discussed below), who is accountable:

101 [Q261](#) (Stephen Lovegrove). Also [Q259](#) (Rupert McNeil)

102 Cabinet Office [Shake-up of Civil Service Training](#) 1 March 2012

103 [Q259](#) (Rupert McNeil)

104 [Q111](#)

105 [Q111](#)

106 The Civil Service Board is responsible for the overall leadership of the Civil Service. It comprises Permanent Secretaries from the Home Civil Service departments.

107 [Q340](#) (Stephen Lovegrove)

... it would be interesting to ask who the head of the Home Civil Service turns to, to get the answer to, "Is all of this up to scratch?".¹⁰⁸

68. We share Sir Richard Mottram's view that the governance of learning and development is:

disjointed and fragmented, with lots of different organisations who do not appear to have any meaningful self-standing status that requires them to report what they are up to and how they measure their performance. Who at the centre of Government is leading this part of the Civil Service vision? It is opaque to me.¹⁰⁹

69. As we have already concluded, we view the decision to close the National School for Government (NSG) as premature at best. NSG's closure left a void which still has to be filled. Departments and the Professions had to fill this void themselves and take control of the development of their own subject-specific knowledge. This provided the incentive to establish the new and welcome Professional academies and frameworks, including the nascent but still tiny, Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA). However, this decentralisation leaves this provision looking haphazard, and has been at the cost of strategic coherence and adequate funding. The National Leadership Centre (NLC) (previously named the Public Service Leadership Academy and then the Centre for Public Service Leadership) with a remit which includes the top of the Civil Service and the wider public sector, was initiated by the Treasury with a generous £21 million funding, but with little consultation with the rest of the Civil Service, despite NLC intending to train Civil Service Leaders. The £21 million for NLC leaves CSLA with funding which is derisory in comparison. Both these bodies have huge potential, but not if they fail to complement each other and both are given the necessary funding.

70. We find it astonishing that the Government estimates that around a total of £600 million is spent by departments on learning and development and yet so little is understood about how that money is spent. There is a lack of evidence of value for money for this substantial total and a lack of accountability. Civil Service Learning accounts for only £75.6 million which is only 12 per cent of this, leaving the bulk of the £600 million unaccounted for. This raises the fundamental question about the leadership and governance of overall learning and development. This is central to the sense of the Civil Service as an institution and its idea of itself. Without better coordination from the centre, there will be wasteful duplication of effort and resources, and a lack of strategic focus and governance.

71. At the conclusion of this inquiry, we have no idea who the Head of the Civil Service holds responsible for the overall quality and output of Civil Service learning and development. This reflects a lack of coordinated ministerial oversight which has led to the two, separately conceived bodies to provide leadership training: the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), conceived by the Civil Service Board, but which has virtually no budget, and National Leadership College, initiated and funded by the Treasury.

108 [Q113](#)

109 [Q113](#)

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

73. ***Earlier reports from this Committee and its predecessor have highlighted the lack of a central individual or body with responsibility for overall learning and development across the current, decentralised system. In 2015, we wrote that “we have not heard how this new academy landscape will be coordinated, or who is responsible for overseeing their collective development”.¹¹⁰ We reiterate that concern and recommend that the Government identifies an individual or body to be accountable for this.***

74. We have considered where responsibility of the Civil Service for the development of its own capability lies. Julian McCrae (King’s College, London) argued strongly that that focus is appropriate:

... if you do not think the leadership of the Civil Service is fundamentally responsible for developing the capability of the Civil Service, then you should not be employing these people at all. What are they there for if they are not responsible for that?¹¹¹

75. Sir Richard Mottram considered that this was not only the responsibility of the Civil Service, however, and that the Government of the day also had a duty to ensure the Civil Service was adequately equipped now and into the future:

The Prime Minister and other Ministers have a duty to maintain the machinery of government as a whole in a fit state for their successors of whatever party and in our experience take this duty extremely seriously.¹¹²

76. Historically, many of the major changes in this area have been the result of ministerial intervention. The decision to establish the Civil Service College (CSC) was the result of the Fulton Report which had been initiated by Harold Wilson’s Labour Government. Tony Blair’s Labour Governments introduced measures to designed to improve policy-making skills.¹¹³ And the decision to close the CSC’s successor, the NSG, was taken by Lord Maude as Minister for the Cabinet Office as part of the Public Bodies Reform Programme. The Civil Service Reform Plan which, amongst other things, established CSL, was another of Lord Maude’s initiatives. The level of resource dedicated to establishing the NLC suggests that it has considerable ministerial backing, though it should be recognised that the Treasury intends that NLC should provide top leadership development for the whole of public sector.

77. In practice, Civil Service capability is the responsibility of both Ministers and Civil Servants. But Ministers have only periodically intervened in this space. The current academy system appears to be being driven from within the Civil Service, for example, and that no Minister chose to appear as part of this inquiry supports that impression. Clare Moriarty, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Exiting the EU and Chair of

110 PASC [Developing Civil Service Skills: a Unified Approach](#) 4th Report of Session 2014–15 HC112. para. 39

111 [Q42](#)

112 [SLC0009](#) (Better Government Initiative). See also [Q110](#) (Sir Richard Mottram).

113 See M. Hallsworth, S. Parker and J. Rutter, [Policy Making in the Real World](#), Institute for Government, 2011, chapter 3

the Leadership and Talent Board, told us that, while it is an issue of mutual responsibility, “civil servants are always in reality going to need to do the legwork, because that is what we are here for”.¹¹⁴

78. Without explicit ministerial recognition of the importance of Civil Service capability, not all the efforts to improve it are being sufficiently resourced. The history of ministerial interventions suggests a tendency towards “big bang” changes which have not always delivered the improvements that they aimed to achieve, nor have they always been sustained. The trajectory of the current system, which encourages more organic growth from within the Civil Service itself, seems to us to be more sustainable. The optimal solution is a combination of both: ministers and civil servants recognising the nature and significance of their working together. It includes a recognition of the need for the Civil Service to build its own capability in the key areas it needs to operate effectively. It is responding to the concern about the traditional dominance of generalists in the Civil Service through the Professions’ academies. It addresses the need to better support the development of leaders across the Civil Service through the CSLA. Ministerial interventions might best be directed at facilitating the evolution of the current system rather than another disruptive reset. We endorse Julian McCrae’s view that:

big-bang changes very seldom work in the way you intend them to, so we probably should avoid them and build on what we have in a strategic direction.¹¹⁵

79. *We welcome the steps the Civil Service is taking to address longstanding concerns about learning and development. For its part, the Government should ensure that its efforts receive active ministerial support and, in particular, adequate resourcing. Whatever the day-to-day pressures on the government of the day, the Civil Service must have ministers’ full authority to implement a coherent policy for Civil Service learning and development. The Government needs to identify who is in charge of Civil Service learning and development. Ministers should encourage the Civil Service to take more visible responsibility for its own future and governance, albeit under the ultimate direction of ministers, and accountable to them. The governance and strategy for Civil Service Learning and Development should be set out in a White Paper, which should have the personal support of the Prime Minister and of the Cabinet as a whole. We do not intend this to disrupt what is being established but rather to review, to consolidate and to improve on what has been achieved in recent years.*

80. *We conclude from the evidence gathered for this inquiry, and from previous inquiries, that the closure of the National School for Government still leaves a void that cannot be filled by Civil Service Learning and the new academies system on their own. We recommend establishing a new institution, building on the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), in a permanent location, capable, over time, of developing the full spectrum of Civil Service learning and development. It should provide residential courses where appropriate, which optimise opportunities for reflective learning which is almost entirely lacking at present. The Director should be a senior civil servant of appropriate rank, who would be part of the Cabinet Office, reporting to the Head of the Civil Service and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who represents the Minister for the Civil Service (the Prime Minister). This would become the central body which holds the key*

114 [Q338](#)

115 [Q37](#)

information about what learning and development provision is being made available, and for whom. Working through the Cabinet Office, it would inform coordination of provision across Whitehall, eliminate duplication, fill the gaps in provision and develop synergies with the separate provision of departments, Professions, and academies. It should work alongside and support the new National Leadership Centre. It should not impinge on the ownership that the departments and Professions have of their learning and development. This would also provide a space for Civil Service Leaders and others to enable the Civil Service as an institution to become more mindful of itself, of its values and ethos, and of how to strengthen its internal governance as well as its capability.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Evolution of Civil Service Learning and Development

1. We reiterate the conclusion of our earlier report, as well as those of our predecessor Committees, that, despite its shortcomings, the closure of the National School for Government was premature and left a void that has not been filled. In particular, the need for a dedicated facility where Civil Servants can reflect on their experiences and share them with their peers is as significant now as it was when the Civil Service College was first established. We also note how the closure of National School for Government has made the UK the odd one out, compared with countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, France, or New Zealand. Most have a permanent institution, dedicated to the learning and development of civil servants. However, the closure of the NSG has also acted as catalyst to some of the positive developments that we go on to discuss in the remainder of this report. (Paragraph 18)

The Academy System

2. Learning and development in the Civil Service has changed significantly since the closure of the National School for Government in 2012. In particular, while departments continue to oversee the development of subject knowledge, this is increasingly supplemented by technical knowledge driven by cross-departmental Professions and Functions, including through a number of new academies. They are now taking responsibility for developing the content, for overseeing its delivery, and for ensuring that it is properly integrated into career progression. Even in the area of policy, which in the past has apparently been both guarded by departments and regarded with a degree of scepticism as a Profession in its own right, there is a clear approach to the development of technical skills alongside subject-specific knowledge. This can only be of benefit in policy development. (Paragraph 31)
3. A system of academies is still evolving but the decentralised approach that has emerged since 2012 has apparently helped to redress the disconnect between learning and development on the one hand and career progression on the other. However, decentralisation has come at the price of consistency of approach and, in particular, in the availability of resources. We regard this as a very significant failing, since this loss of consistency leads to lack of coherence and thus of reputation and public confidence in the Civil Service as a whole. This is a theme we return to in the final chapter of this report. (Paragraph 32)
4. *We regard academies as a useful way of promoting the visibility and coherence of Professions within the Civil Service. Those running the Policy Profession acknowledge that, in the absence of a policy academy, they have work to do to catch up with other professions in terms of visibility and coherence. While we recognise that it is up to the Professions themselves how they organise and brand activity in their area, we recommend those, such as the Policy Profession, that have not yet established academies to consider doing so.* (Paragraph 33)

The Civil Service Leadership Academy

5. *The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) is a welcome recognition of the limitations of CSL and the need for a dedicated body to address leadership capability in the Civil Service. We also welcome the emphasis on Civil Service “leaders teaching leaders”. With the bid for core funding, the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) appears to be moving to a new phase. We regard establishing the CSLA on a firmer footing as an imperative and we support the bid for core funding in the forthcoming Spending Review. However, CSLA is still at an early stage of its development and there are important issues to be resolved, including whether it should have a single location or a series of regional ones, the nature of any faculty recruited, and how to integrate greater conceptual learning with its existing focus on reflective learning. That there are still significant issues to be decided is symptomatic of the piecemeal development of this area and the lack of a strong overall governance and strategy. This is fundamental to the ability of the Civil Service to sustain itself and its effectiveness. We return to this in the final chapter. (Paragraph 47)*
6. *If the funding model of the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) is based on fee income, there is always a danger that it will be tempted to maximise income at the expense of quality by expanding the range of courses it offers too widely. We acknowledge that charging for courses can encourage participants to value them more highly. But any core funding needs to be used in such a way as to ensure that the CSLA’s focus on nurturing future leadership is maintained, and the mistakes made with the National School of Government are avoided. (Paragraph 48)*
7. *The Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA) should develop a clear mission statement which includes a strong emphasis on its focus on leadership and governance, against which CSLA’s effectiveness can be judged. Articulating a clear vision for the CSLA in such a statement will both promote its aim of developing leadership and guard against the dilution of focus which has affected predecessor bodies as the funding model creates an incentive for them to chase fee income. (Paragraph 49)*

National Leadership Centre

8. We welcome the establishment of the National Leadership Centre (NLC). For a learning body with a prospective market of fewer than 2000 people, the NLC’s £21 million budget is generous. We are not critical of this—if it achieves even a small improvement in public service productivity, it will easily cover its costs. However, in comparison with the much smaller amounts given to the Civil Service Leadership Academy, the budget is striking. (Paragraph 56)
9. The National Leadership Centre’s horizontal focus on those at the most senior levels across the public service marks it out from the range of vertical, sectoral academies which focus more on preparing people at a variety of levels for their next promotion. We support the principle that even those established in leadership roles should continue to learn from their immediate peers, from those who have been in similar roles across the public service, and from those with particular, specialist knowledge that they can draw on. We are pleased that there is to be a place where they will have the opportunity to reflect constructively on their experience in a structured environment. (Paragraph 57)

10. The National Leadership Centre is still some months from opening for business and there remain details to be resolved. It has yet to establish a location, for example, and the relationship with the existing sectoral academies that it is supposed to sit above is unclear. Yet, with a number of bodies focussed on the issue of leadership, a degree of coordination is required to ensure the matter is addressed with a degree of consistency throughout. As the “capstone” of public service leadership training and development, it will be in a position to coordinate the activities of the existing sectoral bodies. We recognise that the sectoral bodies are autonomous and this “capstone” role should not suggest that the National Leadership Centre should have authority over them. However, it will be in a position to disseminate its research findings and promote best practice, to share lessons learned and, perhaps, to use its relatively plentiful resources in a way that is mutually beneficial to it and those sectoral bodies, such as the Civil Service Leadership Academy, that have rather less. The working group that has been established is a useful first step in this direction. We will be watching the development of the National Leadership Centre with interest and will consider its progress in more depth once it is fully operational. (Paragraph 58)
11. *We recommend that the government pursues the model envisaged for the National Leadership Centre, to ensure that it will include a permanent HQ location, some capacity to conduct research into how to build leadership capability across the public sector and provides a space for senior leaders to learn from each other and from outside experts. We regard these as elements as essential for the Civil Service Leadership Academy. We recommend that the bid for core funding for the Civil Service Leadership Academy should take these elements into account as a benchmark to aim for.* (Paragraph 59)

Governance

12. As we have already concluded, we view the decision to close the National School for Government (NSG) as premature at best. NSG’s closure left a void which still has to be filled. Departments and the Professions had to fill this void themselves and take control of the development of their own subject-specific knowledge. This provided the incentive to establish the new and welcome Professional academies and frameworks, including the nascent but still tiny, Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA). However, this decentralisation leaves this provision looking haphazard, and has been at the cost of strategic coherence and adequate funding. The National Leadership Centre (NLC) (previously named the Public Service Leadership Academy and then the Centre for Public Service Leadership) with a remit which includes the top of the Civil Service and the wider public sector, was initiated by the Treasury with a generous £21 million funding, but with little consultation with the rest of the Civil Service, despite NLC intending to train Civil Service Leaders. The £21 million for NLC leaves CSLA with funding which is derisory in comparison. Both these bodies have huge potential, but not if they fail to complement each other and both are given the necessary funding. (Paragraph 69)
13. We find it astonishing that the Government estimates that around a total of £600 million is spent by departments on learning and development and yet so little is understood about how that money is spent. There is a lack of evidence of value for

money for this substantial total and a lack of accountability. Civil Service Learning accounts for only £75.6 million which is only 12 per cent of this, leaving the bulk of the £600 million unaccounted for. This raises the fundamental question about the leadership and governance of overall learning and development. This is central to the sense of the Civil Service as an institution and its idea of itself. Without better coordination from the centre, there will be wasteful duplication of effort and resources, and a lack of strategic focus and governance. (Paragraph 70)

14. At the conclusion of this inquiry, we have no idea who the Head of the Civil Service holds responsible for the overall quality and output of Civil Service learning and development. This reflects a lack of coordinated ministerial oversight which has led to the two, separately conceived bodies to provide leadership training: the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), conceived by the Civil Service Board, but which has virtually no budget, and National Leadership College, initiated and funded by the Treasury. (Paragraph 71)
15. *Better coordination and accountability to the centre of government is required in order to maximise the impact of spending on Civil Service learning and development. Without the ability to show that money is being used effectively and efficiently, questions about value for money cannot be addressed.* (Paragraph 72)
16. *Earlier reports from this Committee and its predecessor have highlighted the lack of a central individual or body with responsibility for overall learning and development across the current, decentralised system. In 2015, we wrote that “we have not heard how this new academy landscape will be coordinated, or who is responsible for overseeing their collective development”. We reiterate that concern and recommend that the Government identifies an individual or body to be accountable for this.* (Paragraph 73)
17. *We welcome the steps the Civil Service is taking to address longstanding concerns about learning and development. For its part, the Government should ensure that its efforts receive active ministerial support and, in particular, adequate resourcing. Whatever the day-to-day pressures on the government of the day, the Civil Service must have ministers’ full authority to implement a coherent policy for Civil Service learning and development. The Government needs to identify who is in charge of Civil Service learning and development. Ministers should encourage the Civil Service to take more visible responsibility for its own future and governance, albeit under the ultimate direction of ministers, and accountable to them. The governance and strategy for Civil Service Learning and Development should be set out in a White Paper, which should have the personal support of the Prime Minister and of the Cabinet as a whole. We do not intend this to disrupt what is being established but rather to review, to consolidate and to improve on what has been achieved in recent years.* (Paragraph 79)
18. *We conclude from the evidence gathered for this inquiry, and from previous inquiries, that the closure of the National School for Government still leaves a void that cannot be filled by Civil Service Learning and the new academies system on their own. We recommend establishing a new institution, building on the Civil Service Leadership Academy (CSLA), in a permanent location, capable, over time, of developing the full spectrum of Civil Service learning and development. It should provide residential courses where appropriate, which optimise opportunities for reflective learning which*

is almost entirely lacking at present. The Director should be a senior civil servant of appropriate rank, who would be part of the Cabinet Office, reporting to the Head of the Civil Service and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who represents the Minister for the Civil Service (the Prime Minister). This would become the central body which holds the key information about what learning and development provision is being made available, and for whom. Working through the Cabinet Office, it would inform coordination of provision across Whitehall, eliminate duplication, fill the gaps in provision and develop synergies with the separate provision of departments, Professions, and academies. It should work alongside and support the new National Leadership Centre. It should not impinge on the ownership that the departments and Professions have of their learning and development. This would also provide a space for Civil Service Leaders and others to enable the Civil Service as an institution to become more mindful of itself, of its values and ethos, and of how to strengthen its internal governance as well as its capability. (Paragraph 80)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 16 July 2019

Members Present

Sir Bernard Jenkin, in the Chair

Ronnie Cowan	Dr Rupa Huq
Mr Marcus Fysh	Mr David Jones
Dame Cheryl Gillan	Eleanor Smith

Draft Report (*Strategic Leadership in the Civil Service: Sustaining Self-Governance and Future Capability while Supporting the Government of the Day*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 80 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Nineteenth 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, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 23 July 2019 at 09.30am]

Witnesses

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

Tuesday 16 October 2018

Julian McCrae, King's College London; **Dr Catherine Haddon**, Institute for Government

[Q1–60](#)

Sir Richard Mottram, Better Government Initiative

[Q61–114](#)

Tuesday 18 December 2018

Sir Chris Wormald, Head of the Civil Service Policy Profession and Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Care; **Richard Banks**, Civil Service Policy Profession Support Unit

[Q115–183](#)

Tuesday 15 January 2019

Sir Gerry Grimstone, Chair of the Public Services Leadership Taskforce

[Q184–244](#)

Tuesday 7 May 2019

Sir Stephen Lovegrove, Chair, Civil Service Learning and Leadership Board and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence; **Rupert McNeil**, Civil Service Chief People Officer and Head of the Civil Service Human Resource Profession; **Clare Moriarty**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Exiting the European Union and Chair of the Civil Service Talent Board, and **Nick Borwell**, Interim Director, Civil Service Leadership Academy

[Q245–277](#)

Published written evidence

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

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

- 1 A1 ([SLC0008](#))
- 2 Better Government Initiative ([SLC0009](#))
- 3 Cabinet Office ([SLC0003](#))
- 4 Haddon, Dr Catherine ([SLC0007](#))
- 5 Kakabadse, Professor Andrew ([SLC0010](#))
- 6 The Leadership Centre ([SLC0002](#))
- 7 McCrae, Julian ([SLC0005](#))
- 8 McCrae Julian and Rutter, Jill ([SLC0006](#))
- 9 Smith, Mr Anthony ([SLC0001](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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

Session 2017–19

First Report	Devolution and Exiting the EU and Clause 11 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill: Issues for Consideration	HC 484
Second Report	Parliamentary Boundary Reviews: What Next?	HC 559 (HC 1072)
Third Report	PHSO Annual Scrutiny 2016–17	HC 492 (HC 1479)
Fourth Report	Ensuring Proper Process for Key Government Decisions: Lessons Still to be Learned from the Chilcot Report	HC 854 (HC 1555)
Fifth Report	The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness	HC 497 (HC 1977)
Sixth Report	Accounting for Democracy Revisited: The Government Response and Proposed Review	HC 1197
Seventh Report	After Carillion: Public sector outsourcing and contracting	HC 748 (HC 1685)
Eighth Report	Devolution and Exiting the EU: reconciling differences and building strong relationships	HC 1485 (HC 1574)
Ninth Report	Appointment of Lord Bew as Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission	HC 1142
Tenth Report	Pre-Appointment Hearings: Promoting Best Practice	HC 909 (HC 1773)
Eleventh Report	Appointment of Mr Harry Rich as Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists	HC 1249
Twelfth Report	Appointment of Lord Evans of Weardale as Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life	HC 930 (HC 1773)
Thirteenth Report	A smaller House of Lords: The report of the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House	HC 662 (HC 2005)
Fourteenth Report	The Role of Parliament in the UK Constitution Interim Report The Status and Effect of Confidence Motions and the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011	HC 1813 (HC 2065)
Fifteenth Report	Status of Resolutions of the House of Commons	HC 1587 (HC 2066)
Sixteenth Report	PHSO Annual Scrutiny 2017/18: Towards a Modern and Effective Ombudsman Service	HC 1855
Seventeenth Report	Ignoring the Alarms follow-up: Too many avoidable deaths from eating disorders	HC 855

Eighteenth Report	Governance of official statistics: redefining the dual roles of the UK Statistics Authority; and re-evaluating the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007	HC 1820
First Special Report	Will the NHS never learn? Follow-up to PHSO report 'Learning from Mistakes' on the NHS in England: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 441
Second Special Report	The Future of the Union, part two: Inter-institutional relations in the UK: Government Response to the Sixth Report from the Committee, Session 2016–17	HC 442
Third Special Report	Lessons still to be learned from the Chilcot inquiry: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 708
Fourth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2016–7: Managing Ministers' and officials' conflicts of interest: time for clearer values, principles and action	HC 731
Fifth Special Report	Parliamentary Boundary Reviews: What Next?: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1072
Sixth Special Report	PHSO Annual Scrutiny 2016–17: Government and PHSO Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1479
Seventh Special Report	Ensuring Proper Process for Key Government Decisions: Lessons Still to be Learned from the Chilcot Report: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1555
Eighth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report: Devolution and Exiting the EU: reconciling differences and building strong relationships	HC 1574
Ninth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report: After Carillion: Public sector outsourcing and contracting	HC 1685
Tenth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report: Pre-Appointment Hearings: Promoting Best Practice, and to the Committee's Twelfth Report: Appointment of Lord Evans of Weardale as Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life	HC 1773
Eleventh Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report: The Minister and the Official: The Fulcrum of Whitehall Effectiveness	HC 1977
Twelfth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth report: A smaller House of Lords: The report of the Lord Speaker's committee on the size of the House	HC 2005
Thirteenth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report: The Role of Parliament in the UK Constitution Interim Report The Status and Effect of Confidence Motions and the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011	HC 2065
Fourteenth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fifteenth Report: Status of Resolutions of the House of Commons	HC 2066