



Department
for Education

CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER

Information pack



**Fostering
Friendly**
The Fostering Network

We're proud to be a
Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer.



A message from Susan Acland-Hood, Permanent Secretary

Welcome to the Department for Education, where we are leading the Government's Opportunity Mission, to break the link between background and success and deliver better life chances for everyone. Working closely with key partners across and beyond government, we create opportunities for children and learners to achieve and thrive today, so they have the freedom to succeed and flourish tomorrow. What we do strengthens our society, powers our economy and enables equality.

As a senior leader in DfE you will also play an important role in the wider leadership of the department. You will lead with strong values, professionalism and a commitment to building capability and championing diversity. We are looking for someone with an exemplary track record as a scientist, who can work with our policy teams to provide robust scientific advice and advise Ministers and senior officials on new scientific developments. You will be an inclusive and collaborative leader who can work across disciplines to deliver results.

If you are as excited as I am by the chance to make a difference, then I hope you will apply.

Susan Acland-Hood,

Permanent Secretary



A message from Professor Dame Angela McLean, Government Chief Scientific Adviser

Thank you for your interest in this role as Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department for Education. This is an exciting and interesting role which cuts across the whole of DfE's work at a time when the importance of scientific evidence and advice is at the forefront. You will play a key role as part of the top team in DfE, providing independent challenge and ensuring that the Secretary of State and Ministers have access to expert science advice.

You will be nationally and internationally recognised in your field of science or engineering and will need to be an exemplary science communicator. You will also be collaborative to enable you to work across the many sectors in DfE's remit as well as making links with other Government departments and academia. As an active participant in the cross-government Chief Scientific Adviser network, you will help ensure that policy decisions are evidence based and underpinned by the highest quality science and engineering evidence and understanding.

You will also act as Head of Profession for Government Science and Engineering in DfE and will help to build their wider capability. As part of the Science and Technology Framework, all our Chief Scientific Advisers will support their departments to ensure that excellent science underpins all cross government work including missions to build on existing strengths in science, technology, finance, and innovation in the UK.

If you are interested in this post, and your skills and experience are a good match, then we very much look forward to hearing from you.





The Way We Work in DfE



Our purpose: Why we do what we do

We are the department for **opportunity**

We work to deliver better life chances for all – breaking the link between background and success. We do this by protecting children and ensuring the delivery of higher standards of education, training and care.

We create opportunities for children and learners to achieve and thrive today, so they have the freedom to succeed and flourish tomorrow, strengthening our society, powering our economy, and enabling equality.

Our DfE Behaviours: How we behave

We are **Kind**

We are compassionate and kind, treating each other with consideration and respect and always thinking about those whose lives are affected by our work.

We are **Direct**

We are honest, open and straightforward in our communication, because this helps us and others to be at our best and to learn and improve.

We **Simplify**

We work to prevent overcomplication and confusion and make things simpler for those we serve.

We **Connect**

We build meaningful relationships with colleagues and partners across organisational boundaries, to get the best for children and learners.

The Civil Service code of values: What guides us

Integrity

Honesty

Objectivity

Impartiality



The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

The DfE is supported by around 8,000 staff across 12 sites including Coventry, Darlington, London, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and it works with [18 Arm's Length Bodies](#). These bodies play a critical role in the administration of our funding, the delivery of services, and the provision of regulation and advice across the sector.

We are responsible for:

- teaching and learning for children in the early years and in primary schools
- teaching and learning for young people in secondary schools
- teaching, learning and training for young people and adults in apprenticeships, traineeships and further education
- teaching and learning for young people and adults in higher education
- supporting professionals who work with children, young people and adult learners
- helping disadvantaged children and young people to achieve more
- making sure that local services protect and support children

You can find out further information on our responsibilities, priorities, who we are and corporate information on GOV.UK [About us - Department for Education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).



Job Title: Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)

Location: All DfE offices (Nationally and London)

Salary: External candidates should expect their full-time salary to be £120,000 per annum.

Existing Civil Servants will be appointed in line with the Civil Service pay rules in place on the date of their appointment.

Contract Type: This role is being offered full-time or part time (minimum four days per week) on a fixed term or secondment basis for 3 years. Job share candidates will be considered.

The Role: This is an exciting opportunity to join the Department for Education (DfE) as Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), be the lead CSA to the Government's Opportunity Mission, and to be part of the Government CSA network, contributing to and being a member of the community. The CSA will provide independent advice to the Secretary of State, Ministers, the Permanent Secretary, and other senior officials, ensuring the department's strategic direction, policy making, and operational decisions are informed by the best available science and engineering evidence.

The CSA will work to ensure that science and evidence are at the heart of the education system, underpinning its work. To help achieve this, they will be part of the DfE leadership team. They will advise on emerging research and innovation and will support horizon scanning, bringing together insights from across scientific disciplines to advise the sector on strategic opportunities and risks.

They will be expected to work closely with the DfE Science Advisory Council and provide linkage to, and insight from, world-leading research groups in academia and industry, and to continue to build an external network of scientific and research expertise. The CSA will provide leadership and oversight on the department's approach to research and development investment.

They will work very closely with the department's Chief Analyst, building on work already underway to ensure a strategic approach to developing the scientific evidence base in respect of children (and their parents), young people, and educational settings.



This is a challenging but rewarding Senior Civil Service role. You will:

- Provide high quality, expert scientific advice to Ministers and senior officials on the scientific evidence underpinning policy decisions and ensuring a scientific approach is taken in policy development, including the potential application of AI.
- Bring to bear your own expertise, which should be in a child-related scientific discipline, with those from quantitative disciplines particularly welcome.
- As part of the Leadership team, contribute to the strategic direction of the Department, building the scientific and engineering capability to support that strategy, playing a role in strategy development and advising on strategic risks and opportunities for Departmental policies and emerging research and innovation.
- Participate in the oversight and quality assurance of the Department's investment decisions.
- Communicate with the public, DfE stakeholders and the scientific community on the scientific evidence underpinning DfE policies and operations, acting in an independent manner while paying heed to the Civil Service Code.
- Engage with the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Scientific Adviser Network (a cross-Government working group crucial in ensuring that scientific advice in Government is appropriately communicated and actioned). This involves regular meetings and networking, in which you will be required to represent DfE science and research, and lead DfE input into cross-government science and engineering issues.
- Contribute to the leadership of wider cross-Civil Service issues, including the role of science and evidence in policy making.
- Provide links to, and insight from, world leading research groups, building an external network of scientific expertise, including the most relevant experts from academia and industry.
- Act as Head of Profession for Government Science and Engineering in DfE, providing a leadership role, encouraging innovative working practices and ensuring that the scientists and engineers within the department have access to a range of professional development opportunities.
- Raise the visibility of science and engineering at DfE and facilitate access to specialist skills, knowledge, and expertise to ensure that evidence-based advice is used to support operational delivery and inform policy decisions made by Ministers and Senior Officials.
- Regular one-to-one meetings with the Permanent Secretary.



Applicants will be assessed against the following essential criteria.

If applicant numbers are excessive, preliminary sifting will be done using only the first two criteria bullets.

It is important that, through your CV and Statement of Suitability, you provide evidence and examples of proven experience for each of the essential criteria detailed.

Essential criteria:

- Recognised both nationally and internationally as a leader in science (including medicine) within academia, industry, or other research environments, with expertise in children, families, and education.
- Excellent at communicating complex scientific and evidence issues clearly and succinctly to decision makers, the public, and the media; skilled in influencing a diverse range of audiences, and in being an effective advocate and ambassador of science.
- Experienced at working effectively in a multi-disciplinary way to achieve goals, including identifying and drawing on the advice and experience of experts across a wide range of fields to reach successful conclusions.
- Capable of assimilating, evaluating, and interpreting scientific findings and advice across a broad spectrum of disciplines, advising on and challenging key risks, all at short notice and under pressure.
- Effective in a sensitive political environment open to public scrutiny.

Desirable criteria:

- Experience of the policy-making process and a solid understanding of how the UK government departments operate.
- Used to operating at a senior level in a medium to large organisation, with the ability to think and act strategically and develop creative solutions to complex problems.



Saxton Bampfylde has been appointed as an employment agency adviser to assist with this appointment.

To apply for this post, you will need to submit the following documentation through Saxton Bampfylde's website www.saxbam.com/appointments using code OBFT by no later than noon on Friday 9 May 2025.

1. A **CV** setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
2. A **Statement of Suitability** up to 1,000 words, detailing how you meet the essential criteria outlined on the previous slide. Should we receive a high volume of applications, then we shall sift on the first two essential criteria.

Failure to submit both documents will mean the panel only has limited information on which to assess your application against the criteria in the person specification.

There is likely to be an opportunity for shortlisted candidates to have an informal telephone discussion with the recruiting line manager, Ian Knowles, to discuss the role in more depth prior to the final interview.

Should you encounter any issues with your online application please contact Sophie.tredinnick@saxbam.com

Please note the following:

- We cannot accept applications submitted after the closing date;
- Applications will be assessed solely on the documentation provided;
- Please refer to the advert and checklist above to ensure you have provided everything requested;
- Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt;
- Feedback will only be provided to candidates who were shortlisted but unsuccessful after the interview.



Selection Process

- The recruitment agency, Saxton Bampfylde, will advise the panel on longlist candidates based on the essential criteria. They will then interview the longlisted candidates to advise the Panel on a shortlist, where both the essential and desirable criteria will be used to inform the next stages of recruitment.

Shortlisted candidates will:

- Take part in a **Staff Engagement Panel** (which typically takes up to 1 hour to complete), to be held the week commencing 23 June.
- Undertake an **Individual Leadership Assessment** with an Occupational Psychologist, to be held the week commencing 16 or 23 June.
- Be invited to a **formal panel interview panel on Tuesday 1 July**, which will be face to face in Sanctuary Building, London. You will be asked to prepare a presentation for the interview (further information will be shared with shortlisted candidates) and you will be asked questions to further assess your experience and strengths using the [Civil Service Strengths Dictionary](#).
- Candidates may be invited to meet Ministers for an informal conversation.
- As part of the recruitment process, we may request references.
- Please note that at the interview stage we will ask if you have any conflicts of interest to declare and the Department for Education does not cover the cost of travel to your interview/assessment unless otherwise stated.



Candidates with disabilities

As an employer we are committed to promoting and protecting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all our colleagues and applicants. The Department for Education uses the Disability Confident scheme (formerly the Guaranteed Interview scheme) to help widen employment opportunities for disabled people. Applicants with disabilities who meet the essential criteria, as stated in the person specification, the Civil Service nationality requirements and indicate they are applying under the Disability Confident scheme will be guaranteed an interview.

Employment Scheme for Veterans:

The 'Great Place to Work for Veterans scheme' makes it easier for veterans to join the Civil Service. If you opt into the scheme and meet the minimum criteria, you'll progress to the next stage for most roles – whether that's an interview or an online test.

What nationality do I need to hold in order to apply?

To be eligible for employment to this role you must be a national from the following countries:

- The United Kingdom
- The Republic of Ireland
- The Commonwealth*
- A European Economic Area (EEA) Member State
- Switzerland
- Turkey Certain family members of EEA, Swiss and Turkish nationals are also eligible to apply regardless of their nationality.

(*Commonwealth citizens not yet in the UK, who have no right of abode in the UK and who do not have leave to enter the UK are ineligible to apply.) For further information on whether you are eligible to apply, please visit [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk).



INTERVIEW PANEL



Tony Poulter
Civil Service Commissioner, Chair



Susan Acland-Hood
Permanent Secretary



Professor Dame Angela McLean
Government Chief Scientific Adviser



Ian Knowles
Chief Analyst



The Department is focused on equality of opportunity. This means we are committed to ensuring that our employees better represent the views of the communities that we serve. Therefore, we particularly encourage applicants from underrepresented groups, those based outside London and the South-East and applicants who have achieved success through non-traditional educational routes.

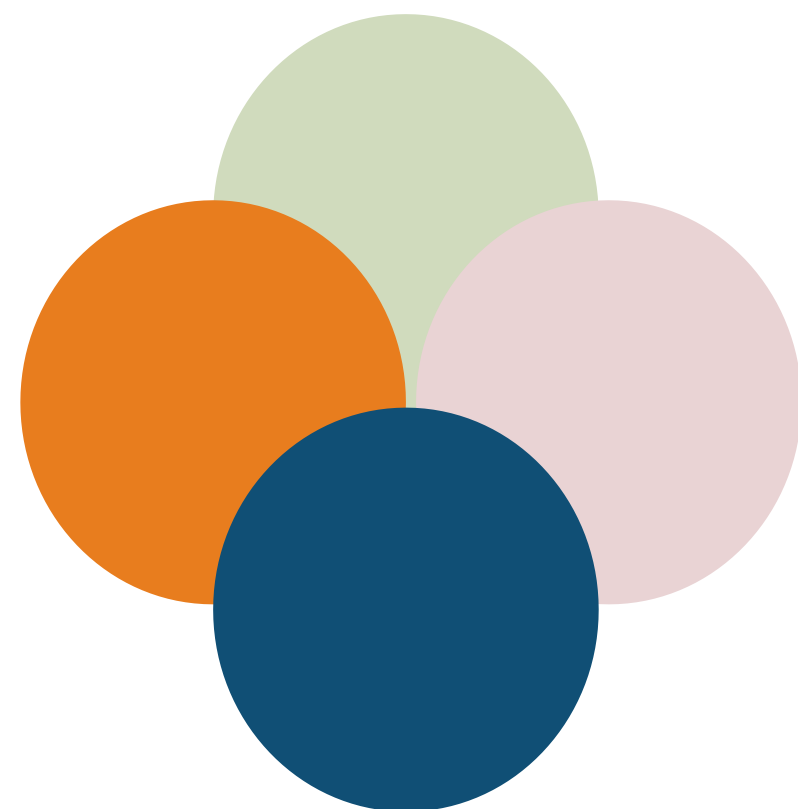
The Department for Education has a strong culture of diversity and inclusion and implements this across all our policies. In 2022, we launched a four year Diversity and Inclusion strategy to continue to **diversify our workforce, improve inclusion** and ensure everyone who works here **realises their potential**. It has leadership accountability at its heart.

In our strategy, we are committed to opening **opportunities to people from all characteristics, backgrounds, and educational routes**. For example, people from **ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people**, people from **all socio-economic backgrounds** and people **across UK regions**. This commitment is applicable to our recruitment and public appointments. We expect all leaders, including those in Arms Length Bodies, to take action that will attract and retain staff from all characteristics, and backgrounds, whilst supporting them to progress in their careers.

In view of this, we ask all applicants to complete an anonymised Diversity Monitoring Form. This will **only be used** to gather data so we **ensure the department is recruiting from the widest possible pool**. The information you provide is held by the SCS Recruitment team and not shared with the selection panel.

We also want to ensure every appointee to the department is committed to promoting diversity, in its broadest possible sense, and tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination. This means they will commit to the principles of levelling up and championing opportunity for all across the department.

It will help to ensure that the department is one where a genuinely diverse range of views can be expressed, without fear or favour.



BEST PRACTICE: We are recognised for promoting diversity in the workplace.

We are a member of the Government's Disability Confident scheme and have achieved the highest Disability Confident Leader status. This signifies our role as champions within the scheme. We use the Disability Confident symbol, along with other like-minded employers, to show our commitment to good practice in employing disabled people.



BENEFITS

Pension - Your pension is a valuable part of your total reward package.

A competitive contributory pension scheme that you can enter as soon as you join where we will make a significant contribution to the cost of your pension; where your contributions come out of your salary before any tax is taken; and where your pension will continue to provide valuable benefits for you and your family if you are too ill to continue to work or die before you retire. Visit Civil Service Pension Scheme for more details. At DfE we are proud to offer a generous pension package. Pension services for the Department are provided by [Civil Service Pensions](#) (MyCSP). The minimum employer contribution under the Alpha scheme is 26.6%.

Generous Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Allowance: 25 days annual leave on entry, increasing on a sliding scale to 30 days after 5 years' service. This is in addition to 8 public holidays. This will be complemented by one further day paid privilege entitlement to mark the King's Birthday.

Staff Wellbeing: Flexible Working Schemes, access to our Employee Assistance programme and the opportunity to join a range of supportive staff networks.

Flexible Working: Most DfE employees will be working a hybrid pattern, spending at least 60% of their time in an office or work setting. Changes to these working arrangements are available in exceptional circumstances but must be agreed with the line manager and in line with the requirements of the role.

Travel to your primary office location will not be paid for by DfE, but costs for travel to an office which is not your main location will be covered.

Generous **paid maternity and paternity leave** which is notably more than the statutory minimum offered by many other employers.

Onsite facilities: Opportunity to use onsite facilities including fitness centres and staff canteens (where applicable).

Season Ticket and Bicycle Loan: interest-free loans allowing you to spread the cost of an annual travel season ticket or a new bicycle.

Sick Pay: Occupational sick pay.



Department
for Education

Civil Service Code

The Civil Service Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of you and other civil servants. These are based on the core values which are set out in legislation. As a civil servant, you are expected to carry out your role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values:

- ‘integrity’ is putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests
- ‘honesty’ is being truthful and open
- ‘objectivity’ is basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence
- ‘impartiality’ is acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well governments of different political persuasions

These core values support good government and ensure the achievement of the highest possible standards in all that the Civil Service does. This in turn helps the Civil Service to gain and retain the respect of ministers, Parliament, the public and its customers.



The selection panel, working to the standards required by the Civil Service Commission, will assess applications on merit and will employ open and transparent processes in determining the candidate considered most suitable for this appointment.

The Civil Service Commission has two key functions:

1. Providing assurance that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, in accordance with its Recruitment Principles. For the most senior posts in the Civil Service, the Commission discharges its responsibilities directly by overseeing the recruitment process and by a Commissioner chairing the selection panel.
2. Hearing and determining appeals made by Civil Servants under the Civil Service Code which sets out the Civil Service values – Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity – and forms part of the relationship between civil servants and their employer.

More details of the Commissioners' role in Civil Service recruitment and a downloadable copy of the Recruitment Principles can be found at <http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk>

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Commission's Recruitment Principles and you wish to make a complaint, you should, in the first instance, contact the SCS Recruitment Team at the Department of Education scs.recruitment@education.gov.uk. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the department, you can contact the Office of the Civil Service Commission at <http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/civil-service-recruitment/complaints/>

HOW TO COMPLAIN

Please contact the Department for Education's SCS Recruitment team if you would like to make a complaint regarding your application at scs.recruitment@education.gov.uk

We will acknowledge your complaint upon receipt and respond within 15 working days.