



Review Body on
Senior Salaries

Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries

Report no. 100

Chair: Lea Paterson CBE

May 2026

CP 1570



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Presented to Parliament
by the Prime Minister
by Command of His Majesty

May 2026

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Review Body on Senior Salaries

Terms of reference

Our terms of reference are as follows:

The Review Body on Senior Salaries provides independent advice to the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland on the remuneration of holders of judicial office; senior civil servants; senior officers of the Armed Forces; all senior managers in the NHS,¹ Police and Crime Commissioners, chief police officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and other such public appointments as may from time to time be specified.

The Review Body may, if requested, also advise the Prime Minister from time to time on Peers' allowances; and on the pay, pensions and allowances of Ministers and others whose pay is determined by the Ministerial and Other Salaries Act 1975. If asked to do so by the Presiding Officer and the First Minister of the Scottish Parliament jointly; or by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly; or by the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales; or by the Mayor of London and the Chair of the Greater London Assembly jointly; the Review Body also from time to time advises those bodies on the pay, pensions and allowances of their members and office holders.

In reaching its recommendations, the Review Body is to have regard to the following considerations:

- *the need to recruit, retain, motivate and, where relevant, promote suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities;*
- *regional/local variations in labour markets and their effects on the recruitment, retention and, where relevant, promotion of staff;*
- *Government policies for improving the public services including the requirement on departments to meet the output targets for the delivery of departmental services;*
- *the funds available to departments as set out in the Government's departmental expenditure limits; and*
- *the Government's inflation target.*

In making recommendations, the Review Body shall consider any factors that the Government and other witnesses may draw to its attention. In particular, it shall have regard to:

- *differences in terms and conditions of employment between the public and private sector and between the remit groups, taking account of relative job security and the value of benefits in kind;*
- *changes in national pay systems, including flexibility and the reward of success; and job weight in differentiating the remuneration of particular posts; and*
- *the relevant legal obligations, including anti-discrimination legislation regarding age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief and disability.*

¹ Very Senior Managers (VSMs) working in the NHS and Executive and Senior Managers (ESMs) working in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) arm's length bodies (ALBs).

The Review Body may make other recommendations as it sees fit:

- *to ensure that, as appropriate, the remuneration of the remit groups relates coherently to that of their subordinates, encourages efficiency and effectiveness, and takes account of the different management and organisational structures that may be in place from time to time;*
- *to relate reward to performance where appropriate;*
- *to maintain the confidence of those covered by the Review Body's remit that its recommendations have been properly and fairly determined; and*
- *to ensure that the remuneration of those covered by the remit is consistent with the Government's equal opportunities policy.*

The Review Body will take account of the evidence it receives about wider economic considerations and the affordability of its recommendations.

Members of the Review Body submitting this Report are:

Lea Paterson CBE (*Chair*)

Pippa Greenslade

Ian McCafferty CBE

The Honourable Zoë Billingham CBE (*ex-officio*)²

Mark Polin OBE QPM

The Reverend David Stanton³

Mark Emerton

The Secretariat is provided by the Office for the Pay Review Bodies.

This Report was submitted to the Government on 6 March 2026.

² Chair, Police Remuneration Review Body and National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body.

³ Until 14 January 2026.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 This Report sets out our recommendations for the 2025-26 pay review round, covering senior civil servants, salaried judicial office holders, and senior health leaders.⁴ Our recommendations are summarised in Table 1.1 below and are provided in full in the main body of our Report.
- 1.2 A supplementary volume will cover pay recommendations for chief police officers in England and Wales, and in the Police Service of Northern Ireland.⁵

Table 1.1: Summary of recommendations

Members of the Senior Civil Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pay increase of 3.5 per cent. • Increases to the pay band minima. • Implementation of pay progression effective 1 April 2026.
Salaried judicial office holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pay increase of 3.8 per cent.
Senior health leaders in the NHS in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pay increase of 3.0 per cent. • Withdrawal of the Executive and Senior Manager (ESM) pay framework. • Delivery of training and knowledge-sharing for remuneration committees and chief people officers.

- 1.3 Our recommendations were made at a time when inflation was heading back towards the Bank of England’s 2 per cent target, and average pay settlements were easing. Reflecting this, most of our main recommendations are lower than they were last year. Chapter 2 describes the relevant aspects of the economic and fiscal context more fully.
- 1.4 Chapters 3 to 5 set out our detailed recommendations and evidence for each remit group.

Key themes

Setting senior pay in a challenging economic and fiscal context

- 1.5 Inflation is falling towards the Bank of England’s 2 per cent target. However, the cost of living increases seen in recent years have materially eroded real take-home pay. Numerous remit group members told us of their desire to see real-terms pay restored to pre-2020 levels. While we recognise these concerns, we do not believe that pay restoration is an economically

⁴ This year, the Government requested that the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) undertake the annual review of pay for senior officers of the Armed Forces – see “Correspondence: Armed Forces’ pay round 2026 – remit letter” (22 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-pay-round-2026-remit-letter>.

⁵ Letter from Minister of State for Policing and Crime to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Senior Salaries Review Body Remit 2026/27: Chief police officers (19 February 2026). Available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/remit-letter-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-for-chief-police-officers-2026-to-2027>; Letter from Minister of Justice (Northern Ireland) to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) Remit 2026/27 – PSNI Chief Officers (24 February 2026). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/publications/remit-letter-to-the-ssrb-for-psni-chief-police-officers-2026-to-2027>.

achievable objective in and of itself. The disruption in the energy markets that followed the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a negative cost shock. This type of shock reduces real incomes and means that, averaging across the economy as a whole, everyone is worse off.

- 1.6 As we noted in our Report last year, many employers in the public and private sector skewed pay rises towards lower paid workers and away from senior leaders during the period of high inflation. While this was an understandable response to severe financial strain, sustained compression of the pay differential between senior leaders and those in ‘feeder’ groups can lead to longer-term difficulties. For example, in both the Senior Civil Service (SCS) and in the health system, there is now material overlap between the pay of the most experienced members of feeder groups and of those newly promoted to senior leadership positions. This is blunting incentives to seek promotion into our remit groups, and hence damaging the talent pipeline.
- 1.7 Recent years have been characterised by persistently weak economic growth. This has contributed to material strains on the public finances, and hence affordability. Government affordability, and more broadly the delivery of value for money to the taxpayer, is an important aspect of our deliberations. Although our remit groups account for only a very small portion of the total public sector pay bill, we recognise that the pay of senior leaders can have wider signalling effects.
- 1.8 When considering value for money to the taxpayer, it is important not to neglect the longer-term view. Pay proposals that appear, on the face of it, to be cost-effective can represent a false economy if they stoke cost pressures elsewhere in the system and/or materially undermine the public sector’s ability to attract, retain and motivate talent. One example here is the experience of the SCS, where past attempts to ‘hold down’ the public sector pay bill with limited annual pay rises has been much more than offset by the phenomenon of ‘grade inflation’ and sharp rises in SCS headcount.
- 1.9 Productivity growth in the UK has been persistently poor in the private and public sectors. At a whole economy level, positive productivity growth is essential if there are to be sustained increases in real-terms pay. But the evidence we have reviewed suggests that, at the remit group level, mechanically linking pay to productivity outturns is fraught with difficulty – not least because of measurement problems and data uncertainties. A more fruitful approach may be to link pay to the skills and behaviours that positively contribute to productivity. We discuss our views on productivity in greater depth in Chapter 2.

Updating public sector pay frameworks

- 1.10 An overarching theme running throughout this Report is the challenge of ensuring that public sector pay frameworks keep up with the intense pace of change in the economy and wider society. For some of our remit groups, particularly the SCS and Executive and Senior Managers (ESMs) in the health sector, these challenges have been compounded by the neglect of pay frameworks over an extended period.
- 1.11 We were therefore pleased that the Government has accepted, and has progressed, our 2025 recommendation for a fundamental review of SCS pay and reward frameworks. It is important that the Cabinet Office keeps up momentum on these changes. Our recommendations for SCS pay are aimed at supporting, and encouraging effective delivery of, this important piece of work.
- 1.12 For senior health leaders, it has been encouraging to hear that initial reactions to the new pay framework for Very Senior Managers (VSMs) have been largely positive. However, there

remain non-trivial challenges in implementation. It is important that the Government learns from the first year of operationalising this framework, and adapts its approach as needed. Regular stocktakes are essential to ensure that pay frameworks adapt and evolve, and are able to continue to attract, retain and motivate the talent that is needed for the public sector to deliver.

- 1.13 We are disappointed that the Government has not yet actioned our recommendation to withdraw the pay framework for ESMs and migrate impacted health leaders onto alternative pay arrangements. Following the abolition of NHS England, there are only a small proportion of health leaders remaining on the ESM framework, largely based in arm's length bodies. The ESM framework has not been updated for a decade, and as such is an increasingly ineffective means of recruiting, retaining and motivating this important cohort of public sector leaders.
- 1.14 Updating of reward structures is also needed for the judiciary, and work on the SSRB's Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure, commissioned by the Lord Chancellor in May 2025, is ongoing.⁶ We intend to deliver our findings to Government later this year.

Rewarding specialist skills, progression and performance

- 1.15 In much of the public sector, senior pay is still largely determined by reference to the scale and scope of leadership roles, rather than by the possession of in-demand skills. However, specialist skills – including but not limited to digital, data and technology (DDaT) – are highly sought after across the public sector, including in our remit groups.
- 1.16 The evidence we have seen suggests that the scarcity of specialist skills, and their growing importance to effective delivery, is challenging traditional public sector pay arrangements. It is becoming increasingly untenable to apply a 'one size fits all' approach to the pay of senior leaders. More creative, and more bespoke, arrangements are likely to be needed to attract, retain and motivate technically accomplished staff in the senior leadership cadre. That includes the acceptance that those with the most in-demand specialist skills may need to be paid more than many other senior leaders.
- 1.17 It is also important that pay frameworks recognise progression and development. This does not mean a return to automatically increasing pay in line with time served – a feature of numerous public sector pay frameworks in the past, and one that did not typically represent value for money for the taxpayer. But, when reward frameworks fail to recognise a relevant deepening of expertise, this tends to incentivise staff to focus overly on chasing promotion, and contributes to excessive churn. We therefore welcome the Government's intention to introduce pay progression for the SCS, and have made recommendations that will help to deliver this.
- 1.18 In most professions, reward is linked to performance. We support this principle in the context of public sector leadership – it is important that senior leaders are held to the highest standards and are accountable for their actions in office. However, the implementation of performance-related reward needs care and thought. This includes in considering when it is appropriate to reward individual as opposed to team performance. It is also crucial that individuals feel that performance management systems are fairly administered. For example, we heard from senior civil servants that widespread perceptions of opaqueness and lack of fairness in the allocation of bonuses was negatively contributing to morale.

⁶ See "Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure: Terms of Reference" (13 May 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-review-of-the-judicial-salary-structure-terms-of-reference>.

Broader considerations, including security and 'personal jeopardy'

- 1.19 While public sector salaries are generally lower than private sector comparators, this has typically been offset in part by broader considerations such as supportive working conditions and the value placed on public sector roles by wider society. However, structural shifts have undermined this traditional employment proposition, and hence negatively impacted recruitment, retention and morale.
- 1.20 The changing nature of public discourse is a case in point. While effective accountability is an important part of any senior leadership role, we heard concerns across our remit groups about the personal impact of undue 'naming and shaming' of individual public servants in the traditional and online media. These individuals do not have the right of reply. We have heard that this type of criticism has had a corrosive effect on morale, and has acted to deter others from seeking such roles.
- 1.21 Public criticism of senior officials has added to concerns of our remit group members about personal security. As was also the case last year, we have been extremely worried to hear of persistent, and in some cases very serious, security concerns across our remit groups. These have included credible threats to the personal safety of individual remit group members and their families. These concerns were most evident for the judiciary, but also featured in our discussions with other remit groups.
- 1.22 Working conditions more generally have been contributing to difficulties in attraction, retention and morale. A prominent example of this is the impact on judicial morale and workloads of the poor condition of the UK courts estate and the cutbacks in court support staff.
- 1.23 While the SSRB is not directly able to influence these broader considerations, we acknowledge their importance to the recruitment, retention and morale of current and future public sector leaders. We urge government to continue to take steps to modernise the state and its supporting infrastructure, as well as to recognise the importance of political public statements to the morale, security and wellbeing of senior leaders.

Fostering diverse and talented cohorts of future leaders

- 1.24 While our focus is largely on the pay of current senior leaders, we also have a strong interest in the nature of the talent pipeline for future leadership roles.
- 1.25 Senior public sector leaders need to be representative of the citizens and communities they serve and draw on the widest possible talent pools – both for effectiveness, and for wider democratic legitimacy. Although progress continues in this area, it is slow and somewhat sporadic, reflecting the difficulties of shifting cultural norms that have become entrenched over many years.
- 1.26 We heard from leaders across our remit groups that they are committed to making further inroads – both in terms of the diversity of protected characteristics, and in other facets of diversity such as regional location and socioeconomic background. We are strongly supportive. It requires sustained efforts by senior leadership over an extended period of time to deliver meaningful, and long-lasting, change.
- 1.27 More generally, changing societal trends pose challenges to the traditional structure of public sector pay frameworks, and risk undermining their effectiveness in attracting talented leaders of the future into senior roles.

- 1.28 The traditional public sector approach to pay has been predicated on individuals staying with one employer through much of their career, and balancing reward today through take-home pay with rewards in the future through defined benefit pensions. This approach is increasingly ill-suited to an ageing society, with no pre-defined retirement age, extensive caring responsibilities at both the younger and older ends of the age spectrum, intense pressures on day-to-day living costs and with a greater degree of job insecurity than was the case in the public sector of the past. There are also growing concerns about the future affordability of public sector pension liabilities.
- 1.29 We heard during our evidence sessions about the risks posed to the talent pipeline from the slow pace of adaptation in traditional public sector pay-setting. Specifically, we heard from numerous future leaders that they had doubts about whether the rewards of moving into leadership positions outweighed the costs. A more agile and responsive approach is increasingly needed. This includes a greater openness to two-way flow between the public and private sectors at different points in individual careers – and, at some point, a reconsideration of the balance between take-home pay and pension.

Timeliness of pay awards

- 1.30 Timely response to recommendations and implementation of pay awards is an important mark of fairness and respect, and can materially impact upon the trust, confidence and morale of remit group members.
- 1.31 We were very disappointed that it took more than seven months for the Government to issue its response to our 2025 Supplementary Report concerning Chief Police Officers and Police and Crime Commissioners. It is unfair on members of the remit groups to be left without certainty for such a lengthy period. We urge the Government to take steps to prevent such delays from occurring in future.
- 1.32 We were pleased that the Government responded promptly to our 2025 main Report, announcing its response only 16 days after the Report was submitted. However, this did not translate into timely pay awards for some remit group members, most notably a large proportion of the SCS. We comment further on this in Chapter 3.

Our evidence base

- 1.33 In reaching our recommendations, we have considered a wide range of quantitative and qualitative evidence. This includes from discussions with remit group members, and written and oral evidence provided by a broad range of stakeholders (see Table 1.2). These were an invaluable part of our evidence base, and we are grateful to all involved for taking the time to contribute.
- 1.34 We believe that informed debate and challenge support the continued improvement and evolution of pay-setting in the public sector. We welcome feedback and views on our judgements and approach.

Table 1.2: Summary of evidence sources

<p>The economy and wider labour market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral evidence from HM Treasury. • Economic and labour market data from a range of sources, including the ONS, OBR, BoE, HMT panel forecasts, Brightmine, IDR and LRD.
<p>Members of the Senior Civil Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighteen online and in-person discussion groups. • Five written evidence submissions. • Oral evidence from four stakeholder groups. • Recruitment, workforce and pay benchmarking data. • Employee and trade union member survey insights.
<p>Salaried judicial office holders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-seven written evidence submissions. • Oral evidence from four stakeholder groups. • Recruitment, workforce and workload data. • In-person and online discussions with judicial office holders. • Attitude and morale survey insights.
<p>Senior health leaders in the NHS in England</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two discussion groups. • Four written evidence submissions. • Oral evidence from two stakeholder groups. • Trust/ICB-level workforce data. • Member organisation survey insights.

Chapter 2

Economic Context

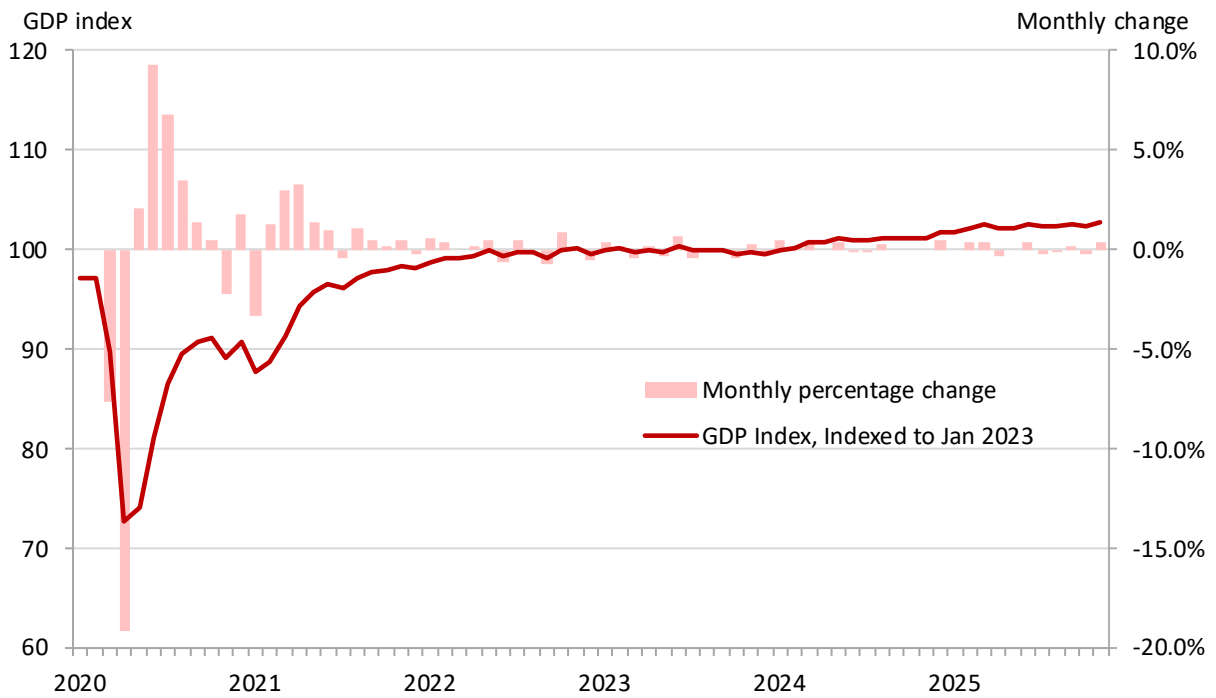
Summary

- 2.1 This year, the economic issues underlying our pay recommendations differ from those faced in 2025, but the economic environment remains extremely uncertain. The UK and world economy continue to be affected by unprecedented global trade conditions, geopolitical uncertainty and major technological change. These ongoing forces are having, and will continue to have, a lasting impact on our remit groups, the public sector, and public finances.
- 2.2 Global conditions are unstable, and the outlook for the UK economy has softened since we started our work on this year's Report. In the time between the receipt of written evidence from departments and departmental spending totals being set, and subsequently HM Treasury's oral evidence in January, the UK economy underperformed compared to forecasts.
- 2.3 Fiscal policy remains a particular challenge. The departmental spending budgets set out in the Autumn Budget implied that departments would need to make tough spending decisions in coming years, with a bearing on our pay recommendations. Since then, slowing growth forecasts have reduced the Treasury's flexibility. Government evidence indicated that there would be no provision of additional funding for public sector pay awards, and we received evidence from individual departments on their allocated budgets and how pay awards above these allocations would impact spending elsewhere.
- 2.4 Meanwhile, there has been a weakening of labour market conditions and an easing of pay settlements, reducing the pressure on departments to raise wages to compete for the best talent.
- 2.5 Inflation has been above the Bank of England's (BoE's) 2 per cent target throughout the past year. However, at the time we finalised this Report, the near-term outlook for inflation had improved markedly, with inflation expected to fall to around 2 per cent by the Spring.
- 2.6 More broadly, the earlier timeline for this year's report has meant we have fewer concrete data points for the forthcoming pay year than has been the case for previous recommendations. This has complicated our deliberations. In making our recommendations, we have incorporated the most recent economic data available, but have had to put a somewhat greater weight on the latest economic forecasts for the year ahead. A particular consideration has been the forecasts for the point at which our recommendations come into effect (1 April 2026 for most of our remit groups).
- 2.7 In summary, the economic environment in which we make our pay recommendations remains challenging, and the outlook highly uncertain. The different factors we are required to consider pull in several directions, and we have had to make difficult trade-offs between these factors in reaching our recommendations on the appropriate increases in pay for 2026 for each of our remit groups.

GDP growth

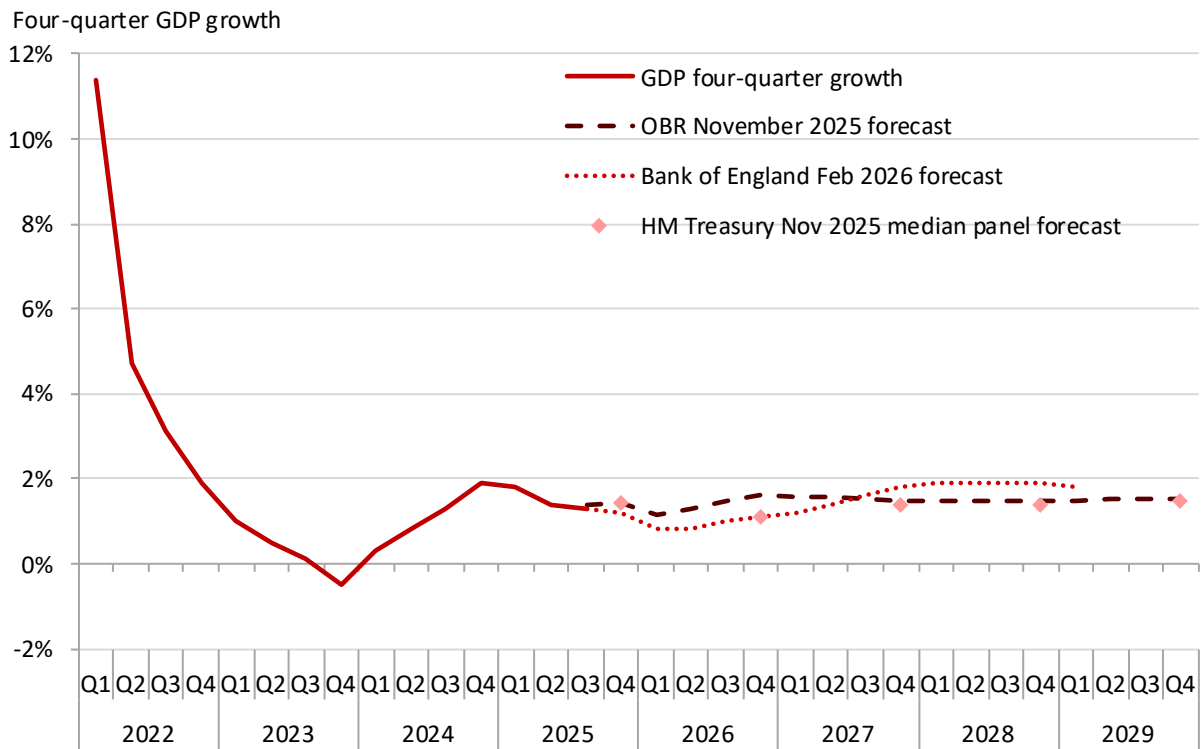
- 2.8 Real GDP growth has again slowed in 2025 to 1.3 per cent over the year. This is a reduction compared to 2024, but still notably higher than in 2023. The economy has only grown by 2.7 per cent cumulatively since January 2023 (see Figure 2.1). None of the OBR, the BoE, or HMT median panel forecasts project growth to exceed 1.6 per cent in 2026 (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1: GDP monthly index and monthly change, January 2020 to October 2025



Source: ONS, GDP monthly estimate, published January 2026. Indexed to Jan 2023 by OPRB.

Figure 2.2: GDP and GDP forecasts, four-quarter growth, 2022 to 2029

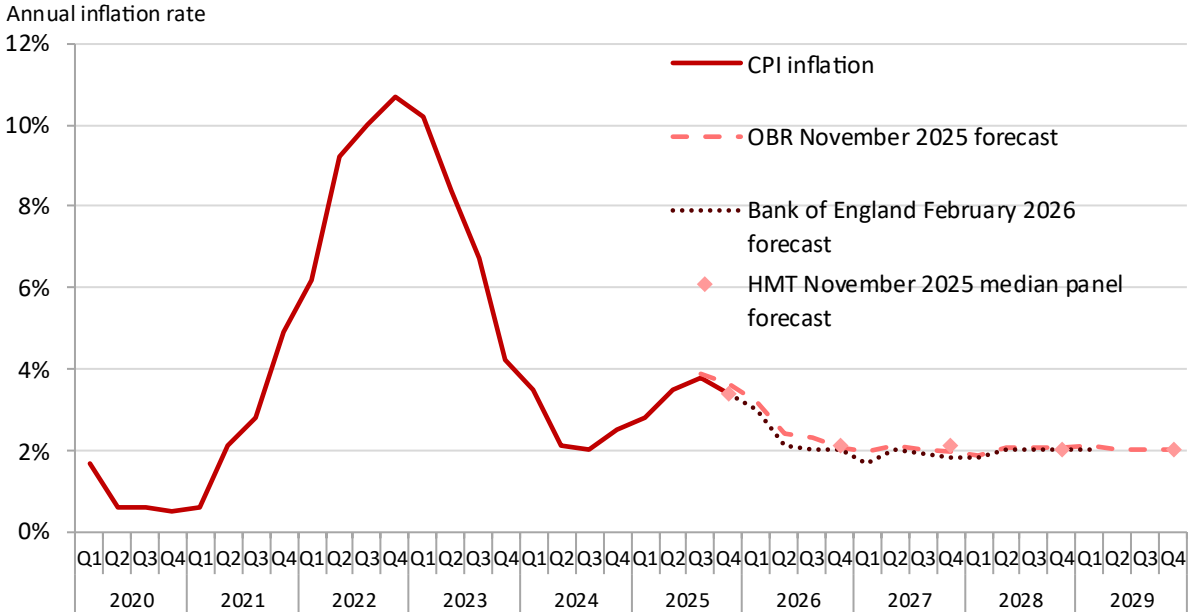


Source: ONS (IHYR), published December 2025; Economic and fiscal outlook, OBR, published November 2025; Monetary Policy Report, BoE, published February 2026; HM Treasury forecasts, published November 2025, and January 2026.

Inflation

- 2.9 Inflation is an important factor in our considerations. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation had come down from its 40-year peak of over 11 per cent in late 2022 to a low of 1.7 per cent in the 12 months to September 2024, before rising again to 3.8 per cent in the 12 months to July 2025, remaining there to September. Inflation has recently fallen slightly to 3.4 per cent in the 12 months to December 2025.⁷
- 2.10 This year, a particular point of note has been the changes in the likely inflation outturns for the first part of 2026. The February 2026 BoE forecast projected CPI falling faster than previously expected, and likely to return to close to the 2 per cent target in April 2026 (see Figure 2.3).⁸

Figure 2.3: Inflation and inflation forecasts, 2020 to 2029



Sources: CPI inflation, quarterly (D7G7), ONS, published January 2026; Economic and fiscal outlook, OBR, published November 2025; Monetary Policy Report, BoE, published February 2026; Forecasts for the UK economy, HM Treasury, published November 2025 and January 2026.

Wages

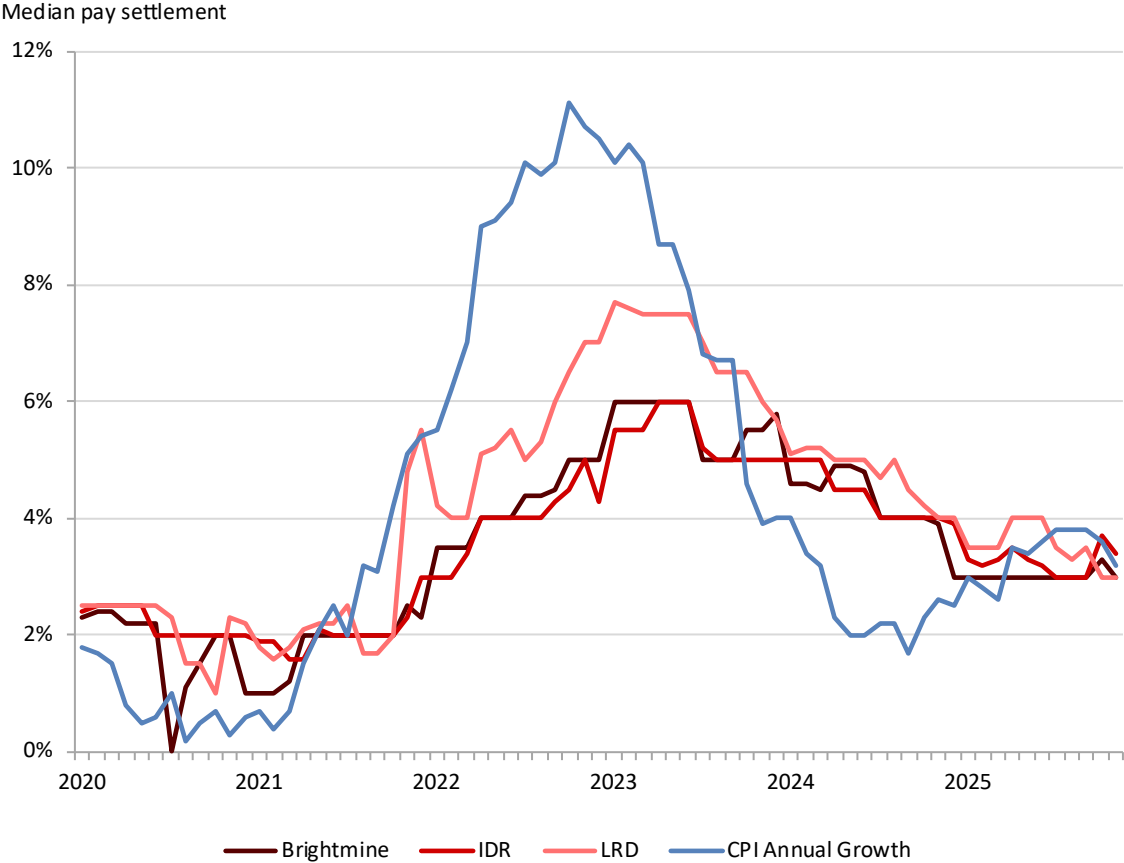
Pay settlements

- 2.11 Pay settlements data provides a good benchmark for pay increases in the wider economy, as these figures are not skewed by changes in composition. By considering the medians, the statistical effect of unusually high pay settlements driven by minimum wage increases should also be mitigated. However, it should be noted that pay settlements do not reflect the whole picture of pay adjustment. The effects of pay progression systems and individually negotiated raises are excluded from pay settlement data, while pay for particular roles can be adjusted outside of organisation-wide pay settlements, for example when advertising vacancies.

⁷ Consumer Price Inflation, UK: December 2025, ONS, published January 2026.
⁸ The BoE forecast is that CPI will fall to 2.1 per cent in April 2026, and will reach the 2.0 per cent target in June 2026. Source: data downloads for Monetary Policy Report, BoE, published February 2026. See the “February 2026 MPR chart data” file, chart 1.1.

2.12 Pay settlement medians have remained fairly steady through the 2025 calendar year, hovering between 3 and 4 per cent (see Figure 2.4), but it is clear that settlements have reduced compared to 2024. Brightmine data covering 2025 shows the median settlement for private sector organisations was 3.0 per cent, and early indications for January are that the median settlement will be 3.3 per cent.

Figure 2.4: Monthly pay settlement medians, three-month average, 2020 to 2025

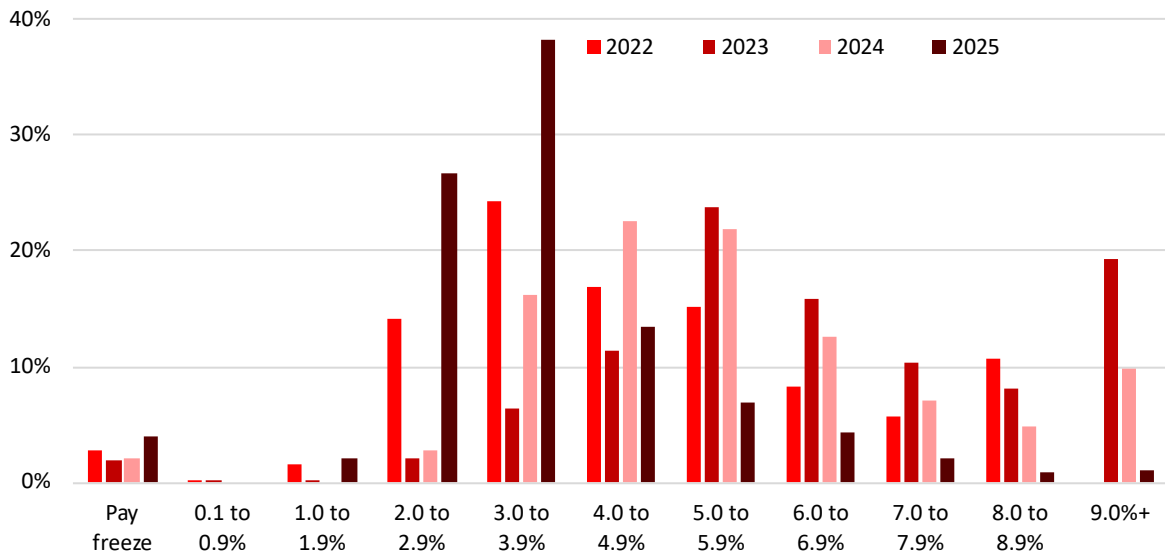


Sources: Settlement medians are from OPRB analysis of Brightmine, Incomes Data Research (IDR) and Labour Research Department (LRD) data up to November 2025. CPI Annual Growth from Series D7G7, CPI ANNUAL RATE 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, ONS, published January 2026.

Note: Latest data is early estimates.

2.13 The shift in the distribution of pay settlements provided by Brightmine is shown in Figure 2.5. Only 15.5 per cent of pay awards in 2025 were at 5 per cent or higher, compared to more than half (56.3 per cent) in 2024, and three-quarters (77.4 per cent) in 2023. Almost two-thirds (64.9 per cent) of 2025 pay settlements are between 2 and 4 per cent.

Figure 2.5: Distribution of pay settlements, 2022 to 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Brightmine data, unpublished.

Note: Pay settlements include both across the board and merit-based parts.

2.14 According to PAYE data, the pay of the median employed person grew by 3.7 per cent in the year to December 2025.⁹ This compares to 5.3 per cent in the year to December 2024.

2.15 The BoE’s *Agents’ summary of business conditions* from February 2026 summarises the intelligence gathered by the BoE’s Agents from their contacts across the UK.¹⁰ The average expected pay settlement for 2026 is 3.4 per cent, down from the 3.7 per cent expectation from the 2025 Agents’ pay survey. The distribution of settlements has also narrowed, with 70 per cent of expected settlements in the 2-4 per cent range, which compares to 46 per cent of reported actual pay settlements in 2025.

2.16 Respondents to the 2026 survey say they made pay settlements of 4.0 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile, the BoE’s full set of private sector settlements data for 2025 shows an average settlement of 3.6 per cent.

2.17 Considering actually awarded pay settlements and pay growth in the last year as well as the BoE’s expectations for 2026, settlements appear to be falling.

Pay across the earnings distributions

2.18 We give significant consideration to the pay of our remit groups and their equivalents elsewhere in the economy, to ensure that the recommendations we make are appropriate to their specific circumstances, as well as to wider labour market trends.

⁹ Median of Pay Growth (Table 27) from Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted (PAYE RTI), published January 2026. Median of pay growth is calculated by producing the annual growth in pay for all individuals in the PAYE RTI dataset and then selecting the median of those values. Growth in median pay figures look at the growth in pay over the past year and so compare the given month to the same month a year previous. This means that the median pay growth only considers those employed in both months.

¹⁰ Agents’ summary of business conditions, Bank of England, published February 2026.

2.19 In general, earnings for our remit groups most closely match the 95th and 99th percentiles of employees across the economy (see Table 2.1). The lowest paid of our remit groups sit between the 90th and 95th percentiles.

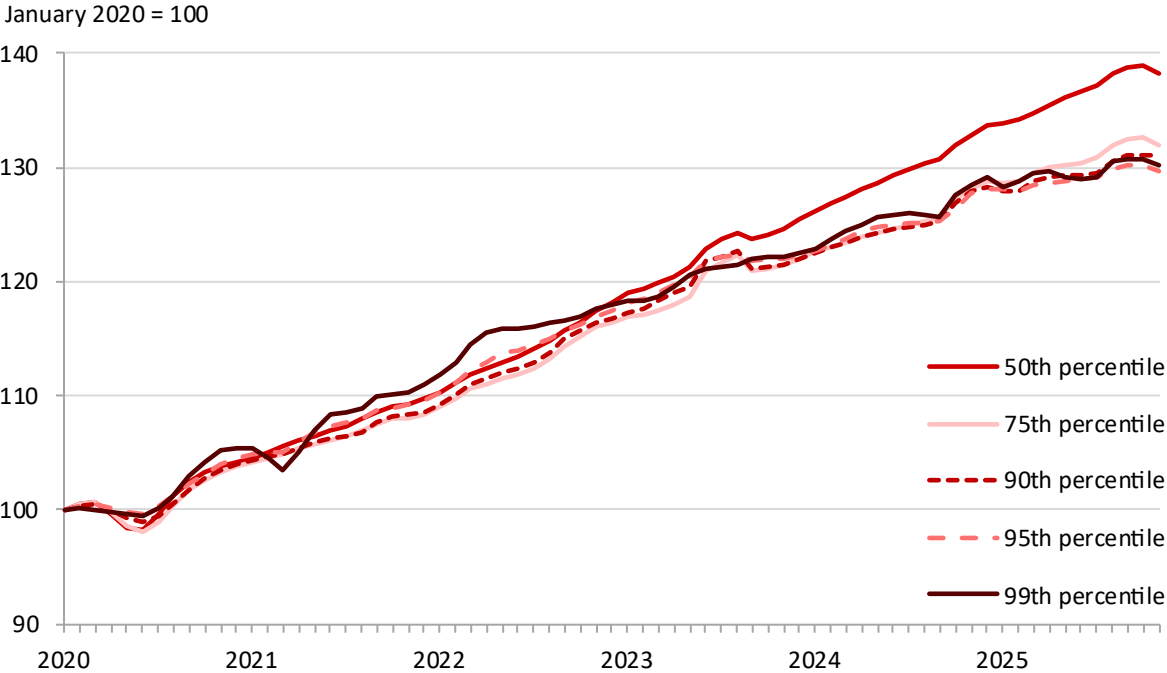
Table 2.1: Implied yearly pay at November 2025, by percentile and seasonally adjusted

10th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	90th percentile	95th percentile	99th percentile
£10,344	£18,456	£30,540	£46,188	£69,348	£92,916	£193,284

Source: Monthly pay by percentile (Table 5) from Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted (PAYE RTI), published January 2026. Implied yearly pay calculated by OPRB as 12 times monthly pay in November 2025.

2.20 Earnings growth has been weaker at the top end of the earnings distribution compared to those closer to the bottom of the distribution since early 2023 (see Figure 2.6).¹¹ This trend has been prevalent in the public sector for a long period,¹² partly due to pay deals being skewed towards lower earners to offset cost-of-living and minimum wage pressures. Increases to the national minimum wage have also boosted earnings growth at the lower distributions. Towards the end of 2024, growth at higher distributions accelerated, getting closer to the growth rates seen by lower percentiles, but this proved to be short-lived.

Figure 2.6: Monthly pay by percentile, indexed to January 2020, seasonally adjusted, 2020 to 2025



Source: Monthly pay by percentile (Table 5) from Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted (PAYE RTI), published January 2026. Indexed to January 2020 by OPRB.

Note: PAYE RTI estimates the pay for work completed in the month listed, rather than paid in the month listed.

¹¹ Monthly pay by percentile (Table 5) from Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted (PAYE RTI), published January 2026.

¹² Recent trends in public sector pay, IFS, published March 2024.

Table 2.2: Year on year growth in monthly pay, seasonally adjusted, 2025

	10th percentile	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile	90th percentile	95th percentile	99th percentile
12 months to Sep 2025	7.7%	7.5%	6.1%	5.4%	4.6%	3.9%	4.0%
12 months to Oct 2025	7.4%	7.1%	5.3%	4.4%	3.3%	3.0%	2.5%
12 months to Nov 2025	7.1%	5.6%	4.1%	3.0%	2.4%	1.5%	1.3%

Source: Monthly pay by percentile (Table 5) from Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted (PAYE RTI), published January 2026. Annual growth calculated by OPRB.

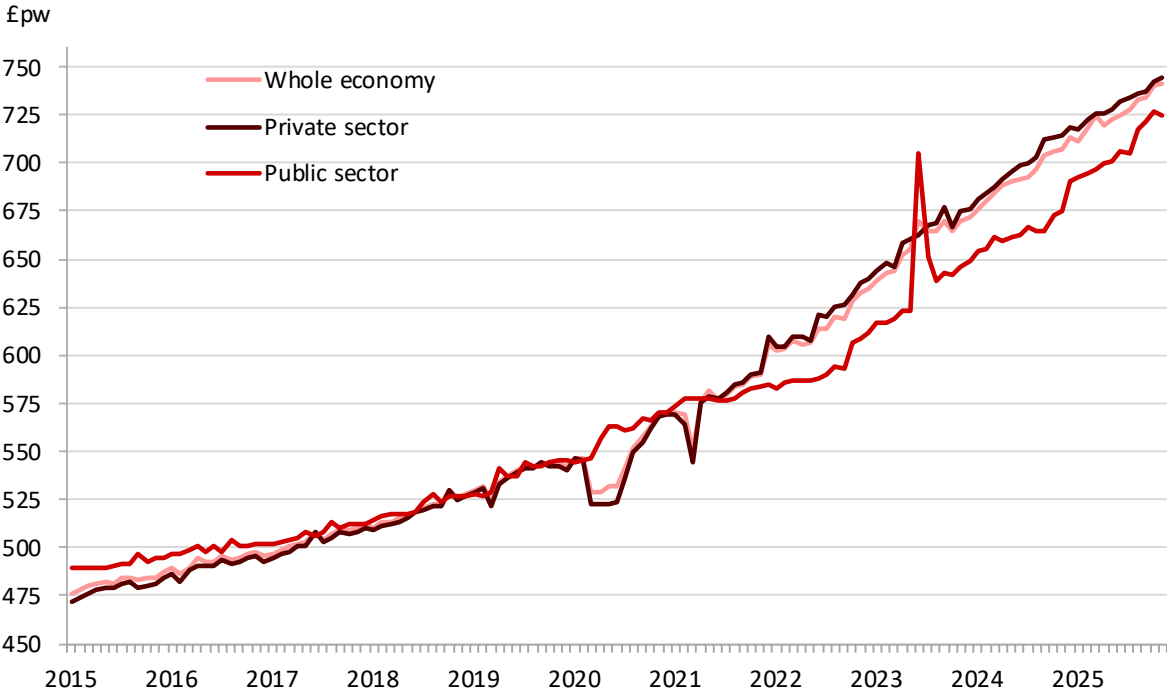
Note: PAYE RTI estimates the pay for work completed in the month listed, rather than paid in the month listed.

Private versus public sector pay changes

2.21 Over the past decade, earnings growth has been notably slower in the public sector than the private sector (see Figure 2.7).

2.22 However, since late 2024 there has been an acceleration in public sector earnings growth compared to private sector earnings, such that average public sector earnings are converging on private sector earnings – the differential reached a peak in September 2024, when private sector earnings were 7.1 per cent above public sector earnings, and has since fallen to 2.6 per cent above public sector earnings.

Figure 2.7: Average weekly earnings, public and private sectors (nominal prices, £pw), 2015 to 2025

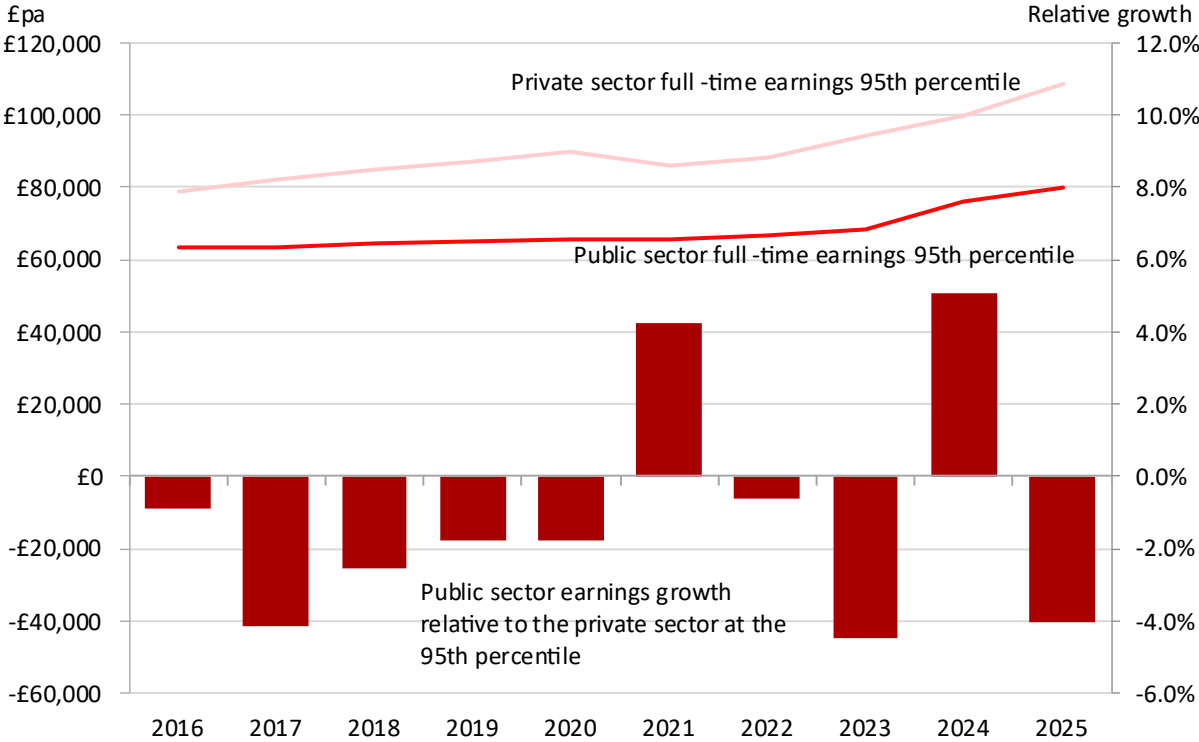


Sources: Average Weekly Earnings, KAB9, KAC4, KAD8, ONS, published January 2026.

Notes: Public sector excludes financial services. Includes part-time working.

- 2.23 ASHE data shows the sector differences for the highest earners. In April 2025, the 90th percentile of private sector earnings were significantly higher than the equivalent in the public sector (£66,153 for the public sector compared to £83,847 for the private sector).¹³ The difference is bigger for the 95th percentile (£79,778 for the public sector compared to £108,732 for the private sector). For 2025, the 95th percentile of private sector earnings grew by 4 percentage points more than the same percentile of public sector earnings (see Figure 2.8).
- 2.24 The situation is different for the median earner, where full-time earnings continue to be higher in the public sector than the private (£40,806 public compared to £38,396 private), due to the much wider earnings distribution in the private sector.

Figure 2.8: ASHE full-time earnings at the 95th percentile, public vs private, 2016 to 2025



Source: Table 7a Annual Pay – Gross 2025, “Estimates of earnings for the highest paid employee jobs by public and private sectors, UK”, ONS. Specific table used is Full time Annual Earnings. Figures are the ONS analysis of data from the ASHE survey.

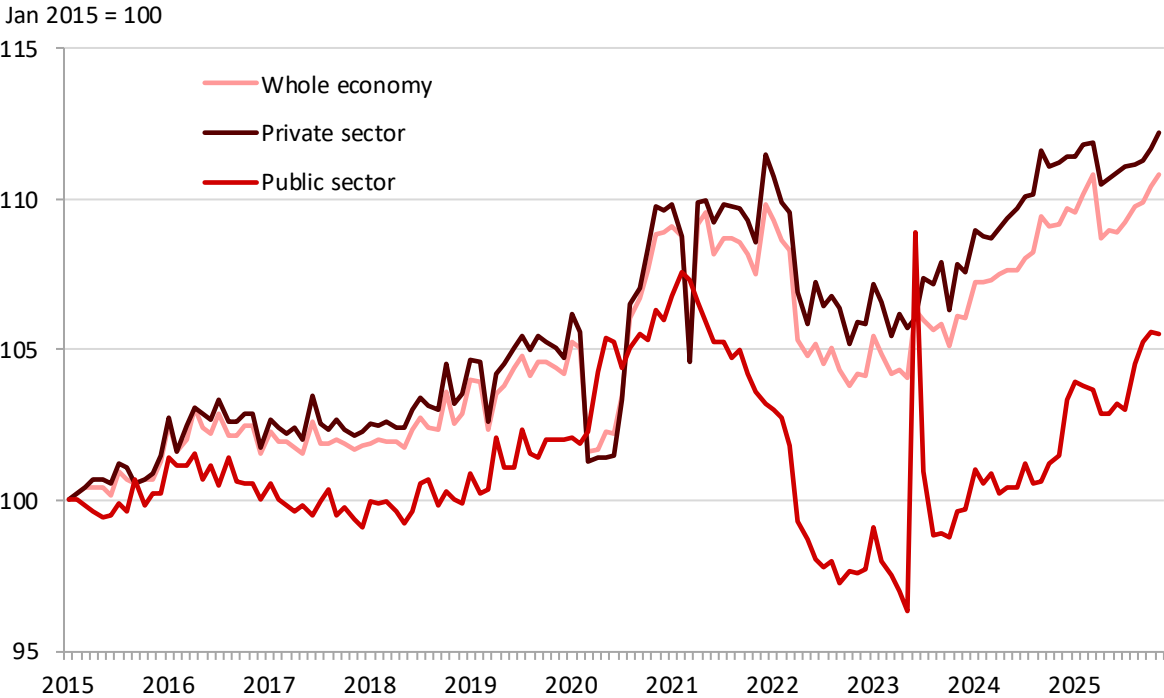
Real incomes

- 2.25 Negative economic shocks, particularly those stemming from the supply side of the economy, represent an unavoidable loss to – and an impact on people right across – the economy. Our view is that individual remit groups are not entitled to exceptional protection from the effects of these shocks. However, the impact of inflation on the real pay of our remit groups can be significant, and where appropriate is discussed further in their individual chapters.

¹³ Full-time Gross Annual Pay 2025 (Table H10 - 90-99 Percentiles.7a), Estimates of earnings for the highest paid employee jobs by public and private sectors, UK (provisional estimates), ONS, published October 2025. Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

- 2.26 Although inflation returned to the 2 per cent target for part of 2024, the cumulative impact of inflation over recent years means that as of December 2025, average prices were 29.1 per cent higher than they were in April 2020.¹⁴
- 2.27 Across the economy, real average earnings growth has been weak in recent years (see Figure 2.9). This means that despite rising real wages since 2023, real earnings were only 10.8 per cent higher in November 2025 than in January 2015. This is particularly true for the public sector, where real earnings have only grown by 5.5 per cent over the same period.
- 2.28 Despite quickly rising nominal pay since 2021 (see Figure 2.7), real wages across the whole economy fell significantly over much of that period, only recovering to 2021 levels in the last months of 2024 (see Figure 2.9).
- 2.29 By May 2023, average real public sector earnings had fallen to £474 per week in 2015 prices, their lowest level since 2003. In November 2025 they had recovered somewhat to £520 per week, though still below their February 2021 peak of £530 per week (see Figure 2.9).¹⁵ The private sector has now surpassed 2021 real wages, reaching £533 per week in 2015 prices in November 2025.

Figure 2.9: Real average weekly earnings, public and private sectors, indexed to January 2015, 2015 to 2025



Source: Average Weekly Earnings, published January 2026. Converted by OPRB to 2015 prices using CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, published January 2026.

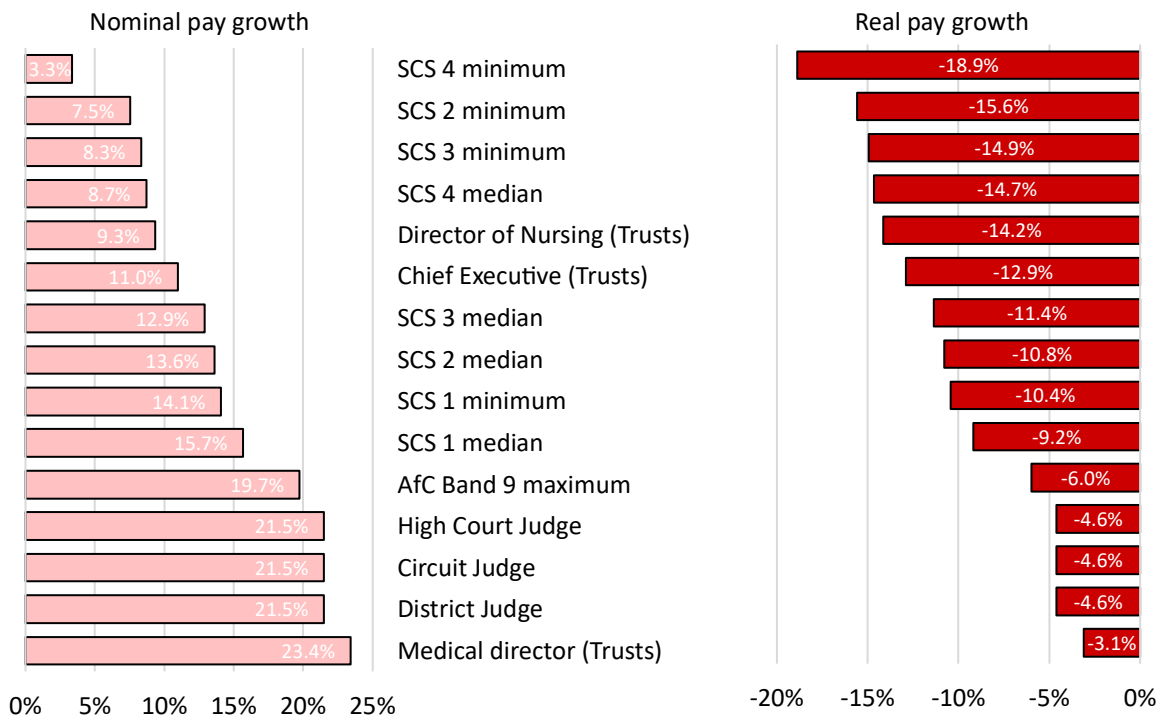
Note: Public sector excludes financial services.

¹⁴ OPRB calculation using Series D7BT, CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, ONS, published January 2026.

¹⁵ Excluding the single month spike in June 2023 as a result of NHS one-off bonus payments.

2.30 By November 2025, public sector wages had risen by 1.2 per cent in real terms since April 2020 (see Figure 2.9). On the other hand, our remit groups have experienced significant falls in real pay since the 2020-21 pay year (see Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10: Nominal vs real change in pay for selected roles, 2020-21 to 2025-26



Source: Real change since 2020-21 calculated by OPRB using CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, published January 2026.

Note: Pay figures for all the given roles corresponds to the salary at 1st April.

Labour market conditions

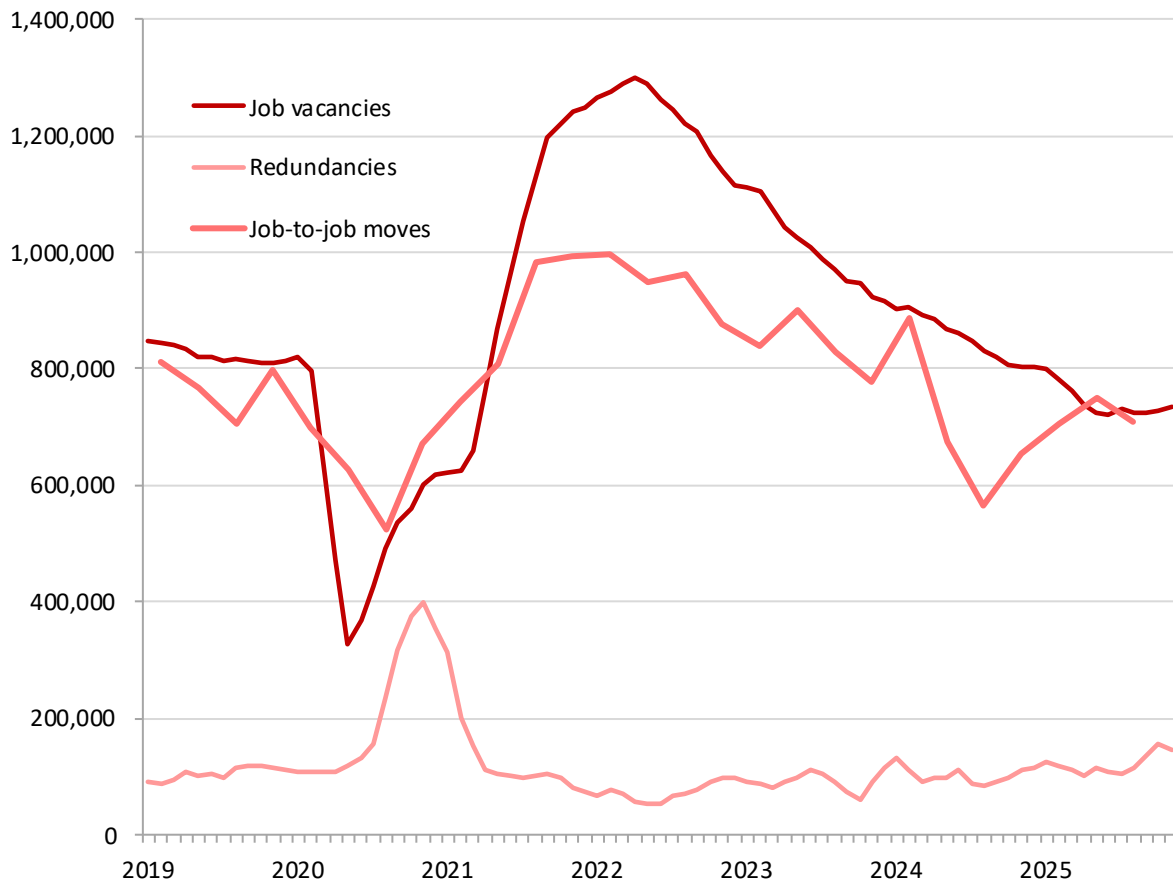
2.31 The labour market has continued to show signs of loosening over the last year. Redundancies¹⁶ increased again in 2025, to an average of 120,500 across each three-month period to November, following an average of 102,000 per three-month period over 2024 and 90,750 over 2023 (see Figure 2.11).¹⁷ The number of job vacancies has levelled off since March 2025,¹⁸ hovering around 729,000 on average each month after a steady fall from the 2022 peak. This compares to 799,000 job vacancies in January of 2025, 904,000 in January 2024, and a peak of 1,300,000 in April 2022. This signifies a return to pre-pandemic levels (see Figure 2.11). Aside from during the pandemic, this is the lowest level of vacancies since 2015.

¹⁶ The redundancy level is the number of people who were made redundant in the three months prior to interview. The figure is not seasonally adjusted. Redundancy figures are presented by the OPRB as the final month of the three months covered. Source: Redundancy level (BEAO), from RED01 SA: Redundancies levels and rates, published January 2026.

¹⁷ Average redundancies for 2025 up to November have been calculated by OPRB using data from Nov-Jan 2025 to Sep-Nov 2025, rounded to the nearest 250.

¹⁸ Vacancy figures are presented as the central month of the three-month rolling average. March 2025 figure of 762,000 vacancies is the three-month average to April 2025. The average of 729,000 per month is calculated using figures from Mar-May 2025 to Oct-Dec 2025. Source: All vacancies (AP2Y), VACS01 Vacancies and Unemployment, ONS Vacancy Survey, published January 2026. Seasonally adjusted. Excludes Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing.

Figure 2.11: Job vacancies and redundancies, three-month average, 2019 to 2025



Sources: ONS estimate of all vacancies (AP2Y), ONS, published January 2026; the number of people who were made redundant in the three months prior to interview (BEAO), from RED01 SA: Redundancies levels and rates, ONS, published January 2026, sourced from LFS data; Job to job flows (aged 16 to 69, seasonally adjusted), X02: Labour Market Flows, ONS, published November 2025, sourced from LFS data.

Note: Job to job flows are published by quarter. For comparison purposes, these figures are presented as the central month of the quarter.

2.32 The unemployment rate has slowly risen from a low of 3.7 per cent in mid-2022 to 5.2 per cent in October 2025.¹⁹ The number of PAYE employees on payroll (see Figure 2.12) has fallen by 180,000 over the year to December 2025,²⁰ to 30.2 million.²¹ However, employment rates remain historically high, and LFS employee figures have risen over the year to October 2025 by 520,000²² to 29.7m.²³

¹⁹ September-November 2025 Unemployment Rate for those aged 16-64 (LF2Q), Table 1, A01: Summary of labour market statistics, ONS, published January 2026. ONS estimates based on the Labour Force Survey.

²⁰ OPRB analysis of annual change to December 2025, Payrolled employees, Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted, published January 2026.

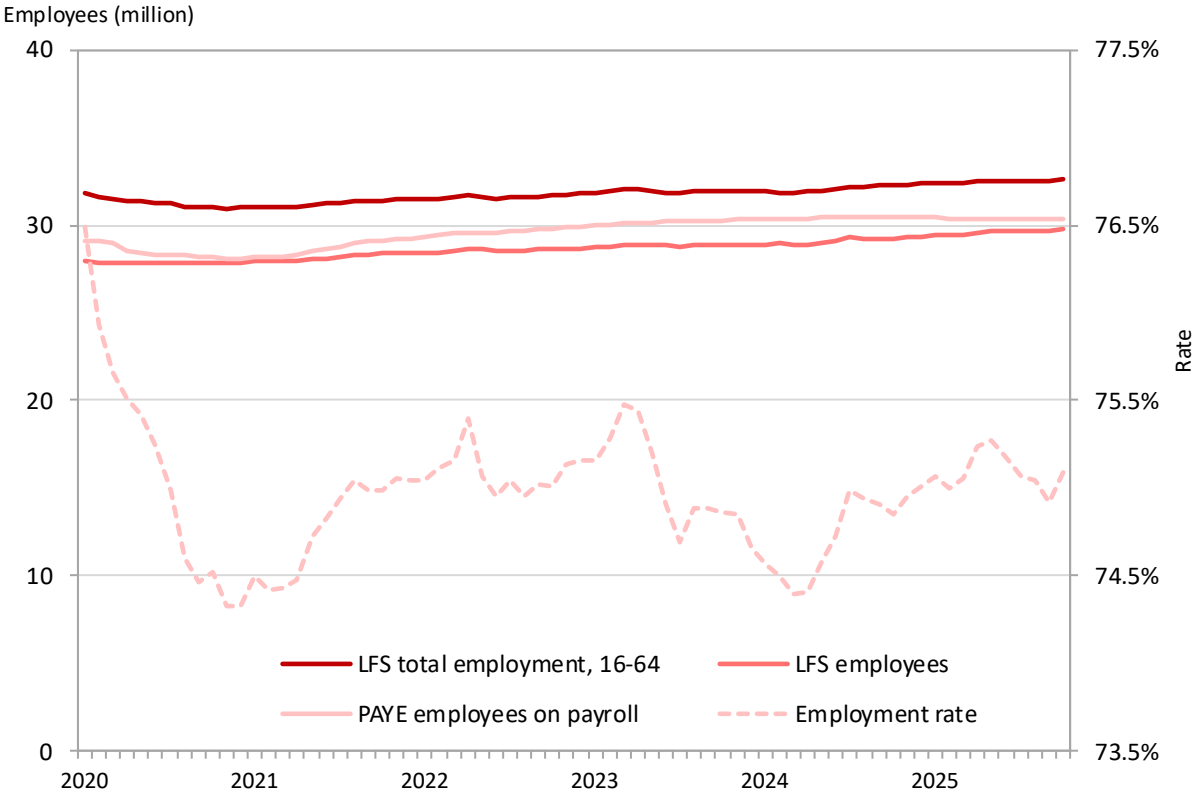
²¹ December 2025 Payrolled employees, Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted, published January 2026.

²² OPRB analysis of the 12-month change to three-month rolling average to November 2025.

²³ LFS employee count is presented as the central month of the three-month rolling average. October 2025 figure of 29.7m employees is the three-month average to November 2025. Source: Employees (MGRN), all in employment, Table 3, A01: Summary of labour market statistics, ONS, published January 2026.

2.33 The impact of this trend to a looser labour market may not be decisive for our remit groups, since demand for particular skills remains high.

Figure 2.12: Employment levels and rate, 2019 to 2025

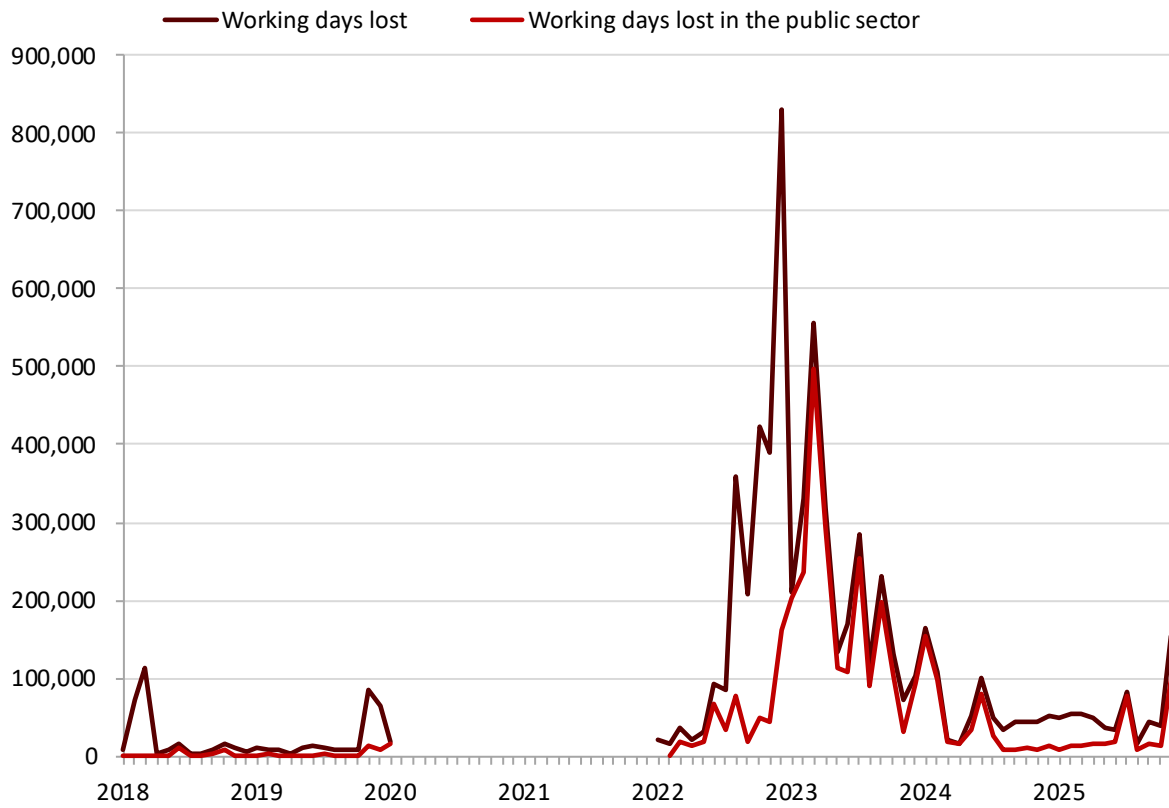


Sources: Summary of Labour Market Statistics, Labour Force Survey, ONS, published January 2026 (LF2G, MGRN, LF24, LF2Q); PAYE RTI data, published January 2026.

2.34 The number of labour disputes has significant effects on both public finances and overall productivity in the economy. The latest data on labour disputes provisionally shows 155,000 working days lost in November 2025, of which the public sector accounted for 97,000. This is unusually high for the year, where over most of 2025 there had been a trend of fewer labour dispute days, more similar to pre-pandemic trends than 2022-24 (see Figure 2.13). Single month spikes in working days lost are frequent – the average over 2025 so far shows 56,000 working days lost per month, of which the public sector accounted for 26,500.²⁴

²⁴ Source: LABD: Labour disputes in the UK, published January 2026. Average calculated by OPRB using data for the first 11 months of 2025, rounded to the nearest 500. Note that Working days lost in the public sector (F8XZ) and Working days lost in the private sector (F8Y2) may not sum to the total Working days lost (BBFW) due to rounding. November figures are provisional.

Figure 2.13: Labour disputes, 2018 to 2025



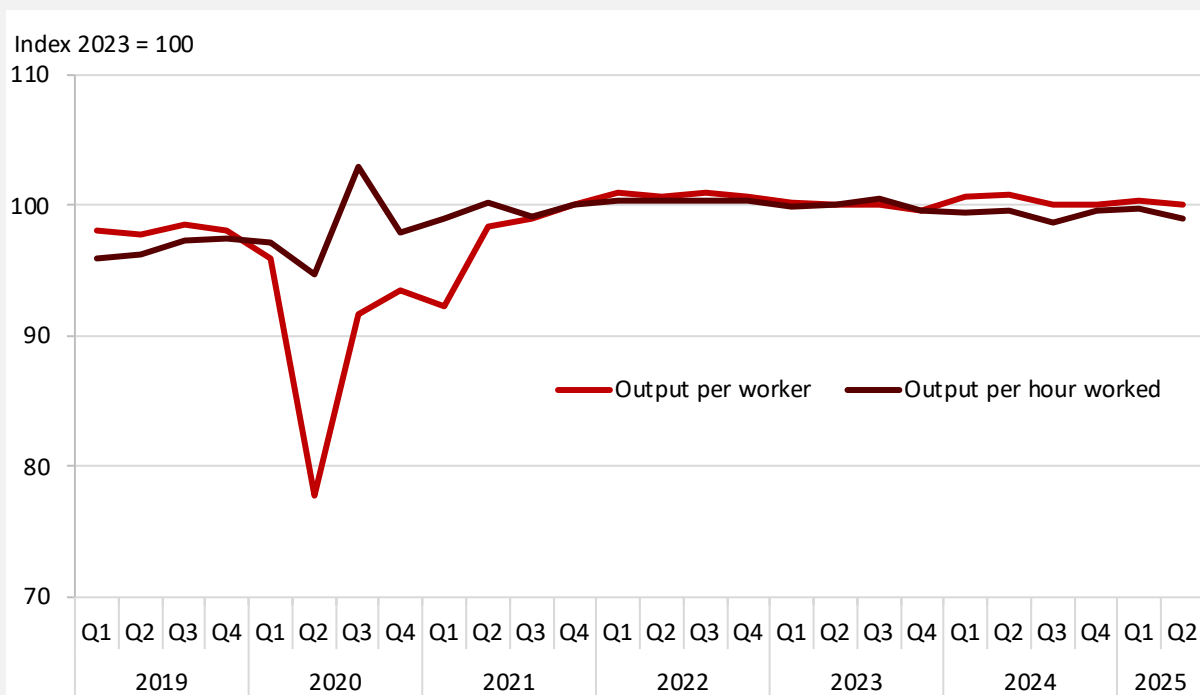
Source: LABD: Labour disputes in the UK, published January 2026 (F8XZ, F8Y2).

Notes: November 2025 data is provisional. Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. No data between February 2020 and December 2021 due to pandemic-related pause in collection. The ONS restarted collecting and publishing data on labour disputes in 2022.

Productivity

2.35 Whole-economy labour productivity levels in Q2 2025 were slightly above 2019 levels, having remained almost entirely flat since Q3 2021 (see Figure 2.14). This, paired with low growth, means there is little additional money in the economy to allocate to real-terms wage rises.

Figure 2.14: Labour productivity level, UK, 2019 to 2025



Source: Output per worker (A4YM) and output per hour (LZVB), ONS, published November 2025.

2.36 This year, HM Treasury again highlighted in their evidence the effect that low productivity growth since the Global Financial Crisis has had on GDP growth. In order to boost productivity, it is important to consider the contribution of public services.

2.37 Public services productivity in Q2 2025, as estimated by the ONS,²⁵ had fallen by 6.1 per cent since Q1 2019. The fall is due to healthcare, in which productivity had fallen by 14.2 per cent since 2019. While the most significant part of this occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when comparing against Q2 2021, healthcare productivity had fallen by 2.1 per cent by Q2 2025, contributing to a 1.9 per cent fall in overall public services productivity in the same period.

2.38 The ONS estimate of health productivity, where productivity fell by 1.5 per cent in the year to Q2 2025,²⁶ is more pessimistic than the NHS's own estimate of 2.4 per cent growth in the year to April-July 2025.²⁷

2.39 It is more difficult to justify real-terms pay increases against a background of poor productivity growth. Improvements to productivity in the future would strengthen the case for higher pay.

2.40 Measuring public services productivity is challenging, and so we welcome the Government's progress towards implementing the recommendations in the *National Statistician's Independent Review of the Measurement of Public Services Productivity*.²⁸ Measurement is

improving, but still imperfect and insufficiently granular to have more than a general bearing on our pay award recommendations. We urge the development of improved productivity metrics in our remit groups' services.

- 2.41 We believe our task of highlighting and responding to recruitment, retention, morale and quality challenges within our remit groups has an important role in contributing to public services productivity improvements. As key leaders within the public sector, it is important that our remit groups have the skills and behaviours which contribute to productivity within their sectors. We encourage the Government to consider the research and evidence in this area and to factor these skills and behaviours into their strategies and performance frameworks.
- 2.42 Pay scales and reward can therefore have an impact on productivity, and we take this into account when making recommendations.
- 2.43 We continue to encourage stakeholders to present evidence on how we should consider public sector productivity in future years.

Public finances and affordability

- 2.44 Following the Autumn Budget in November, pressures on departmental spending totals remain intense. In written evidence, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) said it is funded for a pay award of 2 per cent, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has developed plans which allow for a 2.5 per cent pay award, and the Cabinet Office recommended that the total increase in pay bill for the SCS should be no higher than 2.5 per cent. In oral evidence, HM Treasury indicated that the fiscal position is tighter than when written evidence was submitted.
- 2.45 We note that some of the cuts that a department might make in order to pay for pay awards higher than these figures could also have a direct effect on the recruitment, retention, and morale of our remit groups.
- 2.46 Government decisions about affordability are based on a wide set of judgements about spending and revenues. We take them fully into account but consider them alongside our central responsibility of facilitating adequate recruitment and retention among our remit groups.
- 2.47 The estimated cost of our recommendations is shown in Table 2.3. The total cost is approximately £112 million. This compares to a cost of approximately £65 million if departments' recommended pay awards had been applied across the board. These estimates are based on the most recent pay data snapshots provided to us by the departments. If the Government achieves their planned reductions in headcounts in several of our remit groups in

²⁵ Public service productivity, quarterly, April to June 2025, UK, ONS, published November 2025.

²⁶ Quarter on same quarter a year ago growth, percentage, Table 2: Quarterly healthcare Public Service Productivity, inputs and output, seasonally adjusted, Public service productivity, quarterly, April to June 2025, UK, ONS, published November 2025.

²⁷ Department of Health and Social Care "NHS recovery continues with above target productivity growth" (press release, 3 November 2025) <www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-recovery-continues-with-above-target-productivity-growth>.

²⁸ *National Statistician's Independent Review of the Measurement of Public Services Productivity* (UK Statistics Authority, 13 March 2025). Available at <<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/national-statisticians-independent-review-of-the-measurement-of-public-services-productivity>>.

the time since those snapshots, this reduction will mitigate the cost impact of our recommendations.

- 2.48 We appreciate that recommendations which exceed the Government’s affordability figures put further strain on a difficult fiscal position. Nevertheless, we have concluded that other considerations – particularly broader earnings trends and issues amongst our remit groups discussed in their chapters – are of significant weight and justify a set of pay awards in some cases somewhat higher than the level deemed affordable by the Government this year.

Table 2.3: Cost estimate of our recommendations

Remit Group	Pay Award	Estimated Cost of Recommendations
Senior Civil Service	3.5%	£51m
Judiciary	3.8%	£35m
Senior Leaders in the NHS in England	3.0%	£25m

Chapter 3

The Senior Civil Service

Summary

Our remit

- 3.1 In his remit letter, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster asked us to conduct our usual annual review process and provide recommendations on Senior Civil Service (SCS) pay.²⁹
- 3.2 Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this Report set out the economic context and the specific economic factors we take into account in recommending a pay award for the SCS.

Evidence

- 3.3 We received evidence from the Cabinet Office, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the FDA and Prospect trade unions, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government. We also hosted 18 online and in-person discussion groups with members of the SCS and the feeder grades.³⁰ We thank all who gave evidence for their contributions.
- 3.4 Detailed data and evidence can be found in the Annex to this Chapter.

Main themes and recommendations

- 3.5 We are pleased that this year there has been meaningful progress toward addressing a number of long-standing issues with SCS pay and reward, including several of the most urgent areas for reform highlighted in this Review Body's formal recommendations last year. This includes the development of reward principles and a 'vision statement' for the SCS, proposals for reduced pay band spans and a simple pay progression system.
- 3.6 These are sensible and pragmatic measures, and we support each of these proposals. We commend the efforts made by the Cabinet Office and others in achieving this progress. We strongly encourage the Government to implement these without delay – in particular, ensuring that pay progression takes effect from 1 April 2026.
- 3.7 However, as we said in our last Report, the SCS pay system needs wholesale review. This will take more than one year – it will be essential to maintain the current momentum, and to keep both this Review Body and remit group members informed of progress on a regular basis.
- 3.8 In the interim:
 - Levels of pay for the SCS appear to have fallen behind comparator groups in both the public and private sectors. This is particularly challenging at SCS 1-2, and raises concerns as to whether the civil service can attract and retain the highest-quality candidates – especially those with in-demand specialist skills.
 - The productivity and accountability of the SCS are hampered by excessive churn. Too many posts are occupied by individuals still building their expertise and key networks. Frequent turnover makes it difficult to hold leaders accountable for outcomes. There continue to be reports of individuals leaving the SCS and then returning on higher salaries that were only available to external hires – as internal appointees are prohibited from negotiating their starting salary. A simple pay progression system – which we have called for since 2018 – would

²⁹ See Appendix D.

³⁰ We held in-person discussion groups in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Manchester. See further at [3.108].

reward increased effectiveness in post and reduce the incentive to move roles in pursuit of a better salary.

- The SCS has grown without intention or coordination. Stakeholders have told us that the larger size has not been accompanied by corresponding increases in outputs.
- We hear repeated accounts of ‘grade inflation’ over time. This is not surprising against a background of holding down SCS pay uplifts without attention to SCS numbers.
- With these size increases, the SCS pay bill has grown almost 60 per cent in real terms since 2015 – funding which could be better spent on addressing some of the long-standing challenges within the SCS and, with right-sizing of the workforce, enable a leaner, better-paid SCS in pursuit of a clear vision and purpose.
- There are some concerning indicators of SCS morale – only 54 per cent of SCS are satisfied with the overall benefits package, 20 per cent do not agree their performance is evaluated fairly and 32 per cent do not believe there are opportunities to develop their careers.
- We have also heard confusion about the recent amendments to the SCS performance management system, and strong feedback that the current bonus scheme applicable in UK government departments is not fair or transparent, and negatively impacts teams and organisational culture across the civil service.
- Many in the delegated grades have told us they do not consider promotion to the SCS to be an attractive, or even viable, option for their future career. A key factor is the overlap in pay between the delegated grades and SCS 1 – alongside other disincentives such as less favourable terms and conditions, together with workloads, levels of responsibility and exposure that are viewed as out of alignment with the salary offered.

3.9 Action is needed to restore the SCS’s effectiveness and its attractiveness to able individuals. The forthcoming SCS Strategy, building on the already-published ‘vision statement’, should set out clearly the future size, purpose and composition of the SCS. With current restructuring and Voluntary Exit Schemes (VES) there is an opportunity to align the purpose and size of the SCS with a new pay and reward system. If this is taken, the effect of our pay recommendations on the overall SCS pay bill should be relatively limited.

3.10 The pay and reward system should include a coherent framework for recruiting and retaining in-demand specialist skills. It is particularly important, in a period of great challenges and rapid change, that the SCS needs to be able to recruit and retain the best and who are equipped to understand public priorities and expectations and respond accordingly.

3.11 Based on the evidence we have seen, we are recommending a pay award of 3.5 per cent for all members of the SCS. We also recommend the following adjustments to the pay framework:

- Each of the SCS pay band minima increase by £5,000.
- Introduction of a simple pay progression system with effect from 1 April 2026, comprising 1.0 per cent of the SCS pay bill.

3.12 These recommendations are designed to address enduring issues with SCS pay and reward, which we have been highlighting for some time. We caution against treating the pay rise for the SCS as necessarily right for the wider civil service – where a different set of pay and reward factors may be present for the different workforces. The pay uplift for the delegated grades should be derived from consideration of its unique needs and characteristics, rather than a simple ‘read-across’ from the recommendation for the SCS.

3.13 Our full recommendations for the SCS are set out at [3.82]–[3.101] below.

Government response to our 2024 recommendations

3.14 Last year, we made the following pay recommendations for the SCS:

- A 3.25 per cent consolidated pay increase to base pay from 1 April 2025.
- An increase of £5,000 to the minimum and £12,200 to the maximum for SCS 1.
- An increase of £5,000 to the minimum and £1,100 to the maximum for SCS 1A.
- An increase of £2,000 to the minimum and £500 to the maximum for SCS 2.
- An increase of £2,000 to the minimum and £900 to the maximum for SCS 3.
- An increase of £2,000 to the minimum and £20,000 to the maximum for SCS 4.
- Provision of an anomalies pot comprising 0.5 per cent of the SCS pay bill.

3.15 We also took the unusual step of formally recommending that a fundamental review and ‘reset’ of SCS pay and reward frameworks be undertaken by the Government with urgency – to support the development and implementation at pace of solutions to the issues and anomalies that have been highlighted over many years by the Review Body, including:

- A coherent SCS Strategy which addresses the fundamental questions relating to the SCS’ purpose, size and composition.
- A clear set of reward principles for the SCS.
- A pay structure that can recruit and retain in-demand specialists.
- A simple pay progression system for those delivering in role and demonstrating expertise.
- Addressing salary band overlaps between the delegated grades and the SCS, and within the SCS.
- Reducing reliance upon anomalies pots and non-consolidated payments.
- Benchmarking SCS pay and reward relative to comparable leadership roles and responsibilities across the public and private sectors.

3.16 We were pleased by the Government’s prompt response, announcing only 16 days after we submitted our Report that it had accepted all of the above recommendations – apart from the maxima increases for SCS 1-3, which were deferred to form part of the fundamental review.³¹

3.17 In contrast, however, we are extremely disappointed by the extended delay between the Government’s announcement and the implementation of pay awards by departments. Most awards were not paid to members of the SCS until August or September 2025 – and some as late as October 2025, a delay of more than five months post-announcement. Our strong expectation is that such delays will not occur in future. We discuss this further at [3.99] and [3.165].

³¹ HC Deb 22 May 2025 vol 767 HCWS662. Available at <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-05-22/debates/25052261000015/CivilServiceWorkforce>>.

Context

- 3.18 In evidence, HM Treasury set out the fiscal position and its view of the economic climate in which we are making our recommendations.³² This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. The Cabinet Office said that the total increase in pay bill for the SCS should be no higher than 2.5 per cent.³³ In oral evidence, the Cabinet Office said that a higher award would impact on departmental budgets.
- 3.19 Members of the SCS work in an environment of ongoing change. The Government continues to advance the ‘mission-led objectives’ outlined in its ‘Plan for Change’ alongside other new and emerging priorities.³⁴ Geopolitical and economic uncertainty remains a prominent feature on the policy and delivery landscape, and major shifts in individual sectors – such as the abolition of NHS England, or investments in artificial intelligence (AI) through the AI Opportunities Action Plan – often have a knock-on effect upon the demands and expectations of the civil service.³⁵
- 3.20 Many civil servants are affected by departmental restructuring, redundancies, and voluntary exit schemes.³⁶ In December 2025 there were 36 exit schemes underway, with around 5,000 individuals expected to leave the civil service under these terms.³⁷ The SCS has the task of leading colleagues through these changes and ensuring services continue to be delivered into the future.
- 3.21 More recently, the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister has announced the Government’s plans to ‘rewire’ Whitehall – a “*wholesale digital transformation of the state*”.³⁸ These plans include:
- Learning from the successes of the Vaccine Taskforce, deploying new taskforces that have a direct line to the top of government to remove obstacles to delivering change.
 - Expanding the No10 Innovation Fellows programme to bring in further external challenge and specialist digital skills.³⁹

³² Written submission 001 (HM Treasury).

³³ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [15]-[16].

³⁴ HM Government (2024) Plan for Change: Milestones for mission-led government (CP 1210). Available at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6751af4719e0c816d18d1df3/Plan_for_Change.pdf>. See also: Keir Starmer, Prime Minister “Plan for Change” (speech delivered at Pinewood Studios, Buckinghamshire, 5 December 2024). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-plan-for-change-5-december-2024>; Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street “Next phase of Mission-led government will put working people’s priorities first, with PM set to unveil Plan for Change” (press release, 30 November 2024). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/news/next-phase-of-mission-led-government-will-put-working-peoples-priorities-first-with-pm-set-to-unveil-plan-for-change>; Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street “PM sets out blueprint for decade of national renewal” (press release, 5 December 2024). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-sets-out-blueprint-for-decade-of-national-renewal>.

³⁵ Keir Starmer, Prime Minister “Fundamental reform of the British state” (speech delivered at Reckitt, Hull, 13 March 2025). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-remarks-on-the-fundamental-reform-of-the-british-state-13-march-2025>; Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street “Prime Minister sets out blueprint to turbocharge AI” (press release, 13 January 2025). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-blueprint-to-turbocharge-ai>.

³⁶ Rowena Mason “Nearly 2,000 Foreign Office jobs ‘at risk’, says PCS union” *The Guardian* (online ed, 17 October 2025)

<www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/oct/17/nearly-2000-foreign-office-jobs-at-risk-says-pcs-union>; “Whitehall Monitor 2026: Part 2 – The state of the civil service” (13 January 2026) Institute for Government <www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/whitehall-monitor-2026/part-2-state-civil-service>.

³⁷ Teyve Markson “Voluntary exits: Around 5,000 officials to leave across government” (17 December 2025) Civil Service World <www.civilserviceworld.com/professions/article/civil-service-job-cuts-voluntary-exits-5000-to-leave-government-cat-little>.

³⁸ Darren Jones, Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister & Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster “Move fast, fix things” (speech delivered at What3Words, London, 20 January 2026). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/speeches/move-fast-fix-things>. See also Cabinet Office ““Move fast, fix things” – Darren Jones sets out plan to rewire Whitehall and incentivise innovation in the civil service” (press release, 21 January 2026). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/news/move-fast-fix-things-darren-jones-sets-out-plan-to-rewire-whitehall-and-incentivise-innovation-in-the-civil-service>.

³⁹ “No10 Innovation Fellowship” Number 10 Data Science <<https://fellows.ai.gov.uk>>. See also “The No10 Innovation Fellowship Programme” (12 May 2023) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-no10-innovation-fellowship-programme>.

- Promoting “*the doers, not the talkers*” in the SCS and establishing a National School of Government and Public Services to train them in the skills needed to deliver the new digital state.

3.22 He also said SCS performance management would be strengthened – with more-structured processes for poor performance and data-sharing across departments, key performance indicators (KPIs) for the most senior civil servants to be set by ministers, and existing bonus arrangements reweighted toward fewer, but higher bonuses for top-performing staff.

Key points from the evidence

Recruitment

3.23 CSC data shows a significant reduction in the number of SCS recruitment competitions, with 166 in 2024-25, compared to 235 in 2023-24.⁴⁰ We heard that this reduction in part reflected the timing of the General Election.

3.24 Competition success ratios are broadly similar to last year – with:

- 54 of 166 competitions (32.5 per cent) resulting in only one appointable candidate (compared to 81 of 235, or 34.5 per cent, in 2023-24).
- Only 12 competitions failing to identify any appointable candidates (compared to 15 of 235 in 2023-24), contributing to 7.2 per cent of vacancies remaining unfilled (6.4 in 2023-24).

3.25 However, the average number of applications per role for Commissioner-chaired competitions has increased by 35 per cent since 2023-24. This appears, in part, to be driven by an increasing number of AI-generated applications that are not of the calibre expected for SCS roles or ‘quick applications’ from individuals who are not sufficiently qualified or experienced.

3.26 Of 845 new SCS entrants in 2024-25, approximately 79 per cent were promoted internally from the civil service, 11 per cent appointed from the private sector, and 10 per cent appointed from the wider public sector. This remains consistent with 2023-24, where of the 940 new entrants to the SCS, 80 per cent were internal promotees, 10 per cent from the private sector, and 10 per cent from the wider public sector.

3.27 The diversity of candidates from Commissioner-chaired competitions that were considered ‘appointable’ in 2024-25 has decreased from the previous year. The percentage of ‘appointable’ candidates identified as female (41 per cent) or from an ethnic minority background (7 per cent) is also lower than the current SCS cohort (50 per cent and 9 per cent respectively). We discuss this further at [3.119] and [3.177].

3.28 For this Report, the CSC has not provided us with data on the quality of candidates deemed ‘appointable’. We understand this is due to concerns regarding the consistency of grading criteria and approaches across panels. We are therefore unable to comment on whether the slight improvement observed last year in the number of shortlisted candidates judged ‘very good’ or ‘outstanding’ has continued. This is disappointing, and we encourage the CSC to provide this data to us in future.

⁴⁰ CSC data covers recruitment campaigns where a Civil Service Commissioner chairs the recruitment panel. Commissioners chair the majority of externally advertised SCS 2 (Director) competitions, and all SCS 3 (Director General) and SCS 4 (Permanent Secretary) competitions.

3.29 This year, for the first time, the Review Body hosted a discussion group with a selection of executive search firms. The purpose was to gather information on the cross-sector senior talent recruitment market, as well as candidate and recruiter experiences. We heard that:

- The salary gaps between the SCS and the wider public sector, and the private sector, have noticeably increased in recent years. We heard there are potentially strong candidates who do not consider applying for SCS roles because the salary bands are not sufficient.
- Although it does not appear that the quality of candidates for senior posts has declined, prospective external candidates are increasingly concerned about uncompetitive salary levels and personal exposure risks.
- The 'Places for Growth' targets for SCS positions are welcome, and have helped tap into the supply of talent outside of London and the South East.
- Candidates are often unaware of SCS pay rules – including the scope to negotiate salary, and that the SCS do not receive pay progression.
- There is often failure to keep candidates engaged over the course of lengthy recruitment processes, where delays in convening panels, scheduling interviews and receiving necessary approvals are commonplace.
- 'Pay tourism' – the practice of leaving the civil service and returning as an external candidate in order to be able to negotiate a higher salary – is prevalent.

3.30 These and other factors affect the attractiveness of SCS roles to both external and internal candidates. A number of issues that we discussed in our Report last year also remain concerns:

- *Pay band overlap between Grade 6 and SCS 1* – 22.3 per cent of Grade 6 staff currently earn more than £81,000, the SCS 1 minimum – and 8.1 per cent earn over £86,000. Members of the delegated grades often do not wish for promotion to the SCS, seeing the pay as failing to match the increase in pressure, responsibility and exposure. This issue is even more acute in Scotland, where those at Grades C2-C3 can often have an effective hourly rate that is much higher than those in the SCS.
- *Pay on promotion policy* – existing civil servants cannot negotiate their starting salary upon promotion to the SCS, instead receiving either the band minima, or a 10 per cent increase on their existing salary. This creates significant disparity with external candidates, who can and often do negotiate markedly higher salaries. This is a notable driver of the 'pay tourism' trend, as well as feelings of inequity and unfairness amongst the SCS cohort.
- *Differences in terms and conditions* – including flexitime and paid overtime, eligibility for various allowances, and reduced annual leave allowances.
- *Differences in pay* – with staff at the same grade being paid differently by different departments.

3.31 As well as deterring some from seeking promotion, these factors deter existing members of the SCS from encouraging their staff to apply for SCS roles. Almost all of these issues relate to the underlying structure of SCS pay and reward, and should be addressed through the SCS Strategy and fundamental review.

3.32 It is particularly important that the SCS can recruit and retain the highest-quality specialist and in-demand skills. Last year, we discussed recruitment challenges in some key disciplines – difficulties persist in key areas such as Digital and Finance.

- 3.33 This year, we have heard more accounts of the continued practice of ‘grade inflation’ (i.e. sizing of roles at a grade higher than previous iterations or other similar positions). This is unsurprising, given that it appears the controls on job-sizing and headcount are much less rigid than those on salaries.
- 3.34 The proportion of SCS based in London has continued to fall,⁴¹ but we have heard that members of the SCS based elsewhere still feel that their opportunities are limited unless they are willing to relocate or commute to London.

Retention

- 3.35 Departmental workforce data provided by the Cabinet Office shows that overall, retention across the civil service has improved over the last 12 months.
- 3.36 In 2024-25, approximately 18 per cent of the SCS left or changed roles:⁴²
- 10.2 per cent of the SCS left – including those who retired, or moved back to a more junior role following temporary promotion.
 - 3.9 per cent of the SCS moved between departments.
 - 3.7 per cent of the SCS moved roles within the same department.

This is a decrease from the approximately 20 per cent of SCS who left or changed roles in 2023-24.⁴³

- 3.37 Broken down by profession, turnover is particularly high in some key areas, such as:⁴⁴
- Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) (13.9 per cent turnover / 17.3 per cent departmental turnover).
 - Finance (13.7 per cent turnover / 17.7 per cent departmental turnover).
 - Human Resources (12.0 per cent turnover / 19.0 per cent departmental turnover).
- 3.38 Across the SCS, median tenure has again increased, though the rate of increase has slowed. In 2024-25, the median tenure for members of the SCS:
- in current role was 2.7 years, up from 2.5 years in 2023-24, 2.1 years in 2022-23 and 1.9 years in 2021-22.
 - in current pay band was 3.5 years, up from 3.3 years in 2023-24, 2.9 years in 2022-23 and 2.6 years in 2021-22.
 - as a member of the SCS was 4.4 years, up from 4.3 years in 2023-24, 4.0 years in 2022-23 and 3.6 years in 2021-22.

⁴¹ See further at [3.122].

⁴² See detailed data and discussion at [3.194]-[3.197]. This data excludes moves related to machinery of government changes. Data on moves between departments is more reliable than those for moves within departments, where differences in departmental reporting practice may affect the figures. It is possible the true figure is significantly higher.

⁴³ Of this group, 11.6 per cent left the SCS (including those who retired or moved back to a more junior role following temporary promotion), 4.4 per cent moved departments, and 3.6 per cent moved roles within the same department.

⁴⁴ See detailed data and discussion at [3.199]. ‘Turnover’ here refers to people who have left the civil service entirely. ‘Departmental turnover’ includes these people as well as those who have moved department. Some of these figures reflect multi-department restructures/consolidation.

- 3.39 The 2024-25 SCS resignation rate was 3.7 per cent. This is down from 4.3 per cent in 2023-24, and down from a record high of 5.9 per cent in 2022-23. By profession, the resignation rate also remains higher in some key areas, such as:
- Clinical (10.1 per cent, down from 10.7 per cent in 2023-24).
 - DDaT (8.8 per cent, up from 8.2 per cent in 2023-24).
 - Finance (6.9 per cent, up from 5.1 per cent in 2023-24).
 - Commercial (5.0 per cent, down from 7.0 per cent in 2023-24).
 - Human Resources (4.6 per cent, down from 5.6 per cent in 2023-24).
 - Communications (4.5 per cent, down from 13.3 per cent in 2023-24).
- 3.40 Of those who have already left the SCS, exit interview data from 2024-25 indicates that 60 per cent were considered ‘regrettable losses’, down from 83 per cent in 2023-24 and 72 per cent in 2022-23. This indicates that outflow continues to include higher-quality members of the SCS – although in reduced volumes than in previous years.⁴⁵
- 3.41 When asked their reasons for leaving, recent years show fewer SCS mentioning the pay overall, while comparisons to pay for similar roles remain steady. Meanwhile, opportunities to develop elsewhere, feeling fairly treated, and (to a lesser degree) how well change is managed have become more commonly mentioned as reasons for leaving over the last nine years.⁴⁶
- 3.42 Some movement – particularly between the public and private sectors – is important, and to be encouraged. However, more needs to be done on recruitment planning for skills shortage areas, and addressing the drivers of churn, to avoid excessive movement. There has been improvement in recent years – possibly due in part to the minimum tenure expectations introduced in 2022⁴⁷ – but SCS turnover remains too high, especially in the DDaT, Finance and Human Resources professions.
- 3.43 We have heard that in the absence of pay progression, changing roles or leaving the civil service altogether is the only way for members of the SCS to improve upon their current salaries.

Morale

- 3.44 The 2025 Civil Service People Survey records an overall SCS engagement score of 75 per cent, which is similar to the 76 per cent score in 2024 and 2023. This does not, however, offer a complete picture of morale across the SCS. Other indicators reveal that:
- Only 54 per cent feel satisfied with their total benefits package, compared to 51 per cent in 2024 and 46 per cent in 2023.
 - 80 per cent of the SCS said they believe their performance is evaluated fairly, remaining steady from 2024.
 - 68 per cent of the SCS agreed that “there are opportunities for me to develop my career in my organisation”, down from 73 per cent in 2024.
 - 63 per cent agreed they have an acceptable workload, down from 66 per cent in 2024.

⁴⁵ See detailed data and discussion at [3.193].

⁴⁶ See detailed data and discussion at [3.189]-[3.191].

⁴⁷ The policy, introduced on 4 July 2022, sets the expectation of a minimum tenure of 3 years for all SCS 1 and 2 posts.

- 68 per cent agree that they have a good balance between their work and private lives, down from 72 per cent in 2024.

3.45 The FDA/Prospect Survey, and our discussion groups with members of the remit group and feeder grades, indicate some significant areas of dissatisfaction across the SCS – with 65 per cent of respondents reporting that their morale has decreased over the last year.

3.46 The FDA/Prospect’s submission and data commentary highlight that:⁴⁸

- 63 per cent of respondents do not feel their organisations have sufficient resources (68 per cent in 2024), and 60 per cent feel there are not enough staff to deliver (67 per cent in 2024).
- 59 per cent do not feel that colleagues in less senior roles have incentive to seek promotion into the SCS, and 56 per cent report they are not likely to seek further promotion within the SCS themselves.
- 74 per cent report they work significantly more than their contracted hours – with 39 per cent working 11 or more additional hours each week (43 per cent in 2024), and 35 per cent regularly working 6-10 additional hours each week (29 per cent in 2024).

3.47 The FDA/Prospect survey suggests that several issues are having a particularly acute impact on morale:⁴⁹

- *Workload and resourcing* – with persistently negative survey responses, despite the 75 percent growth in the size of the SCS over the last ten years.
- *Pay bands and salary overlap with the delegated grades* – with nearly 270 free-text survey responses citing concerns.
- *Link between performance and pay* – 75 per cent of respondents do not see a clear link between performance and pay.

3.48 Despite this, the FDA/Prospect survey also shows that 75 per cent of respondents generally feel valued by their departments, and 69 per cent by ministers.⁵⁰

Size

3.49 The SCS workforce has increased by 175 individuals (155 FTE) over the past year. The SCS is now 2.4 per cent larger than last year and 71.5 per cent larger than in 2015. It now accounts for 1.3 per cent of the total civil service, a 30 per cent increase since 2015.

3.50 The increase in the last year was primarily at SCS 1 grade, with 125 additional individuals at SCS 1 and 50 at SCS 2. The SCS continues to be concentrated in London, with 60.9 per cent of all SCS based there in 2025. This is slightly decreased from 61.8 per cent in 2024 and 68.1 per cent in 2015.

3.51 The sustained growth in the number of SCS shows in the pay bill. This is now approximately £993m, up from £933m last year and £452m in 2015 – a nominal increase of 6 per cent from 2024, and of 119 per cent (or 59 per cent in real terms) from 2015.

⁴⁸ The FDA and Prospect are the principal trade unions for SCS grades. The FDA represents professionals and managers in public service, ranging from HEO grade to Permanent Secretary (see further at “Who we are” FDA <www.fda.org.uk/who-we-are>). Prospect represents employees in specialist roles across a diverse range of industries (see further at “Who are Prospect and what do we do?” Prospect <<https://prospect.org.uk/about/who-are-prospect>>). The FDA/Prospect survey of SCS members was conducted in September-October 2025, and received 556 responses. See further at [3.109].

⁴⁹ See detailed data and discussion at [3.203]-[3.207].

⁵⁰ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at 29.

3.52 Alongside the SCS Strategy, the current departmental restructuring and voluntary exit schemes offer an opportunity for ‘right-sizing’ the SCS workforce, and for improving affordability as well as productivity. We encourage the Government to consider reinvesting any cost savings generated from SCS size reductions into addressing other issues with SCS pay and reward, including reviewing salaries against market rates for certain professions.

Pay and reward

3.53 There appears to be a widening gap between SCS pay levels and salaries across the broader public sector and the private sector. This is affecting attitudes and decision-making across the SCS:

- Only 19.4 per cent of FDA/Prospect survey respondents reported they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall SCS pay arrangements.
- ‘Fairly remunerated for work’ was the most-selected reward concern in the FDA/Prospect survey. Other key concerns were ‘fair pay in line with other colleagues, including comparability to the wider public sector’ and ‘pay keeping up with inflation’.
- 70 per cent of departmental exit interviewees cited pay as a significant factor in their decision to resign (up from 66 per cent last year).
- Comments from Civil Service Commissioners indicate that shifts in the number and calibre of candidates at senior levels are related to uncompetitive salaries in the civil service compared to the wider public sector and the private sector.

3.54 We heard this year in discussion groups and oral evidence that SCS salary levels are diverging from key public sector comparators at a worrying rate. Since 2015 the salary per SCS FTE has fallen 13 per cent in real terms even as the real-terms pay bill has grown by nearly 60 per cent. We intend to explore this issue in further detail in our next Report, including undertaking analysis of salary levels for SCS and pay comparators across the public and private sectors.

3.55 We remain concerned by the number of individuals who are not receiving consolidated, pensionable uplifts to pay in response to this Review Body’s annual recommendations. This occurs when individuals are at or above the top of the relevant salary band – and means they instead receive a one-off non-consolidated, non-pensionable payment. There are approximately 325 individuals (4.8 per cent of the SCS) affected by this issue in SCS 1-3 – up from 240 individuals (3.6 per cent) last year. This issue needs attention, especially as the implementation of the fundamental review progresses.

3.56 This year, we again heard of new joiners to the SCS who are unaware that they have been appointed at the top of the band and their pay cannot increase annually, or unaware that there is no pay progression. As part of the ongoing fundamental review, we encourage the Cabinet Office to make pay ranges and rules more transparent, including to prospective new joiners.

3.57 We have also repeatedly heard discontent with the incentive payment (bonus) scheme. We hear from SCS working in UK government departments (who are eligible to receive bonuses) that the process is often opaque, burdensome and sometimes divisive, for what are relatively small individual payments. Those in the Welsh and Scottish governments, who are ineligible, comment that they would not want a scheme of this kind if offered, for similar reasons. Individuals across both groupings said that they would much prefer to receive pay progression over bonuses.

3.58 Changes have been made to the overall SCS performance management system this year – including introduction of ‘minimum standards’ to replace the previous mandatory objectives, standardisation of performance grading and removal of ‘forced distributions’ in favour of an ‘expected distribution’,

and introduction of cross-government performance data collection. We have yet to see the impact of these changes.

Strategy and development initiatives

3.59 As noted earlier, we are pleased with the progress in addressing long-standing issues with the SCS pay and reward framework since our last Report. This momentum should be maintained.

3.60 We understand the SCS Strategy will set out four key work areas:⁵¹

- *Clear and modernised expectations and accountabilities* – a framework of professional expectations and accountabilities to be integrated into all phases of the employee lifecycle, with all SCS roles realigned to meet these enhanced standards.
- *A reformed reward package* – incentivising SCS delivery, recognising high performance, and addressing poor performance.
- *‘World-class’ attraction, retention and development practices* – the ability to attract and retain the best, diverse talent – including for technical and specialist roles – oriented around delivery priorities and future skills.
- *Optimised workforce management and service delivery* – an HR/talent management function for the SCS that is performance-led, data-driven and tech-enabled, with streamlined controls and processes.

3.61 The intended outcomes of the SCS Strategy are to:⁵²

- *“Realise efficiencies through right-sizing of the workforce”.*
- *“Improve the effectiveness of the SCS, including motivation, morale and wellbeing”.*
- *“Deliver better outcomes in both policy and delivery by having a SCS workforce that reflects the UK population”.*

3.62 These objectives, and the wider SCS Strategy, are to be aligned with the wider Civil Service Reward Strategy and other work on government skills capability, performance, recruitment and workforce planning across the delegated grades and SCS. Full implementation of the SCS Strategy – and total reward transformation across the civil service through the Civil Service Reward Strategy – is expected to be completed by 2030.⁵³

3.63 The Cabinet Office has advised us that this year efforts have been concentrated upon three ‘immediate priorities’:

- Setting clear reward principles for the SCS.
- Addressing the current pay band spans and overlaps.
- Developing a pathway to pay progression.

⁵¹ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [46].

⁵² Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [20].

⁵³ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [21].

3.64 In written evidence, the Cabinet Office outlines the following proposed reward principles:⁵⁴

- Enable a simple, progressive and competitive offer.
- Enable the Civil Service to recruit and retain senior talent.
- Provide the most efficient and effective service to end users and the taxpayer.
- Support an increasingly technical and specialist workforce.
- Incentivise delivery.
- Support a geographically dispersed workforce.

3.65 It also provided a near-final 'vision statement' describing the purpose of the SCS: "*A united, professionalised and high-performing SCS workforce that attracts and retains the senior talent needed to advise, lead, direct and influence the Civil Service in optimally delivering its objectives*".⁵⁵ This statement sets out the Government's expectation that the SCS is:

- *United*: The SCS clearly aligned under the priorities of the government of the day and shared values.
- *Professionalised*: The SCS has clear expectations and accountabilities, and the core skills and knowledge needed to fulfil role now and in future are understood and embedded.
- *High performing*: The SCS workforce enables Civil Service to deliver to its best and drive continuous improvement.

3.66 In oral evidence, the Cabinet Office outlined its proposals regarding pay band spans and pay progression:

- *Pay band spans* – shortening each of the SCS pay ranges by 30-40 per cent through increases to the respective minima, phased over a three-year period, and introducing a 'progression zone' within each band to a 'target rate' and a 'market attraction and top talent zone' at the upper end of each band.
- *Pay progression* – introducing a 'targeted delivery award' that provides pay progression based on a matrix of performance and current position in pay range, with the largest awards going to those who are high-performing and lower in their pay band, and vice versa. The Cabinet Office proposes that the model be applied to all SCS (except poor performers) in a 'test and learn' approach for two years before evaluation.

3.67 We welcome these proposals and look forward to their further development.

3.68 Other strategy and development initiatives include:

- *Skills capability* – development of skills capability and learning curricula, consistent with the Government's intention to 'professionalise' the wider civil service and respond to future skills needs.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [53].

⁵⁵ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [19].

⁵⁶ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [98]-[103].

- *Line management capability* – with work underway to improve cross-civil service line management capability, and introduction of a new Leadership Standard.⁵⁷
- *‘Places for Growth’ expansion* – with a target to increase the number of SCS outside of London to 50 per cent by 2030 and increase the use of thematic campuses and multi-disciplinary teams, strengthening national SCS presence and enabling end-to-end-career pathways outside of London.⁵⁸
- *Local government interchange programme*- launched in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA), and intended to enable the transfer of skills and experience between local and national government.⁵⁹
- *Civil service development schemes* – including the Fast Stream, Future Leaders Scheme, Senior Leaders Scheme, and the Directors Leadership Programme.⁶⁰

3.69 We look forward to receiving a copy of the SCS Strategy, and remain available to offer our assistance and advice in the period before our next report. We also look forward to the publication of the Government’s five ‘People Priorities’ under the refreshed Civil Service People Plan, and the much-anticipated Civil Service Reward Strategy.⁶¹

Devolved administrations

3.70 This year, we received additional information on the operating context, terms and conditions, and views of members of the SCS working in the devolved administrations. This included in-person visits to Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as separate written submissions from the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government.

3.71 There are some differences in SCS terms and conditions between the devolved and UK administrations. This includes ineligibility for bonuses in the Scottish and Welsh governments, and differing starting salaries. This introduces an added complexity in locations where there are both UK and Scottish or Welsh SCS roles. We discuss these differences in further detail at [3.130].

3.72 There are also disparities between the SCS and delegated grades within the Welsh and Scottish governments. This was a prominent feature in discussions during our Scotland visit, particularly the recent introduction of a 35-hour contractual working week for the delegated grades, compared to the 37-hour week applicable for the SCS.

3.73 These differences – whether deliberate or an unintended byproduct of the devolution process – are, on balance, having a negative influence on attractiveness of some SCS positions in Wales and Scotland, and on morale. As we commented last year, these kinds of inconsistencies raise questions of fairness and contribute to feelings of inequity, particularly when there are individuals working in the same place for different governments. We reiterate our suggestion that the benefits and constraints of fully reserved management of the SCS are considered as part of the SCS Strategy.

⁵⁷ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [125]-[127].

⁵⁸ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [107]-[111]. We note recent announcements of civil service relocations and new government campuses across the UK – see Cabinet Office “Thousands of Civil Service roles moved out of London in latest reform to the state” (press release, 14 May 2025). Available at <www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-civil-service-roles-moved-out-of-london-in-latest-reform-to-the-state>. Further background on the Places for Growth initiative can be found at “Places for Growth 2030” GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/collections/places-for-growth>.

⁵⁹ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [132].

⁶⁰ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [134]. See further at “Civil Service Accelerated Development Schemes” (29 January 2024) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-talent-management/civil-service-talent-management>.

⁶¹ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [95]-[97] and [104]-[106].

Diversity

3.74 As of Q1 2025:

- The percentage of the SCS identified as female has remained steady at 49.9 per cent, compared to 49.6 per cent in 2024, and 48.6 per cent in 2023.
- The proportion of SCS identified as from an ethnic minority background again rose slightly to 9.1 per cent, up from 8.9 per cent in 2024 and 8.7 per cent in 2023.
- The percentage of the SCS who declared a disability reached an all-time high of 9.4 per cent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points from 2024.
- 7.2 per cent of the SCS who declared their sexual orientation identified as LGBO, up from 6.2 per cent in 2024, and 6.1 per cent in 2023.

3.75 As we commented last year, the composition of the SCS – like other leadership groups – reflects historical disadvantages on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and other diversity characteristics, particularly at the most senior levels. It is also likely that these difficulties are exacerbated by the current deficiencies in the SCS pay and reward framework.

3.76 There has in recent years been some improvement in pay equality within the SCS, with the median gender pay gap – currently 3.7 per cent – slowly trending down. We discuss this further at [3.156]. However, we note that those identified as white, having no declared disability, or hetero/straight are more likely to receive an ‘exceeding’ or ‘high performing’ performance rating, and these groups receive a higher than proportionate share of non-consolidated performance-related payments.

3.77 The SCS should reflect the diversity of the population and communities that it serves. We encourage efforts to improve civil service diversity, as well as improvement in diversity data collection. We look forward to the publication of the new Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and initiatives that flow from it.

Pay recommendation

Government’s proposal

3.78 The Government’s position is that the total increase in pay bill for the SCS should be no higher than 2.5 per cent.⁶²

3.79 The Cabinet Office has asked that our recommendations this year should be prioritised as follows:⁶³

- **Priority one:** implementing the three ‘immediate priorities’ from the fundamental review (reward principles, band span/overlap, pay progression) – phased over three years.
- **Priority two:** a consolidated increase to base pay for all SCS.
- **Priority three:** for departments to “*address acute issues stemming from the operational application of the pay ranges and other workforce factors*”.

3.80 We have also been asked for our view as to whether Permanent Secretary pay and reward should be included within the fundamental review of SCS pay and reward frameworks. We do not see a reason to exclude Permanent Secretary pay and reward from the fundamental review.

⁶² Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [15]-[16].

⁶³ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [27].

Other stakeholders' proposals

3.81 The FDA/Prospect advocates the following priorities for this pay review round:⁶⁴

- An inflation-proofed pay uplift.
- Minima increases to address the overlap between Grade 6 and SCS pay bands.
- Implementing a simple pay progression system.
- Recognition and reward for additional responsibilities.

Our recommendation

3.82 We recognise the strength of the evidence provided by HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office in relation to the economic context and affordability constraints applicable to this year's pay review. At the same time, the SCS needs to be able to recruit and retain high-quality individuals. We consider essential an increase in base pay which, at the least, halts the erosion in the relative attractiveness of working in the SCS, not least when compared with broadly equivalent roles elsewhere in the public sector.

3.83 Moreover, we expect a reduction in the SCS headcount. Some of those leaving under current exit schemes will not be replaced. The SCS Strategy should clarify what kinds of roles and responsibilities should be for the SCS in future. This means it is open to the Government to implement the pay award we are recommending while managing the overall pay bill impact, which was the focus of the affordability concern in the Cabinet Office's written evidence.

3.84 As indicated at [3.11] above, and for the reasons set out across this Chapter, we recommend a consolidated pay award for members of the SCS of 3.5 per cent. Those who are subject to formal poor performance measures will be ineligible for this increase.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that all members of the Senior Civil Service should receive a 3.5 per cent consolidated increase to base pay from 1 April 2026.

3.85 In previous years, this Review Body's pay recommendation for the SCS has been replicated for the delegated grades. We caution against this approach. The pay uplift for the delegated grades should be derived from detailed and separate consideration of the specific needs and characteristics across the various workforces, rather than a simple 'read-across' from the recommendation for the SCS.

Pay bands

3.86 The large spans of the SCS pay ranges should be reduced. We agree with the Government's submission that this should be achieved via increases to each pay band minima over several years. We recommend that this year, the minimum for all SCS grades should increase by £5,000.

3.87 We recommend that all minima increases are applied before the general pay award, so that members of the SCS currently at the respective band minima will receive more than 3.5 per cent overall.

⁶⁴ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at 20.

Recommendation 2

We recommend an increase of £5,000 to the pay band minima for all SCS grades from 1 April 2026 (to be applied before the general consolidated pay award).

3.88 If Recommendation 2 is accepted, the revised SCS pay bands will be as below:

Table 3.1: Revised SCS pay bands if SSRB recommendation accepted

	Minimum	Maximum	Span between minimum and maximum
SCS 1	£86,000	£117,800	£31,800
SCS 1A	£86,000	£128,900	£42,900
SCS 2	£105,000	£162,500	£57,500
SCS 3	£135,000	£208,100	£73,100
SCS 4	£160,000	£220,000	£60,000

3.89 Subject to information received in future pay review rounds, we expect to recommend further increases to the minima on an annual basis over at least the next two years. We invite stakeholders to comment on this, and on the appropriate value of increase, in future annual evidence submissions.

3.90 We are not recommending adjustment of the pay band maxima this year. However, we recognise that there may be adverse impacts in the longer term if there are large numbers of SCS employees who are above the pay band maxima and deemed ineligible for consolidated pay increases. We intend to return to this issue, and invite comment from stakeholders in future evidence submissions.

Pay progression

3.91 We have favoured a simple pay progression system for some years. We are pleased that there has been progress since our last Report. At oral evidence the Cabinet Office outlined features of a sensible progression arrangement. We are supportive of this proposal and recommend its introduction without delay.

3.92 The need to introduce pay progression should be balanced with recognition that a progression system cannot be fully established in a single year. We are making a recommendation which takes account of what is practicable in the next pay year. We consider that a central pot comprising 1.0 per cent of the total SCS pay bill is necessary to enable meaningful progress on this much-needed reward mechanism.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that a central pot comprising 1.0 per cent of the total SCS pay bill is allocated for the introduction of pay progression for the SCS from 1 April 2026, to reward the acquisition and development of skills and expertise.

Progression uplifts should be greater for those who are highest performing and lower in the pay band, and smaller for less strong performers higher in the band. Those whose objectives are only partially met should not receive a progression increase.

- 3.93 The pay progression framework should be deployed on a ‘test-and-learn’ basis, with implementation at pace followed by evaluation and amendment as necessary. It should be applied transparently and in the same way across all organisations employing members of the SCS, including the devolved administrations. Responsibility for driving progress and providing accountability should lie with a single central owner, such as the Cabinet Office.
- 3.94 Equal pay issues – including pay gaps by gender, ethnicity, and other protected characteristics – should continue to be addressed alongside any pay progression model.
- 3.95 The pay progression framework recommended for the SCS is aimed specifically at addressing long-standing issues with SCS pay and reward. It should not automatically be applied to the delegated grades without consideration of the differing pay and reward factors applicable to these workforces.

Anomalies pot

- 3.96 In recent years we have routinely provided for an anomalies pot – intended to address acute skills gaps and equal pay issues, and exceptionally to mitigate the effects of pay overlaps with the delegated grades.
- 3.97 This year we sought evidence on the effectiveness of the anomalies pot and a report on the extent of its use, and for what purposes. We have not received clear or compelling evidence on this point. Anecdotally, we have heard that these funds have been used to address various challenges, many of which stem from the longstanding issues with the SCS pay and reward framework – but not directly related to the areas specified above.
- 3.98 In light of this, we have decided not to make provision for an anomalies pot in our recommendations this year. We invite future evidence from stakeholders, should there be a strong view that the anomalies pot should be reinstated. Such evidence should include detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the pot and the extent and purposes that it has been used previously. Equal pay cases should continue to be addressed separately via established departmental processes.

Timeliness

- 3.99 All members of the remit group should be paid on time. This is an important mark of fairness and respect.
- 3.100 Last year, the Government responded to our recommendations promptly. However, this was followed by a delay of between two and five months before members of the remit group received payment. This runs counter to the Government’s stated commitment to timely pay awards. Details of the ‘speed to pay’ by department are outlined at [3.165].
- 3.101 Implementation of this year’s pay award should occur without delay following announcement of the Government’s response to this Report. It should not be deferred while other pay awards are being finalised, or for any other foreseeable circumstances (such as change capacity planning with external payroll providers).

Looking ahead

- 3.102 We note that establishing a sustainable pay progression system will likely need a central allocation for the next year or two. We look forward to stakeholders’ evidence and observations on this for our next Report.
- 3.103 For our 2027 Report we would also like the Cabinet Office’s submission to include evidence on:
- The impact of changes to SCS performance management, including introduction of ‘minimum standards’ and standardisation of performance grading.

- The roll-out of the changes announced by the Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister in his 20 January 2026 speech, including amending the scheme for bonus payments to SCS members.
- The impact of Places for Growth on SCS applicant quality, numbers, characteristics, recruitment and retention.
- The costs and benefits of a change to the pay range maxima, or of the rules related to consolidated pay increases for members of the SCS paid above the band maximum.
- The initial impact of the pay progression system implemented from 1 April 2026.
- The reasons behind the various pay gaps (gender, ethnicity, etc.) in the SCS.
- If an anomalies pot is sought, how anomalies pots have been used previously, including how far they have been used to address equal pay concerns, recruit or retain scarce skills, or mitigate pay overlaps with delegated grades.
- Whether the SCS pay framework has sufficient flexibility to appropriately remunerate those with in-demand and specialist skills.

3.104 We would also like to receive from the CSC:

- Data on quality of those applicants deemed appointable.
- Additional data on the characteristics of campaigns which either fail or are challenging to fill.

3.105 We also continue to be interested in receiving written evidence commenting on the extent to which there may be interest in, or proposals for, re-examining the balance between pay and pension contribution or potential pension flexibilities as part of the overall SCS reward package.

Annex: Data and evidence

3.106 In support of this year's SCS pay review, we received written evidence from the Cabinet Office, the Civil Service Commission (CSC), FDA and Prospect, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. A full list of written submissions is included at Appendix B.

3.107 We also received oral evidence from:

- The Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (Minister without Portfolio), Civil Service Chief Operating Officer, Interim Government Chief People Officer, and Cabinet Office officials on 9 December 2025.
- The First Civil Service Commissioner and CSC officials on 11 November 2025.
- The FDA General Secretary, FDA Assistant General Secretary and Prospect General Secretary on 11 November 2025.

3.108 This year, the Review Body visited civil service locations in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Manchester. We hosted 18 online and in-person discussion groups with members of the SCS and feeder grades between September and December 2025.⁶⁵ We also, for the first time, hosted a discussion group with a selection of executive search firms to gather insights on cross-sector senior talent recruitment.

3.109 We have also utilised a number of additional data sources, including:

- *Civil Service workforce statistics for the centrally managed SCS* – these figures are sourced from the Cabinet Office SCS database as at 1 April each year. The SCS database collects and captures information on the 'centrally managed SCS'.⁶⁶ Data for the most recent year is always provisional and subject to revisions. They cover 6,860 individuals as at 1 April 2025. Additional data was provided for permanent secretaries (SCS 4).
- *Civil Service statistics: 2025* – published by the Cabinet Office in July 2025, these publicly-available statistics provide workforce information as at 31 March 2025 across the civil service. This covers 7,775 SCS level civil servants as of 31 March 2025. Data on SCS level employees includes some roles that are excluded from the SSRB's remit.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Future Leaders Scheme participants (Online – 16 September 2025); Deputy Directors (SCS 1) (Online – 16 September 2025); SCS working in the Welsh Government (In-person – 17 September 2025); Grade 6/7s working in the Welsh Government (In-person – 17 September 2025); Wales-based SCS working in UK Government organisations (In-person – 17 September 2025); Wales-based Grade 6/7s working in UK Government organisations (In-person – 17 September 2025); Permanent Secretaries (SCS 4) (Online – 2 October 2025); Directors and Director-Generals (SCS 2-3) (Online – 2 October 2025); Edinburgh-based SCS working in the Scottish Government (In-person – 29 October 2025); Edinburgh-based Grade C1-C3s working in the Scottish Government (In-person – 29 October 2025); Edinburgh-based SCS working in UK Government organisations (In-person – 29 October 2025); Glasgow-based SCS working in the Scottish Government (In-person – 30 October 2025); Glasgow-based SCS working in UK Government organisations (In-person – 30 October 2025); Manchester-based SCS located at Piccadilly Gate (In-person, 1 December 2025); Manchester-based Grade 6/7s located at St Peter's Square (In-person, 2 December 2025); Manchester-based SCS located at St Peter's Square (In-person, 2 December 2025); Manchester-based SCS located at Trinity Bridge House (In-person, 2 December 2025); Manchester-based Grade 6/7s located at Trinity Bridge House (In-person, 2 December 2025).

⁶⁶ The SCS database collects data from Ministerial Departments, Non-Ministerial Departments, Executive Agencies and Crown Non-Departmental Public Bodies. It excludes some individuals working at a senior level in government departments but on different employment terms (i.e. some military personnel at the Ministry of Defence, medical staff at Public Health England, members of the Diplomatic Service), as well as in Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

⁶⁷ "Civil Service statistics: 2025" (30 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2025>.

- *Civil Service Commission recruitment statistics* - CSC data covers Commissioner-chaired competitions. Commissioners chair recruitment panels for the majority of external competitions at SCS 2, and all internal and external competitions at SCS 3 and above.⁶⁸ Additional CSC data is published in their Annual Report and Accounts. The 2024-25 annual report was published in November 2025.⁶⁹
- *Cabinet Office recruitment data* – 15 of 17 Whitehall departments submitted details of SCS 1 recruitment campaigns to the Cabinet Office.
- *SCS exit interview data* – the exit interview scheme captured 160 SCS resignations in 41 government departments and agencies between October 2024 and September 2025. Not all SCS resignations are captured. Of the 160 SCS resignations recorded, 42 per cent were either interviewed or completed an exit survey.⁷⁰ This compares to last year (2023-24) when there were 180 exits recorded, of which 49 per cent were interviewed or surveyed. In 2022-23, there were 253 exits recorded, of which 38 per cent were interviewed or surveyed. In 2021-22, there were 138 exits recorded, of which 44 per cent were interviewed or surveyed. The Cabinet Office also collected background data on SCS leavers who were not interviewed. In total, the Cabinet Office have background information for 61 per cent of all 2024-25 SCS leavers recorded, compared to 70 per cent last year, and 56 per cent the year before.
- *Civil Service People Survey results* – the Civil Service People Survey was conducted in September and October 2025 and received 6,683 responses from civil servants identifying as members of the SCS. This accounts for around 86 per cent of all SCS-level civil servants. This compares to around 88 per cent of all SCS covered by the 2024 People Survey.
- *FDA/Prospect members survey results* – the annual FDA/Prospect survey of their SCS members received 556 responses in 2025, compared to 557 responses in 2024, 582 in 2023, and 650 in 2022. This accounts for around 7 per cent of all SCS-level civil servants, and includes responses from a pay bands 1 to 3.⁷¹

3.110 Further detail on the datasets utilised in the development of this Report can be found in Appendix C.

3.111 We appreciate the additional work from stakeholders this year to provide more data and information when requested to facilitate the Review Body’s deliberations. However, we would benefit from further improvements to the availability and quality of data shared:

- Data from government sources could be improved by using more automated collection processes, sharing data across organisations, and having consistency across departments.

⁶⁸ Included in written submission 005 (Civil Service Commission).

⁶⁹ “Annual Reports” Civil Service Commission <<https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/publications/annual-reports>>.

⁷⁰ The Cabinet Office has advised us that the exit interview process reaches 2 in 3 resigning SCS members across government, with around 1 in 4 of those resigning opting to participate in the survey and/or interview. From 2023-24 onward, the numbers of individuals has been rounded to the nearest 5.

⁷¹ Included in written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect).

- Recruitment data for campaigns not overseen by the CSC is sparse, and could be improved by expanding collections from departments and shared recruitment systems. This this would allow for meaningful data collection on SCS 1 recruitment in particular.
- We also suggest that the CSC collects information from commissioners and candidates that better demonstrate the attractiveness of roles to suitable applicants. Individual departments running CSC-led campaigns should also consistently collect and share the requested candidate and process data with the CSC.

3.112 We welcome further discussions with stakeholders on data improvements ahead of the next annual pay review round.

About the Senior Civil Service remit group

3.113 The SSRB’s remit includes members of the SCS (or SCS-equivalent) working in UK Government departments, the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government, the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO), and a range of other public sector organisations.

3.114 The Northern Ireland Executive is excluded from our remit, as are UK Ambassadors and Trade Commissioners.

3.115 The Cabinet Office is the lead department responsible for overseeing the centrally managed SCS cohort.

3.116 The remit group is comprised of four main pay bands – SCS 1 (Deputy Director) to SCS 4 (Permanent Secretary) – as outlined in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Main SCS pay bands

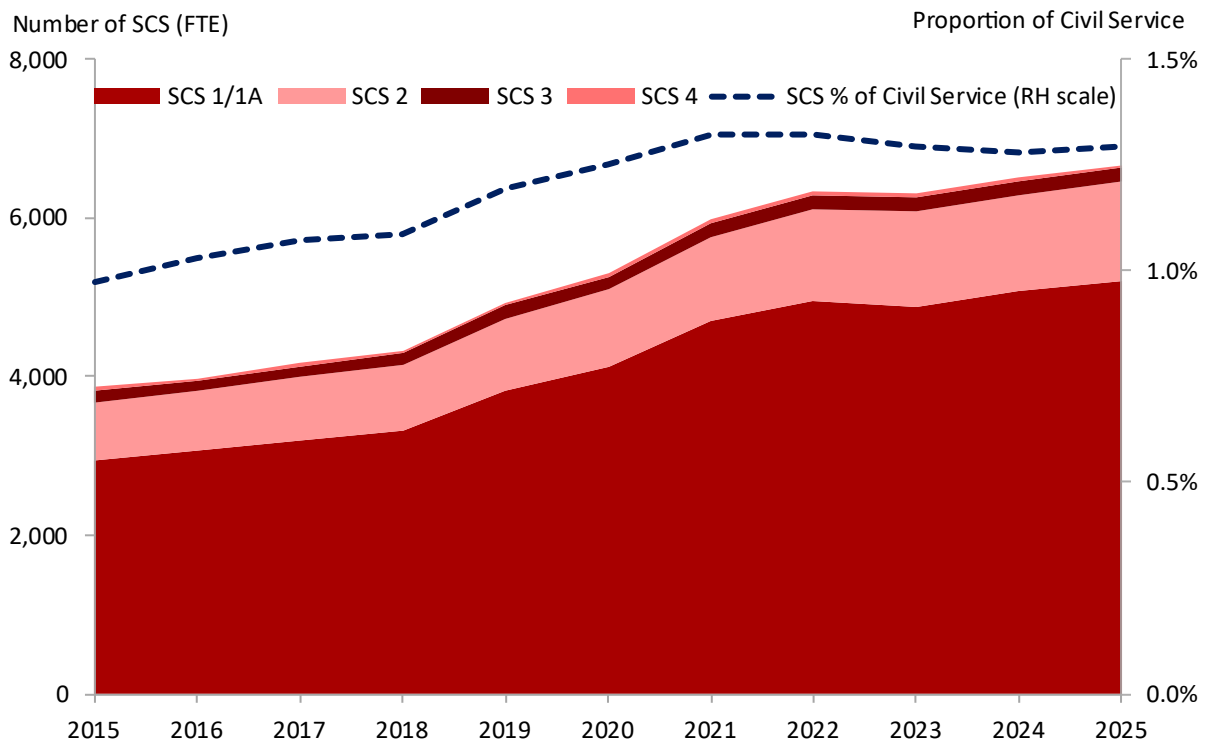
Pay band	Title/grouping
SCS 1	Deputy Director
SCS 2	Director
SCS 3	Director General
SCS 4	Permanent Secretary

Source: Cabinet Office.

Headcount and FTE

3.117 The total SCS workforce has increased by 175 individuals (155 FTE) over the past year. The SCS is now 2.4 per cent larger than last year and 71.5 per cent larger than in 2015 – and the SCS as a percentage of the civil service has increased from 1.0 per cent in 2015 to 1.3 per cent today.

Figure 3.1: SCS FTE and proportion of civil service, 2015 to 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

Table 3.3: Number of SCS or equivalent (headcount) by organisation, Cabinet Office SCS database, 1 April 2025

Organisation	Type	Total centrally managed SCS
Attorney General's Departments*	Ministerial department	290
Cabinet Office	Ministerial department	580
The Charity Commission	Non-ministerial department	5
Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)	Non-ministerial department	140
Department for Business & Trade (DBT)	Ministerial department	315
Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)	Ministerial department	65
Department for Education (DfE)	Ministerial department	280
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)	Ministerial department	220
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Ministerial department	245
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT)	Ministerial department	175
Department for Transport (DfT)	Ministerial department	300
Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)	Ministerial department	360
Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC)	Ministerial department	450
Food Standards Agency	Non-ministerial department	30
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)	Ministerial department	225
HM Land Registry	Non-ministerial department	30
HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)	Non-ministerial department	540

Organisation	Type	Total centrally managed SCS
HM Treasury	Ministerial department	175
Home Office	Ministerial department	395
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	Ministerial department	550
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)	Ministerial department	190
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	Ministerial department	310
The National Archives	Non-ministerial department	5
National Crime Agency (NCA)	Non-ministerial department	45
Northern Ireland Office	Ministerial department	15
The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)	Non-ministerial department	100
The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	Non-ministerial department	20
The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	Non-ministerial department	35
Office of Rail and Road (ORR)	Non-ministerial department	20
Scotland Office	Ministerial department	10
Scottish Government	Devolved administration	370
UK Export Finance	Ministerial department	50
UK Statistics Authority	Non-ministerial department	90
Wales Office	Ministerial department	5
The Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)	Non-ministerial department	10
Welsh Government	Devolved Administration	195

* The Attorney General's Office, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Government Legal Department, the Serious Fraud Office and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate are recorded jointly in these statistics under the umbrella term 'Attorney General's Departments'.

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Notes: The SCS database collects data from Ministerial Departments, Non-Ministerial Departments, Executive Agencies and Crown Non-Departmental Public Bodies. It excludes some individuals working at a senior level in government departments but on different employment terms (i.e. some military personnel at the Ministry of Defence, medical staff at Public Health England, members of the Diplomatic Service), as well as in Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

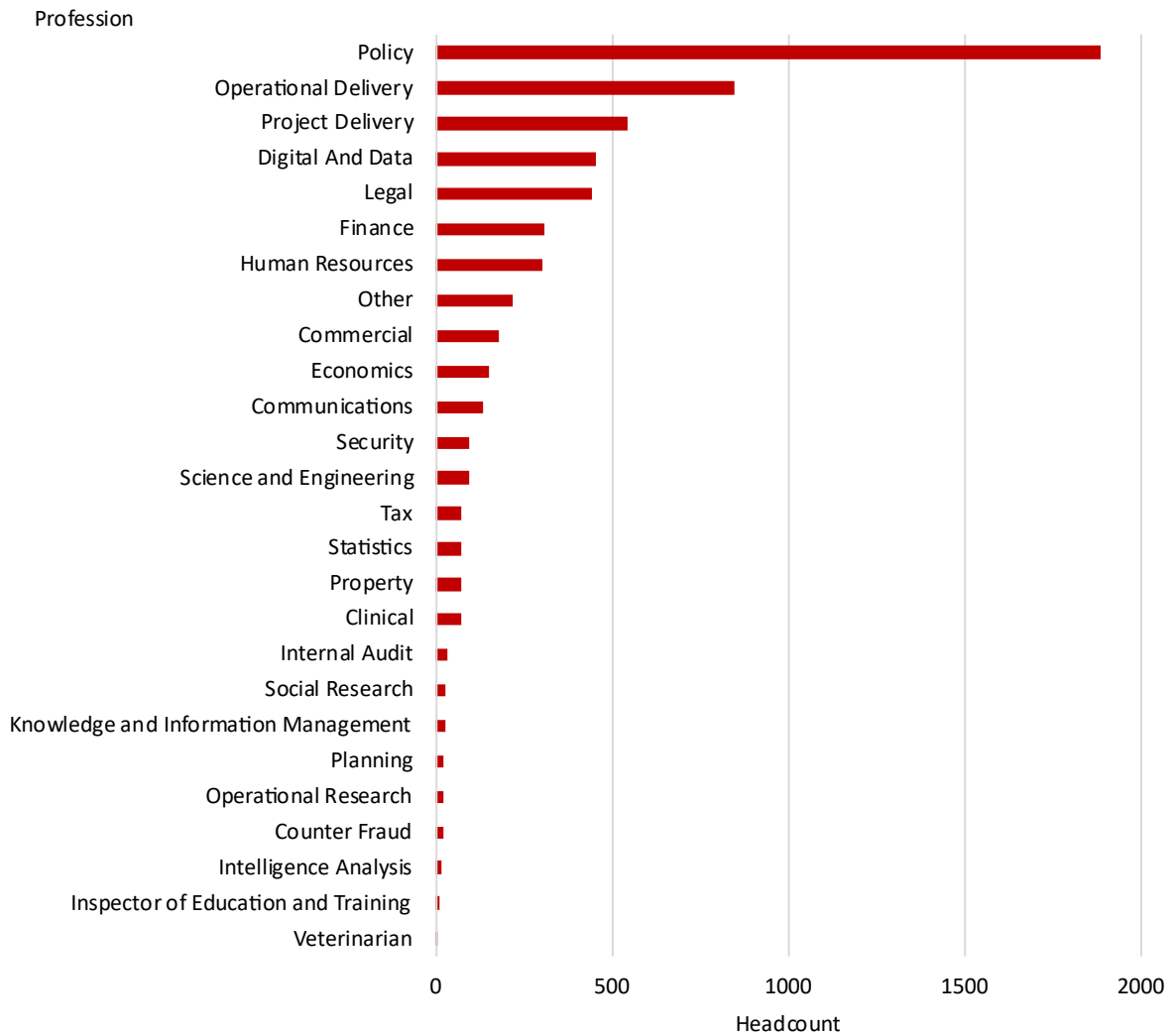
Members of the SCS are counted under their employing department. This means some individuals on temporary or long-term loan to other departments may not be reflected in that department's figures.

Headcount has been rounded to the nearest 5.

Professions and specialisms

3.118 The largest proportion of SCS is in the policy profession (30.9 per cent), followed by operational delivery (13.9 per cent). This compares to 6.9 per cent in policy and 56.8 per cent in operational delivery within the wider Civil Service.

Figure 3.2: Headcount by Profession, 1 April 2025



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Note: Professions with headcounts below five are omitted.

Diversity

3.119 We have been provided with the breakdown of those identified as female by pay band, but other diversity characteristics are only available at the total SCS level.

3.120 At SCS 1, 51 per cent of individuals are identified as female, remaining steady compared to 2024 (50.9 per cent). Meanwhile, 45.7 per cent of individuals at SCS 2 and 47.5 per cent of individuals at SCS 3 are identified as female, both increased from 2024 (44.7 per cent and 43 per cent respectively).

3.121 For the centrally managed SCS overall, in Q1 2025:

- The percentage of the SCS identified as female remained roughly steady at 49.9 per cent, compared to 49.6 per cent in 2024, and 48.6 per cent in 2023.

- The proportion of SCS identified as from an ethnic minority background rose slightly to 9.1 per cent, up from 8.9 per cent in 2024, and 8.7 per cent in 2023.
- The percentage of the SCS who declared a disability rose to 9.4 per cent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points since 2024 to a historic high.
- 7.2 per cent of the SCS who declared their sexual orientation identified as LGBO, up from 6.2 per cent the previous year, and 6.1 per cent in 2023.

3.122 On a headcount basis, 60.9 per cent of the centrally-managed SCS are based in London, continuing the downward trend from 61.8 per cent in 2024, 63.5 per cent in 2023 and 65.4 per cent in 2022.⁷² This compares to 19.6 per cent of all civil servants and 14.8 per cent of the economically active population of the United Kingdom.⁷³ In the last year, the proportion of SCS based in every other part of the UK other than London and Scotland either rose or stayed constant.

3.123 The CSC observed a decrease in the diversity of candidates found to be appointable. For Commissioner-chaired competitions where candidates declared their diversity characteristics:

- 7 per cent of those found appointable said they were from an ethnic minority background (compared to 9 per cent for 2023-24, and 7 per cent for 2022-23).
- 4 per cent of appointable candidates declared a disability (compared to 7 per cent in 2023-24 and 3 per cent for 2022-23).
- 41 per cent were identified as female (compared to 64 per cent for 2023-24 and 40 per cent for 2022-23).

3.124 For more detail on diversity in CSC recruitment, see Table 3.21 to Table 3.23. We also discuss the relationship between diversity and reward in the SCS at [3.156]-[3.159].

Pay and reward

Pay bill

3.125 The estimated snapshot pay bill at Q1 2025 stood at £992.5 million, an increase from £933.5 million (+6.3 per cent, or +2.8 per cent in real terms) in Q1 2024 and £452.1 million (+119.5 per cent, or +58.5 per cent in real terms) in 2015 (see Figure 3.3).

3.126 The increase from 2024 was mostly driven by the 19.4 per cent increase in employer national insurance contributions (NICs) over the year, alongside a 5.2 per cent increase in the total salary bill, as well as the corresponding increase in employer pension contributions. Increases since 2015 are mostly due to increasing workforce numbers as well as employer NICs and pension costs.

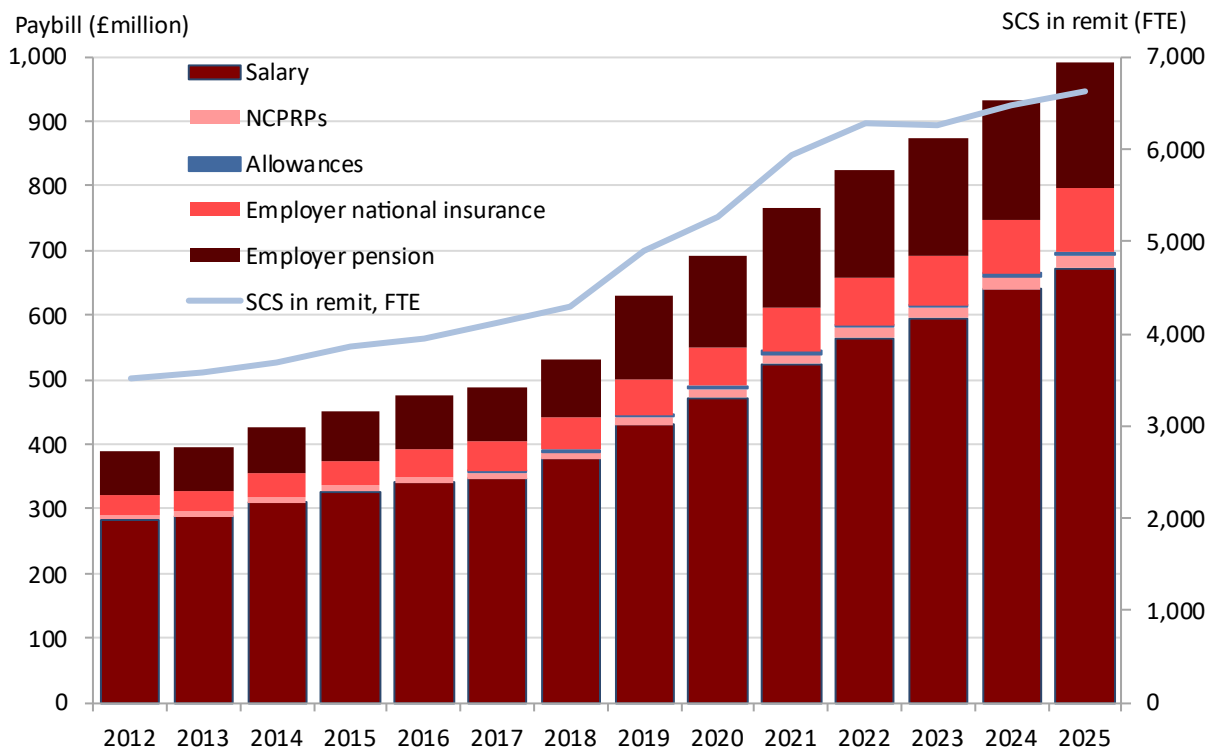
3.127 The salary bill per FTE increased by 2.6 per cent in nominal terms from £99,000 in 2024 to £102,000 in 2025, which is equivalent to falling by 0.7 per cent in real terms. In nominal terms,

⁷² OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

⁷³ Civil Service Statistics 2025; Annual Population Survey Oct 24 to Sept 2025, ONS. Note: the Annual Population Survey is based on location of residence, whereas the Civil Service Statistics are based on location of workplace.

the salary bill per FTE has increased by 19.5 per cent since 2015, equivalent to decreasing by 13.0 per cent in real terms.⁷⁴

Figure 3.3: SCS nominal pay bill, 2015 to 2025

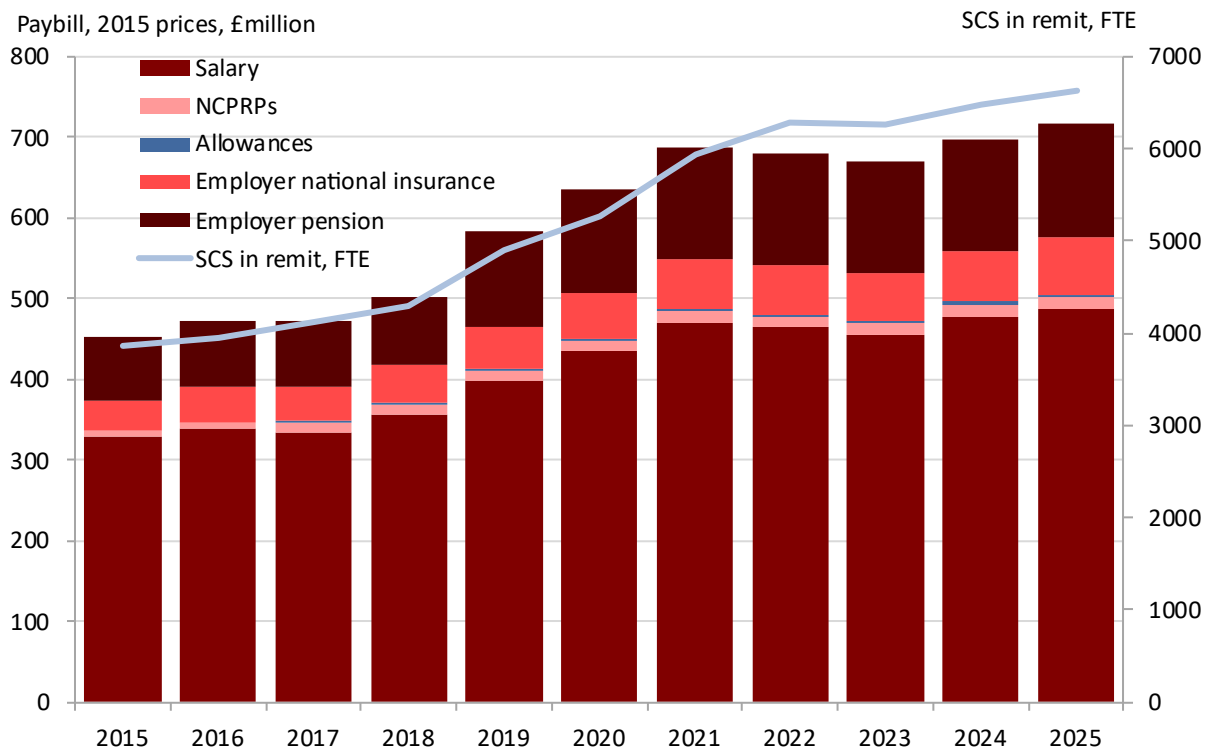


Source: OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

3.128 Non-consolidated performance-related payments (NCPs) include all performance-related payments (often referred to as bonuses), as well as the value of pay awards which exceed the pay band maxima, since these are also non-consolidated. In 2025, NCPs accounted for £20.3m of the £992.5m pay bill, of which £19.5m was performance-related payments. NCPs have accounted for roughly 2 per cent of the pay bill since 2011.

⁷⁴ OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data. Real-terms calculations are made using D7BT, CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, ONS, published March 2025.

Figure 3.4: SCS pay bill in 2015 prices, 2015 to 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data (unpublished). Converted by OPRB to 2015 prices using CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100, published January 2026.

Salary

3.129 The centrally managed SCS are subject to a single pay scale, divided into salary bands by grade. The SCS 1A (Deputy Director) pay band is grandfathered, and contains a limited number of legacy positions. For data purposes, the SCS 1 and SCS 1A pay bands are combined unless otherwise specified. The SCS 4 (Permanent Secretary) pay band is further segmented into three sub-bands by role. There is also a small group of Permanent Secretary-level positions that are subject to market premium remuneration arrangements and fall outside of the general SCS 4 salary range.

Table 3.4: SCS headcount and FTE by pay band and main SCS salary ranges by pay band, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Headcount	FTE	Salary minima	Salary maxima
SCS 1	Deputy Director	5,350	5,200	£81,000	£117,800
SCS 1A*	Deputy Director			£81,000	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	1,280	1,250	£100,000	£162,500
SCS 3	Director General	180	175	£130,000	£208,100
SCS 4	Permanent Secretary (Tier 3)	15	15	£155,000	£175,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Smaller departments</i>⁷⁵ • <i>Second Permanent Secretaries</i>⁷⁶ 				
	Permanent Secretary (Tier 2)	13	13	£175,000	£200,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Most other departments</i>⁷⁷ 				
SCS 4	Permanent Secretary (Tier 1)	8	8	£200,000	£220,000
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Largest and most complex departments</i>⁷⁸ 				
	Specialist Permanent Secretary ⁷⁹	11	11	Market premium pay	
Total		6,860	6,670		

* Grandparented

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Note: Headcount and FTE figures (except for permanent secretaries (SCS 4)) are rounded to nearest increment of five.

3.130 There are variations on the main SCS pay scale in force in the devolved administrations, the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO), and the various arm's-length bodies. Table 3.5 outlines the key differences in pay and reward by organisation.

⁷⁵ Northern Ireland Office; Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS); Office for National Statistics (ONS).

⁷⁶ HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC); Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC); HM Treasury (3x roles); Ministry of Defence (MoD); Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); Department for Transport (DfT); Cabinet Office (2x roles); Home Office; Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ).

⁷⁷ Department for Transport (DfT); Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA); Government Legal Department (GLD); Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG); Department for Education (DfE); Secret Intelligence Services (MI6); Security Service (MI5); Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ); Department for Business & Trade (DBT); Dept for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ); Scottish Government; Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT); Welsh Government.

⁷⁸ HM Treasury; Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); Ministry of Defence (MoD); Department for Work & Pensions (DWP); Home Office; Ministry of Justice (MoJ); HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC); Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC).

⁷⁹ Cabinet Secretary; Civil Service Chief Operating Officer; Director of Public Prosecutions; Chief Medical Officer; Government Chief Scientific Adviser; Chief Executive UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA); First Parliamentary Counsel; Director General, National Crime Agency (NCA); Chief Executive, Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S); Cabinet Office Second Permanent Secretary (European & Global Issues); Director, Government Communications Service.

Table 3.5: Summary – SCS pay and reward key differences by organisation

	UK Government	Welsh Government	Scottish Government	Government Commercial Organisation
SCS starting salary for internal candidates	At minima	At minima	Above minima	Varies
SCS pay overlap with feeder grades?	✓	✓	X	Varies
Pay increase on promotion rule	10% max	5% max	N/A	Varies
SCS receive pay progression?	X ⁸⁰	✓	✓	X
Feeder grades receive pay progression?	X	✓	✓	X
SCS receive bonuses?	✓	X	X	✓

Source: Cabinet Office; Welsh Government; Scottish Government.

- 3.131 Employees who are on SCS terms (or equivalent) but are not ‘centrally managed’ – such as those in arm’s-length bodies – will likely be subject to other variations of this pay scale.
- 3.132 The centrally managed SCS in UK Government departments are not entitled to flexitime, overtime, or most allowances. They also do not currently benefit from a pay progression framework.
- 3.133 The salary ranges for the feeder grades (Grade 6 and Grade 7) vary by department – but generally all overlap with the bottom of SCS 1. Feeder grades in UK Government departments are entitled to flexitime, overtime and a range of allowances – but do not receive pay progression.
- 3.134 The pay-on-promotion policy for UK Government departments is either the band minimum, or if current salary is above that, an increase not exceeding 10 per cent. External candidates are not subject to these rules, and have the ability to negotiate their starting salary – within the pay band, or at the department’s discretion, up to 20 per cent above the advertised maximum.
- 3.135 SCS working in the Welsh Government are subject to the same pay scale as in UK Government departments. As with UK Government departments, they also are not entitled to flexitime, overtime, or most allowances.
- 3.136 There is an informal pay progression arrangement in place for SCS 1-2 in the Welsh Government. Internal candidates are generally appointed at or around the band minimum, and then move to the mid and target rates at annual intervals (see Table 3.6).

⁸⁰ Permanent secretaries receive limited manual pay progression through individualised adjustments made by the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee (PSRC).

Table 3.6: SCS in the Welsh Government pay structure, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Year 1	Year 2	Target Rate	Maximum
SCS 1	Deputy Director	£81,000	£92,791	£95,544	£117,800
SCS 1A*	Deputy Director	£81,000	£92,791	£95,544	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	£100,000	£113,811	£117,628	£162,500

*Grandparented.

Source: Welsh Government.

3.137 The Welsh Government has contractual incremental pay progression for its delegated grades – with staff usually starting at the bottom of the scale and progressing each year to defined pay points (see Table 3.7 below). These grades are also entitled to flexitime, overtime, and a range of allowances. The top of the Grade 6 band overlaps with the bottom of SCS 1.

Table 3.7: Grade 6/7s in the Welsh Government pay structure, 1 April 2025

Grade	Point 1 (minimum)	Point 2	Point 3	Point 4 (maximum)
Grade 6	£76,716	£79,551	£82,089	£88,023
Grade 7	£61,098	£64,540	£68,004	£73,057

Source: Welsh Government.

3.138 The pay-on-promotion policy for the Welsh Government is either the band minimum, or if current salary is above that, an increase not exceeding 5 per cent.

3.139 The SCS working in the Scottish Government are formally subject to the same pay scale minima and maxima as in UK Government departments. However, operationally it offers a higher starting salary – which also forms the first step of its informal pay progression system in which SCS shift to a new pay step annually to eventually reach a target rate (see Table 3.8 below). Approximately 90 per cent of SCS in the Scottish Government fall within the target range.

Table 3.8: SCS in the Scottish Government pay structure, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Step 1 (TR-4)	Step 2 (TR-3)	Step 3 (TR-2)	Step 4 (TR-1)	Target Rate (TR)	Target Rate + 1	Maxima
SCS 1	Deputy Director	N/A	£93,667	£94,437	£96,327	£97,451	N/A	£117,800
SCS 1A*	Deputy Director	N/A	£93,667	£94,437	£96,327	£97,451	£98,821	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	£111,916	£114,155	£116,439	£118,767	£121,143	N/A	£162,500
SCS 3	Director General	£143,036	£145,896	£148,814	£151,790	£154,827	N/A	£208,100

*Grandparented.

Source: Scottish Government.

3.140 SCS in the Scottish Government are otherwise subject to the same conditions as in the Welsh Government – namely, no entitlement to flexitime, overtime or most allowances. There is no formal pay increase on promotion rule – generally, SCS will enter at the bottom step.

3.141 The Scottish Government feeder grades (C1-C3) receive non-contractual pay progression, and are entitled to flexitime, overtime and a range of allowances. These grades also benefit from a 35-hour contractual working week. The salary scale for these grades is shown in Table 3.9 below. Note that each pay point will increase once the Scottish Government confirms its 2025-26 pay award. There is no salary overlap between the Scottish feeder grades and Step 1 of the Scottish SCS structure.

Table 3.9: Grade C1-3s in the Scottish Government pay structure, 1 April 2025

Grade	Step 1 (Max-3)	Step 2 (Max-2)	Step 3 (Max-1)	Maximum
C1	£60,010	£62,889	£67,454	£74,820
C2	£77,460	£80,152	£83,633	£89,403
C3	N/A	£89,687	£90,700	£90,901

Source: Scottish Government.

3.142 The GCO employs most members of the SCS on its own GCO terms – with a minority employed on their UK Government department’s terms. This is dependent on the entry route to the organisation, as well as the score received by candidates at the Assessment & Development Centre. This also determines the applicable salary scale (see Table 3.10 below).

Table 3.10: SCS in the Government Commercial Organisation pay structure, 1 April 2025

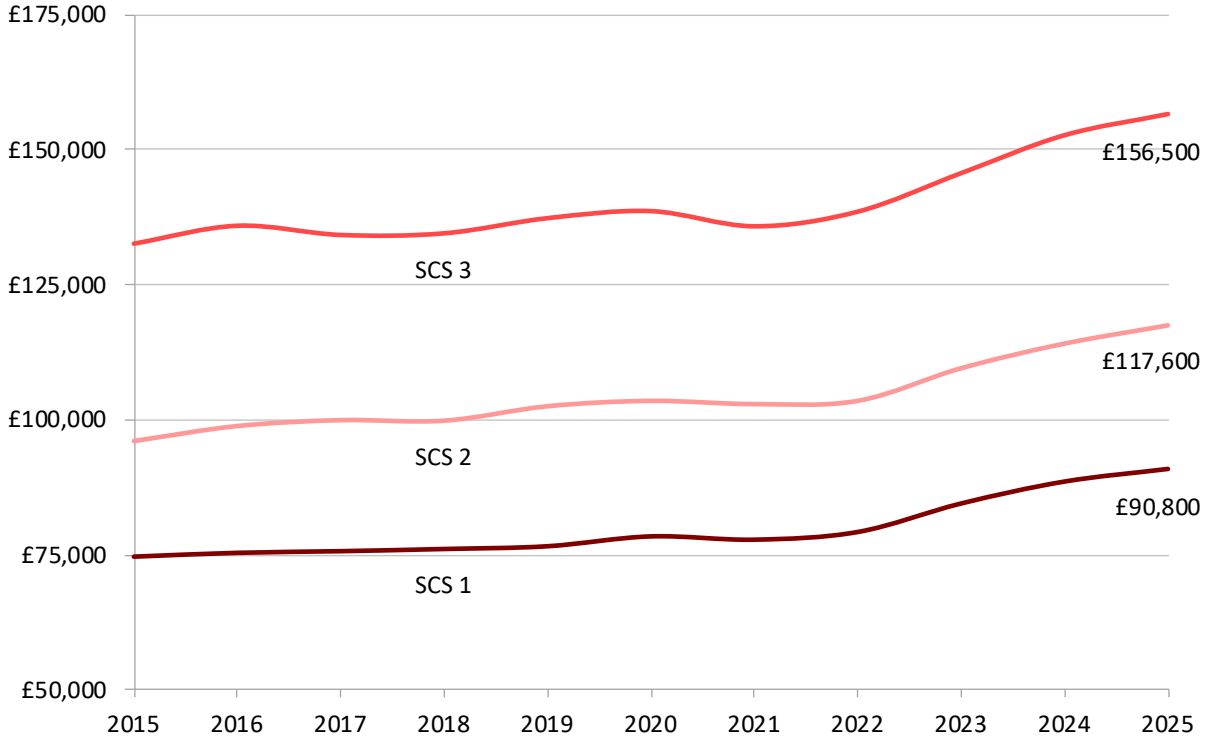
Pay band	Title/grouping	Employment terms	Minimum	Maximum
SCS 1	Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£81,000	£117,800
		Government Commercial Organisation	£101,000	£131,000
SCS 2	Senior Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£100,000	£162,500
		Government Commercial Organisation	£137,000	£186,000
SCS 3	Senior Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£130,000	£208,100
		Government Commercial Organisation	£167,000	£228,000

Source: Cabinet Office.

3.143 There is no formal pay progression system in place for SCS in the GCO – but there is provision of bonuses. We have not received information regarding pay on promotion rules, or other entitlements and allowances for SCS in the GCO.

3.144 Both median salary and median total cash earnings have increased for all pay bands in the last year. However, this nominal increase is still a fall in real terms compared to 2024 for all pay bands.

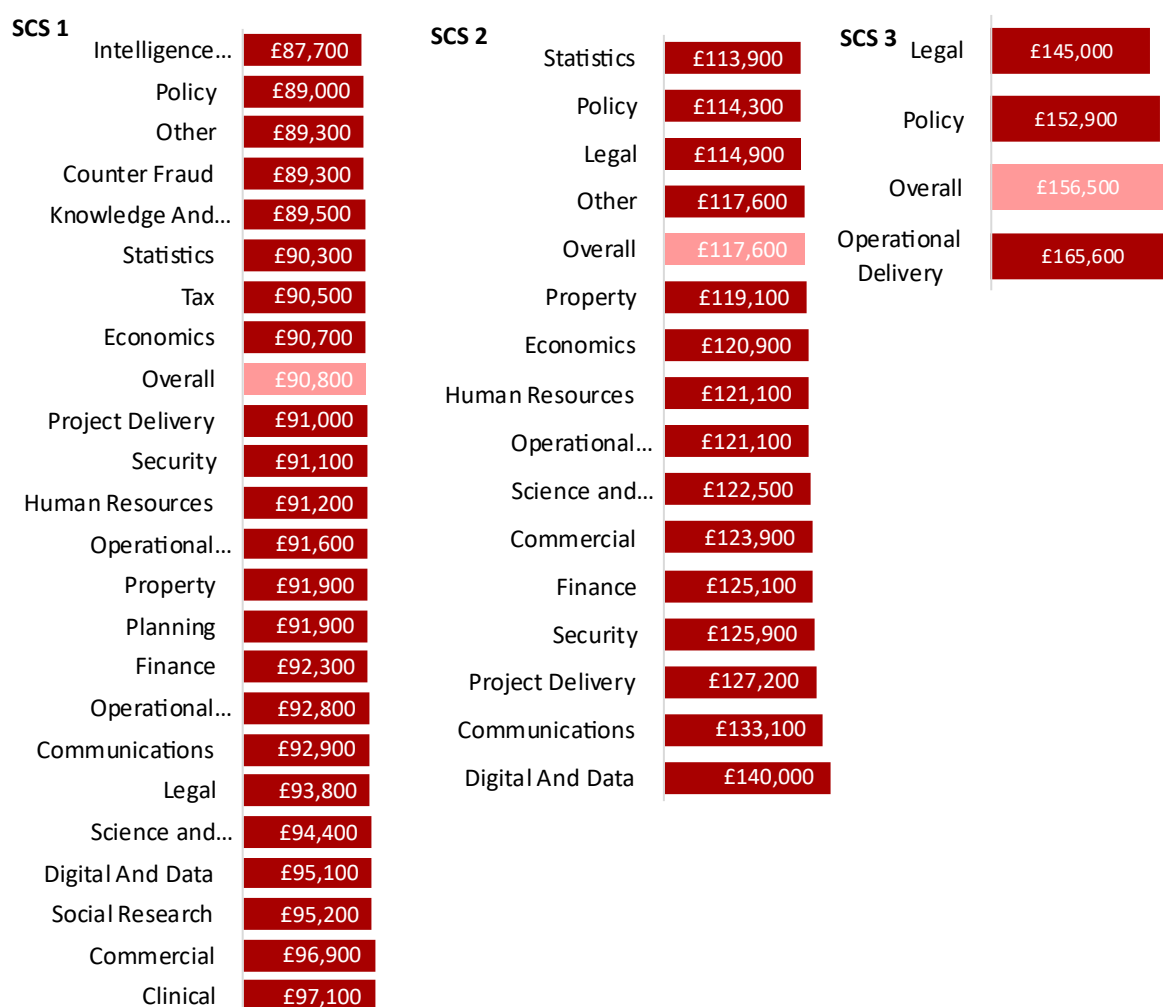
Figure 3.5: Salary medians for each pay band, 2015 to 2025



Source: OPRB analysis of Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

3.145 The Clinical profession has the highest median salary at SCS 1 level in 2025. Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) has the highest median salary at SCS 2 and Operational Delivery at SCS 3. DDaT, Commercial, Finance and Communications are all at the high end for salary at both SCS 1 and SCS 2. The Policy profession is below the median salary at all pay bands.

Figure 3.6: Comparison of median pay by profession of post for each pay band, 2025



Source: Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

Notes: Only SCS with a declared salary are included.

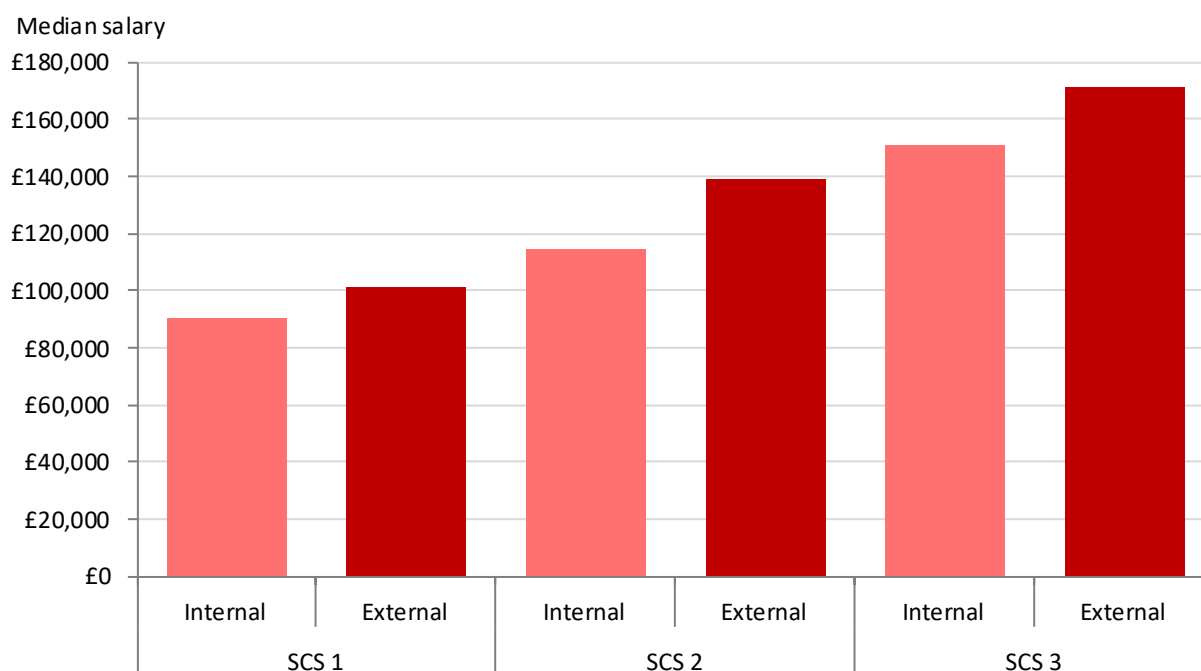
Other refers to any profession that is not one of the standard civil service professions. It does not refer to the median salary of all SCS not presented in the chart.

More senior pay bands have fewer professions with 10 or more individuals. Professions with fewer than 10 people are omitted.

3.146 The median pay of externally recruited SCS continues to be higher than the median pay of internally recruited SCS for every pay band.

3.147 Based on the distribution of external versus internal recruits by £5k salary bands, approximately 24 per cent of those externally recruited at SCS 1 are near or above the pay range maximum, compared to approximately 3 per cent of those internally recruited at SCS 1. Approximately 19 per cent of those externally recruited at SCS 2 are near or above the pay range maximum, compared to approximately 3 per cent of those internally recruited at SCS 2. For SCS 3, 27.3 per cent of those externally recruited are paid £195k or above, compared to fewer than five internally recruited individuals.

Figure 3.7: Comparison of median pay for external vs internal recruits for each pay band, 2025



Source: Cabinet Office data (unpublished).

3.148 There were approximately 325 individuals (4.8 per cent of the SCS) in SCS 1-3 who were at or above their pay band salary maxima in April 2025 – up from 240 individuals (3.6 per cent) last year. This includes 95 members of the SCS who had salaries above their pay band maxima in April 2025, compared to 90 in 2024.⁸¹

Incentive payments

3.149 End-year and in-year non-consolidated performance related payments (NCPRPs) account for £19.5m of the 2025 pay bill. A significant proportion of centrally managed SCS received either an end-year or in-year NCPRP.

Table 3.11: NCPRPs by pay band, 2025

Pay band	Median end year NCPRP	Percentage receiving end year NCPRP	Median in year NCPRP	Percentage receiving in year NCPRP
Deputy Director	£5,000	36.0%	£2,000	27.6%
Director	£5,800	41.9%	£2,500	25.4%
Director General	£6,300	40.3%	£3,400	24.3%

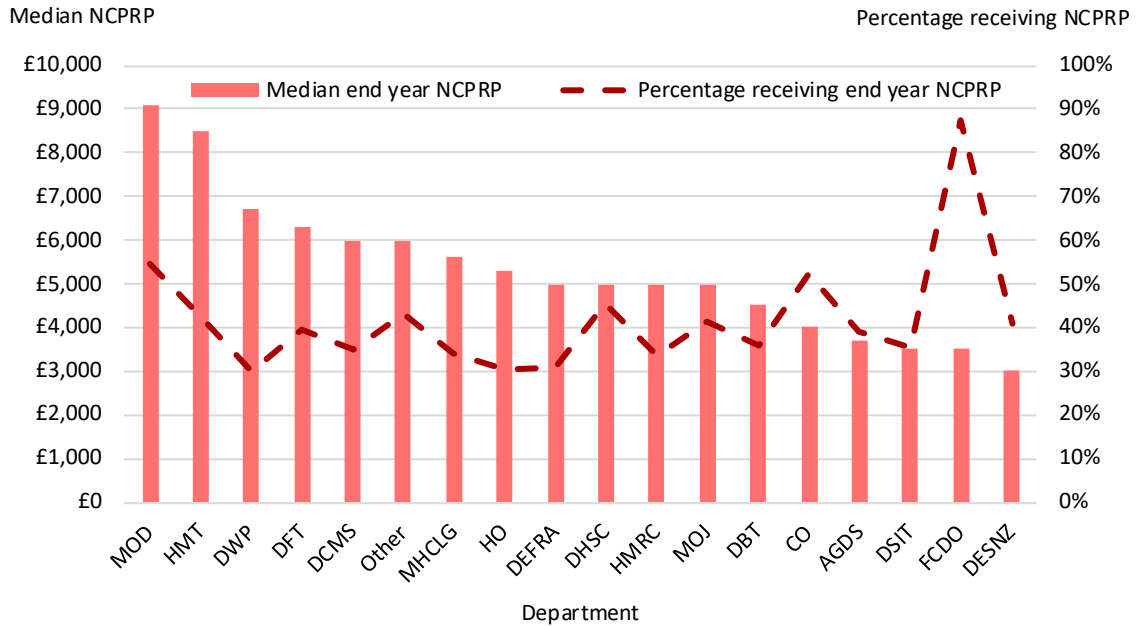
Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.150 There are significant differences between departments, and to a lesser extent, professions, in both the value of awards and the proportion of SCS receiving them. It is possible that these differences are due to higher performance or larger proportions of the SCS being in higher pay bands in some departments or professions. But it is also possible that the differences reflect

⁸¹ The approximately 90 individuals above the pay band maxima in 2024 was incorrectly described as “there are approximately 90 individuals who are at or above the maximum for their pay band” in our 2025 Report.

differing reward approaches or spending limits – these could contribute to feelings of unfairness.

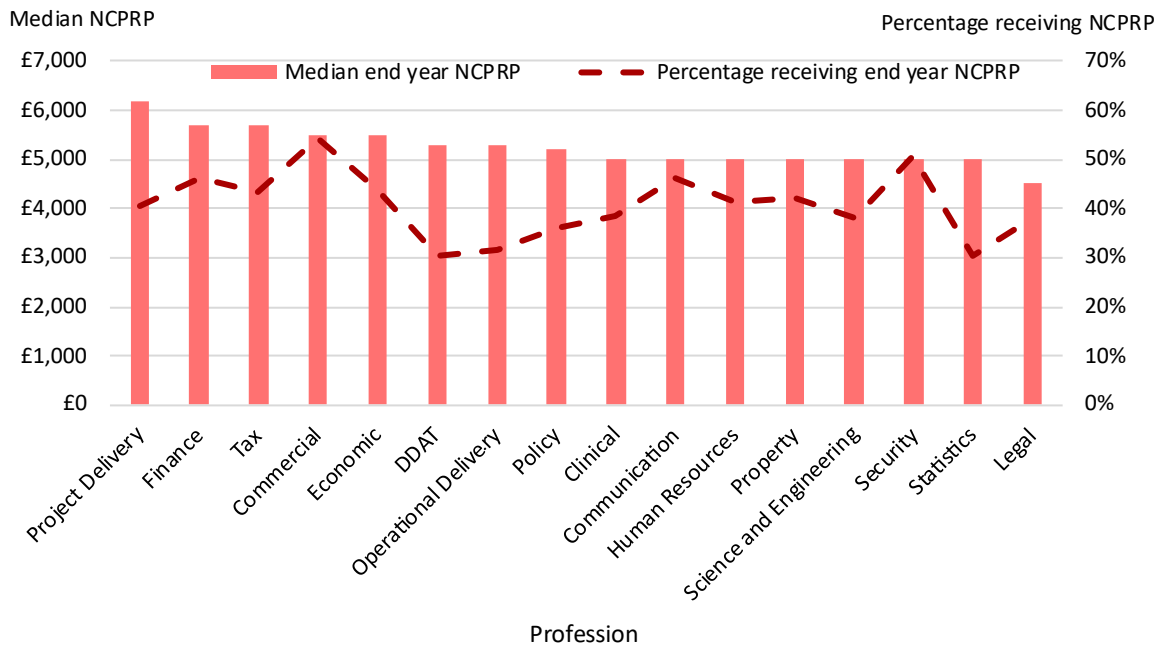
Figure 3.8: End-year NCRPs by department, 2025



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Note: This data excludes the Department for Education, and devolved administrations.

Figure 3.9: End-year NCRPs by selected profession, 2025



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.151 SCS in UK Government departments are eligible for both in-year and end-of-year bonuses. The funding available equates to 3.3 per cent of the overall SCS pay bill, used toward both in-year and end-of-year awards. All SCS in the GCO are eligible for bonuses – defined values for those on UK Government department terms, and salary percentages for those on GCO terms. The Welsh and Scottish Governments do not award bonuses to members of the SCS.

3.152 In 2025, 2.0 per cent of the SCS pay bill was used for non-consolidated performance-related pay (NCPs).

3.153 The value of bonuses varies by organisation:

- Departments have discretion to set their own end-of-year bonus values – but pay guidance from the Cabinet Office says that both ‘exceeding’ and ‘high performing’ ratings must receive some monetary award.
- Departments also determine the value of in-year awards, capped at £5,000.
- Bonuses for SCS 3 and SCS 4 are determined by the Director General Remuneration Committee (DGRC) and the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee (PSRC) respectively. For SCS 3 end-of-year bonuses, the DGRC has set fixed values for ‘exceeding’ (£12,500) and ‘high-performing’ (£6,250).

3.154 In February 2025 an expected distribution of departments’ SCS end-of-year performance markings was introduced:⁸²

- 15 per cent rated ‘exceeding’.
- 20 per cent rated ‘high performing’.
- 60 per cent rated ‘achieved’.
- 5 per cent rated ‘partially met’.

3.155 Table 3.12 below shows the actual distribution of performance ratings for 2024-25.

Table 3.12: Performance rating distribution by pay band, 2024-25

Performance Result	SCS 1	SCS 2	SCS 3
Exceeding	14.0%	17.0%	17.0%
High Performing	28.0%	32.0%	29.0%
Achieving	56.0%	49.0%	
Partially Met	2.0%	2.0%	54.0%

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

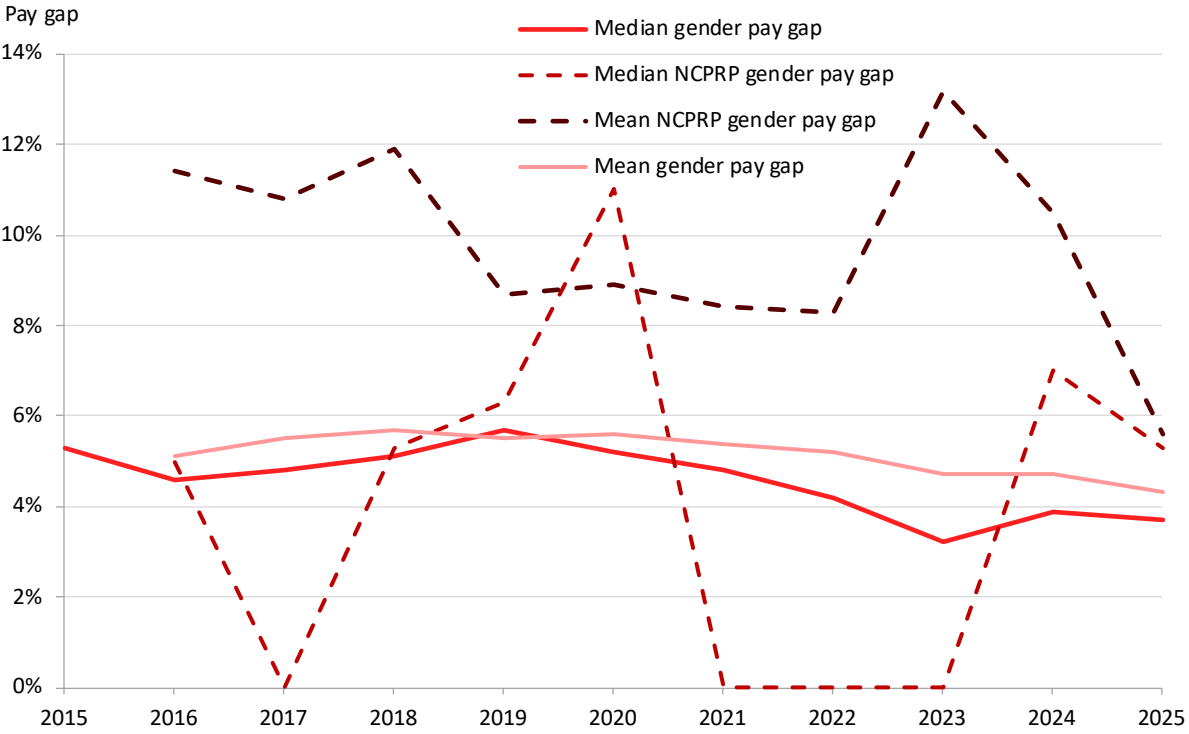
⁸² See “Performance management framework for the Senior Civil Service (2025 to 2026 performance year)” (6 February 2026) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/senior-civil-service-performance-management/performance-management-framework-for-the-senior-civil-service-2025-to-2026-performance-year>.

Diversity and reward

3.156 The median gender pay gap for the SCS was 3.7 per cent in 2024-25. Over the years we have data, the median gender pay gap has been similar to, though below, the mean gender pay gap. Both have slightly trended downwards since their peaks, both at 5.7 per cent, in 2018-19 for the median, and 2017-18 for the mean.

3.157 The median gender pay gap for the Civil Service as a whole reduced from 8.5 per cent in 2024 to 6.4 per cent in 2025. The mean gender pay gap for the Civil Service also reduced, from 7.4 per cent in 2024 to 6.9 per cent in 2025.

Figure 3.10: Gender pay gap, 2015 to 2025



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.158 The diversity-characteristic impact of NCRPs is unclear. Overall figures for end-year NCRPs indicate that members of the SCS who are identified as male, white, having no declared disability, and heterosexual/straight receive more money overall, despite having very similar median NCRPs. This is likely to be a result of a minority of these groups receiving particularly high end-year NCRPs, possibly due to being in pay bands, departments, or professions which give higher payments. Those identified as white, having no declared disability, or heterosexual/straight appear more likely to receive an “exceeding” or “high performing” performance rating, which may explain why these individuals receive end-year NCRPs more frequently.

Table 3.13: Distribution of NCRPs by diversity characteristics, 2025

Diversity group	Diversity characteristic	Percentage receiving end year NCRP	Median end year NCRP	Average end year NCRP cost per recipient
Gender	Female	37.6%	£5,000	£5,944
	Male	37.0%	£5,000	£6,348
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority background	30.6%	£5,000	£5,938
	White	37.1%	£5,300	£6,319
Disability	Declared disability	27.7%	£5,300	£5,869
	No declared disability	37.5%	£5,300	£6,377
Sexual Orientation	LGBO	33.1%	£5,000	£5,809
	Hetero/Straight	36.7%	£5,300	£6,384

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished). Average end-year NCRP cost per recipient calculated by OPRB based on Cabinet Office data.

Note: The percentage receiving end-year NCRP is a percentage of all centrally-managed SCS, including departments and devolved administrations that did not award NCRPs.

Table 3.14: Split of end-year awards by diversity characteristics, 2025

Diversity group	Diversity characteristic	Percentage receiving Exceeding performance result	Percentage of "Exceeding" result recipients receiving end year NCRP	Percentage receiving High Performing performance result	Percentage of "High Performing" result recipients receiving end year NCRP
Gender	Female	13.6%	93.5%	24.5%	88.6%
	Male	12.4%	95.9%	24.8%	89.0%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority background	11.3%	93.3%	20.9%	84.7%
	White	13.5%	94.6%	24.8%	88.3%
Disability	Declared disability	9.3%	93.6%	19.2%	91.8%
	No declared disability	13.9%	94.8%	25.1%	87.9%
Sexual Orientation	LGBO	12.5%	97.9%	22.1%	85.5%
	Hetero/Straight	13.6%	94.4%	24.4%	88.9%

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Table 3.15: Split of in-year awards by diversity characteristics, 2025

Diversity group	Diversity characteristic	Percentage receiving Exceeding performance result	Percentage of "Exceeding" result recipients receiving in year NCPRP	Percentage receiving High Performing performance result	Percentage of "High Performing" result recipients receiving in year NCPRP
Gender	Female	13.6%	30.2%	24.5%	30.5%
	Male	12.4%	26.0%	24.8%	29.6%
Ethnicity	Ethnic minority background	11.3%	21.7%	20.9%	36.0%
	White	13.5%	29.7%	24.8%	30.2%
Disability	Declared disability	9.3%	34.0%	19.2%	37.1%
	No declared disability	13.9%	28.8%	25.1%	30.4%
Sexual Orientation	LGBO	12.5%	38.3%	22.1%	36.1%
	Hetero/Straight	13.6%	28.0%	24.4%	30.3%

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.159 This year, the Cabinet Office has not provided data on the ethnicity pay gap for the SCS. We also do not have data available on the disability pay gap. We are particularly disappointed that this information has not been made available, and request that this is provided for the next pay round.

Pensions

3.160 The Cabinet Office provided information in relation to SCS pension schemes:

- Members moved to the Alpha scheme on 1 April 2022 for future accrual, with final salary sections calculated based on their salary at the time they leave Alpha. The Alpha scheme has an accrual rate of 2.32 per cent of pensionable earnings, revalued annually by the CPI index.
- The pension valuation cycle sets the 'employer' contribution rate, which is a flat rate of 28.97 per cent. This consists of: 23.60 per cent for the cost of newly accruing pension; 5.10 per cent past-service deficit payment and 0.27 per cent for administration costs.
- For SCS who pay a higher member contribution rate of 7.35 per cent, the value of the employer contribution for newly accruing pension is 21.85 per cent.
- It should be noted that the value of Alpha benefits is significantly higher for older members (members aged 50+), but the figures above are based on scheme-wide averages. A 40-year-old SCS member would have an employer contribution valued at around 20 per cent, whereas a 60-year-old SCS member would have an employer contribution valued at around 30 per cent when their ages and salaries are taken into account rather than using scheme-wide averages.

Table 3.16: Civil Service pension scheme member contribution rates, 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Actual Earnings	Contribution Rates
£0.00 to £34,799	4.60%
£34,800 to £56,000	5.45%
£56,001 to £150,000	7.35%
£150,001 and above	8.05%

Source: Cabinet Office.

Note: Contribution rates for 2026/27 will remain the same. The upper two thresholds will remain unchanged. The lowest threshold is increased on 1 April each year in line with CPI inflation from the preceding September.

Views on pay

- 3.161 The FDA/Prospect asked their members in their 2025 survey for views on the most important aspects of reward. 87.7 per cent of respondents selected “Feeling fairly remunerated for work”, followed by 70.2 per cent selecting “Being paid fairly and in line with other colleagues doing comparable work”. These two answers were the most popular, with “Being able to progress and see annual pay rises in line with skills development and experience” (63.4 per cent of respondents) and “Being paid comparably with other public or private sector colleagues” (61.3 per cent of respondents) not too far behind. Only 34.6 per cent of respondents selected “Being paid for overtime or receiving TOIL”, while only 6.8 per cent suggested another option.
- 3.162 In the 2025 People Survey, 54 per cent of the SCS said they are satisfied by the total benefits package, a rise from 51 per cent in 2024.
- 3.163 The Civil Service Commission told us that salary is important in decisions of individuals to apply for senior SCS roles from the private sector but it is difficult to say it is the determining factor. They noted that where civil service pay competes with the NHS or with academy trusts, there is a greater use of exceptions or secondments to allow individuals to remain on higher pay. If movement between central government and local government is wanted, then more similar pay levels are needed. They believed it is necessary to recognise scarce skills through higher pay in some areas, and had tried to help by enabling exceptions, for example in AI.
- 3.164 During discussion groups we heard:
- Those in feeder groups and in the SCS itself believed many colleagues did not want to join the SCS because the overall package compared unfavourably with terms in the feeder grades.
 - Some SCS 1s were managing people paid more than them.
 - It was felt that disparate reward policies especially across departments resulted in people doing very similar jobs receiving very different pay depending on their contract or route into the job, rather than skills, experience or performance.
 - Those in senior grades were concerned about the ability of the SCS to recruit and retain talented people in their late twenties and thirties, a stage of life where financial pressures may be increased, for example by family responsibilities.
 - Better pay, often with pay progression, was available in other public sector roles.

- The work was rewarding. Some spoke of a conscious decision to forego higher pay elsewhere because they loved the work and valued the sense of ‘making a difference’.
- Introducing pay progression was the most important priority for the Cabinet Office’s fundamental review of SCS pay.
- The working of the bonus system is not felt to be transparent. It was perceived as depending on how good one’s line manager was at advocating for a bonus. Some said they would certainly ‘trade’ the bonus arrangements for a progression pay system.

Implementation of 2024/25 pay award

3.165 The Cabinet Office supplied the dates when departments actually paid their SCS the 2025 pay uplift, which took effect on 1 April 2025, shown in Table 3.17 below.

Table 3.17: 2025 SCS pay award ‘speed to pay’, by department

Date	Department
July 2025	DfE DWP HMRC MoJ
August 2025	DBT DCMS DENZ DHSC DSIT FCDO MHCLG
September 2025	Defra DfT HMT Home Office MoD
October 2025	Cabinet Office

Source: Cabinet Office.

Recruitment

3.166 Recruitment information is drawn primarily from the Civil Service Commission.⁸³ CSC information regarding SCS 3-4 recruitment can be treated with a high degree of confidence – whereas information on SCS 1-2 recruitment should be considered less complete.

3.167 Other recruitment information is sourced from Cabinet Office workforce data. Additional insights – mostly related to perceptions of role attractiveness – can be drawn from the

⁸³ The CSC is responsible for regulating all recruitment into the UK Civil Service, including to the SCS; chairing recruitment panels for the majority of externally advertised SCS 2 (Director) competitions; chairing recruitment panels for all open (internal and externally advertised) SCS 3 (Director General) and SCS 4 (Permanent Secretary) competitions; auditing departmental recruitment activity for competitions at SCS 1 (Deputy Director) and below; approving departmental salary offers that exceed the advertised maximum salary for the role by more than 20 per cent; and approving exceptions to the usual open merit-based appointment processes for SCS 2 and above (Written submission 005 (Civil Service Commission) at [5], [11] and [13]).

FDA/Prospect survey, in addition to the FDA/Prospect’s narrative evidence on recruitment difficulties and specific skills shortages and points made in discussion groups.

Recruitment competitions/volume

- 3.168 There were 845 new entrants to the centrally managed SCS in 2024-25, of which approximately 11 per cent came from the private sector, 79 per cent came from government departments, and 10 per cent came from the voluntary and wider public sectors.
- 3.169 The Cabinet Office told us that 383 SCS 1 roles were advertised across 15 of the 17 Whitehall Departments between October 2024 and September 2025, of which 337 were filled. They were unable to provide any additional information about recruitment outside of CSC-chaired campaigns.
- 3.170 CSC data (see Table 3.18) shows that in 2024-25, a total of 60,544 staff were recruited into the Civil Service at grades EO to SCS 4, a 37,784 (38.4 per cent) reduction from the 98,328 staff recruited in 2023-24. Commissioners chaired 166 competitions (0.27 per cent of all civil service recruitment) in 2024-25, which is 29.4 per cent lower than the 235 competitions chaired in 2023-24 – indicating that recruitment at SCS 2 and above has not decreased at the same rate as for the delegated grades.
- 3.171 The CSC dealt with a total of 11,744 applications for 166 posts this year. The average number of applications per role for Commissioner-chaired competitions has increased from 52 to 71 (+35.4 per cent). A breakdown by pay band is shown in Table 3.19.
- 3.172 From the 166 commissioner-chaired competitions in 2024-25, 154 competitions (92.8 per cent) resulted in appointments being made, leaving 12 posts (7.2 per cent) where no appointment was made. This compares to 235 competitions in 2023-24, from which 220 appointments were made (93.6 per cent) and 15 competitions resulted in no appointment being made (6.4 per cent) – a broadly similar success ratio. A breakdown by pay band of SCS posts advertised versus appointments made where the competition was chaired by a Commissioner is shown in Table 3.19. We understand that for the 12 posts where no appointment, issues lie with the quality, not quantity of applicants (all bar one of the failed campaigns had at least 32 applications and at least 3 shortlisted candidates).

Table 3.18: Total Civil Service recruitment (EO to SCS 4) and number of Commissioner-chaired competitions and appointments, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Year	Total staff recruited into the Civil Service (EO-SCS 4)	Commissioner-chaired competitions	
		Total competitions	Total appointments made
2024-25	60,544	166	154
2023-24	98,328	235	220

Source: Civil Service Commission.

Table 3.19: Posts advertised versus appointments made (Commissioner-chaired competitions only) by SCS pay band, 2024-25

Level of post	Posts advertised	Number of applications	Number shortlisted	Appointments made	Posts where no appointment made
SCS 1	1	48	4	1	-
SCS 2	132	10,050	614	122	10
SCS 3	25	1,521	107	23	2
SCS 4	8	125	35	8	-
Total	166	11,744	760	154	12

Source: Civil Service Commission (unpublished).

3.173 The CSC reports that, in addition to the 12 competitions in 2024-25 where there was no appointable candidate, there were 54 competitions (32.5 per cent) where there was only one appointable candidate. This is a very similar proportion to the 81 of 235 competitions (34.5 per cent) in 2023-24 where there was only one appointable candidate (see Table 3.20).

Table 3.20: Commissioner-chaired competitions by number of appointable candidates, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Year	Total competitions	Two or more appointable candidates	One appointable candidate	No appointable candidates
2024-25	166	100 (60.2%)	54 (32.5%)	12 (7.2%)
2023-24	235	139 (59.1%)	81 (34.5%)	15 (6.4%)
2022-23	229	131 (57.2%)	86 (37.6%)	12 (5.2%)

Source: Civil Service Commission (unpublished).

3.174 Data is not recorded on the reasons why competitions resulted in no appointable candidates, however, the CSC comments that “*salary may be a factor for roles with shallow candidate pools*”.⁸⁴

3.175 In 2024-25, the CSC approved 56 exemptions to the usual open merit-based appointment processes for SCS 2 and above – up from 47 exemptions in 2023-24.

Candidate quality and demographics

3.176 This year, the CSC has declined to provide data on the quality of candidates deemed ‘appointable’ – as panel grading assessments are not standardised or moderated across competitions.⁸⁵

3.177 In terms of candidate diversity, the CSC has provided information on gender, ethnicity and disability for Commissioner-chaired competitions over the last two years, broken down by application stage (applicants, shortlist, appointable) – shown below.

3.178 In 2024-25, the CSC experienced a fall in the diversity of candidates found to be appointable. For Commissioner-chaired competitions, where candidates declared their diversity

⁸⁴ Written submission 005 (Civil Service Commission) at [8].

⁸⁵ Written submission 005 (Civil Service Commission) at [6].

characteristics, 41 per cent were identified as female (compared to 64 per cent for 2023-24 and 40 per cent for 2022-23, see Table 3.21). 7 per cent of those found appointable declared they were from an ethnic minority background (compared to 9 per cent for 2023-24, and 7 per cent for 2022-23, see Table 3.22). 4 per cent of appointable candidates declared a disability (compared to 7 per cent in 2023-24 and 3 per cent for 2022-23, see Table 3.23).

3.179 The SSRB is concerned by the apparent fall in diversity of appointable candidates. These proportions appear to be below those at SCS 1, which supplied over 70 per cent of appointees. We recognise that incomplete data, small sample sizes and characteristics of roles advertised may affect the figures and we encourage the CSC to investigate these issues.

Table 3.21: Percentage of candidates identified as female by recruitment phase, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Recruitment phase	2023-24	2024-25
Applicants	30%	30%
Shortlist	46%	46%
Appointable	64%	41%

Source: Civil Service Commission.

Notes: Optional declaration by candidates, and CSC do not always receive complete background information from departments. May not be a complete or representative sample.

Table 3.22: Percentage of candidates identified as from an ethnic minority background by recruitment phase, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Recruitment phase	2023-24	2024-25
Applicants	27%	23%
Shortlist	12%	12%
Appointable	9%	7%

Source: Civil Service Commission.

Notes: Optional declaration by candidates, and CSC do not always receive complete background information from departments. May not be a complete or representative sample.

Table 3.23: Percentage of candidates identified as disabled by recruitment phase, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Recruitment phase	2023-24	2024-25
Applicants	8%	9%
Shortlist	10%	7%
Appointable	7%	4%

Source: Civil Service Commission.

Notes: Optional declaration by candidates, and CSC do not always receive complete background information from departments. May not be a complete or representative sample.

3.180 Information is also provided on the sector background (last role held) for appointable candidates from Commissioner-chaired competitions in 2024-25 (see Table 3.24). The majority

of candidates who declared their sector background were most recently employed in civil service roles.

Table 3.24: Sector background (last held role) of appointable candidates from Commissioner-chaired competitions, 2024-25

Background	2024-25
Civil Service	74%
Private sector	13%
Public sector	12%
Third sector	1%

Source: Civil Service Commission.

Notes: Optional declaration by candidates, and CSC do not always receive complete background information from departments. May not be a complete or representative sample.

3.181 The CSC also collects data from the 71 organisations currently within the remit of the Commission on successful candidates for roles below SCS 2, for which they do not run the campaigns. The SCS 1 proportions of those who declared their diversity characteristics are similar to existing SCS – 52 per cent were identified as female, 12 per cent said they were from an ethnic minority background, and 7 per cent had a declared disability.

Recruitment pressures/difficulties

3.182 Pay levels are a key challenge for SCS recruitment, as noted by both CSC and FDA/Prospect, as well as in discussion groups (see discussion of pay and reward at [3.161]-[3.164]).

3.183 In addition to perennial concerns regarding overall role attractiveness, the FDA/Prospect puts significant weight on the prevalence and impact of skills shortages, including:⁸⁶

- Inquiries and comments by the Public Accounts Committee in 2020 and 2021, highlighting the adverse effects of skills gaps and recruitment shortfalls in the science, commercial and digital sectors, and in procurement and project management.
- Analysis and reports by the Institute for Government from 2021, making a similar point, and from 2025, suggesting that every £1 invested in the Government Commercial Function could save the taxpayer £6.50, but these benefits cannot be realised until there are enough senior, strategic commercial experts.
- The January 2025 *State of Digital Government Review*, which reported an “acute shortage of the digital and data skills needed to harness the benefits of AI” – with recruitment issues “primarily driven by uncompetitively low pay” and low pay satisfaction.

3.184 From its survey, FDA/Prospect report that only 19.9 per cent of respondents consider that the current pay structure is adequate for attracting and retaining SCS with specialist skills – 80 per cent consider it to be ‘inadequate’ or ‘very inadequate’.⁸⁷ They suggest that solutions could include improved pay scales and starting pay, effective pay progression, abolishing the

⁸⁶ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at 19-20.

⁸⁷ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at 27.

differing rules for starting salary between internal and external candidates, investing in skills training, and fixing performance-based pay.⁸⁸

- 3.185 In the FDA/Prospect survey, 59.4 per cent of respondents said they did not feel that colleagues in less senior roles have the incentive to be promoted into SCS, compared to 29.7 per cent who said they did. 44.5 per cent of respondents said they were likely to go for more senior roles.
- 3.186 Overall, the written submissions indicate that the most challenging types of roles/skills to recruit are science, commercial (especially contract management and procurement), digital and data, finance, and project/programme management.
- 3.187 We hosted a discussion group with a selection of executive search firms, for their experience of recruitment to senior posts. We heard that:
- It had become harder to persuade individuals to apply for the SCS. We heard there are potentially strong candidates who do not consider applying for SCS roles because the salary bands are not sufficient.
 - The salary gaps between the SCS and the wider public sector has noticeably increased in recent years. The NHS and the professional regulators offer more attractive salaries to those wanting to make a public service contribution.
 - Prospective external candidates from the private sector are increasingly concerned about uncompetitive salary levels and personal exposure risks. Experiences of some at Director-General (DG) and Permanent Secretary level in recent years was creating a 'brand issue' for the SCS. Those in the private sector earned high salaries to compensate for their increased risk to personal reputation, but there was no financial equivalent in the SCS.
 - Director-General roles were thought difficult to fill due to the remuneration available for the scale, size, complexity and personal risk of the roles, with risks for diversity of fields and attractiveness to those whose careers were still on an upward trajectory.
 - DDaT was the hardest area to attract applicants.
 - The 'Places for Growth' targets for SCS positions are welcome, and have helped tap into the supply of talent outside of London and the South East.
 - Candidates are often unaware of SCS pay rules – including the scope to negotiate salary, and that the SCS do not receive pay progression.
 - There is often failure to keep candidates engaged over the course of lengthy recruitment processes, where delays in convening panels, scheduling interviews and receiving necessary approvals are commonplace. Often the process is rigid and not the 'two-way' interaction that is familiar for senior private sector appointments. Better use of reserve lists and treating candidates with more care would help.
 - 'Pay tourism' – the practice of leaving the civil service and returning as an external candidate in order to be able to negotiate a higher salary – is prevalent.

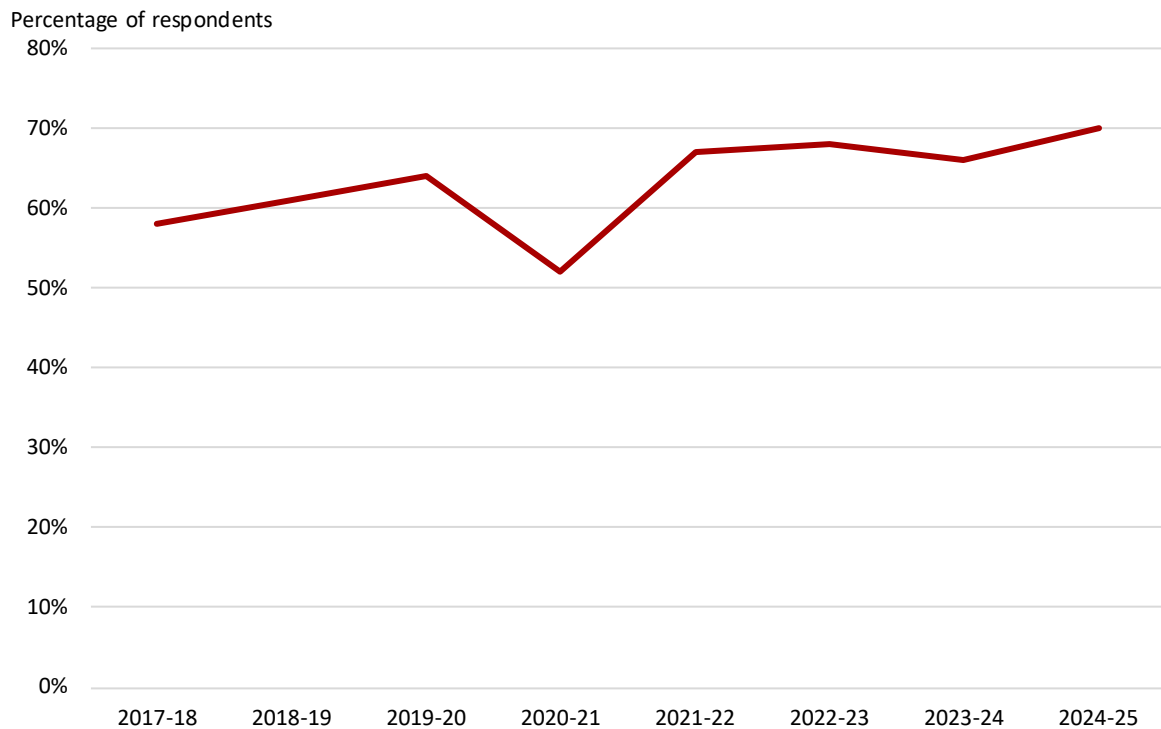
⁸⁸ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at 28.

Retention

3.188 695 people left the centrally managed SCS in 2024-25, down 70 on the previous year. Similarly, the resignation rate also fell, to 3.7 per cent in 2024-25 from 4.3 per cent in 2023-24. Resignations made up 36.3 per cent of all leavers in 2024-25, a decrease from 37.4 per cent in 2023-24, and continuing a downward trend from the high of 41.1 per cent in 2022-23, although still higher than the proportion in 2020-21 of 28.9 per cent.

3.189 Some 70 per cent of departmental exit interviewees cited pay as a significant factor in their resignation, reflecting broad stability since 2021-22.⁸⁹

Figure 3.11: SCS citing pay as an important reason for leaving, 2017-18 to 2024-25

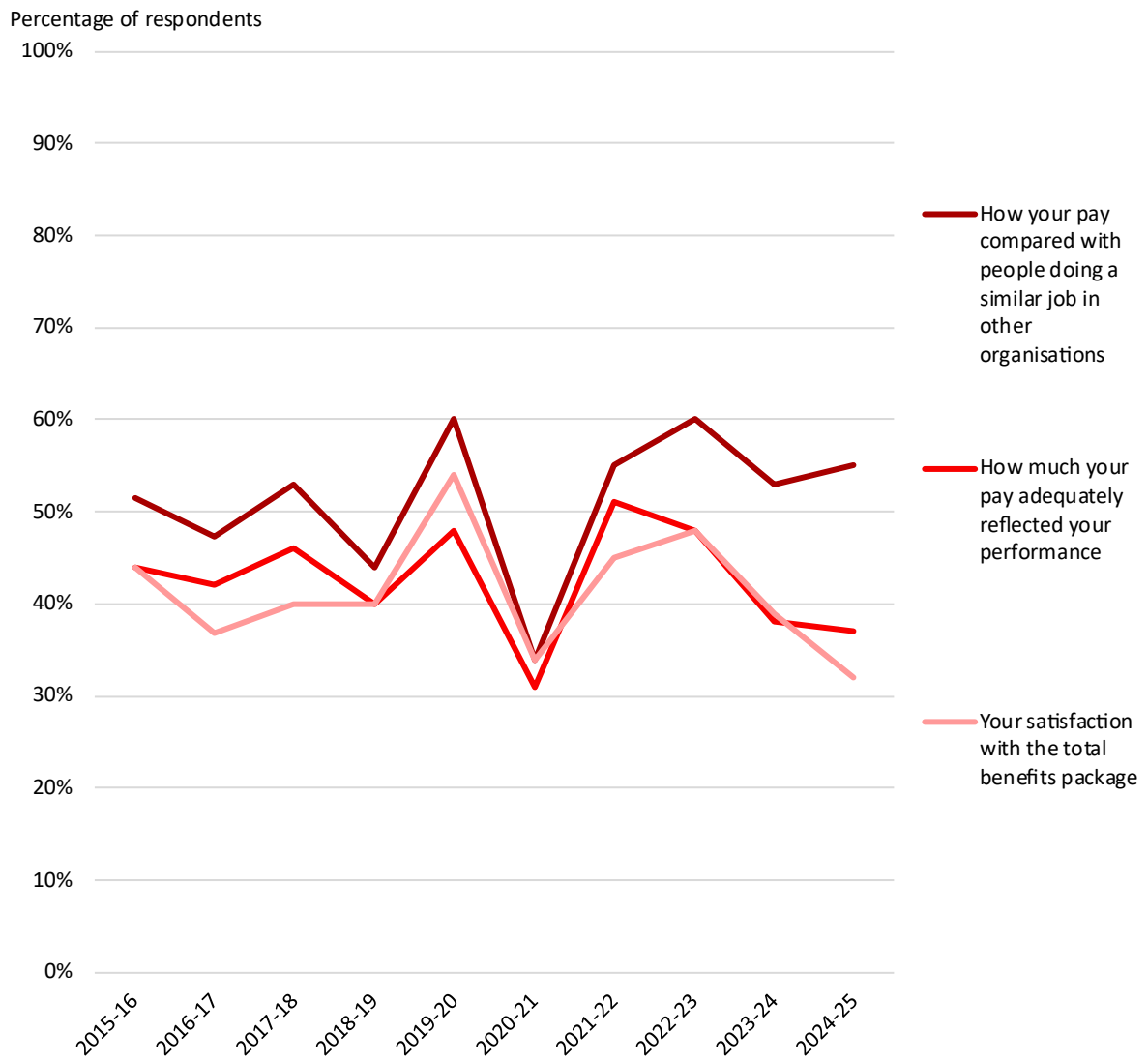


Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.190 When asked more specifically for their reasons for leaving, recent years show fewer SCS mentioning the pay overall, while comparisons to pay for similar roles remain steady.

⁸⁹ Some of the SCS for whom we received exit information did not answer any of the exit survey questions but provided feedback at interview about their motivations for leaving. This “pay as a significant factor” percentage takes into account both survey data and interviews.

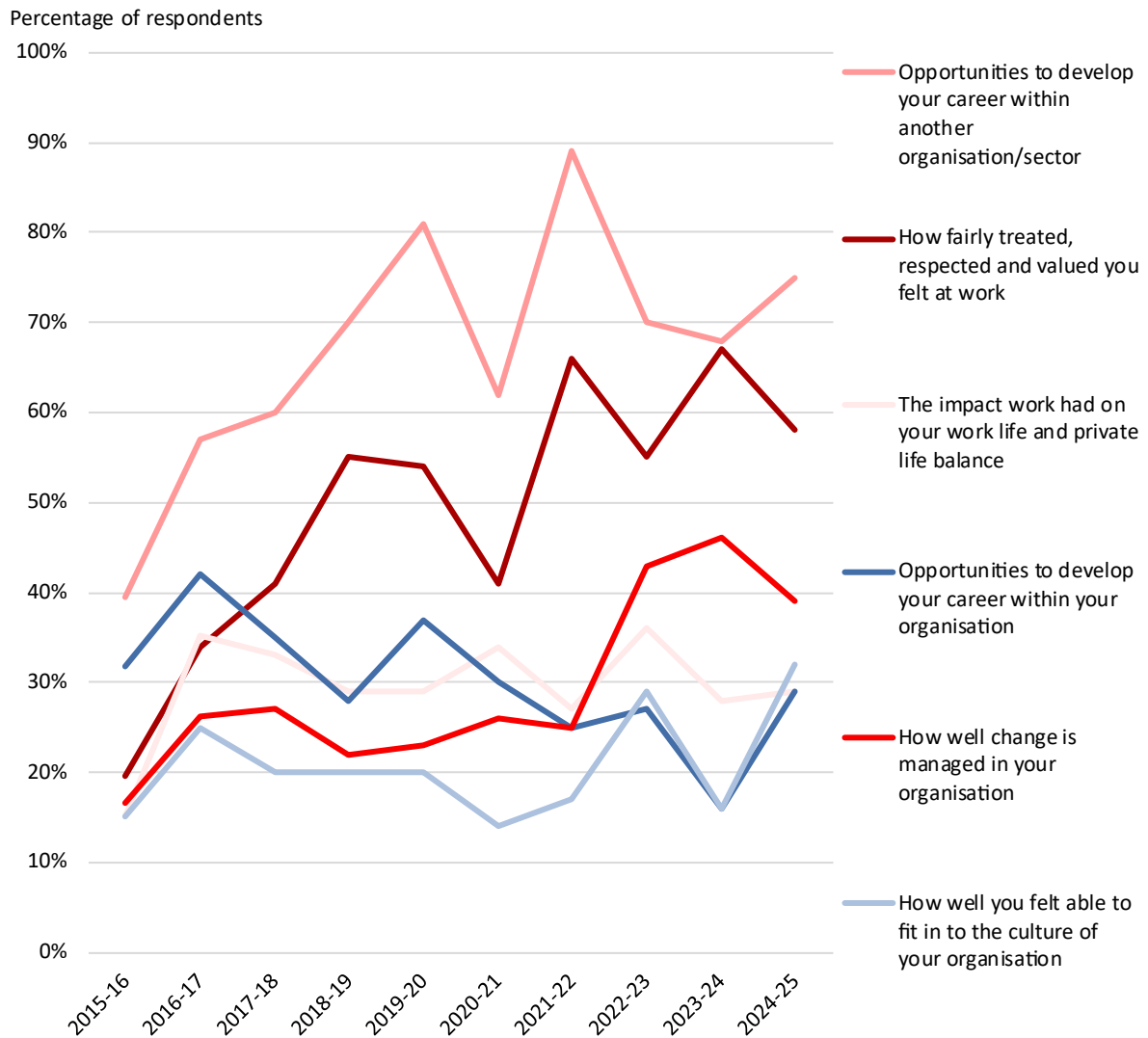
Figure 3.12: Exit interviewees' cited reasons for leaving, pay related, 2015-16 to 2024-25



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.191 Meanwhile, opportunities to develop elsewhere, feeling fairly treated, and (to a lesser degree) how well change is managed have become more commonly mentioned as reasons for leaving over the last nine years, while opportunities to develop within their organisation has become less frequently cited as a reason for leaving.

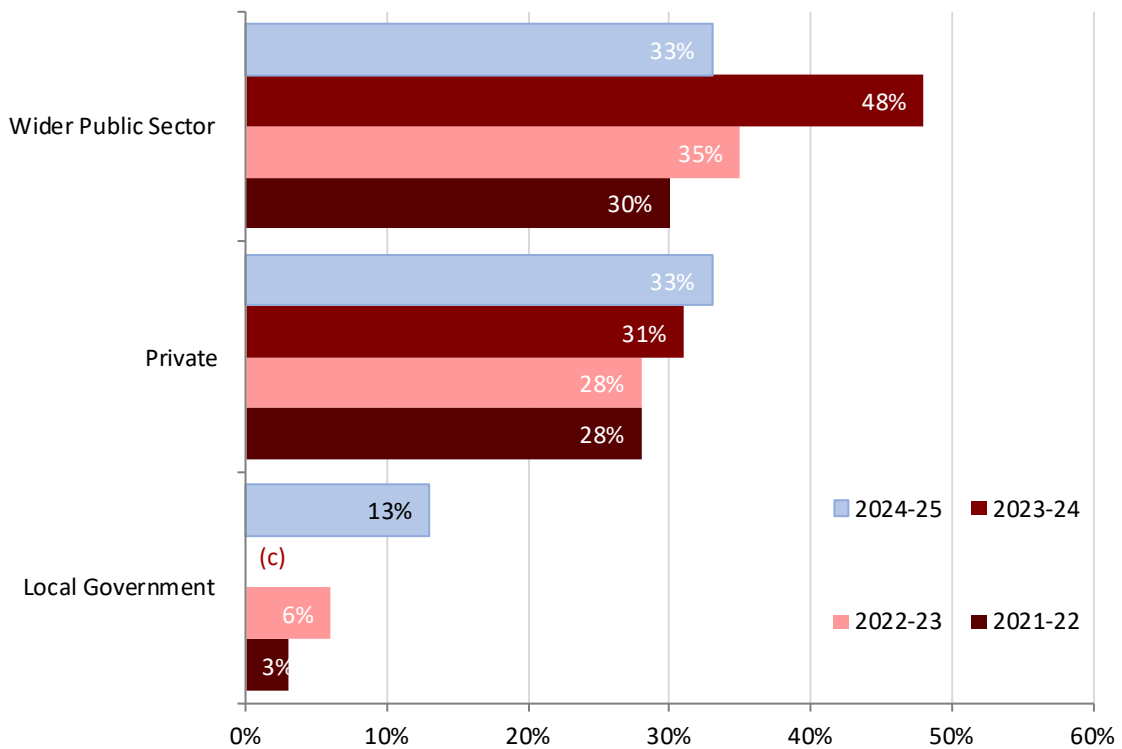
Figure 3.13: Exit interviewees' cited reasons for leaving, non-pay related, 2015-16 to 2024-25



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

3.192 Of those who shared their next steps in departmental exit interviews (see Figure 3.14), the private sector is now as frequent a destination as the wider public sector. However, this year the wider public sector and private sector together account for just 66 per cent of those providing a destination at exit interview, a drop from 79 per cent in 2023-24. 13 per cent are heading for Local Government this year. Other destinations (including consultancy, charity/non-governmental, and undecided), accounting for 21 per cent of respondents, have not been shared due to accounting for under five people each.

Figure 3.14: Destination sectors (proportion of exit interview respondents who provided a destination), 2021-22 to 2024-25



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Note: 2024-25 includes 46 SCS leavers who responded to this question. Consultancy, Charity/Non-governmental, Undecided and Local Government have been omitted as destinations due to the low number of responses.

3.193 Departmental exit interviews provide information on the talent grid markings of those resigning. As detailed in Table 3.25, 60 per cent were defined as regrettable losses based on their talent grid markings in 2024-25, a significant decrease from 83 per cent in 2023-24, and 72 per cent in 2022-23. This rate is similar to the rate from 2021-22 (59 per cent).⁹⁰

Table 3.25: Proportion of exits by Talent Grid Markings, 2024-25

		Performance		
		High potential 11%	Excellent 24%	Star 11%
Potential	Early promise 13%	Good 15%		Strong 13%
	Inconsistent <10%	Effective <10%		Expert <10%

Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Note: Data covers 62 SCS leavers.

⁹⁰ Those with High Potential, Excellent, Star and Strong Talent Grid Markings.

Turnover

3.194 Cabinet Office data on turnover in the centrally managed SCS uses the following definitions:

- Resignations include all centrally managed SCS who resigned in the specified year.
- Turnover includes all moves out of the centrally managed SCS over the specified year, including secondments, movements to an 'SCS level' role outside the centrally managed SCS (e.g. the diplomatic service), end of temporary promotion, etc.
- Departmental turnover includes moves between departments or their executive agencies/crown NDPBs within the year, in addition to moves included under turnover rate.
- Churn includes changing roles within the department within the year, in addition to moves included under departmental turnover rate.

3.195 According to Cabinet Office data on churn, approximately 17.8 per cent of the remit group left the SCS or changed job in 2024-25. This is a fall from 19.6 per cent 2023-24, and 25.2 per cent in 2022-23. A subset of this group leaving their roles – 14.1 per cent of the remit group – left the SCS or changed department (departmental turnover) in 2024-25. This is a fall from 16.0 per cent 2023-24, and 20.8 per cent in 2022-23.⁹¹

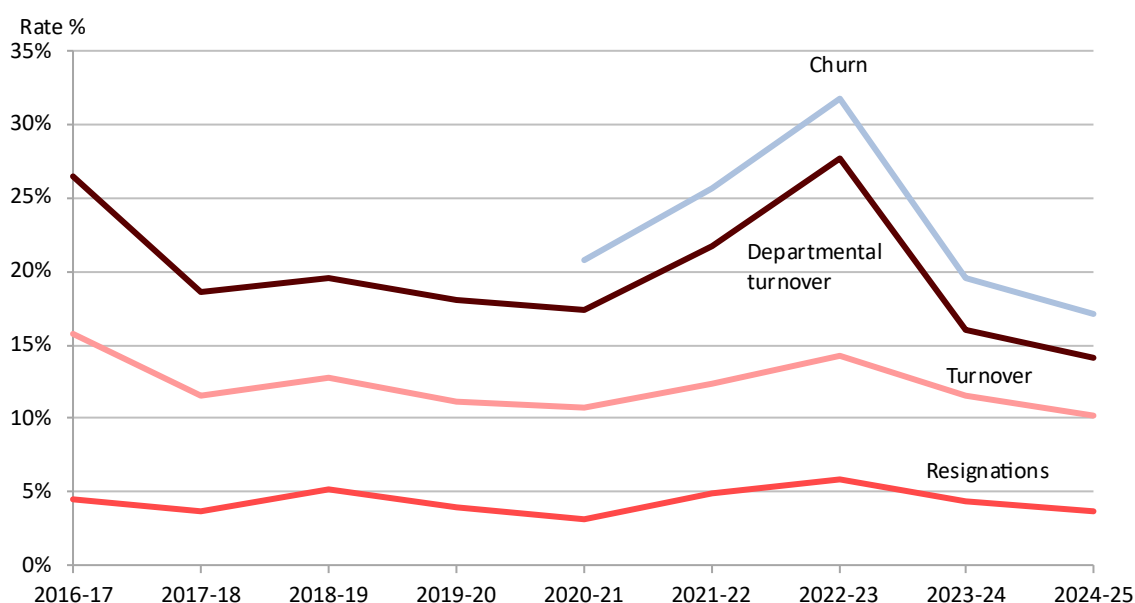
3.196 The proportion of SCS leaving entirely – the turnover rate – was 10.2 per cent in 2024-25, down from 11.6 per cent in 2023-24 and 14.3 per cent in 2022-23, the lowest level since we started receiving data.

3.197 This means that in 2024-25, around 3.9 per cent of SCS moved department, and a further 3.7 per cent moved role within department.⁹²

⁹¹ Figures for 2022-23 exclude departments impacted by machinery of government changes.

⁹² Data on moves between departments are more reliable than those for moves within departments, where differences of departmental reporting practice may affect the figures. It is likely that the true figure is higher, possibly significantly so.

Figure 3.15: SCS resignation, turnover and churn rates, 2016-17 to 2024-25



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

Notes: The above includes several departments subject to Machinery of Government changes in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

3.198 The resignation, turnover and departmental turnover rates for SCS recruited externally were significantly higher than that of those recruited internally, at 15.5 per cent and 13.8 per cent respectively for departmental turnover, at 12.8 per cent and 9.6 per cent respectively for turnover, and 7.1 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively for resignations.

3.199 Resignation and turnover rates differ significantly for different professions:

- Clinical SCS has the highest resignation rate in 2024-25, at 10.1 per cent, followed by DDaT at 8.8 per cent. Policy has the lowest at 2.3 per cent.
- Excluding very small professional groups, Property SCS has the highest turnover rate in 2024-25, at 15.7 per cent, followed by Clinical at 14.4 per cent. Policy has the lowest at 7.0 per cent.

Length of tenure

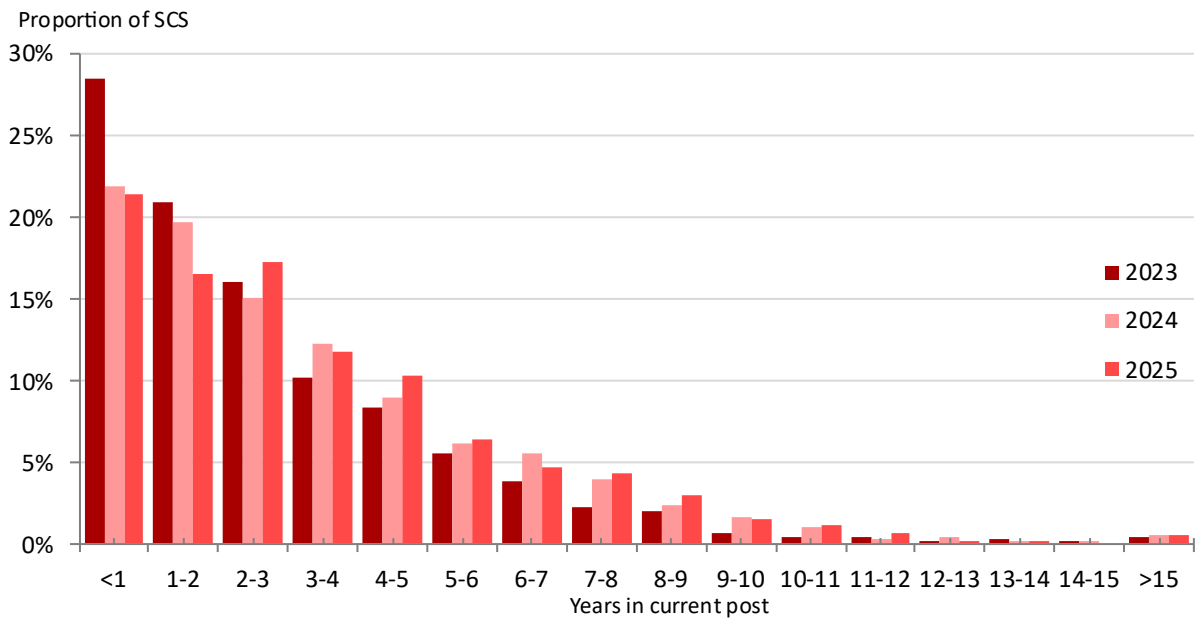
3.200 Members of the SCS have, since 2022, been subject to a 'general expected tenure' in post of at least three years. The impact of this policy is currently under evaluation.⁹³

3.201 The median length of tenure of current staff as of 2025:

- In the SCS is 4.4 years, up from 4.3 years in 2024, and 4.0 years in 2023.
- In current post is 2.7 years, up from 2.5 years in 2024, 2.1 years in 2023.
- In current pay band is 3.5 years, up from 3.3 years in 2024, 2.9 years in 2023.

⁹³ Written submission 002 (Cabinet Office) at [131].

Figure 3.16: SCS by number of years in current post, 2023 to 2025



Source: Cabinet Office (unpublished).

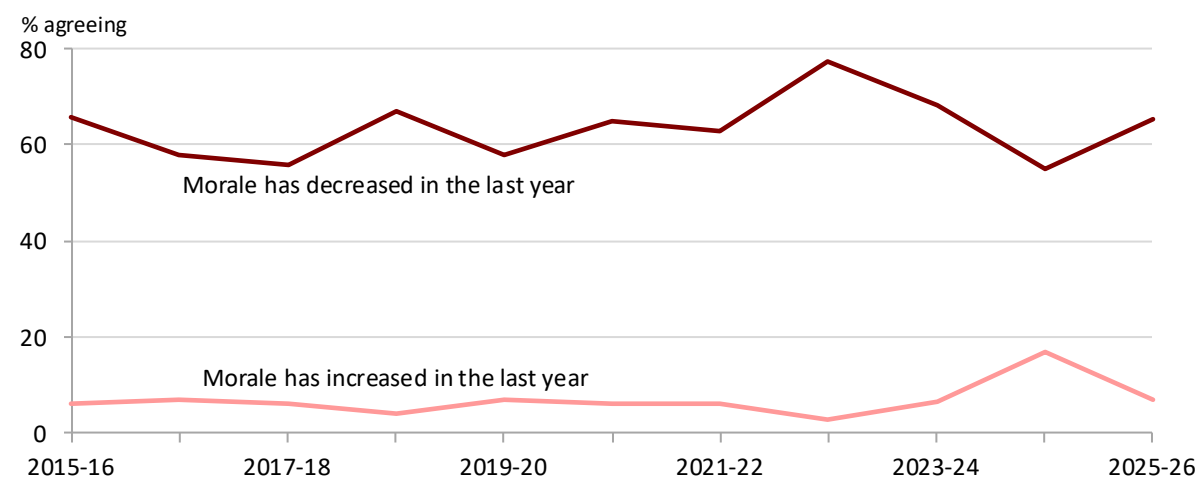
Morale

3.202 People Survey indicators on motivation and morale for the SCS showed broad stability between 2024 and 2025.

- Overall, the SCS employee engagement score remains steady at 75 per cent. This score has been either 76 per cent or 75 per cent at least since 2021.
- The proportion of SCS respondents interested in their work, at 98 per cent, held steady for a fourth year.
- The proportion saying that their work gave them a sense of personal accomplishment was unchanged at 93 per cent for the fourth year running.
- The 'PERMA index' which measures the extent to which employees are flourishing at work was also largely unchanged for the fourth year running, at 84 per cent.

3.203 Conversely, in the FDA/Prospect survey, there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who said their morale had decreased in the past year, from 55 to 65 per cent. This reverses the positive movement in the 2024-25 survey.

Figure 3.17: FDA/Prospect survey responses to question “In the last year has your morale increased or decreased”, 2015-16 to 2025-26



Source: FDA/Prospect (unpublished).

- 3.204 In the 2025 People Survey, 80 per cent of the SCS said they believe their performance is evaluated fairly, remaining steady from 2024.
- 3.205 In the 2025 People Survey, 68 per cent of the SCS agreed that “there are opportunities for me to develop my career in my organisation”, a marked drop from 73 per cent in 2024.
- 3.206 In the FDA/Prospect survey, 25.1 per cent of respondents said they felt their contribution in delivering objectives was not valued by their department, a rise from 23.6 per cent in 2024.
- 3.207 FDA/Prospect again state in their evidence that senior civil servants are continuing to work excessive hours.⁹⁴ In the FDA/Prospect survey, only 9.4 per cent of respondents said they never or only occasionally work additional hours. In the People Survey, 63 per cent agreed they have an acceptable workload (a fall from 66 per cent in 2024), and 14 per cent are neutral, matching last year. 68 per cent agree that they have a good balance between their work and private lives, a big drop from 72 per cent in 2024.
- 3.208 In the 2024-25 exit interviews, 32 per cent of leavers indicate that they may return to the civil service in the future, a fall from 44 per cent in both 2023-24 and 2022-23, and 30 per cent in 2021-22. 83 per cent of those exiting rate their overall experience in the civil service as good or very good, a fall compared to the previous two years (88 per cent in 2023-24, 85 per cent in 2022-23 and 80 per cent in 2021-22).
- 3.209 A total of 77 per cent of leavers would recommend working for the civil service to others – a fall from 84 per cent last year, but still higher than 75 per cent in the year before.
- 3.210 Sickness absence remains low in the SCS compared to the civil service average, but is continuing to rise slowly. Average working days lost per staff year in the SCS stands at 2.7 working days in 2024-25, up from 2.6 at 2023-24, 2.3 days at 2022-23, and 2.1 days in 2021-22. This compares to 4.7 working days for grade 6/7s in 2024-25, and 8.2 working days for the Civil Service as a whole.

⁹⁴ Written submission 006 (FDA and Prospect) at [3.15].

3.211 In the People Survey, 72 per cent of SCS respondents said they were working at 90 per cent or higher productivity, down from 75 per cent in 2024, and 77 per cent in 2023.

3.212 During discussion groups we heard:

- SCS reward did not match the level of accountability, pressure and personal exposure risk. This had increased in recent years – public naming of, and sometimes briefing against, individuals who had no right of reply.
- ‘Pay tourism’ – leaving to rejoin later, so as to negotiate a better salary than that available to internal promotees – was mentioned often. It was widely perceived as unfair, and we heard resentment from those working alongside colleagues in similar roles who were paid much more because they were external (re)entrants.
- There were strong feelings of unfairness, where disparate reward policies especially across departments incentivised the wrong things – for example applying to a department with higher pay before moving to a preferred role, since they could take the higher pay with them.
- Some felt overworked and had observed ‘burnout’ among colleagues.
- The SCS pay system was ‘irrational’ and it was dispiriting that despite recognition of this, for example in the previous plans for capability-based pay progression, little had changed.

Chapter 4

The Judiciary

Summary

Our remit

- 4.1 In her remit letter, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice asked us to conduct our usual annual review process and provide recommendations on pay for salaried judicial office holders.⁹⁵
- 4.2 Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this Report set out the economic context and the specific economic factors we take into account in recommending a pay award for the salaried judiciary.
- 4.3 Alongside our annual review, we are also undertaking a Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure, which will address deeper structural issues, in accordance with the Terms of Reference commissioned by the Lord Chancellor in May 2025.⁹⁶

Evidence

- 4.4 We received evidence from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the heads of jurisdiction, judicial offices and judicial appointments commissions of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, and various judicial associations. We thank all those who gave evidence for their contributions. Detailed data and evidence can be found in the Annex to this Chapter.
- 4.5 As part of the Major Review, we also undertook visits to a number of courts and tribunals across the United Kingdom, including in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow, Belfast and Manchester, where we gathered qualitative insights from consultees. Observations from these visits relevant to our annual review are drawn upon throughout this Report.
- 4.6 Detailed data and evidence can be found in the Annex to this Chapter.

Main themes and recommendations

- 4.7 We recognise the importance of the judiciary as a cornerstone of democracy. Its role supports the rule of law, access to justice for all members of society, the UK's international standing and its global competitiveness.
- 4.8 A well-functioning justice system requires the ongoing recruitment of a pipeline of the highest-calibre, appropriately qualified professionals who are already established in their (often well remunerated) careers. This is an important point of difference from our other remit groups as there is no natural 'feeder group' for judicial roles.
- 4.9 In recent years, growth in private practice earnings for senior legal professionals has diminished the financial incentive to join the salaried judiciary. We heard on numerous

⁹⁵ See Appendix E.

⁹⁶ See "Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure: Terms of Reference" (13 May 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-review-of-the-judicial-salary-structure-terms-of-reference>.

occasions during our evidence sessions about the impact of the widening gap between private practice earnings and those of salaried judicial office holders.⁹⁷

- 4.10 Full-time salaried roles are the backbone of the judiciary and recruitment to salaried roles remains an area of serious concern. Pressures are most acute in particular roles (i.e. Salary Group 7 across both courts and tribunals) and regions (i.e. London and the South East). There are emerging signs of recruitment pressures in other parts of the judiciary. The longer-term pipeline is also increasingly a source of concern.
- 4.11 In contrast to the position in the salaried judiciary, recruitment to fee-paid judicial roles remains strong so far.
- 4.12 We continue to observe a declining trend in the assessed quality of judicial appointments for all roles below the High Court. This is reflected in the multi-year decline in the proportion of candidates graded 'outstanding' (A) or 'strong' (B) in the appointments process. Although there is no recorded link between the assessed quality of candidates on selection day and performance in judicial office, the persistent shift from A/B to C (appointable) gradings remains of serious concern. It is a warning sign that the talent pipeline to senior judicial office is at risk of erosion.
- 4.13 This weakening of the talent pipeline has wider implications. It affects not only the overall quality of appointments but also efforts to build a judiciary that is more diverse and representative. Despite some progress, diversity within the judiciary remains limited, particularly at senior levels. We welcome the sustained efforts that have been made by the judiciary and others to improve representation. However, further sustained efforts will be required to achieve meaningful change.
- 4.14 It is also important to consider the experiences of judges from diverse backgrounds once appointed. Compared with male judges, female judges disproportionately report experiences of bullying, harassment and discrimination in their work. Reports from judges from minority ethnic groups suggest that they are significantly more likely to experience discrimination than white judges.
- 4.15 Morale remains under severe strain. In particular, judicial leaders highlighted growing concerns about personal security, linked to increased public, political and media scrutiny of judicial decision-making, with particular risks identified in certain jurisdictions. This is a matter of very serious concern.
- 4.16 Many judges are affected by poor working conditions, including staffing shortages and degradation of the courts and tribunals estate. While increased MoJ funding for maintenance is welcome, we agree with the view of the senior judiciary that this funding is insufficient to resolve underlying systemic issues arising from long-term underinvestment.
- 4.17 Workloads are high across courts and tribunals. Judges report being asked to do more with fewer resources, with clear limits to reliance on judicial goodwill. Heavy caseloads, and insufficient administrative support appear to be reducing the appeal of salaried judicial office, particularly relative to private practice. Both serving judges and potential candidates for

⁹⁷ For example, provisional ASHE data shows that median full-time annual earnings for solicitors and lawyers increased by 10.7% year-on-year (Louisa Withers "In-house legal pay in 2025" (11 December 2025) Incomes Data Research <www.incomesdataresearch.co.uk/resources/insights/in-house-legal-pay-in-2025>). We intend to gather further legal earnings information as part of the Major Review.

appointment also face uncertainty in light of recent and forthcoming legislative change and court reforms.

- 4.18 Consultees to the ongoing Major Review have highlighted several issues which they consider too urgent to await its conclusion. In this context, we have received a request for an interim Leadership Allowance for Sheriffs Principal in Scotland (Salary Group 5) and a Recruitment and Retention Allowance from the Association of District Judges (Salary Group 7), which we consider later in this chapter.
- 4.19 Taking account of the evidence we have seen, including the pressures on recruitment and morale, but recognising that inflation is falling sharply and expected to reach 2 per cent by April 2026, we are recommending a pay award of 3.8 per cent for salaried judicial office holders.
- 4.20 Our full recommendations for the salaried judiciary are set out at [4.118]-[4.124] below.

Government response to our 2025 recommendation

- 4.21 Last year, we recommended that all members of the salaried judiciary should receive a 4.75 per cent consolidated pay award from 1 April 2025.
- 4.22 We are disappointed that the Government rejected our recommendation. The Lord Chancellor implemented a 4.0 per cent pay uplift, noting the importance of striking a balance between addressing SSRB’s advice and managing the overall affordability to the MoJ.⁹⁸

Context

- 4.23 In evidence, HM Treasury set out the fiscal position and its view of the economic climate in which we are making our recommendations, including its expectation of falling pay settlements and inflation (see detailed discussion in Chapter 2).⁹⁹ The MoJ’s written evidence set out that funding is available for a judicial pay award of 2 per cent in the pay round 2026-27, the lowest of all our remit groups.¹⁰⁰
- 4.24 The MoJ emphasises the challenge of striking a balance between a judicial remuneration package capable of attracting high-quality candidates, with delivering value for money for taxpayers. It states that this balance must be managed against the backdrop of rising demands on the entirety of the justice system, with pressures facing the prison, probation and legal aid services, all of which are funded from the same departmental budget.¹⁰¹ The interaction of these competing demands points to a justice system that is operating under sustained and cumulative strain with diminishing capacity.
- 4.25 Outstanding caseloads continue to rise sharply, with Crown Court listings in some parts of England now stretching into 2029, and the backlog having reached 76,000 in November 2025.¹⁰² Similar pressures are evident across the tribunal system, where we also observe a rise in workload outpacing the system’s ability to meet demand – with a 36 per cent increase in both the Immigration and Asylum Chamber and Special Educational Needs and Disability

⁹⁸ HC Deb 22 May 2025 vol 767 HCWS665. Available at <<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-05-22/hcws665>>.

⁹⁹ Written submission 001 (HM Treasury).

¹⁰⁰ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [148].

¹⁰¹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [149]-[150].

¹⁰² John Hyde “Crown court case listed for 2029 as backlog mounts” *The Law Society Gazette* (Online ed, 14 August 2025) <www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/crown-court-case-listed-for-2029-as-backlog-mounts/5124224.article>; Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [99]-[102].

(SEND) cases in the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal in 2024-25.¹⁰³ Recent legislation in fields including employment, renting, mental health and immigration is expected to generate further demand.¹⁰⁴

- 4.26 Moreover, wider structural reforms are contributing to growing uncertainty. Recommendations from Sir Brian Leveson’s Independent Review into Criminal Courts, including expanding judge-alone trials, will significantly change the role of Circuit Judges.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the MoJ’s plans to overhaul the asylum appeals process with the appointment of a new body of independent adjudicators creates profound uncertainty for judges appointed to the current Immigration and Asylum Chamber.¹⁰⁶ In oral evidence, we were told that the uncertainty associated with structural reforms risks damaging the morale of judges, and could also deter potential candidates from joining the bench in the coming years.
- 4.27 To address the escalating backlog, the MoJ has outlined a range of measures. For the criminal courts, these include funding an additional 1,250 Crown Court sitting days this financial year and increasing magistrates’ court sentencing powers from six to twelve months’ imprisonment for single triable-either way offences.¹⁰⁷ In the tribunals, the MoJ has sought to boost capacity by using remote hearing technology and a ‘virtual region’ to hear appeal applications in Tribunals more efficiently.¹⁰⁸
- 4.28 There are different pressures facing different parts of the system across the UK. In Northern Ireland there are unique pressures placed on judges with the resumption of legacy cases, and a rise in business for the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland.
- 4.29 Set against these mounting pressures is the significant and long-standing value the justice system delivers – both for the economy and wider society. English courts and tribunals remain a preferred forum for the resolution of international disputes, for example, reflecting the strength of the UK’s legal framework and judicial expertise. More broadly, legal services continue to make a substantial contribution to the economy, with the Office for National Statistics estimating that legal services generated £42.6 billion in gross value added in 2024.¹⁰⁹
- 4.30 Beyond its economic contribution, an effective and trusted justice system is fundamental to the functioning of UK society, ensuring public confidence in the rule of law and that ordinary disputes between citizens, businesses and public bodies are resolved fairly and in a timely manner. Pressures on the courts and tribunals impact directly on the wellbeing of citizens, including victims of crimes, civil litigants and vulnerable members of the community.

¹⁰³ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [116]-[117].

¹⁰⁴ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [119]-[120].

¹⁰⁵ See “Independent Review of the Criminal Courts: Part 2” (4 February 2026) GOV.UK

<www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-criminal-courts-part-2>.

¹⁰⁶ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [119]; “Tribunal system reforms to speed up asylum decisions” (24 August 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/news/tribunal-system-reforms-to-speed-up-asylum-decisions>.

¹⁰⁷ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [100]-[101].

¹⁰⁸ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [118].

¹⁰⁹ HC Deb 13 Jan 2026 UIN105447. Available at <<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2026-01-13/105447>>.

Key points from the evidence – England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

Recruitment

- 4.31 Recruitment pressures remain heightened. Across 2024-25, only 944 judges were appointed against 1,066 vacancies (a shortfall of 122).¹¹⁰
- 4.32 Shortfalls are apparent in most salaried roles below the High Court. These are most pronounced for Salary Group 7, in both the courts and tribunals. Recruitment difficulties are also evident among Circuit Judges in Salary Group 5.2. In contrast, recruitment to the High Court and to fee-paid roles has remained consistently strong.¹¹¹
- 4.33 Recruitment to Salary Group 7 roles in the courts has been characterised over a number of years by repeated shortfalls against vacancy requests, affecting both District Judges (Civil) and District Judges (Magistrates' Court). The 2025-26 recruitment campaign for District Judges (Civil) is ongoing – however, the most recently completed recruitment campaign in 2024-25 filled only 51 of 100 vacancies (a 49 per cent shortfall).¹¹² This compares to the 25 of 30 vacancies filled (a 16.7 per cent shortfall) for District Judges (Magistrates' Court) in the most recent campaign from 2024-25.¹¹³ Shortfalls of this magnitude, which have recurred over a number of years, represent a serious and systemic inability to attract candidates to this role, rather than an isolated recruitment challenge.
- 4.34 The pronounced shortfalls against the vacancy requests for District Judges (Civil) have led to their judicial association calling for immediate introduction of a Recruitment and Retention Allowance, pending recommendations from the Major Review. Their evidence cites the positive effect of similar allowances in 2018 on the recruitment and retention of High Court Judges, and argues that it would show salaried District Judges they are valued and their concerns are being taken seriously.¹¹⁴ We consider this issue further at [4.122].
- 4.35 For Salary Group 7 roles in the tribunals, the recruitment picture is similarly concerning. The most recent recruitment campaigns in 2024-25 for Judges of the First-tier Tribunal and for Employment judges resulted in shortfalls of six and 30 against vacancy requests of 18 and 50 respectively (shortfalls of 30 and 60 per cent).¹¹⁵ The 2025-26 campaigns are ongoing. Taken together, these statistics demonstrate a persistent recruitment problem for Salary Group 7 roles across Tribunals.
- 4.36 Given these continuing challenges, together with particular difficulties in some regions (i.e. London and the South East) and specific tribunal chambers, the MoJ and the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) have begun to tailor their approach. Specifically, they have looked towards regional recruitment campaigns for District Judges (Civil) in London and the South East, as well as chamber-specific campaigns for the First-tier Tribunal.¹¹⁶
- 4.37 Although these campaigns have not formally concluded, and the MoJ intends to evaluate the impact of the targeted approach in the Spring, evidence so far suggests that neither approach is likely to result in these campaigns meeting the vacancy request. However, they have achieved more success than the generic and national exercises that have preceded them. This

¹¹⁰ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 6.

¹¹¹ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 7-17.

¹¹² Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 9.

¹¹³ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 10.

¹¹⁴ Written submission 020 (Association of His Majesty's District Judges) at 6-7.

¹¹⁵ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 11-13.

¹¹⁶ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [46] and [51]-[52].

is a reassuring step towards more effective judicial recruitment, and we agree with the MoJ and other consultees that the Major Review is the best place to further explore the persistent recruitment challenges.

- 4.38 While the most pronounced recruitment challenge remains in Salary Group 7, the difficulties are not confined to this group. Recruitment for Circuit Judges (Salary Group 5.2) has improved this year, with a shortfall of only one (2.6 per cent) against the vacancy request of 38. This follows a shortfall of 10 (19.2 per cent) against a vacancy request of 52 in 2024-25. In oral evidence, the JAC told us that the smaller vacancy request may be a factor behind the more favourable outcomes in 2024-25. Prior to this, there were persistent shortfalls in Circuit Judge recruitment for every year between 2016-17 and 2021-22, ranging between 10.7 and 23.4 per cent – an overall shortfall of 78.5 against the 456.5 vacancies (17.2 per cent) across this period. We will keep future recruitment in this area under review.¹¹⁷
- 4.39 Other areas of judicial recruitment in England and Wales have had greater success. Recruitment for High Court Judges has been positive, with no shortfalls against vacancy requests since 2021-22. In addition, the assessed quality of candidates remains very high – in 2025-26, 19 candidates were assessed as A/B on selection day, against a vacancy request of 10.¹¹⁸
- 4.40 Similarly, JAC data shows that recruitment for fee-paid roles is far healthier than for salaried office. In the most recently completed campaigns for Deputy High Court Judge, Recorder, Deputy District Judge (Civil), Deputy District Judge (Magistrates’ Court) and fee paid Judge of the First-tier Tribunal and Employment Tribunal, there were no shortfalls against the vacancy requests.¹¹⁹
- 4.41 The contrast between the positive outturns for fee-paid recruitment, and the recruitment difficulties for much of the salaried bench, highlights the relative unattractiveness of salaried judicial office. Fee-paid roles allow candidates to retain their private practice, work flexibly, and avoid complex cases and administrative burdens, whilst building up a portfolio of experience before they accept the ‘one-way ticket’ of salaried office. This is one of the topics included in the Major Review Terms of Reference, and we have been asked to evaluate whether the relative attractiveness is supporting adequate resourcing.¹²⁰
- 4.42 Despite persistent difficulties in filling junior judicial posts, the MoJ has made clear that demand will further increase, with significantly more judges required over the next three to five years to support delivery of the Government’s agenda.¹²¹ In oral evidence, members of the senior judiciary warned that increasing judicial capacity will be particularly challenging given that over 1,100 judges are expected to retire or leave office within the next five years.
- 4.43 Whilst noting the pressing issues with Salary Group 7 recruitment, in oral evidence members of the senior judiciary encouraged us to look beyond the current recruitment crises and towards the future risk of shortfalls in more senior judicial posts. We note that there is also to be significant leadership turnover in the near future with the retirements of the President of the King’s Bench Division, President of the Family Division and Master of the Rolls. We will

¹¹⁷ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 8.

¹¹⁸ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 7.

¹¹⁹ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 14-18.

¹²⁰ See “Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure: Terms of Reference” (13 May 2025) GOV.UK

<www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-review-of-the-judicial-salary-structure-terms-of-reference>.

¹²¹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [120].

also be considering the recruitment horizon in the context of the Major Review, given these reviews only take place every 5-10 years.

Composition and quality of candidate pool

- 4.44 Meeting vacancy requests alone is not sufficient – candidate quality remains central. Unlike our other remit groups, the judiciary does not have an internal ‘feeder group’ from which to recruit. As a result, the judiciary draws candidates primarily from an external pool of experienced legal professionals, including barristers, solicitors and Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) fellows, many of whom are well-established in their careers and typically well-remunerated before appointment. In oral evidence, members of the senior judiciary emphasised that maintaining England and Wales as a pre-eminent global legal jurisdiction depends on attracting the highest-quality legal professionals to the bench, which in turn requires judicial salaries to remain attractive and competitive.
- 4.45 However, there is a tension between ensuring high-calibre appointments are being made and securing sufficient judicial appointments to fill the vacancy request – as evidenced in recent recruitment campaigns. For example, in oral evidence the Senior President of Tribunals expressed concern that, in each of the three most recent recruitment rounds for Employment Judges, the requirement for prior judicial experience had been waived in order to attract sufficient candidates.
- 4.46 Similarly, consultees have told us that the profile of applicants has shifted over time, with an increasing reliance on candidates from public-sector legal careers. It was suggested that this may, in part, reflect a perceived erosion in the value of judicial pay and non-pay benefits, reducing the attractiveness of judicial office for those in private practice, where earnings are typically higher. While candidates from public sector careers bring valuable skills, there are concerns that a narrowing of professional backgrounds constrains the range of legal experience on the bench and, in time, could affect public confidence in the judiciary.
- 4.47 The JAC internally assesses successful candidates in terms of ‘A/B’ (outstanding/strong), or ‘C’ (appointable). We note that there is a clear downward trend in these assessments for recent judicial appointments. Over the course of 2024-25, ‘A/B’ candidates comprised 54 per cent of total selections for appointment, a decline on the 64 per cent recorded in both 2023-24 and 2022-23.¹²²
- 4.48 For District Judges (Civil), the assessment of candidates as ‘A/B’ has been hovering around 39 per cent of total selections since 2021-22.¹²³ This is a concerning trend. For Circuit Judges, we been told that the 2025-26 recruitment campaign resulted in the lowest percentage of ‘A/B’ candidates since data collection began in 2013-14, with 51 per cent of candidates assessed as ‘A/B’, compared to 62 per cent the previous year.¹²⁴
- 4.49 In oral evidence, the JAC and the Lord Chancellor advised us to exercise caution in interpreting the decline of ‘A/B’ candidates on selection day and the corresponding growth of ‘C’ candidates. The JAC and the MoJ stressed that ‘C’ candidates are still appointable and of a high calibre, and that assessments on selection day do not necessarily have a bearing on judicial performance following appointment.

¹²² Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 3-6.

¹²³ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 9.

¹²⁴ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 8.

4.50 However, we note that the JAC does not progress ‘C’ candidates for appointment to the High Court or above. We therefore regard the sustained downward trend in ‘A/B’ candidates across judicial posts as a matter of concern, given its potential implications for the resilience of the future judiciary. A sustained reduction in ‘A/B’ candidates entering at junior levels may, over time, narrow the pool from which senior judges are drawn. This emerging pattern also brings into sharper focus the underlying strategic issue – whether the system is increasingly driven by the need to fill vacancies, rather than consistently attracting the strongest candidates across all levels.

Retention

4.51 Retention trends are broadly stable, with judges primarily leaving salaried office due to retirement. The average retirement age remained stable in 2024-25 at 66.¹²⁵

4.52 In 2022, the Mandatory Retirement Age (MRA) was raised from 70 to 75.¹²⁶ It is unclear, however, whether this has resulted in judges serving longer, not least given the strong financial incentives to retire earlier.

4.53 Alongside the increase in the MRA, the MoJ also introduced a ‘Sitting in Retirement’ policy, allowing both salaried and fee-paid judges to retire, draw down their judicial pension and – where there is business need – be appointed to fee-paid office without a JAC selection exercise.¹²⁷ As at 1 April 2025, there were 248 judges authorised to sit in retirement, which is an 8 per cent decrease from the 270 judges authorised in 2024.¹²⁸

4.54 In written evidence, the MoJ maintained that ‘sitting in retirement’ supports judicial capacity and is a flexible resourcing tool.¹²⁹ It plans to carry out a detailed review in 2027, five years after the increase in MRA, which will include analysis of application and retention rates, diversity impacts, and longer-term trends.¹³⁰

4.55 In oral evidence, the Senior President of Tribunals explained that judges who begin their judicial career in tribunals tend to be younger than colleagues in the courts, and also tend to retire younger. However, he expressed concern that the average age at which tribunal judges are now seeking to ‘sit in retirement’ has fallen from around 67–68 to closer to 62.

4.56 Despite retention trends remaining broadly healthy across the judiciary as a whole, written evidence from several judicial associations suggests that there are challenges in retaining judges in certain jurisdictions or salary groups. These include fee-paid judges in more complex or sensitive jurisdictions, as well as significant numbers of judges leaving roles in Salary Group 7 to become Circuit Judges in Salary Group 5.2.¹³¹

4.57 The Judicial Attitudes Survey (JAS) 2024 also indicates a mixed picture when it comes to judicial leavers and retention. It found that the number of salaried judges saying they intend to leave the judiciary early had decreased to 39 per cent (from 43 per cent in 2022).¹³² Meanwhile, the number of salaried judges who would consider leaving the judiciary and

¹²⁵ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [72].

¹²⁶ Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022, sch 1.

¹²⁷ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [83].

¹²⁸ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [86].

¹²⁹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [85].

¹³⁰ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [82].

¹³¹ Written submission 020 (Association of His Majesty’s District Judges) at 5; Written Submission 011 (Council of Immigration Judges) at 6-7.

¹³² Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 82.

returning to private practice if it was a viable option had increased from 23 per cent in 2014 to 39 per cent in 2024.¹³³

Morale

- 4.58 The evidence we have received indicates that the judiciary is under sustained strain. It points to a profession struggling under increasing security threats, rising workloads and stress levels, and deteriorating court buildings. Together, these pressures have contributed to an environment in which judges feel overstretched and undervalued.
- 4.59 JAS 2024 results confirm that judicial morale is low. Only 10 per cent of judges feel valued by the media, and nine per cent feel valued by government.¹³⁴ These results are particularly worrying in the context of intensifying criticism of judges, who are unable to respond publicly or defend their decisions.
- 4.60 We note that less than half of salaried judges in England and Wales reported that their pay affected their morale in JAS 2024 – compared to the 2014 JAS where a majority of salaried judges held this view.¹³⁵ However, looking at the JAS results more broadly, it appears that this shift is explained by the rising prominence of other issues affecting morale, rather than the impact of pay upon morale having reduced.
- 4.61 Security concerns have intensified. JAS results show a marked rise in fears around personal security both inside and outside court, citing an increase in scrutiny from the media, politicians and the public. Results from the JAS 2024 showed that judges' concern for their security in court had risen from 27 per cent in 2022 to 39 per cent in 2024.¹³⁶ These concerns are now a material feature of the judicial working environment, rather than isolated incidents.
- 4.62 These concerns are most acute where judicial decisions attract sustained public criticism. We heard that judges in the Immigration and Asylum Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal face particularly severe and persistent threats.
- 4.63 In addition to threats made online, members of the senior judiciary noted in oral evidence the real risk that such threats escalate into physical confrontations. They commented that if Circuit Judges start to hear trials alone (without juries), there will need to be enhanced security for judges both inside and outside court.
- 4.64 The Lady Chief Justice highlighted in oral evidence the importance of supporting judges who are experiencing both online and physical threats, referring to the newly established Judicial Security Taskforce. We regard this as an important development and await further information with interest.
- 4.65 Morale is also impacted by the poor working conditions. On our visits to courts and tribunals across the UK, we found courtrooms operating under makeshift lighting and closures due to flooding and perpetual leaks. Although the MoJ has committed to spending £148.5 million in 2025-26 (up from £120 million in 2024-25) on estate maintenance,¹³⁷ members of the senior judiciary described this level of investment as insufficient, noting that a much higher amount would be required to bring the vast courts estate up to standard.

¹³³ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 7.

¹³⁴ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 117.

¹³⁵ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 19.

¹³⁶ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 46.

¹³⁷ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [121].

- 4.66 Consultees said that changes to ways of working are also eroding judicial morale. The shift towards online working and remote hearings has increased social isolation, while unreliable IT systems and insufficient administrative support have contributed to delays and inefficiencies.
- 4.67 Workloads remain very high across courts and tribunals and case numbers are expected to rise further.¹³⁸ Demand is increasing – for example, there has been a 36 per cent rise in receipts in 2024-25 in the Immigration and Asylum Chamber, and in SEND receipts in the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber.¹³⁹
- 4.68 In oral evidence, members of the senior judiciary commented that judges are operating in an ever more challenging environment, with continual reforms and uncertainty, growing and complex workloads, increasing security threats and declining working conditions, alongside an erosion in real-terms pay. While they acknowledged that pay is not the only factor affecting morale, they said that it “*is at the heart of it*” and warned that “*there is a limit to judicial goodwill*”.

Diversity

- 4.69 The diversity of the judiciary in England and Wales as a whole is gradually improving in terms of gender and ethnicity. Progress across the senior judiciary, however, remains uneven and limited.
- 4.70 The sixth annual diversity of the judiciary statistics, published in July 2025, revealed that 60 per cent of all salaried and fee-paid new entrants to the judiciary were women. This is in contrast with the overall statistics for the judiciary, where 44 per cent of all judges are women. Similarly, 18 per cent of all salaried and fee-paid new entrants to the judiciary were from an ethnic minority background, compared to 12 per cent of the judiciary as a whole. Taken together these statistics show slow, but promising progress.¹⁴⁰
- 4.71 The Lord Chancellor has strongly encouraged judicial diversity initiatives, and maintains a commitment to achieving a representative judiciary. In oral evidence, he highlighted the continued lack of diversity in the senior judiciary, as well as the decline in the number of solicitors being appointed, and the particular challenge for candidates from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds.
- 4.72 The Lady Chief Justice said in oral evidence that diversity is a priority for judicial leadership, noting the soon-to-be-published *Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030*.¹⁴¹ Members of the senior judiciary added that higher judicial salaries might help attract a larger and more diverse pool of candidates. In written evidence, the MoJ noted that the increase in the MRA has slightly slowed the rate of increasing diversity in gender and ethnicity.¹⁴²
- 4.73 It is also important to consider the experiences of judges from diverse backgrounds once appointed. The JAS 2024 results show that female judges disproportionately report experiencing bullying, harassment and discrimination in their work as a judge, compared to male judges.¹⁴³ Reports of experiencing discrimination are almost five times greater for judges

¹³⁸ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [99]-[120].

¹³⁹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [117].

¹⁴⁰ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [92]. See also “Diversity of the judiciary: 2025 statistics” (23 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2025-statistics>.

¹⁴¹ See “Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030 launched” (21 January 2026) Courts and Tribunals Judiciary <www.judiciary.uk/judicial-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2026-2030-launched>.

¹⁴² Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [79].

¹⁴³ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 102.

from a minority ethnic group than for white judges.¹⁴⁴ These findings indicate that improving diverse representation of the judiciary is not enough, and work must be done to ensure that working environments are also inclusive.

- 4.74 We welcome the initiatives to provide support for potential candidates from diverse backgrounds. The MoJ continues to support the Judicial Diversity Forum’s Pre-Application Judicial Education Programme (PAJE) and noted that out of the 779 participants who completed PAJE at least a year ago, 71 per cent have since applied for a judicial role, and 23 per cent were recommended for appointment.¹⁴⁵
- 4.75 We welcome the strategic focus on diversity as a judicial workforce pipeline issue by the JAC and Judicial Office. We are pleased by the publication of the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030, which expands on previous work and has an emphasis on focused engagement with underrepresented groups.

Key points from the evidence – Scotland

- 4.76 The Scottish judiciary report that they are contending with an unprecedentedly busy justice system. In oral evidence, the Lord President told us that the temporary extension of ‘time-bars’ for solemn criminal cases during the pandemic expired in November 2025, which is impacting court backlogs.
- 4.77 The High Court of Justiciary also faces a projected 10 per cent year-on-year increase in the number of indictments registered, and an expected increase in prosecutions for domestic violence and historic sexual crime – increasing the demands upon and workload of Senators. The recently-passed Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, which enables the establishment of a new sexual offences court, will also impact the future work of the Scottish judiciary.¹⁴⁶

Recruitment

- 4.78 The evidence we have seen indicates that judicial recruitment in Scotland to-date has been broadly satisfactory. Data from the Judicial Appointment Board for Scotland (JABS) shows there were 86 recorded vacancies advertised in 2024–25, with only one relevant shortfall.
- 4.79 A number of recruitment exercises remain ongoing. In oral evidence we were told that JABS had just launched a campaign for five Senators of the College of Justice. We look forward to evidence next year on the response rate and quality of applicants for these positions.
- 4.80 The Lord President expressed to us some concerns about a perceived decline in the quality of candidates for judicial appointment in Scotland. JABS do not record data in terms of how many candidates were assessed as ‘outstanding’ or ‘strong’, and therefore we cannot comment further in terms of quality.
- 4.81 The Lord President also noted there have been fewer applicants from the Faculty of Advocates and leading firms, which may reflect the trends towards higher earnings there, diminishing the relative appeal of judicial salaries. We heard that, in contrast, current judicial salaries can be reasonably attractive to practitioners from the public sector – possibly explaining the recent increase in appointments from the prosecution and public bar. The Lord President noted that it might adversely affect perception of the Sheriff Court bench if it were

¹⁴⁴ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 103.

¹⁴⁵ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [94].

¹⁴⁶ Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, s 69.

to become heavily staffed by former prosecutors. He highlighted the importance of attracting high-quality candidates from a range of backgrounds, stating that promoting judicial roles to senior practitioners was a key focus.

- 4.82 This year, we again heard concerns about whether the remuneration of Sheriffs Principal appropriately reflects their leadership responsibilities. In oral evidence, the Lord President acknowledged that these concerns had also been put to him, and observed that an interim leadership allowance could be considered whilst the Major Review is underway.
- 4.83 In our Report last year, we recorded that the Scottish judiciary anticipated difficulties in the forthcoming recruitment campaign for one Sheriff Principal, linked to the leadership and administrative demands of the post. This campaign has since concluded, with an appointment announced on 2 February 2026. All six sheriffdoms now have a permanent Sheriff Principal in post.
- 4.84 With the immediate vacancy filled, the context has changed. The wider questions mentioned in evidence, including the leadership responsibilities of the role, are matters that will be considered in the round as part of the Major Review, in accordance with its Terms of Reference.¹⁴⁷

Retention

- 4.85 Retention in the Scottish judiciary is broadly stable. In 2024-25, ten individuals retired from the judiciary. The annual average age at departure typically falls between 65 and 67, with only rare early exits before the age of 60.
- 4.86 In oral evidence, the Lord President told us that the full impact of the increase of MRA has yet to be seen for judges in Scotland, and commented that judges are likely to be retained longer in the supreme courts than in the Sheriff Courts. In written evidence, the Lord President said there is more confidence that the MRA increase might lead some judges, at all levels, to defer retirement.¹⁴⁸

Morale

- 4.87 Judicial morale in Scotland is mixed. While the JAS 2024 Scotland results indicate that a majority of judges across all roles consider the administrative support they receive to be excellent or good, a third of salaried judges report that their working conditions were worse than they were in 2022.¹⁴⁹
- 4.88 In Scotland, as in England and Wales, judges are experiencing increased exposure from high-profile and difficult cases, heightened press and social media coverage, and security concerns, all of which have implications for judicial wellbeing. In oral evidence, the Lord President highlighted that public criticism of judicial decisions based upon judges' character and motivation undermines both public confidence and judicial morale. He said that work to enhance and improve judicial safety and security was being actively prioritised in response to these concerns.
- 4.89 A key driver of judicial morale in Scotland is the pressure created by both the volume and nature of workload. The JAS 2024 results illustrate that this pressure is felt unevenly across

¹⁴⁷ See "Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure: Terms of Reference" (13 May 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-review-of-the-judicial-salary-structure-terms-of-reference>.

¹⁴⁸ Written submission 025 (Lord President) at [3.8]-[3.9].

¹⁴⁹ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 34 and 27.

the judiciary – with 50 per cent of Sheriffs Principal reporting that their case workload over the last 12 months was too high, whereas no Senators of the Inner House and only 15 per cent of Senators of the Outer House reporting their case workload was too high.¹⁵⁰ In oral evidence, the Lord President emphasised that it is not only the quantity of the work that was an issue, but also its changing nature. For example, he noted that judges sitting in the High Court of Justiciary, where cases are predominantly related to serious sexual violence, have experienced adverse impacts on their wellbeing and morale.

Diversity

- 4.90 The diversity of the Scottish judiciary is not broadly reflective of the demographics of Scottish society. Gender representation within both salaried and fee-paid office remains poor. In Scotland, 28 per cent of judges (salaried and fee-paid) are women, and 72 per cent are men.
- 4.91 In oral evidence, the Lord President noted recent successes in appointing more female Senators, signalling welcome progress at the most senior levels of the Scottish judiciary. Nevertheless, overall improvement remains gradual, and gender imbalance within salaried office persists.
- 4.92 The data we have received on ethnicity and other diversity characteristics are not of a nature which allows for detailed analysis – either in terms of recruitment or in terms of the composition of the serving Scottish judiciary.
- 4.93 In oral evidence, the Lord President highlighted the work that the Judicial Office for Scotland is doing to encourage prospective candidates that judicial posts are open to all who are suitably qualified, regardless of their background, and the importance of having a judiciary that represents Scottish society.

Key points from the evidence – Northern Ireland

- 4.94 Northern Ireland has a smaller outstanding caseload than other jurisdictions, however the judiciary faces its own unique set of pressures. In addition, there has been a rise in work in criminal courts, and criminal barristers in Northern Ireland have been on strike from all current Crown Court cases since 5 January 2026.¹⁵¹
- 4.95 In September 2025, a Joint Framework was announced that will allow the resumption of inquests from the Troubles that were abruptly halted by the Legacy Act, and will establish a judge-led Inquisitorial Mechanism, with presiding judges being drawn from a panel of serving and/or retired judges.¹⁵²
- 4.96 Although the smaller judiciary in Northern Ireland is broadly reflective of its smaller population, we have been told that there is also a disproportionate burden per capita on judges in Northern Ireland. In oral evidence, the Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland said that there are numerous additional ancillary responsibilities that fall to senior judges in Northern Ireland to lead different inquiries, which not only reduce their capacity but also involves stressful and sensitive work.

¹⁵⁰ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 28.

¹⁵¹ “Barristers set to fully withdraw from all Crown Court cases” *BBC News* (Online ed, 12 December 2025) <www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9vij1ly1kjo>.

¹⁵² Northern Ireland Affairs Committee *The Government's new approach to addressing the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland* (1 December 2025). Available at <<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmselect/cmniaf/586/report.html>>.

Recruitment

- 4.97 In Northern Ireland, the recruitment picture is positive, with all vacancies being filled. In the period from 1 April 2024 to date, the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC) undertook four recruitment exercises for salaried court judges in Northern Ireland – for a District Judge (Magistrates’ Court), a Master, a High Court Judge and a County Court Judge – none of which resulted in a shortfall.¹⁵³
- 4.98 Nevertheless, the quality of applicants and recommended candidates remains of concern to some consultees. We have been told by some that the Bench is no longer seen as a credible career path for the more established and senior professionals within the legal profession.
- 4.99 In oral evidence, the Lady Chief Justice highlighted the importance of ensuring a mixture of legal backgrounds on the bench, and said that the bench is no longer attracting lawyers from more financially lucrative practices.
- 4.100 Despite successful recruitment campaigns resulting in all vacancies being filled, some courts in Northern Ireland are still not operating at their full complement. In written evidence we were told that although there are now 19 County Court Judges in post, this is still two short of the full complement of 21, and that further resourcing is required in order to tackle the Crown Court backlog.¹⁵⁴
- 4.101 There are also additional demands on the capacity of the judiciary in Northern Ireland outside of the courtroom. For example, a High Court Judge and two County Court Judges have been nominated to resource the upcoming Truth Recovery Redress Service.¹⁵⁵ In a small jurisdiction, of only 66 salaried judicial court posts, this is not insignificant.
- 4.102 The Lady Chief Justice has commissioned a research report from Queen’s University Belfast on determining appropriate judicial complement at all tiers in this jurisdiction. We understand that this report is to be completed by 31 March 2026. We look forward to further information on the findings of this report.

Retention

- 4.103 Judicial retention is healthy in Northern Ireland. The average age of departure is typically between 63 and 66. However, this is well below the MRA of 75.
- 4.104 Of the 12 salaried judges who retired since the ‘Sitting in Retirement’ policy came into effect in 2022, 11 have taken up sitting-in-retirement appointments.¹⁵⁶ We have been told that this policy appears to be having a positive effect for individual judges, allowing them to have a reasonable number of sitting days whilst topping up their pension, and engaging with interesting areas of law, without the pressure of being allocated more-complex cases. In oral evidence, the Lady Chief Justice observed that the increase in retirement age has in fact led to earlier retirements across the Northern Ireland judiciary.

Morale

- 4.105 The JAS 2024 found that 54 per cent of judges in Northern Ireland are concerned for their personal safety in court, compared to 39 per cent in England and Wales and 38 per cent in Scotland. As many as 61 per cent of judges in Northern Ireland are concerned for their

¹⁵³ Written submission 030 (Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland) at 3.

¹⁵⁴ Written submission 034 (Council of His Majesty’s County Court Judges in Northern Ireland) at 1-2.

¹⁵⁵ Written submission 030 (Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland) at 2.

¹⁵⁶ Written submission 030 (Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland) at 5.

personal safety when they are out of court, compared to 26 per cent in England and Wales and 33 per cent in Scotland.¹⁵⁷

- 4.106 During our visit to Belfast in October 2025 as part of the Major Review, judges described the significant personal impact of rising security threats. They have to travel with armed police escorts, which takes its toll on their wellbeing and family life. Security concerns are most acute for County Court Judges as they preside over non-jury trials (Diplock courts).
- 4.107 In oral evidence, the Lady Chief Justice noted that the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had recently completed consultation on whether individual judges will continue to be provided with armed close protection. A decision is expected by Spring 2026. Given the gravity of the security concerns, we will pay close attention to the conclusions of this important review.
- 4.108 The evidence we have received suggests that the changing nature of judicial work is impacting upon morale. The number of non-jury trials in 2023 and 2024 was the highest in the past five years, resulting in increases for individual judges in case complexity and scrutiny. Consultees report an increase in litigants in-person, affecting case timeliness and adding further complexity. The majority of County Court Judges in Northern Ireland sit permanently in the Crown Court, meaning that they mostly preside over serious sexual violence cases and are not able to hear a variety of civil and family matters to balance this difficult caseload. These factors together have made judicial work more demanding.
- 4.109 The Lady Chief Justice is launching a Rule of Law project in partnership with the Bar of Northern Ireland, which intends to undertake educational outreach on the role of judiciary and support judicial independence and security. We look forward to evidence on the findings from this project.

Diversity

- 4.110 Diversity continues to be an area of focus for NIJAC and the senior judiciary. The judiciary of Northern Ireland is 45 per cent female, which is broadly in line with other jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, there is also a specific focus on diversity of religious background.
- 4.111 In oral evidence, the Lady Chief Justice said that while there have been improvements in gender diversity at the more junior levels of the judiciary, this has not yet fully reached the senior judiciary – but noted that her own appointment as head of the judiciary was an important signal.
- 4.112 The assessment of ethnic diversity in Northern Ireland is constrained by the limited availability of published data. While NIJAC is statutorily required to monitor and report information on applicants and appointees, including ethnic origin, this data has not been provided to us. As a result, it is not possible to assess either the ethnic diversity of candidates, or how this compares with the serving judiciary or wider society in Northern Ireland.

Key points from the evidence – UK Supreme Court

- 4.113 We have not received evidence of any particular recruitment, retention or morale difficulties affecting the UK Supreme Court that diverge from those cited in other jurisdictions. Recent appointments to the Court have been as a result of retirements, and we are not aware of any

¹⁵⁷ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 39-40.

difficulties in attracting high-calibre candidates by the independent appointment commissions which oversee the selection process.¹⁵⁸

4.114 As noted in our Report last year, we acknowledge the Court’s constitutionally significant role as the final court of appeal, determining the most complex and important cases. Accordingly, the court must continue to be able to attract and retain exceptional candidates for the role of Justice. We continue to welcome evidence in future annual pay reviews, and under the Major Review, in relation to the role of Supreme Court Justice.

Pay recommendation

4.115 In its written evidence, the MoJ underlined the financial interdependence of the current annual pay review and the Major Review, noting that pay awards above MoJ’s affordability figure would not only put compounding pressure on budgets, but could limit the department’s ability to act on the recommendations of the Major Review.¹⁵⁹

4.116 However, many consultees have pressed us to take decisive action on pay and reward issues in this annual round, arguing that deferring progress until the Major Review could, because of the protracted nature of judicial recruitment, leave critical issues unresolved until 2029.

4.117 Senior members of the judiciary made clear in oral evidence that the Government’s decision to reject our pay recommendation in 2025 had a discouraging effect, damaged judicial morale and undermined confidence in the process. They expressed particular concern that the refusal appeared to be based solely on affordability, rather than engagement with the evidence-based recommendations or the specific pressures facing the judicial labour market.

Our recommendation

4.118 The challenges facing the judiciary – persistent recruitment shortfalls, declining candidate quality, rising workloads and fragile morale – require action.

4.119 These pressures represent a significant departure from the traditional expectations of the role – where once the judiciary offered manageable workloads, stable administrative support and a predictable working environment, many judges now experience heavier caseloads, limited support, and continuing reform. There are increased fears for personal safety. Where the prestige and public service purpose of judicial roles once offset the pay differential with private practice, the decline in working conditions has increased dependence on remuneration to sustain the role’s attractiveness. Consequently, remuneration carries a greater share of the burden in maintaining the attractiveness of judicial roles.

4.120 Attracting and retaining high-calibre judges depends on the overall balance of pay and working conditions. Meaningful investment in staffing, support and the estate would ease many of the pressures judges face and could justify a more modest uplift – but, in the absence of such improvements, a stronger award is needed to help sustain judicial attractiveness, and support recruitment and retention.

4.121 We also recognise that pressures and recruitment challenges are not evenly distributed across the judiciary. The senior judiciary has expressed a clear preference for a single pay award

¹⁵⁸ See “Appointment of Justices” The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom <<https://supremecourt.uk/appointments-of-justices>>.

¹⁵⁹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [148]-[152].

across all groups – however, we note that this differs from wider remuneration practice, where differentiated approaches are commonly used to address distinct pressures.

4.122 Certain specific groups made the case for targeted pay or allowance uplifts in this annual round, as set out in this Chapter. We have considered these issues carefully, but have concluded that there is not a sufficiently strong case to introduce such changes ahead of the Major Review. Specifically:

- We recognise the concerns raised about the sustained shortfalls in District Judge (Civil) recruitment, but we have concluded that such changes should be considered as part of the Major Review, rather than introduced in this annual round.
- We concluded that the case for an interim leadership allowance for Sheriffs Principal is not sufficiently strong at this stage – as the recent vacancy has now been filled on a permanent basis, and wider questions about the role’s leadership responsibilities are better considered as part of the Major Review.

4.123 The Major Review will allow us to gather the evidence needed to assess specific structural issues in more detail and consider whether a more differentiated or targeted approach is required. As that work develops, it is possible that a uniform uplift may no longer be the most effective approach or the best use of taxpayer’s money, and more tailored solutions may be necessary.

4.124 We have carefully considered the affordability picture, but continued recruitment difficulties and increasing demands on the courts lead us to conclude that an award above the affordability figure of 2 per cent is required. On the basis of the pressures identified, we are recommending a pay award of 3.8 per cent.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that all salaried judicial office holders should receive a 3.8 per cent consolidated increase to base pay from 1 April 2026.

Looking ahead

4.125 We recognise that a number of substantive and complex matters require a level of analysis that goes beyond what can be achieved within an annual round. These issues have not been set aside – rather, they will be taken forward through the Major Review, which has both the remit and the opportunity to explore them in greater depth and with a longer-term perspective. In particular, the Major Review will examine:

- Targeted interventions to support recruitment campaigns for salary groups and regions that have experienced acute shortfalls year-on-year.
- Growth in relative attractiveness of fee-paid roles over salaried roles.
- Leadership responsibilities and inconsistencies around their remuneration.

Annex: Data and evidence

4.126 We received written evidence from:

- The Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
- The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.
- The Judicial Office (England and Wales), the Judicial Office for Scotland and the Judicial Office (Northern Ireland).
- The Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales) (JAC), the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland (JABS), and the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission (NIJAC).
- Nineteen separate judicial associations.

4.127 We received oral evidence from:

- The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.
- The Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales, the Senior President of Tribunals, and other senior members of the judiciary of England and Wales.
- The Lord President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice General of Scotland.
- The Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.
- The Chair of the JAC.

4.128 We also undertook a range of in-person visits to courthouses and online engagements with judges across the UK.

4.129 It should be noted that there is no single comprehensive data source encompassing all the data we use. Differences in categorisation and collection criteria can give rise to discrepancies between datasets.

The remit group

4.130 Our remit covers the salaried judiciaries of England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the UK Supreme Court. UK Reserved Tribunals are included within figures for England and Wales throughout this Annex.

4.131 Each of these jurisdictions operates independently and within its own unique legal system, which results in structural differences – however, a unified pay framework continues to apply across all jurisdictions.

4.132 As at 31 March 2025, there were 2,360 salaried judges in post: 1,525 in the England and Wales judiciary, 546 in UK Reserved Tribunals, 212 in the Scottish judiciary, and 77 in the Northern Ireland judiciary.

4.133 Judges are either salaried or fee-paid. Most salaried judges work full-time, although a proportion have part-time working arrangements. Fee-paid judges generally sit part-time, with the number of days worked varying according to caseload and the need to address

shortfalls in salaried capacity. For most salaried positions, prior experience in a fee-paid judicial role a prerequisite for appointment. Sitting fees for fee-paid judges are linked to the pay of salaried judges.

- 4.134 The judiciary has a unique constitutional role, and the salary of a judicial office holder cannot be reduced. Judges are paid on a spot-rate basis and do not receive incremental progression. Pay is largely uniform across geographic locations. One exception is the London Weighting Allowance of £4,000 paid to London-based judges in Salary Group 7, an amount that has remained unchanged since 1995.¹⁶⁰ Judicial pay does not generally vary by area of law, and tribunal judges are aligned to the same salary groups as courts judges.
- 4.135 Salaried judges are appointed on a permanent basis and are subject to a mandatory retirement age of 75. By convention, they cannot return to private practice before courts or tribunals after joining the salaried judiciary, even following retirement or resignation. However, it remains common for retired judges to undertake commercial arbitration or commercial or family mediation work.¹⁶¹
- 4.136 There are eleven judicial salary bands across eight groups. For most judicial office holders, annual salaries range from £110,826 (Salary Group 8) to £266,556 (Salary Group 3). Senior leadership roles within Salary Groups 1-2 attract salaries between £280,311 and £325,010.

Table 4.1: Judicial salary groups, 1 April 2025

Salary Group	2025-26 Salary
1	£325,010
1.1	£290,213
2	£280,311
3	£266,556
4	£234,096
5	£187,743
5.1	£180,810
5.2	£173,854
6	£163,675
7	£139,469
8	£110,826

Source: Ministry of Justice.

- 4.137 The total pay bill for the salaried judiciary in 2024-25 was approximately £617 million. Of this, approximately £353 million related to pay, with the remainder comprised of employer pension contributions, national insurance and the apprenticeship levy. The total pay bill has risen by around £85 million since 2023-24 and by approximately £213 million since 2018-19. This is proportionally larger than the increase in salaries, primarily due to a significant uplift in employer pension contributions in 2019-20.

¹⁶⁰ Written submission 015 (Judicial Office (England and Wales)) at [1.5].

¹⁶¹ Patrick O'Brien and Ben Yong *Work in Judicial Retirement: A Policy Report* (June 2023). Available at <<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1facLKhFKmi6MLiqI921P9IDbs5tKONO/view>>.

4.138 During our in-person visits to courthouses and engagements with judges across the UK, we observed the following high-level themes:

- Increasing volume and complexity of workload at every level.
- Deterioration in the condition of the court and tribunal estate.
- Insufficient administrative support.
- Heightened security risks.
- Persistent difficulties with IT systems.
- Declining public respect for, and status of, the judiciary.
- Pockets of low morale across the judicial workforce.

England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

4.139 At 1 April 2025, there were 2,071 salaried judicial office holders in England and Wales, comprised of 1,525 in the courts judiciary (of whom 305 were working part-time) and 546 in the tribunals judiciary (with 255 working part-time).

4.140 For the salaried court judiciary, the largest groups by some way were the 666 Circuit Judges and 476 District Judges (Civil).

Table 4.2: England and Wales salaried courts judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount
Lord/Lady Chief Justice	1	£325,010	1
Master of the Rolls	1.1	£290,213	1
President of the King's Bench Division	2	£280,311	1
President of the Family Division	2	£280,311	1
Chancellor of the High Court	2	£280,311	1
Senior President of Tribunals	2	£280,311	1
Lord/Lady Justice of Appeal	3	£266,556	38
High Court Judge	4	£234,096	108
Judge Advocate General (Senior Circuit Judge)*	5	£187,743	1
Specialist Circuit Judge	5	£187,743	24
Senior Circuit Judge	5	£187,743	41
Circuit Judge, Central Criminal Court	5	£187,743	13
Common Serjeant**	5	£187,743	1
Recorder of London**	5	£187,743	1
Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)	5	£187,743	1
Chief Master	5.1	£180,810	1
Senior Master	5.1	£180,810	1
Chief Insolvency and Companies Court Judge	5.1	£180,810	1
Senior Cost Judge	5.1	£180,810	-
Registrar of Criminal Appeals	5.2	£173,854	1
Master	5.2	£173,854	13
Insolvency and Companies Court Judge***	5.2	£173,854	5
Costs Judge	5.2	£173,854	6
Circuit Judge	5.2	£173,854	666
Senior Judge of The Court of Protection	5.2	£173,854	1
Deputy Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)	5.2	£173,854	1
Assistant Judge Advocate General*	7	£139,469	5
District Judge (Civil)	7	£139,469	476
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	7	£139,469	114
Total			1,525

* Salary paid from the Consolidated Fund.

** Remunerated by the City of London Corporation.

*** Formerly known as Registrar.

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Note: A small number of Senior Circuit/Circuit Judges are appointed to tribunals, and accordingly are shown in Table 4.3.

4.141 In salaried tribunals judiciary, the biggest groups were the 155 Employment Judges (Employment Tribunal – England and Wales), 109 First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Judges, and 85 First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judges.

Table 4.3: England and Wales salaried tribunals judiciary (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals), 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount
<i>Employment Appeal Tribunal</i>			
Senior Circuit Judge	5	£187,743	2
Employment Appeal Tribunal Judge	7	£139,469	1
<i>Employment Tribunal (England and Wales)</i>			
Employment Tribunal (England and Wales) President	5	£187,743	1
Regional Employment Judge (England and Wales)	5.2	£173,854	9
Employment Judge (England and Wales)	7	£139,469	155
<i>Employment Tribunal (Scotland)</i>			
Employment Tribunal (Scotland) President	5	£187,743	1
Employment Tribunal (Scotland) Vice President	5.2	£173,854	1
Employment Judge (Scotland)	7	£139,469	22
<i>Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber)</i>			
Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810	14
<i>Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>			
Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810	38
<i>Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber)</i>			
Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) Deputy President	5	£187,743	1
Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810	1
<i>Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber)</i>			
Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810	4
<i>First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	4
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Deputy President	5.1	£180,810	2
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	41
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Resident Judge	5.2	£173,854	4
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	85
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Principal Judge	5.2	£173,854	1
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Regional Judge	6	£163,675	5
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	10

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Deputy Regional Judge	7	£139,469	4
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Deputy Regional Valuer	7	£139,469	4
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Principal Judge	5.2	£173,854	2
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Regional Judge	5.2	£173,854	7
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	109
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber) President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469	10
<i>First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber)</i>			
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation) Chamber President	5	£187,743	1
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation) Chamber Judge	7	£139,469	1
Total			546

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Note: Senior Circuit/Circuit Judges appointed to tribunals are shown in in this table instead of Table 4.2. Presidents of Upper Tribunal Chambers are High Court Judges, and are counted in Table 4.2.

4.142 There were 3,223 fee-paid judges across courts and tribunals (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals) as at 1 April 2025. Fee-paid judges comprise the majority of judges in some tribunals. Precise fee-paid headcounts were not included in the MoJ data submission, but we hope to include this information in future reports.

Scotland

4.143 At 1 September 2025, the Scottish salaried judiciary comprised 212 individuals (207.75 FTE) covering 213 posts. Sheriffs remain the largest group with 125.35 FTE.

Table 4.4: Scotland salaried judiciary, 1 September 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount	FTE
Lord President	1.1	£290,213	1	1
Lord Justice Clerk	2	£280,311	1	1
Senator of the College of Justice (Inner House)	3	£266,556	10	10
Senator of the College of Justice (Outer House)	4	£234,096	23	22.8
Sheriff Principal	5	£187,743	5	5
Chair of Land Court/President of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	5	£187,743	1	1
Sheriff	5.2	£173,854	127	125.35
Deputy Chair of Land Court	5.2	£173,854	-	-
Legal Member of the Land Court*	5.2	£173,854	1	0.4
Legal Member of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	5.2	£173,854	2	1.4
Member of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	6	£163,675	1	0.8
Summary Sheriff	7	£139,469	38	37.4
Member of the Land Court	8	£110,826	3	1.6
Total			212*	207.75

*The Legal Member of the Land Court (part-time) is also a Legal Member of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland (part-time). They are counted toward the headcount for both positions, but only counted once toward the overall Scotland salaried judiciary headcount.

Source: Judicial Office for Scotland; Ministry of Justice.

4.144 There are also 25 fee-paid part-time Sheriffs and 9 fee-paid part-time Summary Sheriffs.

Northern Ireland

4.145 There were 77 members of the salaried judiciary in Northern Ireland, covering 83 posts, as at 1 April 2025. The largest groups are the 19 District Judges (Magistrates' Court) and 18 County Court Judges.

4.146 County Court Judges are in Salary Group 5.2, but are paid at Salary Group 5 for "so long as they are required to carry out significantly different work from their counterparts elsewhere in the UK".¹⁶² This arrangement is understood to reflect the requirement for these judges to sit without a jury to hear terrorism-related cases under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

¹⁶² "Judicial Salaries by Salary Group (effective 1 April 2025)" Ministry of Justice <<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687e2c6a8adf4250705c96a0/judicial-salaries-2025-2026.pdf>> at iv.

Table 4.5: Northern Ireland salaried judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount
Lord/Lady Chief Justice	1.1	£290,213	1
Lord/Lady Justice of Appeal	3	£266,556	3
High Court Judge	4	£234,096	10
Recorder of Belfast ⁱ	5	£202,762 ⁱ	1
Chief Social Security Commissioner and Child Support Commissioner	5	£187,743	-
Social Security and Child Support Commissioner	5.1	£180,810	1
Member of the Northern Ireland Lands Tribunal	5.1	£180,810	1
County Court Judge ⁱⁱ	5.2	£187,743 ⁱⁱ	18
President, Lands Tribunal ⁱⁱⁱ	5.2	£187,743 ⁱⁱⁱ	1
Presiding Master of the Court of Judicature ^{iv}	5.2	£173,854 ^{iv}	1
Master of the Court of Judicature	5.2	£173,854	7
President of the Appeals Tribunal	5.2	£173,854	1
President of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal	5.2	£173,854	1
Vice-President of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal	6	£163,675	-
Presiding District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	6	£163,675	1
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	7	£139,469	19
Presiding District Judge ^{iv}	7	£139,469 ^{iv}	1
District Judge	7	£139,469	4
Presiding Coroner ^v	7	£187,743 ^v	1
Coroner ^{vi}	7	£139,469	4 ^{vi}
Legal Member of the Appeal Tribunals (Chair)	7	£139,469	1
Employment Judge (Northern Ireland)	7	£139,469	6
Total			77

ⁱ The Recorder of Belfast is also a County Court Judge. The current post-holder is remunerated at 108 per cent of Salary Group 5 pay.

ⁱⁱ County Court Judges in Northern Ireland are remunerated at Salary Group 5 “so long as they are required to carry out significantly different work from their counterparts elsewhere in the UK”.

ⁱⁱⁱ The President of the Northern Ireland Lands Tribunal is ordinarily remunerated at Salary Group 5.2 – however, the current post-holder is a High Court Judge and accordingly is remunerated at Salary Group 5.

^{iv} The Presiding Master of the Court of Judicature and Presiding District Judge are paid a separate allowance of 4 per cent of salary whilst performing the role (introduced October 2020).

^v The Presiding Coroner is ordinarily remunerated at Salary Group 7 – however, the current post-holder is a High Court Judge and accordingly is remunerated at Salary Group 5.

^{vi} There are a further 19 salaried judges who hold the position of Coroner concurrently with their other judicial post.

Source: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service; Ministry of Justice.

Note: Judges who hold multiple posts only receive the salary for one role, and are only counted once toward the overall headcount for the Northern Ireland salaried judiciary.

4.147 There were also 163 fee-paid judges, covering 178 posts.

UK Supreme Court

4.148 The UK Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for arguable points of law of general public importance arising from civil cases throughout the United Kingdom, and from criminal cases in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and, in certain cases only, from Scotland. The Court also hears cases to determine issues relating to the legal competence of the devolved administrations, Parliament and Assemblies. It only hears cases of the greatest public or constitutional importance, often affecting the whole population.¹⁶³

4.149 There were 12 members of the UK Supreme Court salaried judiciary as of 1 April 2025. The President is in Salary Group 1.1, and the Deputy President and Justices are in Salary Group 2.

Table 4.6: UK Supreme Court salaried judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary	Headcount
President of the Supreme Court	1.1	£290,213	1
Deputy President of the Supreme Court	2	£280,311	1
Justice of the Supreme Court	2	£280,311	10

Source: Ministry of Justice; UK Supreme Court.

4.150 The Court also has the ability to draw upon members of the Supplementary Panel (currently consisting of four members) when additional judges are needed to form a panel of the requisite number to hear an appeal. Members of the Supplementary Panel are not Justices and only sit when required to do so by the President.¹⁶⁴

4.151 Justices of the UK Supreme Court are also Justices of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC). The JCPC is the court of final appeal for the United Kingdom Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and for Commonwealth countries that have retained the appeal to His Majesty in Council or, in the case of republics, to the JCPC.¹⁶⁵

Pension and allowances

Pension

4.152 Pension contributions form a significant part of the judicial remuneration package. The 2022 Judicial Pension Scheme (JPS 22), introduced in April 2022 to replace the Judicial Pension Scheme 2015 (JPS 15) has a current employer contribution of 62.3 per cent.¹⁶⁶ JPS 22 is a tax-unregistered scheme, meaning that benefits accrued do not count toward individuals' annual allowance or lifetime allowance.¹⁶⁷ The employee contribution rate for JPS 22 is 4.26 per cent.¹⁶⁸

4.153 Earlier legacy schemes are closed for future accrual and existing benefits accrued frozen, but a final salary link of accrued benefits remains for two schemes – the Judicial Pension Scheme 1993 (JUPRA) and the Fee Paid Judicial Pension Scheme 2017 (FPJPS). This means that judges

¹⁶³ Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 1. See also "About the Court" UK Supreme Court <https://supremecourt.uk/about-the-court>.

¹⁶⁴ Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 39. See also "About the Court" UK Supreme Court <https://supremecourt.uk/about-the-court>.

¹⁶⁵ Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 1. See also "About the Court" UK Supreme Court <https://supremecourt.uk/about-the-court>.

¹⁶⁶ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [27].

¹⁶⁷ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [29].

¹⁶⁸ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [31].

may have a combination of judicial pensions from up to four different schemes upon retirement. Implementation of the McCloud remedy has led to more than 95 per cent of affected judges electing to return to JUPRA or FPJPS in relation to the relevant period of service.¹⁶⁹

Table 4.7: Judicial pension scheme membership (salaried judiciary), 31 March 2025

Scheme	Active members	Active salary link members	Deferred members (incl. pension credit and opt outs)	Pensioner members (incl. dependents)	Total
JPS 22	2,389	1	39	287	2,716 (34.6%)
JSP 15	-	714	72	55	841 (10.7%)
JUPRA (incl. 1981 scheme members)	-	1,246	41	3,002	4,289 (54.7%)
Total	2,389	1,961	152	3,344	7,846

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Allowances

4.154 In addition to their salaries, some judges receive allowances. Given that judicial salaries cannot be reduced, allowances provide an alternate mechanism for delivering flexible pay-based reward to judicial office holders – for example, to recognise additional leadership responsibilities or address recruitment and retention issues. The allowances currently paid are:

- The London Weighting Allowance of £4,000, comprising a £2,000 salary lead and an additional £2,000 London allowance, paid to judges in Salary Group 7 whose principal court or hearing centre is based in London.¹⁷⁰ As of 2024-25, 271 salaried judges receive London Weighting.
- The Circuit Judge Leadership Allowance, paid to Circuit Judges who take on an extra leadership role, such as Designated Family Judge, Designated Civil Judge, Resident Judge, or Senior Judge in the Court of Protection. The allowance is set at 4 per cent of salary and is non-pensionable. Where these roles are filled by a Senior Circuit Judge, the judge does not receive an allowance, as these responsibilities are rewarded through higher salary.¹⁷¹
- The Temporary Responsibility Allowance, introduced in October 2022, is given to judges covering leadership roles in a higher salary group on a temporary basis. The allowance is available for three to 12 months and is designed to facilitate cover for circumstances such as long-term sickness or parental leave, as well as vacancies. It is paid at 90 per cent of the difference between the judge’s current salary and the salary of the leadership post they are undertaking, and is non-pensionable.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [32].

¹⁷⁰ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [21].

¹⁷¹ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [23].

¹⁷² Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [25]-[26].

Other expenses and benefits

- 4.155 Judges are entitled to travel and subsistence costs when travelling on judicial business. Judicial lodgings are provided for use by the senior judiciary when sitting on circuit in England and Wales.¹⁷³
- 4.156 Salaried judges are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable relocation costs where they have relocated beyond reasonable travelling distance due to promotion or business need.¹⁷⁴
- 4.157 Judicial office holders are entitled to parental leave, compassionate leave and sickness absence, as well as free eyecare vouchers, cycle-to-work schemes, and official stationery.¹⁷⁵

Recruitment

England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

- 4.158 The Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) is responsible for recommending candidates for judicial office in courts and tribunals in England and Wales, and for some tribunals with a UK-wide jurisdiction. Each year it agrees with the MoJ, HM Courts & Tribunals Service and the Judicial Office on what selection exercises to conduct for the following financial year.¹⁷⁶
- 4.159 The JAC assesses candidates at selection days as outstanding (A), strong (B), selectable (C) or not presently selectable (D). The JAC has stated that *“[i]t is important to note that gradings are an internal assessment measure of a candidate’s performance in a particular selection exercise and against the specific criteria for that role at that time. They do not indicate performance upon appointment”*. Applicants to the High Court must achieve a strong or outstanding grade in order to be recommended for appointment.¹⁷⁷
- 4.160 JAC recruitment figures are anchored on the dates when recommendations were made. For example, if an exercise launched in June 2023 and had recommendations made in June 2024, it would be included in the 2024-25 figures.
- 4.161 The figures from the JAC show the number of candidates selected compared to the number of roles advertised. However, it is sometimes the case that even when there are sufficient successful applicants to fill all roles, there is a mismatch between the selected candidates and the roles available, either in terms of location or specialism.
- 4.162 In England and Wales, the requirement for most judicial roles is five or seven years of legally relevant experience. In practice, on average appointees have between 18 and 20 years of post-qualifying experience.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [34]-[36].

¹⁷⁴ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [35].

¹⁷⁵ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [37] and [128].

¹⁷⁶ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 1.

¹⁷⁷ Written submission 018 (Judicial Appointments Commission) at 3.

¹⁷⁸ “Diversity of the judiciary: 2025 statistics” (23 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2025-statistics>.

4.163 Between 2016–17 and 2021–22, there was a continued shortfall in High Court Judge recruitment each year. From 2022 onwards, all advertised High Court vacancies have been successfully filled.

Table 4.8: High Court Judge recruitment, 2012-13 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2012-13	14	81	14	5.8	0	24	171%
2013-14	10	73	10	7.3	0	16	160%
2014-15	11	73	10	7.3	1	15	150%
2015-16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016-17	14	56	8	7	6	10	125%
2017-18	25	129	17	7.6	8	19	112%
2018-19	25	52	10	5.2	15	10	100%
2019-20	25	64	17	3.8	8	17	100%
2020-21	25	45	17	2.6	8	17	100%
2021-22	17	41	9	4.6	8	9	100%
2022-23	10	47	10	4.7	0	12	120%
2023-24	2	18	2	9	0	4	200%
2024-25	5	24	5	4.8	0	5	100%
2025-26 to date	10	60	10	6	0	19	190%

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

Applicants to the High Court must be graded A or B to be recommended for appointment, so this percentage will never drop below 100.

4.164 There was a shortfall in Circuit Judge recruitment every year from 2016–17 to 2021–22. In 2021–22, around one-fifth of vacancies went unfilled. In the 2023–24 campaign all 92 advertised vacancies were filled. However, the long-term decline in the proportion of those recommended who were graded good or outstanding has continued. For 2024–25, there was a shortfall of ten against 52 vacancies. Recruitment for 2025–26 is ongoing, with 38 vacancies and 176 applications received to-date.

Table 4.9: Circuit Judge recruitment, 2012-13 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2012-13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	54	No data	54	No data	0	64	119%
2014-15	53	232	53	4.4	0	54	102%
2015-16	62	246	62	4	0	48	77%
2016-17	55	184	44	4.2	11	25	57%
2017-18	116.5	401	104	3.9	12.5	89	86%
2018-19	94	200	72	2.8	22	53	74%
2019-20	50	164	43	3.8	7	29	67%
2020-21	63	175	53	3.3	10	41	77%
2021-22	78	225	62	3.6	16	39	63%
2022-23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023-24	92	250	92	2.7	0	54	59%
2024-25	52	215	42	5.1	10	26	62%
2025-26 to date	38	176	37	4.8	1	19	51%

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

4.165 For District Judges (Civil), there have been significant shortfalls since 2019–20. In the 2024–25 recruitment campaign, only 51 of the 100 vacancies were filled. Recruitment for 2025–26 is ongoing, with 105 vacancies advertised and 327 applications received.

4.166 Since 2020–21, less than half of the District Judges (Civil) recommended for appointment have been graded as ‘strong’ or ‘outstanding’. In the 2023-24 and 2024–25 campaigns, only 39 per cent of recommended candidates were graded ‘strong’ or ‘outstanding’.

Table 4.10: District Judge (Civil) recruitment, 2012-13 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2012-13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2013-14	54	322	54	6	0	45	83%
2014-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015-16	61	199	61	3.3	0	65	107%
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	100.5	271	96	2.8	4.5	53	55%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	110	190	47	4	63	27	57%
2020-21	75	141	24	5.9	51	10	42%
2021-22	106	249	57	4.4	49	22	39%
2022-23	100	247	67	3.7	33	27	40%
2023-24	100	237	49	4.8	51	19	39%
2024-25	100	291	51	5.7	49	20	39%
2025-26 to date	105	327	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

4.167 Three of the last four recruitment campaigns for District Judges (Magistrates' Court) have resulted in shortfalls, most recently a shortfall of 5 against a vacancy request of 30 in 2024-25. The percentage of candidates graded strong or outstanding has declined significantly since 2015-16.

Table 4.11: District Judge (Magistrates' Court) recruitment, 2014-15 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2014-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015-16	18	190	18	10.6	0	17	94%
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	17	127	17	7.5	0	12	71%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	25	93	17	5.5	8	9	53%
2020-21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021-22	32	176	32	5.5	0	19	59%
2022-23	25	116	19	6.1	6	6	32%
2023-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2024-25	30	197	25	7.88	5	10	40%
2025-26 to date	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

4.168 Recruitment for the First-tier Tribunal in 2024–25 resulted in a shortfall of six against 18 vacancies. This follows a shortfall of 23 against 70 vacancies in 2023-24. Earlier campaigns had no shortfall despite large vacancy requests.

4.169 The 2023-24 campaign was the first in which the percentage of A and B candidates dropped below 50 per cent. In 2024–25, the proportion improved slightly to 50 per cent, but an overall shortfall remained.

Table 4.12: First-tier Tribunal Judge (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals) recruitment, 2014-15 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2014-15	6	46	6	7.7	0	4	67%
2015-16	1	23	1	23	0	1	100%
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	65	956	64	14.9	1	42	66%
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	112	767	112	6.8	0	57	51%
2020-21	70	332	70	4.7	0	35	50%
2021-22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022-23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023-24	70	358	47	7.6	23	13	28%
2024-25	18	143	12	11.9	6	6	50%
2025-26 to date	113	470	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

4.170 The last recruitment campaign for Employment Judges was in 2023-24, and resulted in a shortfall of 30 against 50 vacancies. At that time, only 25 per cent of candidates were graded A or B at selection day. The 2025-26 recruitment campaign is ongoing.

Table 4.13: Employment Judge recruitment, 2014-15 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies (s 87 & s 94)	Applications	Selections (s 87 & s 94)	Applicants per selection	Shortfall against vacancies	Number of A and B candidates at selection day	A & B candidates as a percentage of total selections
2014-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2015-16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016-17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	59	420	59	7.1	0	23	39%
2019-20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2020-21	25	62	21	3	4	9	43%
2021-22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022-23	50	138	35	3.9	15	16	46%
2023-24	50	75	20	3.8	30	5	25%
2024-25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2025-26 to date	36	137	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Source: Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales).

Note: Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, s 87 selections are candidates who are recommended for immediate appointment, whereas s 94 selections are candidates who are selected for future appointments.

Scotland

4.171 All vacancies for Senators have been successfully filled since 2016-17, with an average of 4.3 applicants per recommendation. The 2024-25 Senator recruitment campaign is ongoing.

Table 4.14: Senator recruitment, 2016-17 to 2024-25

Year	Vacancies	Applications	Recommendations	Applicants per recommendation	Shortfall against vacancies
2016-17	2	10	7	1.44	0
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	5	23	5	4.6	0
2020-21	3	23	3	7.7	0
2021-22	5	16	5	3.2	-
2022-23	-	-	-	-	-
2023-24	5	22	5	4.4	0
2024-25	5	26	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Source: Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland.

Note: Data is based on when campaigns commenced (e.g. if a campaign commenced in March 2023, it would be allocated to 2022-23). Vacancies with decimal numbers (e.g. 3.5) denote vacancies for part-time roles.

4.172 As there are only six permanent Sheriff Principal positions, recruitment volumes over time are accordingly low. There have been only 11.5 vacancies since 2016-17, and only one shortfall (in 2021-22).

4.173 The most recently completed Sheriff Principal recruitment campaign – for one vacancy – ran between August and December 2025. This campaign netted seven applicants – a similar applicant to recommendation ratio as in previous campaigns. A further campaign for 3.5 vacancies launched in February 2026 and is ongoing.

Table 4.15: Sheriff Principal recruitment, 2016-17 to 2025-26 to date

Year	Vacancies	Applications	Recommendations	Applicants per recommendation	Shortfall against vacancies
2016-17	1	6	1	6.0	0
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	1	8	1	8.0	0
2020-21	-	-	-	-	-
2021-22	2	4	1	4.0	1
2022-23	3	10	3	3.3	0
2023-24	-	-	-	-	-
2024-25	-	-	-	-	-
2025-26	4.5	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Source: Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland.

Note: Data is based on when campaigns commenced (e.g. if a campaign commenced in March 2023, it would be allocated to 2022-23). Vacancies with decimal numbers (e.g. 3.5) denote vacancies for part-time roles.

4.174 Recent Sheriff recruitment campaigns have, with the exception of one position in 2024-25, not resulted in any shortfall since 2020-21. There has only been a shortfall of two since 2016-17, against 104.5 vacancies. The number of applicants per vacancy has remained high, with at least 5.2 applicants per post since 2016-17, and a noticeable increase in the number of applicants per vacancy from 2023-24 onward.

Table 4.16: Sheriff recruitment, 2016-17 to 2024-25

Year	Vacancies	Applications	Recommendations	Applicants per recommendation	Shortfall against vacancies
2016-17	3	50	3	16.6	0
2017-18	8	119	8	14.9	0
2018-19	-	-	-	-	-
2019-20	8	45	8	5.6	0
2020-21	20	114	19	6.0	1
2021-22	28	177	30	5.9	0
2022-23	23	120	23	5.2	0
2023-24	3.5	70	4	17.5	0
2024-25	11	104	10	10.4	1

Source: Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland.

Note: Data is based on when campaigns commenced (e.g. if a campaign commenced in March 2023, it would be allocated to 2022-23). Vacancies with decimal numbers (e.g. 3.5) denote vacancies for part-time roles.

4.175 There were no Summary Sheriff campaigns in 2024-25 or 2023-24. Since 2016-17, there has only been one recruitment shortfall (in 2016-17), as outlined below.

Table 4.17: Summary Sheriff recruitment, 2016-17 to 2024-25

Year	Vacancies	Applications	Recommendations	Applicants per recommendation	Shortfall against vacancies
2016-17	21	154	20	7.7	1
2017-18	-	-	-	-	-
2018-19	7	173	7	24.7	0
2019-20	7	96	7	13.7	0
2020-21	14	91	14	6.5	0
2021-22	15	106	17	6.2	0
2022-23	13	132	13	10.2	0
2023-24	-	-	-	-	-
2024-25	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland.

Note: Data is based on when campaigns commenced (e.g. if a campaign commenced in March 2023, it would be allocated to 2022-23). Vacancies with decimal numbers (e.g. 3.5) denote vacancies for part-time roles.

Northern Ireland

4.176 Since 1 April 2024, five recruitment exercises have been undertaken: High Court Judge; County Court Judge; Master (Taxation and Enforcement of Judgments); President of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal; and District Judge (Magistrates' Court).

4.177 For the High Court Judge campaign:

- Six applications were received, with four candidates shortlisted for interview and two deemed appointable. One appointment was made.
- The applicant pool comprised all barristers. Of these, two candidates were existing judicial office holders (fee-paid or salaried). There was gender parity at all stages of the recruitment process.
- The applicant-to-recommendation ratio was 3.0.
- Applicants declared current incomes ranging between £180,000 and £515,000, with an average income of £325,132.

4.178 For the County Court Judge campaign:

- 34 applications were received (20 male and 14 female), with 15 candidates shortlisted for interview (eight male and seven female) and eight deemed appointable (four male and four female). Three appointments were made.
- The applicant pool included 17 barristers, 15 solicitors, and two other legal professionals. Of these, 13 candidates were existing judicial office holders (fee-paid or salaried).
- The applicant-to-recommendation ratio was 4.25.
- Applicants declared current incomes ranging between £45,000 and £357,000, with an average income of £140,172.

4.179 For the Master (Taxation and Enforcement of Judgements) campaign:

- 34 applications were received, with nine candidates shortlisted for interview and four deemed appointable. One appointment was made.
- The applicant pool included nine barristers, 23 solicitors, and two other legal professionals. Of these, 13 candidates were existing judicial office holders (fee-paid or salaried). We did not receive a gender breakdown for this campaign.
- The applicant-to-recommendation ratio was 8.5.
- Applicants declared current incomes ranging between £23,000 and £210,000, with an average income of £92,281.

4.180 For the President of the Industrial and Fair Employment Tribunal campaign:

- 2 applications were received, with both candidates shortlisted for interview and deemed appointable. One appointment was made.
- The applicant pool comprised all solicitors. Both were existing judicial office holders (fee-paid or salaried). We did not receive a gender breakdown for this campaign.
- The applicant-to-recommendation ratio was 2.0.
- Applicants declared current incomes ranging between £126,000 and £148,472, with an average income of £137,236.

4.181 For the District Judge (Magistrates' Court) campaign:

- 74 applications were received, with nine candidates shortlisted for interview and six deemed appointable. We have not been advised of the final number of appointments made.
- The applicant pool comprised 31 barristers, 40 solicitors, and three other legal professionals. Of these, 24 candidates were existing judicial office holders (fee-paid or salaried). We did not receive a gender breakdown for this campaign.
- The applicant-to-recommendation ratio was 12.3.
- Applicants declared current incomes ranging between £9,500 and £249,000, with an average income of £71,537.

4.182 Across all of these campaigns, there were no candidates who rejected an offer of judicial appointment.

UK Supreme Court

4.183 The Supreme Court is required by statute to have judges with a knowledge of, and experience of practice in, the law of each part of the United Kingdom. Under section 25 of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, there are three possible routes to qualification for appointment as a Justice:¹⁷⁹

- Having held 'high judicial office' for a period of at least two years.¹⁸⁰
- Having qualified and practised as a solicitor, barrister or advocate in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland for at least 15 years.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ "Appointment of Justices" The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom <<https://supremecourt.uk/appointments-of-justices>>.

¹⁸⁰ "High judicial office" is defined in section 60(2) of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 as being a judge of the UK Supreme Court (or its predecessor, the Appellate Committee in the House of Lords), the Court of Appeal in England and Wales, the High Court in England and Wales, the Court of Session, the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland or the High Court in Northern Ireland.

¹⁸¹ A person will meet the statutory eligibility criteria if, for at least 15 years, they have been a solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales or a barrister in England and Wales and have gained experience in law during the post-qualification period (for example, by practising as a lawyer or acting as a judge or arbitrator), or an advocate in Scotland, a solicitor entitled to appear in the Court of Session and the High Court of Justiciary, a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland or a solicitor of the Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland.

- Holding a ‘relevant qualification’¹⁸² for at least 15 years and having gained experience in law for at least 15 years while holding a relevant qualification.¹⁸³

4.184 The process for selecting Justices is overseen by an independent selection commission.¹⁸⁴

4.185 We have not received evidence of any current recruitment difficulties affecting the UK Supreme Court. Recent appointments to the Court have been as a result of retirements, and we are not aware of any difficulties in attracting high-calibre candidates by the independent appointment commissions which oversee the selection process.

4.186 However, in written evidence, the President comments upon the real-terms reduction in Justices’ pay over the past 16 years, combined with the growing differential with pay in the private sector – noting that *“the current salary level creates an issue for future recruitment and retention of Justices of the outstanding quality required for the UK’s flagship court”*.¹⁸⁵

Retention

4.187 Most judicial office holders are subject to a mandatory retirement age of 75 years. Salaried judges cannot typically return to private practice before courts and tribunals, and most leave through retirement. Therefore, the average retirement age is an important measure of retention. Trends in the number and age of judges sitting in retirement or transitioning to part-time working are also of interest, as they could indicate dissatisfaction with salaried full-time roles.

England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

4.188 In 2024–25, 58 salaried court judges retired, with an average age at departure of 66 years. This compares with 69 retirements in 2023–24, also with an average age of 66. Since 2016–17, the average retirement age has remained broadly stable, varying between 66 and 68 years. There were three resignations in 2024–25 with an average age of 60, compared to two resignations the previous year with an average age of 55.

¹⁸² i.e. as a barrister, a solicitor, or a holder of another legal qualification as specified by the Lord Chancellor in accordance with section 51(1) of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

¹⁸³ Activities which count (alone or in combination) as gaining experience in law include carrying out judicial functions, practising as a lawyer, and legal academic work.

¹⁸⁴ See “Appointment of Justices” The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom <<https://supremecourt.uk/appointments-of-justices>>.

¹⁸⁵ Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 1.

Table 4.18: Number and average age of leavers, England and Wales salaried courts judiciary, 2016-17 to 2024-25

Year	Number of retirements	Average age at retirement	Number of resignations	Average age at resignation	Number of deaths in office	Number of removals from office
2016-17	124	67	-	-	4	-
2017-18	86	67	1	60	4	-
2018-19	80	67	3	50	2	-
2019-20	80	68	1	62	1	-
2020-21	41	67	3	53.5	1	-
2021-22	45	66	1	63	2	-
2022-23	67	67	-	-	4	-
2023-24	69	66	2	55	-	1
2024-25	58	66	3	60	2	1

Source: Ministry of Justice.

4.189 There were 32 salaried tribunal judges who retired in 2024-25, with an average age at retirement of 65 years. This compares with 20 retirements in 2023–24, with an average age of 66. Since 2016–17, the average retirement age has varied between 64 and 66 years. There were eight resignations in 2024–25, which is a significant outlier from previous years, with an average age of 49.

Table 4.19: Number and average age of leavers, England and Wales salaried tribunals judiciary (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals), 2016-17 to 2024-25

Year	Number of retirements	Average age at retirement	Number of resignations	Average age at resignation	Number of deaths in office	Number of removals from office
2016-17	23	66	1	46	1	-
2017-18	23	66	-	-	-	-
2018-19	34	66	-	-	1	-
2019-20	32	66	-	-	-	-
2020-21	8	65	-	-	1	-
2021-22	14	65	-	-	-	-
2022-23	25	64	-	-	-	-
2023-24	20	66	1	41	1	-
2024-25	32	65	8	49	1	-

Source: Ministry of Justice.

4.190 The Judicial Office (England and Wales) runs a survey for judges who leave the judiciary before their mandatory retirement age.¹⁸⁶ In March 2022, the mandatory retirement age was increased from 70 to 75. For the current survey reporting period (November 2024 to August 2025), 36 judges responded to the survey, including all those who returned to sit in

¹⁸⁶ Written submission 016 (Judicial Leavers Survey).

retirement. The most important factors influencing their decision to leave the judiciary before their mandatory retirement age were:

- “Stressful working conditions” (20 responses).
- “Family/home work-life balance” (13 responses).
- “Protection of pension benefits” (13 responses).
- “Availability of technical IT support” (12 responses).
- “Inability to move to salaried part-time work” (12 responses).
- “Increase in litigants in person” (12 responses).

4.191 When asked the areas where changes could be made to encourage experienced judges to remain in office longer, the most frequent responses included:

- “Less stressful working conditions” (19 responses).
- “Administrative support” (16 responses).
- “Sense of collegiality” (14 responses).
- “Pension” (11 responses).

4.192 Leavers reported that the factors which would have influenced them to stay in the judiciary before reaching mandatory retirement age include:

- “Better administrative support” (15 responses).
- “Reduction in workload” (10 responses).
- “None of the factors” (10 responses).
- “Higher remuneration” (9 responses).
- “Improvements to court or tribunal buildings” (5 responses).

4.193 A new sitting-in-retirement policy commenced in October 2022. This policy permits relevant judicial office holders, now including fee-paid judges, to retire from judicial office, draw down their judicial pension and, where there is a business need, be appointed to a fee-paid office without a JAC selection exercise. They can also continue to accrue judicial pension. To be eligible, judicial office holders must return to sit within two years of retirement. Appointments are for a single two-year term and there is no guarantee of sitting days or an expectation that a judge will sit at a certain level.¹⁸⁷

4.194 In 2024-25, there were 165 courts judges sitting in retirement, with an average age of 70 years. There were also 83 tribunals judges sitting in retirement, with an average age of 68

¹⁸⁷ Written submission 007 (Ministry of Justice) at [83].

years. We have not received information identifying the number of sitting days undertaken by judges sitting in retirement.

Table 4.20: Number of judges sitting in retirement, England and Wales courts judiciary, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Office held	2023-24	2024-25
Lord/Lady Justice of Appeal	12	9
High Court Judge	20	12
Master	4	4
Insolvency and Companies Court Judge	-	1
Circuit Judge	69	72
Assistant Judge Advocate General*	1	-
District Judge (Civil)	56	38
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	14	13
Deputy Master	1	1
Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judge	1	1
Recorder	6	6
Deputy District Judge (Civil)	10	8
Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	1	-
Total	195	165

* Paid from the Consolidated Fund.

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Table 4.21: Number of judges sitting in retirement, England and Wales tribunals judiciary, 2023-24 to 2024-25

Office held	2023-24	2024-25
<i>Employment Tribunal (England and Wales)</i>		
Employment Judge (England and Wales)	21	15
<i>Employment Tribunal (Scotland)</i>		
Employment Judge (Scotland)	-	1
<i>Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber) Judge	4	5
Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber) Deputy Judge	3	2
<i>Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	1	4
Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Deputy Judge	1	2
<i>Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber) Judge	1	1
Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber) Deputy Judge	1	-
<i>First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) Judge	1	2
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Judge	6	4

Office held	2023-24	2024-25
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	14	23
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Judge	3	5
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Judge	18	18
<i>First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber) Judge	1	1
Total	75	83

Source: Ministry of Justice.

4.195 Overall, 560 salaried judges work part-time – 305 in the courts judiciary, and 255 in the tribunals judiciary. This equates to 20 per cent of salaried court judges and 47 per cent of salaried tribunal judges.

4.196 In the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey, 55 per cent of salaried judges stated that it was important to have opportunities to sit part-time, and 38 per cent said that the ability to work part-time would make them more likely to remain in the judiciary until their mandatory retirement age.¹⁸⁸

4.197 We have not received information on tenure in post or as a judicial office holder for England and Wales.

Scotland

4.198 Most salaried judges in Scotland have served less than five years in their current post – with 57 per cent having less than five years' service, 28 per cent having 5-10 years' service, and 15 per cent having more than 10 years' service in current post. The average age across all current salaried judicial office holders is 60 years. By role, average age ranges from 56 years for Summary Sheriffs, to 66.5 years for Senators.

4.199 In 2024-25, eight salaried judges retired with an average retirement age of 67 years. Since 2010, the average age at retirement has ranged between 62 and 68, with an average across this period of 65.

4.200 Of those who retired in 2025, six – all sheriffs – returned to sit in retirement. In 2024-25, judges sitting in retirement worked approximately 2,500 days – an increase of approximately 100 days compared to the previous year.

¹⁸⁸ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 130 and 86.

Table 4.22: Number of days sat by retired and fee-paid judges, 2021-22 to August 2025

Office held	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	April to August 2025
Retired Sheriff	1,962	2,496	2,396	2,478	923
Part-time Sheriff	1,346	1,957	1,685	1,052	558
Part-time Summary Sheriff	94	1,034	1,426	758	302
Total	3,402	5,487	5,507	4,288	1,783

Source: Judicial Office for Scotland.

4.201 We have not received data identifying the number of salaried judges who have part-time working arrangements – however, a comparison of headcount versus FTE (see Table 4.4) indicates that part-time working arrangements are present at almost all levels of the Scottish judiciary, and are most common amongst Sheriffs, Summary Sheriffs, and judicial officers in the Land Court and Lands Tribunal.

4.202 In the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey, 40 per cent said that the ability to work part-time would make them more likely to remain in the judiciary until their mandatory retirement age.¹⁸⁹

Northern Ireland

4.203 The average age of salaried judges in Northern Ireland varies by salary group, ranging from 48 years in Salary Group 6 to 68 years in Salary Group 3. Across all salaried judicial office holders, the overall average age is 59 years, compared to 63 for fee-paid judges.

4.204 In 2024-25, four salaried judges retired, with an average age on departure of 67 years. Since 2011-12, 50 judges have retired, with an average age on departure of 66.6 years.

4.205 Three of the four judges who retired in 2024-25 returned to sit in retirement. At 31 March 2025, there were a total of seven judges sitting in retirement – three of whom were serving as Lord/Lady Justices of Appeal. We have not received information on the number of sitting days completed by judges sitting in retirement.

4.206 There are only three members of the salaried judiciary in Northern Ireland with part-time working arrangements – each working between 0.5 and 0.6 FTE in Salary Group 5.1 or Salary Group 7 roles.

4.207 In the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey, 34 per cent said that the ability to work part-time would make them more likely to remain in the judiciary until their mandatory retirement age.¹⁹⁰

4.208 We have not received information on tenure in post or as a judicial office holder for Northern Ireland.

UK Supreme Court

4.209 In written evidence, the President notes that the real-terms decrease in Justices' salary over time and the growing differential between Justices' salaries and senior members of the legal profession can affect retention – commenting that "*justices can earn a multiple of their salary*

¹⁸⁹ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 64.

¹⁹⁰ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 55.

*by retiring before the mandatory retirement age and undertaking work in the private sector and on courts overseas”.*¹⁹¹

4.210 We have not, however, received specific evidence of current retention challenges. We understand that of the ten most recent retirements from the Court, only four left office more than six months before the applicable mandatory retirement age – however, these include four of the five most recent departures.¹⁹²

Morale

4.211 The most comprehensive information on judicial morale remains the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey (JAS), which was published in February 2025. This survey is published in three separate volumes: England & Wales courts, coroners and UK tribunals; Judiciary of Scotland; and Northern Ireland judiciary. The 2024 edition marks the fifth time the survey has been run over a 10-year period, allowing trends to be identified across the respective judiciaries.

England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

4.212 The 2024 JAS for England and Wales achieved a very high response rate, with 94 per cent of salaried court judges and 95 per cent of salaried tribunal judges taking part.¹⁹³

4.213 Key insights include:

- 85 per cent of salaried judges felt a strong personal attachment to being a member of the judiciary, and 93 per cent felt they provide an important service to society.¹⁹⁴
- While 57 per cent of salaried judges felt valued by the public, only 9 per cent felt valued by the Government and 10 per cent by the media.¹⁹⁵
- 52 per cent of salaried judges said their case workload over the last 12 months was too high, ranging from 60 per cent of Circuit Judges to 2 per cent of Court of Appeal Judges.¹⁹⁶
- Views were very mixed on the amount and quality of administrative support, with 45 per cent of salaried judges rating the amount of support as poor or unacceptable.¹⁹⁷
- 50 per cent of salaried judges rated court maintenance as poor or unacceptable, and only 21 per cent thought it was good or excellent.¹⁹⁸
- Nearly all salaried judges (93 per cent) felt respected by judicial colleagues at court, and most (85 per cent) felt respected by their immediate leadership judge. However, only 53 per cent felt respected by the judiciary’s senior leadership, while 20 per cent did not.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹¹ Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 2.

¹⁹² “Former Justices” The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom <<https://supremecourt.uk/former-justices>>.

¹⁹³ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 2.

¹⁹⁴ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 22.

¹⁹⁵ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 117.

¹⁹⁶ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 30.

¹⁹⁷ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 38.

¹⁹⁸ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 34.

¹⁹⁹ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 120.

- Just 42 per cent of salaried judges agreed that they were paid a reasonable salary for the work they do.²⁰⁰
- On remote hearings, 71 per cent of salaried judges felt the amount of time spent was about right, while 22 per cent felt it was too much. By judicial role, 33 per cent of salaried Employment Judges and 31 per cent of Circuit Judges sitting in crime said they were spending too much time in remote hearings.²⁰¹

4.214 These findings highlight persistent concerns about workload, pay, and working conditions, alongside strong collegial respect and attachment to judicial service.

Scotland

4.215 The 2024 JAS for Scotland also received a very high response rate, with 96 per cent of salaried judges taking part.²⁰²

4.216 Key insights include:

- 82 per cent of salaried judges felt a strong personal attachment to being a member of the judiciary, and 88 per cent felt they provide an important service to society.²⁰³
- 60 per cent of salaried judges felt valued by the public, while 18 per cent felt valued by the UK Government, 19 per cent by the Scottish Government, and only 12 per cent by the media.²⁰⁴
- 34 per cent of salaried judges thought that their case workload over the last 12 months had been too high and 19 per cent that their non-case workload had been too high.²⁰⁵
- Views were mixed on the amount and quality of administrative support.²⁰⁶
- Most felt that the physical quality and maintenance of court buildings was “Excellent/good” or “Adequate”.²⁰⁷
- 90 per cent of salaried judges felt they are treated with respect by judicial colleagues at court and 79 per cent felt they are treated with respect by their immediate leadership judge. 53 per cent felt they were treated with respect by the senior leadership in the judiciary while 16 per cent did not.²⁰⁸
- 46 per cent of salaried judges agreed that they were paid a reasonable salary for the work they do.²⁰⁹
- 77 per cent of salaried judges felt that about the right amount of time is being spent in remote hearings, with sentiment on the standard of support and resources largely

²⁰⁰ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 17.

²⁰¹ Written submission 017 (Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales) at 44-45.

²⁰² Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 3.

²⁰³ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 19.

²⁰⁴ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 24.

²⁰⁵ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 26-27.

²⁰⁶ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 34.

²⁰⁷ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 31.

²⁰⁸ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 80.

²⁰⁹ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 14.

positive. This compares to two years ago where views on digital working were generally negative.²¹⁰

Northern Ireland

4.217 The 2024 JAS for Northern Ireland also received a very high response rate, with 91 per cent of salaried judges taking part.²¹¹

4.218 Key insights include:

- 84 per cent of salaried judges felt a strong personal attachment to being a member of the judiciary, and 93 per cent felt they provide an important service to society.²¹²
- Only 50 per cent of salaried judges felt valued by the public. Very few felt valued by the media (13 per cent), the Northern Ireland Executive (12 per cent) or the UK Government (12 per cent).²¹³
- 57 per cent of salaried judges said their case workload over the previous 12 months was too high, and 20 per cent said their non-case workload was too high.²¹⁴
- Only 30 per cent of salaried judges said the amount of administrative support available to them was “excellent” or “good”, and 50 per cent rated the quality of support as “excellent” or “good”.²¹⁵
- Only 46 per cent of salaried judges rated the physical quality of buildings as “excellent” or “good”, and just 36 per cent said the maintenance of buildings was “excellent” or “good”. Physical quality of personal workspace was higher at 56 per cent.²¹⁶
- 97 per cent of salaried judges felt they were treated with respect by judicial colleagues at court, and 86 per cent felt respected by their immediate leadership judge. 66 per cent of salaried judges felt respected by the senior judiciary, while 12 per cent did not.²¹⁷
- Only 24 per cent of salaried judges agreed they were paid a reasonable salary for the work they do. 63 per cent said salary issues were affecting their morale.²¹⁸
- Most salaried judges (87 per cent) felt they were spending about the right amount of time in remote hearings.²¹⁹
- A majority of salaried judges were concerned about their personal security in court (54 per cent) and out of court (61 per cent).²²⁰

²¹⁰ Written submission 026 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Scotland) at 38-41.

²¹¹ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 3.

²¹² Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 19.

²¹³ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 23-24.

²¹⁴ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 25.

²¹⁵ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 29.

²¹⁶ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 30.

²¹⁷ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 67.

²¹⁸ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 42-43.

²¹⁹ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 37.

²²⁰ Written submission 031 (Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland) at 38.

UK Supreme Court

4.219 We have not received any specific evidence on judicial morale for the UK Supreme Court. Justices of the Supreme Court were not included in the 2024 Judicial Attitude Survey.

4.220 In written evidence, the President comments that *“the drop in real income levels remains a feature that may become a serious factor affecting morale”*.²²¹ He notes also that *“if the differential between private practice and the senior judiciary continues to grow ever larger, particularly when combined with the real term drop in Justices’ pay, this may cause difficulties in attracting and retaining the very best people”*.²²²

Diversity

England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals)

4.221 The latest judicial diversity statistics for England and Wales (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals) were published in July 2025. This data shows that at 1 April 2025, 44 per cent of all judges – 39 per cent of courts judges and 54 per cent of tribunal judges – were female, continuing the gradual upward trend over the past decade. Representation of ethnic minorities also continues to rise slowly, with 11 per cent of salaried court judges and 14 per cent of salaried tribunal judges identify as from an ethnic minority background, compared with 6 and 9 per cent respectively a decade ago.²²³

4.222 Women remain less well represented in the senior court judiciary, particularly at High Court and Court of Appeal level, where proportions are significantly lower than the overall average. There is no evidence of disparity between women and men in judicial selection exercises. Ethnic minority representation has improved but remains concentrated in tribunals rather than courts.

4.223 Professional background data continues to show disparity between solicitors and barristers in judicial selection exercises. Solicitors account for a much higher proportion of applications but a lower proportion of recommendations. Tribunal judges are still more likely to have a non-barrister background than court judges, broadly consistent with previous years.

Scotland

4.224 As of September 2025, 68.5 per cent of the salaried Scottish judiciary were male, and 31.5 per cent were female. Gender diversity is limited in the Supreme Courts, where 74 per cent of Senators are male and 26 per cent are female. Comparatively, gender diversity is better amongst Summary Sheriffs, where 52.6 per cent are male and 47.4 per cent are female.

4.225 We have not received data of sufficient quality to comment upon ethnicity or other diversity characteristics.

Northern Ireland

4.226 As of 31 March 2025, 60.2 per cent of the salaried judiciary were male, and 39.8 per cent were female.

²²¹ Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 2.

²²² Written submission 008 (UK Supreme Court) at 3.

²²³ See “Diversity of the judiciary: 2025 statistics” (23 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2025-statistics>.

4.227 Female representation is highest in Salary Group 7, where women account for 52.7 per cent of judges currently in post. This compares with 27.8 per cent of County Court Judges (Salary Group 5.2) and 10 per cent in the High Court Judges (Salary Group 4).

4.228 We have not received data of sufficient quality to comment upon ethnicity or other diversity characteristics.

UK Supreme Court

4.229 We have not received information on diversity for the UK Supreme Court.

Chapter 5

Senior Leaders in the NHS in England

Summary

Our remit

- 5.1 The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has asked us to make pay recommendations for Very Senior Managers (VSMs) and Executive and Senior Managers (ESMs) in the NHS in England. This year, he has not asked us to review any specific aspects of reward for NHS leaders.²²⁴
- 5.2 Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this Report set out the economic context and the specific economic factors we take into account in recommending a pay award for VSMs and ESMs.

Evidence

- 5.3 We received evidence from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS England (NHSE), NHS Providers (NHSP), and Managers in Partnership (MiP). We also hosted discussion groups with senior health leaders and remuneration committee chairs. We thank all who gave evidence for their contributions.
- 5.4 Detailed data and evidence can be found in the Annex to this Chapter.

Main themes and recommendations

- 5.5 The leadership of the NHS remains under great operational pressure, exacerbated by continued industrial action. Challenges include raising productivity and reducing waiting lists, in a context of significant organisational changes. These include the abolition of NHSE, a reduction in the number and remit of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and mergers of trusts into larger or 'multi-trust' regional organisations.
- 5.6 Alongside these challenges, the Government has set out a changed focus for the NHS, emphasising prevention, care closer to home and digital transformation. These challenges and changes are affecting the nature of NHS leadership roles and require some new skills and capabilities.
- 5.7 In May last year the Government introduced a badly needed new pay framework for VSMs. Its initial reception appears positive but it is too early fully to assess its impact. It will be important to carry out a careful evaluation by its first anniversary.
- 5.8 The pay framework for ESMs is very out of date. In recent years both the ESM and VSM pay frameworks have been unfortunate illustrations of the need to ensure pay frameworks remain current. We repeat our 2025 recommendation that the ESM pay framework should be withdrawn.
- 5.9 The Government has also introduced a 'performance league' approach, ranking NHS organisations, through the NHS Oversight Framework. This includes linkage of senior pay to trust performance. Further work is needed to make sure the linkage has the desired effects and avoids unintended consequences.

²²⁴ See Appendix F.

- 5.10 The ability of challenged trusts to attract and retain very able leaders is a continuing concern. The VSM pay framework allows for two years' protection from negative effects of weak organisational performance on recruited leaders' pay but whether this improves recruitment should be monitored closely. Other measures may also be needed, for example to support career prospects of leaders who take on these challenges.
- 5.11 The persistent high turnover of leaders, particularly CEOs, remains a drag on the performance of the NHS.
- 5.12 So too does disappointing productivity. Understanding and measuring productivity in the NHS is more developed than for our other remit groups. However, further work is needed including on how leaders can best, and best be incentivised, to support productivity.
- 5.13 We do not have the clarity we would expect as to whether there is a sufficient pipeline of leaders to manage the NHS in the next five years. There is general recognition of the need for systematic leadership development, including full implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 Messenger Review and the establishment of a Leadership College. These changes need to happen without any further delay and be supported by clear output measures.
- 5.14 We have previously noted that it is not clear where the strategic overview and decision-making for senior NHS reward sits between the DHSC and NHSE, nor what is the precise demarcation of responsibilities between these central organisations and local remuneration committees. With the merger of NHSE into the DHSC the opportunity should be taken to clarify these governance questions.
- 5.15 This clarification should include ensuring that there is enhanced support for local remuneration committees, who have an important role in applying the new VSM pay the framework. We recommend that the DHSC develop and deliver a programme of training and knowledge-sharing for chairs of remuneration committees and for chief people officers.
- 5.16 There are some specific reward issues affecting this leadership group. These include difficulty in recruiting and retaining certain skills and VSM roles not always being attractive to Agenda for Change (AfC) Band 8s and 9s – a recurring theme in our discussion groups and written evidence. The DHSC told us there is scope to offer pay increases to these applicants. It should spell this out as transparently as possible and ensure that it is understood by remuneration committees.
- 5.17 However, overall it is the demands and challenges summarised above, rather than inappropriate pay levels, which are the principal pressures on NHS leaders. We recommend a pay increase of 3.0 per cent for all VSMs and ESMs from 1 April 2026.

Government response to our 2025 recommendations

- 5.18 Last year, we recommended a pay increase of 3.25 per cent for all VSMs and ESMs from 1 April 2025. We are pleased that the Government accepted our recommendation.
- 5.19 We also recommended that an additional 0.5 per cent of the VSM and ESM pay bill in each employing organisation be used to address specific pay anomalies, targeted at mitigating the effects of pay overlaps with the AfC pay scale. The Government rejected this recommendation on the basis that an award of 3.25 per cent *“well compensates VSMs and ESMs for the work*

*that they do, and because previous measures of this sort have not seen widespread use by employers”.*²²⁵

5.20 We make a recommendation to address employers’ inadequate awareness of this issue at [5.73] below.

5.21 We also recommended withdrawal of the ESM pay framework. The Government deferred its substantive response to this recommendation. The Secretary of State said he will be considering it in light of the abolition of NHSE and the consolidation of arm’s length bodies (ALBs).

Context

5.22 In evidence, HM Treasury set out the fiscal position and its view of the economic climate in which we are making our recommendations, including its expectation of falling pay settlements and inflation (see detailed discussion in Chapter 2).²²⁶ The DHSC’s written evidence said it had developed financial and delivery plans which allow for a pay uplift of 2.5 per cent. It said that a higher award would entail trade-offs which inevitably have an impact on healthcare delivery.²²⁷

5.23 In discussion groups, and in evidence, we again heard of intense pressures on NHS leaders. In November 2025 the operational waiting list stood at 7.3 million, down from 7.6 million a year earlier but up from 4.5 million in July 2019 before the pandemic.²²⁸

5.24 There are demanding targets for financial and delivery performance. £2.2bn of deficit support funding is needed to achieve balanced plans across the NHS for this financial year.²²⁹ Industrial action continues to affect the service. In June 2025 the number of appointments rescheduled since 2022 because of strike action had reached at least 1.7m.²³⁰

5.25 In addition, major organisational changes are taking place. These include the abolition of NHSE and its merger into the DHSC, reductions in the role and number of ICBs, and a continuing shift towards larger ‘multi-trust’ organisations.

5.26 With its 10 Year Health Plan for England, published in July 2025, the Government has set the direction for the NHS, focusing on shifts to:²³¹

- Preventing illness rather than treating sickness.
- Delivering care closer to home rather than in hospitals.
- Digital transformation of service delivery.

²²⁵ HC Deb 22 May 2025 vol 767 HCWS663. Available at <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-05-22/debates/25052261000024/NHSWorkforce>>.

²²⁶ Written submission 001 (HM Treasury).

²²⁷ Written submission 038 (Department of Health and Social Care) at 14.

²²⁸ Written submission 038 (Department of Health and Social Care) at 10.

²²⁹ Written submission 038 (Department of Health and Social Care) at 7.

²³⁰ Siva Anadaciva “What impact do strikes have on the NHS?” (14 August 2025) The King’s Fund <www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/blogs/counting-cost-nhs-strikes>.

²³¹ “10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future” (30 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>.

- 5.27 In June 2025, the Government published the new NHS Oversight Framework (NOF) 2025/26.²³² In September 2025, it published league tables derived from assessment of NHS trust performance against this framework.²³³ The tables provide a basis to compare trusts' performance. The average of all NOF metric scores is used to provide a ranked order of trusts. The trusts are placed in one of five segments within the overall table. A trust's segment largely depends on its performance relative to other trusts rather than its absolute performance. We comment at [5.33] below on the potentially arbitrary implications of this.
- 5.28 The metrics used to assess performance of health organisations include measures intended to capture productivity improvements. Improving productivity is key to the Government's plans for the NHS. Under the 2025 Spending Review, the NHS is expected to deliver ambitious productivity targets of 2 per cent per year.²³⁴
- 5.29 We heard in evidence that considerable work has gone into measuring health service productivity, albeit with caveats that metrics are more developed in the acute sector than elsewhere and measures of increased organisational outputs are not always indicative of improved performance. We think this important and the Review Body's consideration of productivity is discussed in Chapter 2.

Changed VSM pay system

- 5.30 The VSM pay framework, published in May 2025, is intended to allow additional rewards for the strongest performers and withholding of uplifts for weaker performance.²³⁵ This is to be achieved, at least in part, by linking eligibility for pay uplifts to the organisation's place in the league tables mentioned above.
- 5.31 The intention is that leaders of trusts in segment 5 of the NOF-derived league table will not receive an annual pay increase. In its written evidence, the DHSC said it will consider extending the new performance-related pay provisions in 2026 to 2027 to organisations who fall into segments 3 and 4. This will affect pay awards for VSMs and members of Executive Teams.
- 5.32 Remit group members expressed concerns about how equitably the new approach will work. There were reservations about the linkage of individuals' pay to the organisation's league table segment. In evidence and discussion groups we also heard that there should be a place for team-based performance reward because organisational improvements are often the result of team rather than individual efforts.
- 5.33 We also heard worries that institutional and budgetary constraints would preclude the organisational changes necessary for a trust ever to move above segment 3 in the performance tables. Conversely, where managers are able to improve trust performance they could find their segmentation unchanged or, in theory, worse because of greater improvements elsewhere. This has the potential to be both unfair and at odds with the aim of tying leaders' pay to the performance of their own organisation.

²³² "NHS Oversight Framework 2025/26" (1 December 2025) NHS England <www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/nhs-oversight-framework-2025-26>.

²³³ "NHS oversight framework – NHS trust performance league tables process and results" (11 December 2025) NHS England <www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-oversight-framework-nhs-trust-performance-league-tables-process-and-results>.

²³⁴ Written submission 038 (Department of Health and Social Care) at 5.

²³⁵ "Very senior managers (VSM) pay framework" NHS England <www.england.nhs.uk/leaders/vsm-pay-framework>.

- 5.34 Linking pay to organisational performance may increase the incentive to focus on NOF metrics. This is potentially positive but will also require careful monitoring to identify any unintended consequences or encouragement of unwanted behaviours. In oral evidence the Minister said she and the DHSC recognise this risk and described the care that has been taken in finalising the metrics.
- 5.35 For next year, we would like to hear evidence from the DHSC and reflections from leaders on the experience of implementation and lessons learned, including whether there are organisations whose segment position has been detrimentally affected because of improvements elsewhere.
- 5.36 Local remuneration committees and chief people officers have an important role under the VSM pay framework. This includes making effective use of provisions to offer premia to attract strong performers to challenged trusts, to pay bonuses of up to 10 per cent of salary to reward high performers and, for lower-paid VSM posts, to use the pay ranges to offer salaries attractive to individuals near the top of the AfC scale.
- 5.37 We note that for many VSM posts the new pay framework and pay ranges, which were conceived in 2022, need to reflect the rapidly evolving organisational changes within the NHS. The reduction in number, and refocusing of the role, of ICBs requires consequential adjustments to pay ranges for VSMs in ICBs, of whom there were more than 700 in June 2025.
- 5.38 In addition, the VSM framework needs to respond to the amalgamation of trusts into larger regional units. Amalgamation is creating organisations with turnover significantly above £1 billion, the upper end of the VSM framework scales, and affecting the VSM roles within these organisations.
- 5.39 As well as these adjustments, to take account of changes such as trust turnover or ICB population sizes (to which pay is linked), it is important that change is managed so as to retain and motivate these leaders, and to ensure that talented individuals are attracted to ICB roles in the future.

Key points from the evidence

- 5.40 In discussion groups and evidence there was agreement among stakeholders that senior health leaders' pay is broadly at the appropriate levels. In the 2024 NHS Staff Survey, 84 per cent of VSM respondents were satisfied with their level of pay.

Recruitment and retention

- 5.41 NHSP's remuneration survey suggests that, overall, recruitments attract similar or fewer applicants suitable for shortlisting than they did a year earlier.²³⁶ It is important that the assessment of the VSM framework's impact should include monitoring the extent to which recruitments fail to attract appointable candidates.
- 5.42 There can be difficulties in filling some roles such as finance and digital, where skills are in demand in other sectors, and in attracting applicants near the top of the AfC scale to VSM posts.
- 5.43 We continue to observe high levels of churn and inexperience in CEO roles. NHSP's remuneration survey, sent to all trusts in July/August 2025, found that 64 per cent of CEOs were in their first CEO role, up from 58 per cent a year earlier. 25 per cent had been in post

²³⁶ Written submission 039 (NHS Providers) at 12.

for 12 months or less (31 per cent a year earlier).²³⁷ These are roles where consistency and stability are particularly important.

- 5.44 In discussion groups and oral evidence, we heard a continuing concern about attracting high-calibre candidates to challenged trusts. Some of these related to non-pay factors such as effects on career progression, professional learning and risk of unfair damage to reputation.
- 5.45 The VSM pay framework contains provisions intended to address the attractiveness of these roles, notably scope for a premium on salary of up to 15 per cent and protection against withholding of pay uplifts because of the organisation's league table segment for the first two years in role.
- 5.46 It will be important to check their impact on applicant fields closely to determine whether further pay and/or non-pay steps are needed.
- 5.47 NHSP's remuneration survey suggests that there has been little change in vacancy durations (for three key executive director roles, 25 per cent of trusts reported vacancies of over a month) or use of interims, who occupied 7 per cent of executive director posts.²³⁸
- 5.48 In discussion groups and evidence from NHSP we heard that health leadership is continuing to evolve. Mergers are creating more 'multi-trust' leadership roles. The Government's direction for health care, with shifts to prevention and to treatment closer to home, requires increased working across organisations and care sectors. It creates larger scopes and span of control for some roles with a possible decrease in scope for other roles as additional management hierarchy is added. The pay framework needs to evolve smoothly to reflect these changes.
- 5.49 We also heard fears about the NHS losing talented leaders through the changes to ICBs. It is important to manage this risk, and of loss of leaders in the NHSE changes. This could exacerbate the pressures, already a source of concern, on the NHS's supply of leadership talent.

Central pay approvals

- 5.50 In previous reports we have commented on the adverse effect on recruitment of long waits for central approval of pay cases. We welcomed the Government's acceptance earlier this year of our recommendation that all pay cases should be turned round within four weeks.
- 5.51 In discussion groups we heard that pay cases may still take longer than four weeks. In oral evidence NHSP said pay which is compliant with the relevant framework should not require central approval simply because it is above the £170,000 threshold.
- 5.52 We sympathise with this view. However, the DHSC told us that it remains Government policy that salaries above the threshold require central approval. They also said that there were no current cases exceeding the four-week turnaround time and delegations had been put in place to expedite approval decisions. We welcome this improvement.

²³⁷ Written submission 039 (NHS Providers) at 11.

²³⁸ Written submission 039 (NHS Providers) at 12.

Talent pipeline

- 5.53 All stakeholders supported completing the full implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 Messenger Review of leadership across health and social care.²³⁹ We agree. There has been progress, for example in developing a leadership and management framework. However, current talent development arrangements are too piecemeal and should be replaced with a national system, recognised by all stakeholders. The Government intends that a new leadership college will play an important part.
- 5.54 Accordingly, we expect the evidence for our next report to describe the completed implementation of the Messenger recommendations and substantial progress on establishing the leadership college.
- 5.55 Since our last report the proportion of health leaders aged 55 or over has edged up a little, to 40.3 per cent. Half of CEOs are 55 or older. We remain concerned that the pipeline of future leaders may not be strong enough to replace them with the quantity and quality of leadership the NHS will need. We recognise much work is done at a trust and regional level on leadership development, but are concerned that there appears to be no overall understanding of the sum total of this work and whether or not a pipeline of senior leaders exist to meet the leadership requirements of the NHS.

Attractiveness of leadership roles

- 5.56 In discussion groups, and in evidence from NHSP and MiP, we again heard that individuals on AfC choose not to apply for VSM roles because the pay uplift would not match the increased demands and accountability.
- 5.57 Three of the five VSM pay ranges for directors reporting to the CEO start below the AfC Band 9 maximum of £125,637. In our last Report, we noted that in 2023-24 NHSE estimated that up to 9 per cent of VSMs had basic pay which was less than the top of the AfC Band 9. That percentage may have risen since then, because in the subsequent two years there have been annual pay increases of 5.5 per cent and 3.6 per cent for AfC, and 5 per cent and 3.25 per cent for VSMs.
- 5.58 The DHSC told us in oral evidence that the new VSM pay framework allows a meaningful uplift to be offered to anyone near the top of the AfC pay range. In theory, that may be a solution. In practice, the evidence is that the problem of weak incentives for promotion from AfC has not been solved. The Government's statement that, in the past, employers have not made widespread use of available anomalies pots to reduce overlaps is a further indication that these issues remain.
- 5.59 In our last report, we said that the bottom of ranges in the new VSM pay framework is too low to address this issue. That remains our view.
- 5.60 We heard, again, that possible personal jeopardy reduces the attractiveness of leadership roles and can sap the morale of those in these posts. There is a distinction between leaders being held accountable, which no stakeholder questioned, and unfair media or public criticism, which can include personal abuse on social media. When that occurs VSMs and

²³⁹ Gordon Messenger and Linda Pollard *Leadership for a collaborative and inclusive future* (8 June 2022). Available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-social-care-review-leadership-for-a-collaborative-and-inclusive-future.

ESMs need to be able to look to the DHSC and NHS leadership, including Ministers, for full support.

Morale and motivation

- 5.61 We are completing and submitting this Report earlier in the year than our 2025 Report. This means we do not have evidence from the NHS staff survey from autumn 2025.
- 5.62 In discussion groups we heard of impacts on morale of unrelenting intense pressures on leaders. In written evidence, NHSP reported challenged morale and increased anxiety. MiP's survey, which had 68 respondents in our remit group, found weaker morale than a year ago across a range of indicators.
- 5.63 In addition, we are concerned that the continued high turnover of leaders may be indicative of weak morale and lack of organisational talent development.

Diversity

- 5.64 The senior health leadership group is more diverse by gender and ethnicity than our other remit groups. This reflects sustained hard work across the NHS. In evidence we heard some concerns that the merger of NHSE and the DHSC, and loss of posts, should not involve losing the capacity to continue to drive progress on diversity.

Pay recommendation

Government's proposal

- 5.65 The Government has recommended that the pay award should not exceed 2.5 per cent.²⁴⁰

Pay considerations

- 5.66 The ESM framework is very out of date and not fit for purpose. Besides NHSE, ESMs lead other critically important health and care services and the obsolescence of their reward framework should not sit in a 'pending' tray, waiting on the NHSE/DHSC merger. We repeat our recommendation that the Government should withdraw the ESM pay framework. If it is not able to do so before the start of the 2026/27 pay year the 2025/26 pay uplift should be consolidated for all ESMs, to avoid this group being disadvantaged.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the ESM pay framework is withdrawn.

- 5.67 It is too early to assess the impact of the VSM pay framework or the linkage of individuals' pay to the organisation's league table segment position. However, our initial observations, which we intend to be helpful in supporting an early evaluation of the impact of the framework, are:
- Like its predecessor, the VSM framework's pay ranges are related to organisation turnover, or population size for ICBs. We understand the challenges of finding a basis which is both more nuanced and sufficiently robust but we remain concerned that,

²⁴⁰ Written submission 038 (Department of Health and Social Care) at 14.

because a role's challenge depends on more than organisation size, the ranges may undervalue or overvalue some VSM posts.

- VSMs' contracts of employment are with the organisation for which they work. We would like greater clarity on the interaction between provisions in the pay framework, particularly for withholding pay uplifts, and VSMs contracts of employment – how far do these contracts leave remuneration committees obliged, or possibly even able, to withhold pay uplifts where, for example, an organisation is in segment 5?
- A mechanism may be needed so that there is consistency and equity across senior leaders, since pay decisions are made by remuneration committees at local level. We favour guidance for remuneration committees and light-touch monitoring of their implementation of the framework.
- It is not yet clear whether the two-year period when there may be a 15 per cent base pay uplift, and protection against withholding of salary awards, will be enough to incentivise able leaders to move to challenged trusts.
- It appears that there are limits to the number of trusts that can be placed in the higher segments of the league tables. How this is fair, and what is its rationale, should be spelt out.

- 5.68 A full evaluation of the VSM framework, encompassing all the aspects mentioned in this Chapter, should take place by the framework's first anniversary. We expect the DHSC's evidence for our next report to include the findings of this evaluation.
- 5.69 There are non-pay issues which are still to be addressed to secure full value from the taxpayer's spending on senior health leaders' remuneration. In particular, action is needed to understand and address the causes of continuing high turnover of leaders, particularly CEOs. This level of turnover is a brake on the effective running of the NHS.
- 5.70 The merger of NHSE into the DHSC presents another risk to leadership effectiveness because of its potential to divert their time and focus into dealing with uncertainty and impacts of the change. The merger should be completed as swiftly as possible so as to mitigate this risk. One success criterion for the merger should be achieving clarity on where accountabilities lie for senior reward, which has not been fully clear under the institutional landscape to date.
- 5.71 Noting those non-pay issues, the data on recruitment, retention and morale does not indicate that, overall, the pay of NHS leaders is at an inappropriate level.
- 5.72 As indicated at [5.17] above, and for the reasons set out across this Chapter, we recommend a consolidated pay award for ESMs and VSMs of 3.0 per cent.

Recommendation 6

We recommend a consolidated pay increase of 3.0 per cent for ESMs and VSMs from 1 April 2026.

- 5.73 The effectiveness of the VSM framework depends, in part, on wise use of its flexibilities at local level. This means that the decisions of remuneration committees and chief people officers will be very important.

- 5.74 In addition, we remain concerned that there should be a solution to the problem of attracting individuals at the top of the AfC scale to VSM posts. The Government's statement that, previously, anomalies posts have not seen widespread use suggests insufficient focus on the problem. The DHSC told us last year's VSM pay framework allows scope to offer pay increases to these applicants. It should ensure that this is understood by remuneration committees. We recommend training to correct the possible shortfall in awareness of a need for action.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that before July 2026 the DHSC arranges delivery of a programme of training and knowledge-sharing for chairs of remuneration committees and chief people officers on applying the VSM framework and performance award principles, including scope to ensure posts are financially attractive to individuals near the top of the Agenda for Change pay scale.

Looking ahead

- 5.75 For our 2027 Report we would like the DHSC's evidence to include conclusions from a full evaluation of the impact of the VSM pay framework, which should take place by the framework's first anniversary, including:
- The extent of use of premia to attract leaders to lower-performing trusts, and of use of bonuses for high-performing VSMs.
 - How applicant fields for VSM roles, and numbers and quality of VSMs who leave, in lower-performing trusts compare to those under the previous framework and whether further pay and/or non-pay measures may also be needed to secure good candidate fields.
 - The number and percentage of VSMs not receiving the annual pay uplift.
 - Data on change, if any, in appetite of AfC colleagues to apply for VSM posts.
- 5.76 We would also like to receive:
- A report on the delivery of training to remuneration committees and chief people officers (Recommendation 7 above).
 - An estimate of VSM numbers which, for the salary threshold part of the assessment of VSM numbers, uses a figure revised upwards from £110,000 to a level which reflects pay increases since the £110,00 figure was first adopted.
 - Evidence on the future remuneration of ESM roles including plans for individuals currently on ESM terms.
 - An evaluation of the impact of the NOF-derived league tables and of the linkage of individuals' pay to their organisation's segment position.
 - An assessment of the effects, including any that are unwanted, of metrics intended to capture productivity.

- Details of progress on, and impacts of, the abolition of NHSE and the changed number and role of ICBs, including adjustment of the pay ranges for ICB VSMs.
- An assessment of leadership strength against the ten-year plan objectives, progress on completing implementation of the recommendations of the Messenger Review and establishing the leadership college and the expected impact of these.
- Evidence on where accountability for a holistic approach to senior reward now sits.

Annex: Data and evidence

- 5.77 We received a mix of written and oral evidence from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE), NHS Providers (NHSP), and Managers in Partnership (MiP). We held two discussion groups – one with members of the remit group and one with remuneration committee chairs. We visited several NHS organisations in different parts of the country. We appreciate all the contributions and insights we received. We are grateful to the DHSC and NHSE for their work in improving the evidence and data they provide to us.
- 5.78 The timeline for completion of this report has entailed earlier data provision to us than in previous years. This means we have not been able to draw on the findings of the 2025 NHS Staff Survey. Some of the data on senior recruitment and retention comes from the extensive dataset provided to us by NHSE in late summer 2025, which goes up to March 2025, rather than data up to June which we have used in previous reports. Therefore, year-on-year comparisons between these datasets in our reports cannot be made on a like-for-like basis.
- 5.79 We also received NHSP’s remuneration survey, which was carried out in July and August 2025 and received responses from 132 trusts (64 per cent of all trusts in England). The survey provided evidence on the motivation and morale of senior health leaders, albeit now around six months old.
- 5.80 This year, we have increased our focus on data on productivity. We have drawn on the evidence we received and our own analysis of publicly available data. The Review Body’s thinking on productivity is set out in Chapter 2.

Workforce

- 5.81 A VSM is someone who holds an executive position on the board of an NHS trust, NHS foundation trust or ICB, or someone who, although not a board member, holds a senior position typically reporting directly to the chief executive.
- 5.82 Many standard terms and conditions for VSMs, such as annual leave and redundancy, are linked to Agenda for Change (AfC) terms and conditions. Although there is a national framework for setting VSM pay, individual VSMs are employed on local contracts. Medical directors may be employed on consultant contracts, with a pay framework and other terms subject to national collective bargaining arrangements.
- 5.83 An ESM is someone who holds an executive position in one of the DHSC’s arm’s length bodies (ALBs) or someone who, although not a board member, holds a senior position, typically reporting directly to the chief executive.
- 5.84 It is difficult to identify VSMs using national workforce data systems as staff are employed under local terms and conditions and are not separately identified in the payroll system. As there is no single way to identify VSMs, NHSE has estimated the size of this workforce using other data fields in the Electronic Staff Record (ESR), such as job role and earnings, to identify the records most likely to relate to VSMs. In this case, a proxy threshold of those earning a yearly salary greater than £110,000 was used to identify VSMs.
- 5.85 It is estimated that there were 2,844 VSMs in trusts and foundation trusts in June 2025, with a full-time equivalent of 2,681. A further 766 VSMs were working in ICBs. This represents approximately 0.2 per cent of the 1.5 million staff working in NHS providers. This is around 161 (4.7 per cent) more than this period in the previous year. This is probably because last

year's 3.25 per cent pay uplift increased the number of those above the salary threshold at which an individual is identified as a VSM.

- 5.86 There were around 502 ESM posts in health executive agencies and ALBs in June 2024. Although no new evidence is available past November 2024, we understand the number of ESM posts has remained relatively stable, and that the DHSC has not received any requests for large numbers of increase or decreases of ESMs from any of their ALBs.
- 5.87 In March 2025, VSMs were employed across 205 provider trusts and 42 ICBs. Since then, changes have been introduced which are reducing the number of ICBs to 26. The headcount number of VSMs in each trust ranged from one to 82. The median number of VSMs in a trust was 11. The vast majority of VSMs, up to 94 per cent, were on permanent contracts.
- 5.88 ESMs were employed in one of 12 ALBs, with a small number of former Public Health England ESMs employed by the DHSC. More than three-quarters of ESM roles were in NHSE. In other words the great majority of ESM roles are, presumably, to be subsumed in DHSC or abolished. The next largest employer of ESMs was the Care Quality Commission.

Diversity

- 5.89 As of June 2025, around half of senior health managers were identified as female. In the VSM cohort, 50.1 per cent were identified as female (48.7 per cent in June 2024). In the ESM cohort, 52 per cent were identified as female as of June 2024.
- 5.90 For VSMs, 13.2 per cent recorded their ethnicity as being from an ethnic minority background (13.0 per cent in June 2024). 10 per cent of ESMs recorded their ethnicity as being from an ethnic minority background in June 2024.
- 5.91 Two-fifths (40.3 per cent) of the VSM group were aged 55 and over (39.8 per cent in June 2024).
- 5.92 NHSE's March 2025 dataset reports that VSMs aged 55 and over accounted for over half of medical directors (54.0 per cent); 50.0 per cent of CEOs; 50.0 per cent of nursing directors; and 31.6 per cent of finance directors.

Pay awards

- 5.93 Last year all ESMs and all VSMs in the NHS in England received a pay increase of 3.25 per cent, in line with our recommendation.

Pay cases and pay thresholds

- 5.94 Under the current VSM framework, there is a requirement that all proposed VSM pay at or above £170,000 in NHS trusts is subject to ministerial approval (or ministerial comment in foundation trusts) before appointments are made. This is an increase from the previous threshold of £150,000. Any VSM pay proposal at or above the £170,000 threshold that adheres to the VSM pay framework can be cleared at senior official level rather than by ministers.
- 5.95 The approval process also applies where an employer proposes to pay an annual uplift which takes an individual above the threshold or band maximum.
- 5.96 ICBs are required to submit pay cases for proposed salaries for executive directors (other than for CEOs) above the agreed thresholds or £170,000, whichever is the lower (see Table 5.5).

For ICB CEOs, the threshold is the operational maximum of the relevant sized ICB – £214,115 for the smallest ICBs to £292,714 for the largest (see Table 5.4).

5.97 In 2024-25 there were 129 requests to approve salaries, or uplifts or additional payments over £150,000 for VSMs; 41 (32 per cent) related to CEOs. 96 of these requests were above the new threshold of £170,000 and of these, 39 (41 per cent) related to CEOs. (In 2023-24, there were 128 requests for approvals above the then threshold of 150,000).

Pay levels

Pay frameworks and existing pay levels

5.98 Senior health managers within our remit are currently covered by one of four pay frameworks:

- The VSM pay framework, which was published last year shortly after the completion of the 2025 SSRB Report.
- The ESM pay framework, with pay ranges set in 2016, which applies to the most senior managers in the DHSC's ALBs.
- The 2022 interim pay framework for CEOs of ICBs.
- The 2022 interim pay framework for executive directors of ICBs.

5.99 The DHSC intends to revise the ICB pay ranges to take account of the May 2025 VSM pay framework and the changes to the role and number of ICBs.

5.100 There is some pay overlap with AfC Band 9 roles, and with the doctors and dentists pay bands for medical directors.

VSMs

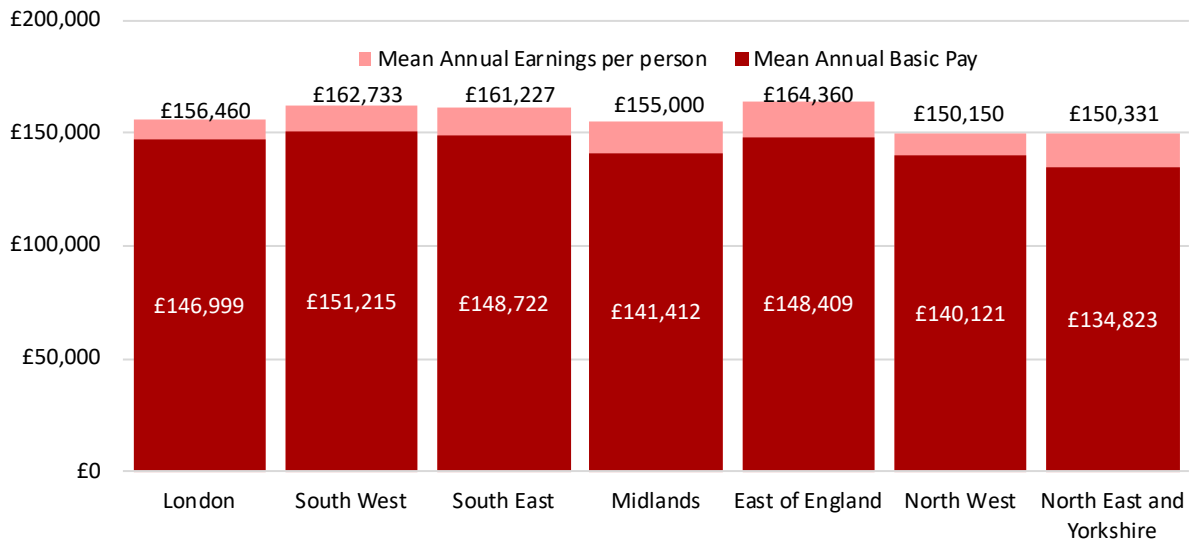
5.101 The overall estimated earnings over the year to June 2025 for VSMs in trusts across all regions was around £411 million. Average VSM basic pay per person was £144,529 (4.3 per cent higher than June 2024). It was £152,592 per FTE.

5.102 Variable pay added 8.6 per cent (£12,403) on average per person. Much of the variable pay is for local payments (£5,125), additional activities (£4,284) and medical awards (£1,591).

5.103 For female VSMs, average basic pay was 4.2 per cent lower than male average basic pay, and average total pay 5.7 per cent lower (3.9 and 4.5 per cent in June 2024). Next year's figures should show whether widening of this gap is becoming a trend.

5.104 Regional variation in VSM salaries grew from the previous year but remains small (see Figure 5.1). Average basic pay in the lowest-paying regions (the North East and Yorkshire) was 6.7 per cent below the overall average, and average basic pay in the highest-paying region (the South West) was 4.6 per cent above the average. There are no explicit London or other location allowances for the VSM group, but these are paid to staff at the top of AfC.

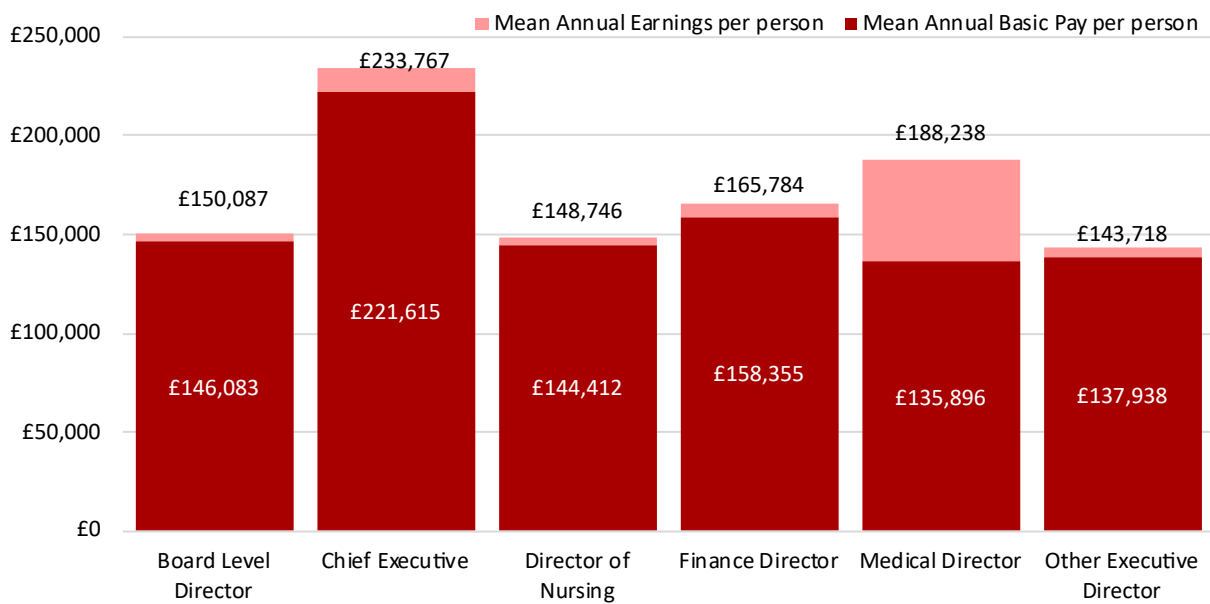
Figure 5.1: Average basic and total pay for VSMs by region, June 2025



Source: NHS England (unpublished).

Note: Board-level roles only. Due to a combination of methods in identifying VSMs within the dataset, the data may be subject to misidentification in some instances and, therefore, skewed results for some regions.

Figure 5.2: Average VSM salaries by role, June 2025



Source: NHS England (unpublished).

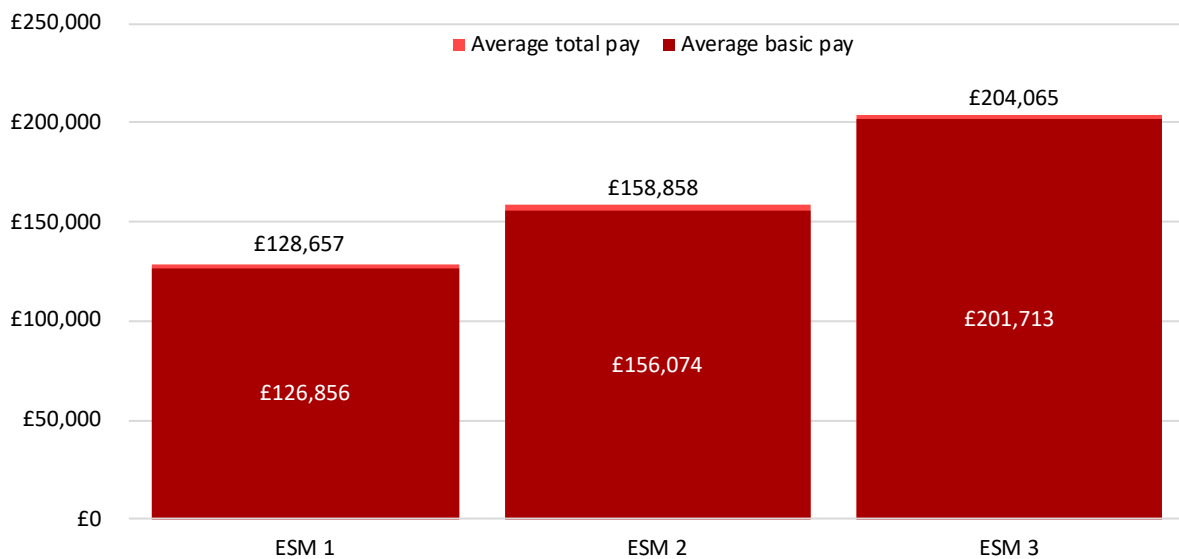
Note: Board-level roles only. Due to a combination of methods in identifying VSMs within the dataset, the data may be subject to misidentification in some instances and, therefore, skewed results for some roles. Medical directors may be on their pre-existing medical and dental salaries and terms and conditions, together with any appropriate management allowance, or they may move on to VSM terms and conditions.

ESMs

5.105 Between November 2023 and November 2024, ESM average basic pay increased by 3.2 per cent, again most likely due to the annual pay uplift. However, as fewer individuals received a consolidated award this increase is lower than the previous year. For 2025, the DHSC expect this to be an average increase of circa 3.25 per cent, as all ESMs (including those on and above band maximum) received a consolidated increase in pay.

5.106 For female ESMs, average basic pay was 1.2 per cent lower, and average total pay 2.1 per cent lower, than the male averages. This differs from last year where female basic pay was 1.1 per cent lower than the male average and average total pay was 2.7 per cent lower.

Figure 5.3: Basic and total pay by ESM grade, 2024-25



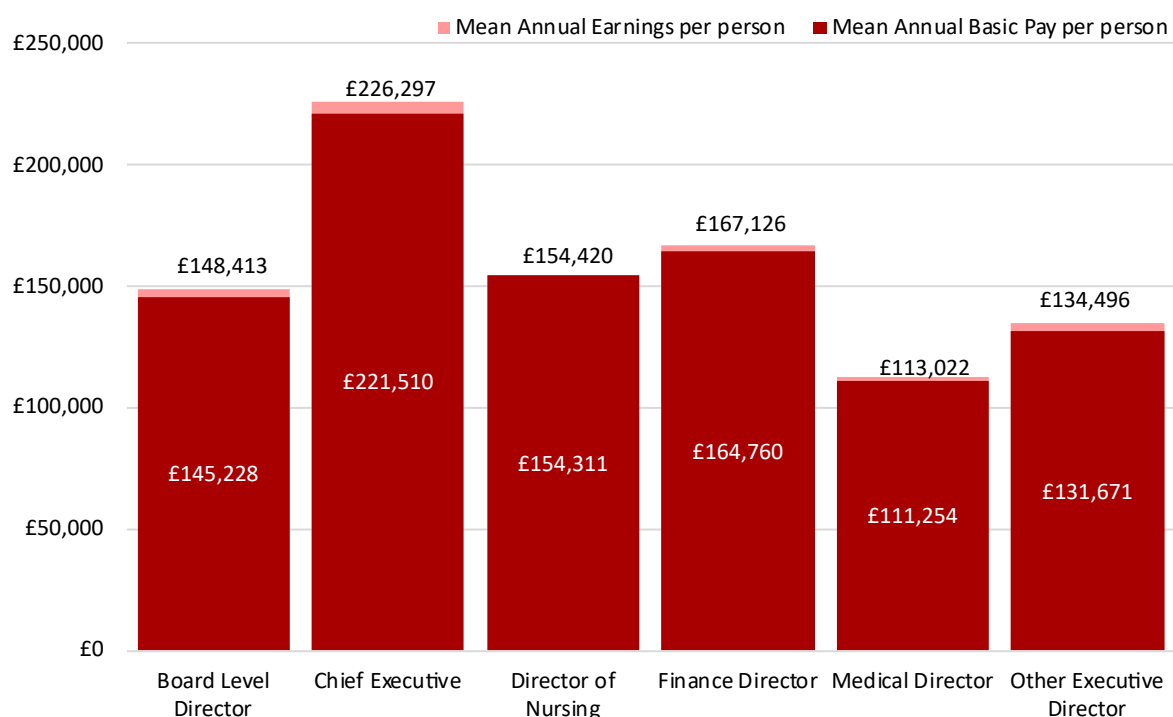
Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

ICB VSMs

5.107 The overall estimated annual basic pay over the year to June 2025 for ICB VSMs across all regions were £88 million. Average basic pay was £116,781 per person (£153,707 per FTE). This is 7.7 per cent higher than June 2024 where it was £108,388 and 1.1 per cent higher per FTE.

5.108 Variable pay added 1.7 per cent (£1,927) on average per person. Average payments included £1,030 for additional activities; £656 for local payments and £202 for other payments.

Figure 5.4: Average ICB salaries by role, June 2025



Source: NHS England (unpublished).

Note: Board-level roles only. The level of pay and earnings for medical directors may appear low as over 60 per cent of medical directors in the dataset worked 'part-time' on the ICBs, most likely alongside additional (consultancy) roles elsewhere. Due to a combination of methods in identifying VSMs within the dataset, the data may be subject to misidentification in some instances and, therefore, skewed results for some roles.

VSM pay framework

5.109 A new VSM framework was published in May last year, shortly after we submitted our 2025 Report. It does not differentiate salaries by trust type as the previous framework did.

VSM pay ranges

5.110 The VSM pay framework has five salary bands, related to organisation turnover. The salaries of VSMs under the new framework range from £100,499 at the minimum for a level 2 executive director in a small trust, up to £308,976 at the summit of the exception zone for a CEO of a trust over £1 billion.

Table 5.1: VSM Level 1: Chief executive officer (CEO) pay ranges, 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	£145,165	£200,997	£216,825
£250-£499 million	B	£156,331	£223,330	£243,929
£500-£749 million	C	£178,664	£245,663	£260,190
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£223,330	£256,830	£287,294
Over £1 billion	E	£245,663	£279,163	£308,976

Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

Table 5.2: VSM Level 2: Executive directors pay ranges (board directors/executive directors reporting to CEOs), 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	£100,499	£156,331	£184,302
£250-£499 million	B	£111,665	£167,498	£195,143
£500-£749 million	C	£122,832	£178,664	£205,984
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£133,998	£189,831	£216,825
Over £1 billion	E	£156,331	£206,581	£227,667

Source: NHS England.

Table 5.3: VSM Level 3: Executive directors pay range (Executive directors reporting to a board director), 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent
£250-£499 million	B	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent
£500-£749 million	C	£111,665	£133,998	£135,516
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£117,249	£139,582	£146,357
Over £1 billion	E	£122,832	£150,749	£157,199

Source: NHS England.

ICB pay ranges

5.111 ICB pay ranges are to be adjusted to take account of, as mentioned at [5.37], the new pay framework and changes in ICB numbers and roles. Currently, the structure for ICB CEOs is similar to that for trusts with four bands based on a weighted measure of the population of the ICB area. The salaries range from £189,722 to £314,397.

5.112 At executive director level there are also four bands, but with differentiation between three specific roles (chief finance officer, chief nursing officer and chief medical officer). All other roles are grouped together. The salaries in ICBs range from £133,890 for chief nursing officers on the minimum in group A or B, up to £197,311 for a chief finance officer on the maximum.

Table 5.4: ICB CEO pay ranges, 1 April 2025

Weighted Population	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
<1 million	A	£189,722	£214,115	£238,508
1-1.5 million	B	£205,984	£230,377	£254,770
1.5-2 million	C	£238,508	£260,190	£281,873
>2 million	D	£271,032	£292,714	£314,397

Source: NHS England.

Table 5.5: ICB executive pay ranges, 1 April 2025

Groups A and B (<1.5 million weighted population)	CFO	CNO	CMO	Other board executives
Minimum	£144,189	£133,890	£133,890	£124,133
Operational maximum	£173,460	£161,942	£161,942	£150,423
Groups C and D (>1.5 million weighted population)	CFO	CNO	CMO	Other board executives
Minimum	£166,956	£155,030	£155,030	£131,180
Operational maximum	£197,311	£184,302	£184,302	£171,292

Source: NHS England.

Views on pay

- 5.113 In the 2024 NHS Staff Survey, 84 per cent of the VSMs who answered (2,107) said that they were satisfied with their level of pay, the same as the previous year. This was 52 percentage points higher than the score across the entire NHS Staff Survey cohort which was at 32 per cent, also a similar figure to the previous year.
- 5.114 In our last Report, we observed that we have previously noted a strong sense in the NHS that individual performance pay is divisive and inappropriate, but that there may be scope to develop arrangements which incentivise team working. This year in discussion groups we heard similar views from NHS leaders. They were concerned that trusts in segments 4 and 5 will not attract VSM applicants, despite the incentive payments for such moves and protection of pay uplifts for up to two years. The disincentive effect of withholding of annual pay uplifts to leaders of these organisations in the future would be stronger.
- 5.115 We also heard from some remuneration committee chairs who thought there was a role for an appraisal-linked component in determining pay.
- 5.116 The Government's view, expressed in the new VSM pay framework with the NOF-derived trust league tables, is that VSMs' annual pay uplifts should be affected by the organisation's performance and the individual's attainment of their targets and objectives.

Overlap with Agenda for Change

- 5.117 The lack of monetary incentive to move from AfC Band 9 to take a VSM role has been highlighted to us by many stakeholders. This means the minimum salary within the pay frameworks is important, to provide appropriate headroom over AfC.
- 5.118 Within both the ESM and the new VSM pay frameworks, the bottom of the lowest range is considerably below the top of the highest AfC pay band (Band 9). The top of AfC Band 9, currently £134,103 in London (where AfC staff receive the High-Cost Area Supplement), now exceeds the top of ESM Band 1, £131,000. In trusts with annual turnover below £1 billion, the ranges for VSM Board directors reporting to the CEO start at, or well below, the top of AfC Band 9 in London.
- 5.119 In our last Report, we noted that in 2023-24 NHSE estimated that up to 9 per cent of VSMs had basic pay which was less than the top of the AfC Band 9. That percentage may have risen since then, because in the subsequent two years there have been annual pay increases of 5.5 per cent and 3.6 per cent for AfC, and 5 per cent and 3.25 per cent for VSMs.

5.120 In oral evidence, DHSC said that the VSM pay ranges allow any VSM job to be advertised at salaries which would offer an uplift above the highest AfC pay.

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment

5.121 There were 380 appointments to the cohort of VSMs in trusts between June 2024 and June 2025. These largely resulted from internal moves and moves from other trusts, as well as moves from other NHS organisations.

5.122 NHSP's remuneration survey, conducted in summer 2025, reported that 64 per cent of CEOs were in the role for the first time, a larger proportion than the 2024 survey (58 per cent). Foundation trusts were more likely to have a first-time CEO (66 per cent) than NHS trusts (58 per cent), a feature also observed in the last survey. 70 per cent of CEOs have been appointed since 2020 and 28 per cent of CEOs had been in post for a year or less, lower than last year's survey (31 per cent).

5.123 The survey also reported on shared roles. 11 per cent of executive director roles were shared with another trust (13 per cent last year). Information and technology roles were the most likely to be shared at 21 per cent, while medical, nursing, estates and operations directors were the least likely at 6 per cent. 20 per cent of CEO roles were shared this year, compared to 22 per cent last year and 14 per cent the year before.

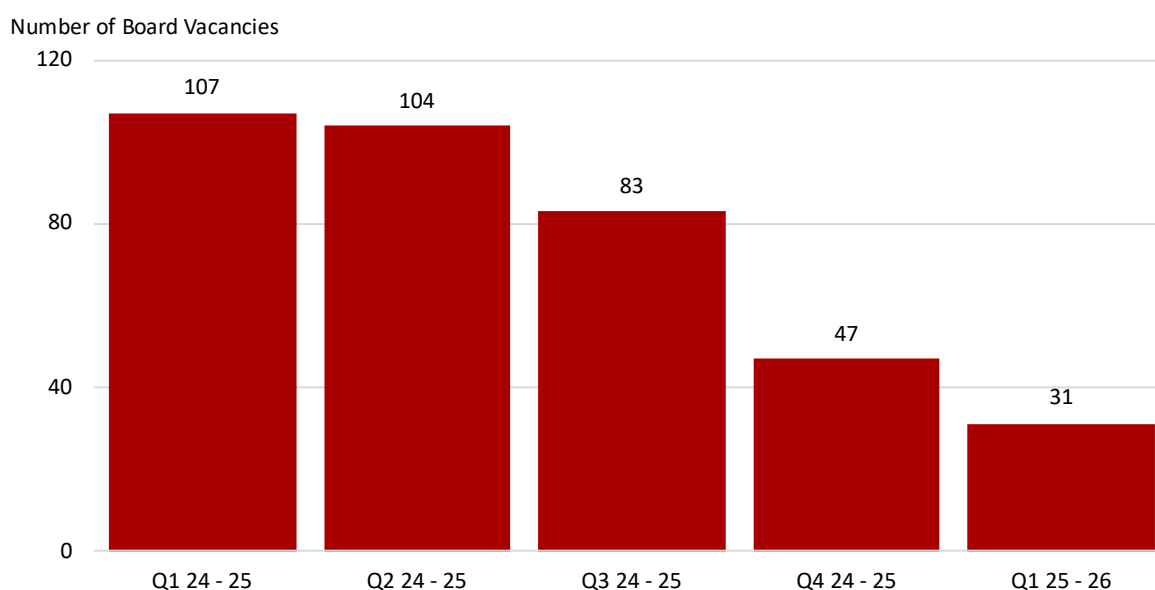
5.124 Quarterly vacancy data reported 31 board level vacancies in provider trusts in Q1 2025-26, a significant difference from 107 in the same quarter a year earlier (see Figure 5.5). According to NHSE several factors contributed to this reduction:

- *Lower response rates* – Amongst other reasons, uncertainty around ICBs has led to a large drop in responses.
- *A change in the collection system/portal* – those unfamiliar with the portal have found difficulties with onboarding and completion.
- *The group model* – Some organisations are pooling resources or sharing directors and so reducing the vacancies available.

For these reasons, we do not put weight on the figure of 31 as a total, though some of its features may be illustrative. The most commonly vacant roles were reported to be HR (6) and Medical Director (4). Some 61 per cent of these vacancies were actively being recruited to.

5.125 We heard last year that the number of shortlisted candidates for VSM posts (not all of whom are judged appointable) was in low single figures. These numbers were lower for the most challenged trusts who sometimes struggle to attract interest from appointable candidates, and more than one attempt may be required to fill some positions. This was also the case in some localities, particularly in rural areas.

Figure 5.5: Executive director vacancies in NHS providers, Q1 2024-25 to Q1 2025-26



Source: NHS England (unpublished).

Note: All aspects of the collection were updated to include the boards of ICSs/ICBs for data from 1 July 2022, which began to be captured in the Q2 2022/23 collection which covers the period 1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022.

5.126 In oral and written evidence, it was observed that senior managers' roles have become progressively more complex. The shrinking of the pool of suitable candidates available to fill these vacancies, along with renewing leadership pipelines, has affected the ability to recruit and retain talent.

5.127 In evidence we again heard that high levels of financial pressure across the sector make trust roles more demanding. We heard of several factors which are affecting the attractiveness of leadership roles, including greater operational pressures and increased demand on executive time.

5.128 The 2025 NHSP remuneration survey again reported widespread operational pressures (72 per cent in 2025, 71 per cent the year before); demand on executive time (74 per cent in 2025, 67 per cent the year before) and an increasingly critical narrative around NHS leaders (65 per cent in 2025, up from 55 per cent the year before).

Retention

5.129 In total 271 VSMs left the provider sectors between June 2024 and June 2025. In addition, from March 2024 to March 2025 204 VSMs left their organisation and moved to another trust.

5.130 The DHSC's written evidence noted that 9.2 per cent of trust VSMs left the sector in 2024-25, similar to the previous year (9.7 per cent). The rate is higher in ICBs, at 14.7 per cent. Table 5.6 below gives a breakdown of VSMs' reasons for leaving.

5.131 Retirement accounted for 34.3 per cent of leavers between June 2024 and June 2025 compared to 27 per cent between June 2023 and 2024. This suggests a retirement rate across the trust VSM workforce of approximately 6.6 per cent in the 12 months to June 2025, compared to approximately 2.6 per cent in the previous 12 months.

5.132 NHSP’s remuneration survey results showed that, at summer 2025, 73 per cent of executive directors had been appointed since the start of 2020 and nearly a third (32 per cent) had been in post for a year or less.

Table 5.6: VSMs reasons for leaving, June 2025

2024 Reason for leaving	Proportion in trusts	Proportion in ICBs	Proportion in ALBs
Voluntary resignation	33%	24%	50%
Retirement	36%	16%	25%
End of fixed-term contract	8%	18%	9%
Redundancy	12%	21%	8%
Unknown	6%	20%	6%
Other	5%	0%	2%

Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

5.133 As highlighted in previous years, around 40 per cent of the cohort are aged over 55 and are therefore potentially eligible for retirement. Overall staff turnover has remained constant for this cohort, with a rate of just over 9 per cent in 2024-25. This compares to a rate of around 10 per cent in 2023-24.

5.134 Turnover particularly affects challenged trusts. The Care Quality Commission has previously found that trusts rated ‘inadequate’ have vacancy rates, and proportions of executives in their first year, that are several times higher than those of ‘outstanding’ trusts.

5.135 Over the year to June 2025, 90 ESMs left NHS ALBs. This is up from 68 the previous year.

5.136 Of the 64 ESMs leaving ALBs, 32 (50 per cent) cited ‘voluntary – resignation’ and 16 (25 per cent) cited ‘retirement’. From the 32 that cited voluntary resignation, 17 were ‘other/unknown’ under voluntary – resignation.

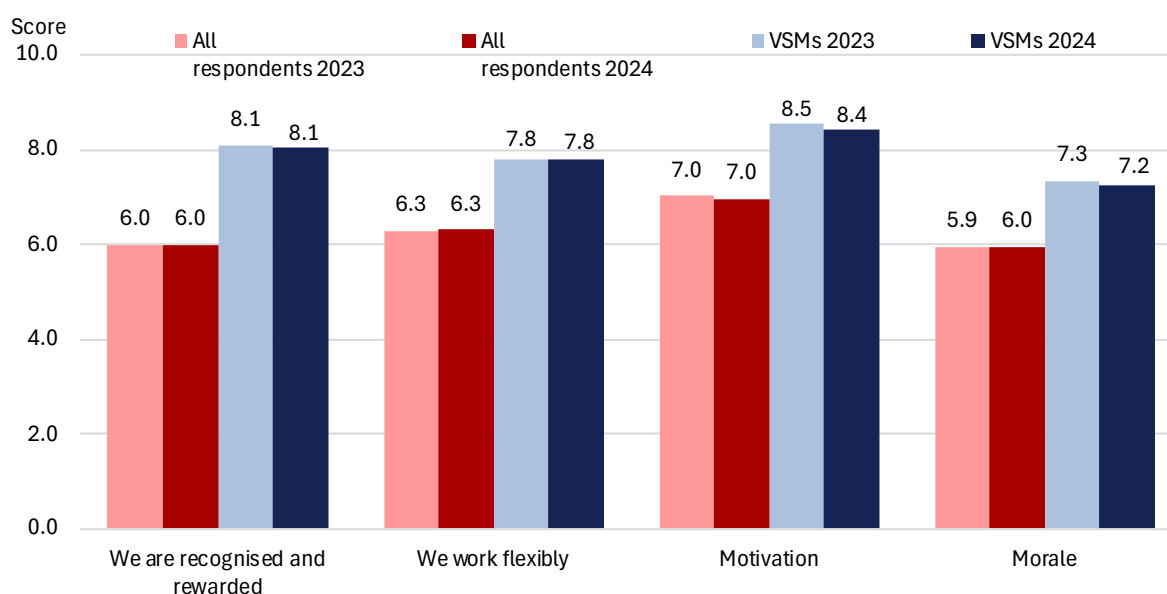
5.137 Staff turnover at AfC Bands 8d and 9 was at a similar rate. Overall, 9.3 per cent of staff in these bands in trusts left the NHS in the year to June 2025. Of these, 27.2 per cent gave retirement as their reason for leaving. There was a lower rate of band 8 and 9 leavers from ALBs – 8.9 per cent in the year to March 2025. Of these, 27.2 per cent gave retirement as their reason for leaving.

Motivation and Morale

5.138 NHSE has been able to isolate VSM responses within the NHS staff survey results. We are grateful to them for their work. In 2024 survey responses were received from 2112 VSMs which was a 4 per cent increase from 2023. The staff survey scores for VSMs were very similar to the previous year with a decrease, of approximately 0.3 per cent, across all four themes.

5.139 VSMs have significantly higher staff survey scores than all respondents.

Figure 5.6: VSM NHS Staff Survey scores by theme/sub-category, 2024



Source: NHS England (unpublished).

Pensions

5.140 Estimated pension scheme membership for the VSM group increased by 3.1 percentage points across all salary ranges between June 2024 and June 2025. Overall, an estimated 87 per cent of VSMs are in the NHS pension scheme, but this proportion falls as salary range rises. Only 71 per cent of those earning over £200,000 are in the NHS scheme, though this is a 6 per cent increase over the year.

Table 5.7: Pension scheme membership for VSMs

Salary range	2024 membership rate	2025 membership rate
£110,000 to £125,000	88%	88%
£125,000 to £150,000	88%	90%
£150,000 to £175,000	82%	87%
£175,000 to £200,000	72%	82%
>£200,000	65%	71%
All	84%	87%

Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

Appendix A

List of those who gave evidence and information to the SSRB

General

HM Treasury

Executive search firms discussion group

The Senior Civil Service

Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (Minister without Portfolio)

Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office

Interim Government Chief People Officer

Cabinet Office

Welsh Government

Scottish Government

First Civil Service Commissioner

Civil Service Commission

FDA and Prospect

Senior Civil Service discussion groups

The Judiciary

United Kingdom

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice

Ministry of Justice

President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

Council of Appeal Tribunal Judges

Council of Employment Judges

Council of Immigration Judges

Council of Tax Judges

Council of Upper Tribunal Judges

Mental Health Tribunal Members' Association

England and Wales

Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales

Senior President of Tribunals

Members of the senior judiciary of England and Wales

Judicial Office (England and Wales)

Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales)

Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales)

Association of High Court Masters and Insolvency and Companies Court Judges

Association of His Majesty's District Judges

Council of His Majesty's Circuit Judges

High Court Judges' Association

National Council of His Majesty's District Judges (Magistrates Court)

Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate) and Deputy Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)

Scotland

Lord President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice General of Scotland

Judicial Office for Scotland

Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland

Sheriffs and Summary Sheriffs' Association

Sheriffs Principal

Northern Ireland

Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland

Judicial Office (Northern Ireland)

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service

Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission

Association of His Majesty's District Judges (Northern Ireland)

Council of His Majesty's County Court Judges in Northern Ireland

Council of District Judges (Magistrates Court) in Northern Ireland

President of the Appeals Tribunals (Northern Ireland)

Society of Masters of the Court of Judicature (Northern Ireland)

Senior Leaders in the NHS in England

Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)

Department of Health and Social Care

NHS England

NHS Providers

Managers in Partnership

VSM, ESM and Remuneration Committee Chair discussion groups

Appendix B

Index of written submissions to the SSRB

Written submissions to the SSRB are published by, and at the discretion of, each evidence provider. Where written evidence is publicly available, links are included in the citation below.

Written submission	Provider	Received	Publication status	Citation
Economic context				
001	HM Treasury	15/12/25	Published	HM Treasury <i>Economic Evidence to the Pay Review Bodies: 2026-27 Pay Round</i> (December 2025). Available at < www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-evidence-to-the-pay-review-bodies-2026-27-pay-round >.
Senior Civil Service (SCS)				
002	Cabinet Office	30/10/25	Published	Cabinet Office <i>Government Evidence to the Review Body on Senior Salaries on the Pay of the Senior Civil Service</i> (October 2025). Available at < www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-evidence-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-on-the-pay-of-the-senior-civil-service >.
003	Welsh Government	17/11/25	Unpublished	Welsh Government <i>Welsh Government SSRB Response</i> (November 2025).
004	Scottish Government	08/12/25	Unpublished	Scottish Government <i>Scottish Government response to request for evidence: SSRB 2026 Report (Senior Civil Service)</i> (December 2025).
005	Civil Service Commission	29/09/25	Unpublished	Civil Service Commission <i>Statement of Evidence: Civil Service Commission to the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB) 2026</i> (September 2025).
006	FDA and Prospect	20/10/25	Unpublished	FDA and Prospect <i>FDA & Prospect Written Evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body</i> (October 2025).
Judiciary				
United Kingdom				
007	Ministry of Justice	30/10/25	Published	Ministry of Justice <i>Ministry of Justice Evidence Pack: Judicial Pay Annual Award for 2026/27</i> (October 2025). Available at < www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-evidence-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-2026-to-2027 >.
008	President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom	08/09/25	Unpublished	Letter from President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Request for Evidence: Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries (8 September 2025).
009	Council of Appeal Tribunal Judges	05/10/25	Unpublished	Letter from Chair of the Council of Appeal Tribunal Judges to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the 2026 Annual Review of Judicial Pay (5 October 2025).

Written submission	Provider	Received	Publication status	Citation
010	Council of Employment Judges	30/09/25	Unpublished	Letter from Chair of the Pay & Pensions Working Group, Council of Employment Judges to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Call for Evidence: Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries 2026 (30 September 2025).
011	Council of Immigration Judges	20/10/25	Unpublished	Council of Immigration Judges <i>Response of the Council of Immigration Judges (CIJ) to the SSRB's Call for Evidence in relation to the 2026-27 pay review for salaried judges</i> (October 2025).
012	Council of Tax Judges	08/10/25	Unpublished	Council of Tax Judges <i>Response to SSRB 2026 Annual Review</i> (September 2025).
013	Council of Upper Tribunal Judges	09/10/25	Unpublished	Letter from President of the Council of Upper Tribunal Judges to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the invitation for evidence on the annual pay award for 2026 (9 October 2025).
014	Mental Health Tribunal Members' Association	31/08/25	Unpublished	Mental Health Tribunal Members' Association <i>SSRB 2026 48th Annual Report on Senior Salaries – Call for Evidence Evidence from MHTMA re Mental Health Tribunal Judicial Office Holders</i> (August 2025).
<i>England and Wales</i>				
015	Judicial Office (England and Wales)	11/11/25	Unpublished	Judicial Office <i>Evidence for the SSRB Annual Review 2026-27</i> (November 2025).
016	Judicial Office (England and Wales)	11/11/25	Unpublished	Judicial Office <i>Judicial Leavers Survey: November 2024 to August 2025</i> (November 2025).
017	Judicial Office (England and Wales)	24/02/25	Published	Cheryl Thomas <i>2024 UK Judicial Attitude Survey: England & Wales courts, coroners and UK tribunals</i> (February 2025). Available at < www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Published_2024JAS_EnglandWales_UKTribunals.pdf >.
018	Judicial Appointments Commission	22/09/25	Published	Judicial Appointments Commission <i>JAC Submission for 2026 SSRB Judicial Pay Review</i> (September 2025). Available at < https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/targeted-outreach-programme-banner/our-services/jac-publishes-data-to-inform-2026-review-of-judicial-salaries >.
019	Association of High Court Masters and Insolvency and Companies Court Judges	30/09/25	Unpublished	Association of High Court Masters and Insolvency and Companies Court Judges <i>Senior Salaries Review Body – Annual Judicial Pay Review 2026-27: Evidence on behalf of the Association of High Court Masters and Insolvency and Companies Court Judges</i> (September 2025).
020	Association of His Majesty's District Judges	22/09/25	Unpublished	Association of His Majesty's District Judges <i>Evidence from the Association of His Majesty's District Judges for the Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries 2026</i> (September 2025).

Written submission	Provider	Received	Publication status	Citation
021	Council of His Majesty's Circuit Judges	13/10/25	Unpublished	Council of His Majesty's Circuit Judges <i>Submission to the Senior Salaries Review Body 2026-2027</i> (October 2025).
022	High Court Judges' Association	20/11/25	Unpublished	High Court Judges' Association <i>HCJA Consultation Response: SSRB Annual Judicial Pay Review 2026/27</i> (November 2025).
023	National Council of His Majesty's District Judges (Magistrates Court)	23/09/25	Unpublished	National Council of His Majesty's District Judges (Magistrates Court) <i>Submissions to the Senior Salaries Review Body (following its invitation for evidence dated 1st August 2025)</i> (September 2025).
024	Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate) and Deputy Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)	08/10/25	Unpublished	Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate) for England and Wales <i>Submission to the Senior Salaries Review Body</i> (October 2025).
<i>Scotland</i>				
025	Lord President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice General of Scotland	13/01/26	Unpublished	Judicial Office for Scotland <i>Evidence for the SSRB Annual Review 2025/26</i> (January 2026).
026	Judicial Office for Scotland	24/02/25	Published	Cheryl Thomas <i>2024 UK Judicial Attitude Survey: Judiciary of Scotland</i> (February 2025). Available at < https://judiciary.scot/docs/librariesprovider3/judiciarydocuments/judicial-attitudes-survey/published_scotland_2024_jas.pdf >.
027	Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland	04/10/25	Unpublished	Letter from Head of Operations, Judicial Office for Scotland to SSRB Secretary regarding the request for written and data evidence for the Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries (22 September 2025).
028	Sheriffs and Summary Sheriffs' Association	10/11/25	Unpublished	Letter from Secretary of the Sheriffs and Summary Sheriffs' Association to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the 2026-27 pay round request for evidence (10 November 2025).
029	Sheriffs Principal	22/12/25	Unpublished	Letter from President of the Sheriff Appeal Court to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the annual submission on behalf of Sheriffs Principal (22 December 2025).
<i>Northern Ireland</i>				
030	Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland	07/10/25	Unpublished	Letter from Lady Chief Justice of Northern Ireland to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Request for Evidence: Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries (7 October 2025).

Written submission	Provider	Received	Publication status	Citation
031	Judicial Office (Northern Ireland)	24/02/25	Published	Cheryl Thomas <i>2024 UK Judicial Attitude Survey: Northern Ireland judiciary</i> (February 2025). Available at < www.judiciaryni.uk/files/judiciaryni/2025-02/2024%20Judicial%20Attitude%20Survey%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20-%20240225_0.pdf >.
032	Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission	30/09/25	Unpublished	Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission <i>Judicial Appointments in Northern Ireland (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025): Evidence for the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB)</i> (September 2025).
033	Association of His Majesty's District Judges (Northern Ireland)	11/09/25	Unpublished	Association of His Majesty's District Judges (Northern Ireland) <i>Evidence from the Association of His Majesty's District Judges (Northern Ireland) for the 2026 Annual Review of Judicial Pay</i> (September 2025).
034	Council of His Majesty's County Court Judges in Northern Ireland	28/09/25	Unpublished	Council of His Majesty's County Court Judges in Northern Ireland <i>Submissions to SSRB from H.M. Council of County Court Judges in Northern Ireland</i> (September 2025).
035	Council of District Judges (Magistrates Court) in Northern Ireland	29/09/25	Unpublished	Council of District Judges (Magistrates Court) in Northern Ireland <i>Review Body on Senior Salaries: Written Evidence for 2026 Annual Review on Behalf of the Council of District Judges (Magistrates' Court) in Northern Ireland</i> (September 2025).
036	President of Appeal Tribunals (Northern Ireland)	29/09/25	Unpublished	Letter from President of the Appeals Tribunals Northern Ireland to Chair of the Senior Salaries Review Body regarding the Call for Evidence: Forty-Eighth Annual Report on Senior Salaries 2026 (29 September 2025).
037	Society of Masters of the Court of Judicature (Northern Ireland)	30/09/25	Unpublished	Society of Masters of the Court of Judicature (Northern Ireland) <i>Senior Salaries Review Body: Evidence For 2026 Annual Pay Award</i> (September 2025).
Senior Leaders in the NHS in England				
038	Department of Health & Social Care	30/10/25	Published	Department of Health & Social Care <i>The Department of Health and Social Care's written evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body for the pay round 2026 to 2027</i> (October 2025). Available at < www.gov.uk/government/publications/dhsc-evidence-for-the-ssrb-pay-round-2026-to-2027 >.
039	NHS Providers	29/09/25	Published	NHS Providers <i>Senior Salaries Review Body 2026/27: Written evidence from NHS Providers</i> (September 2025). Available at < https://nhsproviders.org/resources/senior-salaries-review-body-202627-written-evidence-from-nhs-providers >.

Written submission	Provider	Received	Publication status	Citation
040	NHS Providers	02/10/25	Unpublished	NHS Providers <i>NHS Providers Briefing: 2024/25 Remuneration Survey Results</i> (September 2025).
041	Managers in Partnership	07/10/25	Published	Managers in Partnership <i>MiP written evidence to SSRB: 2026-27 pay round</i> (October 2025). Available at < www.miphealth.org.uk/news/mip-ssrb-evidence-2026 >.

Appendix C

Index of datasets utilised by the SSRB

Datasets provided to the SSRB directly by stakeholders are published by, and at the discretion of, each evidence provider. Other datasets are sourced from the public domain. Where datasets are publicly available, links are provided below.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
Economic context				
001	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	21/01/26	Inflation and price indices – Consumer price inflation (CPI): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D7BT: CPI INDEX 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100 (at 21 January 2026) D7G7: CPI ANNUAL RATE 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100 (at 21 January 2026) 	Published ²⁴¹
002	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	20/01/26	Earnings and working hours – Data from Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EARN01: Average weekly earnings (at 20 January 2026) Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI), seasonally adjusted (at 20 January 2026) Estimates of earnings for the highest paid employee jobs by public and private sectors, UK (2025 provisional edition – at 19 November 2025) 	Published ²⁴²
003	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	20/01/26	Employment and employee types – Number of people in paid work as a proportion of the population, and vacancies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A01: Summary of labour market statistics (at 20 January 2026) X02: Labour Force Survey flows estimates (at 11 November 2025) 	Published ²⁴³
004	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	20/01/26	Unemployment – Information on the labour market, young people and workless households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VACS01: Vacancies and unemployment (at 20 January 2026) 	Published ²⁴⁴
005	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	20/01/26	Redundancies – People who have been made redundant or have taken voluntary redundancy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RED01 SA: Redundancies levels and rates (seasonally adjusted) (at 20 January 2026) 	Published ²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ "Inflation and price indices" Office for National Statistics <www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices>.

²⁴² "Earnings and working hours" Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours>.

²⁴³ "Employment and employee types" Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes>.

²⁴⁴ "Unemployment" Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment>.

²⁴⁵ "Redundancies" Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/redundancies>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
006	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	20/01/26	Workplace disputes and working conditions – Work stoppages because of disputes between employers and employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LABD: Labour disputes in the UK (January 2026 edition) 	Published ²⁴⁶
007	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	15/01/26	Gross Domestic Product (GDP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MGDP: Monthly gross domestic product: time series (at 15 January 2026) QNA: GDP quarterly national accounts time series (at 22 December 2025) 	Published ²⁴⁷
008	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	13/11/25	Labour productivity – Efficiency of the UK workforce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A4YM: Output per Worker: Whole Economy SA: Index 2023=100: UK (at 13 November 2025) LZVB: UK Whole Economy: Output per hour worked SA: Index 2023 = 100 (at 13 November 2025) 	Published ²⁴⁸
009	Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)	26/11/25	Economic and fiscal outlook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report – November 2025 Supporting documents, charts and tables 	Published ²⁴⁹
010	Bank of England	05/02/26	Monetary Policy Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report – February 2026 Supporting charts and data tables 	Published ²⁵⁰
011	Bank of England	05/02/26	Agents’ summary of business conditions (ASBC): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report – February 2026 	Published ²⁵¹
012	HM Treasury	21/01/26	Forecasts for the UK economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2026 (at 21 January 2026) November 2025 (at 19 November 2025) 	Published ²⁵²
013	Brightmine	19/01/26	Pay settlements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly pay settlements data (at 19 January 2026) 	Unpublished ²⁵³
014	Incomes Data Research	31/01/26	Median pay settlements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated median pay settlements, monthly (at 31 January 2026) 	Unpublished ²⁵⁴

²⁴⁶ “Workplace disputes and working conditions” Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/workplacedisputesandworkingconditions>.

²⁴⁷ “Gross Domestic Product (GDP)” Office for National Statistics <www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp>.

²⁴⁸ “Labour productivity” Office for National Statistics

<www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity>.

²⁴⁹ “Economic and fiscal outlook – November 2025” (26 November 2025) Office for Budget Responsibility

<<https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2025>>.

²⁵⁰ “Monetary Policy Report – February 2026” (5 February 2026) Bank of England <www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2026/february-2026>.

²⁵¹ “Agents’ summary of business conditions – February 2026” (5 February 2026) Bank of England

<www.bankofengland.co.uk/agents-summary/2026/february-2026>.

²⁵² “Collection: Forecasts for the UK economy” (21 January 2026) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/collections/data-forecasts>.

²⁵³ Subscriber-only dataset. The median settlement figure is published monthly for the preceding three-month period – see “Pay trends” Brightmine <www.brightmine.com/uk/resources/total-rewards/pay-trends>.

²⁵⁴ Subscriber-only dataset. Near-final figures are published quarterly – see “Pay Climate” Incomes Data Research <www.incomesdataresearch.co.uk/resources/pay-climate>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
015	Labour Research Department	23/02/26	Median pay settlements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payline release – February 2026 (at 23 February 2026) • Payline release – January 2026 (at 26 January 2026) • Payline release – December 2025 (at 22 December 2025) 	Published ²⁵⁵
Senior Civil Service (SCS)				
016	Cabinet Office	14/10/25	Cabinet Office SCS dashboard: Outputs generated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCS characteristics, including headcount, FTE, declared diversity characteristics, profession, function, pay band, department, region, time in post, time in pay band, and time in SCS • Pay bill by component • Salary and total cash by pay band, external or internal recruitment, and profession • Resignation, turnover and departmental turnover rates by various characteristics • Proportion of SCS in each pay band by £5k salary band • Proportion of SCS by number of years in post, pay band and SCS, up to 15+ years • Number of entrants and leavers • Number of new entrants by recruitment source • Distribution of performance results by pay band • Gender pay gaps 	Unpublished ²⁵⁶
017	Cabinet Office	30/07/25	Civil Service Statistics 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed information on the UK Civil Service workforce as at 31 March 2025, including on pay, diversity and location 	Published ²⁵⁷
018	Cabinet Office	24/11/25	Cabinet Office Recruitment data, October 2024 to September 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCS 1 roles advertised and filled by 15 of 17 Whitehall departments 	Unpublished
019	Cabinet Office	27/10/25	Civil Service Exit Interview Results, October 2024 to September 2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCS Exit Interview Data 	Unpublished
020	Cabinet Office	15/01/26	Civil Service People Survey 2025 – results dashboard: Outputs generated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of SCS and wider Civil Service who gave each possible answer to the 2025 People Survey questions 	Unpublished ²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ “News & blogs – Bargaining, economy and pay” Labour Research Department <www.lrd.org.uk/news>.

²⁵⁶ Some information is publicly available – see “Civil Service statistics: 2025” (30 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2025>.

²⁵⁷ “Civil Service statistics: 2025” (30 July 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2025>.

²⁵⁸ Some information is publicly available – see “Civil Service People Survey: 2025 results” (26 February 2026) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-people-survey-2025-results>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
Judiciary				
021	Ministry of Justice	30/10/25	<p>Courts and Tribunals Judges (England and Wales only, unless otherwise noted), 2024-25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data index <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1/2/4(a): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, salary group, salary, number in officially recognised leadership role, and number working part-time (as at 24 June 2025) • A1/2/4(b): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, salary group, salary, number in officially recognised leadership role, and number working part-time (as at 24 June 2025) – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> • A2(a): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, 2016-17 to 2024-25 • A2(b): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, 2011-12 to 2024-25 – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> • A2(c): Number of judges (headcount) with authorisation to sit in the High Court (s 9(4) appointments or s 9(1) authorisations) by primary judicial role • A3(a): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, broken down by gender • A3(b): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, broken down by ethnicity • A3(c): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, broken down by age band • A3(d): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, broken down by disability • A3(e): Number (headcount) of fee-paid and salaried Court judges by region, broken down by contract type (fee paid / salaried full time / salaried part time) • A3(f): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, broken down by gender – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> • A3(g): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, broken down by ethnicity – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> 	Published ²⁶²

²⁶² “Ministry of Justice evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body 2026 to 2027” (30 October 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-evidence-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-2026-to-2027>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A3(h): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, broken down by age band – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> A3(i): Number in post (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, broken down by disability – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> A3(e): Number (headcount) of fee-paid and salaried Tribunal judges by tribunal appointment, broken down by contract type (fee paid / salaried full time / salaried part time) – <i>includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</i> <p><i>Pay and reward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1: Judicial pay bill, 2011-12 to 2024-25 (as at 31 March 2025)²⁵⁹ B2: Number of salaried Court and Tribunal judges receiving London Weighting allowance, 2013-14 to 2024-25 B3: Judicial pension scheme membership (as at 31 March 2025) B4: Pension taxation, 2022-23 to 2024-25 (as at 31 March 2025) B5: Estimates of gross annual pay (employees)– UK legal professions, April 2024²⁶⁰ <p><i>Recruitment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C8: Number declining judicial appointment offer (JAC campaigns – salaried judges, fee-paid judges, non-legal members) by judicial role, March 2024 to April 2025 C9(a): Number of Court appointments by judicial role, broken down by division/circuit, March 2024 to April 2025 C9(b): Number of Tribunal appointments by judicial role, broken down by chamber/region, March 2024 to April 2025 <p><i>Retention and outflow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D1(a): Number of leavers (headcount) of salaried Court judges by judicial role, reason for leaving, and average age at departure, 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2025 D1(b): Number of leavers (headcount) of salaried Tribunal judges by judicial role, reason for leaving, and average age at departure, 1 April 2016 to 31 	

²⁵⁹ Data drawn from HMCTS annual reports (publicly available) – see HM Courts & Tribunals Service (July 2025) *Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25* (HC 1102) at 89, and earlier HMCTS Annual Reports and Accounts (“Collection: HMCTS annual reports and plans” GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-annual-reports-and-plans>).

²⁶⁰ Data drawn from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) at Table 14.7a (publicly available) – see “Dataset: Earnings and hours worked, occupation by four-digit SOC: ASHE Table 14” Office for National Statistics (29 October 2024) <www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/occupation4digitsoc2010ashtable14>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<p>March 2025 – includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1(c): Age of retirement of salaried Court judges aged 61+ in salary bands 5-7 by age band, 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2025 • D1(d): Age of retirement of salaried Tribunal judges aged 61+ in salary bands 5-7 by age band, 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2025 – includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland • D2(a): Number of judges (headcount) sitting in retirement in Courts, by primary judicial role and average age, 1 April 2025 • D2(a): Number of judges (headcount) sitting in retirement in Tribunals, by primary judicial role and average age, 1 April 2025 – includes UK Reserved Tribunals and office holders in Scotland/Northern Ireland <p><i>Strategic context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1: Number of days sat by judicial role, 2011-2024 • E5: Average number of HMCTS employees (FTE), 2011-12 to 2024-25²⁶¹ • E8: Number of judicial training days completed between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2025 (Courts and Tribunals judges) • E11: Number of Tribunals sitting days per year by jurisdiction, broken down by salaried or fee-paid judge, 2007-08 to 2024-25 	
<i>England and Wales</i>				
022	Judicial Appointments Commission	22/09/25	<p>Vacancies, applications, recommendations and gradings for all JAC exercises, 2011-12 to 2024-25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C1: Overall figures by year <p>Vacancies, applications, recommendations and gradings for specific salaried posts by year, 2012-13 to 2024-25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C2(a): High Court Judge • C2(b): Circuit Judge • C2(c): District Judge • C2(d): District Judge (Magistrates' Court) • C2(e): Judge of the First-tier Tribunal • C2(f): Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales) 	Published ²⁶³

²⁶¹ Data drawn from HMCTS annual reports (publicly available) – see HM Courts & Tribunals Service (July 2025) *Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25* (HC 1102) at 62, and earlier HMCTS Annual Reports and Accounts (“Collection: HMCTS annual reports and plans” GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmcts-annual-reports-and-plans>).

²⁶³ “JAC publishes data to inform 2026 review of judicial salaries” Judicial Appointments Commission (30 September 2025) <<https://judicialappointments.gov.uk/targeted-outreach-programme-banner/our-services/jac-publishes-data-to-inform-2026-review-of-judicial-salaries>>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<p>Vacancies, applications, recommendations and gradings for specific fee-paid posts by year, 2016-17 to 2024-25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C3(a): s9(4) Deputy High Court Judge • C3(b): Recorder • C3(c): Deputy District Judge • C3(d): Deputy District Judge (Magistrates' Court) • C3(e): Fee-paid Judge of the First-tier Tribunal and Fee-paid Judge of the Employment Tribunals (England and Wales) 	
023	Council of HM Circuit Judges	13/10/25	<p>Calculations showing real-terms remuneration reduction for Circuit Judges since 2008:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of current remuneration and remuneration in 2008, adjusted for inflation • Calculation of the gross income required to replace the lost annual accrual of tax-free lump sum on retirement under JUPRA • Difference in additional pension contributions payable since 2008 if salary had increased with CPI or RPI 	Unpublished
<i>Scotland</i>				
024	Judicial Office for Scotland	04/10/25	<p>Members of the Scottish judiciary, as at 1 September 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data index <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1: Current salary structure by judicial role (at 1 April 2025) • A2(a): Numbers in post (headcount) by judicial role, 2014-2025 • A2(a): Numbers in post (Salaried judiciary – FTE) by judicial role • A3: Numbers in post (headcount) by judicial role and salary group, broken down by gender, time in current post and age band <p><i>Pay and reward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B1(a): Judicial pay bill, 2018-19 to 2024-25 • B1(b): Estimated judicial pay bill, 2025-26 and 2026-27 • B2: Number in receipt of allowances by judicial role, 2019-20 to 2024-25 • B3: Judicial pension scheme membership <p><i>Retention and outflow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1(a): Leavers (salaried judiciary) by judicial role, reason for leaving, statutory retirement age, and age at retirement, 2010 to 2025 • D1(b): Average age on retirement by year, 2010 to 2025 • D1.1 Retirement profile (age at retirement versus statutory retirement age) • D1.2 Leavers (salaried judiciary) by judicial role, year and age band, 2010-11 to 2025-25 	Unpublished

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D2: Number returning from retirement by judicial role, 2025 D3: Judicial Attitude Survey 2024 results²⁶⁴ <p><i>Strategic context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E1: SCTS Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25²⁶⁵ E1.1: SCTS Criminal Court Modelling – September 2025²⁶⁶ E1.2: SCTS Business Plan Delivery Report 2024-25²⁶⁷ E2: Forecast judicial workforce requirements (next seven years) E5: Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service staff (headcount), 2020-2025 E6: SCTS Estates Strategy 2016-26²⁶⁸ E6.1: SCTS Sustainability Strategy 2024-27²⁶⁹ E11: Number of fee-paid judicial officer sitting days per year by judicial role, 2021-22 to August 2025 E12: Commentary on judicial diversity initiatives 	
025	Judicial Appointments Board Scotland	04/10/25	<p>Judicial recruitment statistics (Scotland), 2013-14 to 2024-25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C1: Number of vacancies by judicial role C2: Number of applications by judicial role C3: Number of recommendations for appointment by judicial role C5: Applicant diversity statistics (gender, professional background, diversity, ethnicity) by judicial role C6: Professional background by judicial role sought, broken down by applications and recommendations C9: Regional recruitment breakdown by judicial role and sheriffdom 	Unpublished ²⁷⁰
<i>Northern Ireland</i>				
026	Judicial Office (Northern Ireland)	30/09/25	<p>Members of the Northern Ireland judiciary, to 30 September 2025:</p> <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A4: List of judicial leadership roles (incl. roles receiving leadership supplements) 	Unpublished

²⁶⁴ Publicly available – see “2024 Judicial Attitude Survey Published” (24 February 2025) Judiciary of Scotland <<https://judiciary.scot/home/media-information/media-hub-news/2025/02/24/2024-judicial-attitude-survey-published>>.

²⁶⁵ Publicly available – see “Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25” (27 August 2025) Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service <www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/2pzbanrs/scts-ara-2024-25-published-version.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ Publicly available – see “Criminal Court Modelling – September 2025” (11 September 2025) Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service <www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/ywedphq/scts-modelling-report-sep-25-final.pdf>.

²⁶⁷ Publicly available – see “Business Plan Delivery Report 2024-25” (23 June 2025) Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service <www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/hhtnzi02/end-2024-25-business-plan-delivery-report.pdf>.

²⁶⁸ Publicly available – see “SCTS Estates Strategy 2016-2026” (25 April 2016) Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service <www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/z3hdfcbp/scts-estates-strategy-2016-26.pdf>.

²⁶⁹ Publicly available – see “SCTS Sustainability Strategy 2024-2027” (25 April 2016) Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service <www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/i5bpryex/scts-sustainability-strategy.pdf>.

²⁷⁰ Data provided to the SSRB is primarily drawn from published JABS annual reports – see “Publications” Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland <www.judicialappointments.scot/publications>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<p><i>Retention and outflow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1: Number of salaried judges leaving in the current year (1 April 2025-31 March 2026) and indicated forthcoming retirements (1 April 2026-31 March 2027) • D2: Number of salaried judges sitting in retirement (2022 to date) • D3: Judicial Attitude Survey 2024 results²⁷¹ <p><i>Strategic context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1(a): Annual Judicial Statistics– number of cases received and disposed per year by court (2008-2024), and commentary • E1(b): Court of Appeal and High Court Statistics– number of cases disposed per year by division and judicial role (2008-2024) • E1(c): Number of sitting days and average sitting time by judicial role and case type (2008-2024) • E2: Forecast judicial workforce requirements (next seven years) and commentary (incl. planned and ongoing policy initiatives) • E3: Commentary on the number and impact of litigants in person • E4: Number of judicial complaints (2010-2025) • E5: Approximate number of administrative and support staff, and fee-paid judicial office holders (courts and tribunals) • E6: Commentary on size and condition of courts estate • E7: Commentary on economic contribution of the judiciary • E8: List of judicial training programmes, by type, invitees and number of attendees (1 January 2025-30 September 2025) • E12: Commentary on judicial diversity initiatives • E13: Commentary on court backlogs • E13(a): COVID-19: Recovering the Justice System – Dashboard #63 (September 2025) • E13(b): NICTS Recovery Data Report (to 27 June 2025) 	
027	Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service	02/10/25	<p>Members of the Northern Ireland judiciary, as at 31 March 2025:</p> <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1: Current salary structure by judicial role (at 31 March 2025 versus 1 April 2025) • A2(a): Numbers in post (headcount) by judicial role and salary group 	Published ²⁷²

²⁷¹ Publicly available – see “2024 Judicial Attitude Survey - Findings Report” (24 February 2025) Judiciary NI <www.judiciaryni.uk/publications/2024-judicial-attitude-survey-findings-report>.

²⁷² “Ministry of Justice evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body 2026 to 2027” (30 October 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-evidence-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-2026-to-2027>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A2(b): Numbers in post (headcount) time series (2020-21 to 2024-25) by judicial role and salary group A2(c): Numbers in post (headcount) with flexible working arrangements, by judicial role and FTE A3(a): Numbers in post (headcount) by judicial role and salary group, broken down by gender A3(b): Average age by salary group A3(c): Average age on appointment and age distribution, by judicial office and salary group A3(d): Average age on leaving and age distribution, by judicial role and salary group A4: Officially recognised leadership roles, by judicial role and headcount <p><i>Pay and reward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1: Judicial pay bill, 2011-12 to 2024-25 B2: Number in receipt of allowances, 2017-18 to 2024-25 B3: Judicial pension scheme membership <p><i>Retention and outflow</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D0: Leavers (salaried judiciary) by judicial role, salary group, number of leavers, average age and reason for leaving, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D1(a): Number of leavers (salaried judiciary) by average age and reason for leaving, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D1(b): Number of higher judiciary leavers (High Court Judge and above) by average age, age band and reason for leaving, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D1(c): Number of leavers (salary groups 5, 5.2, 6 and 7) by salary group and age band, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D1(d): Number of leavers (salary groups 5, 5.2, 6 and 7) by judicial role, salary group and age band, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D1(e): Reasons for leaving (salaried judiciary) by judicial role and salary group, 2011-12 to 2024-25 D2: Number returning from retirement by previous role and salary group, returning role and salary group, 2011-12 and 2024-25 	
028	Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service	02/10/25	<p>Criminal cases and defendants dealt with by Northern Ireland High Court and County Court Judges, 2000-2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and percentage of scheduled non-jury Crown Court defendants dealt with, by judicial role Number and percentage of scheduled non-jury Crown Court cases dealt with, by judicial role 	Published ²⁷³

²⁷³ "Ministry of Justice evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Body 2026 to 2027" (30 October 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-evidence-to-the-senior-salaries-review-body-2026-to-2027>.

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and percentage of Crown Court defendants dealt with by a County Court Judge, by scheduled or non-scheduled status Number and percentage of Crown Court defendants dealt with by a High Court Judge, by scheduled or non-scheduled status 	
Senior Leaders in the NHS in England				
029	NHS England	25/11/25	<p>VSMs in Provider Trusts and ICBs, and ESMs employed by ALBs²⁷⁴, to June 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1-A3: Number of staff in post at year-end, by headcount and FTE <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B4: Gender by headcount, FTE and region (VSMs in Provider Trusts) B7: Ethnicity by headcount, FTE and region (VSMs in Provider Trusts) B10: Age by headcount, FTE and region (VSMs in Provider Trusts) B22-B24: Total and mean annual earnings by headcount and region <p><i>Pay and reward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C1-C3: Base pay – mean and annual earnings <p><i>Gender and ethnicity pay gap</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C14-C16: Mean monthly basic pay per FTE, by gender and staff group C17-C19: Mean monthly earnings per FTE, by gender and staff group C20-C22: Count of staff used in gender pay gap analysis, by headcount and FTE <p><i>Turnover</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D1-D3: Count of joiners and leavers by organisation D4: Count of leavers who left the NHS, by reason for leaving (VSMs in Provider Trusts) <p><i>Recruitment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E1-E3: Count of joiners from outside the NHS, by source of recruitment E4-E6: Count of joiners from within the NHS, by source of recruitment <p><i>Feeder group information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E7-E9: Band 8d and 9 staff headcount (at start and end of year) and count of joiners and leavers, by organisation 	Unpublished ²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ NHS Resolution; NHS Business Services Authority; NHS Blood and Transplant; Health Research Authority; NHS Counter Fraud Authority; NHS England; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

²⁷⁵ Data provided to the SSRB is primarily drawn from publicly-available datasets, including the NHS England Workforce Statistics (see “NHS Workforce Statistics – June 2025 (Including selected preliminary statistics for July 2025)” (25 September 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/june-2025>>), NHS Staff Earnings Estimates (see “NHS Staff Earnings Estimates, June 2025 (including supplementary analysis on pay by ethnicity)” (25 September 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-staff-earnings-estimates/june-2025>>), and NHS Sickness Absence Rates (see “NHS Sickness Absence Rates, June 2025” (30 October 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-sickness-absence-rates/june-2025>>).

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E10-E12: Count of Band 8d and 9 leavers who left the NHS, by reason for leaving <p><i>VSM breakdowns by job role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AD25-AD27: Mean annual earnings (basic pay and non-basic pay) by role group 	
030	NHS England	05/08/25	<p>VSMs in Provider Trusts and ICBs, and ESMs employed by ALBs²⁷⁶, to March 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1-A3: Number of staff in post at year-end, by headcount and FTE A4-A6: Number of board-level staff in post at year-end, by headcount and FTE <p><i>Remit group characteristics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1-B3: Headcount and FTE by organisation B4-B6: Gender by headcount, FTE and region B7-B9: Ethnicity by headcount, FTE and region B10-B12: Disability by headcount, FTE and region B13-B15: Sexual orientation by headcount, FTE and region B16-B18: Religious belief by headcount, FTE and region B19-B21: Age by headcount, FTE and region B22-B24: Total and mean annual earnings by headcount and region <p><i>Pay and reward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C1-C3: Base pay – mean and annual earnings C4: Bonuses – total number, mean and median amounts (Trusts only) <p><i>Gender and ethnicity pay gap</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C5-C7: Mean monthly basic pay per FTE, by gender, ethnic group and staff group C8-C10: Mean monthly earnings per FTE, by gender, ethnic group and staff group C11-C13: Count of staff used in gender and ethnicity pay gap analysis, by headcount and FTE C14-C16: Mean monthly basic pay per FTE, by gender and staff group C17-C19: Mean monthly earnings per FTE, by gender and staff group C20-C22: Count of staff used in gender pay gap analysis, by headcount and FTE C23-C25: Mean monthly basic pay per FTE, by ethnic group and staff group C26-C28: Mean monthly earnings per FTE, by ethnic group and staff group 	Unpublished ²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ NHS Resolution; NHS Business Services Authority; NHS Blood and Transplant; Health Research Authority; NHS Counter Fraud Authority; NHS England; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

²⁷⁷ Data provided to the SSRB is primarily drawn from publicly-available datasets, including the NHS England Workforce Statistics (see “NHS Workforce Statistics – March 2025 (Including selected preliminary statistics for April 2025)” (26 June 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/march-2025>>), NHS Staff Earnings Estimates (see “NHS Staff Earnings Estimates, March 2025” (26 June 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-staff-earnings-estimates/march-2025>>), and NHS Sickness Absence Rates (see “NHS Sickness Absence Rates, March 2025” (24 July 2025) NHS England <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-sickness-absence-rates/march-2025>>).

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C29-C31: Count of staff used in ethnicity pay gap analysis, by headcount and FTE 	
			<p><i>Turnover</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1-D3: Count of joiners and leavers by organisation • D4-D6: Count of leavers who left the NHS, by reason for leaving • D7-D9: Count of leavers who remained in the NHS, by organisation • D10-D12: Count of leavers who remained in the NHS, by reason for leaving • D13: Count of joiners and leavers who moved between organisation types (Trusts, ALBs, ICBs) 	
			<p><i>Recruitment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1-E3: Count of joiners from outside the NHS, by source of recruitment • E4-E6: Count of joiners from within the NHS, by source of recruitment 	
			<p><i>Feeder group information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E7-E9: Band 8d and 9 staff headcount (at start and end of year) and count of joiners and leavers, by organisation • E10-E12: Count of Band 8d and 9 leavers who left the NHS, by reason for leaving • E13-E15: Count of Band 8d and 9 joiners from outside the NHS, by source of recruitment • E16-E18: Mean annual earnings of Band 9 staff • E19-E21: Mean annual earnings of Band 9 staff who earn over £110,000 	
			<p><i>Sickness levels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F1-F3: Monthly sickness absence rate by FTE days available/lost • F4-F6: Annual sickness absence rate by FTE days lost and reason for absence • F7: National (all NHS staff/pay bands) monthly sickness absence rate by NHS England region • F8: National (all NHS staff/pay bands) monthly sickness absence rate by staff group • F9: National (all NHS staff/pay bands) monthly sickness absence rate by staff group and reason for absence 	
			<p><i>VSM breakdowns by job role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AD1-AD3: Count of staff by role group, gender and benchmark group • AD4-AD6: Count of staff by role group, ethnicity and benchmark group • AD7-AD9: Count of staff by role group, age and benchmark group • AD10-AD12: Count of staff by role group, disability and benchmark group • AD13-AD15: Count of staff by role group, sexual orientation and benchmark group 	

Dataset	Provider	Received /Accessed	Details	Publication status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AD16-AD18: Count of staff by role group, religious belief and benchmark group AD19-AD21: Count of staff by role group, contract type and benchmark group AD22-AD24: Count of staff by role group, working pattern and benchmark group AD25-AD27: Mean annual earnings (basic pay and non-basic pay) by role group 	
031	NHS England	05/12/25	<p>NHS Board Vacancies and Commercial Spend Report, 2021-22 to Q1 2025-26 (quarterly):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count of current Executive Director vacancies, by role and organisation Length of Executive Director vacancy by role and organisation Anticipated Executive Director vacancies in next 12 months, by role and organisation Anticipated Executive Director vacancies in next 24 months, by role and organisation Count of current Chair/Non-Executive Director vacancies, by role and organisation Anticipated Chair/Non-Executive Director vacancies in next 12 months, by role and organisation Anticipated Chair/Non-Executive Director vacancies in next 24 months, by role and organisation Commercial spend – Third party executive search firms, by organisation Commercial spend – Interim managers, by organisation Commercial spend – Advertising, by organisation 	Unpublished
032	NHS England	27/03/25	<p>NHS National Staff Survey 2024 (VSM versus non-VSM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Regions Gender Ethnicity Disability Job roles 	Unpublished ²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ This data is a subset of the published NHS National Staff Survey 2024 (see “Results” (2024) NHS Staff Survey <www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/results>).

Appendix D

Remit letter: Senior Civil Service



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SW1A 2AS

Lea Paterson CBE
Chair, Senior Salaries Review Body
10 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0NB

22 July 2025

Dear Lea,

2026/27 REMIT OF THE SENIOR SALARIES REVIEW BODY (SSRB)

I am writing to confirm the SSRB's remit for the Senior Civil Service (SCS) during the upcoming pay round for 2026/27.

This Government greatly values the SSRB's key role in providing independent and evidence-based recommendations and it is important that we continue to work constructively together. This Government continues to strive to ensure that the SCS is equipped to efficiently deliver vital, high quality public service, and drive our ambition for mission-driven government.

We were pleased to be able to accept your recommendations for the SCS for 2025/26 pay awards. As the Spending Review confirmed, all pay must be funded from departmental budgets and there will be no additional funding available for pay settlements. My department's evidence will set out the funds available to the SCS for 2026 to 2027, following the Spending Review last month, as well as the recruitment and retention context alongside, earnings data, and our future strategic priorities.

We know that public sector workers delivering our vital public services deserve timely pay awards. We announced 2025/26 pay awards two months earlier than last year, and remain committed to bringing 2026/27 pay announcements forwards further. That is why we are launching this pay round two months earlier than the previous pay round.

To this end, I would be grateful for your support in achieving an earlier pay announcement by submitting your report at the earliest point that allows you to give due consideration to the relevant evidence. I recognise that changing the timeline from recent years will present challenges for you, but I am sure you also share the Government's belief in the importance of returning to more timely annual pay processes. To enable you to submit your report earlier, our department will aim to cooperate with all your deadlines and bring the evidence process forward.

This year the Government's evidence will continue to set out our strategic priorities for the SCS workforce, including in relation to pay. This includes setting out our direction for a fundamental review of the SCS pay and reward frameworks, which was recommended by the SSRB in your 2025/26 report and accepted by the Government.

Any specific proposals for the Permanent Secretary group will also be shared with the SSRB. Where any recommendations by the SSRB are made in relation to this group, these will be additionally considered by the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee alongside our standard processes.

As has been agreed in recent years' Government evidence to the SSRB, employees of the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO) who are members of the SCS or are SCS equivalents fall within the remit of the SSRB. Information about this group, as well as proposals on their remuneration will be shared with the SSRB this year, subject to the recommendations of the GCO Remuneration Committee.

I look forward to receiving your report in due course.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt Hon. Pat McFadden MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster**

Appendix E

Remit letter: Judiciary



Lea Paterson CBE
Senior Salaries Review Body

The Right Honourable
Shabana Mahmood MP
Lord Chancellor & Secretary
of State for Justice

MoJ ref: SUB125875

22 July 2025

Dear Lea,

JUDICIAL PAY REVIEW 2026/27

I would like to thank you for your work over the last year, both for your recommendation on the 2025/26 judicial pay award and in the commencement of the Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure. The decision to apply a 4% pay uplift to all judicial office holders required difficult trade-offs as this is above the 2.8% budgeted as set out in written evidence.

Although rejecting your recommendation of 4.75% was necessary to manage overall affordability to my department, I value the expert and independent advice of the SSRB highly. I share the concerns which were behind your recommendation that the judiciary receive a higher pay award than other SSRB remit groups. However, as I set out in my evidence I believe that fully assessing the role of pay in addressing such issues requires the extensive evidence and focused consideration provided as part of the Major Review process. I can assure you that my decision to reject the 2025/26 annual pay recommendation was not taken lightly.

I write to you now to formally commence the 2026/27 pay round for all salaried judicial office holders. The details of this commission are outlined below.

Context for 2026/27

During this pay round, you will receive evidence from my department, HM Treasury and the judiciary. My department's evidence will, as usual, cover the recruitment and retention context for the judiciary, earnings data and our approach to judicial resourcing. It will also set out funds available to the Ministry of Justice for 2026 to 2027, following the Spending Review. As the Spending Review confirmed, all funding for pay must be found from departmental budgets and there will be no additional funding available for pay settlements.

We know that people working in the public sector, delivering our vital public services, deserve timely pay awards. We announced the 2025-26 pay awards two months earlier than last year's and remain committed to bringing the 2026-27 pay announcements further forward. This is why we are launching this pay round two months earlier than in previous pay round.

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E <https://contact-moj.service.justice.gov.uk/>
www.gov.uk/moj

102 Petty France
London
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I would be grateful if you could support an earlier pay announcement by submitting your report at the earliest point following due consideration of the relevant evidence. To enable this, my department will also submit our written evidence earlier than last year. My officials will be in touch with the Office for the Pay Review Bodies to discuss this timeline.

It will of course be necessary for you to consider the role of the Major Review in coming to your recommendation on this annual pay award. The MoJ written evidence for the annual review will provide a foundation for your initial considerations as part of the Major Review. You will no doubt require more specific evidence to understand the core of the issues set out in the Terms of Reference. I look forward to your Major Review evidence request and would be grateful for clarity on timings.

I am thankful for the work of the SSRB and all it does to support the maintenance of a high quality and independent judiciary.

Yours sincerely,



RT HON SHABANA MAHMOOD MP

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE

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OFFICIAL

Appendix F

Remit letter: Senior Leaders in the NHS in England



*From the Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

22 July 2025

Dear Mrs. Paterson,

RE: SRRB Remit Letter

I would firstly like to offer my thanks for the Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB)'s work over the past year on the 2025 to 2026 report. I appreciate the independent, expert advice and valuable contribution that the SSRB makes.

I write to you now to formally commence the 2026 to 2027 pay round.

As you know, on 15 May, we published the new pay framework for very senior managers (VSMs). This new framework has been designed to drive consistency, increase transparency and limit VSM pay inflation whilst giving sufficient flexibility to attract talented candidates to the most challenging roles and providers. One of its key aims is to provide a stronger link between pay and operational performance in order to incentivise VSMs to focus on the improvement of services. I would like to thank you for providing comments on this framework in your last report, which officials are carefully considering.

On 3 July we published our [10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future](#). This plan seeks to make 3 big shifts from hospital to community, sickness to prevention, and analogue to digital, and sets the context for the pay round. A valued, motivated and skilled NHS workforce is essential to delivering our plan, which is why we will publish a 10 Year Workforce Plan to create a more empowered workforce ready to deliver a transformed service.

We were pleased to be able to accept your recommendations for 2025 to 2026 pay awards. However, it came in above the figures we set out as affordable within evidence. Over the past few months, we have identified how extra funds will be freed up by cutting duplication and waste, and through abolishing NHS England, and reshaping and reducing Integrated Care Board (ICB) costs by 50% to empower NHS staff and deliver better care for patients. As the Spending Review confirmed, all pay must be funded from departmental budgets and there will be no additional funding available for pay settlements. My department's evidence will set out the funds available to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for 2026 to 2027, following the Spending Review last month, as well as the recruitment and retention context alongside, earnings data and our plan for building an NHS fit for the future.

We know that public sector workers delivering our vital public services deserve timely pay awards. We announced 2025 to 2026 pay awards 2 months earlier than last year and remain committed to bringing 2026 to 2027 pay announcements forwards further. That is why we are launching this pay round 2 months earlier than the previous pay round, I would

be grateful if you could support an earlier pay announcement by submitting your report at the earliest point that allows you to give due consideration to the relevant evidence. I recognise that changing the timeline from recent years will present challenges for you, but I am sure you also share the government's belief in the importance of returning to more timely annual pay processes. To enable you to submit your report earlier, our department will aim to cooperate with all your deadlines and bring the evidence process forward.

As always, whilst your remit covers the whole of the United Kingdom, it is for each administration to make its own decisions on its approach to this year's pay round and to communicate this to you directly.

I would like to thank you again for your and the review body's invaluable contribution to the pay round and look forward to receiving your report for 2026 to 2027 in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wes Streeting". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

RT HON WES STREETING MP

Appendix G

Existing salaries for SSRB remit groups

Senior civil servants, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Minimum	Maximum
SCS 1	Deputy Director	£81,000	£117,800
SCS 1A	Deputy Director*	£81,000	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	£100,000	£162,500
SCS 3	Director General	£130,000	£208,100
SCS 4	Permanent Secretary	£155,000	£220,000

*Grandparented.

Source: Cabinet Office.

Senior civil servants in the Welsh Government, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Year 1	Year 2	Target Rate	Maximum
SCS 1	Deputy Director	£81,000	£92,791	£95,544	£117,800
SCS 1A	Deputy Director*	£81,000	£92,791	£95,544	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	£100,000	£113,811	£117,628	£162,500

*Grandparented.

Source: Welsh Government.

Senior civil servants in the Scottish Government, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Step 1 (TR-4)	Step 2 (TR-3)	Step 3 (TR-2)	Step 4 (TR-1)	Step 5 (TR)	Step 6 (TR+1)	Maximum
SCS 1	Deputy Director	N/A	£93,667	£94,437	£96,327	£97,451	N/A	£117,800
SCS 1A	Deputy Director*	N/A	£96,667	£94,437	£96,327	£97,451	£98,821	£128,900
SCS 2	Director	£111,916	£114,155	£116,439	£118,767	£121,143	N/A	£162,500
SCS 3	Director General	£143,036	£145,896	£148,814	£151,790	£154,827	N/A	£208,100

*Grandparented.

Source: Scottish Government.

Senior civil servants in the Government Commercial Organisation, 1 April 2025

Pay band	Title/grouping	Employment terms	Minimum	Maximum
SCS 1	Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£81,000	£117,800
		Government Commercial Organisation	£101,000	£131,000
SCS 2	Senior Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£100,000	£162,500
		Government Commercial Organisation	£137,000	£186,000
SCS 3	Senior Commercial Specialist	Civil Service	£130,000	£208,100
		Government Commercial Organisation	£167,000	£228,000

Source: Cabinet Office.

England and Wales salaried courts judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary
Lord/Lady Chief Justice	1	£325,010
Master of the Rolls	1.1	£290,213
President of the King's Bench Division	2	£280,311
President of the Family Division	2	£280,311
Chancellor of the High Court	2	£280,311
Senior President of Tribunals	2	£280,311
Lord/Lady Justice of Appeal	3	£266,556
High Court Judge	4	£234,096
Judge Advocate General (Senior Circuit Judge)*	5	£187,743
Specialist Circuit Judge	5	£187,743
Senior Circuit Judge	5	£187,743
Circuit Judge, Central Criminal Court	5	£187,743
Common Serjeant**	5	£187,743
Recorder of London**	5	£187,743
Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)	5	£187,743
Chief Master	5.1	£180,810
Senior Master	5.1	£180,810
Chief Insolvency and Companies Court Judge	5.1	£180,810
Senior Cost Judge	5.1	£180,810
Registrar of Criminal Appeals	5.2	£173,854
Master	5.2	£173,854
Insolvency and Companies Court Judge***	5.2	£173,854
Costs Judge	5.2	£173,854
Circuit Judge	5.2	£173,854
Senior Judge of The Court of Protection	5.2	£173,854
Deputy Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)	5.2	£173,854
Assistant Judge Advocate General*	7	£139,469
District Judge (Civil)	7	£139,469
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	7	£139,469

* Salary paid from the Consolidated Fund.

** Remunerated by the City of London Corporation.

*** Formerly known as Registrar.

Source: Ministry of Justice.

England and Wales salaried tribunals judiciary (incl. UK Reserved Tribunals), 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary
<i>Employment Appeal Tribunal</i>		
Senior Circuit Judge	5	£187,743
Employment Appeal Tribunal Judge	7	£139,469
<i>Employment Tribunal (England and Wales)</i>		
Employment Tribunal (England and Wales) President	5	£187,743
Regional Employment Judge (England and Wales)	5.2	£173,854
Employment Judge (England and Wales)	7	£139,469
<i>Employment Tribunal (Scotland)</i>		
Employment Tribunal (Scotland) President	5	£187,743
Employment Tribunal (Scotland) Vice President	5.2	£173,854
Employment Judge (Scotland)	7	£139,469
<i>Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Administrative Appeals Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810
<i>Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810
<i>Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) Deputy President	5	£187,743
Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810
<i>Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber)</i>		
Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery Chamber) Judge	5.1	£180,810
<i>First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (General Regulatory Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Deputy President	5.1	£180,810
First-tier Tribunal (Health, Education and Social Care Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Resident Judge	5.2	£173,854
First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Principal Judge	5.2	£173,854
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Regional Judge	6	£163,675
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Deputy Regional Judge	7	£139,469
First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) Deputy Regional Valuer	7	£139,469
<i>First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber)</i>		
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Principal Judge	5.2	£173,854

Office held	Salary group	Salary
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Regional Judge	5.2	£173,854
First-tier Tribunal (Social Entitlement Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber)		
First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber) President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (Tax Chamber) Judge	7	£139,469
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber)		
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation) Chamber President	5	£187,743
First-tier Tribunal (War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation) Chamber Judge	7	£139,469

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Scotland salaried judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary
Lord President	1.1	£290,213
Lord Justice Clerk	2	£280,311
Senator of the College of Justice (Inner House)	3	£266,556
Senator of the College of Justice (Outer House)	4	£234,096
Sheriff Principal	5	£187,743
Chair of Land Court/President of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	5	£187,743
Sheriff	5.2	£173,854
Deputy Chair of Land Court	5.2	£173,854
Legal Member of the Land Court*	5.2	£173,854
Legal Member of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	5.2	£173,854
Member of the Lands Tribunal for Scotland	6	£163,675
Summary Sheriff	7	£139,469
Member of the Land Court	8	£110,826

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Northern Ireland salaried judiciary, 1 April 2025

Office held	Salary group	Salary
Lord/Lady Chief Justice	1.1	£290,213
Lord/Lady Justice of Appeal	3	£266,556
High Court Judge	4	£234,096
Recorder of Belfast ⁱ	5	£202,762 ⁱ
Chief Social Security Commissioner and Child Support Commissioner	5	£187,743
Social Security and Child Support Commissioner	5.1	£180,810
Member of the Northern Ireland Lands Tribunal	5.1	£180,810
County Court Judge ⁱⁱ	5.2	£187,743 ⁱⁱ
President, Lands Tribunal ⁱⁱⁱ	5.2	£187,743 ⁱⁱⁱ
Presiding Master of the Court of Judicature ^{iv}	5.2	£173,854 ^{iv}
Master of the Court of Judicature	5.2	£173,854
President of the Appeals Tribunal	5.2	£173,854

Office held	Salary group	Salary
President of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal	5.2	£173,854
Vice-President of the Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment Tribunal	6	£163,675
Presiding District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	6	£163,675
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	7	£139,469
Presiding District Judge ^{iv}	7	£139,469 ^{iv}
District Judge	7	£139,469
Presiding Coroner ^v	7	£187,743 ^v
Coroner	7	£139,469
Legal Member of the Appeal Tribunals (Chair)	7	£139,469
Employment Judge (Northern Ireland)	7	£139,469

ⁱ The Recorder of Belfast is also a County Court Judge. The current post-holder is remunerated at 108 per cent of Salary Group 5 pay.

ⁱⁱ County Court Judges in Northern Ireland are remunerated at Salary Group 5 "so long as they are required to carry out significantly different work from their counterparts elsewhere in the UK".

ⁱⁱⁱ The President of the Northern Ireland Lands Tribunal is ordinarily remunerated at Salary Group 5.2 – however, the current post-holder is a High Court Judge and accordingly is remunerated at Salary Group 5.

^{iv} The Presiding Master of the Court of Judicature and Presiding District Judge are paid a separate allowance of 4 per cent of salary whilst performing the role (introduced October 2020).

^v The Presiding Coroner is ordinarily remunerated at Salary Group 7 – however, the current post-holder is a High Court Judge and accordingly is remunerated at Salary Group 5.

Source: Ministry of Justice.

Note: Judges who hold multiple posts only receive the salary for one role.

Executive and Senior Managers (2016 framework)

Grade	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone maximum
ESM 1	£90,900	£113,625	£131,300
ESM 2	£131,301	£146,450	£161,600
ESM 3	£161,601	£176,750	£191,900
ESM 4	£191,901	£207,050	£222,200

Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

Very Senior Managers (2025 framework) Level 1: Chief executive pay ranges, 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	£145,165	£200,997	£216,825
£250-£499 million	B	£156,331	£223,330	£243,929
£500-£749 million	C	£178,664	£245,663	£260,190
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£223,330	£256,830	£287,294
Over £1 billion	E	£245,663	£279,163	£308,976

Source: Department of Health and Social Care.

Very Senior Managers (2025 framework) Level 2: Executive directors pay ranges (board directors /executive directors reporting to CEOs), 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	£100,499	£156,331	£184,302
£250-£499 million	B	£111,665	£167,498	£195,143
£500-£749 million	C	£122,832	£178,664	£205,984
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£133,998	£189,831	£216,825
Over £1 billion	E	£156,331	£206,581	£227,667

Source: NHS England.

Very Senior Managers (2025 framework) Level 3: Executive directors pay range (Executive directors reporting to a board director), 1 April 2025

Organisation turnover	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
Up to £250 million	A	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent
£250-£499 million	B	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent	Agenda for Change or equivalent
£500-£749 million	C	£111,665	£133,998	£135,516
£750 million-£1 billion	D	£117,249	£139,582	£146,357
Over £1 billion	E	£122,832	£150,749	£157,199

Source: NHS England.

Very Senior Managers (2025 framework) ICB chief executive pay ranges

Weighted Population	Group	Minimum	Operational maximum	Exception zone
<1 million	A	£189,722	£214,115	£238,508
1-1.5 million	B	£205,984	£230,377	£254,770
1.5-2 million	C	£238,508	£260,190	£281,873
>2 million	D	£271,032	£292,714	£314,397

Source: NHS England.

Very Senior Managers (2025 framework) ICB executive pay ranges

Groups A and B (<1.5 million weighted population)	CFO	CNO	CMO	Other board executives
Minimum	£144,189	£133,890	£133,890	£124,133
Operational maximum	£173,460	£161,942	£161,942	£150,423
Groups C and D (>1.5 million weighted population)	CFO	CNO	CMO	Other board executives
Minimum	£166,956	£155,030	£155,030	£131,180
Operational maximum	£197,311	£184,302	£184,302	£171,292

Source: NHS England.

Appendix H

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

General

AI	Artificial intelligence
AFPRB	Armed Forces Pay Review Body
ALB	Arm's length body
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
Cohort/cadre	A particular group or section of the relevant workforce
DDaT	Digital, Data and Technology
Feeder group	The grade/rank/section of the relevant workforce which is immediately below our remit group in seniority, and/or whose members form the internal candidate pool for appointment or promotion into roles within our remit group (i.e. Grade 6/7 in the SCS, fee-paid members of the judiciary, AfC Band 8/9 in the NHS)
FTE	Full-time equivalent
FY	Financial year
HR	Human Resources
Junior workforce	The section of the relevant workforce that does not fall within the SSRB's purview (i.e. the delegated grades in the civil service, the AfC grades in the NHS)
HM	His Majesty/His Majesty's
HMT	HM Treasury
KPI	Key performance indicators
NHS	National Health Service
OPRB	Office for the Pay Review Bodies (the Secretariat to the SSRB)
pa	Per annum
Q	Quarter
Remit group	The respective public sector workforce within the SSRB's purview (i.e. the Senior Civil Service, the salaried judiciary, senior leaders in the NHS in England, chief police officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Police and Crime Commissioners)
SSRB	Review Body on Senior Salaries
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Economic Context

ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BoE	Bank of England
CPI	Consumer Price Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDR	Incomes Data Research
LRD	Labour Research Department
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
RTI	Real time information

Senior Civil Service

CSC	Civil Service Commission
Delegated grades	Civil servant staff grades from Administrative Assistant (AA) up to Grade 6 (G6) (or C3 in Scotland), where pay, terms, and grading structures are managed individually by departments rather than centrally
FDA	The trade union representing professionals and managers in public service (formerly known as the Association of First Division Civil Servants)
LGA	Local Government Association
LGBO	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and other
NCPRP	Non-consolidated performance-related payments (bonuses)
No10	Number 10 Downing Street – the official residence and office of the British Prime Minister
‘Pay tourism’	The practice of leaving the civil service and returning as an external candidate in order to be able to negotiate a higher salary
Places for Growth	A UK government initiative aimed at relocating civil service roles from London to regional hubs across the UK
Prospect	The trade union representing employees in specialist roles across a diverse range of industries
SCS	Senior Civil Service/servants
VES	Voluntary exit schemes
Whitehall	The group of employees and departments of the British government that are not part of its military and whose main offices are in London

Judiciary

CILEX	Chartered Institute of Legal Executives
Diplock courts	A non-jury system in Northern Ireland, named after Lord Diplock, introduced in 1973 to try persons suspected of terrorist offences
FPJPS	Fee Paid Judicial Pension Scheme 2017
HMCTS	His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service
JABS	Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland
JAC	Judicial Appointments Commission (England and Wales)
JAS	Judicial Attitude Survey
JCPC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
JPS	Judicial Pension Scheme
JUPRA	Judicial Pension Scheme 1993
KC	King's Counsel
Major Review	The Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure ²⁷⁹
McCloud Remedy	A government-mandated correction to UK public sector pension schemes that removes age discrimination caused by transitional protections applied between 2015 and 2022 ²⁸⁰
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MRA	Mandatory Retirement Age
NIJAC	Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
NICTS	Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service
PAJE	The England and Wales Judicial Diversity Forum's Pre-Application Judicial Education Programme
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SCTS	Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
Solemn cases	Serious criminal cases heard before a Senator and jury of 15 people in the High Court, or a Sheriff and jury of 15 people in the Sheriff Court – as opposed to a 'summary case' heard in the Sheriff Court or Justice of the Peace Court without a jury. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 'solemn cases' are known as 'indictable offences'

²⁷⁹ See "Major Review of the Judicial Salary Structure: Terms of Reference" (13 May 2025) GOV.UK <www.gov.uk/government/publications/major-review-of-the-judicial-salary-structure-terms-of-reference>.

²⁸⁰ See *Lord Chancellor and another v McCloud and others; Secretary of State for the Home Department and others v Sargeant and others* [2018] EWCA Civ 2844.

UK Reserved Tribunals	Tribunals that deal with reserved issues of UK law – rather than matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament, or Northern Ireland Assembly – and have UK-wide jurisdiction and structures
UKSC	The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom

Senior Leaders in the NHS in England

AfC	Agenda for Change
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CNO	Chief Nursing Officer
DHSC	Department of Health & Social Care
ESM	Executive and Senior Manager – someone who holds an executive position in one of DHSC’s ALBs or someone who, although not a board member, holds a senior position typically reporting directly to the chief executive
ESR	Electronic Staff Record
ICB	Integrated Care Board
MiP	Managers in Partnership – the specialist trade union for managers and other senior staff working in health and care services (a joint venture between the FDA and Unison)
NHSE	NHS England
NHSP	NHS Providers
NOF	NHS Oversight Framework
VSM	Very Senior Manager – someone who holds an executive position on the board at an NHS trust or NHS foundation trust or someone who, although not a board member, holds a senior position typically reporting directly to the chief executive

