



Department
for Education

DEPUTY DIRECTOR FE/HE IMPROVEMENT AND INTERVENTION

Information pack



A message from Susan Acland-Hood, Permanent Secretary

I would like to add my personal welcome to you and I hope that you will be inspired to join us in the Department for Education. I am passionate and committed to our work and feel a very strong connection with the Department's objectives.

Whatever your background, if you are interested in a stimulating professional challenge combined with creating amazing outcomes for all of us in society then come and join our journey.

As a senior leader in DfE you will play an important role in the wider leadership of the department. You will lead with strong values, professionalism and a commitment to building capability and diversity. We are looking for someone who offers both the skills and the commitment to lead this agenda and our people. I hope this pack helps you decide whether that person is you.

We are the department for opportunity. If you have the will and the skill to make a difference to the lives of children and young people across the country, we want to hear from you.

I look forward to your application,

Susan Acland-Hood,

Permanent Secretary



Welcome Message from Roger Cotes, Director for Regional Performance

Thank-you for considering this role which is central to our intent to support financial resilience in higher education and to deliver FE sector improvement in line with the commitments in the Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper.

This role is a fantastic opportunity to lead a division which brings together civil service, educational practitioner and finance expertise to deliver improvement. It sits at the interface of delivery with policy and is critical to the Government's ambitious programme of skills reforms.

Regional Performance Directorate is responsible for driving performance across the post-16 system to secure improved outcomes for learners – in terms of education, employment and growth. This division has a national role but works in close partnership with our regional teams.

Our directorate is a fantastic place to work with brilliant people and a positive people survey. We currently delivering significant changes in our role and resourcing and change leadership – both of the division and contributing to the wider directorate and group will be an important part of the role.



The Way We Work in DfE

Our purpose: Why we do what we do

We are the department for **opportunity**

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

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

Our DfE Behaviours: How we behave

We are **Kind**

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

We are **Direct**

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

We **Simplify**

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

We **Connect**

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

The Civil Service code of values: What guides us

Integrity

Honesty

Objectivity

Impartiality



The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and under 19s further education policy in England.

The DfE is supported by around 8,000 staff across 12 sites including Coventry, Darlington, London, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and it works with [16 Arm's Length Bodies](#). These bodies play a critical role in the administration of our funding, the delivery of services, and the provision of regulation and advice across the sector.

We are responsible for:

- teaching and learning for children in the early years and in primary schools
- teaching and learning for young people in secondary schools
- teaching, learning and training for those aged 19 years and under in higher and further education
- supporting professionals who work with children and young people
- helping disadvantaged children and young people to achieve more
- making sure that local services protect and support children

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



Job Title: Deputy Director FE / HE improvement and Intervention:

Location: Sheffield, London, Coventry Manchester, Darlington – role will require national travel at least a couple of times a month.

Salary: External candidates should expect their salary upon appointment to be £81,000 per annum.

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

Contract Type: This role is being offered on 3 year assignment duration*. This is a full time role and suitable for a job share or part time (4 days a week).

The Role:

This role provides leadership to our improvement and intervention work across the Further and Higher Education Sectors. The role involves shaping our new approach to managing financial risks to the HE sector which is a top priority for the Department. It involves leading and overseeing the office of the Further Education Commissioner, Ellen Thinnesen.

The FE Commissioner leads all intervention activity in Further Education Colleges. Our approach in higher education draws on our substantial experience of leading financial improvement in the further education sector, and the role will establish synergies across the portfolio.

***The assignment duration**

This role has a minimum assignment duration of **3 years**. An assignment duration is the period of time a Senior Civil Servant is expected to remain in the same post to enable them to deliver on the agreed key business outcomes. The assignment duration also supports your career through building your depth of expertise. As part of accepting this role you will be agreeing to the expected assignment duration set out above. This will not result in a contractual change to your terms and conditions. Please note this is an expectation only, it is not something which is written into your terms and conditions or indeed which the employing organisation or you are bound by. It will depend on your personal circumstances at a particular time and business needs, for example, would not preclude any absence like family friendly leave. It is nonetheless an important expectation, which is why we ask you to confirm you agree to the assignment duration set out above.



- To lead the development and implementation of our approach to strengthening financial sustainability in the Higher Education Sector, working in partnership with the Office for Students
- Leadership and oversight of the office of the Further Education Commissioner – who is sector practitioner appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and reporting to the Minister for Skills. The division supports the Commissioner in managing a team of around 16 Deputy Commissioners and Advisers. It also manages a small team of HE advisers.
- Delivery of a major programme to support institutional restructuring, with budgetary responsibility for a facility of up to £360m of loan funding to support structural change. The role also holds the budget for the FE Commissioner.
- Leading Further Education sector improvement, working closely with the Further Education Commissioner. This includes work to establish best practice and improvement support, as well as delivery of mandated and intensive support, including intervention and structural change where required.
- Leadership of change – the Directorate is going through significant transformation to support the move to Regional Improvement Teams – announced by the Prime Minister last year. This will involve significant changes in how the FE Commissioner team works with regional teams to deliver improvement.



Applicants will be assessed against the following criteria. If applicant numbers are excessive, preliminary sifting will be done using only the first criteria.

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

- ❖ **Systems leadership** – experience of driving improvement in complex system, using a range of levers
- ❖ **Partnership working** – proven ability to secure positive outcomes in a complex environment, with multiple partner and stakeholders
- ❖ **Effective decision making** – ability to make robust decisions informed by strong data and evidence and assessment of **risk** and **value for money**.
- ❖ **Change leadership and performance management** - experience of driving significant organisational change to deliver high performance, while achieving high staff engagement.
- ❖ **Working at pace** - experience of delivering at pace in situations with a high level of pressure and scrutiny.

We also expect candidates to be able to demonstrate the following **desirable** criteria:

- ❖ A strong understanding of how to secure improvement in the further and higher education sectors – which can be complemented by experience of parallel sectors



To apply for this role, you need **to complete an online application** via the [Civil Service Jobs portal](#). Applications will be accepted until **23:55 on 8th April 2026**

Application

1. A **CV** setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements. Please ensure you have provided reasons for any gaps within the last two years.
2. A **Statement of Suitability** (no longer than 2 sides or 1,000 words), detailing how you meet the essential criteria outlined in this pack. Should we receive a high volume of applications, then we will sift on the first essential criteria.

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

If you are unable to apply online, please contact scs.recruitment@education.gov.uk in the first instance. Please visit [our career site](#) for further information on the Civil Service application process.

Please note the following:

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



Selection Process

Shortlisted candidates will:

- I. Take part in a formal interview which will include:
 - I. A presentation (details will be provided to shortlisted candidates)
 - II. Interview questions based on the essential criteria to further assess your experience.

The interviews will take place on the 22 and 23 April and will be face to face in our Sheffield office.

Please note that references and open-source due diligence checks (including into social media accounts) may be undertaken for all short-listed candidates.

The Department for Education does not cover the cost of travel to your interview/assessment unless otherwise stated.

Please note that at interview stage we may ask if you have any conflicts of interest to declare.



Candidates with disabilities

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

Employment scheme for Veterans

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

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

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

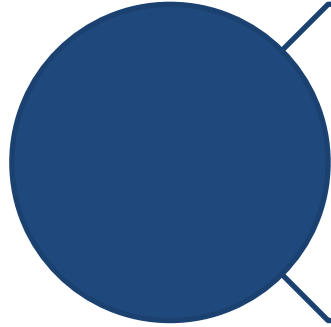
- The United Kingdom
- The Republic of Ireland
- The Commonwealth*
- A European Economic Area (EEA) Member State
- Switzerland
- Turkey Certain family members of EEA, Swiss and Turkish nationals are also eligible to apply regardless of their nationality.

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

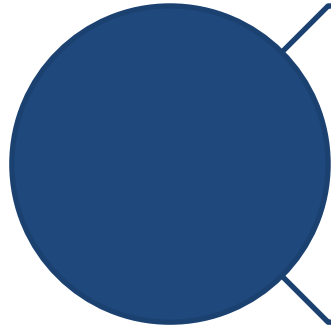


INTERVIEW PANEL

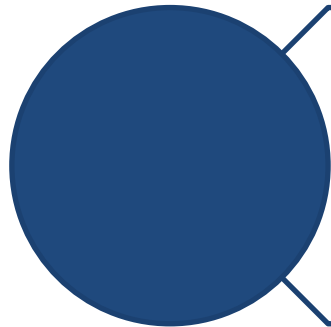
Interview Panel



Roger Cotes
Vacancy Holder



[Ellen Thinnisen]
Panel Member



[Michael Nicol]
Independent Panel Member



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



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

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

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

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

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

Best practice: We are recognised for promoting diversity in the workplace.

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



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

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

Performance Related Pay: You may be eligible for an end-year non-consolidated payment based on performance against objectives in the previous year. Payments are non-consolidated and non-pensionable. You may also be eligible for an in-year award. These are paid on an exceptional basis for proven, evidence-based delivery e.g. against stretching project milestones or for an exceptional corporate contribution. Awards will be non-consolidated and non-pensionable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sick Pay: Occupational sick pay.

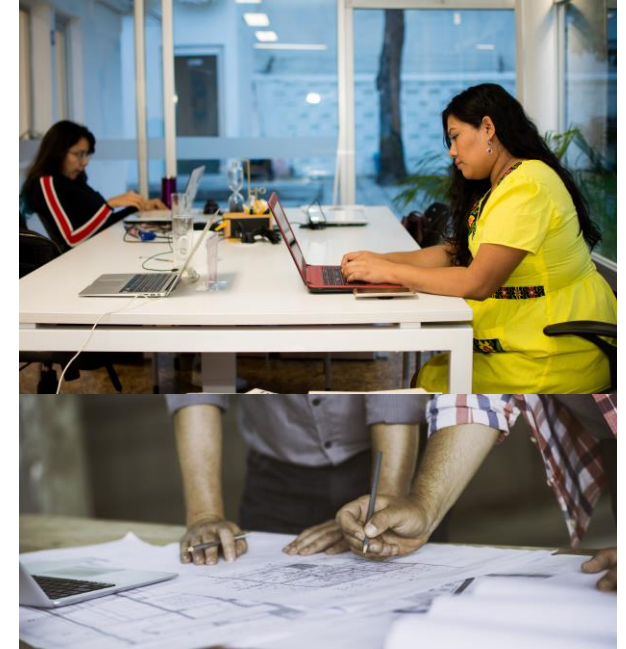


Civil Service Code

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

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

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



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

The Civil Service Commission has two key functions:

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

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

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

How to complain

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

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