



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Candidate Information Pack

Rural Payments Agency

Chief Executive



Welcome



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs



The RPA holds direct relationships with farmers, land managers and growers who receive public money for the actions they do to grow and farm in a more nature-friendly way. It also runs a number of key services, like the cattle movement service, and manages core data sets like information on rural land parcels. It's an absolutely crucial part of the Government delivering for rural communities, and for the food and farming sectors.

We're looking for a skilled, effective and collaborative operational leader to take the RPA through its next phase of transformation and manage a complex and important programme of work across a range of policies and schemes. Transforming the operating model and embedding new digital, data, technology capabilities to improve services for customers. Making the organisation more efficient, instilling a test, learn and improve culture and aligning the RPA's work with evolving policy intent. Joining the RPA's work up seamlessly with other regulators and advisors who work closely with farmers and land managers. All in the service of the outcomes that public money is for, including nature recovery and food security.

Please watch my video where I say a bit more about the RPA, the Defra group, and what I'm looking for in a candidate. This is available: [here](#).

If you're motivated by offering really high quality services to people whose livelihoods are made from looking after land and nature and growing food, if you enjoy working across multiple organisations and teams to join up policy and delivery and make a difference, and if you think you can lead over 2000 people to do that excellently, then I hope you'll put in an application.

I look forward to meeting you in the interview process.

Emily Miles, Director General, Food, Biosecurity and Trade, DEFRA

About the organisation



Rural Payments
Agency



The Rural Payments Agency (RPA):

- is an executive agency of the UK [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(DEFRA\)](#)
- is the delivery body for a range of policies, schemes and services for the agricultural sector in England
- is responsible for distributing over £2 billion of payments each year to farmers, and land managers in England
- employs over 2000 staff members across various offices in England, including Reading, Carlisle, Exeter, Newcastle, Workington, and York
- works closely with the Farming and Countryside Programme (FCP) within Defra, the Government Major Programme that leads the transition from the pre-EU exit Common Agricultural Policy to domestic policies and schemes, including Environmental Land Management schemes
- is supported by shared business services for human resources, finance, property, commercial, digital, data, technology and security from the defra group
- is undergoing a period of significant change in its work, its relationships with customers and the digital, data and technology capabilities it relies on

For more information about who we are and what we do visit
our website: [Rural Payments Agency - GOV.UK](#)

About the organisation

The RPA's objectives are:

- successfully delivering the agricultural transition (the transition away from the EU Common Agricultural Policy to domestic policies and schemes in England), meeting both customer and policy needs
- delivering environmental outcomes through a quality service
- being an exemplar of the Civil Service's operational delivery profession working in practice

The RPA's work includes:

- managing farming grants to boost productivity, improve animal health and welfare and improve the environment in England
- managing and agreements and payments to farmers and land managers through Environmental Land Management schemes
- monitoring cattle movements and inspections of abattoirs and meat cutting plants
- issuing import and export licenses for the agri-food sector
- paying subsidies to encourage uptake of milk in schools,
- supporting free flow of trade through provision of certificates of free sale
- managing ad-hoc emergency support for the sector
- Running a customer contact centre
- managing remote monitoring and on-site visits to support effective delivery of environmental land management schemes
- managing the rural land register for the Defra group.



70,000 agreements

The RPA administers about 70,000 environmental land management agreements with farmers paying out monies and checking compliance with terms of the agreement.



220,000 calls

Our customer contact centre responded to 220,000 calls in 2023-24, and dealt with 189,000 items of correspondence.



Cattle database

The RPA provides the service to record cattle births, deaths and movements, and administers the ear tag allocation service - Livestock Unique Identification Service, (LUIS).

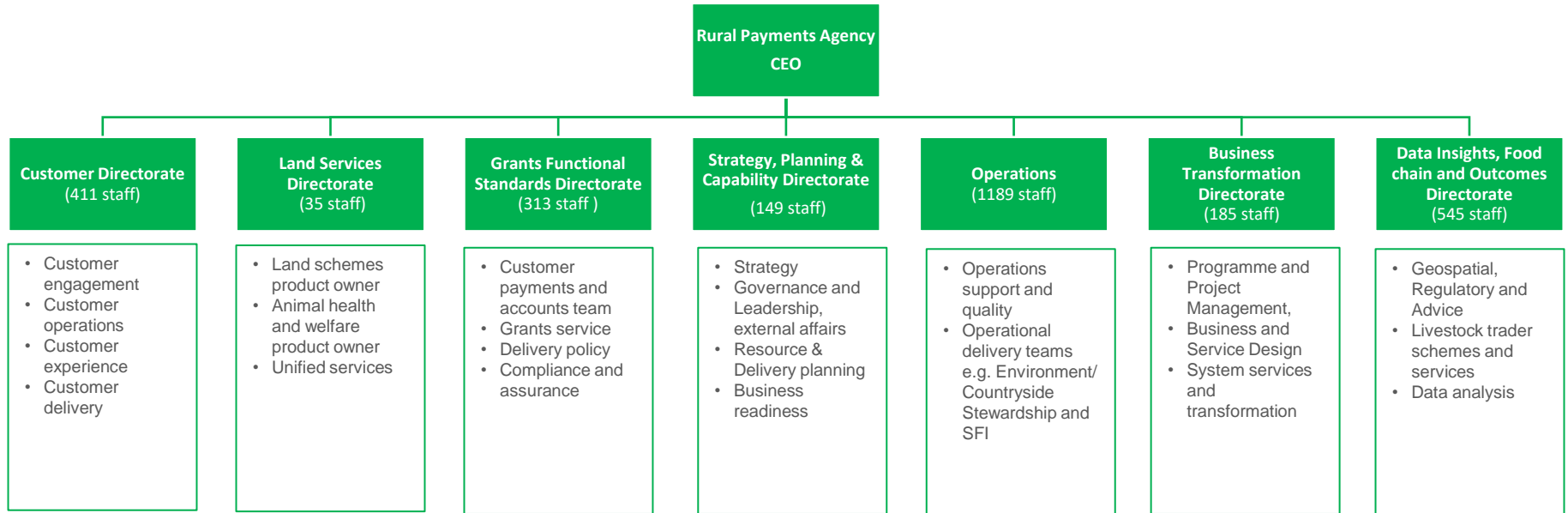


School milk

The RPA subsidises the cost of milk and yoghurt products for school children in the UK through 350 partners who distribute £6.5m to 2m pupils a year.

About the organisation

The RPA is an executive agency within the DEFRA Group, under the responsibility of the Director General, Food, Biosecurity and Trade. An overview of the structure at RPA is provided below.



Key Responsibilities

The Chief Executive of the RPA is responsible for the day-to-day running of the agency. They set policy and direction and ensure the RPA's plans are delivered in line with its responsibilities and Defra's strategic priorities. As a leader within Defra, they work closely with other senior leaders and chief executives to deliver collectively across the entirety of the Department. The new CEO will bring their people and operational leadership skill, collaborative approach and customer focus to develop and drive an enterprise wide transformation.

Leadership and strategic vision

- Be a credible, collaborative and effective leader and build a high performing, trusting and trusted executive team to execute the RPA strategy in partnership with policy and delivery teams across Defra group
- Develop the vision and transform the operating model and organisational design of the organisation to collaborate with colleagues, adapt to the changing policy and delivery context and priorities, deliver more efficiently and continuously improve services and outcomes
- Help the organisation build and deploy the resources, skills and capability to enable it to deliver its aims and objectives.
- Be an inspirational and inclusive leader to RPA's 2500 people, creating a culture which embodies the VERITAS values (Visible, Engaging, Respectful, Inclusive, Trusted, Accountable and Supportive).

Partnership working and stakeholder engagement

- Build strong, collaborative and open partnerships across Defra and with ministers, as well as with external stakeholders from a range of organisations
- Represent the organisation to a complex and varied customer and stakeholder group, promote a wide understanding of the work that RPA does and the role that it plays, and respond to learning and insight

Operational delivery and transformation

- Ensure efficient and effective delivery of the planned programme of grants, schemes and services for farmers, in line with policy priorities and intent set by Ministers and in partnership with colleagues across Defra
- Lead the transformational change required to improve customers' experience, efficiency and outcomes
- Embed new technology, data, digital services and ways of working, in partnership with the Farming and countryside Programme and Defra's Digital, Data and Technology teams, and leverage them to support wider transformation, including:
 - improving operational performance through data insights, technology and improved capability
 - improving customer experience of RPA services
 - reducing fraud, error and any other forms of failure or waste
 - reducing the cost-to-serve of grant schemes and other RPA services
- Manage risks within the policy and risk appetite set by the core Department.

Financial Management

- Take personal responsibility as the CEO and accounting officer for financial probity, regularity and value for money of RPA expenditure

Candidate Profile

Summary:

This role is for a customer-focused, collaborative and confidence-inspiring leader who is energised by the idea of:

- leading a large organisation working across multiple sites on a range of services for the farmers and land managers who look after 70% of the land in England
- working in ongoing partnership across organisations, disciplines and teams to deliver ambitious outcomes for food, farming and the environment
- embedding user-centred principles and practices across the whole organisation
- embracing new digital, data and technology and the agile, multidisciplinary ways of working that are needed to make services work better for customers and outcomes
- building the capabilities to continuously adapt policies, schemes and services to respond to evolving policy priorities, learning and feedback.

Essential criteria – we are looking for someone who:

- Is a credible and inclusive leader of people, able to take the whole organisation through a positive and effective process of learning, change and improvement to develop and mature the operating model and culture of the organisation
- Has a track record in leading high quality, efficient and continuously improving services for customers, building operational excellence and embracing digital, data and technology change as critical enablers of improvement
- Is able to take a strategic approach to managing the range of responsibilities and priorities the organisation needs to deliver in a coherent, efficient way, building and maintaining momentum whilst managing evolving priorities and risks in a complex, uncertain and dynamic policy and sector context
- Is instinctively collaborative and will actively enjoy building trust and common purpose across the organisation and with policy, finance, commercial, digital and delivery colleagues across multiple other organisations and teams, embedding effective multi-disciplinary approaches across the range of products and services
- Can quickly and effectively build relationships and trust with a range of external stakeholders; has highly effective communication and influencing skills, providing clear vision and leadership internally and credible, responsive communications and engagement with external partners and customers
- Has experience of being accountable for and successfully managing and delivering against a substantial and complex budget.

The Selection Process



Civil Service Commission

Civil Service SCS2 level recruitment processes are regulated by the [Civil Service Commission](#) and are governed by the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles. The law requires that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition.

Longlist

The panel will assess your application to select those demonstrating the best fit with the role by considering the evidence you have provided against the essential criteria set out in the 'Candidate Profile' section. Failure to address any or all of these may affect your application. Candidates selected for longlisting will be invited for a preliminary discussion to further explore their skills and experience.

Shortlist

The panel will review reports on those longlisted and will select a shortlist of candidates whose applications best demonstrate suitability for the role, by considering the evidence provided against the essential criteria set out in the Candidate Profile.

If you are shortlisted, you will be asked to take part in a number of assessments. These assessments will not result in a pass or fail decision. Rather, they are designed to support the panel's decision-making and highlight areas for the panel to explore further at interview.

- **Staff Engagement Exercise**
- **Structured Stakeholder Conversation**
- **Meeting with a Defra Minister**

Candidates will also be offered the voluntary opportunity for an informal discussion with Emily Miles as the recruitment head, to talk about the role and ask any questions. Further detail will be shared with shortlisted candidates nearer the time.

Formal Interview

This will be an in-person interview and will assess your capabilities against the essential criteria set out in the Candidate Profile. You may be asked to deliver a presentation, the subject of which will be provided in advance.

The panel will be chaired by Elizabeth Hambley CB, Civil Service Commissioner.

The panel will also include:

- Emily Miles, Director General Food, Biosecurity and Trade, Defra
- Lara Sampson, Partner at Public Digital
- Non-Executive Director Chair of RPA's Management Board.

Regardless of the final outcome we will notify all candidates as soon as possible after the final interview.

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

Complaints

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles, and you wish to make a complaint please contact Russell Reynolds via the application address in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you can contact the Civil Service Commission via their website: [here](#).

Timeline

Candidates are asked to note the below timetable, exercising flexibility through the recruitment and selection process as it may not be possible to offer any alternative dates for assessments or interviews.

Please note that this timeline is indicative at this stage and could be subject to change. The anticipated timetable is as follows:

Activity	Week Commencing
Closing date	4 June
Longlisting meeting (<i>Appointment Panel only</i>)	9 June
Preliminary discussions with Russell Reynolds Associates	9, 16 & 23 June
Shortlisting meeting (<i>Appointment Panel only</i>)	30 June
Assessments	7 & 14 July
Panel Interviews	14 July



Detailed Terms and Conditions

Salary and grade

The role is Director / Senior Civil Servant (SCS) Pay Band 2 and we expect to offer a salary of **c£120,000** for an exceptional candidate.

Existing Civil Servants will have their salary calculated in accordance with Civil Service pay rules.

Location

The RPA is a national organisation. You may be based at the locations listed below which are either a main Defra or RPA location. Travel to Defra/RPA sites is expected alongside frequent travel to London for meetings, including with senior leaders and ministers. The agreed amount of time spent at a workplace for this post will reflect the requirement for Civil Servants to spend at least 60% of their working time in an organisation workplace with the option to work the remaining time flexibly from home. Working time spent at a workplace may include time spent at other locations including field-based operational locations, together with supplier, customer or partner locations. This is a non-contractual agreement which is consistent with common Civil Service expectations.

Options: Reading (HQ), Bristol, Carlisle, Crewe, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham, Workington and York. Other locations may be considered subject to Defra or RPA presence and capacity.

Contract type

This role is being offered on a permanent basis. It is expected that this role will have a minimum assignment duration of 3 years. That is the period of time we would expect you to remain in this role to enable you to deliver on agreed business outcomes. It is also designed to support you in your career and to help you to develop a depth of expertise. While we would ask you to agree to this expected duration as part of accepting any offer, it is not a contractual provision and is not written into your terms and conditions.

External candidates will be offered a permanent Defra contract. This includes employees of accredited NDPBs. Current Civil Servants will be offered the post on permanent transfer from their current department to Defra. If you are an existing civil servant appointed on promotion, you will be appointed on modernised terms and conditions.

How to Apply

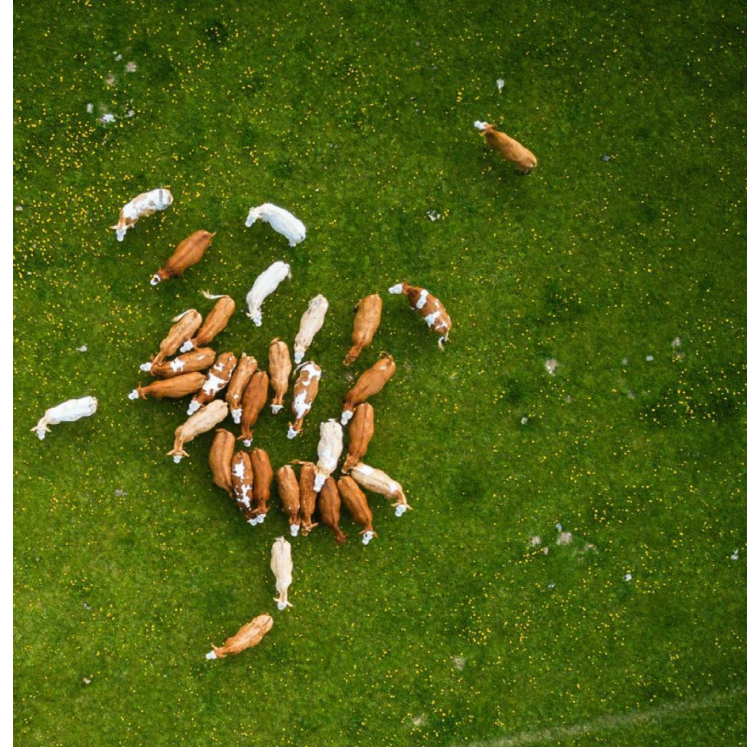
The recruitment process is being undertaken by Russell Reynolds Associates on behalf of RPA. Please submit your full application by email to responses@russellreynolds.com. All applications will be acknowledged.

Your submission should include:

- The role title and reference code **2504-012L** in the subject heading of the email.
- **Your CV**, with educational and professional qualifications and full employment history, including an explanation of any gaps in your employment history, and details where possible of budgets and numbers of people.
- **A short covering statement** of no more than two A4 sized pages (1000 words) explaining why this appointment interests you and how you can evidence your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the criteria in the Candidate Profile on page 7.
- **A Diversity Questionnaire:** The Civil Service is committed to achieving a workforce that reflects the society it serves, at all levels including the most senior. Collecting this information enables us to identify whether we are recruiting from the widest possible pool of talent and check that all groups are being treated fairly throughout the process. This form will not be disclosed to anyone involved in assessing your application. Please note that applications will not be accepted unless the form is returned. If you do not wish to provide a response to a particular question, you should complete the 'prefer not to say' option. Please complete that [here](#).

We operate a Disability Confident Scheme (DCS). We are committed to making reasonable adjustments in order to support disabled job applicants and ensure that you are not disadvantaged in the recruitment and assessment process. All monitoring data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not affect your application in any way. If you wish to make an application under this scheme, please indicate this when asked on the Diversity Questionnaire.

If you require any adjustments due to a disability to make the process more accessible to you, please contact the application address detailed above for assistance.



Useful information

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

This job is broadly open to the following groups:

- UK nationals
- nationals of the Republic of Ireland
- nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)
- individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020
- Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

For more information on job nationality requirements and the right to work in the UK, see the [Civil Service recruitment: nationality rules - GOV.UK](#) and the UK Visas and Immigration rules: [UK Visas and Immigration - GOV.UK](#)

Security Clearance

Successful candidates for this role will be required to obtain SC clearance prior to taking up appointment. Applicants must be currently resident in the UK and have between 3 to 10 years continuous UK residency depending on the level of Security. However, residency qualification may be reduced for certain roles and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is up to each person applying for a post to ensure they meet the residency criteria.

More information about security clearance levels can be found at the following link: [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Pre-Employment Checks

Everyone employed in the Civil Service is subject to security checks. These security checks, known as pre-employment checks, are conducted to verify your: identity, employment history; right to work; eligibility under nationality rules; and any unspent criminal convictions.

These checks ensure that candidates are entitled to work in the UK and possess the honesty, integrity and values for government-related work.

Depending on the level of checks needed for the role, you may need to provide at least three documents so we can evidence your identity, nationality, full permanent address, signature and date of birth.

These would include:

- Current British Passport
- Birth Certificate - issued within 12 months of birth
- Bank, building society or credit card statement
- Current photo card driving license
- Original utility bill
- Marriage certificate/Civil
- Partnership certificate

What makes Defra a great place to work?

We offer an attractive and competitive benefits package. We have strong and proactive staff networks, special leave policies for hospital appointments, reasonable adjustments put in place for those who need them, and diversity talent programmes to help everyone irrespective of background, to achieve their potential.

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.

Great Member Pension	Generous Employer Contribution	Death Benefits
<p>Defined Benefit Pension Scheme</p> <p>Provides a secure pension payable for life with no investment uncertainty</p> <p>Choice of tax-free lump sum Amongst the lowest member contributions in public sector</p> <p>Generous build rate of 2.3% of your earnings as a pension each year</p>	<p>Employer contribution towards your pension is extremely generous – on average 27% of your pay</p> <p>These contributions pay for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A pension for you o Pension for your loved ones o Death benefits o Ill health benefits 	<p>Able to nominate anyone (including charities) for a tax-free lump sum in the event of your death</p> <p>Lump Sum of up to two times your pay</p> <p>Pension for your spouse/partner of around 37.5% of your pension</p> <p>Pension for eligible children</p>

Generous 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 leave entitlement.

If you are an existing civil servant appointed on promotion, you will be appointed on modernized terms and conditions.

Staff Wellbeing: We want to support your wellbeing by ensuring that flexible working is at the heart of our people offer. Our flexible working policies create an environment in which we are all happy and comfortable talking about flexible working options. These include where you work, when you work and how you work. Flexible Working Schemes allow you to vary your working day as long as you work your total hours. We also have generous paid maternity and paternity leave which is notably more than the statutory minimum offered by many other employers.

Childcare benefits: Working parents can open an online childcare account and for every £8 they pay in, the government adds £2, up to a maximum of £2000 a year for each child or £4000 for a disabled child. Parents then use the funds to pay for registered childcare. Existing employees may be able to continue to claim childcare vouchers, so please check how the policy would work for you here.

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 season ticket or a new bicycle.

Sick Pay: Occupational Sick Pay.

Professional subscriptions: We will pay the membership fees for one relevant professional association.

[Visit the Civil Service Pension Scheme](#) for more details.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

We passionately believe in equality, diversity & inclusion and we match that belief with action.

RPA is committed to being an organisation in which fairness and inclusion are central to all our working relationships. At RPA we want you to have a respectful, welcoming and engaging working environment, free from discrimination regardless of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, social background, trade union activity, caring responsibilities or working pattern.

At Defra we are always looking to attract the very best people from the widest possible talent pool, and we are proud to be an inclusive, equal opportunities employer. As a Disability Confident Leader, we're committed to ensuring that all candidates are treated fairly throughout the recruitment process.

We offer career development through a range of both internal and Civil Service wide talent schemes, mentoring, sponsorship and reverse mentoring. Our senior leaders talk authentically and with passion about what they are doing personally to support equality, diversity and inclusion.

We promote and support a range of flexible working patterns to enable staff to balance home and work responsibilities, and we treat people fairly irrespective of their working arrangements.

Application schemes:

Candidates applying under the Disability Confident Scheme or Great Place to Work for Veterans who meet the minimum essential criteria in the job specification are guaranteed an interview. Please complete the relevant parts in the online application system if applying under either of these schemes.

RPA also offers a Redeployment Interview Scheme to civil servants who are at risk of redundancy, and who meet the minimum requirements for the advertised vacancy.

What reasonable adjustments can be made if I have a disability?

Defra is a Disability Confident Leader and therefore part of the Disability Confident Scheme (for further information on the Disability confident scheme please visit: [Disability Confident Scheme](#). If you have a disability defined by the Equality Act 2010, you're eligible to be considered for the Disability Confident Scheme.

In order to qualify you must have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities. (Further information regarding disabilities covered under the equality act please visit [here](#)).

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments for Disability Confident Scheme applicants and will try to remove any barriers so you are not at a disadvantage during the selection/recruitment process/ interview / assessment including; allowing extra time during selection tests; ensuring that information is provided in an accessible format or; by providing training. We are also committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for the role applied for.

If you feel that you may need a reasonable adjustment to be made, or you would like to discuss the disability confident scheme in more detail please contact the application address included.

If you wish to receive a hard copy of the information, or in an alternative format, please contact: responses@russellreynolds.com





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