

Position Specification

UK Health Security Agency

Chief Executive

March 2025

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Introduction

One of the principal functions of government is to protect the public. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) exists to protect the public from health harms of major infectious threats as well as radiological, nuclear and chemical incidents, whether accidental or deliberate. Additionally, it plays important roles in the science of health protection, in the innovation and growth of the UK life sciences industry, and the UK's contribution to global health security. The Chief Executive will lead UKHSA in fulfilling these missions.

Infectious diseases are some of the greatest threats to human health. The prevention, detection and control of infectious diseases is central to the role of UKHSA. Some, like major vaccine-preventable diseases of childhood are a constant threat. Others such as pandemics and epidemics are health emergencies with sudden and often unexpected risk of loss of life on a very large scale. In the last few decades COVID-19, HIV, pandemic influenza, and major epidemics such as Ebola, Zika, MERS and SARS demonstrate infectious diseases have not lost their ability to arrive at speed and cause tens or hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Alongside this the risk of chemical, nuclear, radiological and biological incidents can cause significant risk to the health of the population. The UK has had recent examples such as the Novichok poisonings. Environmental health hazards range from natural radon to climate change.

To counter these threats requires significant scientific capacity. UKHSA is therefore both an operational and a scientific organisation, with many national and internationally recognised health protection scientists from multiple disciplines. UKHSA also runs a major network of diagnostic and experimental laboratories, some within NHS settings and others independent of it. It works with academic centres of excellence and the UK's vibrant life sciences industry.

UKHSA faces, interacts with and serves the public, the NHS, the government and scientists across the world.

The role of CEO of UKHSA is therefore a challenging but also a fascinating one with no two days the same. It requires a leader who can run a complex organisation, be good in a major crisis, inspire scientific colleagues, and work in government and international bodies at a senior level. They may have come from public health or medicine, from academia, from industry or from government. Whatever their background, they will make a substantial contribution to the health, security and economy of the UK through their leadership and management of this remarkable organisation.

Professor Chris Whitty, KCB FRS FMedSci FRCP FFPH

Chief Medical Officer for England



Professor Chris Whitty
Chief Medical Officer for
England

Context and role

The Civil Service delivers public services and supports the government of the day to develop and implement its policies. Much of this work happens in our individual Departments (of which there are over 40), but we also have 12 cross-Government functions - along with numerous arms' length bodies who work across the public sector.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases and the impact of chemical, radiological and other environmental health hazards, to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. It provides scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

UKHSA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care. The Chief Executive leads the agency and is accountable for its strategy and operations, and for the effective and efficient use of public funds.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring UKHSA delivers its mission to:

- **Prepare:** be ready for and prevent future health security hazards
- **Respond:** save lives and reduce harm through effective health security response
- **Build:** the UK's health security capacity and resilience including being an integral part of UK national security infrastructure.



For more information about who we are and what we do, please view our video available [here](#)

or visit our website at:

[UK Health Security Agency - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/uk-health-security-agency)

Key responsibilities



As Chief Executive, you will:

- Build the vision and plan that supports the ambition for UKHSA to be a scientific and operational leader in health security.
- Provide strong leadership to a multi-disciplinary organisation of 5,500 people, by translating Ministers' ambitions into a clear vision to staff, setting a direction for that vision and ensuring the agency is organised, resourced and motivated to deliver its priorities.
- Lead the emergency preparedness and response to health security threats, ranging from infectious diseases, CBRN, antimicrobial resistance to emerging zoonotic diseases and environmental hazards.
- Ensure that the scientific capabilities are in place to support health protection systems and to exploit opportunities to contribute to economic growth and the development of the UK's life sciences industry.
- Be accountable, as Accounting Officer, to Parliament for the agency's performance and expenditure of a core budget of c.£400m revenue and £80m capital, with additional funding of c.£900m for COVID-19 vaccines.
- Be an ambassador and representative for UK health security and protection, building strong working relationships with local, national and global peers.
- Work with the devolved governments, local authorities, and health systems, across a wide range of issues, fostering collaboration and information sharing on common challenges, and recognising the cross-border nature of health threats.
- Develop a strategic, multi-year approach to health equity, sensitively and effectively addressing the specific needs of the people and communities at greatest risk.
- Deliver relevant policy interventions as set out in the Government's forthcoming 10 Year Health Plan.

Experience required



You don't have to be a scientist or public health professional but, if you are not, you will have worked extensively in one of those fields. Above all, you will be a leader in your field, able to inspire and motivate others.

To help you succeed in this role, you must have a strong commitment to the Civil Service values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity, and you will likely have:

- Sufficient breadth and depth of experience to lead and represent the UK's health protection interests with confidence, including the communication and influencing skills to work effectively with health and science experts, Ministers and a wide variety of external stakeholders.
- Confident, inclusive and engaging leadership skills, with an ability to lead and motivate a large and distributed team (including a core of scientific professionals) and with a successful track record of working collaboratively across organisational boundaries to deliver cross cutting priorities.
- Exceptional strategic capability and judgement, combined with experience of how to translate strategy into successful delivery.
- Experience of managing large scale and complex budgets, performance delivery and corporate governance.
- The resilience to work under sustained pressure and scrutiny; and lead through ambiguity.

Desirable criteria

- A qualified public health or scientific expert.
- Technological familiarity as an enabler of efficiency and innovation.
- Experience of working in a commercial environment.

Recruitment process

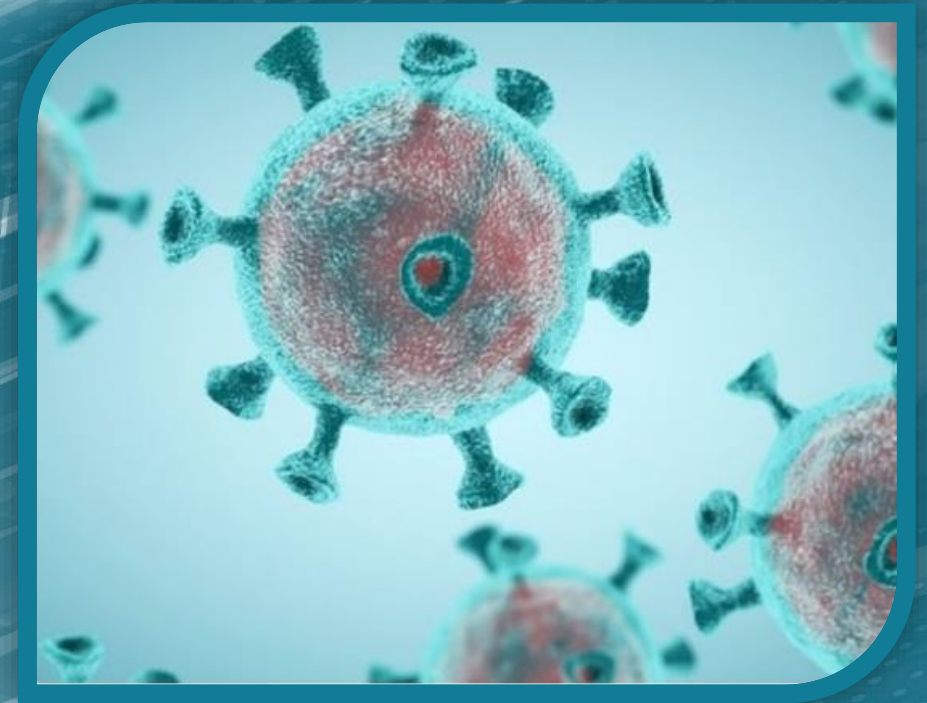
Civil Service recruitment processes at Permanent Secretary level are regulated by the [Civil Service Commission](#), and we follow clear guidelines to ensure that our recruitment is fair and open. We expect the process for this role to be as follows:

- **The closing date for applications will be 23:55 on 2nd April 2025.**
- Shortlisting of applications will take place in the week commencing 7th April 2025.
- Between **the week commencing 5th May and week commencing 2nd June**, shortlisted candidates will be invited to undertake some further assessments.

Inputs from all those steps will then form the basis of a panel interview, chaired by the First Civil Service Commissioner, Baroness Gisela Stuart. Other panel members at the interview will include Professor Chris Whitty (Chief Medical Officer and Interim Permanent Secretary, DHSC), and Ian Peters (Chair UKHSA).

Full details will be provided to shortlisted candidates and recognising that there are a number of steps in the process, we will do our best to arrange the sessions in a way that works for you.

We hope that this process will be conducted in face-to-face sessions, but if you need any adjustments to make the process accessible to you please let us know.



How to apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Russell Reynolds Associates on behalf of UKHSA. 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 **P2502-035L** 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 experienced required on page 6.
- **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](#).
- **A completed Declaration of Interests form.** Please note that applications will not be accepted unless the form is returned. 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 the DCS, please indicate this when asked on the Diversity Questionnaire.

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



The law requires that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the [Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles](#).

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles, and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact Joanne Whitehead in the Government People Group (Joanne.Whitehead@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) in the first instance.

Detailed terms and conditions

- The successful candidate will hold this post for up to five years from the date of appointment. There is no presumption in favour of renewal, but renewals for a shorter period than five years may be possible where performance has been strong, following consultation with the Cabinet Secretary and at the discretion of the Prime Minister.
- If you are successful, you can expect your salary on appointment to be between **£170,000 and £200,000 per annum**. If you are an existing civil servant, your salary will be agreed in line with the Civil Service pay rules in place on the date of your appointment.
- This is a full-time role, but all flexible working arrangements are welcomed and will be considered (including existing job share arrangements). The role will be based in London but with operations across England.

Please note that:

- Civil Service pension arrangements will apply and you will have the option of joining the Civil Service Alpha Pension Scheme, a defined benefit (DB) pension scheme. The current employer contribution rate for this salary level is in excess of 30% of salary as explained at [Civil Service Pension Scheme](#).
- The role includes 30 days annual leave - this is in addition to 8 public holidays and one privilege day.
- If successful you must hold, or be willing to obtain, security clearance up to DV level. More information about the vetting process can be found [here](#).
- You will need to hold the right immigration status and nationality requirements for this role - please ask the Russell Reynolds team if you have any questions.
- Unfortunately, we will not be able to reimburse you for any expenses incurred as part of this recruitment process.

To ensure integrity of judgements and decisions they make every day, all civil servants must make sure that no conflict arises - or could be perceived to arise - between their public duties and their private interests when joining, or leaving, the civil service. This is a requirement of our Civil Service Code and is designed to protect both individual civil servants and their employing departments. If you believe you have any interests that might be relevant (or be perceived as relevant) to your ability to undertake this role, please let Russell Reynolds know early in the process. Such interests may be financial or may be related to the relationships you have with specific individuals, organisations, or employers. Further information available here: [Declaration and management of outside interests in the Civil Service - GOV.UK](#)

Detailed terms and conditions

Restrictions

During the period of appointment there will be certain restrictions on political activities.

Business Appointments

Candidates should also note that on completion of the appointment, the post holder will be subject to the Government's Business Appointments Rules, with the possibility of restrictions on future employment imposed by the Prime Minister, on the recommendation of the independent Advisory Committee on Business Appointments. If you would like to discuss what this means, please get in touch with responses@russellreynolds.com.

Further information about the Rules and restrictions likely to be imposed on former Permanent Secretaries can be found [here](#).

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to supporting the principle that everybody should have the same opportunities for employment, development and progression. This should be based on their ability, competence and suitability for the role.

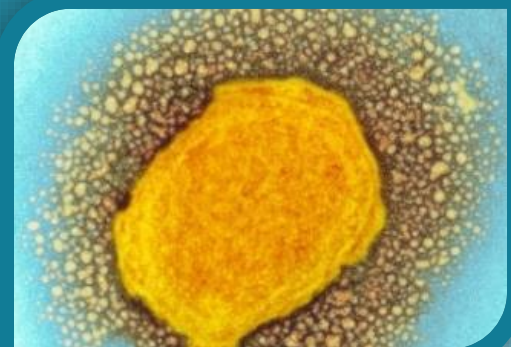
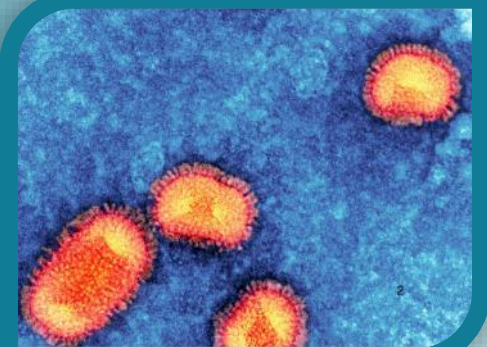
This means that no applicant should receive less favourable treatment on grounds of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, religion, transgender status, family or domestic responsibilities, or working patterns. Also, nobody should be disadvantaged by any specific conditions or requirements, unless it can be justified that these could affect their ability to undertake the role.

Complaints

The law requires that selection for appointment to the Civil Service is on merit on the basis of fair and open competition as outlined in the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles, which can be found at: <https://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/recruitment/recruitment-principles/>.

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles, and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact Joanne.Whitehead@cabinetoffice.gov.uk in the first instance.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the Department, you can contact the Civil Service Commission at the address below: info@csc.gov.uk



UK Health
Security
Agency

