

FORM FOR RESPONDING TO THE CSCS CONSULTATION

Please use this form to respond to the consultation and send your completed form to cscs.reform@cabinetoffice.gov.uk or the address stated above, by 4 May 2016. Anyone may return a completed form to the above email or address, but it is primarily targeted at employees covered by the scheme, their representatives and their employers.

Name	
Job Role	
Organisation	
Contact details	

Q1: Do you agree that these are the right principles for the reform of the scheme? If not, what should be the principles to be followed?

I do not agree with the principles in the document underpinning wide ranging compensation scheme reforms.

In 2010, changes were made to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS) which were described by the then Minister as fair, affordable and sustainable in the longer term. I am opposed to any further changes which will both damage the morale of civil servants and renege on the then Minister's settled position reached in 2010.

I do not agree that 'reshaping the workforce' necessarily requires making redundancies. The government should focus on re-training and up-skilling staff where necessary before redundancies are considered. Should redundancies be required, the proposed changes will mean less people can afford to leave, making restructuring harder.

The consultation paper also says the government want a new and reformed civil service yet fails to show how cutting compensation terms will achieve that. The gradual erosion of pay, terms and conditions, pensions and redundancy terms in fact makes the civil service a less attractive employer.

It is suggested that redundancies are necessary for 'staff turnover' and apprenticeship places. While I welcome the development of apprenticeships, they should not be used as cheap labour to replace experienced and loyal staff. Apprentices need experienced mentors to learn from and be encouraged by.

Another purported aim is the idea of 'increasing attractiveness of the scheme for staff exiting early'. The flexibility is already there in the current scheme for Voluntary Exits to be more attractive yet it has not been used appropriately. It therefore seems that making voluntary exits 'more attractive' is being used as an excuse to diminish voluntary and compulsory terms.

It is also doubtful how many people taking 'voluntary' terms would be real volunteers under these proposals. As office closures loom, many will feel forced to take a voluntary package rather than risk being made redundant on less favourable compulsory terms. This causes enormous anguish and distress as people waver, being unsure whether or not the risk of compulsory redundancy is high.

The paper also proposes removal or reduction of access to employer funded early retirement. I do not agree that changes are needed to these terms. It is argued, without evidence, that many ex- civil servants remain economically active, however, they may be

taking work at a different pay level and/or for shorter hours. Forcing people to leave without this option, in a climate where it is difficult for over 50's to get a job, will create hardship and distress.

Removing the employer funded access to early pension would also impact on the numbers of staff willing, or able, to leave. Those aged between 50 and 59 are by far the largest age group in the civil service, most of whom have a pension they may wish to access early. It could be that people in this age group would not leave voluntarily without the early access to pension option.

In summary, if the government want to create a 'modern civil service' they should instead be honouring terms and conditions, investing in training staff, providing decent pay rises and offering local employment opportunities by reversing plans to close local offices.

Q2: Should the tariff be reduced as part of the cost saving measures? If so, to what level should it be reduced? If not, what should be changed instead to produce comparable savings?

The tariff should not be changed. Reductions made to the tariff in 2010 were described by Francis Maude as fair, affordable and right for the long term. I oppose any further changes to the tariff and do not believe that further cost savings are fair and/or necessary.

Reducing the tariff to 3 weeks will impact on those with short service (including many part-time staff) and will deter people from going. The savings quoted in the consultation paper may therefore be erroneous because changing the tariff will skew the demographic of those applying. Maintaining the current tariff level will ensure that voluntary redundancy remains a more affordable option for some of those thinking about leaving the civil service.

Q3: Should the cap on the multiple of salary be reduced? If so, to what level should it be reduced? If not, what should be changed instead to produce comparable savings?

The cap on the multiple of salary should not be reduced. Reducing the maximum multiplier to 18 or 15 months would be a dramatic reduction for long serving, loyal staff who have not volunteered to leave before but who may now be forced out due to the massive number of civil service office closures.

These proposals may also disproportionately affect part-time staff, the majority of whom are women in the civil service. An impact assessment should therefore be carried out to assess the effect on different groups of workers.

Q4: Are there any other significant cost saving measures that should be considered instead of or in addition to a reduction in the tariff and/or cap?

No savings are necessary. When changes were introduced in 2010, Francis Maude described them as fair, affordable and right for the long term.

Q5 Should the Civil Service apply a different cap on the salary that qualifies for compensation payments?

There is no need to apply a cap. The averagely low wages of Public Sector workers mean that average redundancy payments are not excessive.

Q6: Should the requirement for at least one offer under voluntary terms (and for that

to be a “good” one rather than a minimal one) before moving to Compulsory Redundancy be kept?

Voluntary terms, of no less than current Voluntary Redundancy terms, should always be offered before moving to Compulsory Redundancy.

Q7: If the requirement for a voluntary offer before redundancy is kept, should that offer be on the basis of a fixed “tariff”?

If Voluntary Exits and Voluntary Redundancy were both flexible it would cause more uncertainty. Voluntary Redundancy tariffs should remain fixed.

Q8: Should Voluntary Exit allow for higher maximum payments than Voluntary Redundancy? If it should, by how much?

Office closures are a reality for many civil servants and many are occurring in parts of the UK where getting another job will be difficult. The idea that many of the people going will be volunteers in any real sense is misleading. Many feel forced to take a voluntary package rather than risk being made redundant on less favourable terms. This causes enormous anguish and distress as people waver, being unsure whether or not the risk of redundancy is high.

The flexibility is already there in the current CSCS for Voluntary Exits to be more attractive yet, on most occasions, when employers have proposed this, it has been turned down by the Cabinet Office. There are therefore flexibilities in the current scheme and employers should try utilising them before considering changes to the CSCS. Otherwise, it seems that making Voluntary Exits ‘more attractive’ is being used an excuse to diminish voluntary and compulsory terms.

Q9: Are there any other ways in which staff could be encouraged to be more proactive in coming forwards when exit exercises are being run?

The vast majority of people do not want to lose their jobs and “voluntary” redundancy is often taken because the compulsory terms are worse. However, in circumstances where people do want to leave, offering more attractive redundancy terms would encourage people to be more proactive in coming forwards. Reducing the terms has the opposite effect.

Q10: Should the employer funded early access to pension provision be removed from the scheme?

No. The paper argues, without evidence, that many ex- civil servants remain economically active, however, they may be taking work at a different pay level and/or for shorter hours, in some circumstances resulting in a cost to the public purse through tax credit or benefit payments. Forcing people to leave without this option, in a climate where it is difficult for over 50's to get a job, will create hardship and distress. This will affect those who have devoted their working life to the civil service and are now often being pushed out due to workplace closures.

Removing the employer funded access to early pension would also impact on the numbers of staff willing to leave. The latest civil service statistics (2015) show that those aged between 50 and 59 are by far the largest age group, most of whom have a pension they may wish to access early. It may be that people in the over 50 age group would not choose to leave the civil service without the early access to pension option. This would

have a large negative impact on any future restructuring exercise, both for the employer and employees.

Q11: Should the minimum age for early access to pension be increased to 55?

No, the minimum age for early access to pension should not be increased to 55. This would impact on thousands of loyal staff who have devoted their working lives to the civil service. If people are forced to leave due to office closures, they may be unable to find alternative work as it is statistically proven that those over 50 find it more difficult to obtain new employment.

Early access to pension has been a popular option for those leaving the civil service to date. Raising the minimum age to 55 will, therefore, make the prospect of forced redundancies more likely, causing great distress to loyal staff and will make any restructuring exercise more difficult for the employer.

Q12: Are there any other ways in which the key issue (the provision of a very expensive retirement benefit to staff unlikely to actually retire) could be resolved?

This provision is not “very expensive”. The current arrangements should be kept as they provide a good option for both staff and employers when restructuring is being considered.

Q13: Do you agree that employers should have the flexibility to set a lower maximum cap than £95,000 in Voluntary Exit schemes? Is there any level below which a cap should not be set?

Caps of this nature impose unnecessary and arbitrary restrictions. No evidence of value for money has been provided to justify the current proposal for a £95,000 cap. People should be entitled to the full tariff and there should not be any cap on exit payments.

Q14: Do you support the suggested package set out above?

No. None of the individual or combined options described in the consultation paper would compensate staff for what would amount to an unnecessary, unfair and unilateral imposition of detrimental terms and conditions of employment. I therefore do not endorse them.

Q15: Is there another way in which the Government's aims of reducing costs and ensuring that the CSCS operates as desired could be met?

There are lots of ways for governments to reduce costs. Tearing up the terms and conditions of loyal, hard working Public Sector workers should not be among them.

Q16: What should the tariff be for the reformed “inefficiency” terms?

Inefficiency terms are used a lot, particularly in DWP and HMRC, due to stringent absence management procedures and changes made to ill health retirement under Alpha.

Talks on inefficiency terms between civil service unions and the Cabinet Office in the Spring of 2015 reached a mutual agreement and included provisions to bring the maximum payment of 21 months. I therefore see no reason why negotiations should be re-opened.

Q17: Should the revised arrangements be called something different?

The mutually agreed terms referred to in Q16 should be implemented and should be called "Efficiency"terms".

Handling of information from individuals

The information you send may need to be passed to colleagues within Cabinet Office or other Government departments, and may be published in full or in a summary of responses.

All information in responses, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want your response to remain confidential, you should explain why confidentiality is necessary and your request will be acceded to only if it is appropriate in the circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department. Contributions to the consultation will be anonymised if they are quoted.

Individual contributions will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.