



Sir Mark Sedwill
Cabinet Secretary
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
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12 September 2019

Dear Sir Mark

We are writing to you as a result of increasing concerns being expressed by our members working in the civil service. You will be aware that Prospect, alongside others, has been a staunch defender of the civil service. Political impartiality, the ability to provide evidence based policy advice to ministers without fear nor favour, upholding the rule of law and serving the government of the day rest at the core of what makes the civil service the envy of the world.

In these increasingly febrile times it is all the more important that civil servants are supported. There has not been a government in peace time that has been more reliant on the civil service. Over the past number of months, the civil service has been the subject of unwarranted attacks, often fuelled by those seeking to achieve partisan political advantage. Prospect alongside others has stood up and defended the civil service, its key underlying principles and ethos and spoken out on behalf of the many thousands of loyal and hardworking civil servants who cannot speak out as individuals.

Particularly against the backdrop of the Prime Minister repeatedly refusing to confirm that he will abide by the will of Parliament and Parliamentary legislation, members have raised concerns as to their position as civil servants. These concerns will only be compounded by the judgement from the Court of Session yesterday.

It is in the DNA of the civil service that they must act with integrity, comply with the law and not give rise to their political impartiality being questioned. It is the job of civil servants to serve the government of the day. It is the job of the government to act lawfully. The Prime Minister has not demonstrated or explained how he plans to act in accordance with what is the settled will of Parliament.

This puts the civil service in an invidious position. No civil servant should be put in a position where there is a conflict between obeying the law and serving the government of the day. It is all the more startling that the Prime Minister (and Minister for the Civil Service) should leave civil servants in this position.

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We are seeking your urgent action to;

- Ensure that the Prime Minister, Ministers and SPADs are familiar with the requirements of the Civil Service Code
- Issue guidance to civil servants so they are clear as to their rights and responsibilities under the Civil Service Code.
- Set out clearly the processes and procedures for civil servants to follow if they believe that they are being asked or instructed to act in contravention of the Code.
- Set out clearly the processes to be followed where civil servants raise concerns.
- Be very clear that civil servants should never be asked or instructed to act in contravention of the law.
- Give a clear commitment that where civil servants raise concerns in good faith that they will be supported and not subject to detriment or disciplinary action and their concerns will be investigated and acted upon speedily.

Ensuring that civil servants are provided with the appropriate guidance and support has never been more important. I know that the question of issuing guidance had been a matter of consideration and there was some concern that the issuing of guidance would itself prompt media and political speculation. Frankly, we are beyond that point. In order to assure staff and provide clarity, your urgent action is required.

Yours sincerely



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Deputy General Secretary

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