

News story: Celebrating Women in Whitehall: Her Majesty The Queen meets Female Permanent Secretaries

The event held at The Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace acknowledged that women are being appointed to the top of the Civil Service at the fastest rate in history.

One in three permanent secretary positions in the past two and a half years went to women.

Three years after Her Majesty became Queen, the Civil Service appointed its first ever female Permanent Secretary, Baroness Evelyn Sharp.

Baroness Sharp entered the Fast Stream in 1926 just one year after women were allowed to apply. Now there are ten female permanent secretaries, making up just over a quarter of all permanent secretaries.

The event marked this great achievement but also brought together role models for future generations and future permanent secretaries.

Sue Owen, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and diversity champion for the Civil Service said:

I was delighted to welcome so many women who have broken the glass ceiling past and present to get to the very top of the Civil Service.

Women make up more than half the Civil Service and we benefit from their skills. It is absolutely right that women should be properly represented at the highest levels. Whilst the first female Permanent Secretary was appointed in 1955, it is only in the last decade or so that real progress has been made.

We want this trend to intensify. We will support women at every level to achieve their full potential and to know they can reach the very top.

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service said:

The Civil Service is committed to being a place where everyone can thrive regardless of background, with the aim of becoming the most inclusive employer in the UK.

Currently, over 40% of the Senior Civil Service are women. But

there is still more to do, which is why we are determined to build on our progress to date by removing any remaining barriers for women and other underrepresented groups in the Civil Service.

Further information

In total, there have been 35 female permanent secretaries, including those currently in post.

The figure of ten female permanent secretaries includes Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary at the Department of International Trade who takes up her role in March 2017.