



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT



PRESS RELEASE

The Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC, MP, Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, said today:

“In an increasingly competitive employment market, it is important that the UK intelligence community is able to attract, and draw upon, the skill, talent and experience of all sectors of our society – to reflect, protect and promote our values, and keep our nation safe. It is essential that these organisations reflect the UK of today with a diverse and inclusive workforce. Diversity encourages challenge, drives innovation and ensures better decision making – whilst this is important in any organisation or sector, it is an operational imperative for the intelligence community.

“The Intelligence and Security Committee has today published its report *Diversity and Inclusion in the UK Intelligence Community*, which considers the four key protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act – Gender, Race, Sexuality and Disability – and addresses these in the context of diversity and inclusion across the intelligence community. Our report highlights good practice, identifies possible gaps and where appropriate makes recommendations to help improve the approach.

“The UK intelligence community employs some of this nation’s most talented individuals – the Committee has seen at first hand the commitment and dedication of their staff. It is therefore right to consider what more can be done to develop and manage them, and to be clear that any improvements that can be made will benefit not just those who are currently under-represented in these Agencies and organisations, but all members of staff. We have considered this in relation to three key areas – senior leadership, the recruitment process, and career and promotion prospects.

“We have found that there has been significant progress in recent years: SIS and MI5 have both appeared in The Times ‘2018 Top 50 Employers for Women’ list, for example, and MI5, SIS, GCHQ and the Home Office are all included in the Stonewall Top 100 employers. However, as many of the people we have spoken to have acknowledged, there is much still to be done. At senior levels, in particular, the intelligence community is still not gender-balanced and does not fully reflect the ethnic makeup of modern Britain: whilst 31% of the senior civil servants in MI5 are women, that figure is considerably lower (around 25%) across the other Agencies and rest of the intelligence community. There is a glaring lack of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at Senior Civil Service levels across the community: in 2016-2017, just one of the organisations overseen by the Committee (GCHQ) had any staff at this level who declared as BAME.

“It is critical that support for building a diverse and inclusive organisation comes from the top – this agenda must have broad executive support which needs to filter down through organisations. We have heard from the Heads of each of the organisations about their personal commitment to diversity

and the significant work they are doing to create more inclusive workplaces. We have also been impressed by the work of staff networks: we commend the energy and dedication of these individuals who are playing a key role when it comes to galvanising support for, and recognition of, under-represented groups. At an organisational level, we have seen that the three intelligence Agencies in particular are working together effectively, sharing resources and best practice, and have also developed strong partnerships with external organisations – in particular with Business in the Community (BITC) on gender issues and Stonewall on LGBT matters.

“We have also heard about the challenges that the organisations face, and what they are doing to try and overcome these. For example, the Committee recognises that there are particular challenges in terms of security vetting (which is bureaucratic, takes too long and is widely considered by many of those we met to be an inhibitor to diversity) and nationality rules, and that the wider public often has inaccurate and outdated perceptions about the Agencies in particular, and the type of staff they are now looking to recruit. It is important that the Agencies’ recruitment campaigns continue to do all they can to challenge stereotypes and attract a more diverse range of applicants from under-represented groups.

“Once staff are recruited, then each organisation must ensure that there is active talent management, putting in place systems for identifying and developing talent from under-represented groups in their workplace. This will require greater engagement from middle management in particular – these individuals are often line managers and have an important role in supporting under-represented groups.

“Finally, we must emphasise the importance of collecting data in this area. To gain a clear understanding of diversity across the intelligence community, robust data is essential. Until an organisation knows where it stands and how it is performing, it cannot define and deliver progress. This means that no organisation’s commitment to diversity and inclusion can be taken seriously until it collects, scrutinises and is transparent with its workforce data and can measure its progress accordingly. Unfortunately the current data across the intelligence community is not sufficiently robust. In addition, the Committee has not, with the notable exception of MI5, been provided with the declaration rates for new recruits and entrants to the Agencies and organisations. This makes it difficult to properly evaluate BAME, LGBT and disability figures for those embarking on, or continuing, their careers in the intelligence community.

“In publishing this report today we wish in particular to thank all those staff who shared their experiences, ideas and gave so freely of their time. The Committee could not have undertaken this study without them. We also wish to thank the Rt Hon. Fiona Mactaggart, who began this work in December 2016 and progressed it up until the Election in May 2017. The Committee is extremely grateful for her excellent work on this important project. I also, on behalf of the Committee, wish to thank Caroline Flint, Kevan Jones and Robin Janvrin who have given up their time to take this forward since November last year.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) is a statutory committee of Parliament that has responsibility for oversight of the UK intelligence community. The Committee was originally established by the Intelligence Services Act 1994, and has since been reformed by the Justice and Security Act 2013.
2. The Committee consists of nine members drawn from both Houses of Parliament. The Chair is elected by its members. The Members of the Committee are subject to Section 1(1)(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and are routinely given access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties.
3. The Committee's membership is as follows:

The Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP (Chair)

The Rt. Hon. Richard Benyon MP

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Janvrin GCB GCVO QSO

The Rt. Hon. Ian Blackford MP

The Rt. Hon. Kevan Jones MP

The Rt. Hon. Caroline Flint MP

The Rt. Hon. Keith Simpson MP

The Rt. Hon. David Hanson MP

The Most Hon. the Rt Hon. the Marquess of Lothian QC PC

4. The Committee oversees the intelligence and security activities of the UK, including the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The Committee also scrutinises the work of other parts of the UK intelligence community, including the Joint Intelligence Organisation and the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office; Defence Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence; and the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism in the Home Office.
5. The Members of the Committee are subject to Section 1(1)(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and are routinely given access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties.
6. The Committee sets its own agenda and work programme. It takes evidence from Government Ministers, the Heads of the intelligence Agencies, officials from the intelligence community, and other witnesses as required. The Committee makes an annual report to Parliament on the discharge of its functions and may also produce reports on specific investigations.
7. The Committee is supported in its work by a Secretariat provided by the Cabinet Office. It also has access to legal, technical and financial expertise where necessary.