

civic
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The 2026/27
Civic Future
Fellowship:
programme overview

The limits of the possible are too often defined by the edges of conventional wisdom. This is the case in British public life, where short-term gains eclipse long-term vision.

For too long, our public institutions have failed to grasp the serious challenges our society faces. There is a stagnation and dysfunction in too much of public life and politics which cannot go on.

Fixing this is a complex project, but part of the solution is encouraging more highly talented people to enter into public life in the first place. This is crucial for Britain's future success. We need to encourage better, more capable people to negotiate and transform systems of governance and drive Britain towards security and abundance.

This is what our Fellowship aims to do.

If you're a highly driven individual who wants to break Britain out of stagnation, then apply. It is easy to do so and the potential upside for you – and the country – is very high.



Outline of the year

The year will be separated into three terms, beginning in October 2026. Each term will feature sessions held on a weekday evening in Westminster, with 10 sessions in total per term. The Fellowship is designed to be rich in content, with many topics covered over the year.

Term 1: Political Philosophy

- How important political ideas emerged historically
- How democratic societies try to govern in practice, including questions of speech, authority, markets, borders, and pluralism
- How assumptions about autonomy, progress, and the human person are challenged by new technologies
- The ideas and movements now challenging liberalism, including nationalism, post-liberalism, and civilisational thinking

Term 2: Public Policy

- Britain's changing constitution and legal apparatus
- How political change actually happens: democracy, parties, and elites
- How the British economy can overcome stagnation
- A thorough examination of important policy areas: housing, health, immigration, and more

Term 3: National Security

- How national security and foreign policy shape Britain's domestic politics
- How power really works in the international system
- What Britain's core security challenges are in the 21st century, including military readiness, intelligence, technology and defence supply chains
- How to define and defend the British national interest

Topics may change slightly in the course of the year.

During the year you'll be asked to read, watch, or listen to material which will inform the discussions. You'll get to know the other Fellows very well. Previous Fellows have shared ideas, collaborated on projects, and formed lasting friendships.

Need to know

- The Fellowship is provided at no cost to participating Fellows. Fellows receive a small stipend to cover study costs.
- It is designed to be completed alongside a full-time job, with sessions taking place on weekday evenings. We can also arrange full-time, paid, London-based professional work placements in relevant organisations for a select number of applicants.
- There are three 10-week terms, running from October 2026 to June 2027.
- Terms will feature one evening session each week, on a weekday evening, lasting between 90 minutes and two hours.
- Sessions will be led by subject area experts, including academics, diplomats, politicians, policymakers, businesspeople and others working in public life. A few sessions each year are held over dinner.
- There will be around 20-60 pages of reading set for each week.
- There will be two residential weekends in the year, focusing on how we can reform government and how we can develop as leaders.
- There will be a week-long overseas visit.

Residential weekends and the overseas trip

There will be two residential weekends in the year.

The first will be held in October, focusing on how British governance works and how its respective parts fit together. We will also hear directly from frontline politicians and policymakers who have been involved in significant reforming efforts.

The second, taking place in December or January, covers more practical skills crucial for leadership in public life, including public speaking, communicating, and decision-making in high pressure situations.

Fellows will also take part in an overseas trip, seeing up close how an entirely different area of the world works: its state, its governance, its society, and its culture. The visit will be one week long and take place in Easter 2027. In order to allow Fellows to schedule time, we will confirm the dates once they are accepted onto the programme.



The Civic Future Fellowship application process

The process runs from January to June 2026.

JAN-MARCH 2026

The written application stage
(opens 29 January and closes 8 March 2026)

1

MAY 2026

In-person interviews for shortlisted candidates

2

JUNE 2026

Final decisions

3

Click here to apply now

Details of the curriculum, readings and session tutors will be provided to all successful Fellows in Summer 2026.

"Civic Future has accelerated my desire to actually get involved, and pushed me and others in our cohort to think we could do this now."

'The quality of the content was like no other teaching I had ever experienced. The amount we were expected to read, the people coming from different disciplines to discuss it, the sense of direct application, the insanely high level of rigour.'

"I was constantly impressed and challenged by the course."



"CF gave me connections with people I would not have been able to meet otherwise, often at a level of seniority I would not normally have access to."

"I now feel even more inspired to take further steps in public life – whether within the civil service or without."

The structure and people on the PLP expose you to a high volume of high quality analysis, opinion and examples. Engaging with the work and the group rapidly accelerated my thinking.

Declan Clancy, 2025 participant

If you're lucky, there are periods in your life when, in a short period of time, an experience drastically transforms you for the better and you can almost feel your brain growing. I have had three such periods: university, going through a startup accelerator, and the Civic Future Public Leadership Programme. I couldn't recommend it more highly to anyone interested in public service.

James Worthington, 2025 participant

FAQs

Why is this programme needed?

Britain needs to widen and strengthen the talent pool for public life. The country is facing a combination of significant social, security and economic challenges: from growing the economy, to facing the rise of China, and managing the impact of AI. Yet far from rising to the challenge, too much of the state apparatus is not working as it should. Our public institutions are trapped in stagnation and dysfunction.

Civic Future aims to address this problem by encouraging more highly talented people to enter British public life and preparing them for the challenge of improving it. In order to face the problems and opportunities of the future, our leaders must be more than good enough; they must be exceptional.

Is the programme for people with an allegiance to one particular political party?

No. We are not party political. Civic Future team members are drawn from various political traditions. We want to train the next generation of effective public servants and people in public life, regardless of political persuasion. However, we are committed to certain ideas which we think are important: those contained in a broadly understood liberal tradition. We value basic freedoms of association and of speech. We think that high trust, democracy, robust state capacity and a strong economy are important. These values and ideas are not exclusive to any one of the major political parties.

Can you provide more information about the speakers or tutors for the programme?

Many of the tutors involved in the Fellowship teach at top universities. They will be subject area specialists, meaning that whatever the topic, the Fellows will be learning from some of the most qualified people in the country. Many sessions will also be led by former practitioners: senior civil servants, diplomats, frontline politicians, and public intellectuals, ensuring a wide variety of content and perspectives on the programme.

What is the expected outcome of the programme for Fellows? Will Fellows be expected to pursue a career in public life after completing the programme, or can they go into any field with the skills they've learned?

We define public life broadly. Some Fellows might aspire to go into frontline politics, whereas others will want to work in the civil service, non-governmental organisations, think tanks, or perhaps in private companies that work closely with government. We expect everyone interested in the programme will be committed to improving public life in some way.

Are there any work placements or internships offered for Fellows?

The Fellowship is designed for people who are already in full-time work, but we can also help to organise full-time, paid, professional work placements in relevant organisations for a select number. Applicants should indicate in the application form if they are interested in this opportunity.

What does Civic Future's non-profit status mean?

We are a registered charity and are fortunate to be funded by a range of generous philanthropists, trusts and foundations. Civic Future does not seek any funding from the government.

Can you provide more information about the residential events?

How do they fit into the overall structure of the programme?

There will be two weekend residencies over the course of the year: one in September and the other in December. There will also be an overseas trip around Easter time in 2027. The weekend residencies will be held outside London. All fellows will be expected to attend these and arrange any other commitments in advance to make this possible. They are an integral part of the programme.

Is the programme certified or accredited in any way? How is the Fellowship different from a traditional university experience?

The Fellowship is not formally accredited by a higher education institution, although we are working with a range of respected academics on the curriculum and teaching. It is important to emphasise that we hope people will participate in the Fellowship primarily because they value it as an enriching experience, rather than as a formal qualification for their CV.

Are the Fellowship seminars all in person?

The Fellowship seminars will all be held in person. We may occasionally invite an expert to give a lecture via video if they are based outside the UK. We think group interaction in person is important for building confidence and trust. We appreciate that most people don't live in London and that this may be a barrier. We may be able to arrange paid professional work placements for some Fellows, allowing them to move to London and work full-time in a relevant organisation whilst doing the programme. Applicants will be able to indicate an interest in this opportunity on the application form.

Will people be able to join the Fellowship even if they can't attend each session in person? Is there a hybrid option?

Unfortunately not. Our Fellowship sessions will all be in person. In future we may be able to expand to allow semi-remote attendance, but for now we're concentrating on what we can offer well, which is in-person meetings, however imperfect that may be. We don't want anyone to be put off from applying because of where they live and in many cases will be able to cover travel and some accommodation expenses for those who live outside London. If you live outside London and would like to take part in the Fellowship, you should still apply.

What kind of support will Civic Future offer its Fellows once they've graduated from the course?

The main way we will support our Fellows is through our mentor programme. At the end of the Fellowship, participants will be offered advice about public service opportunities, and be paired up with a senior mentor already working in public life. Our alumni will be invited to attend future conferences, dinners and events and expected to remain part of our wider community, helping and advising future Fellows.

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