

A black and white photograph of a group of people in a conference room. In the foreground, a person is seen from the side, writing on a whiteboard. Behind them, several other people are seated around a long table, looking down at papers or devices. The room has large windows in the background and an 'EXIT' sign above a door on the right. The overall atmosphere is professional and focused.

civic  
future.

# The 2026 Public Leadership Programme

overview

We are looking for exceptional people in mid-career, with a strong track record of achievement.

The Public Leadership Programme is a springboard and serious commitment to meaningful national improvement. It will help you examine the biggest issues Britain faces and how you can address them.

For too long, public institutions have failed to face these challenges squarely, distracted by the wrong incentives and trapped in short-term crisis management. Too much of public life and politics is stagnant and dysfunctional.

Fixing this will not be easy, but at least part of the answer is simple: more capable people in politics, government and public life. Britain needs people who can navigate institutions, negotiate trade-offs, and reform how the state works, so we can grow the economy and increase prosperity.

The Programme aims to find new talent and ideas, and attract them to roles and careers to make the biggest difference. But talent is not enough. People in party politics, the civil service, media, culture, and major institutions need serious preparation if they are to be effective.

If you are accepted, your assumptions will be tested and your knowledge broadened. It should be challenging, enriching, and useful.

You will deepen your understanding of government and politics through guided reading on Britain's main problems and sessions with leading thinkers and practitioners: politicians, policymakers, and others with proven expertise.

The Programme culminates in a residential retreat, to take action on the problems Britain faces, the opportunities and changes required, and the role we can all play.

If you want to help Britain break out of stagnation, apply. It is straightforward, and the potential upside - for you and for the country - is substantial.

We look forward to reading your application.

With very best wishes,

**Harry Fletcher-Wood**

Public Leadership Programme Leader





# What does the Programme involve?

It is a unique programme which aims to support participants' successful entry into government and public life. The Programme is offered at no cost to participants and is carefully structured to accommodate people in full-time work.

## Across five months – September to January – you will enjoy:

- Carefully-chosen readings, deepening your understanding of key topics;
- Monthly seminars, with a chance to discuss big ideas and hear from leading politicians and sector experts;
- A weekend retreat in January 2026, the culmination of the Programme, which will support you to chart your future course.

## Participants will gain fresh insight into how our system works – and doesn't work – and what they can do to change it.

The PLP is provided at no cost to participants, and we have means-tested travel bursaries available. The programme is designed to be manageable alongside a full-time job, with seminars taking place on weekday evenings and the dates of the residential fixed well in advance.

## We will answer questions like:

- Why does Britain feel stuck?
- Why has economic growth proved elusive?
- Why can't we cut crime?
- Why is it so difficult to control our border?
- How can we overcome the barriers to change?
- What can you do to help?

**This is a chance to accelerate your entry into public leadership**

# What is the content of the Programme?

## Programme Launch

An opportunity to hear from a leading political figure. You will also meet the rest of the Programme cohort and, we hope, begin to forge meaningful relationships.

## Autumn Seminars

### **Learn why and how Britain works – and doesn't work**

When you enter public life, we want to ensure you have a strong sense of the biggest issues, and what you can do about them. Each week we will read key texts, old and new, exploring what government is, could and should be doing. We will take a deep look at a few specific issues, including infrastructure, economic growth, security and borders, and public services. Every month, we will meet for a seminar: a chance to hear from experts and to discuss what we have read.

## Final Retreat

### **Conclusions and commitments**

We will finish the programme with a two-day retreat. Building on all that we have read and discussed, we will hear from leading figures in public life and seek to draw conclusions about Britain's biggest challenges. It will be a chance to establish their causes, their consequences, and what can be done to address them. This will be your chance to commit to a future path, planning your next steps into public life.

All participants will be expected to attend the retreat and arrange other commitments to make this possible.

# Application Process

- The application process runs from January to June 2026.
- The process will run in two stages. The written application stage, in which applicants will have a number of questions to complete and submit via our online form. This written stage will be open for five weeks before the submission closes at 11:00 PM on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026.
- The shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview in May.
- Final decisions will be made in June.
- We expect the application process to be competitive.
- We carefully read applications and interview as many candidates as possible. This takes time – we will get back to you as soon as we can.
- Details and dates of the programme, speakers and readings will be shared with all successful participants in summer 2026.

**FEB-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**

# 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: rebuilding the economy, 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. Our [Fellowship](#) is aimed at early career individuals with high potential. The Public Leadership Programme is aimed at individuals with demonstrated achievement who are ready to enter public life.

## 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. Our Trustees and Advisory Board comprise people from all major parties and none. We want to train the next generation of effective public servants, regardless of their political Persuasion.

However, we are committed to certain ideas we consider 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 market-based economy are important. These values and ideas are not exclusive to any one of the major political parties.

## How much experience do I need to have to apply?

We are looking for people with a clear track record of achievement. Few people achieve overnight success early in their career: our suggestion is that participants should have a decade's work and life experience – and much to show for it. For those earlier in their career, the Civic Future Fellowship is likely to be more appropriate.

[You can find out more about this here.](#)

## Can you provide more information about the speakers for the programme?

Many speakers have extensive experience of trying to get things done in Westminster and beyond, as MPs, ministers, special advisors and civil servants. Others are topic experts who have spent years closely studying specific issues. In either case, participants will be learning from the most qualified people in the country. You can visit our website to see the range and calibre of speakers at our events.

## **What is the expected outcome of the programme for participants? Will participants 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?**

Our goal is to support participants to enter or advance their career in public life. While we define public life broadly, to include both frontline politics and the civil service and other public institutions, the programme is primarily intended to support those looking to stand for elected office.

## **Are there any efforts made to ensure that the programme is representative of different backgrounds and experiences?**

We expect each cohort of participants to come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and have a wide range of experiences and beliefs. We're not just searching for very talented individuals, but individuals that will work together as a group. Some may not have gone to university, others may have PhDs. We design the course to bring people with diverse perspectives and experiences together to discuss issues productively and build strong relationships.

## **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.

## **Is the programme certified or accredited?**

The programme is not formally accredited by a higher education institution. It is an opportunity for an enriching experience, not a formal qualification.

## **Are the monthly seminars in person? Is there a hybrid option for the programme?**

All events are held in person. We think this is an important way to build confidence and trust within the cohort. 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 participate, you should still apply.

## **What kind of support will Civic Future offer participants after the programme?**

We hope the programme will provide you with the ideas and inspiration you need to kickstart your role in public life, as well as a tightly knit cohort of like-minded reformers. Our alumni will be invited to attend future conferences, dinners and events and expected to remain part of our wider community, helping and advising the next cohort.

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