



# Briefing: What next for the Anti-Corruption Champion role?

June 2022



**UK Anti-Corruption Coalition**

The Anti-Corruption Champion post is a Prime Ministerial appointment that was created in 2006. There have been seven holders of the post, including Cabinet Ministers, Ministers attending Cabinet, and backbenchers (see Annex I).<sup>1</sup> The most recent incumbent, John Penrose MP, resigned in June 2022, creating a vacancy. The success of the role has usually been dependent on the energy and interest of the post-holder, and has little formal accountability. The UK is highly unusual in having this model of anti-corruption governance; a majority of other countries have models such as an anti-corruption agency.<sup>2</sup>

## Characteristics of successful Anti-Corruption Champions

- **Independent.** Despite being appointed personally by the Prime Minister, the Champion needs to challenge the government, ensuring it lives up to its domestic and international commitments; recognising there is sometimes a trade-off between independence and proximity to the locus of power.
- **Influential.** The Champion needs to be able to exercise genuine influence on government policy and resource allocation, whether from within the Cabinet or outside, with appropriate levels and frequency of access.
- **Informed.** The Champion does not need to be an expert when appointed but should be willing to draw on the UK's extensive expertise to become well-informed, much of which rests within civil society and academia.
- **Engaged.** The Champion should be willing to allocate adequate time to the position and to demonstrate a genuine interest in the policy issues.
- **Representation.** The Champion plays a crucial role in pushing reforms within the UK and abroad through the international anti-corruption architecture, and needs the stature, experience and skills to play such a role.

## Priorities

The incoming Champion should be expected to oversee delivery of the following key priorities:

- Finalising the new national Anti-Corruption Strategy.
- Ensuring that key pieces of relevant legislation, such as the Procurement Bill and the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill, are fit for purpose.
- Ensuring that recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life and Boardman Reviews are implemented.
- Reviewing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the UK's anti-corruption governance framework.

## Recommendations

The Prime Minister has options (See Annex II) which include appointing a Minister, in line with the original conception of the role, or filling the role through a like-for-like replacement; appointing a cross-bench Peer to create more independence; or making a more radical decision such as creating an Anti-Corruption Agency or appointing an Independent Commissioner. The UK Anti-Corruption Coalition proposes:

- a) No 10 should move swiftly to appoint an interim Anti-Corruption Champion to replace John Penrose MP. They should have the characteristics outlined above and a public announcement should be made of the post's priorities. The Minister for Security or Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster could be an appropriate interim post-holder.
- b) At the same time, No10 should announce that the interim Champion, working through the Joint Anti-Corruption Unit in the Home Office, will launch a consultation to gather ideas and options for strengthening the UK's Anti-Corruption Governance framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Barrington, Robert. 2020. *The Role of the UK Anti-Corruption Champion*. CSC Working paper No 5, May 2020.

<sup>2</sup> *Global Mapping of Anti-Corruption Authorities*, 2020. Agence Francaise Anticorruption. [https://www.agence-francaise-anticorruption.gouv.fr/files/files/NCPA\\_Analysis\\_Report\\_Global\\_Mapping\\_ACAs\\_0.pdf](https://www.agence-francaise-anticorruption.gouv.fr/files/files/NCPA_Analysis_Report_Global_Mapping_ACAs_0.pdf)

***Annex I – UK Anti-Corruption Champions***

<b><i>Name</i></b>	<b><i>Role Title</i></b>	<b><i>Dates in Office</i></b>	<b><i>Other role</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>	<b><i>Key achievements</i></b>
Hilary Benn	Ministerial champion for combating international corruption	2006-2007	Secretary of State for International Development	Cabinet member	Creation of anti-corruption units in Met and City of London police; publication of 1.5 page Anti-Corruption Plan
John Hutton	Unclear	2007-2008	Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	Cabinet member	Not known
Jack Straw	Anti-corruption champion	2008-2010	Secretary of State for Justice	Cabinet Member	Bribery Act passed into law
Ken Clarke	International anti-corruption-champion	2010-2014	Secretary of State for Justice (2010-2012), Minister without Portfolio (2012-2014)	Cabinet Member (2010-2012), attending Cabinet (2012-14)	Commitment to UK public register of beneficial ownership at G7 Summit in Lough Erne
Matt Hancock	Government Anti-Corruption Champion	2014-2015	Minister of State for Business and Enterprise	Minister, attending Cabinet	Publication of 64-point national Anti-Corruption Plan; incorporation of anti-corruption aspects into UK's Open Government Partnership plan; establishment of Joint Anti-Corruption Unit
Eric Pickles	Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion/government's Anti-Corruption Champion	2015-2017		Backbench MP, not attending Cabinet	Anti-Corruption Summit; introduction of Unexplained Wealth Orders in Criminal Finances Act
John Penrose	Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion	2017-2022		Backbench MP not attending Cabinet (2017-19; 2019-22), Minister for Northern Ireland not attending Cabinet (2019)	Publication of five-year national Anti-Corruption Strategy; launch of global Beneficial Ownership Transparency campaign; Economic Crime Act

<b>Annex II – Assessment of options for renewing or replacing role of Anti-Corruption Champion</b>					
	<i>Backbench MP</i>	<i>[Cabinet] Minister</i>	<i>Crossbench Peer</i>	<i>Head of Anti-Corruption Agency</i>	<i>Independent Commissioner</i>
	Champion	Champion	Champion	Replaces Champion	Replaces Champion
<b>Independence</b>	Low/Medium	Low	Medium/High	High	High
<b>Influence</b>	Medium	High	Medium	Low/Medium	Low/Medium
<b>Access</b>	Medium	High	Medium/Low	Low	Low
<b>Expertise</b>	Medium	Low	Medium/High	High	High
<b>Resourcing</b>	Low <i>some support from JACU</i>	Medium/Low <i>Ministerial resources likely to be directed to day job</i>	Low <i>some support from JACU</i>	High <i>ACA would have dedicated staff</i>	High <i>Commissioner would have dedicated staff, probably small numbers but dedicated and focussed like JACU</i>
	Anti-Corruption Champion role requires comprehensive ToRs, should not be under personal patronage of Prime Minister, and should report to Parliament				
<b>Other notes</b>	Has Government whip but able to operate with some independence	Previous experience indicates engagement and involvement may or may not happen	May form part of G5; potential to find peer with highly relevant experience, contacts and track record	Needs to be established by statute	Likely need to establish by statute if similar to modern Slavery Commissioner
					Scaled-back non-statutory Ombudsman-type model also exists – likely to have lower resourcing and questionable effectiveness

The UK Anti-Corruption Coalition brings together the UK's leading anti-corruption organisations who, through their work, witness the devastating impact of corruption on society.

[www.ukanticorruptioncoalition.org](http://www.ukanticorruptioncoalition.org)



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