

## Case study

CIMA

Kim Clegg, ACMA

David Allen, ACMA

Gemma McNab, Student

Department for Work and Pensions

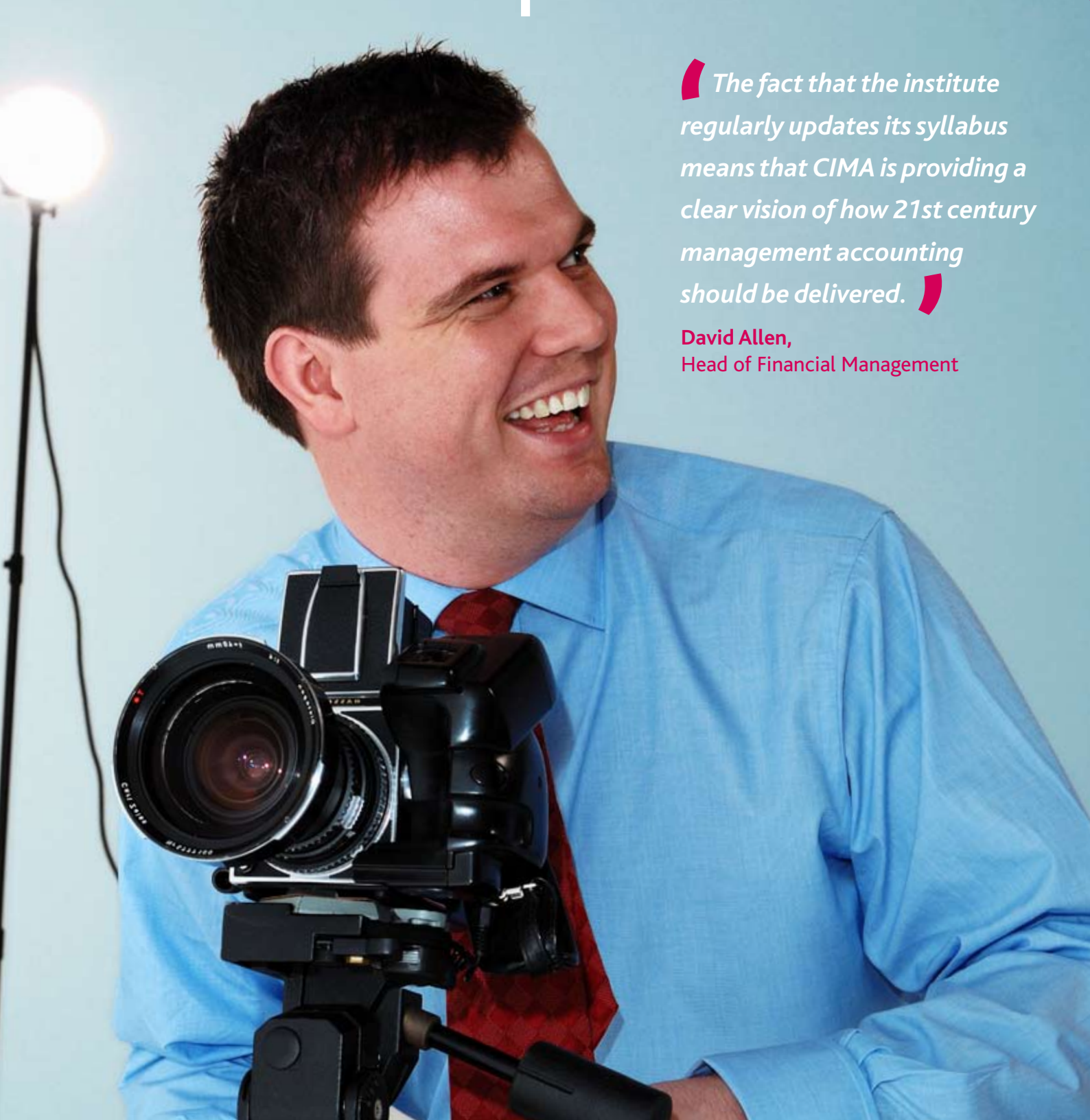


**David Allen**  
Head of Financial  
Management

**Kim Clegg**  
Senior Finance Business Partner

**Gemma McNab**  
Financial Management Trainee

# Department for Work and Pensions



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Head of Financial Management

**The Department for Work and Pensions is here to promote opportunity and independence for all through modern, customer-focused services.**

**DWP helps people to achieve their potential through employment, so that they are able to provide for their children and to work and save for a secure retirement.**

**Just about everyone in Great Britain will deal with the department or one of its eight businesses at some point in their lifetime.**

**The following businesses are part of the DWP: Jobcentre Plus, The Pension Service, Child Support Agency, Disability and Carers Service, The Health and Safety Commission, Health and Safety Executive, The Rent Service and Debt Management.**

Sometimes it can be tough being an accountant and it can be even tougher being an accountant in the civil service. 'I can remember a number of occasions when I've told people what I do for a living and you could see their eyes start to glaze over,' laughs Kim Clegg, a senior finance professional at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). 'The perception is that accountants are rather grey individuals anyway but when you're an accountant and a civil servant, that's about as grey as you can get.'

However Kim is living proof that being a management accountant in the DWP is anything but dull. Since becoming a CIMA member 14 years ago, her career has flourished. 'The broad business focus of my qualification has given me great opportunities to work on all sorts of different projects and to influence and develop the strategic directions of the organisations I've worked in,' she says. 'Accountants in government need to be dynamic and they're now working from within the business at the heart of issues such as consultancy, strategy and business planning,' she continues. 'We're not limited to the calculator or spreadsheet. You're more likely to find me drafting business policy than pulling numbers together.'

Kim has been head of finance for both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Government Actuary's Department and is now a senior finance business partner at the DWP's employment agency, Jobcentre Plus. She says each of the roles have been both challenging and rewarding. 'Some people may still see management accountants as number-crunchers,' she continues. 'But really we're more like an eccentric bunch of inventors and developers who are always looking for ways to make our

*business – whether it's in the public or private sector – work better, faster and more effectively. And that's particularly important when you're using taxpayers' money.'*

David Allen is another case in point. After spending several years helping hospitals in Essex and east London to reduce their budget deficits, David has now taken up the financial reins of a £2.5 billion government organisation focused upon reducing unemployment and improving the UK's skills base. This is taking on many massive new responsibilities that will require a new approach. 'My last job was quite a challenge as you can imagine but I'm always looking for new opportunities to stretch myself,' he smiles. 'My new role is to create an expert team to ensure that financial management is properly embedded from the start. That way we'll have a strategy that isn't just aspirational, it's something we can deliver on the ground.'

When David decided to enhance his career prospects by opting to study for an accountancy qualification six years ago, CIMA was the obvious choice. 'I wanted a credible professional qualification that allowed me to engage with all levels of management in an organisation and to effect change,' he explains. 'CIMA filled the criteria and it continues to help me on a number of levels.' David says the qualification's credibility has enabled him to provide a trusted financial service. 'CIMA members operate in a unique place, providing financial leadership from a business perspective,' he continues. 'The fact that the institute regularly updates its syllabus means that CIMA is providing a clear vision of how 21st century management accounting should be delivered and I'm able to continue to make my work relevant.' ▶

**Kim Clegg, ACMA – Senior Finance Business Partner**

**David Allen, ACMA – Head of Financial Management**

**Gemma McNab, Student – Financial Management Trainee**

## DWP

Both David and Kim are part of the government's ongoing drive to ensure that taxpayers' money is being spent effectively. 'There's a big initiative at the moment to make all senior managers and civil servants more financially literate,' David explains. 'It's a great time to be in the civil service because financial management is something that everybody has to work with now,' he continues. 'Having the CIMA qualification means that not only do we have the right set of skills to help central government function more efficiently but we're being empowered to use those skills to their maximum potential.'

For Gemma McNab variety is also the spice of life. Since joining the DWP's graduate training scheme three years ago, she has moved through a range of placements including work with the Child Support Agency and the regional office of Jobcentre Plus in her home town of Newcastle. 'The training support at the DWP is brilliant,' she says. 'I've been given lots of independent projects and lots of support with my studies at the same time.'

She is currently working in COBAP (corporate banking and method of payment), using her financial skills to support a procurement team. Not all trainee accountants in the DWP are

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studying for the CIMA syllabus, but Gemma's employers were keen for her to broaden her skills base. 'My employer recognises that the content of CIMA is particularly relevant in the light of the

*broader financial role finance must fulfil in the future, and the focus within the CIMA syllabus on topics such as governance and ethics, business strategy and risk management is recognised as supporting these objectives,' she adds.*

Gemma is currently waiting to receive the results of her final CIMA paper (TOPCIMA). 'It's been hard work studying and holding down a full time job but I've had great support and I've learned so much,' she says. And what are her plans for the future? 'I really have no idea,' she laughs. 'All I know is that I'm enjoying my work and I'm developing new skills all the time.' Gemma adds that she is confident that the DWP will provide the type of opportunities she is looking for. 'When I first saw the DWP's advertisement for graduate trainees, it described the kind of job I was looking for exactly. It said the DWP was looking for the 'financial leaders of the future' and with my employer's support, I know I can achieve that goal.' ■

If members of the press are interested in CIMA case studies, please contact:

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