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CIVIL SERVICE WORLD 



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FROM THE EDITOR



The government's levelling-up drive has had a difficult year. Some of the difficulties have been of the government's own making, as plans attached to the broad agenda – which is intended to help spread economic activity, opportunity and, yes, civil servants across the country – seemed to use varying criteria. The Towns Fund, for example, appeared to go to some of the places deemed left behind and not others, while the eponymous Levelling Up Fund didn't include some widely accepted measures of poverty.

There have also been, of course, problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Effort that would have gone into implementing the prime minister's election-winning appeal to traditional Labour heartlands was within months subsumed into the fight against the pandemic, from which it is only now beginning to emerge.

And, even if there had been no Covid, the pledges may have foundered for many other reasons. The inequalities and deprivation across the UK, and the north-south divide in prosperity, are long-established

and have persisted in the face of efforts (though not always consistent) to tackle them.

Perhaps what this problem needs is some kind of national reset. A moment when both companies and workers reassess the value of cramming as many people as possible into a square mile of real estate in the capital and consider whether everyone needs to be in the office, all of the time. From such an idea grows the potential of people working in less-fashionable parts of the country and commuting only occasionally. Perhaps such a situation could mean that people don't need to work as much to pay a big mortgage, freeing people up to join community groups and help invigorate the places they love. From this, young people might begin to notice that they don't have to have a London postcode to get on, and they can choose to stay closer to home should they wish to, but bringing with them the prestige and wages of higher-paying jobs.

Or perhaps none of this would happen. But until now, we have not had a chance to find out. The coronavirus pandemic

has been a dreadful national experience as many have lost loved ones and all of us have had to become used to talking about daily death tolls in a way that would have been previously unimaginable, and the nation was always going to change after such an event. Indeed, it seems to be presenting an opportunity for some of these societal changes. Companies are adjusting to remote working, so it will be a phenomenon well beyond even the depressingly long tail of Covid cases.

This is what makes the government's urging of employees in general, and civil servants in particular, back into the office such a missed opportunity. As Dave Penman of the FDA union relays in his column this month, both the prime minister Boris Johnson and chancel-

lor Rishi Sunak seem to be readying the ground for another call back to the workplace.

This would be a shame. No-one is denying that people will need to go back into the office. There are many things that civil servants do that would be improved by being able to be in the same room as other people.

But there are also many examples where we have learned that it is less crucial than we thought. The government should harness this for many reasons – not least, as Penman notes, that greater flexibility might lessen the pain of future pay restraint. But the chance to join up levelling up with the post-Covid economy is chief among them. The government will only get this opportunity once. It should at least try to take it. ■

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INBOX

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CALCULATED RISK

Cabinet secretary Simon Case's assertion that there will be "no return to normal" for the civil service after the pandemic, and that it must become more willing to take risks, was welcomed

"Agree, and not just for delivering public services," **Eamonn M.** wrote. "Future efficiencies in HR are going to come through greater development of people data analytics as a means of directing future HR policy interventions. And governmental organisations are only going to benefit if: those responsible for people policies are given the necessary training; departments prioritise investment in the latest data management tools; and those wishing to start the process now, by beginning to untap the potential of people data already held, are given appropriate support."

But **Richard Wild** cautioned: "If we want people to take more risk we must accept failure."

ON SECOND THOUGHT

Readers had questions about Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove's proposals to boost civil service cooperation across the UK, which include plans for secondments to allow officials to work in other administrations.

"A perfectly sensible idea, but if it's really going to work, it has to be seen as career-enhancing when the civil servants return to their home administration," **Eliot Wilson** said. "The House of Commons Service has been quite good at this for some time, with standing secondments

to the Cabinet Office and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and an encouraging attitude towards other temporary placements in Whitehall and beyond."

A J William Parr asked: "Will there be a successor to the European Union's Bilateral Exchange Scheme, so that UK civil servants may continue to benefit from overseas secondments?"

RED FLAG?

There was a mixed response to DCMS's new guidance instructing government buildings to fly the Union flag every day.

"Personally, I welcome this move," **Alan Ramsay** said. "I sincerely hope that the devolved administrations will be forced to comply. However, I somehow suspect that it will only be "guidance" and that the Union flag will never see the light of day, especially in the Scottish Parliament."

Others felt the flag-flying drive was simply a distraction. "Priorities eh..."

Rory Tiernan wrote.

Alfie Noakes commented: "Fantastic news. It's nice to know that while 120,000 people died from covid, trade to the EU has all but collapsed, the government focused attention on ensuring government offices fly the union flag all year round. Hoorah!"

Geoff Eales suggested an alternative approach: "It would be good to get out the EU flags again and run them up as a mark of respect for our friends and neighbours. Or are they planning to run up the flag of St George for 'Little England'? Good to get our

money's worth out of Union flags stock though before they have to lose the Saltire and... who knows what else?"

And **Eleanor Greene** quipped: "Have the poles been risk assessed for the extra strain of two flags?"

OLD NEWS

News that the Department for International Trade is moving to the newly-refurbished Old Admiralty Building was met with excitement and nostalgia.

"I started my civil service career in 1979 in the Old Admiralty Building working for the Civil Service Department. Was a lovely building," **David Dollimore** said.

"It's been a long haul since we came up with the scheme, but I am truly delighted that Old Admiralty Building is open for business, and wish all at Department for International Trade every success from their new home," wrote **Roddy Houston** of the Government Property Agency. "A massive thank you and well done to all my colleagues at GPA (both past & present) for delivering this."

Ian Ascough chimed in: "Can't wait to get inside and to see my colleagues in 3D!"

TALENT SHOW

Some readers were unimpressed with the news that some departments' plans to beef up their civil service presence outside of London – with expansions planned in Birmingham, Leeds and Scotland – which fell short of the prime minister's promise to move "departments of state, ministers, private offices and all, to great northern cities and regions that represent the future of this country".

Geoff Eales wrote: "Something of an empty gesture as the new jobs for pork barrel constituencies will be exceedingly limited. Existing experi-

enced staff will move from London and tiny numbers of local junior support staff recruited locally. Experience may be lost from those unwilling to move."

Emma Musgrave replied: "There is also much talent and expertise in the regions and lots of individuals who can't or won't move to London. This was about levelling up."

But **Geoff Eales** said he was speaking from experience. "I know, I was part of the 'talent' which moved from Durham to London for an HMRC post 45 years ago, moved back to Teesside briefly but had to move back to London," he said.

"Suffice it to say that a regional departmental presence as large as HMRC's was not sufficient to sustain a mid to senior level career within the north east. I really hope it does level up and the north east provides all the Treasury mid grades and fast trackers in Darlington, but somehow I doubt it. The reality is it will be small numbers of lower-level posts and a lot of Treasury staff doing weekly commutes from London. Not so much levelling up as pork-barrel politics but the illusion of jobs and levelling up."

TEMP JOB

DWP's announcement of more than 80 new temporary jobcentres, to help staff accommodate the increased workload brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, prompted confusion.

"They shut our local one down not long ago. I wish they'd make their minds up," **Peter Galley** wrote. ■

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The second part of our defence special has interviews with the civil servants and military officers who are leading the digital transformation of the Ministry of Defence.



New system to monitor Whitehall performance revealed

Outcome delivery plans will require departments to “more thoroughly consider affordability, capability and risk”, say Cabinet Office and Treasury chiefs. **Richard Johnstone** reports

Details have been revealed of the new approach to measuring performance across government that will provide scrutiny of the priority outcomes set for each department in last year’s Spending Review.

In a letter to the Public Accounts Committee chair Meg Hillier, civil service chief operating officer and Cabinet Office permanent secretary Alex Chisholm and Treasury director general of public spending Cat Little said new outcome delivery plans (ODPs) would aim “to improve and builds on previous Single Departmental Plans” and would monitor the priority outcomes set for departments in the 2020 Spending Review.

The letter revealed that these priorities had been proposed by departments to measure “progress in their delivery” and were intended to make “progress towards embedding planning and performance more effectively in the [Spending Review] process”.

Following the publication of the one-year SR last November, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury have been working closely with departments and the government functions to develop what Chisholm and Little called a “revised planning and performance framework”, through the new ODPs.

According to the chiefs, these plans require departments to set out both “strategy and planning information for delivery of the provisional priority outcomes”, and

information for work on any “strategic ‘enabling’ activities that are crucial to the successful delivery of those outcomes”.

The ODPs will also be used to improve policy evaluation, after what Chisholm and Little said were the “detailed overviews of evidence bases and evaluation plans that departments provided to inform decisions at SR20”.

Summary versions of ODPs for the 2021-22 financial year will be published later this year following approval by the Cabinet Office, Treasury and No.10, the letter said. Departments will be required to “report regularly” to the Cabinet Office and Treasury on progress to provide “an ongoing picture of departmental activ-

ity against the ODP, enabling greater shared understanding of performance and early action where delivery is off track”.

The letter included a diagram to set out how the new planning and performance framework works.

It also revealed plans for a new evaluation taskforce in government to “improve knowledge of what truly delivers outcomes for citizens” in 2021-22, laying the groundwork for what are expected to be longer-term settlements in a 2021 Spending Review.

The ODPs are also intended to lead to improvements in a number of other areas. They will support joint working across the priority outcomes that were shared across departments, and also support the shared funding agreed to match specific policy outcomes in the Shared Outcomes Fund, for which a second round of funding was announced at last year’s Spending Review.

Departments will be required to “more thoroughly consider affordability, capability and risk through the new ODPs, to ensure more realistic and deliverable plans”, according to Chisholm and Little. This means departmental and agency accounting officers – normally permanent secretaries or chief executives – and functional leads such as finance directors “will play a vital supporting role in scrutinising plans and ensuring their deliverability”, with the Public Value Framework created by former No.10 Delivery Unit chef Sir Michael Barber being used across government as “an important assessment tool to help departments identify how they will improve delivery of priority outcomes”.

There will also be a focus on improved use of data and reporting, with the Treasury using the new plans and the Spending Review settlement to set new data standards and data-sharing requirements.

The letter also noted that the prime minister Boris Johnson and cabinet secretary Simon Case had asked Barber to conduct a rapid review of government delivery to ensure that it remains focused, effective and efficient, and to suggest how it could be strengthened. However, it did not say if this review, which was commissioned in January, has concluded or made recommendations.

Chisholm and Little said the package of changes to Whitehall oversight “will improve our understanding of what interventions deliver the most meaningful outcomes and support greater accountability around how public money is spent to deliver real-world outcomes.

The new ODPs and their corresponding performance information will be used to inform future spending reviews.”

In an analysis of the plans for CSW, former Treasury official Martin Wheatley said that the ODPs represented the third recent attempt by government to improve oversight and management of its performance.

“Planning across government can only be effective if ministers are clear about a short list of their real ‘must-dos’” *Martin Wheatley*

The two previous attempts – departmental business plans and single departmental plans – were not taken seriously by the Cabinet Office and the Treasury, Wheatley, who is now the research director at the Commission for Smarter Government, said.

However, he said that the new approach appears to learn lessons from the previous exercises. “The focus on just three or four outcomes in each department is a big step forward from what were in some cases several dozen ‘priorities’ and other goals in the SDPs.

“Recognising that fifteen of the pri-

orities require serious collaboration between departments is also an improvement on the tendency of the SDPs not to look outside their departments. There is a strong emphasis on evidence and evaluation. Above all, the Treasury appears to be taking them seriously.”

However, he highlighted three aspects of departmental planning which require improvement if the new approach is to be successful.

These demonstrate improved analysis and understanding by departments of inputs, outcomes and outcomes; a proper linking of the new departmental plans to “money and activity”; and greater transparency, including full publication of the plans.

They also need proper political support, Wheatley added. “Planning across government can only be effective if ministers – and above all the prime minister with the support of the chancellor – are clear about a short list of their real ‘must-dos’.

“Likely candidates for that list are not hard to see, notably recovery from the pandemic, ‘levelling up’, net zero, and Global Britain. But what would be really transformational would be if this year’s Spending Review could be anchored in an explicit, and clearly defined statement of the government’s most important intentions for the remainder of this parliament.” ■



ALEX THOMAS IMPROVING GOVERNMENT'S RESILIENCE

BEFORE ANY INQUIRY INTO COVID-19 STARTS ITS WORK THERE ARE LESSONS TO LEARN FOR THE GOVERNMENT

“To govern is to choose” is a common cliché. In fact sometimes, as we saw during Theresa May’s administration, to govern means to delay making choices for as long as possible. And then prime ministers are hit with events that they would not have chosen and could not possibly have foreseen, changing their plans in a moment.

Our recent Institute for Government report *Responding to shocks: 10 lessons for government* looks at what UK governments should learn from recent shocks, particularly focusing on the response to Covid-19 and – in different ways – the UK’s exit from the European Union. Talking to public servants involved in these events is no substitute for the public inquiry the government has committed to but not yet established, but it does allow lessons to be identified, and hopefully learnt, more rapidly.

We focused on three areas: anticipating and preparing for shocks; the mechanics of government; and the checks and balances that constrain action and allow for scrutiny of decisions.

The government has quite a good understanding of the top threats the UK faces. While no list or ranking of risks can foresee every eventuality, the National Risk Register identifies and analyses the “known knowns”. But we found that as a tool for making decisions the register does not reach deeply enough into departmental activities. Pandemics, whether influenza or other diseases, have been recorded as a significant risk for a long time. But plans in the departments that needed to respond to secondary effects were underdeveloped, most notably in the Department for Education.

The government also needs to be better equipped to make rapid and difficult policy decisions in response to shocks. When a major crisis like the pandemic hits, ministers and civil servants need to make it a top priority to boost the advisory and co-ordination structures in the centre of government.

We also found that generally the operational execution of decisions worked more effectively than the policymaking behind the decisions themselves. And when thinking about how best to make major government interventions work well on the ground, reconditioning existing delivery mechanisms – like Universal Credit – works better than creating complex new structures like a centralised test and trace system.

Participation in decision-making was also a theme. Broader

participation made for better decisions, whether in securing rapid buy-in to economic support packages or the integration of the NHS and army into the design of vaccination programme logistics. The summer 2020 school reopening, Eat Out To Help Out and the limited use of the Nightingale hospitals were less successful because a range of expertise was not incorporated into the policymaking process.

Relationships between central and local government need to be improved, with “bitterness” and “suspicion” fuelling an instinct to centralise and hampering the Covid-19 tracing system, the NHS Volunteer Responders scheme and some of the economic support packages. Participation in decisions and collaboration in their delivery need to be more firmly entrenched in the government’s response to shocks and crises.

Almost all of our interviewees, though, felt that the government, civil service and wider public sector adapted well to new ways of working. Some civil servants were amazed and relieved at how resilient their teams, and their IT capability, proved to be in an exceptional time. Civil service reformers should take

heart at the flexibility demonstrated and make the most of this moment for change.

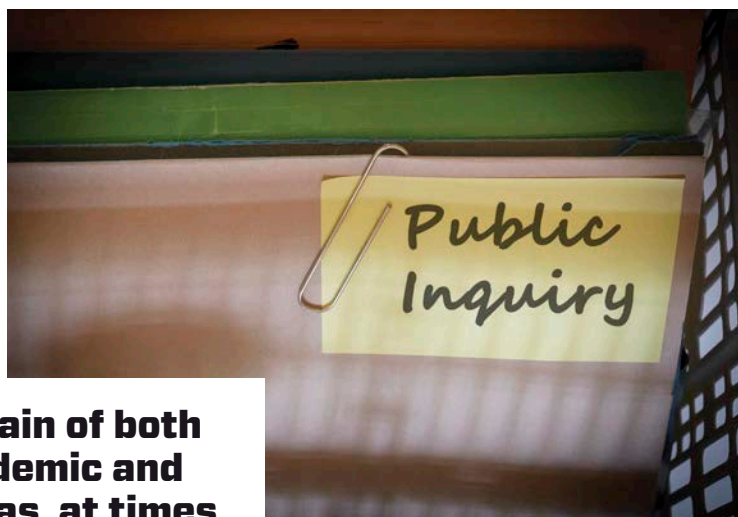
We found that the strain of both the pandemic and Brexit has, at times, exposed the limits of accountability in government. The gaps can be seen when the prime minister appoints “tsars” to lead parts of the pandemic response, or in the ambiguous special adviser position of Lord Da-

vid Frost as chief Brexit negotiator before his installation as a minister. And it has often not been clear who rightly gets the blame when things go wrong like at DfE in August last year.

That particularly matters when a government is willing to override norms and break conventions. The weakness of the UK’s parliamentary and propriety oversight mechanisms has been repeatedly exposed, including during the government’s willingness to break international law and in suspending the normal procurement rules with a “high-priority lane” for contacts of ministers.

Those working in and close to government in recent years have seen the state tested as rarely before as it responded to the systemic shocks of Covid-19 and the UK’s departure from the EU. While we wait for a full inquiry into the pandemic and as the country’s new trading relationship with its nearest neighbours evolves, now is the right time to start to learn lessons from this extraordinary period of government activity. ■

Alex Thomas is an Institute for Government programme director leading work on policymaking and the civil service



“The strain of both the pandemic and Brexit has, at times, exposed the limits of accountability in government”

DAVE PENMAN IN THE OFFICE, BUT OUT OF TOUCH

THE PRIME MINISTER AND CHANCELLOR HAVE BOTH BEGUN ENCOURAGING PEOPLE BACK TO THE WORKPLACE AFTER COVID. BUT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER SERVED LEARNING THE FLEXIBLE WORKING LESSONS OF THE PANDEMIC

It's all too easy to have a pop at politicians for not understanding the realities of modern employment. Many have life experiences that are very different to your average working Joe or Josephine. It's why they should tread carefully when opining about some issues, particularly if they're attempting to suggest some form of personal knowledge of the subject.

So, what to make of the apparently spontaneous comments from the prime minister and chancellor around returning to workplaces over the last few weeks? They both have form on this front, given last summer's attempts to shame civil servants back in to workplaces as part of their ill-advised and ultimately ill-fated drive to get people back to city centres.

Is this where we're heading again? Rishi Sunak's attempt at describing spontaneous workplace bonhomie with "people riffing off each other" was achingly crass. It reminded me of a dad nervously interrupting his teenager screaming obscenities while playing Call of Duty: Warzone, trying to explain how he was the first kid in computer club at school to have a Commodore Amiga. Cool.

"The lockdown has shown millions of workers, managers and employers that remote working can help with work-life balance"

Riffing Rishi might have been referring to his own experience as a hedge fund manager of course, but I suspect it's more a push back from what those in government see as an imbalance in the debate on remote working. While he later conceded in the interview that there could be "some extra flexibility", it all sounded very begrudging.

Similarly, when the prime minister said "the general view is people have had quite a few days off, and it wouldn't be a bad thing for people to see their way round to making a passing stab at getting back into the office", it makes you wonder who this general is and where he's been working for the last

decade. As ever with the prime minister, you need to get beyond the smoke screen of the deliberately provocative terminology, which he delivers in a manner to suggest it was merely an off the cuff remark. A few weeks earlier he'd said: "Believe me, the British people will be consumed once again with their desire for the genuine face-to-face meeting that makes all the difference to the deal or whatever it is."

Is this just a remote, almost luddite view of the working world which they want to apply regardless of evidence or another cack-handed attempt at addressing concerns about city centre economies?



Avoid polarised debate

The danger here is we see this as a polarised debate, between slackers who want to spend their entire week in their PJs and go-getters looking to seal the deal with spontaneous moments of ingenuity that you can only get when you're close enough to a client or colleague to smell their halitosis. Sunak's comment that staff will "vote with their feet" if they're forced out of the office is an example of this. Most employees want a balance and most balanced arrangements will suit employers and employees alike.

The lockdown has shown millions of workers, managers and employers that remote working can help with work-life balance and be as, if not more, productive.

Employers that can, but won't, offer this flexibility will be the ones seeing the feet walking out the door. The civil service has an opportunity to be at the forefront of this quiet industrial revolution and have a competitive edge when its fighting with one hand tied behind its back on pay.

As we emerge from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the civil service, like countless other employers, is going to have to navigate some very complex issues with its workforce. What does and does not need to be done in the workplace? How do you accommodate different preferences across thousands of employees? How do you deal with the legitimate concerns of those who have to pack on to public transport for the first time in over a year?

This will take time to get right, so my plea to ministers is this: save us from your faux spontaneous riffs and your misspoken insults. Trust in those whose expertise and responsibility it is to deliver public services and allow them to get on with it. ■

Dave Penman is the general secretary of the FDA union. He tweets @FDAgensec

ADAM WRIGHT PREPARING FOR THE COVID DECADE

THE CHALLENGES OF THE UK'S RECOVERY FROM THE PANDEMIC WILL TAKE YEARS TO SORT OUT. A NEW REPORT FROM THE BRITISH ACADEMY SETS OUT SOME OF THE THINGS POLICYMAKERS NEED TO THINK ABOUT TO PREPARE

The UK is facing a Covid decade, with the social impacts from the pandemic being felt throughout the 2020s. This decade will be a turbulent one for policymaking, not just because of the difficult choices needing to be made in the face of uncertainty, but also because policy intervention will need to be extremely well-timed, well-targeted and supported at all levels in order to meet the challenges ahead. This is likely to push the current mechanics of policymaking in the UK well beyond its existing limits.

History has shown that times of upheaval can be opportunities to reshape society, but to seize these opportunities in policy requires both vision, and for decisions to be made in a supportive and connected policy environment. Policymaking is rarely straightforward and, in recent years, has been even more constrained than usual by the all-encompassing complexity of politics and process surrounding Brexit, only to be hit with Covid-19 just as things had seemingly turned a corner. Even if our policymakers can muster the energy and drive needed to develop a powerful vision for economic and social recovery across the UK, enacting this will require the navigation of complex structures and processes as well as cultures, norms and relationships.

Take education, for example, where the pandemic has caused massive upheaval both in loss of learning and the impact on the social development and mental wellbeing of children and young people. If we are going to tackle the consequences of something as huge as the past year's lost access to education and the exacerbation of longstanding socioeconomic inequalities in educational attainment we must adopt an approach that is both sensitive to differentiated effects on communities and places while being more coordinated and supportive across different levels of governance and between different administrations.

Much of the issue lies not in party politics, but in the complexity of accounting for challenging, cross-cutting factors like place, scale and time in developing and delivering policy. These factors can help policymakers to understand and respond to the fact that, while everyone has

been affected by this crisis, the long-term impacts will vary considerably by who you are, where you live, how visible you are to decision makers, and how long you have had to face the acute effects of the pandemic. The British Academy's *Shaping the Covid decade* report tries to address this by linking up a set of strategic policy goals with an underlying framework for more effective policymaking.

The first two policy goals deal directly with the mechanics of policymaking, focusing on improving multi-level governance and the way administrations develop, share and communicate knowledge, data and information. The pandemic has highlighted the longstanding tensions in the relationships between localised and centralised levels of government administration. But the sense of shared purpose in the pandemic recovery provides a unique opportunity for these tensions to be confronted and hopefully resolved. To work properly, the flow of knowledge between different levels of government has to improve, with data and information from localities feeding up, and wider strategy and context flowing down.

“The pandemic has highlighted the longstanding tensions in the relationships between localised and centralised levels of government administration”

But, equally, we must improve the horizontal flows too: different bodies at the same level – such as different local councils, government departments, health trusts and local enterprise partnerships – must be able to learn from each other, share evidence and resources and provide lateral accountability to help improve policy responsiveness to diverse and changing local needs.

This requires what the British Academy has called a policy environment that is “CLEAR”: Communicative, ensuring effective flows of information; Learning, strengthening the nexuses between

evidence, policy and practice; Engaging, building transparency and trust through citizens' active involvement; Adaptive, responding to change and uncertainty in a coordinated way; and Relational, fully embracing a joined-up approach and the interconnections between policy issues.

These are already principles that many in the civil service are striving to put into practice, but the impact of the pandemic and the size of the challenges we face in this Covid decade demand that policymakers redouble their efforts to improve the way we do policy, as this will undoubtedly improve policy itself. ■

Dr Adam Wright is head of public policy at the British Academy



IAN CHESHIRE LET'S ABOLISH THE SPENDING REVIEW

FURTHER REFORM OF THE WAY THE GOVERNMENT MANAGES RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS IS VITAL, SAYS THE FORMER GOVERNMENT LEAD NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When the Commission for Smart Government divvied up its work and gave me the topic of finance, I thought I had drawn the short straw. What could we say of any interest about spreadsheets and financial reports?

In fact, as the work has gone on, it has become clear to all of us on the commission that finance is actually central to our work. Readers of *Civil Service World* will, of course, know that it is no accident that the Treasury wields so much power in government. It controls the purse strings, and has often pioneered financial management reforms, at least back to the 17th century, when George Downing came up with the idea of managing all government spending in one place (and on the side engaged in some speculative property development off Whitehall). In the more recent past, the UK has been the origin of government financial management innovations, notably planning spending at a high level over a number

“Financial plans are important as a means to an end, and not an end in themselves”

of years. The UK has a strong record of keeping spending within planned totals.

As I know from my business career, effective financial control – not spending money you haven't got – is vital. However, it is only one part of the picture. The other dimension is value: making sure planned spending is on the right things, and making sure plans get put into action as intended.

Despite some phases of innovation, the financial management initiative under Margaret Thatcher, and political focus on delivery under Tony Blair, UK government's track record on that has been rather patchier. The ratings agencies are beginning to mutter about whether the UK's traditional reputation for excellent financial governance is beginning to tarnish.

From 2017, the Treasury has shown signs that it recognises the need to pursue value alongside strong control. Drawing on his

Blair-era experience, Sir Michael Barber has helped the Treasury develop its Public Value Framework. Despite the strains of the last couple of years on the government machine, the Treasury has stuck at it, and last autumn's Spending Review signalled a stronger focus on value, data, evidence, and good systems and people.

The commission's new report offers some encouragement and advice to build on the progress so far, drawing on corporate and international comparisons. We suggest significant reforms.

Chief among them is a call to abolish the spending review. We don't mean by that, of course, that the government doesn't need to come up with a set of medium-term financial plans. But it is important to see them as a means to an end, and not an end in themselves.

Instead, we need a new approach to planning money and activity. It consists of four key elements.

First, a new plan for government, working out across how money and activity can make things happen in line with the government's intentions, not department by department, but across the whole. That needs to start by setting a limited number of top-level goals, with some definition of where it wants to get by the end of the parliament, on such challenges as levelling up, net zero and Global Britain.

Second, learning from the George W Bush administration

in the US, there needs to be rigour and transparency about the financial management capability of departments and public bodies. There should be a common rating system, with the results published, to drive improvement in capability and performance.

Third, government needs to be more open about what it is spending and what it is achieving. This is partly about publishing plans which are currently kept secret. But the more important point is to make it accessible to the non-expert.

And fourth, underpinning the first three, the government needs excellent data and financial management systems, and a workforce with the right professional background and skills.

Our proposals are not just important. We believe they are vital for the success of the government, as it leads the recovery from the pandemic and puts in place its ambitions for the country. ■

Sir Ian Cheshire is the chairman of Barclays UK plc, and a member of the Commission for Smart Government. He served as the government's lead non-executive director from 2015 to 2020



THE CSA CIVIL SERVICE AWARDS

There was no shortage of talented individuals and teams recognised in this year's Civil Service Awards. CSW talked to some of the winners about their work and how it felt to win



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LEADING THE WAY TO BETTER LIVES FOR VICTIMS OF THE TROUBLES

Chris Atkinson won the Inspirational Leadership Award for his work coordinating the delivery of long-stalled plans for a payments scheme to help people left with permanent disabilities as a result of conflict in Northern Ireland. In the first of a series of articles with award winners, he tells CSW about the background to the project



new payments scheme to support people who are permanently disabled because of injuries they sustained during the Troubles will shortly open for applications after years of political discussion. In February, a senior policy officer in the Northern Ireland Office who played a key

role in progressing the scheme won the Inspirational Leadership Award in the annual Civil Service Awards for his efforts.

Chris Atkinson began working on the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme – or the Victims’ Payments Scheme for short – in October 2018, with colleagues in the NIO’s Legacy Group.

The scheme is designed to help people left, through no fault of their own, with disablement caused by life-changing injuries from incidents such as bombings or shootings during the Troubles. Who should be eligible for the scheme had been long debated, and work to progress it in Northern Ireland had stalled. But an amendment to the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 set a legal deadline for the scheme to be set up, with parliament requiring the NIO to act because of how long debates about it had been ongoing, and because there had also not been an executive in place at Stormont for more than a year and a half following the collapse of power-sharing.

Atkinson was tasked with leading the UK government’s work to meet the requirement. He led a team that consulted on what the Victims’ Payment Scheme should look like with victims themselves, support groups, political parties, academics, and statutory authorities. He also worked with the Northern Ireland Civil Service, which will support the independent board administering the scheme, and other UK government departments with an interest in it.

“I always wanted to approach this in a collaborative way, so it was really important that we worked hand in glove with the right people,” Atkinson said. “The scheme needed careful design work and to be mindful of the very particular needs of victims and survivors. I was really lucky that someone joined the team from another government department who had experience of dealing with complex schemes, another experienced in engagement, as well as others with relevant technical expertise. Wider teams in the NIO were brilliant at sharing their expertise.”

Atkinson added: “From the very get-go we sought to map out what the victims’ journey and experience should be right the way through the scheme. How do you support them from the very early stages – from ‘do I want to make an application?’ to being told whether or not they’re going to get a payment.”

Atkinson said there was a lot of expertise and experience in the victims sector and his team went out and made themselves available for as long as people wanted to talk during the consultation process.



“I always wanted to approach this in a collaborative way, so it was really important that we worked hand in glove with the right people”

“It was really important for us to build credibility and trust with people, as there are sensitive issues involved and it was so important to us that this scheme be people centred in its approach,” he said.

“Ultimately, the scheme is about providing acknowledgement and a measure of financial support to those who are eligible. We were prepared to drive half way across the country if that was what it took to have those conversations, or made ourselves available out of hours, as we wanted to get this right.”

Atkinson had a core team of around five people with a further 10 or so colleagues from the Legacy Group helping out at times. They were also supported by colleagues with significant experience and expertise in running consultations.

He added that the team “invested a lot of time” working with a group of NICS staff preparing to implement the proposals, both before and after the regulations were made, “to help ensure the implementation experts could pick up the scheme straight away from us”.

Atkinson is currently on secondment at the Independent Reporting Commission, which was set up to report on efforts to tackle residual paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. It is an arm’s-length body sponsored by the NIO.

How did it feel to win the award?

“It was amazing. I was just completely taken aback. It was humbling to even be shortlisted, because the two people who I was shortlisted with had done incredible things. Kelsey Williams had done an amazing piece of work around Black Lives Matter in the Department for Education and Chris Rampling, HM Ambassador to Lebanon, clearly just had so much respect and love from all of his team.

“It’s made me realise how grateful I am to have had this experience. I’ve met and got to work with some incredible people, particularly people who were injured in the Troubles. I genuinely found them inspiring to work with and to meet.”

What lessons for other parts of the civil service are there from your experience with the scheme?

“There are a couple. One was the importance of identifying early on who would have an interest and building a relationship with them. Me and my deputy director just went out and had coffee with a couple of people who had been lobbying and campaigning around this for a long time. Sometimes there’s a nervousness within the civil service that we can’t go out and engage until we’ve got something to say. But people really value being listened to, »

so for me, prioritising that really helped.

“Also identifying across Whitehall who else might be interested, and who else might be able to help you. I was lucky enough to meet someone who had been involved in the Windrush scheme

who was extremely useful, as were colleagues from DWP who had experience with industrial injuries, and others.”

How did you celebrate the awards win?

“I was able to celebrate with my family.”

Who nominated you for the award?

“My old deputy director, Ruth, who leads the Legacy Group very kindly put me forward, cheered on by my director, Chris, and the NIO’s perm sec – Madeleine Alessandri – who’s a very big advocate of the Civil Service Awards. ■



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

MHCLG senior policy adviser **Abigail Agyei** was recognised in the awards for her work with marginalised communities during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as her work with the department’s BAME network leading conversations on race in the civil service to create an inclusive, safe and accountable culture. She spoke to *CSW* about her work, winning the award, and trying to celebrate during lockdown



Abigail Agyei spent 2020 working on some of the most high-profile issues facing government. As a senior policy adviser in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government’s People, Places and Communities Division, she began the year in a team working on race and minority ethnic equality policy and work commemorating the Windrush generation, and then moved towards helping communities cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which has greatly affected black and minority ethnic communities across the country.

For these contributions, as well as her work with the department’s BAME network, Agyei won the Rising Star Award at the 2020 Civil Service Awards, recognising her work in what she tells *CSW* has been a “busy and challenging” year.

“It has also felt incredibly rewarding,” she says. “It has been a mix of supporting communities as effectively as possible, and also trying to support my workforce, with my BAME network hat on.

“Before Covid, I was working in the race equality team engaging on our internation-

al commitments on race as well as engaging with Windrush communities, particularly through the Windrush Day grant scheme that our department holds. And then when Covid happened, there was a real focus on working to help the affected communities, so I have supported the team on that.

“I have also been part of the BAME network for three years as head on events and communications. Everything that happened this year following Black Lives Matter and George Floyd’s death meant I have worked on this additionally in the evenings and weekends to support our ethnic-minority workforce.”

She describes the year as “tiring and challenging, but incredibly rewarding in many parts as well”, as it has been spent working on the kinds of issues that motivate her as a civil servant.

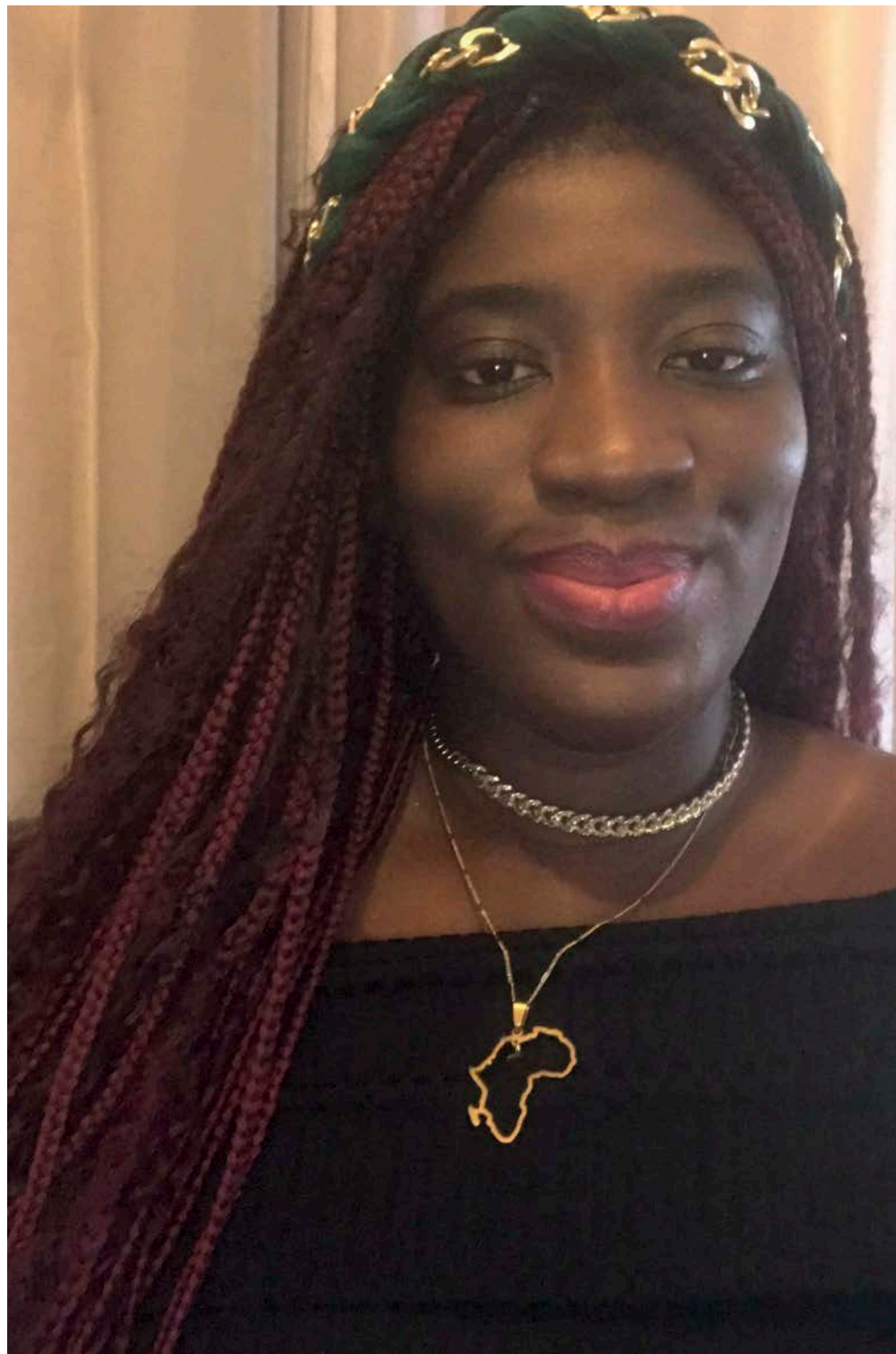
“The reason I was interested in becoming a civil servant, and being in public service, was to support minority and marginalised communities in general. The civil service is the way I’ve been able to do this because of its reach in supporting the public and directly working on policies to support these communities. That’s definitely the reason I chose to be a civil servant and seven years on I’m still here. I think that’s been reflected throughout my career, of wanting to support and amplify the voices of marginalised communities.”

She says MHCLG is “doing great work to make sure that we’re reaching those hard-to-reach communities”.

Reflecting on her own area, she says: “We are seeing improvements with the community champions work we do, which works to engage with communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. We engage with local authorities and voluntary and community sector regularly and are helping to expand their work in supporting these communities, and offering a range of interventions that are helping to build trust and empower communities.

“In particular, a lot of work is being done to engage with communities on the [Covid] vaccine, and I think we’re doing a really good job of making sure we’re listening to communities’ concerns and answering these concerns, and we are seeing uptake increase. I think it’s important that we’re seeing a lot more medics and doctors from ethnic-minority communities talking about the importance of vaccines and how effective they are – people are seeing these community champions, people who look like them, talking about the vaccine.”

Agyei is also proud of her work in the last year supporting conversations in the department around race in response to



“The reason I was interested in becoming a civil servant, and being in public service, was to support minority and marginalised communities”

FEATURE › CS AWARDS PROFILES

the Black Lives Matter movement. “I am definitely proud of how I’ve been able to push and support the conversations about race, and to hold the department and civil service to account in regards to race, because I’ve been very vocal about how we can only really effectively support communities once the civil service is more reflective of the communities we serve.

“The conversations we’ve been having with the BAME network were happening long before George Floyd and the pandemic, but obviously it’s been heightened recently, and I’m proud of being able to have those conversations. I’m proud of the blog I wrote this year about my experiences as a black woman dealing with the pandemic and George Floyd’s death, the reach it has had, and just trying to amplify the voices of how I think many black people were feeling.”

How did it feel to win the Rising Star Award?

“When my name was said, it really felt like a blur, but it was a really nice feeling. And especially reading about the work of the other two nominees, they are

both women doing great work in the civil service. So I thought it really could go to any of us. So it was really nice to hear my name. Surreal, but it was a nice feeling.

“I didn’t think we were going to have a chance to give speeches, so I didn’t think that far ahead, but when I saw people given speeches, I thought ‘oh gosh, if I win this, I’m going to have to say something’. I hadn’t given it much thought, so I didn’t overthink it.”

How did you celebrate the award win?

“I was on my own when I found out I won. But I had loads of colleagues, friends and family cheering me on and messaging me and calling.”

Who nominated you for the award?

“I first found out on our intranet, where we were informed of people who had nominations in general and I got sent an email from the Civil Service Awards. So that’s when I heard that I’d been put forward in three categories. Some members of the BAME network had put forward nominations for me, and then I found out in January that I’d been shortlisted to the final

three of the Rising Star Award. It was lovely, as cheesy as it sounds, just to hear I’d been nominated in categories for anything in regards to my work, and then to be short-listed was really nice and overwhelming.”

What are your career ambitions?

“There’s not been a blueprint through my career. A lot of the roles I’ve applied for through my career have just had the common theme of wanting to support communities that don’t feel they often get heard by government.

“I’m keen to continue to progress. Especially as a black woman in the civil service, I’m always keen to see more black women in the senior civil service. I believe the figure at the moment is only around 1%. I don’t know if that’s something that I thought about for myself right now, but I’m definitely always keen to see more of us and to support making this happen. So maybe it’s something I need to think a bit more about. But I’m definitely keen to continue to progress as much as I can in my career in the civil service to supporting vulnerable and marginalised communities.” ■



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BREAKING NEW GROUND WITH SUPPORT NETWORKS

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s **Gillian Whitworth** won the 2020 Health & Wellbeing Award in recognition of her extraordinary commitment, courage and compassion in raising greater awareness of eating disorders. She tells CSW about the background to her nomination



The past year has been a challenging time for most, but for those battling eating disorders it has been particularly tough. Gillian Whitworth has been a driving force in the

launch of the Civil Service Eating Disorders Network and in February won a Civil Service Award for her work to raise awareness on an issue that is still a source of stigma.

Whitworth was one of three founders of an eating-disorder support group at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in 2018 – the first of its kind in the civil service. After joining the Fast Stream and moving to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, she continued awareness-raising work but also kept signposting people to the monthly support groups run by her colleagues in BEIS.

Whitworth's recent Civil Service Award win, in the Health & Wellbeing category, recognised her "extraordinary commitment, courage and compassion" in highlighting ways that eating disorders can present in the workplace and ways colleagues can help.

"To start with I was nervous about putting myself centre stage with those experiences – there is still quite a lot of stigma around eating disorders and mental health within our society," Whitworth told CSW. "But the response has been overwhelmingly positive."

Whitworth said her experience from the past three years showed that civil servants seeking support and advice often have different needs.

"Broadly, the CSEDN interacts with three groups of people," she said. "The people who've had personal experiences in the past or who are going through something currently. Then there are those who've supported a family member, or someone really close to them – so they have that second-hand experience."

"The third group are the people who don't necessarily have that personal contact but who want to create a more kind and supportive workplace."

A shared experience of many of the Civil Service Eating Disorders Network co-founders was supportive line managers. Making sure line managers are well-informed and able to signpost staff to help is "critical", according to Whitworth.

"We know that when people talk about problems that they're having around eating or seeking reasonable adjustments, their line manager is a key relationship – it can make a difference," she said.

"The CSEDN have developed resources particularly aimed at managers to support them in having those conversations in a sensitive way."

The CSEDN launched during Eating Disorders Awareness Week in March and had more than 300 people take part in webinars and other events. One was an



"The network have developed resources particularly aimed at managers to support them in having those conversations in a sensitive way"

interactive session on Teams with a range of experts, where people posed questions to speakers using the Slido app.

"That access to people that understand and have expertise has been invaluable for people, especially where they can't access that help in everyday life," Whitworth said.

"Bringing that expertise to civil servants and making sure people can understand how to support themselves or how to support others is a crucial aim of our network."

Whitworth said the switch to virtual support group meetings necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic was a great opportunity to reach more people – not only across the UK but also in British embassies and high commissions, connecting people in different environments but with similar experiences.

But she said that while it had been "a real joy" to see a more people coming together to support one another, the pandemic had been a "negative and painful" experience for people suffering with eating disorders in particular.

"Certain things during this pandemic are quite triggering for people affected by eating disorders," she said. "In the first lockdown many people talked about stockpiling food, which can be troubling for someone who is struggling with bingeing. Or lockdowns and restrictions can disrupt someone's routine – that can really heighten someone's anxiety."

Whitworth said the rates for people who had been seeking help either from NHS services or national eating-disorder charity Beat, had increased significantly over the past 12 months.

"Being able to reach more people has definitely helped. But people are suffering," she said. "It's been a difficult, challenging time for a lot of people that we're speaking to."

Whitworth said that anyone who would like to get involved with the CSEDN is welcome to contact edsg@beis.gov.uk.

How did it feel to win the Health & Wellbeing Award?

"I was slightly overwhelmed, but in a good way. It's been a journey over the past few years and it's quite an emotional for me – it felt great to see our hard work recognised. All three finalists in my category were mental-health initiatives: it shows that the civil service is clearly becoming a more supportive environment to talk about mental health."

How did you celebrate the awards win?

"Sharing the good news with my family! I had a joint celebration with my partner as he passed medical school



the same day – we danced around to a celebratory playlist on Spotify.”

What lessons for other parts of the civil service are there from your experience with the network?

“Normalise talking about really difficult topics and creating safe spaces to ask questions and learn about our col-

leagues’ difficult experiences. We need to get comfortable – as people and as colleagues – supporting one another and sharing openly how we are feeling and when we are struggling. And don’t be afraid to stand out and tell your own story, even if it’s been difficult and you’ve overcome challenges. Someone will rec-

ognise themselves in what you’ve said.”

Who nominated you for the award?

“One of my friends in the FCDO. Last year, I did a presentation during Eating Disorder Awareness Week during his first week on our team. He said he’d found that really powerful. So it wasn’t a bombshell: we know each other!” ■



REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE MOST IN NEED

DWP official **Sarah Morton** has been recognised for her voluntary work with organisations that support homeless people in Liverpool. She tells CSW how staff from across the department’s Belle Vale service centre support the HOPE Project



Department for Work and Pensions staff member Sarah Morton this year joined the small group of individuals who’ve won a Civil Service Award twice. The Personal Independence Payments case manager at DWP’s Belle Vale service centre in Liverpool picked up the Citizenship Award in recognition of her tireless volunteering work with some of the most vulnerable people in the city.

Morton helps with a range of grassroots organisations that support homeless people in Liverpool. She also volunteers with food banks, works to end period poverty and gives her time to aid victims of domestic violence. She won the Volunteering Award in 2017 for her work.

As well as mobilising colleagues at Belle Vale to support the HOPE Project, the principal organisation she works with to help rough sleepers, Morton is also passionate about ensuring DWP staff have a better understanding of service users as individuals.

“When you’re working at a processing

site and you're not actually seeing people like you do in a jobcentre, it helps people realise that there's a vulnerable person behind every case that we deal with," she says. "It helps to reinforce that we need to do our very best to make sure that everybody gets the level of service that they deserve and the most help that we can give them."

Morton tells CSW she shares the stories of people she meets doing outreach work with colleagues to give them a better understanding of the issues they face. The result is that her "unbelievably generous" Belle Vale colleagues now provide the majority of the support that the HOPE Project receives.

"Being able to tell people's stories is about addressing the myths about homelessness," she says. "Some people have very strange ideas about deserving and undeserving people. Some people have the idea that if you end up homeless you've done something to deserve that. But that's not the case: everybody deserves to have a home."

"When we're dealing with people with disabilities or in very bad situations, something like that can happen to them if they don't get the help that they need."

Morton says the HOPE Project has brought her into contact with elderly women who have been victims of domestic violence and ended up on the street because they were thrown out by their partners. But the biggest demographic sleeping rough is single men.

The HOPE Project offers food, clean clothing, sleeping bags and essential items like sanitising wipes to people living on the streets in Liverpool. Morton became involved after the death of her father, who was a keen walker, when she was looking for an organisation that could make use of his outdoor clothing.

She quickly took over running the HOPE Project's Friday night outreach team. Her mother and her mother's friends began cooking the hot soup and scouse distributed by teams on Fridays.

Morton says she was nominated for her latest award in recognition of her work in the early days of the pandemic, before the government's Everyone In temporary accommodation drive for rough sleepers was up and running.

Because the HOPE Project is not a registered charity, it does not accept cash donations. An Amazon Wish List fixed the issue of colleagues not being able to physically donate things like insulated sleeping mats, gloves and rain ponchos to her at the office when everyone was working remotely.

"We were able to take them out and distribute them safely," Morton says. "Obviously at a distance, with a risk assessment."



“Some people have the idea that if you end up homeless you’ve done something to deserve that. But that’s not the case: everybody deserves to have a home”

Despite being able to continue providing essentials to people living on the streets during the pandemic, Morton was very conscious that the humanising support the HOPE Project offers was diminished.

"People who rough sleep say the worst thing about it is not sleeping on the floor, it's when people look through you or don't even look at you, like you don't exist," she said. "It's very dehumanising."

"One of the most challenging parts of the first lockdown was not being able to stop and talk. Just to have conversations was a big part of what we do. But we weren't able to do that with Covid. We just had to leave packed lunches and hot drinks and little care packs in a place for them to pick up while keeping our distance all the time, and let them know why we couldn't chat."

How did it feel to win the award?

"I was really surprised, to be honest – particularly as I won an award once before for outreach work. The award is really for our whole site at Belle Vale, because without them the HOPE Project wouldn't have anything to take out. They really are very generous, kind-hearted people. And a lot of people don't think of DWP staff as being like that. The site management where I work were absolutely made up that I won."

What lessons for other parts of the civil service are there from your experience?

"I would encourage anyone to get involved with local community stuff. It's really, really rewarding and everybody thinks you're really altruistic but I get a lot more out of it than I put in. If you've had a bad week at work and you're feeling sorry for yourself, when you go out it helps to clear your head and remember there's still a lot of people who need help and who are in a lot worse position than yourself. It can help you realise what you've got to be grateful for."

How did you celebrate the awards win?

"When I won the Volunteering Award in 2017, it was pre-Covid and I was able to take my mum with me to Lancaster House in London, which was lovely and really fancy. This time it was a virtual ceremony, but the awards people sent everyone who was shortlisted a really nice hamper and we got a bottle of prosecco and some nice Fortnum and Mason goodies. So it was just that. My mum's a big part of what we do with the Hope Project, so we raised a little glass that night."

Who nominated you for the award?

"It was one of my colleagues, Rachel Dever. She works for HM Passport Office now because she got promoted just before the ceremony. She nominates me for everything, she's like my biggest cheerleader." ■

DELIVERING BENEFITS TECHNOLOGY FIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

DWP staff won the Project Delivery Excellence Award for a project to upgrade systems delivering jobseekers' allowance and many other benefits during the first wave of the Covid pandemic. **Mark Bell** tells CSW how it was done



The Virtual Machine Environment Replacement (VME-R) project replaced ageing legacy infrastructure with more modern technology needed to enable future welfare policy changes to be implemented. This complex and intensive programme has seen the Department for Work and Pensions rebuild technology, some of which was more than 40 years old, which supports its core benefit payment systems.

Altogether, 11 critical benefit systems were replaced with zero disruption to DWP's benefit operations or delays to citizen payments. The largest four of these systems was replaced in the middle of the global pandemic, as DWP Digital rose to the challenge amid remote working and lockdowns. The applications pay out more than £150bn a year to millions of UK citizens.

The project was a DWP in-house exercise between the DWP Digital and Service Planning and Delivery - Change Delivery teams, and created opportunity for DWP to further move away from outsourced IT services towards a fully in-sourced digital

organisation. The project helped DWP Digital staff to build capability, learn new skills and own their careers as the programme progressed.

Replacing the largest benefit system

Over Easter 2020, the VME-R project replaced jobseeker's allowance, the department's largest benefit system, remotely and at pace. Replacing the old service was particularly critical at this time as demand on the JSA system rocketed to unprecedented levels due to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The JSA payment system was introduced in the 1990s, and based on an IT code set designed in the 1960s, although as new technical and policy requirements changed code was added over the years.

The replacement was the

“Processing times are now 50-60% quicker and we can implement upgrades mid-week for the first time”



The VME replacement team at Christmas 2019



Mark Bell, head of the VME-R programme at DWP

culmination of two years of planning, although the increase in benefit claims meant the programme was reviewed to boost capability in order to support around one million additional jobseeker's allowance claims and support thousands of new operational staff.

Working remotely, and throughout nights and weekends, the service was fully commissioned for operational activity on Easter Monday 2020, 24 hours ahead of schedule. The team was awarded the Project Delivery Excellence Award at the Civil Service Award 2020 for achieving this migration.

The project has seen:

- System capacity increased to allow 3,000 additional staff to respond to jobseeker's allowance claim surge
- Record timing for data migration of 6.2 billion rows of customer data, which was

delivered in under 24 hours

- Overnight IT batch processing time reduced from five hours to just over one hour, offering longer operational working days.

In total, 11 benefit applications have now been moved to new technology. Other applications migrated during the pandemic were the disability living allowance system in August 2020. The income support and pensions strategy computer system, which support the state pension service, were the two last applications to be replaced in January 2021, completing the programme.

The systems being replaced had an online service from 7am to 7pm and an

overnight batch processing service approximately from 8pm to 4am. Processing times are now 50-60% quicker, and DWP Digital is now able to implement upgrades mid-week for the first time. ■

THE FULL LIST OF MIGRATED SYSTEMS

- 1 Winter Fuel Payment System (2016)
- 2 Housing Benefit Computer System (2018)
- 3 FAMIS Pay & Personnel (2019)
- 4 War & Pensions Computer System (2019)
- 5 Social Fund Computer System (2019)
- 6 Industrial Injuries Computer System (2019)
- 7 Jobseeker's Allowance Payment System (2020)
- 8 Disability Living Allowance Computer System (2020)
- 9 Attendance Allowance Computer System (2020)
- 10 Income Support Computer System (2021)
- 11 Pension Service Computer System (2021)

CHANGING THE UNCHANGEABLE

Three steps to overcome scale, complexity, and bureaucracy



OliverWyman

When nine out of ten of organisational transformations fail to deliver, it takes three things to be among the small number that succeed: framing the future, building the movement, and sustaining the momentum. Through our work with HMG, including independent reviews of major departmental transformation programmes, and drawing on experiences with other governments and the private sector, we've identified what causes transformation to fail and what can make it work. Failure comes from a lack of alignment and convergence. This leaves the organisation without the conviction to see the transformation through. Rigorous programme management in itself cannot deliver transformational change, but our three steps will equip any transformation with the ability to manage the trade-offs or difficult decisions that will inevitably arise.

"I don't want to build another transformation empire, I want to actually change things."

– Senior civil servant

FRAME THE FUTURE. Change starts at the top, and leaders usually show strong commitment to change. However, this commitment is often not aligned between individual leaders. When anyone is unwilling to let go of their personal vision to converge on a shared one, the transformation as a whole is in jeopardy. Instead, a common vision of the future must be agreed, and supported by the leadership's conviction to see it through.

BUILD THE MOVEMENT. This is the ability to convert conviction into real change. It requires ongoing, effective leadership throughout. Leaders need to take the whole organisation on the journey, building commitment, convergence, and conviction at every level. To achieve this, they must articulate the transformation in a way that explains it to team members in the context of their personal roles. This allows everyone to take ownership of delivering and driving the change while staying true to the core objectives. It also accelerates the speed at which change can happen.

"I can see the teams are excited – they can pick up the ball and run with it now."

– Senior civil servant

The operating model – including governance, decision making, processes, and incentives – must be adjusted to support the rapid delivery of transformation goals. This can be particularly challenging in government departments, where the bureaucracy and complexity can feel insurmountable, but our clients have often been surprised by how much is in their power to change.

SUSTAIN MOMENTUM. Leaders must take time to understand how the change is being delivered. This will allow them to identify and address any blockers to success, such as staff engagement.

To keep momentum, the organisation needs some changes to be visible early in the process. A common pitfall is spending about 18 months in a design phase without delivering anything different on the ground. Teams are doomed to fail if they focus on planning, organisation, and processes instead of delivery. Instead, each step of the change programme should be set up to start small, deliver something – good or bad – quickly, then stop what doesn't work and scale up what does. Without leadership, new ways of working, and early experiences of success, the organisation's commitment, convergence, and conviction for change will be diluted, putting delivery at risk.

"Whatever you do, do something."

– Senior civil servant

START DELIVERING YOUR OWN CHANGE PROGRAMME

There is a plethora of tools to support each of these stages, from immersive events and co-creation workshops to deploying agile methodologies. Often the same tools are used in a successful programme as a failing one. The difference is the context, the purpose, and the order in which they are deployed. That's why our three steps – framing the future, building the movement, and sustaining the momentum – should be at the core of your transformation.

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What the Integrated Review means for Whitehall

The government's flagship foreign policy review has set out a direction of travel to 2030 for all of government. **Richard Johnstone** asked a series of experts to consider what the review will mean for officials

The policy implications of the government's Global Britain vision have finally been set out after ministers published the long-awaited Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy.

The exercise – the largest review of the UK's foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the cold war – set out the UK's post-Brexit strategic direction, headlined by a pledge to invest in cutting-edge technology and a tilt to the Indo-Pacific region in terms of defence priorities. The prime minister, Boris Johnson, said when it concluded that the UK cannot rely solely on an “increasingly outdated international system” to protect its interests and required a new foreign policy of “increased international activism”.

“The review addresses the chal-

lenges and opportunities the UK faces in a more competitive world, where new powers are using all the tools at their disposal to redefine the international order and – in some cases – undermine the open and liberal international system that emerged in the wake of the cold war.”

The UK is “uniquely international” in its outlook and interests, Johnson said, but cautioned that the nation cannot allow the past to shape its vision of the future.

“The Integrated Review will make it clear that the UK cannot rely solely on an increasingly outdated international system to protect our interests and promote our values,” he said.

“Instead, it will establish a new government foreign policy of increased international activism and a UK that works, alongside our allies and using all the tools at our disposal, to shape a more open internation-



al order in which democracies flourish.”

The review document says that the new strategy will require “more integrated, adaptive and innovative structures and capabilities” across Whitehall, and that the plan “is intended as a guide for action for those responsible for aspects of national security and international policy across government, including in departments that would not previously have been considered part of the national security community”.

It sets out a 16-part vision for the UK in 2030, under four headings – a stronger, more secure, prosperous and resilient union; a problem-solving and

burden-sharing nation with a global perspective; creating new foundations for our prosperity; and adapting to a more competitive world.

This leads to a four-part strategic framework for international policy across government: sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology; shaping the open international order of the future; strengthening security and defence at home and overseas; and building resilience at home and overseas.

Meeting the aims of this strategic framework will require “some significant changes and shifts in policy”, according to the document, with 12 named. These range from “mov[ing] from defending the status quo within the post-cold war international system to dynamically shaping the post-Covid order” and learning from coronavirus to “improve our ability to anticipate and respond to crises” to pursuing deeper engagement in the Indo-Pacific in support of shared prosperity and regional stability, with stronger diplomatic and trading ties, and doing more to “adapt to China’s growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes more powerful in the world”.

In total, the document lists 10 departments as having Integrated Review projects funded in last year’s Spending Review: the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; the Ministry of Defence; the Department for Digital,



To implement the plan, a performance and planning framework will now be developed to set a series of priority outcomes, including the four elements of the Integrated Review’s strategic framework. From this, government departments will develop outcome delivery plans, leading to both improved monitoring of implementation (defined as progress on projects, programmes and outputs) and impact (reaching specific outcomes and benefits). This approach builds upon the

future policy decisions, are implemented swiftly and effectively, and to establish systems that better support the National Security Council”. Lovegrove will take up the post of NSA, moving from his current role as Ministry of Defence permanent secretary, at the end of March.

The document also reveals that there will be further strategies, including on resilience, cyber and international development, published by government in the months ahead, with these plans influencing decisions in future spending reviews.

Other commitments in the plan include the creation two new cross-government hubs: a £9.3m “situation centre”, to be based in the Cabinet Office, and a Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre.

Downing Street said the White House-inspired situation centre, or SitCen for short, will “build on the lessons of the Covid pandemic to improve our use of data to anticipate and respond to future crises”.

The Operations Centre, meanwhile, is aimed at improving the nation’s ability to thwart terrorism at the same time as dealing with the actions of “hostile states”. Johnson said the facility will bring together counter-terrorism police, intelligence agencies and the criminal justice system to coordinate the government’s expertise and resources in a “state-of-the-art facility” to improve response times to terrorist incidents. ■ >>

“A new government foreign policy of increased international activism will work alongside our allies to shape a more open international order in which democracies flourish” Boris Johnson



Culture, Media and Sport; the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; the Department for International Trade; the Department for Education; the Home Office; the Cabinet Office; the Department of Health and Social Care; and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as well as the UK security and intelligence agencies.

development of the planning and performance framework for departments announced in last year’s Spending Review.

The Integrated Review also revealed that the government’s new national security adviser, Sir Stephen Lovegrove, is to review the UK’s “national security systems and processes to ensure its objectives and priority actions, as well as

'How to make the integration happen'

The breadth of the government's Integrated Review means ministers need to think about how it will be implemented, says **Dr Simon Harwood**, director of defence and security at Cranfield University

The Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy marks a critical shift in the way departments will collaborate over national security.

Unlike past statements, this version goes beyond plans for defence equipment and troop numbers, covering everything from bombs to biodiversity. In other words, it realises that securing defences with military capability and diplomacy is of little value if a society can be brought to its knees by climate change, cybercrime or a pandemic. Now, explicitly, the National Risk Register will take into account the interdependence of risks.

The review has made R&D central to its future vision of national security, announcing at least £6.6bn of investment up to 2025 for defence, plus a further £695m for security and intelligence. The breadth and depth of UK higher education and its interdisciplinary expertise will increasingly be an important source of "whole society" insights and knowledge. It will also be needed when it comes to the evolution of policy in line with the new domains of warfare in space and cyberspace.

This means a level of opening up of work and

discussions over national security. Traditionally, government has found it hard to engage with academia in these fields and vice-versa. Traditionally, higher education and industry have been given a problem and asked to go away and solve it, but this isn't

partnership. The best results will always come from spending more time making sure the questions being asked are the right ones. Major projects of all kinds fail because of a lack of early conversations about outcomes, a lack of flexibility, a fixation with narrow objectives (maybe just thinking in terms of time and budget) over the bigger, underlying needs of a society. Such a broad-minded approach is signalled by the Integrated Review. There now needs to be a culture of understanding and partnership that will make the new vision live up to its potential. ■



'Sound priorities at risk of being undermined'

The government has arrived at many of the right conclusions, but UK security could be undermined by a focus on competition, says **Ian Mitchell**, co-director for the Center for Global Development in Europe

The Integrated Review aims "to make the United Kingdom stronger, safer and more prosperous while standing up for our values". But we need to look at the four objectives to see how well it meets this vision.

Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology

The UK has long lagged its rich country peers on R&D efforts, to the detriment of its own economic growth. The government, to its credit, has been stepping up its spend, but where the review falls short is seeing science and technology as mainly a means to gain economic, political and security advantages over others. It recognises the need for collaboration, but focusing on "power for strategic advantage" overlooks the opportunity of a coordination role.

Shaping the open international order of the future

The review promises the UK will play "a more active part in sustaining an international order in which open societies and economies continue to flourish and the benefits of prosperity are shared through free trade and global growth".

This could be the most important objective – outside the EU, the UK now has an even stronger stake in the success of the functioning of the international system. Ensuring well-resourced and effective teams at the World Trade Organisation, IMF, UN, G7 and G20 – and the technical policy capacity to support them – would make a big difference to the UK's ability to achieve positive changes.

Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas

Here, the government is marrying a major expansion of its resources on defence with a "tilt to the Asia-Pacific", mainly in response to China's more assertive international position. But the review is light on the UK's contribution, and former national security advisor Lord Peter Ricketts notes the risks are not prioritised, and resources are not aligned with them.

Building resilience at home and overseas

This objective aims to improve "our ability to anticipate, prevent, prepare for and respond to risks ranging from extreme weather to cyber-attacks... climate change and biodiversity loss".

The inclusion of climate as the "foremost international priority" is a clear positive, and the UK deserves credit for prioritising it.

From the start, the Integrated Review has taken too narrow a view of security. Global health was not in its terms of reference even as the pandemic got under way. It barely mentions UN peacekeeping and has very little on transparency, tax and tackling illicit finance, where the UK should have an outsized role given its own role as a major finance centre. The Sustainable Development Goals – the blueprint for addressing global challenges – are mentioned just three times. ■



After the IR: Tests for the new cyber strategy



The Integrated Review revealed there will be a new cyber security strategy this year. **Ciaran Martin**, professor of practice in the management of public organisations at the Blavatnik School of Government and former chief executive of the National Cyber Security Centre, sets out what to look for

The signature achievement of the government's Integrated Review of security, defence, foreign and development policy was a coherent plan to base future security and prosperity on scientific and technological excellence. The plan has everything needed to give it strategic credibility: funding, policy, legislative and governance changes.

But one underdeveloped part of this section of the document is cyberspace. Despite a narrative emphasis on Britain as a "cyber power", there were no new policies or pounds. The only new "announcement" was that there would be a national cyber strategy later this year. Intriguingly, this is to be a "whole of cyber" strategy, replacing the two previous national cybersecurity strategies of 2011 and 2016.

Here are some security checks by which we will be able to assess, when it comes out, whether the framework still works for Britain's cybersecurity.

The first test is posture. A newcomer to Britain reading only the Integrated Review would be forgiven for concluding that the UK government thought of the internet as war zone, rather than a revolutionary civilian technology driving prosperity and progress. Posture can be assessed in one question: is the UK government in favour of a safer internet, or does it prioritise exploiting its insecurities to project British power? A safer internet is in Britain's overall interests, even if it sometimes makes exploiting others' vulnerabilities harder.

The second test is focus. As President Obama's former cyber security adviser Michael Daniel put it last week, the average American business is far more likely to encounter a ransomware or other criminal attack than Russian intelligence. The same is true in the UK, and it's true for individual citizens too. But the Integrated Review had little to say on the protection of the citizen online, focusing instead on the great power competition aspects of cyberspace. A cyber strategy needs to reverse this imbalance.

The third and fourth tests are the bureaucratic staples of money and mandate. UK cybersecurity has been well funded: it may not need a huge further injection



"A safer internet is in Britain's overall interests, even if it sometimes makes exploiting others' vulnerabilities harder"
Ciaran Martin

of money, but the sort of cuts envisaged for some public services in the current fiscal envelope would be disastrous. And organisational mandates are crucial: cybersecurity may be a team sport, as is often said, but it needs a team captain. The mandate for the National Cyber Security Centre, which I had the

privilege of setting up, comes from the now-expired National Cyber Security Strategy and a new one is needed.

A fifth test is transparency. The UK has benefitted enormously from the NCSC's innovations in sharing and publishing information about threats, and in a more outward-facing approach to business and the media. If a "whole of cyber" approach includes more classified equities, cyber security could be dragged back "behind the wire". This would be disastrous.

The final test is governance. The risk is that a "securitised" vision of cyberspace is agreed behind closed doors in military and intelligence circles and then presented to the National Security Council. Who is there to argue that a militarised internet only favours authoritarians, and that the safer we make our own digital homeland, the more prosperous – and secure – we are? ■

HOW AMERICA GOT ITS CIVIL SERVICE OF APPOINTEES



The United States changes its top civil service leaders with every new president. **Lorenzo Castellani** offers a fascinating insight on how this system came to be, drawing on research from his new book

In the United Kingdom, before 1780, that amorphous collection of functionaries that some writers have incautiously termed a civil service was in fact no such thing. Indeed, according to the historian Henry Parris, that apparatus was not permanent, not civil and not a service.

Permanency has become a way to distinguish longer-serving officials from shorter-tenured ministers. But in the 18th century, ministers often remained in office as long as they felt they retained the king's confidence, even when the prime minister had resigned. But ministers were not, in any case, permanent functionaries, and did not personally administer their departmental affairs until the last quarter of the 19th century, while their subordinate officials performed tasks which nowadays would be considered political and therefore taboo for neutral civil servants.

And it was certainly not yet a unified organisation. This was not a body of full-time salaried officers, systematically recruited, with clear lines of authority and uniform rules that disciplined their careers and pay. Indeed, the 19th-century debates about civil service reform reflected the need for institutional adjustment in a society that had been undergoing an extensive industrial revolution. Rules and superannuation were not consolidated until the 1830s, and systematic recruitment did not become the norm until after 1870.

However, in the latter part of the 18th century, it became usual for an outgoing ministerial team to resign and go into opposition. This established a pattern of "government" and "opposition", which made it necessary to distinguish permanent from temporary servants of the crown, and it quickly became established that the great majority of posts must be permanent, set-

ting the basis for the permanent civil service.

Such a system has remained in place for all the years that followed, albeit with periodic waves of reform. But some appointments as part of the UK government's response to the coronavirus have demonstrated that this is not the only approach. A number of appointments have been made to lead specific elements of the response – Kate Bingham for the vaccine taskforce, Baroness Dido Harding for the test and trace system, and Dame Louise Casey as the head of the taskforce to house rough sleepers during the pandemic's first wave – that has more in line with a system where politicians appoint outsiders rather than career civil servants to many administrative roles.

In the UK, this has led to concerns that these appointments risk falling into gaps in accountability, but many other countries have systems with much greater political appointments in the bureaucracy.

One example is the United States, where, instead of a permanent senior civil service that remains in place as administrations change, there is a principle of spoils system. This means in Washington DC, many top jobs change hands when there is a change of president.

Part of the explanation in the difference between the UK and the US lay in the view of government posts by the 19th-century British as inalienable items of freehold property. Crown sinecures were, nevertheless, gradually abolished following a series of parliamentary inquiries inspired by mounting concern in the first half of the 19th century about wasteful public expenditure. And the killing of patronage occurred with the Northcote-Trevelyan inquiry of 1853, which prescribed the creation of a professional civil service with a systematic recruitment based on competitive exams.

While in the United States, as I argue in my book *The History of the United States Civil Service from the postwar years to the twenty-first century*, a traditional, European-like bureaucracy has never established. The American administrative system developed and maintained its proper peculiarities. According to Herbert Kaufman, “an examination of the administrative institutions of this country suggests that they have been organised and operated in pursuit successively of three values, here designated representativeness, neutral competence, and executive leadership”. Representativeness held the most promise in the post-colonial period, and it was hailed as a way to keep executive power in check.

The earliest stress was placed on representativeness in government, the quest for which clearly had its roots in the colonial period, when colonial assemblies were struggling with royal governors for control of political life in the New World and “no taxation without representation” was a slogan that expressed one of the principal interests and anxieties of the colonists. The legislatures thus became the champions of the indigenous population against what was regarded in many quarters as executive oppression. It was manifested in the widespread perception of the legislature as the champion of the citizens and limited powers of executives (such as the governors or local representatives or mayors). Up to the end of the Civil War, it was through the legislatures that government policy was formulated

and legitimated. The emphasis on representativeness was manifested in the form of an increasing number of official positions filled by balloting. Moreover, the development of the political parties in the Jacksonian era strengthened the idea of patronage for administrative posts. According to a 19th-century American’s mentality, in a real democracy loyal activists had to be rewarded with a temporary appointment in the administration ranks. This characteristic of organising the upper levels of administrative power, named the spoils system, albeit restricted and reformed, is still part of the American administrative tradition today.

The counter-balance to patronage was the introduction of the merit system in the late 19th century. Merit was the longtime battle cry of the Progressive-era reformers and the middle class, seeking a political system without corruption and spoils. Civil servants should be free from any political taint and overlooked by a Civil Service Commission. They should be expert professionals who were hired, compensated and promoted without par-

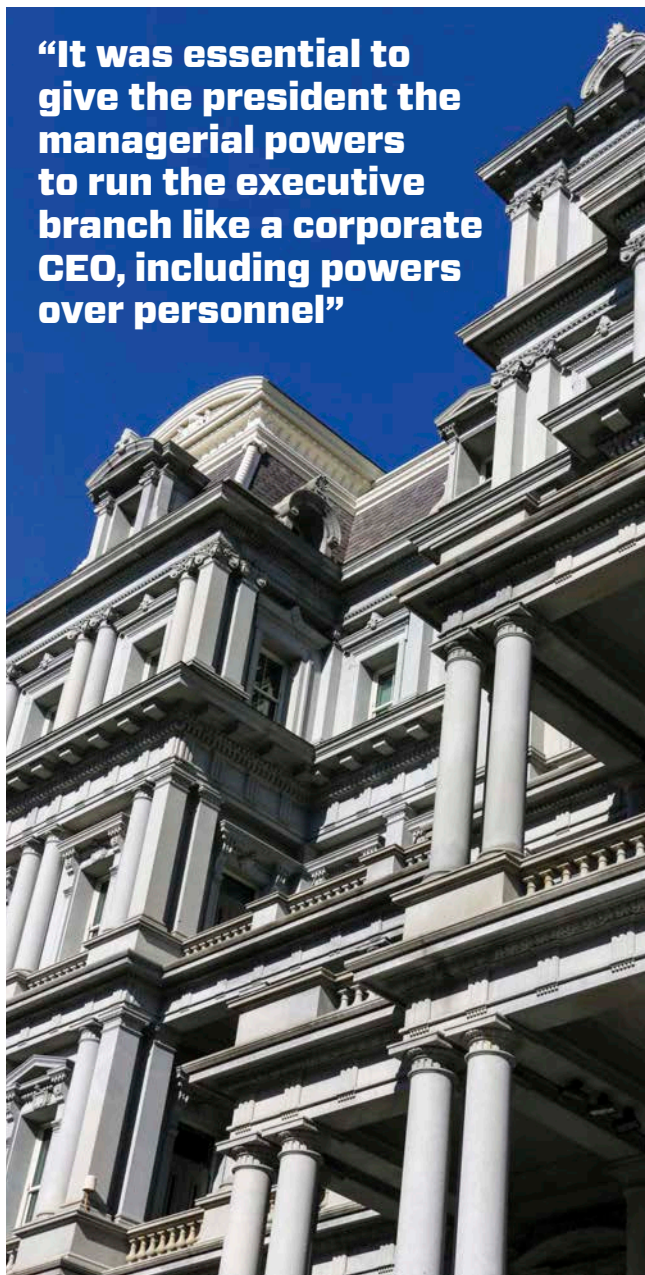
tisan considerations. Civil service reform had been a mass movement leading up to its enactment at the federal level in the 1883 Pendleton Act and widespread enactment in states and localities.

Yet at the same time, there occurred the rise of the management class as a consequence of capitalistic development. Large corporations were no longer run by owners and boards of directors. Instead, the American solution was for a professionally trained class of managers who would make all important decisions regarding the operations of the corporation. The rise of management as an idea was a kind of endorsement of the new American political economy. Everybody had to pull in the direction indicated by the manager. Given the dominance and idolatry of business in the American political economy, the common perspective has been that government needed more businesslike practices. Transposing business administration to public administration was presumed to be valid and preferred. Government needed to be made as efficient as business. In this context, it was essential

to give the president the managerial powers to run the executive branch like a corporate CEO, including the powers of budgeting, personnel and planning, and to transform the public functionaries into public managers. The civil service had to be reformed following managerial principles and practices and this is what occurred by late 1970s, when the neo-managerial era begun.

This was formalised by the passage and the subsequent implementation of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act, which abolished the Civil Service Commission and created the Office for Personnel Management. From this moment onward, the civil service was required to follow business-like principles both in personnel management and in organisational practices, meaning the US civil service today is a layering of political patronage (appointees), merit principle (recruiting on the base of neutral competence), and management (the search for efficient organisation to accomplish political aims). In light of the coronavirus response, it is an approach that may have more lessons for the UK than many officials would have thought just one year ago. ■

Lorenzo Castellani is an adjunct professor in the department of political science at the Luiss Guido Carli University in Rome



“It was essential to give the president the managerial powers to run the executive branch like a corporate CEO, including powers over personnel”

Produced in association with CSW's sister title *PublicTechnology*



Attendees at last month's PublicTechnology Live heard from government's digital leaders about pandemic response, the future of online services – and nostril-based forms of communication. **Sam Trendall** runs through the highlights

On 24 March 2020, one day after the UK went into its first national lockdown, *PublicTechnology* was scheduled to welcome several hundred people to its largest-ever annual conference in London.

Having been subject to what was, at that stage, a postponement, the publication and most of its audience probably did not expect that, 364 days later, when we finally convened for a public sector-wide event, we would still only be able to do so via the medium of our respective laptop and smartphone screens.

But the fact that PublicTechnology Live, which welcomed nearly 800 registrants and more than 50 speakers last month, was hosted this way highlights that the last year has given us a lot to talk about in public sector technology.

Many discussions during the two days of the event touched on how the challenges of responding to coronavirus have been a prompt for collaboration, innovation, and transformation. Several of government's

most senior digital leaders spoke openly of their concern that, once the pandemic is over, some of the ground gained might be lost, and effective new ways of working might be ditched for bureaucratic business as usual. But, then again, technology and data professionals have played a key role in ensuring that, outside of Covid response, business has continued as usual. Attendees frequently heard about innovative uses of tech that have allowed crucial citizen services to continue uninterrupted, as well as some existing transformation initiatives that have pressed on despite the backdrop of coronavirus.

All of the presentations and panel discussions – including ministers, senior officials, local government leaders, NHS representatives and industry chiefs – are available on to view demand: visit <http://publictechnology.net/whitepaper/publictechnology-live> to register.

But for those interested in a whistlestop tour, here are five things we learned during PublicTechnology Live.

GOVERNMENT'S CORONAVIRUS HOMEPAGE WAS BUILT IN FIVE DAYS

Shortly before the UK went into its first national lockdown in March 2020, the government brought together all relevant guidance and data on the burgeoning pandemic at GOV.UK/coronavirus. The site remains the homepage for all things related to the pandemic, and now links to the latest advice and sources of support in a range of areas, including travel, employment, childcare and vaccination, as well as providing daily statistical updates.

In her opening address to the event, Cabinet Office minister Julia Lopez – whose brief includes the Govern-



ment Digital Service – revealed that the coronavirus landing page was built in just five days. It was visited 18 million times in the first week alone.

This was one of the examples cited in which the minister claimed digital, data and technology professionals had consistently risen to the “Herculean” challenges of the past year.

“There is a lot to be proud of” *Julia Lopez*

“By continuing to place user needs at the core of delivery and through hard work, collaboration and innovation, we have been able to deliver the rapid transformation needed to support citizens and businesses during what has been an unprecedented moment,” she said. “There is a lot to be proud of.”

ISSUES PERSIST WITH SOVEREIGNTY AND SILOS

Participants in PublicTechnology Live’s opening panel discussion were posed an age-old question by an audience member: how can large departments best work collaboratively and avoid siloed working and empire-building?

The question – and the perception it speaks to – is one that has dogged government transformation efforts for a decade or more.

“I think the fact the question always comes up means that... there is more than a grain of truth to it,” said Helen Roberts, director of digital delivery at the Department for Work and Pensions. “People closest to the system still ask the question about

how that improvement can be made.”

Although working across departmental boundaries remains a challenge, Roberts said the work of the last year has shown that is one that can be overcome. She pointed to the work to create the service to provide support for citizens that are shielding, for which DWP collaborated with numerous other departments, as well as industry and the third sector.

“What we have experienced has shown that, with that singular purpose and prioritisation, teams want to come together to make things happen,” she said. “I think you can see other pockets of that happening... I think the intent

is there to do it, but there is still work to be done on the mechanics: how do you make sure that communities across government are able to come together and have those conversations to work through where there’s still any blockers or barriers – perceived or otherwise?”

She added: “There are some really built-in, gnarly problems to be worked through... definitions of things across different bits of government make it hard to share the same bit of data if one person or group is calling it or using it for something slightly different to another person or group, so that level of alignment will be really difficult to crack. But, once it is, it will really open the door to doing some of those things in an even more streamlined way.”

GOV.UK WILL BECOME MORE PROACTIVE AND PERSONALISED

Elsewhere in her opening address, Cabinet Office minister Lopez updated attendees on the work of GDS to develop GOV.UK Accounts, which aim to offer citizens a single log-in for all government’s online services. The system will replace a patchwork of what the digital agency claims is over 100 separate means of logging in to access various services across departments.

Lopez said that ambition is to have online platforms that serve citizens with

pertinent information and services, rather than simply reacting to their requests.

“Over time, GOV.UK accounts will allow us to proactively provide information and services to users based on their user needs and what they have told us about themselves,” she said. “This will reduce friction for users, so they do not have to give different parts of government the same information multiple times, and link together services to make user journeys simpler.”

The minister claimed that this work represents part of the “next phase in government reform and digital transformation”. This will also encompass tackling the issues caused by ageing tech infrastructure, and improving the use of data across public services.

“As we build back together as one nation, world-class digital services have to be central to our response,” she said. “Citizens and business must be able to seamlessly and securely interact with government in a much more personalised, trusted and timely way.”

DEFRA HAS REVAMPED RECRUITMENT TO FOCUS ON SPECIALISM

Like a lot of government entities, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is no stranger to bringing in outside tech experts.

Or, as joint chief digital officer Harriet Green put it, “that whole experience of going out to consultants and asking them what you need to do in the world of technology – and then not being able to fulfil what they tell you to do, and going out to them again for fulfilment.”

But in recent years, the department has looked to reduce its reliance on external help and increase its base of in-house digital, data and technology (DDaT) credentials. A key component of this has been changing the way it recruits people, to focus much more on specialists – rather than the generalists that, according to Green, the civil service recruitment process is designed to identify.



“We have made our interviews much more about the work that people will be doing”
Harriet Green

“There has been a process at Defra of gradual professionalisation of the DDaT skills,” she said “When I arrived three years ago there were still plenty of people who

were turning their hand to everything: ‘I do a little bit of project management, a little bit of business analysis – might even do a bit of coding as well!’”

She added: “The civil service recruitment process is all about behaviours and success criteria and a lot of these things don’t really compute to the skills we are trying to recruit. So, we have changed our interviews and made them much more about the work that people will actually be doing, and we have brought in team members who are already working in these areas... so it is more of a discussion about: ‘here are some of the problems we have got – how might you approach working with us on this?’ Apart from helping us to understand whether or not that person really has the skills, it gives them already a sense of what it would be like to work with us, and an interest in the issues they would be dealing with.”

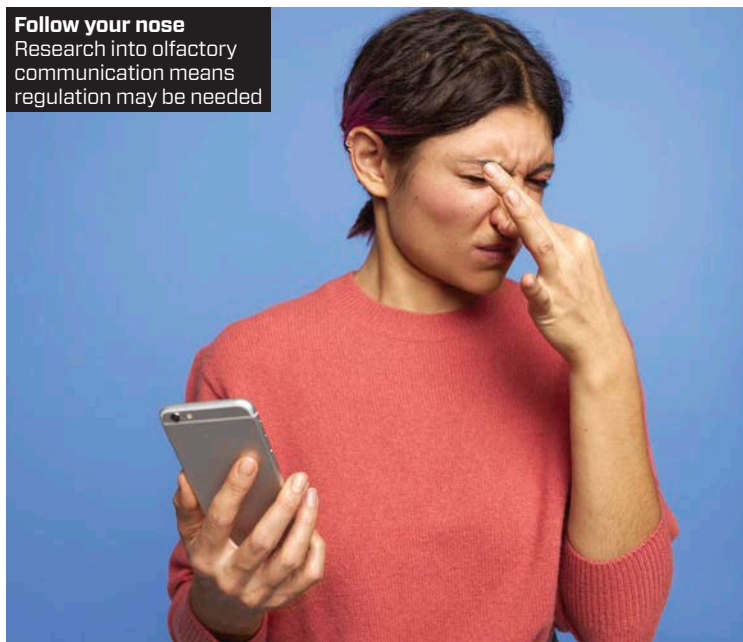
The result is a department that, according to the digital chief, is “more in charge of our destiny”.

WE MAY NEED TO REGULATE THE ‘INTERNET OF SMELLS’

Ofcom has expressed its intent to closely follow developments not just in the products and services that it currently regulates, but in those that might one day come under its remit.

Follow your nose

Research into olfactory communication means regulation may be needed



Earlier this year the regulator published its Technology Futures report, which mapped the emerging technologies that might come to play a more significant role in the future of communications and broadcasting.

These were split into five broad categories: immersive communications; mobile and wireless; fixed and optical technologies; broadcast and streaming; and satellite.

The mobile and wireless section of the report considers developments such as networks free of the current cellular system of boundaries, while the fixed and optical segment

covers developments in fibre cabling.

Object-based media is an emerging broadcast form which can be altered and personalised for individual users. The satellite sector, meanwhile, could be shaped by machines that could be manufactured in space.

The immersive communications section contains many of the report’s most eye-catching areas, including brain-machine interface technology, haptic-communications – which are based on touch – and even olfactory communications.

According to director of emerging and online technology Simon Saunders, Ofcom is already conceiving of a world in which it regulates the market for connected devices that allow us to communicate nasally.

“There is significant research into olfactory communications – or what we could call ‘the internet of smells’. You decide for yourself whether or not that sounds like a good thing,” he told attendees. ■

Watch sessions on demand: <http://publictechnology.net/whitepaper/publictechnology-live>

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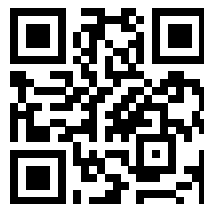


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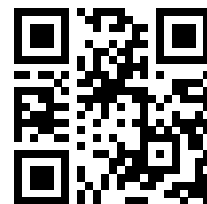
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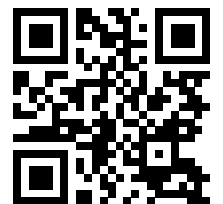
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