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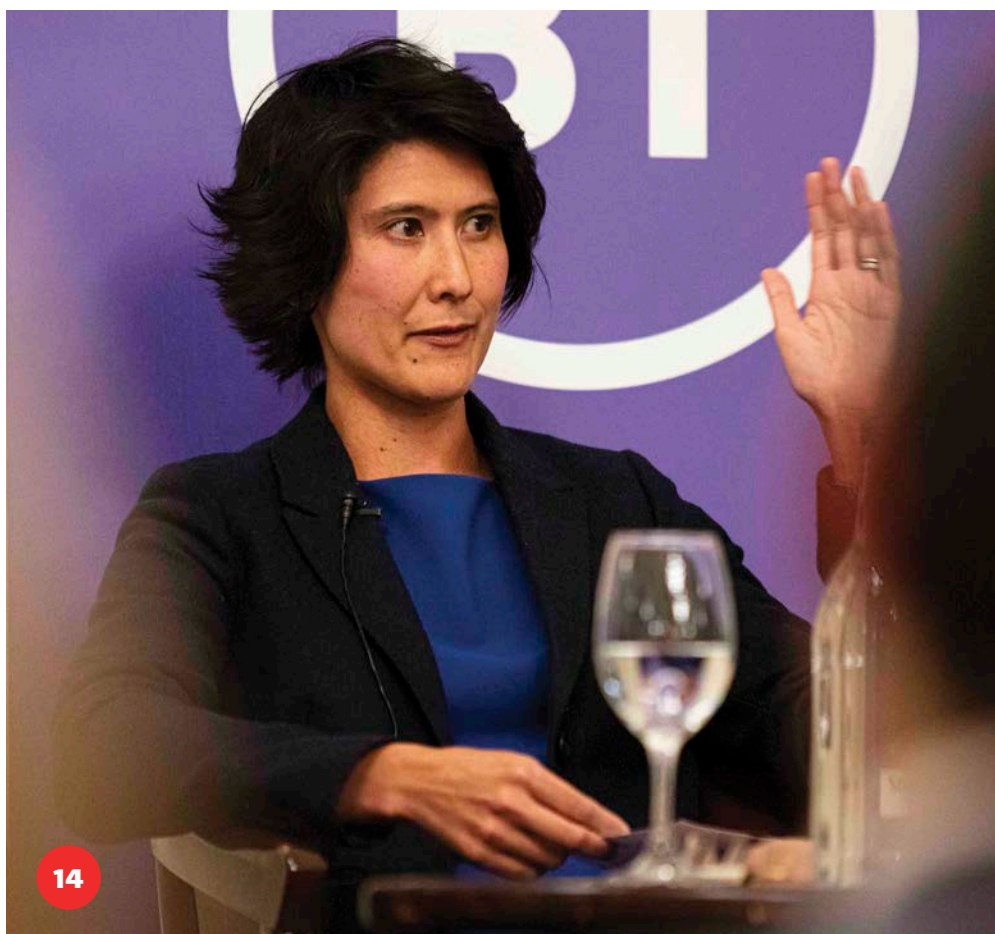
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FROM THE EDITOR



The war might be over. If the hard rain promised by Dominic Cummings had been failing on Whitehall, it seems to have abated somewhat.

Since his former aide's departure, Boris Johnson has made a number of appointments that seem to indicate he has decided to move government on from Cummings's often deliberately provocative style. If bringing in Dan Rosenfield, a former Treasury civil servant, as the PM's chief of staff indicated a move away from the previous regime's siege mentality, then the revocation of Lord Frost's appointment as national security adviser seemed to reassert the importance of civil service values – honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity – in government.

The move to name Ministry of Defence permanent secretary Sir Stephen Lovegrove to the post instead was a telling one. Frost's appointment was, it seems, intended to shake up the advice given to Johnson, putting someone who had the PM's trust in a key role. It was also initially announced in

June 2020 when Brexit negotiations, being led by Frost, were lolling somewhat. "Get a move on, our chap has a new job to get to in September," seemed to be the message to Brussels.

Of course, this never came to pass. Frost stayed put as Brexit negotiator until the deal was reached on Christmas Eve, long after the previous national security adviser, Sir Mark Sedwill, had departed. Then, with only days left until he was set to start the post, it was announced that Lovegrove would take it on instead. Frost would not, in his new role as Johnson's representative on Brexit and international policy, be leaving EU exit issues behind after all.

Quite how much all this had all been planned as a considered rejig of the civil service or a Brexit negotiating tactic is something that we might need to wait for memoirs to reveal. But Frost's appointment was criticised by many, including Johnson's predecessor Theresa May, for turning a civil service role into a political one.

Stopping that change is a good thing. Add in Tom Scholar's reappointment as

Treasury perm sec despite his reported appearance on a No.10 hit list (with hit sometimes being spelled with an s), it looks like Cummings's hard rain might be over.

I'm reminded of comments by Ciaran Martin, the former head of the National Cyber Security Centre, last month. "Now that the government's "war on Whitehall" seems to be over... it's worth asking: what has this latest attempt, accompanied as it has been by ferocious (if mostly anonymously briefed) rhetoric, actually involved? The answer is, by historical standards, virtually nothing at all," he wrote on Twitter.

"Absolutely nothing has changed in the civil service, apart from the identities of a few very senior office holders," he added.

It might, though, be too early to conclude that nothing will change – but hopefully now civil service reforms will be done in partnership with those working in government, not in strident, grenade-throwing opposition to them. There is much in Michael Gove's Ditchley lecture (the closest thing we have so far to a proper outline of what ministers want reforms to achieve) that civil servants agree with, and many examples of innovation in the civil service that a reform plan could highlight. In this issue, we go inside the Home Office's Accelerated Capability Environment to take a look at one of them.

Now that the gloom of Dom has been lifted from the government, ministers should work with officials to unlock the future. ■

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INBOX

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DEAL OR NO DEAL

HMRC's three-year pay offer and overhaul of its employment terms (see p.6) prompted a mixed response. Some readers were pleased to see staff offered a pay rise and welcomed the changes, including standardised contracts and the option of regular work from home...

"Great news for all staff. Excellent job on the team getting this through," **Jeanette Forder** said.

"It would be good to see the same scope and ambition across departments. We are one civil service after all," **Rachel McCann** added.

And **Graham** commented: "I left HMRC in 2017 when the Cambridge office was closed... because I didn't want to commute to London or Peterborough five days a week. If I'd been offered two days a week working at home then I might still be there."

...But others had qualms about the downsides, including changes to working patterns and cuts to overtime pay.

"It's not just a pay deal... It's a pay deal with strings that reward the new kids on the block and punish the dedicated, experienced staff who quite frankly are the backbone of the civil service," **Sarah Clark** said.

Craig Worswick said if HMRC wanted to make conditions fairer, it was taking the wrong approach. "The unfairness comes about from previous attacks on terms and conditions. What thousands of staff ought to know is that their contracts should resemble those of the long-serving members of staff but they have been repeatedly watered down, creating a multi-tiered workforce. This is about 'levelling down' and the permanent secretary has decided to engage in a classic case of 'divide and rule'," he said.

Steve Ryan also said the changes amounted to "levelling down, to make people work longer at a time of pandemic when the concept of a shorter working week is commonly accepted. Moreover, there seems to be absolutely no provable business need for the changes."

David Read asked: "Is there scope in the deal for people to buy back leave?"

Currently I'd rather have the time than money. I'm in another department and I'd be a bit disappointed if I lost leave and had hours increased at my age and stage."

And **Peter Royle** wrote: "I don't blame members for voting for it but don't believe the unions should be recommending a deal where some will lose existing rights."

FROSTY RECEPTION

In other pay news, readers did not agree with the finding of an impact assessment that the freeze Rishi Sunak announced last year for most civil servants is "justified".

"Can you explain why - when all of the UK is in lockdown, your no. 1-voted best civil service in the world has kept on working from home, keeping the wheels on the government's pandemic strategies, defence, Brexit, policies, not forgetting infrastructure and making sure protocols in all aspects of governance are running smoothly - you feel that a pay freeze is justified?" **Peter Drummond** said.

Roger Wardle asked: "Will it apply to the public-sector MPs?"

Stuart Rhodes Firth went further, saying: "Get MPs to start living on minimum wage. And to give up the second houses."

CHURN BABY CHURN

The news that MPs on parliament's Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee are preparing to scrutinise the issue of high turnover in the civil service prompted some thoughtful reflections.

Robert Jackson wrote: "Institutional memory is important. But that is partly what strong record keeping is for.

"My bigger worry in the civil service is the prevalence of closed-loop teams: archaic, inefficient, and parochial hierarchies that are often (sometimes for good reasons!) skeptical of change and innovation. These are not the norm but they still exist. They are generally filled with well-meaning, competent people who just happen to have never worked anywhere else, and thus lack a sense of perspective. Having new people with broader experience join such areas can breathe new life into them."

Geoff Eales also said there was a silver lining to civil service churn. "Looked at another way, the transfer of experience and gaining different experience in different

departments contributes to the vibrancy of the civil service and cross fertilisation between departments," he said.

"In comparison, the military operate on rolling two-year postings which facilitate gaining a wide range of experience but impact even more so on institutional memory than relatively much less frequent churning in the civil service. I experienced a small civil service department where senior staff had been in post for 15 to 40 years and it encouraged staleness of thinking and lack of acceptance to new ideas and challenge from more broadly experienced staff."

RINGS A BELL

To many readers, the announcement of a new training programme for civil servants, including plans for a new campus and the possibility of some military-style training in future, sounded oddly familiar.

The Civil Savant @TheCivilSavant Ooh, centralised training facilities? We could give it a name, like a national school for government or something like that...

peter harrison @4harrisons If only there was something like a National School of Government. Oh. Yes. The Conservatives closed that in 2012 and outsourced civil service training.

Clair Fisher @pashleyfisher Members of the senior military used to enjoy civil service style training at Sunningdale.

Alison Titchener @alibops87 Can we also train ministers?

Glyn Rawlingson @rawlingson_g Think the politicians are in more need of some training. Bit of humility wouldn't go amiss either

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

We profile some of the Civil Service Awards winners and look at how other countries have taken on Covid. Plus, Suzanne Heywood opens up about her book *What does Jeremy think?* and her life with the late cabinet secretary.

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HMRC busts freeze with pay deal

All staff under SCS will get a pay rise for the next three years, starting with a 3% average award. **By Beckie Smith**

HM Revenue and Customs staff are in line for a wage rise this year and for each of the next two years under a pay offer that comes alongside major reforms to the department's working conditions.

Under a pay deal that was 15 months in the making, HMRC is offering its 60,000 staff in grades AA to G6 an average pay increase of 3% this year, 5% for 2021-22 and 5% for 2022-23. Senior civil service pay is set separately.

The tax agency is also standardising contracts for staff to eliminate what its permanent secretary Jim Harra has called "inherent unfairness" in working conditions.

The changes will mean working hours and annual leave entitlements are standardised, all staff are entitled to regular remote working, and disparities in pay between staff doing the same job are reduced.

The package is intended to address what Harra has called a "crisis" of pay and working conditions. In October 2019, soon after being appointed perm sec, Harra told MPs that staff were "very, very dissatisfied" with pay, while reform was needed to tackle structural problems.

Among other things, he promised to tackle differing terms of employment that mean some staff are being paid different amounts for doing the same job, depending on when they were hired or promoted.

"We've got a bewildering array of different contracts – thousands and thousands of different contractual terms – and we'll be moving all colleagues onto a standard contract," Harra said.

The contract will include a 37-hour working week for full-time employees, and a standard allowance of 25 days' annual leave a year – increasing incrementally with time up to a cap of 30 days.

Customer service staff will be required to work a maximum of one evening shift a week and six Saturdays a year as required.

The contracts will also entitle every official to work from home at least two days a week.

Officials who have been recruited more recently are likely to benefit most, while those who have worked for the department for a long time may see

some "personal disadvantages", such as a decrease in annual leave or changes to their working patterns, Harra said.

"But it is important that we're able to do that for two reasons," he said.

"One, to give the customer service that we want, but also to be fair between all colleagues. Some colleagues are probably having to do more evening and weekend shifts at the moment than they're going to end up doing because others are doing fewer. So to achieve that fairness, it does mean that some people are going to experience some change that they may not personally welcome."

He added that the changes will also enable HMRC to fund the pay increases, which will be weighted towards those at the lower end of their pay ranges, or on lower salaries.

The department has not been given extra funding from the Treasury for the pay bump, and is instead using the reforms to create "efficiencies" that it is recycling into staff pay, he said.

Those efficiencies include changing the standard working day from 7am to 8pm to match HMRC's

customer service opening hours. The department will no longer pay overtime for shifts worked within those hours.

Previously, the department has relied on staff choosing to over-time for customer-service lines to

stay open. The change will "enable us to fit our resources into the working day in a more cost-efficient way", Harra said.

This reallocation of resources helped HMRC make the case to the Treasury and Cabinet Office to approve the pay increase, despite the freeze announced by the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, last year.

The freeze means most civil servants' pay will not increase in 2021-22, but allows for some exceptions.

"We were able to demonstrate that we are furthering the reform of public services here," Harra said. "As well as doing something for our people in terms of improving their pay and the fairness of their pay system, we're also doing something for public services by furthering reforms and working arrangements so that we are more customer focused. And that's obviously something that ministers are keenly interested in."

Some of the contract changes have been informed by the department's response to the coronavirus crisis, which has seen the



"We want to be fair between all colleagues. Some colleagues are probably having to do more evening and weekend shifts at the moment"
Jim Harra

majority of staff working from home over the last year. "I think we have shown ourselves that we can successfully work more flexibly than perhaps we believed that we could," Harra said.

He said other working practices the department has adopted in that time will have

a lasting effect on the way HMRC works.

"In implementing the Covid support schemes, we developed an incredibly fast and effective way for policy advisers, project leads and operational groups to work together so that we could implement huge schemes really, really fast. We'll definitely want to learn from that. And ministers,

I expect, will demand that we replicate that speed of response in the future.”

Included in the reforms is a commitment that HMRC will work with trade unions on any changes to people’s working arrangements.

Both PCS, the civil service’s biggest trade union, and ARC, the FDA union’s HMRC branch, have urged their members to vote through the pay deal.

ARC’s committee said it was recommending that members accept the deal “because we believe it delivers real benefits to members in the immediate and long term”.

It said it was “confident” that it had achieved its goal of maximising the

pay bump staff will get while lessening proposed changes to terms and conditions, “especially in the current context of public sector pay restraint”.

FDA national officer Jawad Raza said its HMRC members had done “incredible” work on the coronavirus pandemic.

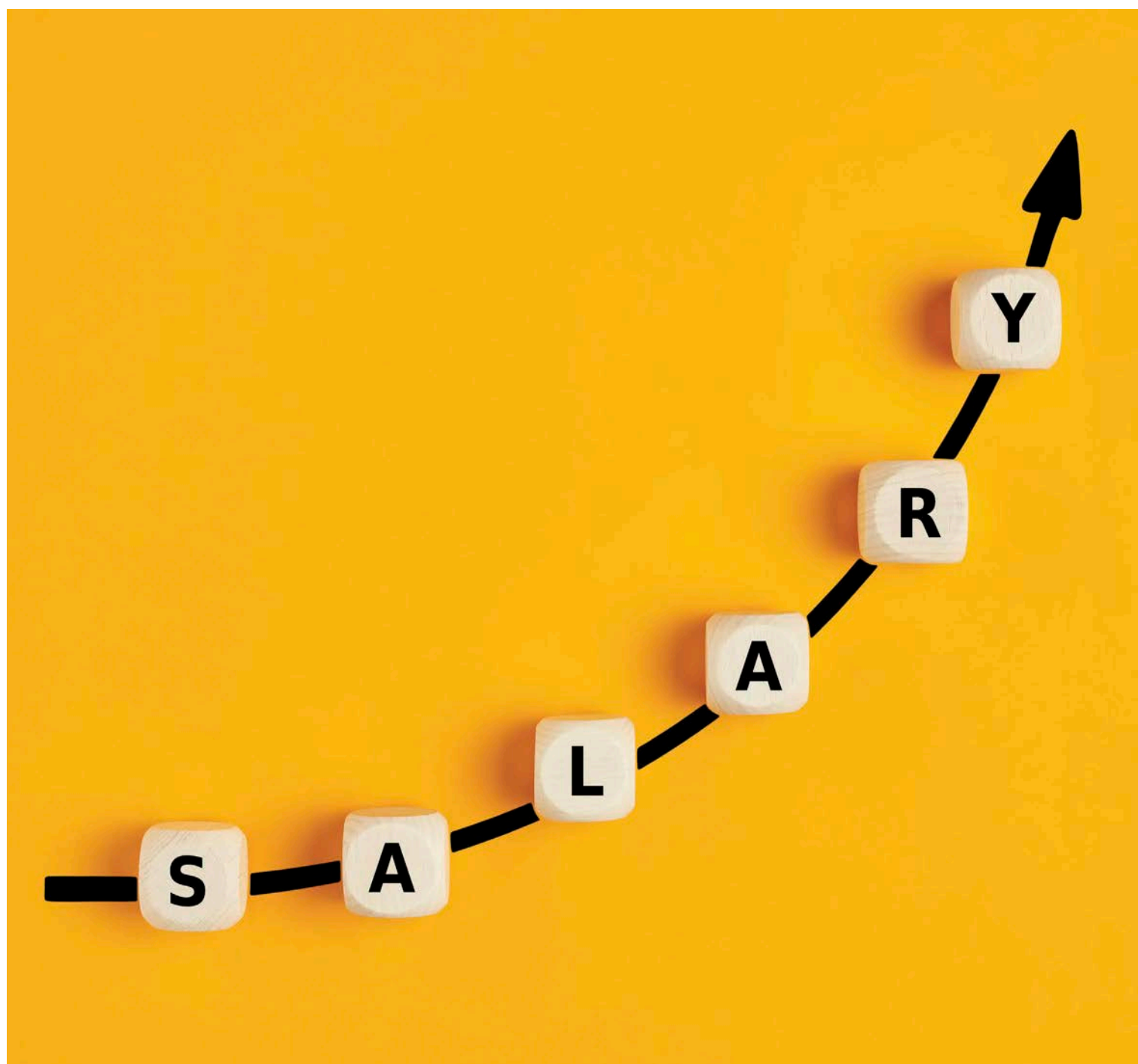
“Thousands of staff will now be getting a pay rise significantly above inflation, which they well and truly deserve,” he said.

Lorna Merry, PCS revenue and customs group president, said it was a “positive deal” that “goes some way to addressing HMRC’s major low pay and progression issues”.

PCS said that during the negotiations, it had been “determined to address the

major low-pay problem in HMRC”. Pay for the lowest-earning officials in the department – those at administrative assistant grade – was so low that the department had been forced to raise it slightly each year in line with national minimum wage increases.

However, support for the deal is not unanimous, with some union members and groups opposing it on the grounds that it comes at too high a cost to employment terms. While some CSW readers have welcomed the pay rise and reforms, others have described the changes as “regressive” and accused HMRC of “levelling down” and adopting a “divide and rule” approach (see *Inbox*, p.5). ■



ALEX THOMAS MAKE THE CENTRE HOLD

A REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IS A CHANCE TO STRENGTHEN NO.10 AND THE CABINET OFFICE, ARGUES ALEX THOMAS

One of the off-the-record briefings that caught the Westminster Village's imagination last year was the moment Boris Johnson was reported to have asked who was responsible for the government's coronavirus lockdown exit strategy. Sir Mark (now Lord) Sedwill, then cabinet secretary, supposedly replied "you are".

The former civil servant has since suggested that this was good-spirited banter between the two men. But the account of this particular meeting seemed to encapsulate the frustration of a prime minister who thought he was giving direction from No.10 but found that his commands provoked no response.

This frustration has prompted Johnson to ask Sir Michael Barber, known as an expert in "deliverology" – identifying government priorities and getting things done – to review his operation to help make things work better. Barber has an opportunity to introduce significant improvements to how the centre of government works.

One of the problems Barber will be considering is the effectiveness of No.10 and the Cabinet Office. Both are good at brokering between departments and co-ordinating activity, but the Cabinet Office in particular is less able to raise decisions above a lowest common denominator compromise.

The prime minister's top civil servant, the cabinet secretary, also has limited powers to make things happen across government. While he can shape the hiring and firing of his permanent secretary colleagues, much of his influence is in practice reliant on his status and personal leadership skills. He – alongside the government's chief operating officer also based in the Cabinet Office – need to persuade other heads of department to co-operate on the functional running of the civil service.

Coronavirus and – to some extent – the government's Brexit response have exposed these weaknesses. The government has found it hard to take timely decisions, too often failed to anticipate the consequences of its actions (or inactions) and been un-

able to co-ordinate activity across departments.

Fixing these problems does not necessarily need major surgery, and heeding the regular call for a new "prime minister's department" would be – like so many machinery of government organisational changes – a distraction. Instead the prime minister should learn from the successes and failures of previous administrations and adapt the current structures in the centre of government.

First, the prime minister should strengthen the Cabinet Office's role in agreeing the government's plans. He should set out the government's objectives clearly and seek explicit and public cabinet agreement to a policy programme. The cabinet secretary in turn can then hold permanent secretaries to account for their part in the implementation of that programme.

Secondly, as part of that sign-off the cabinet should agree a small number of top cross-cutting priorities, the delivery of which is then led by teams based in the Cabinet Office working under the direct authority of the prime minister. Whether on social care, climate change or levelling up, these intractable problems need leadership from the centre.

Next – learning from Barber's personal experience – the prime minister should set up a new central delivery unit in the Cabinet Office which has a far stronger remit and capacity than the existing teams holding departments to account.

Finally, the cabinet secretary and government chief operating officer should have more responsibility for directly running the civil service, including authority over cross-cutting services within government departments such as its finance, digital and commercial functions.

These improvements will help the prime minister impose his grip on the government. They are sensible administrative changes to sharpen up the Cabinet Office – already staffed by some of the most talented people in government. But bureaucratic tweaking cannot substitute for the sustained attention and skills of the prime minister himself. The success of Boris Johnson's government ultimately depends on the man himself giving ministers clear priorities and holding them to account. No departmental reforms can substitute for personal attention and focus from the figure at the top. ■

Alex Thomas is a programme director at the Institute for Government, leading its work on policymaking and the civil service. This article first appeared on the IfG website



“Coronavirus and – to some extent – the government's Brexit response have exposed the weaknesses of the centre”

DAVE PENMAN LESSONS FROM A PACE-SETTING PAY DEAL

THE NEW PAY PACKAGE FROM HMRC SHOWS A DEPARTMENT THAT IS SETTING THE PACE IN PAY AND REWARD FOR CIVIL SERVANTS. OTHER DEPARTMENTS SHOULD HURRY TO CATCH UP

In many ways I probably wouldn't be here writing this if John Major's Conservative government hadn't developed its pay delegation strategy in the early 90s. I got my first step up the union ladder when I was selected for a role in supporting the unions (five at that time) in the Department of Social Security as they prepared for the introduction of pay delegation.

I left my role as counter manager at Cumbernauld Benefits Agency, one I absolutely loved, for my first full-time trade union role on secondment. I was soon immersed in job evaluation, progression arrangements (or lack of them) and reviews of every pay element you can think of from London weighting to shift premia. When, two years later, I got my first job working for a union, in what is now PCS, it was dealing with the impact of full pay delegation on the agencies and non-departmental public bodies in Scotland. Oh, the joys of job evaluating Royal Parks Constabulary officers whilst trying to protect allowances for having a shotgun at home for our members in Scottish Natural Heritage.

A few years later I moved to London and started work at the FDA. Twenty-one years later and it's fair to say I've seen almost everything pay delegation has had to throw at civil servants. Delegation was intended to provide flexibility for employers to tailor their pay arrangements to their very different needs.

"The scope and ambition of the deal is a testament to the drive, commitment and skill of negotiators on both sides of the table and was almost two years in the making"

The reality, however, has been very different. Increasingly pay delegation simply became a tool of Treasury control, with little scope for genuine divergence before pay restraint became the default.

Reward strategy, which should drive organisational and behavioural change, has been relegated to an afterthought by the power dynamic of Whitehall, with complete disinterest from a succession of ministers whose concern for civil service pay was limited to the signal it sends elsewhere in the economy. In almost three decades, there have only been a

handful of pay settlements that have set the pace across the service.

HM Revenue and Customs's pay offer for 2020-23 (see page 6), in this context, is truly groundbreaking. It follows a path that the Department for Work and Pensions trod a couple of years ago and, driven by changing business needs, seeks flexibility over hours of operation in exchange for a higher pay award. It also harmonises a number of terms and conditions as well as helping to significantly improve progression times to the max of the range. No deal can be all things to all people, certainly not in an organisation the size of HMRC. There are quid pro quos on annual leave and working patterns, but the scope and ambition of the deal is a testament to the drive, commitment and skill of negotiators on both sides of the table and was almost two years in the making.

With most of the civil service suffering in a pay freeze, many will be looking at the pay rises on offer over the three years of this deal, which includes 2021. The truly groundbreaking elements, however, lie elsewhere.

For the first time, grade 6s and 7s in HMRC will have a contractual right to flexitime, and to take up to 28 days flexi-leave a year. Long working hours have blighted the civil service for decades. For too long it has been accepted by employers that the culture of excessive hours is just a by-product of being at a senior grade. Our latest survey, conducted at the end of last year, showed that over 40% of respondents were working at least an extra six hours, every week, unpaid, and three-quarters reported it affecting their wellbeing.

The deal also embeds what we've learned from the last 12 months on remote working. Many departments will be similarly looking at hard-wiring greater flexibility, and HMRC's signal of intent will help pave the way.

Whether 2021 is simply a pay pause or the start of a pay freeze, employers across the civil service should be looking to see how they can improve the total package available to staff. The lockdown has, for many, reignited the demand for a greater work-life balance. There should be nothing to stop civil service employers understanding the value of this to employees and delivering practical and meaningful commitments when cash reward is restrained.

Many of these will already be in the gift of departments without the need for Treasury/Cabinet Office approval. What would be truly groundbreaking though, is greater flexibility in this year's civil service pay guidance over elements that come with little or no direct cost.

In a year when the civil service has been at the forefront of the government's response to the health and economic emergencies, this could be a tangible recognition from ministers for all that incredible work. Surely that would be something worthy of applause. ■

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



WHAT AID CUTS MEAN FOR GLOBAL BRITAIN

DR PHILIP A. BERRY AND DR JOE DEVANNY ARGUE THAT BORIS JOHNSON HAS OVERTURNED 15 YEARS OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT MOVING TOWARDS A NARROWER VISION OF “GLOBAL BRITAIN”

During November’s Spending Review, chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak announced the government’s intention to temporarily abandon spending 0.7% of gross national income on Official Development Assistance. Instead, the chancellor outlined plans to spend 0.5% of GNI on overseas aid next year, saving approximately £4bn.

With Britain facing its worst recession in 300 years, the chancellor is in an unenviable position as he seeks to balance the books. The decision to reduce ODA spending, however, should not be viewed solely as a short-term measure to alleviate challenging economic circumstances, but as the end of the cross-party consensus on international development that has held for approximately 15 years.

The decision to cut the aid budget, combined with the Department for International Development’s merger with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 2020, reflects sharp disagreement within the Conservative Party regarding the level and function of overseas aid, which stretches back half a century.

These decisions are further proof that Boris Johnson’s Conservative Party has moved away from some of the centrist policies adopted by his predecessors and, more importantly to international allies, has a different conception of Britain’s “soft power”. Five former prime ministers, including three Conservatives, have reportedly disapproved of Johnson’s decision to cut the aid budget.

Since David Cameron’s election as Conservative leader in 2005, the party had fully embraced the international development agenda and committed to the target of 0.7% of GNI for ODA. Support for international development was an important part of Cameron’s rebranding of the party and relocation of it to the political centre ground after three successive election defeats. The move was not solely positional: Cameron was personally supportive of development as a moral imperative and a means of boosting Britain’s soft power. His support for international development was also shared by other senior Conservative MPs, most notably his first international development secretary, Andrew Mitchell.

Significantly, and in the face of considerable political opposition, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010-15) was the first British government ever to meet the internationally-recognised 0.7% of GNI target for ODA in 2013. The target was then, with Cameron’s tacit support following a private member’s bill initiated by a Liberal Democrat MP, enshrined in law in 2015.

“Boris Johnson’s Conservative Party has moved away from some of the centrist policies adopted by his predecessors and has a different conception of Britain’s soft power”

Despite this support for aid at the top of the party, there was always a dissenting faction. Not all Conservative MPs, members or aligned media were enthusiastic about Cameron’s determination to meet the 0.7% target, or indeed to retain DfID as an independent department amid public sector austerity. This dissenting faction was partly motivated by a view that development was being wrongly prioritised over more traditional Conservative commitments, such as to defence spending. Johnson’s simultaneous cut to the aid

budget and increase in the defence budget is a clear indication of his relatively consistent position in this intra-party debate.

Johnson’s views on development were well known before his ascent to the premiership. For example, in 2019 he argued: “We can’t keep spending huge sums of taxpayers’ money as though we were some independent Scandinavian NGO... The present system is leading to inevitable waste as money is shoved out of the door in order to meet the 0.7% target [for spending]”. Whereas this view was the dissenting voice against the party leader-





ship under David Cameron and Theresa May, it has now become the party orthodoxy, against which supporters of aid must argue.

Several centrist Conservative MPs have been dismayed by the decision to cut aid, with one, Baroness Sugg, resigning from her ministerial position in protest. It is likely that the government will face a parliamentary rebellion, led by Andrew Mitchell, when it ultimately introduces legislation to repeal the 0.7% spending target.

The rebels are concerned that the decision to repeal the law – despite assurance from the chancellor that the move is temporary – indicates that the government’s longer-term intention is not to reinstate the 0.7% target when the public finances are restored to health. It is unclear if a Conservative rebellion in the House of Commons – or a similar effort in the House of Lords – will have the numbers to inflict a parliamentary defeat on the government. Johnson presides over a different party – in parliament and in the composition of its electoral support – than did Cameron or May.

And what about public opinion? Some polling suggests that the public broadly supports the decision to cut aid. In the context of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic, with a widespread assumption that – defence and a small number of other protected sectors notwithstanding – further domestic spending cuts are likely, it is perhaps unsurprising that public opinion supports cutting aid too. The decision is, nevertheless, further evidence of Johnson’s disjointed approach to what was meant to be his Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. A symbolic decision to, as Andrew Mitchell once put it, “balance the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world,” does not bode well for Britain’s global standing, ahead of a year in which a new US president is inaugurated and Britain has the presidencies of two prominent multilateral meetings, the G7 and COP26. After nearly eighteen months in office, we are finally seeing the shape of Johnson’s vision of the national interest and what “Global Britain” will mean in practice. It is a narrower, meaner vision of Britain’s role in the world, with its “soft power” diminished. ■

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Little's account

After an extraordinary year, **Cat Little** reflects on how the Treasury and government finance function met the pressures of a pandemic with innovation. By **Richard Johnstone**

Cat Little was not planning to run a Spending Review from her house. The Treasury's director general of public spending found out she was going to move from her previous role as chief finance officer at the Ministry of Defence in December 2019, with her start date at 1 Horse Guards Road set for the following March, after the Budget.

Little's predecessor, James Bowler – now a Cabinet Office permanent secretary leading the Covid taskforce – was to cover the Budget. She was to take over the following day and start on the next fiscal event.

"So it all was very clean, but then of course, Covid happened," Little says. "I think it's fair to say nobody was really doing what they expected to be doing."

Little was thrust into the coronavirus response before she could even get to the Spending Review. She had just three days in the office before the first national lockdown, making acclimatising to her new role difficult.

Although there have been some benefits of working from home in her hectic first year in the finance ministry – "I normally have a couple of dogs with me who are

causing chaos in the background, they're always a good distraction when you're trying to have difficult meetings with minister" – Little acknowledges the strangeness of starting a new job in Covid times.

"As a leader, you work really hard to develop relationships in your first weeks and months, because it matters so much to your ability to get stuff done," she says. "But it was completely different to what I expected. It really changed a lot of the way in which my teams had to operate."

She joined the Treasury just after the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, had set out the government's initial fiscal response to coronavirus in the March 2020 Budget, a £12bn package that was soon overtaken by the scale of the crisis. Just two weeks later, Sunak announced the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme, also known as furlough, which at its peak saw the government pay 80% of the wages of 8.9 million people. To date, it alone has cost £46.4bn. A sister scheme for the self employed has cost £5.4bn to the end of December 2020.

Following the Budget, "it was all about getting money quickly to the right places to tackle the crisis", says Little. "There's still a bit of that, but we



“It was all about getting money quickly to the right places to tackle the crisis”

were all learning on our feet, and huge amounts of money were involved.”

Development of the support schemes happened at an unprecedented pace. The furlough scheme was up and running on 20 April, exactly a month after Sunak announced its creation, and a full 10 days sooner than expected. It was followed by the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and an expanded sick pay entitlement, which went live on 13 May and 26 May respectively.

Little says that while there has been innovation in how these schemes have been developed, she adds that “I would stress our control frameworks in Managing Public Money [the Treasury’s spending control guidance] and how we approach spending decisions hasn’t in substance changed throughout”.

Indeed, she is pleased with how the Treasury’s guidance has stood up to the pressures of the pandemic, including the increase in ministerial directions sought for elements of the response, such as the hospitality-boosting Eat Out To Help Out Scheme.

“One of the things I’m really keen to do is say: ‘what has this taught us about the pace at which we can make good decisions and add value?’”

“We fully expected to get more directions,” she says. “Partly because of pace, and partly because a lot of the things that we were doing were firsts, and we haven’t got evidence to prove or to fully inform our assessments of value for money, or feasibility. Being able to say very quickly to the public that we think this is the right thing to do but here are the gaps in our ability to prove it to you, has been a really positive thing.”

However, the speed of the response – and the need to develop and implement major schemes with most of the civil service working from home – did change some of the Treasury’s processes, Little says.

“It allowed us to innovate, and think differently about decision making,” she tells CSW. Bringing together the usually-separate ministerial and official approvals for spending and creating bespoke decision-making points were among the more agile processes adopted.

“Normally you’d have officials make a decision, then you’d sequentially go to

a minister here in the Treasury, normally the chief secretary, then back to the Cabinet Office, and the Cabinet Office would advise the minister,” Little says. “So we in effect brought together the departmental and the central decision making.”

Looking beyond Covid, Little is keen to maintain these processes to keep government agile. This forms part of the government’s Project Speed, which is focused on quickening infrastructure delivery and policy implementation.

“One of the things I’m really keen to do as part of Project Speed is to work with departments to say: ‘what has this taught us about the pace at which we can make good decisions and add value, and do we want to normalise some of that regardless of Covid?’” she explains.

“The sums of money that we’ve had to make decisions about at a very, very fast pace are obviously significant, but I think we’ve made some brilliant fast-paced decisions and crucially got money to where it is needed. Equally, I think we’ve been able to delegate money to departments in different ways that perhaps we would have been reticent to do prior to Covid, so it’s made us really think about how we empower departments and their accounting officers to deploy funds in a crisis moment.”

The hypothesis of Project Speed, says Little, is that the faster government can deliver, the quicker it can have impact, and the less money it’s going to cost. “In order to enable faster delivery of anything in government, you’ve got to have decision making and agile ways of developing business cases and making decisions,” she says. “So we’re using Project Speed to look at our governance – and to be frank, we’re starting to think about how we use it for other policy areas, not just not just infrastructure.”

Even in Covid times, Little acknowledges frustration at the “bureaucracy and layers of decision making” in the Treasury. But she senses an opportunity to unlock quicker delivery that, while a long-standing objective, has only been patchily realised. “You’ve got to have the whole context and environment to want it, and I think you’ve also got to have very clear direction from ministers and from senior officials to do things differently,” she says. “That probably hasn’t always been the case, to be frank.”

But the combination of Covid showing how things can change and buy-in from senior ministers means “the conditions are right”, she says.

“Project Speed is sponsored by the chancellor, and by [joint Treasury and Cabinet Office minister] Lord Agnew, and

the chief secretary works very closely with them on this,” she says. “For the first time, the conditions are right, you’ve got ministerial and senior official sponsorship, and a real burning platform staring us in the face.”

Changes were also evident in the process around the 2020 Spending Review, which was initially planned as a full three-year review, but was truncated as the impact of Covid meant it wasn’t possible to go beyond a one-year settlement for 2021-22.

“Almost up until the point of negotiations, we were operating on the basis it would be a multi-year review,” Little recalls. Details of how to submit information for a multi-year settlement were sent to departments in July. It was only in late October that the decision was made for a one-year review – the second successive 12-month round.

“We had departments submit their SR bids on the basis of a multi-year spending review,” Little says, noting that would always be her preferred way of doing the exercise.

The impact of Covid means the 2020 round was a long way from the “star chamber” sessions of previous reviews.

“We did nearly all the negotiations virtually, with our ministers in the Treasury and departments in their buildings or wherever they were located, so that was different,” she says. “And we ended up doing a lot of the publication and the development that happens in decision-making at the end remotely as well.”

Little says “lots and lots of positives” emerged from the process.

“I was able to get experts in a virtual room much quicker and much more efficiently than we would have been able to if we were all physically located at the Treasury, and it helped with a lot of the cross-government interactions,” she says. “We worked very closely with other functions and with the Cabinet Office, and with departmental experts, so it was brilliant to have the flexibility to access all of that in a virtual environment, and it was very fast paced.”

Individual successes include virtual capital appraisal panels for all of the capital investment that went into the Spending Review. Little says they formed a “massive, important part of the evidence base” for the decision to increase capital spending by £27bn to £100bn for 2021-22.

“It was great to be able to run that process seamlessly in a virtual environment,” she says. “I also co-chaired panels on technology, data and automation with [Cabinet Office perm sec and civil service chief operating officer] Alex Chisholm and it was fantastic to be able to get all of our digital experts together to talk

about technology investment. I'm sure we would have done it if we'd been physically together, it was just easier to coordinate and probably more efficient [remotely]."

The Treasury's focus has now begun to move to the 2021 review, and Little says the challenge will be to make sure the work that went into the 2020's cancelled three-year review doesn't go to waste.

"I don't think it will, because government departments – speaking from experience – operate on a multi-year basis. Depending on which department you're in, you'll always have a business plan that's more than one year and you'll always want to be thinking about the strategic and medium to long-term context," she says. "So I hope a lot of what departments we're doing will still bear fruit in the future."

Little says departments "want to be heard and to have straight and honest conversations" with the Treasury.

"I really hope that the way in which we engaged, communicated, and worked in partnership with departments reflected that," says Little, who also chaired weekly Spending Review discussions with the finance leadership group of departmental and arm's-length body finance chiefs. "We were really open about where we were in the decision-making process: we asked them to tell us what they thought about the move to a one-year review, ahead of decisions being taken."

"I think I think people want an honest, timely engagement, and I really hope that the way in which we engaged and communicated, with departments reflected that."

It is this "deep passion" for public finances that first brought Little into the civil service. A relatively late joiner, she describes herself as the "classic consultant who has joined a client", having previously been the external auditor to HM Prison Service and the HM Courts and Tribunals Service, and the internal auditor to the Legal Aid Agency.

"I got to know the Ministry of Justice pretty well, along with all of their financial issues," she says. "It was it was a matter of coincidence [that in 2013] a job was coming up, and I was at a stage in my career when I thought actually having the opportunity to get my sleeves rolled up and stuck in rather than being the consultant on the sidelines was a great opportunity."

Even though she was moving to work

with a client she had previous experience of, she says that the working environment was "massively different" from consultancy firms.

"I remember someone explaining to me the box system, and just thinking that is bonkers," she recalls. "I'd come from PwC where everything is incredibly slick and agile, and then someone was explaining to me that we make decisions through paper going in boxes and boxes being locked."

"It's just very, very different. And I'm a historian by training so I really enjoyed the tradition and the culture and the ethos, and learnt very

quickly to celebrate those differences and to embrace them, but equally to use that private sector perspective, to innovate and challenge constructively where needed."

Despite that initial reaction, Little says she soon began to appreciate how the system helps ministers with civil service advice.

"It really does work," she says. "A minister who's diligent with their box and makes decisions quickly [makes it] a really slick decision-making process."

It is, though, another part of government that has been affected by the pandemic. "I think Covid has changed boxes," says Little. "Ministers are much more IT savvy and much more technologically driven so you've kind of got virtual boxes and physical boxes."

It is yet another decision-making tweak in a year packed full of them. As Little's dogs, bemused by a year of public spending decisions in their house, would surely attest if they could. ■



The plan, when Little speaks to CSW in December, is that 2021 will be a multi-year review, but after the tumult of 2020, this isn't yet a certainty.

Whatever the length of the next review is, Little says her Treasury leadership will be informed, as the 2020 review was, by her experience on the departmental side of the table – for both the MoD and, before that, the Ministry of Justice.

"I've led spending reviews from a departmental perspective," she says. "I've seen what a really good effective, open, trusted, evidence-based relationship looks like, and the positive impact that can have on frontline services in the public sector."

"So when I took on this job, and when we launched the Spending Review, we very much set out the ambition of having very transparent, clear priorities right from the start. The way in which I expect my spending teams and the Treasury to work with departments is all about how we can help things to get done."

In addition to her Treasury role, Little is also the head of the government finance function, having taken over from Mike Driver when he became interim permanent secretary at the MoJ.

Little says she is "humbled" to combine the two roles into what she says is her dream job. "I've dedicated my whole career to public finance, so being in this role at this moment in time is an absolute privilege," she says.

She is committed to the function's strategy, which was published in 2019, and wants to "harness the collective talent and the coalition of leadership" across government to implement it.

"We have a team of directors general who lead as chief finance officers and chief operating officers across departments, and it matters deeply to me that every single one of these people feel that the vision and the strategy is equally owned. And that leaders right through the finance function feel as passionate about it as we do so."

‘ZEROING IN ON THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE’

**INSIDE THE
GOVERNMENT’S
INNOVATION
ENGINE**

A Home Office unit focused on innovative ways to solve problems is attracting a lot of attention across government.

Richard Johnstone took a look inside the Accelerated Capability Environment to find out more

Toby Jones



“When certain names and numbers come up on your phone, you know this must be important”



The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has a challenge. The Department for Transport agency collects a lot of data from its bases and aircraft, but as the information has proliferated, it has struggled to make use of all its intelligence.

In the face of such a quandary, the MCA did what increasing numbers of government departments and agencies are doing and turned to the Accelerated Capability Environment. ACE, based in the Home Office, is rethinking how government tackles big challenges, and could change the future of the civil service itself.

ACE was established in April 2017 as part of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, and initially focused on problems where criminal justice and policing came up against technology barriers. It was established to quicken delivery by focusing on what its head, Toby Jones, says is “removing ambiguity and uncertainty about the art of the possible for a particular problem and bringing it to life very rapidly”.



“That zeroing in makes sure everyone knows what they’re doing today and tomorrow, and what the next steps are to get ideas through to impact.”

Its success to date is such that the way it works is being considered as part of the government’s civil service reform agenda, as ministers seek to spread its mix of innovation, collaboration, engagement and pace outward.

ACE has thrown its doors open (virtually) to CSW to provide an insight on how it is quickening innovation across a host of sectors, and how it might point the way to a more innovative government.

ACE tackles the challenges that data and digital technology present to public safety and security like a start-up, Jones says. After a series of successes in areas including cybercrime and verification of children online (see box), the group’s work broadened into other policy areas.

This included its work with the MCA, which initially engaged ACE to better analyse its incident data, so it could better deploy its ships and other assets. Then, once the MCA started using two fixed-wing surveillance aircraft, it wanted a better way to bring together all the data it gathered via radar, ship detection, infrared video, and mobile signal and wifi sensors.

It is addressing, campaign architect Paul McCarthy says, a “swivel chair problem, where coastguards are looking around multiple displays to try and understand what the picture is”.

“What they need is a platform where they can exploit that information and make it more beneficial to their rescues, but also in other things they do, including action on pollution in the maritime environment,” he says.

“They’re looking for a complete view of everything they know in order to gain a better understanding of that data, and make it better for sharing with other government departments.”

We will return to how ACE helped solve the MCA’s swivel-chair problem, but just as Toby Jones is explaining how this is a classic ACE problem, his phone rings. And this is not just any call – his

“batphone” ringing indicates something major. This time, ACE is being called in to help deploy the coronavirus vaccine.

“We’ve just been called to see if we can help with vaccine rollout that was confirmed following the approval of the vaccine in the UK in the last 24 hours,” he says in a conversation on 2 December.

Jones is limited in what he can say about ACE’s work in the vaccine rollout – “it’s to do with data but I don’t think that’s going to help very much, everything is to do with data,” he says – but it builds upon work it did helping to stand up the government’s Joint Biosecurity Centre in June.

“That’s an example of the sort of things that can happen,” Jones says. Some of ACE’s work is planned, “and some of it is about phone calls that come out of the blue. When certain names and numbers come up on your phone, you know this must be important.”

The fact that ACE’s work ranges from ships to

organisations to help with each commission. Known as Vivace, this group of more than 200 companies is hosted by defence giant QinetiQ and provides cutting-edge industrial expertise for each project.

Commissions generally only take around 12 weeks. A project lifecycle provides what Jones calls a “handrail” to guide projects at pace while maintaining governance and oversight for public money. The 10 steps are split into three stages: assess, assign, deliver. There are review points between each: one to determine if ACE should take on the work, and another to review possible approaches after initial work by staffers and the research community.

“We bring the customer on the journey with us,” says Alun Jones, who heads up ACE’s delivery function. “During that process, we are breaking delivery

“We’re realising the benefit of creating an environment that allows behaviours we see in the civil service – but struggle to harness and amplify – to become possible”



down into a series of time-boxed sprints, and that gives the team an opportunity to pause, reflect, confirm whether this is still the right way to do things or whether we need to tweak some things.”

Although the approach is different from conventional civil service policymaking, it was conceived, says Toby Jones, “in the face of a number of classic problems in public sector delivery”.

Katie Gardiner, ACE’s senior responsible owner in the Home Office, agrees. “It is very much an emphasis on a new way of responding to emerging and complex threats in a changing environment, particularly in the digital world, where we see rapid change,” she says.

The intention was to create a space where the public and private sector could collaborate on particularly challenging questions, she says. “The culture is all about

shots demonstrates how in-demand it is as government tackles policy problems that arise from digital and data.

ACE aims to zero in on policy solutions through a 10 step process, driven by a team of 40 specialists in areas including data science and engineering, behavioural psychology, policy and law, delivery, intellectual property and technology. It also draws on a community of private and third-sector

providing the opportunity for a safe space to try out new ideas and to work at pace, in a way that really drives innovation.”

ACE's success has gained it a nomination in the Civil Service Awards, in the innovation category. Gardiner says that “there wasn't really any existing means that we could use that would enable us to work in the way that ACE does with industry on specific problems”. The Home Office first explored possible best practice around how a function would operate, before concluding that the ACE model represented the best way forward.

“We knew that conventional ways of working on digital and data challenges in the public sector were not as effective as they might be at dealing with the pace of change in hugely uncertain times,” Toby Jones adds. “Problems emerge really quickly out of your field of vision, and they demand a rapid response. We knew that we needed something different – a unified problem-solving approach across the public sector, private sector, academic and non-profit sector.”

To return to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency swivel-chair problem, CSW joins a project gate meeting between the “assess” and “assign” stages of the project. At this meeting, the team considers if it is right for ACE to take on, and decides to progress it from the assess to the assign stage. A second major meeting between stages five and six determines the outline of the pitch to customers.

“Some customers will come to us with problem statements that either aren't really well understood, and we want to work with them to understand what the problem looks like, or they might actually be wanting to ‘solutioneer’ and say ‘we want to buy a certain widget’, and that's not appropriate for ACE,” says Simon Christoforato, chief executive of Vivace. “So this two-to-three [stage] is really to say, is this the right thing for us to be doing? And let's have a collective review of the best approach, which will then lead us to success in the five-six gate review. That is the formal bid back to the customer to ensure we understand the scope, and we're defining the cost and the time boundaries of the work.”

Progress though the two-three gate and the problem is thrown open to the Vivace community, which accesses the data in its own development environment, called “PodDev”. It uses that data to assess possible solutions, which are then fed back to the customer at the five-six stage, after which solutions are “made real” for clients to use.

Carl Roberts, who leads the meet-

ACE PROJECTS

Better investigations through data

ACE has developed the data investigation and collaboration environment to enhance knowledge sharing across the security sector.

According to ACE's annual report, it “created an innovation environment for the law enforcement community that can be used to explore future opportunities in multi-source data exploitation, as well as non-technical aspects such as personal compliance monitoring”.

Verification of Children Online

ACE was commissioned by GCHQ, and supported by DCMS and the Home Office, to run a cross-sector research project to provide insights to government on how children could be kept safer online. It brought together experts to stimulate innovation and collaboration, with a cross-sector task force considering the hypothesis: “If platforms could verify which of their users were children, then as a society we would be better empowered to protect children from harm as they grow up online”. The project had two phases. For phase one, the taskforce met fortnightly for ten weeks to explore the issue. A range of promising solutions were identified for further exploration and trialling, alongside a scoring system for proposals. The task force delivered a phase-one report with ten recommendations to help find a workable, practical solution focused on preserving privacy that would make a real difference to how platforms recognise their child users. In the second phase, the taskforce considered the theoretical and practical aspects of age assurance by providing valuable research and proof of concepts to inform wider government initiatives. This work is now helping to inform policy decision makers considering how to tackle online harms.

ing, produces the problem statement, as well as considering the legal and security issues ACE might need to consider if it takes on the commission.

The MCA's problem, he says, is that “they're not really able to use their data at the moment”. He explains: “They are looking at getting that information downloaded in more real time, and what they need is a platform where they can exploit that information and make it more beneficial to their missions – both in supporting rescues, but also in tackling pollution and other activities in the maritime environment.”



ACE's aim was therefore to get to a proof of concept for the MCA about how this data could be better used, a project Roberts calls “pretty typical”.

“That's also where ACE can add most value,” he says. “They've come with a problem – and an opportunity – but at this stage, we didn't really talk about any solution. We want to understand the problem.”

“This is a good example of one that fits squarely into what we do,” adds Debs Kears, ACE's chief technology officer. “It's a data problem, it's an integration problem, and it's something that we can help them solve.”

Kears goes first in the question session, which is attended by seven of ACE's staffers and which CSW sits in on.

She says having heard the problem, the team has a couple of routes to choose from. “That can influence what exactly that we're going to do next, and that's the headline thing I'm thinking about.”

Commercial lead Ryland Wilson builds on what the output will be. “Our approach will probably be a proof of concept to the customer. I'm thinking: what will we give them at the end of it? It could be a short-term licence, for example, that we hand over to the customer, for them to use the capability that we've demonstrated for a short time period. They're thoughts and considerations for the team to take away and explore before this comes back for five to six [gate].”

Iain Wallace, who represents the Vivace community in this session, then gets to be, in his words, “the annoying disrupter” at the meeting, “and point out sort of opportunities to do things a little bit differently”.

He explains: “One hat I'm wearing



is, what approach can we take that's going to give us a different set of options? How do we open up as wide as possible to make sure we've got a broad range of companies coming forward to present opportunities and capabilities?"

After this meeting, the next move was to hold a call with 50 companies setting out the MCA's requirements.

As this project progressed, the companies were given access to the MCA's data through ACE's development environment, and, after a four-week development period, 13 pitches were put to the MCA. Five were then developed into proof of concept tools for the agency – all within ACE's 12-week project timeframe.

So what does ACE have that government needs? ACE's model has been praised by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which said its co-creation model should be replicated across the UK government; Toby Jones says that officials in the Cabinet Office have discussed how best to learn from it in wider civil service reform efforts.

While he defines the values driving ACE as key civil service ones – impact, value, integrity, fair and open competition, opportunity, diversity – he also says that “inquisitiveness, collaboration and flexibility are additional qualities”.

“What we're realising is the benefit of creating an environment that really allows those behaviours that we do see in the civil service – but at times struggle to harness and amplify – to become possible.”

Gardiner agrees that “there's an opportunity for the civil service to really draw on those attributes and amplify them”.

She says that “core civil service values are incredibly important in all of the work that we do”. While working at pace “is certainly not unknown to the civil service”, ACE's approach can be a real enabler.

Toby Jones adds: “I think that's one of the exciting things about ACE: what can we do to learn from the cultural aspects so that this becomes a more systemic and endemic way of working across the public sector with the private sector. ACE is learning by doing, which actually is a pretty good mechanism to speed things up.”

So how could government departments learn from how ACE does things? “I think there is a lot of best practice here, which actually really helped to inform and drive that agenda as much where we are thinking about collaboration within the public sector,” Gardiner says.

“I think about this a lot,” Jones agrees. “The demand for this way of work-

ing is growing very quickly, as people learn from each other about what's been achieved through using this model.”

But it is spreading the mindset, rather than turning ACE into a central function, that he says is the way forward. “Do I think there's a future where this ACE becomes some uber-organisation? I don't think that's necessarily the right strategy,” Jones says. “What I think is really interesting is the learnings about our ways of working and our culture.”

Jones says one way to absorb the lessons of ACE is to focus on its watchwords: innovation (translating ideas to impact), collaboration (bringing people and organisations together around the problem), engagement (trusted relationships created to share the burden of problem solving), and pace (if there is something that needs to be done, get on with it)."

Jones acknowledges that some of these are long-standing public sector priorities,



“It can require some adjustment. There's a certain amount of education that's required about how things are going to work”

but are not always achieved. “We're not always excellent at collaboration, either in the private sector or public sector alone. The public sector recognises the need for collaboration, but driving it from a leadership point of view means driving by example, and behaviours,” he says.

So how can this be done in other parts of government that do not have the space that ACE has? He says the key thing is to create the space for people to think and work at pace.

“I wouldn't take the ACE model, but what I'd do is I'd form a blended team from across a government department: right from the most accountable senior

officials through to those who are just joining and learning the ropes, and I'd bring experience from across sectors to some active problem solving that they need to address in their department,” he says. “And I'd coach them to work and behave in the way that we have, to show that it releases more value more quickly.”

“From that, they will develop models that work for them... I would say that's the way to scale this: to take those core behaviours and scale them and respect things like unified participation from different sectors. That's where the magic lies.”

Jones, whose career has encompassed the public sector, an established multinational and a start-up, knows this is possible because it was how he learned the approach, although he acknowledges that it does include some “pain of working with the machinery that we find ourselves dealing with”.

Gardiner says civil servants who work on projects with ACE report finding it “refreshing” to have the space to work differently. “I think it is something that can require some adjustment. There's a certain amount of education – for want of a better word – that's required about how things are going to work, how they're going to feel, what's required of the team that's engaging ACE, and how they can make the most of that experience.”

“It is different to how things often work in other situations, so there can be a bit of a learning curve there.”

All this sounds like manna for Dominic Cummings's erstwhile efforts to bring in greater external expertise into the civil service, from weirdos and misfits among others. Jones says he understands the ACE model was flagged to the prime minister's former top adviser as an example of what is possible within government, but ACE itself didn't speak to the Brexit svengali before his pre-Christmas departure from No.10. But, Jones says, ACE “drew yet more energy from the demand for ‘do different’”.

It is still to be seen how the wider civil service reform plans being developed by Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove and permanent secretary Alex Chisholm formalise these lessons, but there is a clear willingness to look at how to change.

“We're finding ACE is actually bringing to life those values and this way of working for many,” Jones says. “It's uncomfortable, but very, very productive.” ■

ACE will be taking part in the Home Office's Security and Policing event from 9-11 March. For details and to register to attend please visit: www.securityandpolicing.co.uk

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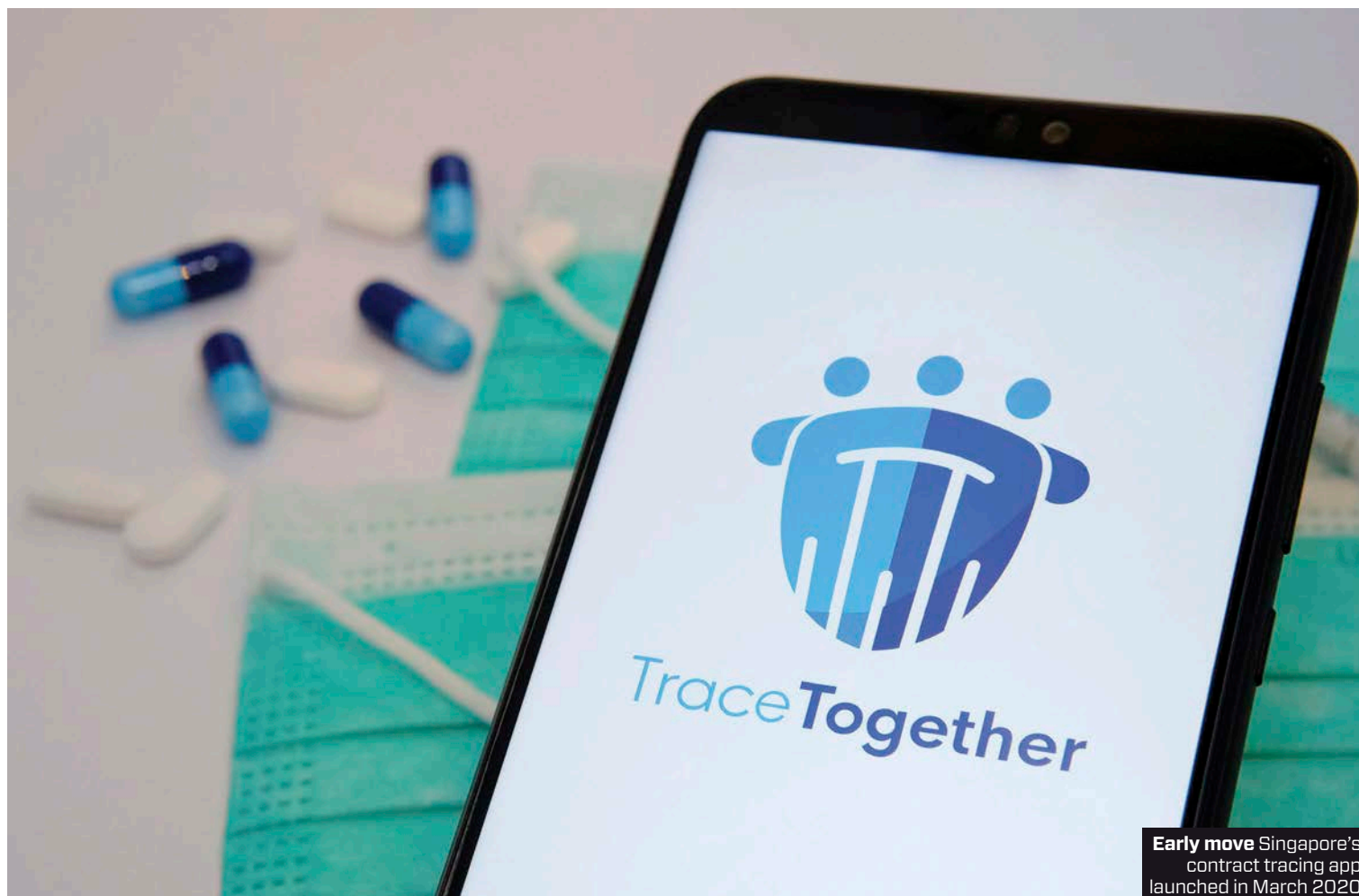
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TECHNOLOGY IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS



Early move Singapore's contract tracing app launched in March 2020

The Singaporean government's response to Covid-19 has made extensive use of digital, devices, and data – not always uncontroversially. **Sam Trendall** talks to **Kok Ping Soon**, head of GovTech Singapore, to find out more

“We are one of the countries that has really been able to leverage technology to respond to Covid,” says Kok Ping Soon, chief executive of GovTech Singapore. “I suppose our ability to do that rests on our good engineering capabilities, the fact that we were able to leverage the cloud, and the fact

we have good data infrastructure; these were the key reasons why we were able to deliver the digital solutions quickly.

“But we are not resting on our laurels – we want to make sure we lock in the gains from digitalisation.”

Such gains saw the technology agency's work progress “five years in eight weeks” around the start of the pandemic, according to the chief executive.

“My message to my senior officers and stakeholders is that, if there is a silver lining to Covid-19, it is in the digitalisation agenda,” Kok says. “Many things that we wished we could do have been brought forward.”

GovTech, an operational unit based in the Singaporean prime minister's office, fulfils a similar function to the Government Digital Service, with a team of more than 500 software developers and other tech specialists supporting the creation of digital services, as well other areas such as the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence.

The organisation also has a considerably wider role than its UK equivalent, as it directly provides and manages the

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in-house IT teams of about two thirds of government departments; this comprises around 1,200 people. GovTech also oversees government-wide cybersecurity, including the management of an annual tech procurement budget of around £1.5bn.

Speaking to *Civil Service World's* sister title *Public Technology* in December, Kok says that, when the coronavirus crisis first hit – “which seems like a century ago” – the organisation identified three primary objectives that it believed could be supported by digital platforms and services.

“Firstly, how can we get information across to our citizens in a very timely and accurate manner?” he says. “How can we use digital solutions to broadcast messages? And, beyond the broadcasting, there’s a [need] to use digital channels for more ‘narrowcasting’ – in the sense that, if you can personalise, that is good, but if not then at least provide more contextualised or more localised specific information.”

The mass promulgation of government updates was supported by the creation of a WhatsApp channel that, at its peak, sent as many as seven daily messages, in four languages, to a total of more than 1.3 million subscribers across the country.

Other communication tools include the Ask Jamie chatbot, an online tool rolled out across

more than 70 Singaporean government agencies since its launch in 2014. Since early 2020, the program has been adapted and bolstered to support queries concerning the pandemic. A companion chatbot for business has also been launched.

The Covid-19 Situation Report website, meanwhile, serves as a central hub through which the Ministry of Health publishes daily data on the spread of the virus.

Business support

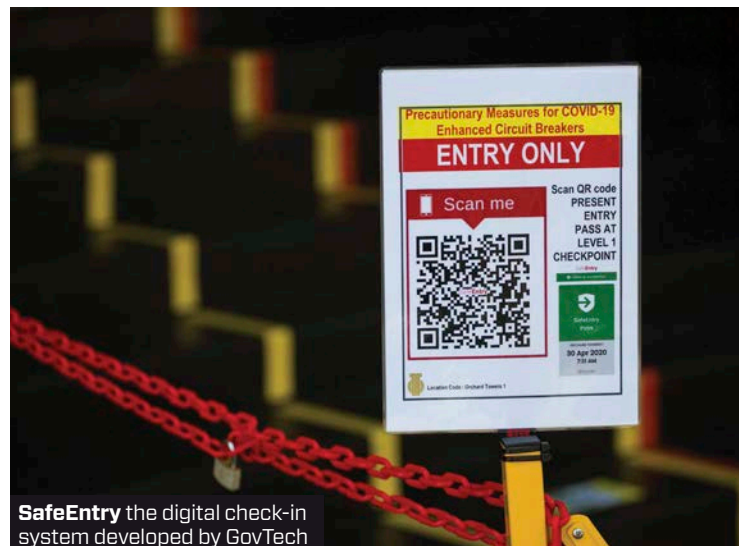
The provision of more detailed and local information supported the second key objective identified by Kok at the start of the pandemic: to aid in the distribution to the population of essential goods,

and access to services and support.

This began with the creation of the Mask Go Where online service, which allowed citizens to find where they could collect their government-distributed masks.

“Very soon, we found there were lots of other things,” for which the GoWhere platform could be repurposed, Kok says.

“We have benefitted from a system where our office is embedded into ministries – the CIOs from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Trade are from my agency”
Kok Ping Soon,
GovTech Singapore



SafeEntry the digital check-in system developed by GovTech

These have included “where to go to a clinic for a check-up, where to go for financial support... [and] distributing meals and community food packs”.

The third major area on which GovTech has focused is “digital solutions to support the management of outbreaks”.

“There are two parts to this,” the chief executive says. “One is how can we help companies manage the situation and fulfil their requirements. The second is how can we help health authorities.”

During the pandemic, Singaporean businesses have faced new obligations including ensuring adequate social distancing and, where necessary, conducting temperature scanning of employees.

To support this, GovTech worked on developing an affordable product that could allow firms to conduct widespread screening.

“For some of the biggest premises where they want to deploy higher-end solutions, that can be quite expensive,” Kok says. “[But] the secret sauce here doesn’t

lie so much in very expensive hardware – it is actually in the software. We used deep learning-based software and packaged it with low-cost off-the-shelf hardware.”

The result is an infrared camera that can detect faces and measure temperature – removing the need for temperature to be scanned manually. GovTech made about 50 of these units for rapid deployment, and has since licensed its SPOTON software to three local SMEs and one

non-profit organisation, which will construct further units to be sold to businesses across the country at a cost of about £375.

Companies have also been supported in fulfilling their coronavirus requirements by the GoBusiness portal, which allows them to apply for and declare the exemptions and permissions needed for organisations and individual workers to return to work.

“We developed a declaration system that allows [companies] to integrate it into their own business-management systems,” the CEO says.

App and running

The most high-profile element – for good and for ill – of GovTech’s coronavirus



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response effort has been its work to support Singapore's Ministry of Health, and the wider national public health response, principally through the development of contact-tracing technology.

Singapore launched the TraceTogether app as early as 20 March 2020 – three days before the UK went into its first national lockdown.

Like the contact-tracing apps that have followed since, the Singaporean program uses Bluetooth technology to detect close contacts between users, each of whom is assigned a random ID. This is then used to generate further temporary IDs each day.

The app captures and stores on users' phones for 25 days information on contacts, including the temporary IDs of each device, the time the contact took place, and the duration.

To supplement the app, in September GovTech began distributing small Bluetooth-enabled tokens that can be worn on a lanyard or carried in users' bags or pockets.

This, according to Kok, not only helped address the need to include in the contact-tracing programme citizens who do not own smartphones, but can also help “overcome the limitations of iOS” that mean that the TraceTogether app cannot be kept running in the background on Apple devices – and so stops working for long periods.

The app and tokens tie in with the SafeEntry system which allows users to check into venues. This platform processes more than 10 million check-ins at venues around the country each day, according to the GovTech chief.

Information from the contact-tracing, venue check-ins, and quarantine orders has been gathered in a government “data warehouse”.

When a user tests positive for coronavirus, permission is requested for their encrypted contact log to be provided to the Ministry of Health, which

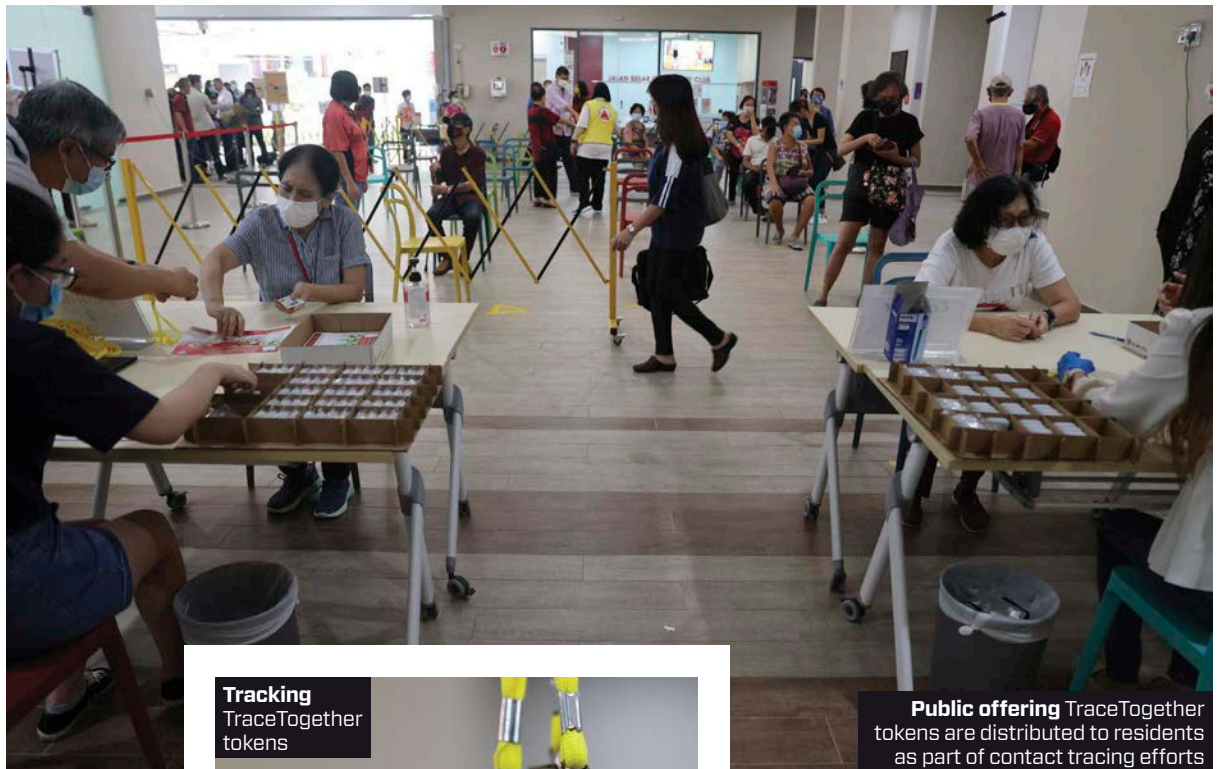
can then “deanonymise” the data.

Singapore is one of the only countries that has successfully launched a programme that allows for data to be collected and collated by public health authorities; the UK government's attempt to do so was abandoned, in favour of adopting the Exposure Notification infrastructure jointly developed by Apple and Google, in which data is stored solely on users' phones.

The privacy concerns raised over centralised models like Singapore's – coupled with the limitations of Apple's

“With Exposure Notification – it is Apple and Google that do so,” he says. “It prevents health authorities from identifying the transmission chain. You need to understand the transmission chain, in order to do epidemiological investigations and identify clusters. That was the key reason why we didn't go with the exposure notification protocol, and stuck with our own TraceTogether.”

Kok says that, in cases where a user denies permission for their log to be provided, laws exist through which the government can compel them to do so, if required.



Tracking
TraceTogether
tokens

Public offering TraceTogether
tokens are distributed to residents
as part of contact tracing efforts



operating system – has seen most countries go for the decentralised technology developed by the two vendors.

But the GovTech chief points out that, in the Singaporean system, the ultimate holder of the “master key” that can unlock the anonymity of the data is the government – and not a private company.

“Most of the time we don't need to do that – citizens understand the importance of it,” he adds.

Tracing trust

CSW talked to the GovTech chief before ministers admitted that the data gathered by the contact-tracing app could also, in some cases, be shared with the police for investigative purposes.

The long-standing Criminal Procedure Code of Singapore allows law-enforcement agencies extremely broad access to any publicly or privately held data they believe may be “necessary or desirable for any investigation, inquiry, trial or other proceeding”.

But, last summer, foreign minister Vivian Balakrishnan had indicated that the data gathered through TraceTogether would be

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used for nothing other than contact tracing.

After his cabinet colleague, home affairs minister Desmond Tan, revealed last month that CPC law did apply to TraceTogether data, Balakrishnan admitted that data had been accessed by law enforcement – although, to data, this has only happened for one murder case, he said.

Shortly after these revelations, the Smart Nation and Digital Government Office – a policy and programmes unit that sits alongside its implementation-focused sister agency GovTech in the prime minister's office – issued a statement that said “we acknowledge our error in not stating that data from TraceTogether is not exempt from the Criminal Procedure Code”.

The update added that urgent legislation would be brought forward ensuring that police could access TraceTogether data only for investigations into seven of the most serious types of offences: dangerous weapons crime and armed robbery; terrorism-related offences; violent crime and murder; drug trafficking; escape from custody; kidnapping; and sexual offences.

“It is not in the public interest to completely deny the police access to such data, when the safety of the public or the proper conduct of justice is at stake,” the SNDGO said. “If a serious criminal offence has been committed, the police must be able to use this data to bring the perpetrators to justice, seek redress for the victims, and protect society at large.”

It added: “We value the trust that the public has placed in the TraceTogether programme, and feedback from members of the public. Dr Vivian and [law minister] Mr K. Shanmugam held a public consultation [on 8 January] with members of the press, the legal fraternity, technology experts, and academia, to hear their views on the matter. The views gathered will inform the debate on the upcoming legislation.”

By January, about 80% of the population was using TraceTogether. During his conversation with CSW, Kok says that the adoption of technology and data has proven an effective tool in Singapore's coronavirus response partly because “the trust between the citizen and the government is strong”.

A quick perusal of the online reaction of some of those citizens to ministers' revelations about the use of their data suggests that, beyond the new laws, the government may have to work a little to maintain – or, in some cases, regain – that trust.

Tourism boost

The Singaporean government's response to Covid has encompassed more than just crisis management; initiatives such as the SingapoRediscovered Vouchers have sought to promote in-country tourism, and boost the local economy.

The scheme has seen every adult citizen of the country given \$100 (£55) of vouchers which, between 1 December 2020 and 30 June 2021, can be spent on attractions and accommodation within the country.

Citizens can log in to a GovTech-built platform to access and manage their vouchers.

According to Kok, the development of this service – which is run by the Singapore Tourism Board, an agency of the Ministry of Trade and Industry – is the latest example of GovTech's ability to work across ministries.

This is, in part, due to its operating model, which means that many departmental technology leaders are provided by the digital agency, ensuring a strong “ops-tech” integration between technologists and their colleagues in delivery and policy.

“I think we have benefitted from a system where our office is embedded

into ministries – the Ministry of Health CIO is from my agency, as is the CIO for the Ministry of Trade,” he says.

The day before the first coronavirus case was detected in Singapore in January 2020, the government set up a multi-ministry task force, supported by an operational committee of civil servants.

“That committee is where our office gets plugged in... and we can say ‘actually, technology can play a part,’” Kok says.

“All these digital solutions arising from our response to better manage Covid came about because we have a ringside seat for these discussions at the intelligence level, as well as at the individual ministry level.”

With the coronavirus crisis now into its second year,

the GovTech leader says that work will continue to improve the services built or repurposed during the last 12 months.

The agency has also reimaged its own use of technology; at the time of our conversation shortly before Christmas, Kok says he has begun going in to the office “once or twice a week” – but that the default for the organisation is still to work from home.

“I don't think 80% of my guys are going to work from home [in the long term], but we shouldn't revert to 100% back in the office... because there are wellbeing and productivity advantages,” he says. “Even the way we think about an office has to change. Increasingly we find an office is not a place for work, but for social interaction. We are configuring our office to be equipped for more social spaces. And every meeting is equipped for remote participation. Most of our infrastructure is not there at the moment.”

GovTech also intends to continue to recruit talent, he says, particularly at a time when some companies are being forced to let workers go.

After a momentous year for its internal operations and the citizen services it delivers, the GovTech leader says that his goals for the coming months boil down to a simple question: “How do I ensure these gains are not lost?” ■

“If there is a silver lining to Covid-19, it is in the digitalisation agenda; many things that we wished we could do have been brought forward”
Kok Ping Soon,
GovTech Singapore

20 March 2020

Date on which Singapore launched its contact-tracing app – three days before the UK went into lockdown for the first time

70

Number of Singaporean agencies that already used the Ask Jamie chatbot, which now answers coronavirus queries

80%

Approximate proportion of population using the TraceTogether app or token as of January 2021

10 million

Number of venue check-ins processed by the SafeEntry system each day

OUTstanding achievement

Tom Ketteley is an assistant director at UK Visas and Immigration who was named in the OUTstanding top 100 LGBT+ future leaders for 2020. He tells CSW about mentoring, diversity in the civil service and why public role models are important

The OUTstanding top 100 top LGBT+ future leaders recognises business leaders who are breaking down barriers and creating more inclusive workplaces. After being included in the list for 2021, Tom Ketteley talks to CSW about his work as an LGBT+ role model and mentor in the Home Office, and how the civil service can be more inclusive.

Congratulations on being named in the top 100.

Thanks! It's really very flattering, especially when you see everyone else on the list. I'm really pleased, I've certainly told the story in my area of the Home Office, but it's really nice to get a bit more exposure – not really for me, but for why it's important that we have things like this.

Why is public recognition like this for LGBT+ role models important?

For me, it is about creating – particularly in the civil service – an inclusive culture, where we know that no matter who you are, where you come from, what makes you special is what makes you different. I think there's a perception that there are barriers and glass ceilings, and I'm sure there are – but hopefully these lists will help other people see what they can achieve. I'm a great believer in 'you have to see it to be it'.

You do a lot of work mentoring other civil servants – how did you get involved in that?

I'm quite a chatty person, I like talking to people. And I'm really fortunate that a lot of my role is around developing and bringing people on. My day job is legal career pathways, as well as some operational work, which is really about investing in people and talent. So I'm very lucky to have space to be able to champion things. I get approached a lot of the time for chats and coffees or mentoring. I do a range of mentoring, some through our talent schemes in the Home Office, particularly our Access scheme which is for underrepresented groups. I don't just mentor LGBT+ people, but I do tend to find that's who I get matched up with most, particularly at the junior grades. Outside work I mentor for Queer Lawyers for Tomorrow, which is for law students. I'm very involved in making the legal profession more inclusive.

Is there a long way to go there?

Yes. My background is as a solicitor in private practice, and the law is just so stuffy and outdated, it's quite incredible. I'm on the committee of the Law Society's LGBT+

division, which we've only had since 2014, where every other protected characteristic has had one since the '70s or '80s. And still, it's controversial, and people don't really understand it. It's similar in the Home Office, but at a different level – you see some of the comments on staff news articles, and you realise there's a lot more that we need to do to create that inclusive environment.

Where in particular do you think progress still needs to be made in the civil service?

One area is visibility – I've always been out at work, but I know from speaking to law students that they often expect to go back into the closet when they start their career. And some of our graduates who come into the Home Office, I'm

How does that breadth of experience benefit the Home Office, where you work?

From an operational perspective, the more we reflect the communities that we serve, the less likely things like Windrush are to happen again. And it's not just about LGBT+ perspectives; that's where I add a lot of my time and effort, but not exclusively.

How else do you champion diversity and inclusivity?

I guess I annoy people a bit but I won't sit on all-male interview panels. We can do better than that. I'll tell people "I'll find you someone to take my place or you need to find someone else to sit alongside me."



"I've always been out at work, but I know from speaking to students that they often expect to go back into the closet when they start their career"

surprised how many people feel that they have to hide themselves and be something different when they're at work.

So I think we've got to educate people, starting before they come anywhere near us that actually, you can be who you want to be in the civil service. Then following on from that once they arrive, we need to instil that we value that difference. Having different lived experiences can make our policy professions better because there's more thought around the table.

But actually, everyone can do that. And I think once we've cracked things on the gender side, we can move onto other things – so I want to make sure that every panel I'm going to be on is not all white. I try and put my money where my mouth is, so on the selection programme I run we have diverse panels, we have blind selection, we aspire to be the gold standard, and to keep improving. It helps being LGBT and also having a disability so I tick those two boxes! But all of that, I think, is really important to making sure that we spot the right talent and we don't always just recruit within our own image. »

Whose responsibility do you think it is to drive change?

I think there's a lot of individual responsibility. You also need to have the permissive environment where you can stand up and say "I'm not going to sit on that panel" and feel comfortable to champion that. I think the civil service gives me that safe space.

Sometimes in coaching conversations I get told 'it's easier for you because you're more senior'. And I always say "well, I wasn't always more senior!" You have to have a moral or ethical compass, and I think civil service values allow you to take those positions. But you need that enabling culture to do that – and to care about where you work.

Are you encouraged by civil service leadership saying they want to champion diversity – or does this feel like a conversation that's been happening for a long time?

It has been going on for a long time, but I'm really pleased to see some of the practical changes that are taking place, like the introduction of independent panel members – not just because I enjoy sitting on interview panels and hearing the classic stories people tell you. The fact that more places are now using that best practice – I don't know what the stats are, but I feel it must make a difference.

What's important about having independent panel members?

The fact that there is someone who is different on the panel, I think, should help people feel more comfortable with these roles. And there's a lot of benefit to being an independent panel member – because I've done it, I know far more about how the system works now, so my applications are significantly better than they would be otherwise. That experience can help more junior people really understand what people are looking for when they're appointing a director general, what they

need to do in their career if they want to aim for that and what their next steps should be. I've benefitted a lot from those panels in terms of senior networking too.

What goals do you have for your own career?

My career anchor has always been immigration, I love to know why people move around the world. That was the case right from university, studying migration and refugees and doing volunteer work with the Red Cross refugee unit. I then worked in private practice on immigration, where I ended up specialising,

Have you ever experienced any difficulties in your career as a result of being out?

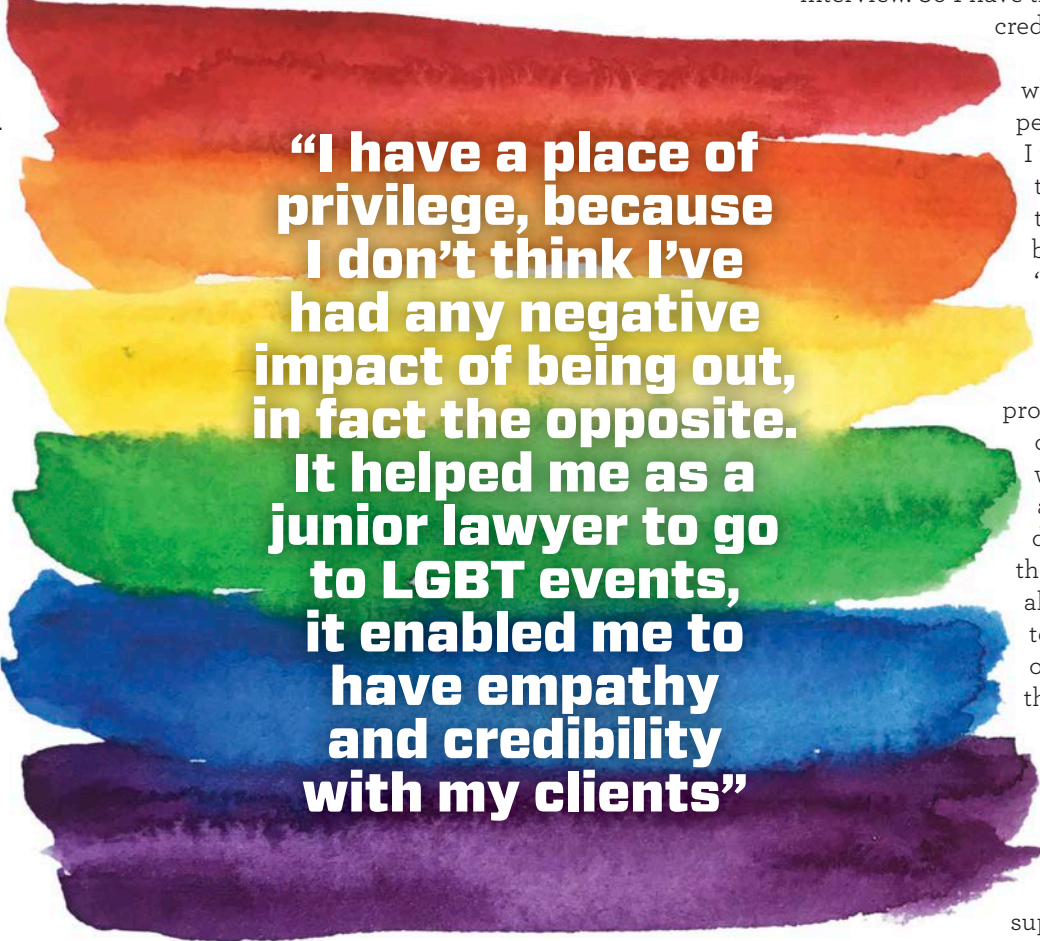
I feel that I have a place of privilege, because I don't think I've had any negative impact – in fact, quite the opposite. I think it helped me as a more junior, younger lawyer, to go to LGBT events in the legal profession where you'd network with people across different levels. It enabled me to be better with my clients, because I would talk to them about going to [the UKVI office in] Croydon with my husband, to go through his immigration application and have our interview. So I have that empathy and credibility with them.

In the civil service, when I'm coaching people for interviews, I tell them that if there is anything that makes them a bit different, a bit 'not the norm', they should sell that as much as they can, and be really proud about that. That comes across really well in interviews, and helps people demonstrate some of their leadership. But also, you don't want to work with a racist or homophobic so get that out on the table really early on.

I have always had great work environments, but problems exist – I pick it up when I support grievances or people having other issues in the workplace. There are pockets where on the outside, people are broadly accepting of diversity and understand why there is a benefit to the public in that we will make better decisions and do better work. But you still look a little bit below the surface, not all is quite right.

In particular, I think there are real struggles around trans rights. It feels like things are going backwards in the country as a whole – you look at how gay men were treated in the '80s and I don't think it's too far away from how lots of trans people are struggling now. That's why it's really important for people like me, who are in that place of privilege, to talk about those issues. ■

That's why it's really important for people like me, who are in that place of privilege, to talk about those issues. ■



"I have a place of privilege, because I don't think I've had any negative impact of being out, in fact the opposite. It helped me as a junior lawyer to go to LGBT events, it enabled me to have empathy and credibility with my clients"

particularly in LGBT+ family migration and human rights family work – that was the bit that I really loved about my work. When I moved into the Government Legal Department after that, I really enjoyed being there and being able to see not just the impact not just on an individual place or client, but a systemic impact.

I've always wanted to work in the Home Office so when my chance came I moved over. I guess I see myself pivoting around the legal side of the civil service, whether that's in GLD, or outside in other areas. I'm really passionate about professionalising people so I can see myself in the space of building capability of our lawyers, somehow.



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Introduction

The Civil Service Awards are a highly respected and prestigious cross-government programme, recognising and celebrating the wealth of inspirational individuals and innovative projects within the Civil Service. For the last 15 years, these unique and empowering awards have helped to spread best practice right across government, sharing innovation, learning and leadership.

Many congratulations to all the nominees and shortlisted projects. This is a fantastic recognition of the incredible work you have delivered and an achievement you should be proud of.

Good luck to everyone waiting to hear the results!

Category Champions



Alex Aiken
*Executive Director,
Government
Communications
Service*



Madeleine Alessandri
*Permanent
Secretary, Northern
Ireland Office*



Simon Case
*Cabinet Secretary
and the Head of
the Civil Service*



Alex Chisholm
*Chief Operating
Officer for the
Civil Service and
Permanent Secretary,
Cabinet Office*



Mike Driver
*Department of Health
and Social Care*



Tamara Finkelstein
*Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs*



Elizabeth Gardiner
CB QC
*First Parliamentary
Counsel and
Permanent Secretary*



Sue Gray
*Permanent Secretary,
Department of
Finance in the
Northern Ireland
Executive*

Category Champions



Jim Harra
*Permanent Secretary
and Chief Executive,
HM Revenue
and Customs*



Sarah Healey
*Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media and Sport*



Stephen Lovegrove
*Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Defence*



Dame Shan Morgan
*Permanent Secretary,
Welsh Government*



Sarah Munby
*Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Business, Energy and
Industrial Strategy*



Antonia Romeo
*Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Justice*



Peter Schofield
*Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Work and Pensions*



Sir Patrick Vallance
*Government Chief
Scientific Adviser
and Head of the
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The Citizenship Award

Recognising exceptional individuals who go way beyond what could reasonably be expected of them, to improve the lives of citizens or communities. Their contributions could be in the workplace, or as volunteers outside work, or both.



Diane Law-Crookes
Ministry of Defence

'Lest we forget' is the creed by which we live in the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. Diane Law-Crookes, administration assistant, exemplifies this in her selfless, nurturing and caring attitude towards WW2 veterans in the evening of their life, making their lives relevant and visible to everyone. These individuals were particularly threatened by COVID-19 and, irrespective of this, Diane ensured that every possible contact with them was maintained (safely and adhering to COVID-19 restrictions). COVID-19 challenged this, but Diane undertook every measure to ensure contact was maintained and never lost.



Lisa Hodge
Ministry of Defence

During the lockdown between April and June, Lisa created a Facebook group of 60 sewers in Newport, South Wales. Together, they formed the group 'Newport and Caerleon Scrubbers' sewing scrubs, bags, hats and headbands for NHS staff and local care homes. Lisa managed the group's needs, balancing orders coming in, getting fabric delivered to individuals, and picking up and delivering completed items. Lisa completed all of this while sewing herself, homeschooling two children and continuing in her day job! Lisa made over 1,000 items, and as a group the Newport and Caerleon Scrubbers made and delivered close to 100,000 items, enabling vital protection to the people working on the front line.



Sarah Morton
Department for Work and Pensions

Working with local communities in Liverpool, Sarah supports homeless people, assists with food banks, and works to eliminate period poverty. She encourages her work colleagues to recognise the hardships faced by vulnerable citizens, organises charity drives, and enables colleagues to assist in their communities. Sarah has worked alongside local councillors, gaining valuable insight into the economic pressures they face, particularly during the pandemic. This insight guaranteed she focused her efforts where need was greatest. Sarah is fully committed to enhancing quality of life for all and works tirelessly to ensure everyone can live the best life possible.



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National Volunteer Prescription Delivery Scheme (Wales)

Welsh Government

This project focused on delivery of medicines to the most vulnerable people in society during COVID-19 lockdown through a Wales-wide new prescription delivery service. The National Volunteer Prescription Delivery Scheme and the Royal Mail Service were designed and implemented to supplement capacity and resilience of pre-existing medicine delivery arrangements, operated by community pharmacies and dispensing doctors in Wales. The scheme was designed to address an increased demand resulting from measures taken to reduce the spread of coronavirus. Devised and established within just five weeks of shielding being introduced in Wales, a total of 7,984 medicines deliveries were made between May and September 2020.

PPE Portal Team

Department of Health and Social Care

The PPE Portal is an outstanding innovation that has been developed in partnership with the armed services, eBay, Clipper Logistics, Volo Commerce and Royal Mail to develop a service from scratch, to respond to the extra need for PPE for primary and social care providers which has arisen as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a standing start in March, the team have onboarded just under fifty thousand providers and distributed more than 1.2 billion items of PPE to critical front line services.

The PPE Portal partnership not only spans the boundaries of the public and private sector, but also traverses national borders, collaborating with the EU to gain EU State Aid for £1.3 billion within two months, to ensure PPE is free for those who need it most.

Shielding

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

On the 22 March 2020, the government introduced new shielding health guidance and a support offer to help protect the people most vulnerable to COVID-19. What made this task truly remarkable was not only the scale and pace of the programme, but the unprecedented collaboration across MHCLG, DHSC, NHSE, NHSD, GDS, DEFRA, DWP, CO, local government and local delivery partners. Over four months, 2.2 million people were contacted by the programme, 1.2 million signed up to the website, and 4.7 million food boxes were delivered to over 500,000 people, with every department pulling together to help protect people's health.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL SHORTLISTED NOMINEES.

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Complex Transactions Team - COVID-19 Response

Cabinet Office

To support DHSC and NHSE&I during the COVID-19 crisis, the Complex Transactions Team (CTT) enabled the delivery of 15,154 ventilators designed and built within 4.5 months, operationalisation of testing from a daily testing capacity of 3,000 to 100,000 in six weeks, and 32 billion items of PPE equipment. This was achieved by deploying 57 commercial specialists to all COVID-19 cells (Ventilation, Testing, Nightingale Hospitals and PPE) and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. The team took a leadership role in delivering the commercial arrangements to secure supplies and services, working at rapid pace under highly pressurised conditions.



COVID-19 Emergency Measures in Rail Franchising Contracts

Department for Transport

As the coronavirus crisis began in March, the number of rail passengers plummeted. This created a huge shortfall in rail industry revenue which, unaddressed, would have left many operators facing imminent financial collapse. The team moved with extraordinary speed to design and implement an innovative and widely-praised commercial agreement to avert this outcome and allow the railway to perform its role as a public service, transporting key workers, medical supplies, food and fuel throughout the lockdown. Subsequently, the team developed and delivered a further 'recovery' agreement with operators, which incentivises financial and performance improvements for passengers and taxpayers.



Energy Efficient Scotland National Delivery Scheme

Scottish Government

Warmer Homes Scotland is the Scottish Government's flagship national fuel poverty scheme. Benefits are realised through the installation of a bespoke suite of energy efficiency measures, including insulation and heating, to properties of households living in or at risk of fuel poverty. Launched in September 2015, the scheme has helped almost 20,000 households reduce their fuel bills. The contract to operate the scheme, worth £224 million over seven years, was awarded to Warmworks Scotland LLP following an open procurement exercise. The Scottish Government delivery management team consists of Team Leader, Delivery Lead, Policy Officer and a Procurement (contract management) specialist.

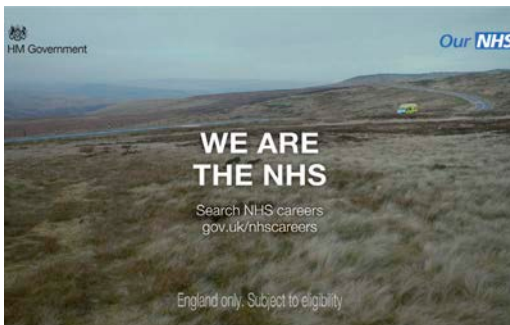


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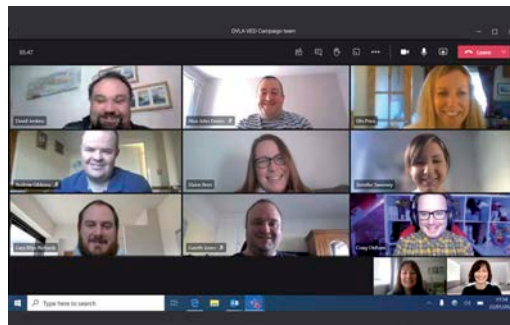


DHSC Communications and Marketing Team - 'Our NHS' Allied Health Professions and Nursing Recruitment Campaign

Department of Health and Social Care

The 'Our NHS' allied health and nursing recruitment campaign attracted over 30,000 people to express interest in an NHS career in just six weeks. UCAS reported an increase of 24,810 applications.

Developed and delivered by a multi-disciplinary team of communications professionals, the campaign supported the government's major pledge to build the NHS workforce of the future, by attracting 76,000 nurses and primary care staff into training. This fully integrated campaign used real NHS staff to tell the story of their interesting, demanding, varied and rewarding careers, helping our community back to health. It combined proactive campaigning with direct digital communication to maximise numbers going on to apply for training.



DVLA Vehicle Tax Evasion Campaign 2020

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

This nomination is to recognise DVLA's work to tackle vehicle tax evasion. The agency has a long-term strategy to keep vehicle tax evasion low, and uses a wide range of prevention and enforcement measures to remind motorists of their legal duties to pay vehicle tax on time. Using an evidence-based approach, DVLA planned and delivered a fully integrated behaviour change communications campaign at the start of 2020 using communications targeted to the highest evasion areas in the UK.



National Resilience Hub, Covid-19 Communications Response *Cabinet Office*

The National Resilience Hub was formed in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Over the past eight months it has delivered one of the largest cross-government communication efforts, and coordinated a 24/7 communications response to an unprecedented emergency. The hub is a team of multi-disciplinary communication and insight experts from across government who have come together to work collaboratively for the first time. Throughout the crisis, they have continually and determinedly supported the public to understand how the government is balancing the needs of society, the economy, and health in order to save lives and livelihoods.



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Civil Service
Dyslexia & Dyspraxia
Network



Department
for Transport



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network

Cross-government

The Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia Line Managers Toolkit was developed to help line managers understand more about the '4Ds' and neurodiversity. These conditions may affect up to 15% of the Civil Service and require reasonable adjustments. The toolkit was developed by the CSDDN (Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network), a cross-government network, to provide insight into traits of neurodiversity. Written by and from the perspective of staff with these conditions, their aim is to help:

- line managers support colleagues;
- neurodiverse people aware of their condition;
- those that may not be aware they have a condition.

DfT Commercial Development Programme

Department for Transport

DfT's Commercial Development Programme is a fantastic example of collaboration across multiple professions and disciplines, to manage an identified gap in the commercial leadership arena. The three-year accelerated development programme provides commercial associates with the opportunity to undertake three diverse and stretching commercial placements. The programme is built on industry best practice and provides a comprehensive learning and development offer, including working towards recognised professional qualifications. The programme has successfully enabled the department to build a sustainable pipeline of commercial leaders, and very clearly advances the pillars of 'A Brilliant Civil Service' alongside commercial priorities for the transport sector.

Inclusion Apprenticeship Programme

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

How can we become the most inclusive employer by 2020? By designing an inclusive resourcing process focusing on equity of opportunity for all applicants, regardless of their social or educational background. The Civil Service recruitment principles encourage this type of approach but apprenticeship schemes typically follow a traditional selection route. Removing minimum entry requirements, targeting marginalised candidates, linking with local authorities and schools, holding outreach events, running a social media campaign, outlining the selection process at an open day and partnering with the department's Social, Economic Diversity and Inclusion Network, the team delivered an apprentice cohort which reflects the Civil Service's desire to be the most inclusive employer.

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Digital Learning Division - Hwb EdTech Programme *Welsh Government*

Through a number of collaborative and innovative workstreams, officials have been able to develop and deliver the EdTech programme, supporting connectivity, in-school infrastructure, cloud services and digital resources, generating unparalleled financial economies of scale and supporting key areas such as the Curriculum for Wales, online safety and cyber resilience. The Hwb EdTech programme is widely regarded as the Welsh Government's most successful digital transformation programme. It is regularly referenced by other government administrations who are keen to establish similar programmes of work and hailed as 'world-class' by tech giants including Microsoft, Google and Adobe.



Get Your State Pension *Department for Work and Pensions*

The Get your State Pension (GySP) digital service has transformed the way citizens claim their state pension. Developed in 2018, within two years it has progressed from being a mainly form-based service to become the first benefit which can award and pay the customer without any agent intervention, in a process called Citizen Straight Through Processing (CSTP). In 2018, 25% of customers invited to claim their state pension did so online. Today, that figure is 75%. Over 60% of customers are now paid using CSTP. Through collaborative working across departmental boundaries, the customer experience has been transformed in a positive way.



Scottish Government Design System *Scottish Government*

Launched in August 2020, the Scottish Government Design System will make building websites and digital services quicker, cheaper and more accessible. The Design System enables common digital problems to be solved once for Scotland and shared for re-use across public sector teams, breaking down organisational boundaries and creating new professional communities focused on delivering high-quality digital services for citizens. The system shares a collection of ready-made web components created by a multi-disciplinary team, ensuring they meet best-practice standards for technical build, design, user experience, accessibility, usability and performance.



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BAME Male Working Group and Race Network Co-Chairs

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

The DFID (now FCDO) Race Network launched a project to empower BAME men to share lived experiences, understand how race affects BAME men's employment experiences, and advocate for improvements. In support of DFID's first Race Action Plan, the team used a snowballing technique to engage BAME men, assuring them of anonymity and sensitive handling. The outcome was a report launched on 21 March 2020 (International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) which provided unique insights on what is preventing BAME men from realising their potential, including subtle and overt forms of discrimination: racially-aggravated shouting, swearing, racist jokes and sexualised-racial harassment. Respondents demonstrated considerable bravery in providing testimonies. Support was offered and senior-level commitment was maintained throughout COVID-19 and the DFID/FCO merger leading to institutional change.



Campaign & Projects Leeds D&I Group HM Revenue & Customs

Campaign and Projects, Leeds, is a new office of over 400 people from a diverse range of backgrounds. The Diversity & Inclusion Group was formed by 11 volunteers who aim to ensure that staff recognise everyone's individuality, with different values, skills and ways of thinking. They promote the benefits these differences bring to HMRC, and raise awareness of a range of topics; in the last year, the group has delivered over 30 awareness campaigns. Their 'Time to Talk Day' events promoted better understanding of mental health, and for Inclusion Week, the group organised engagement workshops such as exploring identities and 'speed-inclusion'. Recognising the potential wellbeing impact of working from home due to COVID-19, the group developed online weekly group tasks to promote inclusion, bring teams together and combat feelings of isolation.



Civil Service Carers Network Cross-government

The CSCN brings together carers networks from across the Civil Service to share knowledge and resources, maximise the network support available to carers, and promote a carer-inclusive Civil Service through developing and improving policy approaches for supporting carers. They provide resources to help networks get going, including ideas for ways of working, training on wider Civil Service issues, and presentations to support outreach. In 2019, the network made suggestions for becoming a carer-inclusive Civil Service, which led to them being commissioned by the Chief People Officer to work with CSHR and create a carers strategy. This was launched in February 2020 with an update in June, and they are already working to implement the commitments made.

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Civil Service Fast Stream and Early Talent

Cross-government

The Fast Stream and Early Talent (FSET) team oversees the flagship Fast Stream programme for graduates with the potential to become Civil Service future leaders - ranked number one in the Times Top 100 graduate employers. FSET aims to be the most inclusive graduate and early talent programme in the UK, with disability and neurodiversity as an essential priority. FSET is a Disability Confident Leader which demonstrates proactive improvement to support disabled young people. They are also passionate about inclusion, creating the environment and culture for post-holders with disabilities to flourish. FSET has a number of multi-award winning positive action diversity internships, all of which encompass participants with disabilities alongside other diversity categories.

Civil Service LGBT+ Network

Cross-government

As the cross-government network for LGBT+ civil servants and for networks within Civil Service organisations, the CS LGBT+ Network provides a supportive environment that enables individuals to connect across departments and develop their understanding of themselves within the LGBT+ community. The network also acts as a critical friend to the Civil Service D&I team, offering feedback on policies and practices, and working with LGBT+ champions across the Civil Service. They collaborate closely with Jonathan Slater, CS LGBT+ Champion, playing a key role in setting agendas for champions meetings and presenting at each one. The network partners with the CS Race Forum to create awareness-raising sessions focused on BAME LGBT individuals and their contribution throughout history. They use volunteers collaboratively, encouraging cross-departmental working groups to implement initiatives, ensuring diversity of thought, approach and content.

Civil Service Working Through Cancer Network

Cross-government

In the UK, one in every two people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, and around one million people of working age have been told they have cancer. The impacts of COVID-19 on people affected by cancer are significant, and supporting vulnerable colleagues is vital to ensure people feel included, valued, and able to deliver their best work. The network has two principles: to support people affected by cancer, including carers and line managers; and to normalise talking about cancer in the workplace. In 2019, network chair Seonaid Webb delivered a presentation to CS Disability Champions and was then contacted by several departments looking to set up their own Working Through Cancer networks. Membership continued to grow throughout 2020, and at the last count there are 25 organisations represented in the network, including Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments.



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Food Vulnerabilities Directorate *Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs*

As millions of people were shielding, Defra set up the Food Vulnerability Directorate to support the food needs of people who were shielding, vulnerable people struggling to access food but not shielding and people economically vulnerable as a result of COVID-19. The directorate oversaw the delivery of over five million food packages to shielding households, engaged with supermarkets to prioritise shielding people for delivery slots, and built a referral service to enable local authorities and selected charities to refer vulnerable individuals for access to prioritised supermarket slots. The team secured £16m from the DCMS Charity Fund to support economically vulnerable people, providing food to over 5,000 frontline charities. Analysis conducted by the team suggested that children, ethnic minorities, and young people were disproportionately affected, resulting in the team leading a successful bid to HMT, securing £63m to be administered through local authorities, aimed at 250,000 people experiencing acute hunger.

Heather Wilson *Scottish Government*

Heather has made a significant contribution to the success of the Scottish government's disability network and the Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network (CSDDN) toolkit. She managed the creation of the toolkit, remotely leading a cross-Civil Service team who she didn't meet until the launch event. Heather completed an illustration course in her own time to improve her drawing skills, so she could create visuals (later enhanced by a graphic designer) to increase accessibility for those who find it easier to learn from images than written guidance. The toolkit supports conversations between colleagues and line managers about dyslexia and dyspraxia, and helps draft workplace adjustment passports. Heather networks throughout the organisation at all levels to contribute to wide-ranging developments by influencing decision-makers and collaborating with HR. Heather is connected with other staff networks, sharing her advice and learning about intersectionality challenges. She also provides peer support to colleagues, helping them work through challenges.

Home Office Gender Equality Network (GEN) *Home Office*

The Home Office Gender Equality Network (GEN) was re-launched by co-chairs Kerry O'Dea and Jason Ghaboos in 2019, establishing a diverse core team of over 25 passionate volunteers. GEN takes a programmatic and evidence-led approach, initiating a series of pilots and projects aimed at improving workplace inclusivity for all staff and embedding gender equality in everything the department does. Their evidence draws from departmental data, surveys and focus groups with staff, with a strong focus on outcomes. The network focuses on the personal development of their team, supporting each other to achieve their goals without recognising grade structures - the most junior grade can be working on the highest profile project.

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LGBTI Chile D&I Team, *Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office*

The British Embassy in Santiago is recognised among the 20 best employers in Chile for LGBTI+ talent, becoming the first diplomatic mission and public sector organisation in Chile, and the only British embassy in the region, to receive accreditation from one of Latin America's leading LGBTI+ civil society networks. Attaining accreditation brought together the embassy's public diplomacy, corporate policies, learning and development, and local outreach into a strategic effort, working towards eradicating discrimination and setting a standard for LGBTI+ inclusion in Chile, for the public and private sector alike.

ONS Faith and Belief Network *Office for National Statistics*

The co-chairs of the All Belief Network at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Jaspreet Gakhal and Paul Thomas, are dedicated to tackling misconceptions and raising awareness of religious and non-religious faiths and beliefs. For Interfaith Week in November 2019, they chose the theme 'Building Bridges'. The theme and its aims were agreed with the ONS Faith and Belief champion, Peter Benton, who was so supportive that he highlighted the 'Building Bridges' theme to the Civil Service's Faith and Belief Champion, who in turn adopted this across the entire Civil Service. Working with other diversity networks, Jaspreet and Paul's passionate call to increase inclusivity resonated and all were keen to work together to make Interfaith Week a success. The calendar of events was an outstanding achievement where personal stories were shared, understanding raised and connections made.

Preeta Ramachandran and Mark Thompson and Aspire Participants *Department for Work and Pensions*

DWP's purpose is to ensure social mobility opportunities for its customers; Preeta and Mark wanted to replicate the same development opportunities for their Work Coaches across the South East. Many colleagues join DWP straight from school, leading to a lack of confidence and self-limiting beliefs to progress to more senior roles. Participants in the Aspire programme have been encouraged to challenge self-imposed barriers to success and show confidence in their ability to communicate effectively. They have learned how to build a powerful personal brand and set challenging but achievable goals. Feedback has been extremely positive: participants say the programme has increased their confidence and sense of purpose, and many have a newfound confidence to seek progression opportunities.

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The Health & Wellbeing Award

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Gillian Whitworth

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Gillian demonstrates extraordinary commitment, courage and compassion in raising greater awareness of eating disorders, an issue often stigmatised and overlooked. At BEIS, she collaborated with colleagues to form the first Eating Disorder Support Group across the Civil Service and has continued to raise awareness at the FCDO. She has spearheaded work to highlight how eating disorders may present in the workplace and how we can be more inclusive, providing clear constructive advice on eating disorders, body image and diet culture. Colleagues have welcomed Gillian's empathetic approach, creating spaces for colleagues to share, connect and learn about this difficult, emotional issue.



Home Talk

Home Office

Home Talk is a mental health support group operated by volunteers. Colleagues struggling with their mental health are encouraged to drop in and talk about how they are coping in a group that is non-judgemental, confidential and supportive. Participants are encouraged to talk about both positives and negatives, and are connected with others with similar experiences. Due to the pandemic, Home Talk is now held virtually which has widened its reach, allowed more colleagues to join, and is successfully tackling stigma as well as the isolation that the pandemic is causing. Home Talk has recently expanded to include a dedicated women's group as well.



Julie Slater

Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory

Julie took over leadership of the Dstl Enabled Mental Health employee support network in October 2019, and during her time at the helm, the community has flourished. Prior to lockdown, Julie's enthusiasm and approachability saw attendance at group meetings increase from single digits to over 30. During lockdown, she has instigated methods allowing this support mechanism to more than double again. For many, this has been a true lifeline in these extremely challenging times. Julie's contribution to providing mental health and wellbeing support to everyone at Dstl cannot be overstated. It continues to grow, alongside their community, on a daily basis.

Civil Service Awards 2021

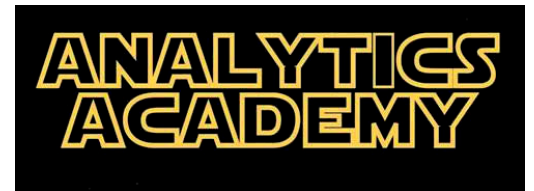
INNOVATION AWARD

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Recognising the outstanding advancement or application innovation to improve policy, service delivery or public administration.



Accelerated Capability Environment (ACE) Home Office

The Home Office's ACE team solve public safety challenges from data and digital technology, at the pace demanded by a fast-changing world. ACE challenged conventional problem-solving, introducing agile, collaborative ways of working that accelerate solution-finding from years to months or weeks. This imaginative, entrepreneurial team found a new, cost-effective way to drive start-ups, SMEs, the not-for-profit sector and academia to bring cutting-edge expertise to bear on these challenges. The team won the Institute for Collaborative Working's 2019 innovation award, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology cited ACE as an effective model which should be replicated across government.

Say My Name Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Our names are central to who we are as individuals, and getting people's names right is crucial to helping people feel seen, included and valued. The Say My Name campaign started as a simple idea from a creative individual and grew into a proud achievement for a team. The team is now furthering inclusion and respect by using Say My Name - an initiative encouraging people to add the phonetic pronunciation of their name to their email signature. This is a simple, elegant idea to make all colleagues feel included.

The Analytics Academy, A coding course for everyone at DfE (Jack Tattersall, James Lowe and Peter Fitzsimons) Department for Education

The Analytics Academy is a bite-sized, gamified, online R coding course developed by the Central Analysis Unit for the whole of DfE. It uses an innovative approach to deliver training through online videos and coding 'missions', incorporating insights from behavioural science and the video-gaming industry. Analytics Academy makes what could be a dry and tedious learning process into something entertaining and engaging, by injecting the personality of the trainers and the odd nerdy pop culture reference to keep things light-hearted. Nearly 500 DfE staff - almost 80% of the department's analysts - have enrolled, and that number keeps growing.



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The Inspirational Leadership Award

Recognising individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, regardless of grade or role.



Chris Atkinson

Northern Ireland Office

Chris Atkinson led work to establish a scheme for payments to recognise and support those seriously injured through no fault of their own during the troubles in Northern Ireland (NI). For years it seemed impossible to get agreement for this scheme. Chris's passion for making a difference to the lives of these vulnerable people is commendable. In putting people at the heart of his approach, he pitched a way forward focused on practical action and a sensitive framework for managing political differences.



Chris Rampling

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

As well as providing direction, inspiration and guidance, Chris is passionate and committed to strengthening the UK's presence in Lebanon and delivering UK interests. He is a natural leader and a great diplomat, inspiring everyone he works with - embassy colleagues, implementers, donors, local contacts - to achieve common goals. He genuinely motivates people around him, and builds strong teams that strive towards continuous improvement. The embassy works as one team under his leadership, leading by example and applying the Civil Service's core values. Chris is respected for being genuine, ethical, principled, and consistent, and is very 'human' with every member of staff.



Kelsey Williams

Department for Education

Kelsey is nominated for her exceptional contribution to driving continuous improvement for creating a race-inclusive culture at a time of heightened sensitivity during the pandemic and the tragic death of George Floyd, while continuing to inspire members of her team by role modelling authentic and honest communication to the department. She prioritised the wellbeing of her team so that they could contribute to the success of PR while feeling valued, empowered, and included. As a result, Kelsey got the best out of her team so they could deliver above and beyond the project's original objectives during a very challenging time.

The Policy & Use of Evidence Award

Recognising excellence in policymaking.



Behaviour, Insight and Research Team C19 Response

HM Revenue & Customs

Building evidence and integrating it into policy takes time - and yet HMRC's Behaviour, Insight and Research Team brought cutting-edge techniques and deep insight to develop the furlough scheme without that luxury. The team deployed social media analytics to gather real-time data on business needs, rejigged its research methodology to set up online focus groups, and mobilised the behavioural insight evidence from its randomised controlled trials. As a result, every step of the journey to make a claim was informed by evidence - rather than assumptions - about customers' behaviour. The scheme received widespread praise as the best-designed service the department has developed.

Childcare Team

Welsh Government

The Coronavirus-Childcare Assistance Scheme helped maintain capacity in vital public services during the first peak of the pandemic, by providing childcare to enable parents employed in critical infrastructure to work. It also supported vulnerable children and their families where intelligence indicated they could be at risk. Robust evidence and economic modelling underpinned the business case to repurpose funding for this scheme, while primary and secondary research informed collaborative implementation with the wide range of stakeholders. A dashboard on service availability, takeup, and virus outbreaks, provided management information and has given a data sharing legacy. Independent evaluation verifies that the scheme is exemplary.

GO-Science COVID SAGE Secretariat

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) secretariat delivers scientific advice to decision-makers during emergencies. Co-chaired by Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir Patrick Vallance, and Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, SAGE first met in January to discuss an outbreak of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan. The secretariat has since delivered over 60 meetings and released 400 papers, convening hundreds of experts and leading specialists from the UK's diverse scientific community to provide timely, impactful advice to the Cabinet. The secretariat has championed independence, proactivity and transparency, welcomed challenges, and provided an authoritative, unified voice to inform the UK's response.

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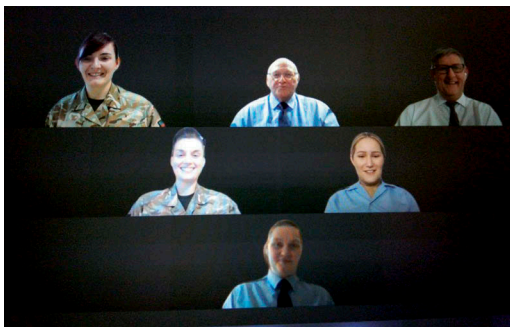


The Project Delivery Excellence Award

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Course Design Team, Foundation Medic Course *Ministry of Defence*

The Course Design Team has delivered a major revision of the Military Medics training. The Foundation Medic Course is a tri-service course which takes the core military skills delivered in initial training and conjoins them with medical skills, to make these service-men and -women into first response Military Medics. The design and delivery, which normally takes 24-36 months, was delivered in six months - a milestone which has never been achieved before in Defence Medical Services. The team of six applied innovation, working consistently above and beyond to deliver an integral course which will positively impact care given on operations.



Nabeeha Ahmed *Ministry of Justice*

During COVID-19, Nabeeha played a vital leadership role in facilitating technology changes and training to enable remote working for MoJ colleagues. Nabeeha managed the rollout of MS Teams across the department, collaborating with suppliers and partners to ensure the service was fully supported in time for lockdown. So that colleagues could make the most of MS Teams, Nabeeha drove a change-management cycle for the rollout: she defined the approach for communicating with colleagues about MS Teams, arranged for the provision of learning materials, and organised training delivery. The software was rolled out successfully with approximately 38,000 colleagues installing and using it quickly and easily. Over 4,000 colleagues joined the training sessions and gave very positive feedback. Colleagues received information about technology releases in a timely and consumable manner, and MoJ saved £45,000 in change management costs due to the service arrangement set up by Nabeeha.



Virtual Machine Environment, Replacement (Jobseekers Allowance) *Department for Work and Pensions*

The project to replace DWP's benefit systems within the UK's National Critical Infrastructure was the biggest in Europe. As well as these systems being old, replacement of the systems was necessary to enable future welfare policy changes to be implemented. This was undertaken as an in-house exercise between DWP Digital and Service Planning and Delivery colleagues, requiring precision in planning and execution with zero disruption to DWP benefit operations. The latest system, Jobseekers Allowance, was to be replaced in the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcomes achieved have been independently recognised by Internal Audit and Senior Officials.



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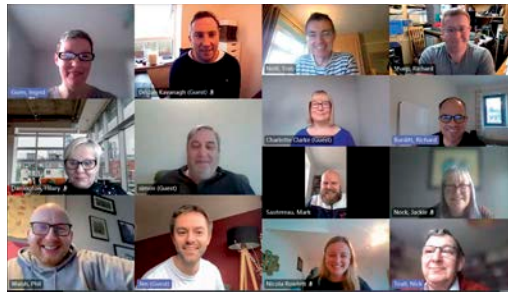
Recognising exceptional service delivery.



Joint HMRC/HMT CJRS, SEISS and EOHO Teams

Cross-government

HMRC and HMT delivered HMG's flagship economic interventions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and protect businesses and jobs. CJRS (or the furlough scheme) has helped employers pay the wages of nine million people across the UK - over a quarter of the workforce. Over 2.7 million people have been supported by the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), and hundreds of thousands of businesses have been supported, including through Eat Out To Help Out (EOHO). These schemes have all been delivered as a partnership between experts from HMT and HMRC, who have operated as a single virtual team. They have been delivered successfully at a rapid pace.



Non-Shielded Vulnerable People Project

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Up to 630,000 non-shielded vulnerable people now have access to vital food supplies thanks to a new Defra, Kainos, Capgemini and KITS digital service. COVID-19 resulted in a 40-fold increase in demand for supermarket deliveries, and placed significant issues and barriers in front of non-shielded vulnerable people who were self-isolating or social distancing. Targeted at the elderly, disabled people, and those with long-term health conditions, the new service provides an England-wide self-service system which enables local authorities and charities to refer non-shielded vulnerable people to priority food delivery slots, while observing competition law and complying with GDPR data requirements.



The UK-Japan Trade Agreement Negotiations Team

Department for International Trade

The team successfully negotiated the UK's first trade agreement for 50 years, with Japan. The agreement met all the objectives set for it and has been widely praised externally. This was the world's fastest-ever trade negotiation, was conducted almost entirely virtually, in unprecedented circumstances, and with a heavyweight nation of the trade world. The team did so in collaboration with 20 government departments and agencies, under intense pressure and scrutiny, creating new ways of working. The team received a letter of praise from the Cabinet Secretary for their achievement.

The Resilience & Rapid Response Award

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Get an isolation note

MHCLG Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Taskforce

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The MHCLG Rough Sleeping Covid-19 Taskforce worked rapidly and successfully with local authorities and other partners to bring thousands of vulnerable rough sleepers and others at risk into emergency accommodation at the height of the pandemic. The team swiftly refocused priorities and sustained morale through extremely challenging circumstances to bring 'Everyone In' through collaboration with local authorities, voluntary sector partners, and hotels. Within two weeks, over 90% of rough sleepers had been offered accommodation, and as well as saving hundreds of lives, this has helped to turn around the lives of many more.

The China Network

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

HMG's China Network is nominated for exceptional crisis response as COVID-19 spread in China. They managed the successful evacuation of British nationals from the epicentre of Wuhan, and used accurate situational awareness to shape UK ministerial and scientific policies at a crucial stage of the outbreak. A challenging context included closure of consulates in Wuhan and Chongqing, the largest draw-down of over 400 UK-based staff and dependants, and significant restrictions on staff movements. Colleagues from 18 government departments worked in crisis structures, giving 24/7 support to British nationals and meeting intense ministerial demand for analysis at the most uncertain and rapidly evolving stage of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Isolation Note; DHSC (Alexander Peck), DWP (Ailsa McGinty, David Long), NHSX, (Diane Baynham), NHSD (James Higgott)

Cross-government

Nominated for the Health Tech Awards 2020, the Isolation Note is an example of Civil Service collaboration at its best. The Isolation Note was introduced at the start of the pandemic as a digital means by which individuals can certify absence from work for COVID-19 reasons via NHS 111 Online, and is pragmatic, creative and flexible solution to mitigate complications arising from COVID-19 for citizens, GPs, employers and benefit claimants. Available UK-wide, more than 2 million Isolation Notes have been issued (correct as of December 2020) and the system has been adapted and adjusted to reflect the latest requirements and guidance from the Government. The Isolation Note's introduction has empowered citizens; protected GP clinical time; safeguarded access to and payment of benefits; and given needed reassurance to employers and employees. The initiative has also provided valuable lessons and acted as a springboard for future government improvements around certification requirements.

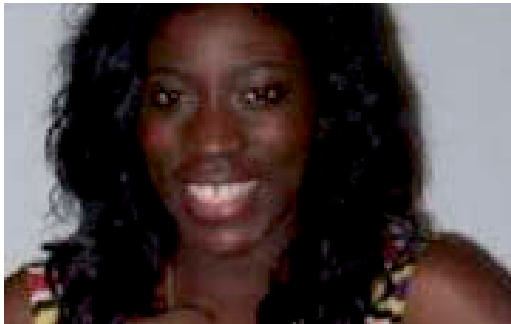


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The Rising Star Award

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Abigail Agyei

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Abigail has passion and commitment to public service and has made a significant impact to communities, dedicating her career to supporting marginalised and minority communities and amplifying their voices. She has worked with Grenfell victims and survivors, and supported children being brought safely to the UK from Calais and is currently working in MHCLG engaging with faith and BAME communities following COVID-19. Abigail has been instrumental in leading on race in the Civil Service and enabled uncomfortable conversations to happen, in order to create an inclusive, safe and accountable culture particularly with the Black community with the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on minority ethnic people and the witnessing of the death of George Floyd and many others.



Leanna Conradson

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

During COVID-19, and in addition to her role as a team leader with a substantially increased workload, Leanna has demonstrated extraordinary foresight in setting up Wales Employment Tribunal's (ET) technology, Cloud Video Platform (CVP), ensuring the upkeep of justice. Acting Regional Employment Judge for Wales, Sian Davies, says: "Leanna's contribution to the administration of justice during the pandemic has been extraordinary. I have no doubt whatsoever that Wales ET would have been unable to respond to the crisis in the way it has without Leanna; she is simply exceptional and her efforts are deserving of national recognition with this award."



Sidonie Edey

Department for Work and Pensions

Sidonie's outstanding people and policy leadership makes her a rising star. Approachable and generous with her time, despite dealing with complex issues across several portfolios, Sidi inspires all around her. With her exemplary support and guidance, her team delivered - at pace - policy to base maternity pay for furloughed workers' on their usual earnings rather than their reduced furlough pay, supporting thousands of families through challenging times. Committed to staff development, she manages portfolios thoughtfully, ensuring staff are optimally stretched and supported. She conveys passion for DWP's objectives and confidence in her team's ability to deliver excellence, taking pride in embodying the Civil Service values.

The Science Award

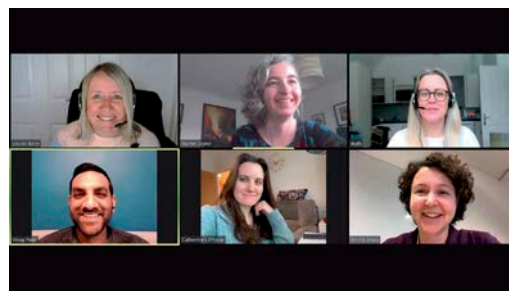
Recognising the outstanding advancement or application of science to improve policy, service delivery or public administration.



Climate Change - Rapid Attribution Studies

Met Office

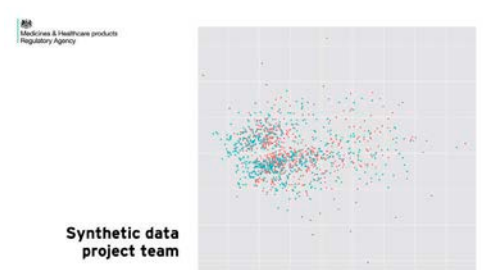
The scientific group led by Professor Peter Stott at the Met Office has revolutionised the way climate science is applied, by assessing how human activities are affecting current weather. This new scientific application has helped people better understand how the distant-seeming threat of climate change is affecting them in the here and now. Recent assessments made by the team have clearly demonstrated the value of this new approach. Through their analysis of record-breaking temperatures in the UK and above the Arctic circle, the team has brought vividly to life the rapidly rising risks of climate change.



International Travel Risk Assessment Team

Animal and Plant Health Agency

The International Travel Risk assessment team engaged in cross-disciplinary science, working with Public Health England (PHE) to develop innovative models to inform the UK government on the risk of entry of SARS-CoV-2 to the UK via international travel. Delivering at pace, the team provided robust results that fed into policy discussions, identifying countries from which the risks are highest and alternative health measures to 14-day self-isolation. The team stepped outside their scientific comfort zone and displayed fantastic teamwork in order to aid PHE at this demanding time.



Synthetic Data to Support MedTech Innovation

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

There has been an explosion of artificial intelligence algorithms used in healthcare. However, many are not validated, leading to concerns about bias and patient safety. The MHRA has developed a novel method to generate synthetic data as a cost-effective solution for algorithm training and validation. These high-fidelity datasets are completely artificial, but capture the complex clinical relationships found in the original data. This methodology provides regulators and MedTech innovators with a robust route for algorithm validation and regulation. It also provides the NHS and patients with assurance that algorithms used in clinical decision making are safe, effective and equitable.



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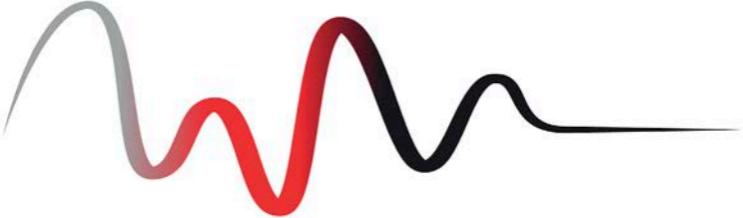
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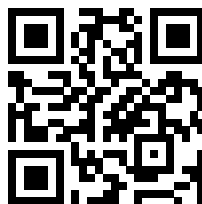


A WORD IN YOUR EAR

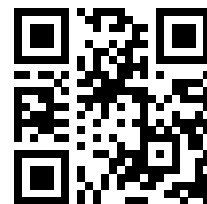
In our new podcast we speak to the biggest figures in government, and experts from across the country, to get the lowdown on key issues affecting the civil service.

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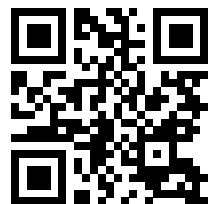
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