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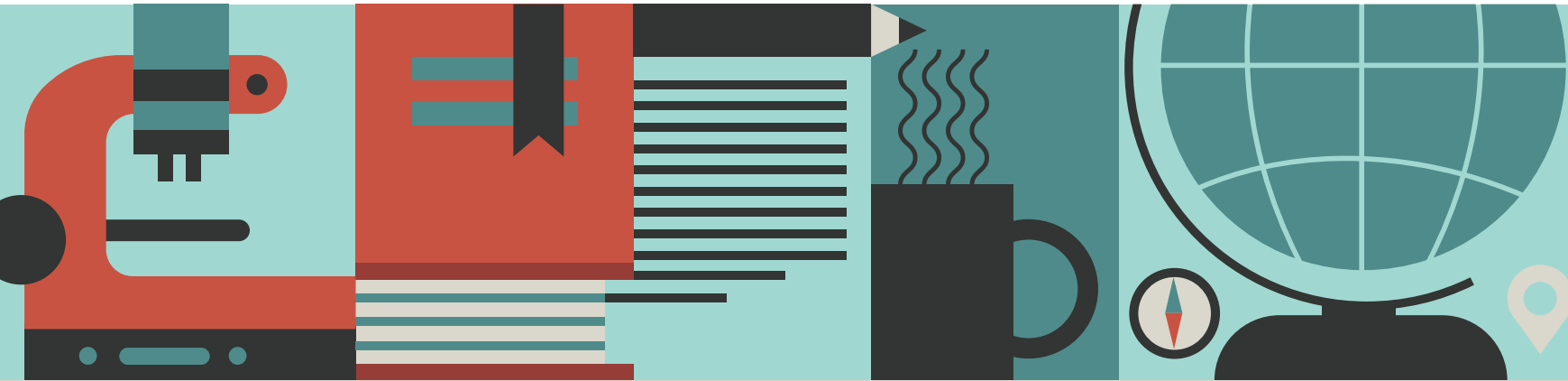
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BRIDGE BUILDERS

CSW speaks to civil servants who helped a nation mourn Queen Elizabeth II

REGRETS, HE'S HAD A FEW

Confessions of a former DfE policy adviser



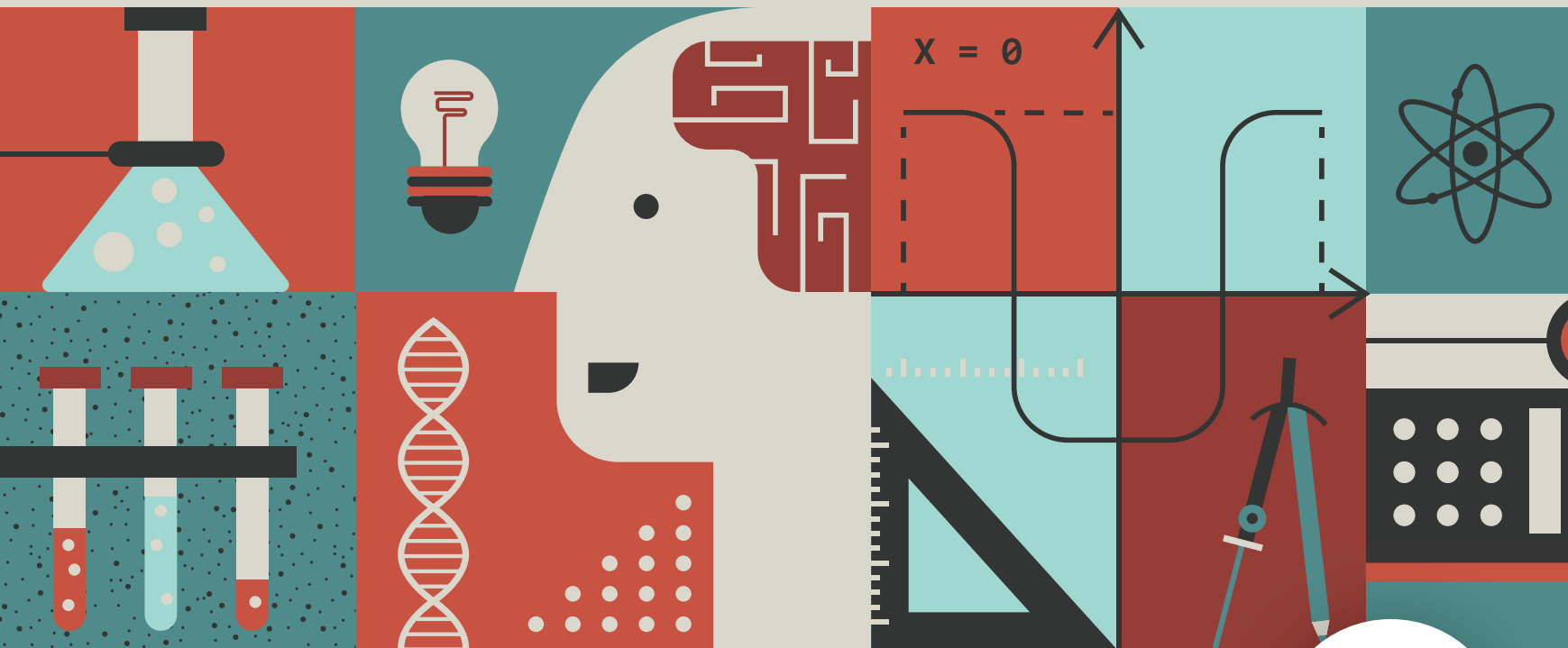
SCIENCE AND INNOVATION FOCUS

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Security Accelerator

Caitlin Ballard,
Geospatial Commission



 Full details of the 2022
Civil Service Awards Shortlist





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FROM THE EDITOR

In 2013, Stella Manzie and Jean Hartley – academics at the Open University – published a study likening public leadership in the UK to dancing on ice. This metaphor, they explained, “evokes the delicate, symbiotic and sometimes precarious process of working together which elected or appointed politicians and senior public servants have to undertake”.

In this model of dual leadership, they added, there is a “sense of moving together” and the possibility that while navigating the slippery ice, “the partnership may stumble and occasionally fall”.

Nine years later, the image of such a finely balanced partnership jars. The peremptory sacking of a widely respected permanent secretary by a politician who would (as it turned out) spend less time as chancellor than Ed Balls spent as a dance sensation in 2016 is just the most recent example of how far things have moved from that ideal.

It no longer feels that government’s dual leadership will only “occasionally fall”. Rather, it is as though the dancing has

been replaced by continual stumbling, as one partner exploits the power imbalance and pushes the other to their limits.

Manzie and Hartley observed that officials are often motivated by a specific combination of public service and respect for the political process. “Much of their motivation is based on the belief that politicians in general want to improve society, and that, by working with them, public servants can also have a role in that,” they wrote.

One wonders whether senior officials today could honestly speak in similar terms about their political masters. In recent years we have seen ministers and prime ministers disregard their own code of conduct, ignore constitutional norms, denigrate public institutions and even ignore the law if it doesn’t suit them. Consciously or otherwise, they are relying on the fact that officials are both temperamentally inclined and professionally obliged to support their objectives, and mostly powerless to do anything if those objectives don’t line up with the public good.



In days gone by, the intrinsic imbalance in the ministerial-official relationship was countered by the notion of ministerial accountability. Ministers took the credit for their departments’ work, even when the idea was that of a clever policy team, or the blame, even if the failing was down to officials. The policymaking dance played out behind the scenes, but the minister alone walked onstage to receive the reviews.

But today we have a pick-n-mix version of accountability. If something goes well, then the minister “got the big calls right”. But when things go wrong, politicians duck behind the curtain and push officials out amid the booing.

That 2013 study said successful public leaders have “political astuteness” (for ex-

ample in balancing competing interests and building consensus), as well as strong ethical values and personal integrity. The question of ethics, it said, “is central to [senior officials’] weighing up of how to act in a context of diverse interests and needs, and in consideration of the public interest”.

Even if the next year or two offer a more stable dance surface for public leaders, there are tough choices and hard times ahead. Senior officials will need astuteness and integrity in spades. But their skills are not enough. Politicians must accept their own part in the dual leadership which is required to pursue the public good. Rather than dodging accountability and avoiding honest discussion, they need to face the music, and dance. ■

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INBOX

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LESS IS MORE?

The consensus among senior officials who responded to a recent survey by Reform and Deloitte was that the civil service workforce should shrink – alongside government doing less and becoming more “streamlined”. But not everyone felt the same.

“I disagree with the top officials surveyed here and found this a bit worrying. I think the government needs to do more, not less. What it needs to do less of is re-inventing everything all the time (mainly ministers’ fault, but I think Whitehall officials quite enjoy it too),” Andrew Sissons said.

SECRET’S OUT

Suella Braverman’s assurance to MPs that, while she had sent official documents to her personal email address six times, none were classified as “secret” or “top secret”, failed to impress.

“Well, that’s OK then. So if civil servants share documents below that level with their mates there will be no consequences? Yes?” Old Curmudgeon said.

BREEDS CONTEMPT

Meanwhile, the news that Rishi Sunak has axed Boris Johnson’s target to cut 91,000 civil service jobs but instead is telling departments to “maximise efficiency within budgets” came as no great surprise to CSW readers.

“Same old story, nothing ever changes,” Lyndsey Taylor said.

Donald Sprunk commented: “Common theme with all

politicians and governments, they’ll always give with one hand and take with the other.”

CUTS CONUNDRUM

Sunak’s announcement came after a message from civil service unions soon after his ascension to No.10 – that he has no mandate to make further public-spending cuts.

“The unions are absolutely correct,” Alam Ali said. “Zero justification for cuts, zero mandate and it’s a political choice NOT a political necessity!”

ALL MOD CONS

Readers were split over the news that the Ministry of Defence had withdrawn its pay offer – amounting to a 12.85% pay rise for staff over the next three years in return for changes to terms and conditions – after civil service unions took different stances on the deal.

“It was an absolutely terrible offer which was rejected by PCS members in line with the negotiating strategy they agreed to,” Josh Chown said.

Similarly, Kris Markowicz commented: “Appears as if PCS is only guilty here of fighting for its members during the biggest cost of living crisis for generations. The MoD has some of the worst – if not the worst – pay rates of all civil service departments, as well as the worst terms and conditions which this ‘deal’ would worsen and enforce for the next three years.”

“Stick your 2-3%, MoD are the worst payers in the country,” Peter Drummond added. “Inflation in double figures, this hopefully will give the

employees the will to strike.”

But Simon Harrison said: “As a non union member I am furious that an organisation that represents less than one in 10 civil servants in the MoD has cost us again the chance of a meaningful three-year settlement that would have given people certainty and more money. And for what? The right to a paid lunch for staff – well, in 30 years I have never met anyone who gets a paid lunch break – and for the rights of the people who work in London. That’s circa less than 1,000 people who work in Main Building.

“And to cap it all they are surprised at the angry reaction... to their ineptitude and posturing, and that their few numbers are going to get fewer. At what point are they so few that they are irrelevant?”

APPLY PRESSURE

The news that the Civil Service Commission has decided to intervene in the Cabinet Office’s recruitment processes after three years of consistently poor and worsening performance sparked concern.

“This is a more serious issue than it looks. Who were the beneficiaries of these breaches of civil service recruitment processes? That they happened so close to the seat of power is alarming,” Antony Carpen said.

PRICE TAG

A damning Public Accounts Committee report that concluded HM Prison and Probation Service had wasted nearly £100m in a “high risk and over-ambitious” attempt to deliver a new case-management system for electronic tagging – which was later scrapped – reminded one reader of a much-beloved show.

“Could be from *Yes Minister*: ‘none of the expenditure would result in any future benefit,’” tweeted @Watching_events.


ON THE FLY


Readers were outraged that up to £62m of funding will be spent extending the contract on government’s “Brexit jet” – which it leased last year for ministers to use alongside the PM’s primary aircraft, the RAF Voyager – for four more years.

“More taxpayers’ money squandered on vanity projects,” Colin Taylor said.


“Do they know it’s not Christmas and there’s a cost of living crisis going on?” asked Alam Ali. “How about they can keep it, if they can give me one Brexit benefit? Oh and I want all the money I’ve lost in import duties from purchases made in the EU back!”


Meanwhile, the reactions poured in on Twitter...

 **Karen Watson @OldratEssex** As you do, in a financial crisis


 **Chris Smith @ledredman** “Spending taxpayers money wisely”

 **Common sense ideologue @pragmatitude** £62m for ministers’ Brexit jet? That would pay for free school meals for all UK schoolchildren several times over with enough change to deliver the present cabinet to Rwanda. Now that would be a sensible use of public finances.

 **Farrukh @implausibleblog** Please let all the hungry school children know that at least our ministers can fly around in luxury while they can’t concentrate at school

 **Sunlit Uplander @SunnyUplander** And the nurses for whom there is no money!

 **Keith Davies @Davies2K** Why can they not use regular flights – where possible?

 **Théroigne Russell @TheroigneR** Make MPs go commercial. ■

RHYS GLYNE CIVIL SERVICE CUTS: DOS AND DON'TS

THE PM IS RIGHT TO DROP THE 91,000 JOB CUTS TARGET, BUT DEPARTMENTS STILL FACE REDUCED BUDGETS. HERE'S HOW MINISTERS SHOULD TRY TO SAVE MONEY FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE

The prime minister has confirmed the government has dropped the target to reduce the civil service headcount to the size it was before the 2016 Brexit referendum, which would have meant removing 91,000 roles. In a letter to officials, he said that “top-down targets” were not the right way to cut the civil service. He has reversed the short-sighted plan to pause the Fast Stream.

Rishi Sunak’s more constructive approach to these questions is welcome. But the government has still warned that public-spending cuts will be part of its approach to plugging the fiscal black hole in the forthcoming Autumn Statement. This will mean tough choices for all departments working with smaller-than-expected budgets.

The civil service has grown by 25% since 2016. We at the IfG estimate that around half that growth relates to new, permanent post-Brexit functions. Much of the rest of the increase was in response to Covid and Brexit transition demands, with these “surge” staff largely now moved to fill other vacancies. So ministers should be honest that there are few painless “efficiencies” to be found. Cuts will mean departments choosing not to do work they might otherwise have done.

But there are cuts that can be made in parts of the civil service, if ministers choose to. And, as our recent report sets out, there is a right and wrong way to approach the task. Here are six ways ministers can make cuts happen while avoiding wrecking necessary government departments.

Target ‘pounds not people’

Sunak’s announcement last week was a good start – aim for budget savings, not headcount reductions for their own sake. Headcount targets give departments little control over cuts. They fall where vacancies happen to arise, rather than being targeted at low priority areas. Talented, mobile staff tend to leave sooner. Less mobile and, sometimes, weaker performers are more likely to stay. Headcount reductions lead to false economies, saving money in one part of the civil service just to create new costs elsewhere. The decision to stop the Fast Stream, cutting off low-cost and high-potential recruits and increasing the need for outside consultancy, is a prime example. Holding departments to account for realising genuine budget savings is much more sensible.

Have a long-term plan for cuts and efficiencies

Ministers and senior officials need to work out what kind of civil service the country needs for the next 5-10 years,

not the next two, and plan the workforce accordingly. Failing to take a long-term approach causes the boom and bust cycle the civil service has experienced throughout its history – with short-term cuts periodically reversed causing expense, disruption and a loss of skills for departments.

Be prepared to invest to save

Of course the civil service can become more efficient. Doing so should always be its aim. But the most valuable efficiency savings require up-front spending. Ministers should allocate resource for this and be prepared for some results to take time. In particular, digital investment must be protected to improve service provision and realise genuine efficiency savings.

New Cabinet Office ministers should dial down the rhetoric

Oliver Dowden and Jeremy Quin, the two ministers who will oversee civil service reform in the Cabinet Office, both come to their roles with past experience at the centre of government. Unlike some of their predecessors, they should prioritise calm competence in their dealings with the civil service. Dowden, in particular, should drop the culture-warrior persona he developed as party chairman. A more collaborative, consistent and sustained relationship with officials will give them the best chance of achieving efficiencies and reform while also slimming down the civil service.

Motivate and reassure the staff who stay

It is important ministers send a clear signal about who they want to stay. The numbers suggest the policy profession is likely to feel the heat first, having nearly doubled in size since 2016. Whereas the government committed in the Declaration on Government Reform to bolster scientific, digital and data-based skills in the civil service.

There is always pressure to run down contingency planning and resilience activity too – which would be a mistake. Keeping people with these skills is essential, as demonstrated by the pandemic.

Make honest decisions about stopping activity to protect priority services

Finally, differentiate clearly and honestly between making efficiencies and stopping activity. A smaller civil service will be able to do less. “Doing more with less” usually just means doing more, worse. If ministers want to protect overstretched frontline teams, they need to accept that services elsewhere will need to be cut to achieve budget reductions.

Now that Sunak has dropped the headcount target, ministers and senior officials can make staffing decisions based on what will best serve the government and country, rather than short-term headlines. A mature approach to civil service reform will be even more important given the tough decisions departments will face following the Autumn Statement. ■

Rhys Clyne is a senior researcher at the Institute for Government



DAVE PENMAN WHY FAST STREAMERS COULD STRIKE

OFFICIALS ON THE FLAGSHIP GRAD PROGRAMME ARE HAVING TO SKIP MEALS AND AVOID SOCIALISING. IS IT ANY WONDER THEY'RE SAYING ENOUGH IS ENOUGH?

Does Rishi Sunak's appointment as prime minister herald a return to serious government? The bar has been so low of late that not turning the country into an international laughing stock would be judged to be Churchillian.

I'll pass over some of the more controversial cabinet appointments. I want to concentrate on politics and how it affects the civil service.

The target of returning to 2016 staffing levels in the civil service was always going to disintegrate on contact with reality. That said, it was a policy dreamed up in cabinet and signed off by the then chancellor, one Mr Sunak.

The announcement of its demise in the PM's first message to civil servants was welcome, as was his decision to "unpause" Fast Stream recruitment. The pause was another of those headache-inducing decisions that was clearly just a totemic nod to headcount reduction. It would make no difference in the grand scheme of things, further tarnish the brand of the civil service and damage it for decades to come. Another policy originally signed off by the chancellor, now reversed as PM.

However, as welcome as that reprieve is, the Fast Stream is far from safe. It is an extraordinary scheme. I have genuine admiration and, I'm not afraid to say, love, for civil servants. They do an incredible job of public service in the most extraordinary circumstances. But there is a little bit of me that loves fast streamers in that special way you reserve for George Clooney or Salma Hayek when you talk about your favourite movie stars.

"I love fast streamers in that special way you reserve for George Clooney when you talk about your favourite movie stars"

Fast Stream selection is tough - only 2.3% of candidates are successful. There are still issues with diversity, particularly on socioeconomic background. As a result, it's an easy hit for some critics, but I do and always will love it. Let me tell you why.

Fast streamers are the embodiment of the public service ethos. They are clever, motivated individuals who have choices. While there are now other routes into the Fast Stream, many are gradu-

ates who, by way of educational achievement and ability, get through the rigorous selection process. They could have chosen much better-paid career paths. But they chose public service.

And their enthusiasm for public service, commitment and raw talent oozes out of every pore. All of which is why you have to work really, really hard to piss them off. Bet you can guess what's coming next.

They are indeed pissed off. These motivated, committed public servants on a career trajectory many, including this writer, could only dream of, are considering striking. This year's pay offer was rejected by 95% of members, with 86% saying they would consider industrial action.

Low pay blights the Fast Stream. That 2.3% success rate has meant that, quite frankly, the Cabinet Office has sat on its laurels for too long. Why raise pay levels when committed graduates keep applying for the scheme? Why address low pay when fast streamers will get a big pay jump when they move to Grade 7? These issues are not new, we've been raising them for years, but the current cost of living crisis has exacerbated these long-term structural problems.

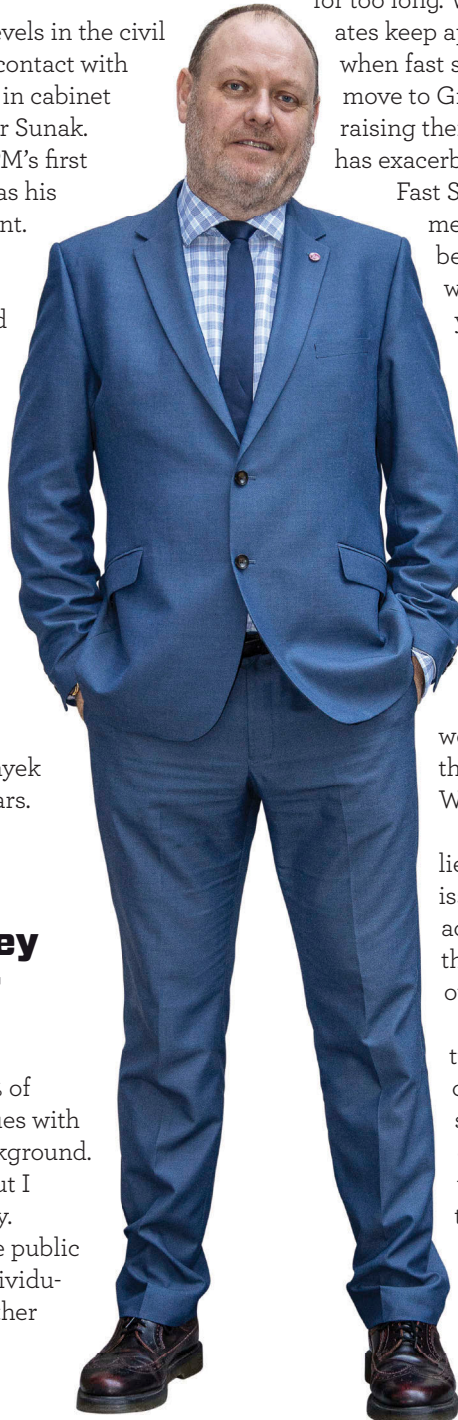
Fast Stream starting pay is lower than that of an HEO, meaning we've had members leave the scheme to become HEOs for a pay rise, even though they would be almost guaranteed Grade 7 within two years. Their current quality of life is so low, it outweighs the prospect of future promotion.

Stats are hard to come by, so we have relentlessly surveyed our ever-growing membership. Almost half rely on parental support to get by, and more than a third still live with their family, driving a coach and horses through any aspiration to address socioeconomic issues. Nearly 90% have considered leaving the scheme, and nearly half of those who chose the scheme over a better-paid alternative now regret that decision.

They are skipping meals, avoiding social gatherings, and trying to minimise travel to work. If they are currently placed out of London, they are terrified of how they'll cope if posted to Whitehall, where the cost of living is even higher.

They are telling us enough is enough, and I believe them. I know that public service pay is a tricky issue for government, I also know that our members across the board are struggling. In many ways, this dispute embodies what we are seeing across our public services, and the country as a whole.

It is, though, also a result of neglect. The structural problems have been there for years; the cost of living crisis has just brought them into sharp relief. It is a solvable dispute with a group of members who should never be in a position where they are considering strike action. Ministers may choose to dig in and fight, but ultimately it will be the country that loses if they do. ■



Dave Penman is the general secretary of the FDA union

RICHARD STIRLING AND JASMINE KENDALL

WHY WE NEED MORE HUMAN-CENTRED PUBLIC SERVICES

THE UK SCORES WELL ON A NEW INTERNATIONAL RANKING OF PEOPLE-FOCUSED PUBLIC SERVICES. BUT WE NEED TO GO FURTHER AND FASTER IN REDESIGNING SERVICES AMID EVER-GROWING PRESSURES

Few dispute that the public sector in the UK is facing phenomenal challenges. Pressure on services is growing. Budgets are ever tighter. There are political pressures on the horizon. What is needed is a way to improve the mechanism through which help is delivered.

Design thinking or, more specifically, “human-centred design” helps identify the most effective way of delivering a service. By putting yourself in the shoes of someone you are trying to help, you identify the whole problem that they are trying to solve, map out all the times they need to talk to someone or fill in a form, and spot the places where there are dead ends or mismatches between systems. Improving these things achieves the holy grail in public services: reducing costs while improving quality of service.

The good news is that the UK is fairly well set up to do this. We have recently benchmarked 30 countries on their capacity to harness human-centred design in the delivery of their public services. The UK ranks fifth in our Human-Centred Public Services Index.

The index measures the extent to which services are easy to use, easy to access, reliable and effectively deliver their promised outcomes.

We measured this through the combination of an international survey, which asked just under 10,000 people worldwide what they thought of public services, existing data from organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations, and research into the quality of information on each country’s public service webpages.

The UK’s score in the index reflects progress that has been made to date. This has largely been in digital transformation, building on reforms led by the Government Digital Service. However more mainstream parts of policy delivery, such as changes to support for farming led by Janet Hughes at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, are also gaining momentum.

There is a professional cadre of policy designers in the UK government corralled by Andrew Knight in the Cabinet Office. Most departments now have a dedicated in-house design team. We have so many of the build-

ing blocks to really start harvesting the benefits.

Quite how to do that can be seen from looking at the performance of other countries in the index. The three leading countries, the United Arab Emirates, Finland and Singapore, have each taken different approaches but what unites them is a clear, consistent, vision for the future implemented over the long term.

If you look at the story behind the numbers then there are some really strong messages for governments in how to overhaul our public services to be fit for the 21st century.

Countries that perform best have a strong vision for public service design. Setting out this vision from the centre of government, through standards, strategy and funding for design teams is crucial for any government to excel in designing services which work well for their users.

Countries also need to have a way to track performance in delivery and public experience across their whole portfolio of services, to inform their priorities and promote cross-departmental interest in creating services that meet people’s needs.

In addition to benchmarking, governments need to establish clear accountability for transformation in departments with agreed priorities for the year. This should be accompanied by clearly outlined actions, timelines and allocated responsibilities.

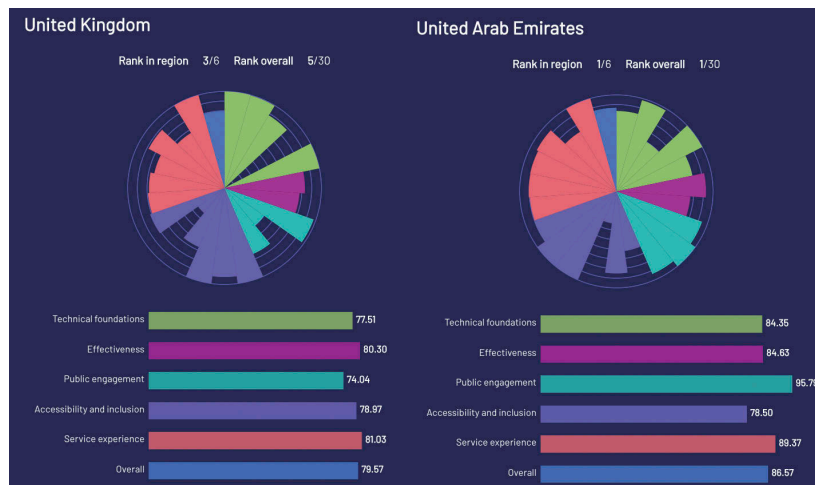
Public services should also be designed for and with the people who need them the most. Service teams should prioritise reaching out to people from marginalised communities to understand their needs and centre them in the design process. Co-design practices – whereby people with different lived experiences are brought into teams to help design the services them-

selves – can help governments to meaningfully engage with users to create inclusive and accessible services.

Finally, governments need to keep pace with innovation in the private sector and, where appropriate, work to harness the best technology to deliver service improvements.

This will be challenging in the current environment, but the way our services are currently delivered was not decreed by holy writ. We can and should improve them. It won’t happen overnight, change takes time, but like the Chinese proverb says: “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.” We cannot afford to sit on our hands and watch the erosion of our public services. ■

Richard Stirling is the co-founder and CEO of Oxford Insights. Jasmine Kendall is a consultant at Oxford Insights



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The culmination of many years' careful planning, Operation Bridges saw teams across and beyond government work together to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Here, CSW speaks to some of the civil servants who worked on the operation



WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER



Sian Joseph, DCMS

As deputy director for ceremonials, what sort of planning and preparations had you been involved in for Operation Bridges before it began?

The Bridges plans have been developed over many years, coordinated across government by the Cabinet Office. In the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, this involved working up detailed plans with our event-management company, testing these plans, resolving supply-chain issues, developing comms, securing funding and training our volunteers. We were lucky to have a brilliant team working on this in DCMS, not just in our ceremonials team but also in wider parts of the department, including comms, finance, HR, legal and commercial who have been vital in our planning.

When the operation began, what were some of the first steps you had to take?

As well as our team in DCMS, we brought together a huge team of volunteers to help us deliver the Bridges plans, including over 700 marshals. So, as well as activating our plans with our contractors and briefing our new secretary of state, one of our initial priorities was to get these volunteers up and running. The support we had from our volunteers was phenomenal and I would like to reiterate my thanks to them – we couldn't have done it without them.

Looking back, what was the most valuable part of the planning undertaken before the operation began?

Through such intense planning, as well as delivery of other events like the Platinum Jubilee, we had built up really strong relationships with colleagues in other government departments, and with wider partners, which were invaluable when it came to getting on with delivery. There was an amazing sense of team spirit and willingness to help each other.

What did you learn about yourself or the civil service through working on Bridges?

It sounds a strange thing to say, given that it was a very sad occasion, but I really enjoyed working on Bridges. There were times, though, when my resilience was tested and I was lucky to have brilliant colleagues to help keep me going. It was great to see the positive feedback about the civil service delivery and the MoD did a spectacular job of demonstrating the best of British pomp >>

“I have acutely felt the responsibility of assuring and supporting the delivery of the plan for a long time. My main feeling on activation was wanting to reflect the deep commitment of Her Majesty to public service”
Ellen Atkinson, Cabinet Office

and ceremony to the rest of the world. **What was the most memorable or moving moment of the operation?** I will never forget the final hour of the end of the lying-in-state queue when we worked so closely with parliament colleagues to time the last person walking through Westminster Hall with such precision. I felt a huge sense of relief and pride at the culmination of an enormous amount of effort from so many people on such a historic moment.

Ellen Atkinson, Cabinet Office

What was your role in Bridges and what did that involve, practically? I was the overall Gold for Bridges in the Cabinet Office, working for Sarah Healey as the senior responsible officer. This meant I was responsible for the Bridges Secretariat, which coordinated across all the partners involved in delivery, bringing together a common picture of the status of the operations across the UK and supporting the ministerial meeting which took place daily. In practice, this meant working with the ‘gold’ leads responsible for each part of the operation to provide assurance to ministers and resolve any issues. **Had you been involved in any similar operations before, or planning exercises for Bridges? If so, what were the most helpful elements of those experiences?** I have had responsibility for Bridges for the last six years and was involved as Gold and Silver in the Duke of Edinburgh’s funeral [in 2021]. Across the Bridges planning

Operation was activated? Did you have time at that point to reflect on the significance of what you were working on? The Bridges Secretariat put out an alert to all operational delivery partners in and outside government to stand up their plans once the very sad announcement was made about Her Majesty. It was critical we sent this in a timely way so we could have a smooth start to a no-notice activation of plans.

I have acutely felt the responsibility of assuring and supporting the delivery of the plan for a long time. My main feeling on activation was wanting, in everything we did, to reflect the deep commitment of Her Majesty to public service and deliver for His Majesty the King at a time of deep personal grief.

Did your knowledge or experience from your previous roles help during the operation? I was the director of constitution before becoming the director responsible for Bridges. My previous experience helped me understand the deep constitutional

“After almost 100 hours of a continuous live stream, pressing the button to close the queue tracker was quite a moment”

Andrew Simpson, DCMS

and historic significance of events. It made certain events like the breaking of the Wand of Office and the returning of the Crown, Sceptre and Orb particularly poignant.

What was the most challenging part of the work, either operationally or personally? The responsibility of the role, because of the importance to the Royal Family, internationally, nationally and personally of delivering a fitting tribute to Her Majesty.

And what helped you most to tackle those challenges? I had an incredible group of people to work with, and for, from the civil service, royal household, ministers, other government departments, parliament and partner organisations across the UK. We have always called it a “Bridges Community” and it really is. Something this big in scale and scope cannot be delivered without absolutely excellent people across the UK working together.

What was the most memorable or moving moment of the operation? There are so many, but I think looking down on Parliament Square as the national minute of silence happened the night before the funeral. I remember seeing the crowds and workers bowing their heads outside

the window and the images on the television from around the UK. It was so moving and showed the deep love and esteem the public held Her Majesty in.

Faye Jackson, DCMS

What was your role in Bridges and what did that involve, practically? I was the press lead for Bridges within DCMS and this involved working closely with colleagues across our press, digital, internal communications and policy teams. I worked on Bridges for over five years, however preparations have been going on for much longer. During activation I helped to stand up a DCMS communications team to deal with the huge influx of media enquiries. We were also responsible for proactive comms around flags, silences, processions and lying-in-state. This meant working closely with colleagues across DCMS, wider government and the Palace to ensure all our proactive and reactive communications were aligned and easy for

the public to understand, to help them pay their respects.

In what ways were the comms around Bridges similar to other large ceremonial projects you’ve worked on, and in what

ways was it different? I’ve managed the media at a number of major government events including the Platinum Jubilee, Remembrance Sunday, the First World War centenary and 75th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day, which gave us a solid foundation to build upon for how to manage large scale national events. I’m so proud of how people across all grades and disciplines joined together to provide the best possible service to the public.

What made this event different to others I’ve worked on, though, was the sheer scale of public and media interest and the appetite for information. Working in government means you’re used to the media scrutinising each announcement, which they did do for Bridges, but we also used our relationships built over years of working with broadcasters to use them as an extension of our public information campaign. For example, the *BBC* and *Sky News* both broadcast our YouTube queue tracker live and we were in constant contact with them to issue updates regarding the queue’s length, estimated waiting times and when it would close.

What did you learn about the civil service through this work? I would say the greatest lesson I learnt about the civil service while working on Bridges was the ability of every individual to seamlessly move from their day job into activation.



community we have worked together to prepare to deliver a fitting tribute to Her Majesty, including testing and exercising the plans. We have learned and implemented lessons from every exercise and other big events like the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and [Platinum]Jubilee. **What were some of your first tasks as the**

Every person who was called upon to help did so happily, giving up their evenings and weekends and working around the clock to ensure everything ran smoothly.

Have you taken any lessons or reflections from Bridges back to your “day job”?

I would say: firstly, always be flexible. Despite having all our comms material prepped years in advance, the sheer appetite for information and stories meant we issued more proactive communications than initially expected. Without the tenacity and flexibility of the DCMS comms team, we wouldn't have been able to adapt our plans to suit the needs of the media and public.

Most importantly, Bridges reminded me how talented and dedicated those working in the civil service are, particularly the DCMS comms team, which went above and beyond throughout.

What was the most memorable or moving moment of the Operation? There were two moving moments for me. Firstly, standing at the window of 100 Parliament Street and watching the Queen's coffin being taken down Whitehall to the Palace of Westminster, and then seeing the pictures of the lying-in-state in the papers the next day. I'd written and rewritten the lying-in-state press release a number of times over the last five years but nothing I could have written could do justice to the atmosphere and mood within the Palace of Westminster with the public filing past in silence.

The other was meeting some of the first people to go through the lying-in-state, who we looked after as they were doing media interviews. They had queued through the night to pay their respects and I will never forget how overcome with emotion they were and how thankful they were to those who had made that moment possible. It reminded me that all of the work and the hours all of the civil service had put into Bridges was worth it and that it meant so much to so many people from Britain and around the world.

Andrew Simpson, DCMS

What was your role in Bridges? As head of digital communication, my role was, in a nutshell, using online channels to ensure the public knew what the mourning and funeral arrangements were, for the elements DCMS managed (flags, silences, elements of the processions and of course the lying-in-state). This meant making sure there was clear public-facing guidance and products that were responsive and up-to-the-minute across the week, to help the public mourn and know how they could take part (both in person and remotely).

Did your role change over the course of the operation? It didn't change as such because I knew what the rhythm of the week was in advance thanks to years of planning, but the pressure certainly ramped up when the lying-in-state opened. We had to be ready to manage what would be an unprecedented public event to make sure as many people as possible knew the plans and could attend or observe in a respectful way.

To do this we built and launched a live queue tracker (which informally became known as “QueueTube”) that displayed the end of the queue in real time, with estimated queuing times, the nearest landmark, What Three Words location and even the weather! All to help people plan their attendance and know what to expect. This took on a life of its own, with nearly 10 million views across the week.

What was the most challenging part of the work, either operationally or personally? The most challenging part of our work was maintaining the tracker, a tool which had never been delivered before on this scale. Once it was live there was no going back, so we had to be iterative and develop it based on user feedback in the background while it was live.

Having good contacts with YouTube (for technical support) and the media (to ensure they always had the latest link and would feature it on their hourly national news bulletins) really helped and meant it provided a genuine service to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. We also committed ourselves to running the tracker 24/7, so all audiences were served, no matter what time they queued up, and providing around-the-clock support was a real team effort.

How important was the support of your team and other departments in meeting that challenge? Put simply, the queue tracker and our accompanying social media products could not have been delivered without the dedication of our small team, who worked around the clock for 10 days to make sure we could deliver a service on this scale. We'd also worked on the Platinum Jubilee and Commonwealth Games earlier in the year, so we were well placed to be ready to deliver innovative event comms at speed and under pressure.

The real heroes, though, were the community of amazing cross-Whitehall digital and comms volunteers, who took it in turns to stand at the back of the queue and share

real-time location data. Without them the tracker wouldn't have been possible.

Have you taken any lessons or reflections from Bridges back to your “day job”? Firstly, don't be afraid to challenge ourselves and go beyond what even the experts say is possible. Google, for example, had been looking at mapping



solutions for some time, but our queue solution pushed the envelope further.

Secondly, always think about how best we can tailor our products for online media outlets as well as social media and have a Plan B (and Plan C) in place. Our live-streaming queue tracker was actually three products brought into a single package (mapping, data-driven graphical overlays and live streaming via YouTube). We've used a similar approach for live streaming the Remembrance Sunday service each year from the Cenotaph in London and this year we'll be making this an even more immersive experience, thanks to what we've learned from QueueTube.

What was the most memorable or moving moment, for you? After almost 100 hours of continuous live stream, pressing the button to close the queue tracker was quite a moment. The whole team was so proud to have played a part in delivering the tracker and all our social media content, which was our most engaged-with ever. Knowing we'd played a part in helping the public pay their respects for the monarch's passing is something that will stay with us for the rest of our careers. ■

Full versions of these interviews, plus more from other departments, are available at bit.ly/3EiqtmY or using the QR code



Anita Friend leads the Defence and Security Accelerator, which finds and funds innovation to serve national security. She tells **Beckie Smith** about making “defendable” decisions, trusting her staff, and how managing crises has framed her approach to work

THE FAST AND THE CURIOUS

Systemic change in the civil service can be grindingly slow, but Anita Friend has seen what it can do at the sharp end of things. She saw it when she was working on the government’s response to the Novichok crisis in 2018, the swine flu outbreak in 2009, and the London riots.

The urgency needed to respond to

a crisis – whether a nerve-agent poisoning or the emergence of a new disease – brings about a “brutal prioritisation and efficiency”, says the head of the Defence and Security Accelerator. “You only do the things that you know are going to matter. It forces you to focus on the things that are going to make the most difference because you don’t have the bandwidth or time to

do the ‘nice to haves’ around the edges.

“Ministers need to make decisions really quickly, and civil servants need to be able to quickly and efficiently coordinate the best available advice across a wide range of departments.”

Friend’s decade-long civil service career is a rundown of high-pressure and high-stakes roles that includes a stint as head of

risk assessment for the Cabinet Office and – immediately before her current job – a six-year stretch at the Home Office, where she oversaw a team responsible for reducing the risk of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive attacks on UK soil.

Her current post as head of DASA seems, at first glance, more pedestrian. But she says there was a running theme that drew her to the Ministry of Defence body.

“I’m not going to lie; the adrenaline of some of those [previous] roles was quite exciting, as was being at the forefront of some of that decision-making,” she says. But the main attraction was having a sense of purpose at work, and a mission she cared about. All her jobs, she notes, have been national security-oriented.

“They’ve all centred around: ‘how do we keep people safe and how do we protect values?’ And they’ve always centred around trying to harness the very best expertise, be that from inside or outside government.”

It’s that drive that led her to DASA. The Accelerator finds and funds innovative technologies to help solve problems brought to it by its customers – government departments and other public-sector bodies. It does this through funding calls, where

it invites companies to put forward bids for funding to develop products and services, and by engaging with businesses around the country. All the innovations aim to strengthen national security in some way.

Friend describes DASA’s model as “deliberately customer demand-led”. Customers approach DASA with a request – and, crucially, funding – and are involved throughout the decision-making process “because, ultimately, they have the expertise on what can make a difference in their specialist area”.

“It’s quite a good way of ensuring that the things we focus on are things that someone in the national-security system deeply cares about,” Friend says. While the funding requirement “really sharpens the thinking on ‘is this a priority, is it something that we actually need?’ it also means that the customer has skin in the game,” she adds.

When DASA puts out a funding call, businesses put their proposals forward and go through a rigorous bidding process where they are assessed according to three core criteria. As well as being desirable, they must also be technically feasible and practically viable. “The science has to stack up,” Friend says. “We want to take

risks, but we don’t want to be investing in things that have absolutely no chance”.

But, she stresses, it’s not all about the technology. “The technology being ready and fit for purpose – it’s pretty obvious that you need that, although it’s often underestimated how difficult that can be. The other bit is knowing how you’re actually going to use it. The technology on its own is valueless unless we know how we are going to use that technology in a way that will be valuable. And then, practically, how do we turn that into reality?” That could entail regulation changes or securing accreditation, for example.

The viability criteria also considers commercial promise. “Ultimately, government wants innovation to be cost effective; we don’t want to be having to throw massive chunks of money at this,” Friend says. DASA wants the projects it invests in to be profitable for the companies creating them, which retain their intellectual-property rights and can funnel those profits into scaling up and securing investors. “Once you start to get those external investments, it’s not all in government’s hands to scale up. You’re doing it in genuine partnership with the private sector.”

The customer – which ultimately uses the product or service – has the final say on which bids to fund and how much risk to take. Friend describes DASA as a “facilitator and enabler”, bringing in experts to weigh in on risks and potential benefits for national security. The Accelerator has a pool of nearly 900 assessors from the MoD’s Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and across the government’s science network that it can call on to help with those judgements.

“It’s important for us that the decisions about what we invest in are defensible and robust,” Friend says. “So it isn’t me going, ‘I think this might be useful’... It is the very best experts from across the government network.”

Friend joined DASA in September 2019. A few months later, DASA’s capacity to source and support innovation at speed was tested and its leader’s crisis-management credentials really began to shine. The Accelerator’s focus quickly turned to addressing pandemic-specific issues. “Because, funnily enough, that was a big priority at the time,” Friend says.

“We had to work much faster than we had before. You couldn’t wait several years for us to get this capability through; it was needed now. So we had to really focus our attention on the innovation where we could have rapid impact. We were looking at



Anita Friend

“There’s a perception barrier, if we’re being honest. There are quite a lot of negative perceptions about working with defence and security. It’s not all about weapons”

technology that didn't require a significant amount of development before being used in practice, in the emergency," she says.

One project DASA funded in response to the Covid pandemic aimed to speed up the process of sanitising ambulances, to cut the turnaround time between call-outs. "It's critically important that they are clean, because you don't want to spread infection. But the quicker you can do it, the more lives you can save," Friend explains.

The Accelerator launched a funding call and more than 200 proposals for technical solutions piled in within a week. DSTL scientists tested 12 methods, which in some cases cut cleaning time from an hour to 10 minutes. The project was completed within just 10 days and implemented by the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust, having a "real-life impact" on the number of lives saved.

The ambulance example illustrates the scope of DASA's work. "Our mandate covers national security writ large," Friend says. "So although we sit within the Ministry of Defence, it is defined as innovation for the benefit of all national security – and there are a range of departments across that."

"Part of our challenge is helping private-sector companies and academia understand the breadth of what we worry about when it comes to national security," she adds.

While most companies have "a pretty good understanding of the obvious bits", there are a number of areas they might not think about, Friend says. "It's only when we can clearly articulate what we want and need in a way that can be understood by organisations that don't typically work with national security and don't typically work with government that we can really fully harness the potential of what's out there.

"That's the first hurdle. If you can't understand what it is that we want... you're unlikely to make the leap of 'that idea that I'm developing is really relevant for national security and can make a really big difference'."

Another project DASA funded recently was to develop a device created by a small company called Glic to autonomously hook up trailers to vehicles. "That has been developed for the commercial market, but it has huge utility for the military because there's been a really big drive for automation of military platforms. Being able to have a trailer that can tow equipment on the back of it that can be [connected] automatically is game changing," Friend says.

DASA funded further development of

the civilian technology so it can be used by the army, including testing to make sure it would work in a military environment. "It's always key that these things actually work in situ, rather than in abstract," Friend notes.

DASA uses a network of "innovation partners" across the UK to tap into local business and academic networks to expand its reach and build businesses' understanding of national security. Friend says it can be difficult to reach suppliers who have not worked in defence and security before, and are therefore "at a disadvantage from the very start".

"Part of what DASA is trying to do, along with others, is to level that playing field: to provide the support, advice and knowledge networks that are needed to give those suppliers a more equal chance of getting their ideas through on merit," she says. The Accelerator can support smaller players to build their capacity to make ideas commercially viable and develop them at the pace and scale needed in the public sector.

"Assumed knowledge" can create difficulties, too, when talking to companies that don't have the familiarity and understanding that longtime defence suppliers have built up of national secu-

ry operations and priorities. "We'll talk about capabilities that make a lot of sense within the internal community... without really [setting out clearly] what we are actually trying to achieve," Friend says.

Another challenge when working with potential suppliers, she adds, is overcoming defence's image problem. "There's a perception barrier, if we're being honest. We know that there are quite a lot of negative perceptions about working with defence and security. And we need to be conscious of that and need to avoid reinforcing those stereotypes.

"Defence is not all about weapons, and the more 'spiky end' – how it can often be perceived. These are necessary capabilities that are required in order to protect people and to protect our values that people have fought for over the years. And similarly, with national security, at the heart of a lot of those capabilities is that balance between keeping people safe and preserving people's personal freedoms."

The difficulty, Friend says, is in "making sure that those nuances come out in our communication so that we don't end

up inadvertently reinforcing those negative perceptions that defence is all about war and killing people and weapons and that kind of thing; and that security is all about a kind of 'Big Brother' state and monitoring people. That isn't what we're trying to do. And I think we just need to make that a lot clearer in our narrative – because that can be quite a big barrier to people engaging in the first place."

Just like for the rest of the civil service, the pandemic changed not just the Accelerator's mission but also its ways of working. DASA's staff are already spread across the country, but Friend says the pivot to full remote working showed "more can be done remotely than perhaps we had thought".

"There were some real negative sides to that – there have been conversations at length about the loneliness, the isolation and the challenges that it poses. But there's also some real positives, because it provides opportunities for people to carve out that work-life balance in some circumstances."

For DASA, the pandemic "reinforced our thinking on all-inclusive, flexible working... that empowerment, choice and trust for

employees to choose where they work, based on business needs but also based on their personal needs. They can balance the two."

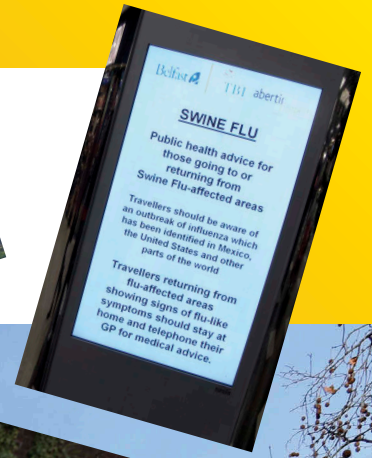
She applies that

thinking to her own career beyond the pandemic – taking breaks for "thinking and reflecting" away from meetings and emails to make more sense of her working week. "It's also about managing energy – I'm a natural introvert; public engagement is not something that comes naturally to me. I know I need to balance my time – I need those face-to-face interactions to do my job, and big public-speaking conferences are absolutely crucial to what we do. But I need to balance that with time on my own, because that's when I get my energy."

Much of her approach to work has been informed by her previous jobs. "Crisis management, as you'd expect, is a really high-pressure environment where everything is needed yesterday. That experience has really taught me a lot about resilience... that it's doable to work really long hours over a short period of time – and a lot of people do, because people really want to bring the best to the job – but it isn't sustainable.

"For the longer crises that I was working on, you could really see the impact that it had on people... Inevitably, it results in burnout. It results in people being a bit

"Working in crisis management has taught me a lot about resilience, and that working really long hours over a short period of time is doable, but it isn't sustainable. It results in burnout"



sharper with each other than they might have been otherwise because it doesn't bring out your best self. You're more likely to do things in a way that you wouldn't do when you're not under pressure."

She is mindful of how her approach as a leader "sets the tone" for her team. "It's that recognition that if you work long hours, your team are probably going to work long hours too. If you want a culture

where that isn't expected, you've got to lead by example - you've got to say, 'You know what, today I'm going to go see my kids because there's something on at school.'

"For me it was almost a reframing of how I thought: it's about how I make best use of the time that is available, as opposed to 'how do I get through this massive long to-do list?'"

Work-life balance, wellbeing and job

performance, Friend says, "are all connected". She explains: "It's really important that we are always striving to maintain that happy, engaged feeling at work. It's also about that empowerment and trust of our people - trusting them to make smart, informed decisions about how best to use their time and where best to spend their time in a way that works best for DASA but also works best for them. Ultimately, it's a win-win." ■



Collaborations between Public and Private organisations that work

Tim Sheppard and **Shayma Ali** from IQVIA, a human data science company, on building on the learnings from collaborations that emerged during the pandemic to support public health challenges today and in the future

Solving the biggest health and social care challenges in the UK today—and being prepared to respond quickly to crises in the future—is a major task for government, but public sector organisations are not alone in this mission. *Civil Service World* sat down with Tim Sheppard, IQVIA's SVP & General Manager for Northern Europe, and Shayma Ali, Senior Director, Public Sector Solutions, to discuss the problem-solving capabilities of public and private approaches that emerged in the pandemic and how collaboration across various public sector bodies, academics, and private companies with key skills can be the key moving forward.

IQVIA, a global provider of advanced analytics, technology solutions, and clinical research services to the life sciences industry, employs 82,000 people globally, including more than 6,000 in the UK. IQVIA is the third largest employer in the life sciences sector, with offices across the country.

Ali explained how the company has branched out into the public sector in recent years: "The population health surveillance service we delivered during the pandemic to the UK government bolstered our belief that we can support transformation across departments in the provision of pandemic resilience and digital health. We have learnt a lot from the pandemic in these areas, and we want to help other departments to learn from their successes, too."

Ali said IQVIA's workforce of data scientists, epidemiologists, healthcare practitioners and analysts can be valuable to public sector bodies. She noted that IQVIA has worked on several vaccines' clinical trials and that Sir Patrick Vallance recognised its work on the Covid-19 Infection Survey (CIS), as a 'landmark study' of a population health surveillance programme.

Sheppard explained how CIS became an exemplar of public-private



collaboration. “Starting in March 2020, the government urgently needed to understand the number of citizens infected—in near real-time—to monitor the spread of the infection, and it wanted to canvas 179,000 households every two weeks across the country. As Covid vaccines were created, the survey was also able to monitor their response and their impact on new variants in 2021.

“A project of this scale would have been impossible without the collaboration between numerous government departments. Together, the team led by Helena Jordan, Senior Director of Operations, provided subject matter expertise, technology capabilities, human resources, and the nationwide reach the survey needed, not only at pace but at unprecedented scale.”

The expertise doesn't stop there. IQVIA also provides DHSC with Covid-19 Medicines Supply Chain Analytics, and supports life sciences, pharmaceutical industry and government departments with briefings and detailed insights into supply and demand for medicines, clinical research, and policy responses. “This cross-industry collaboration and insight sharing are valuable to all,” said Ali.

Sheppard concurred and noted insights and intelligence are essential to tackle health and social care challenges. “There is a lot of data available to the public system and different government bodies, but not everyone knows what to do with it, as the civil service survey we conducted with Dods Research reveals,” he said.

CSW: What did you want to find out with the survey?

TS: We wanted to understand the current and future public health priorities across government and asked Dods Research to survey 250 civil servants early this year.

SA: We also wanted to identify civil servants’ data confidence and access to healthcare data to explore how departments can unlock its value and enable tech-led transformation to improve public health outcomes.

CSW: What are the key findings?

SA: The survey highlighted the importance of real-time, good-quality data and uncovered opportunities for public health initiatives. For example, although 40% of respondents are quite confident when using real-world healthcare data to improve outcomes, 16% recognised they need greater support on data and intelligence.

CSW: Where does collaboration fit moving forward?

TS: The survey shows that helping civil servants understand how to use these broad data sets to answer specific public health questions, and helping them create solutions to the challenges, is an opportunity for collaboration. Having the data insights to support interventions on some of these public health issues can help drive productivity up, assisting the nation in returning to economic growth very quickly. We often find data assets or initiatives in one organisation may be unknown to another, where they could be used for public benefit.

CSW: Why are these partnerships important?

SA: Partnerships around common objectives are a benefit to tackling issues, as we saw through the pandemic. The health and well-being of staff within government, improving local population health outcomes, health inequalities, and planning for future pandemics and the threats posed by antimicrobial resistance can also benefit from partnerships. Together we can work on healthcare issues that may not all sit within one department but others with a vast population, such as the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Justice, and DWP.

TS: The world is facing several health challenges, and these are not just pandemics, the backlog the NHS is facing, obesity and cardiovascular disease, mental health and age-related neurodegenerative diseases, not to mention inequalities in access to treatments, as highlighted in the NHS's Core20PLUS5, are all challenges that need collaboration with the private sector to bring subject matter expertise and capacities to the table.



CSW: What capabilities can be strengthened with more collaboration between organisations?

SA: We aim to share experience and problem-solving capabilities. We can combine the knowledge and insights of many diverse approaches to tackle population health challenges. For example, bringing together the massive amounts of publicly available data in the UK, including proprietary data assets of government departments and companies underpinned

by appropriate governance, can be used to create solutions to help inform decision-making and support better outcomes for departments looking to address topics such as inequalities, pandemic preparedness, and economic recovery.

TS: Civil servants named *‘Health inequalities and well-being solutions’* as their top current priority for improving public and/or employee health in the Dods research. As the NHS and other government departments endeavour to identify health inequalities and develop action plans to reduce disparities, real-world data plays a pivotal role in identifying and delivering effective solutions.

Contact Shayma.Ali@iqvia.com or visit www.iqvia.co.uk for more information

As new ministers and advisers settle into their roles, CSW reproduces this comment piece from **Sam Freedman**, a former civil service policy adviser to Michael Gove at the Department for Education from 2010-2013

CONFESSIONS OF A FORMER GOVERNMENT ADVISER



In the decade that has passed since I stopped being a government adviser, I've realised, with increasing horror, just how many traps I fell into. This was largely due to my lack of experience - I was 28 in 2010 and had had a few researcher jobs. What the hell did I know? But also at the time, I hadn't thought much about my own decision making or psychology. So this is a retrospective exploration of what I did wrong. I hope that people who are now doing similar jobs can learn from my mistakes. I've divided my reflections into cognitive errors - misplaced biases or assumptions that led me astray - and practical errors, the things I'd do differently if I ever did the job again.



Cognitive errors

Chesterton's fence

Governments always look incompetent from the outside. The machinery is clunky and dysfunctional for all the reasons Dominic Cummings and others have pointed out. If you're working for the opposition it's easy to let this drift into confirmation bias. All these stories about the government messing up *must* mean that everything they're doing is wrong and all of our ideas would be better. As a team, in 2010, we had a strong belief that the Department for Education (DfE or DCSF as it was then) had gone way off course and Ed Balls had wrought a bureaucratic mess upon the sensible Blairite reform agenda.

It was easy to feed this confirmation bias – plenty of schools were frustrated with, for instance, the Building Schools for the Future programme, under which a complex process had been developed to replace the secondary school estate. Many were also irritated by the Every Child Matters agenda under which local authorities were given new powers to drive the integration of children's services. For lots of headteachers this felt like a departure from their educational purpose and time wasted in lengthy meetings.

This was all grist to our mill and gave us the confidence to take a wrecking ball to these and other programmes the moment we got through the door. But we forgot to ask G. K. Chesterton's famous question:

"There exists in such a case a certain institution or law; let us say, for the sake of simplicity, a fence or gate erected across a road. The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to it and says, 'I don't see the use of this; let us clear it away.' To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer: 'If you don't see the use of it, I certainly won't let you clear it away. Go away and think. Then, when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it.'"

We cleared many things away without asking what the use of them was. With BSF the mistake was immediately apparent. Cancelling the project led to a firestorm of criticism and a poor attempt to replace it.

I realised quickly that we should have slowed the construction schedule down, so we could make the savings the Treasury required, and simplified things, without scrapping the whole programme.

It took me longer to realise we'd made a similar mistake with Every Child Matters. Again, it wasn't working – but integration of services does matter. Throwing it all away without thinking about what needed saving has meant that years later a new approach

is being developed piecemeal (family hubs, the social care review, etc) with even less local authority capacity left to enact it.

Key lesson: don't just focus on what's going wrong, even if that fits your biases about the people you're hoping to replace. Ask the point of the policy and talk to the people who think it's a good idea.

Optimism bias and cognitive dissonance

I was fascinated to find, when I saw the DfE budgets, that there's a line for "optimism bias" around construction projects. Essentially the expected completion date for most new school buildings turns out to be wrong, which budgets account for (or at least they did when I was there).

It turned out the same applied to many of our policies. In politics the cost of admitting you're wrong is unhelpfully high. Politicians can survive an occasional U-turn, but collecting them makes your chances of advancement limited. As an adviser you want to make things work for your ministers so it's tempting to dismiss signs that things might not be going to plan. Which might be because the idea wasn't that good in the first place, or because circumstances changed.

A good example is the expansion of the academies programme. We wanted to move quickly because, at that time, no one thought the coalition would last five years. That meant encouraging as many schools as possible to leave their local authority and "academise" immediately, with weaker schools joining trusts run by stronger ones. There were signs early on that we'd overestimated the ability of highly rated schools to absorb additional schools into their academy trusts, with many of them growing unsustainably. But we wanted the success story that big numbers seemed to show. Ministers didn't want to

"Not having the difficult conversation now means having a worse one later, or being left with regrets"



hear about slowing things down – quite the opposite. So I tried to ignore my doubts and pretend to myself it was a few badly run trusts and not a systemic issue. Eventually it became so obvious that more process and regulation was put in place. But I should have acknowledged the problem earlier.

Key lesson: do not ignore the small voice in the back of your mind, however inconvenient – embrace the doubts and use them as a basis to explore the concern and see if the problem is a real one.

Capital hoarding and conflict avoidance

When I left I was pretty disillusioned. I no longer believed in some of the policies being pursued and I disliked the ap-

proach being taken in the media. But I don't think I ever told Michael Gove that, or any of the other ministers or advisers.

I was too selective in the battles I picked. I should have learnt from Cummings, who never had any compunction about raising his concerns loudly and regularly. Like most people, I'm naturally conflict-averse and prefer to work collaboratively, but that meant I passively let arguments go past when I knew I shouldn't have. I told myself it was to preserve my capital with colleagues for more important battles; that it wasn't my job to raise concerns about the way we disparaged the sector in the media; and that if I was too difficult I'd get shut out of the decision-making process.

But if I'd been honest with myself, it was because I didn't want to have the fight.

I suspect that unless one is naturally Cummings-like (and few of us are) that this is something that can only be learnt through experience. I'm still conflict-averse but now I know that not having the difficult conversation now means having a worse one later, or being left with regrets. Age also gives some authority, which makes it easier to raise concerns.

Key lesson: have the difficult conversation, speak up. If you lose the argument at least you know you tried. If you end up getting punished for raising honest concerns then it's probably not the right job for you anyway.

Practical errors

Prioritisation

My first piece of advice to any new adviser is “prioritise”. I was terrible at it. I have a poor attention span and am interested in almost everything, so having access to all meetings in ministers' diaries and every submission that was in their red boxes was too tempting. I tried to read everything; go to every meeting; speak to everyone who wanted to talk to me. I got drawn into firefighting every piece of negative press, and the petty battles spads had with various journalists. As a result, I didn't give enough time to anything. I often completely lost track of policies I'd worked on in their early stages and then realised there was a problem too late in the process.

For instance, I was very keen on a policy whereby we'd recruit teachers through regional gateways and then place them at schools for training, much like Teach First does but on a national basis. But somewhere along the way, this became “Schools Direct”, through which schools had to recruit trainees individually. Forcing schools to do all the recruitment was clearly a bad idea but I didn't notice the change happening because I was too distracted.

The most effective advisers I've seen since I left have all prioritised a few things and largely ignored the chaos around them. I'd like to believe if I did it again I'd do this.

Ignoring the middle

Many of the meetings I had were with (dread word) “stakeholders”. These people, from outside government, either loved what we were doing – or pretended to – or hated it and wanted to let off steam.

Everyone I spoke to had strong opinions about our policies.

Of course, most people working in education, like most people in the country, spend little time thinking about politics and policies, and what they are worried about is often different to that which occupies the professional wonk world.

I didn't spend enough time speaking to these people – almost no one in Whitehall does – because they weren't asking for time in my diary. I joined some ministerial visits to schools, but they are hopeless because everyone is on their best behaviour, and there's no time to talk to anyone. I had a regular group of Teach First teachers to talk to, but they were atypical too. I should have done more low-key visits to schools and talked to more normal heads and teachers. Had I done so, I probably would have picked up on things like the growing mental-health challenge, which has now become a full-blown crisis. And I would have realised quicker how compliant most people in education are, and the dangers of setting metrics that you think are nudges but are interpreted as rigid targets.

Stopping writing

Being so busy and bombarded with official submissions, papers and proposals, I spent all my time commenting on other peoples' work, often in person, because I

didn't want to stop to write it down. But, as I've realised too late in life, I think things through by writing them out. The less I wrote, the less I thought, and the less I forced myself to properly work through arguments. Somewhat remarkably, I tweeted from an unlocked account the entire time I was in the DfE – I think I'm the only adviser before or since to do that – and I did have some long debates about policy which changed my mind. That should have made me realise I needed to write long form a lot more than I did. »



What I did right

As you can tell from the above, I have a lot of regrets about my time in government. I was naïve, inexperienced, flying blind. I worked on policies that now make me wince. But there are some things I'm proud of – helping set up the Education Endowment Foundation, which has significantly increased the evidence we have about educational interventions; the design of the pupil premium, even if we never had the money to fulfil the policy intentions; the National Reference Test, which gives us the first

proper year-to-year measure of secondary-school standards over time; defending most of the schools budget and getting a better settlement than any department bar Health.

I also think I was more open minded and open to challenge than most advisers, probably because I wasn't attached to any party. Ultimately that led to me becoming disillusioned, as my mind was changed on various policies, but along the way I think I stopped some bad things happening that a more tribally-oriented person

would have encouraged. I'm also good at absorbing a lot of detail quickly and so was probably better than most at supporting the civil service to explain complex and fiddly issues, like school funding reform, to ministers and other advisers. I'm glad I had the experience but I wish I'd done it later in my career. It would be generally good if advisers – including spads – were selected more for experience and knowledge and less for loyalty or, as was the case for me, being in the right place at the right time.

Responses to *Confessions of a former government adviser*

After publishing the above article on my Substack I received so many interesting responses. Three of them are reproduced here, with more available online.

Karim Palant was an adviser to Ed Balls during the 2010-2015 Parliament. From the May 2010 election until January 2011 Balls was the shadow secretary of state for education, and so Karim was effectively shadowing me. Here is what he tweeted in response to my article:

“This is a fascinating piece. As it happens I was an opposition adviser for education for a lot of the big moments that Sam mentions here – the academies bill/rushed roll out. The scrapping of BSF and the roll back of integration of children’s services. Tempting as it is to shout ‘we told you so’ that would both not be in the spirit of the piece and would also miss the point. There clearly were things that could be improved in all of those areas. And the question is

“What’s remarkable – in retrospect – is how keen to please most of the civil servants we worked with were”

why weren’t the govt doing them pre-2010, and how do we find a way – on behalf of taxpayers and users of services – to get the best of both worlds. How do we avoid both the pitfalls: ignoring valid criticism whether from media, experts, frontline or opposition? But also throwing out the baby with the bath-

water with new ministers?

“My very specific experience of the academies bill and BSF cancellation was that essentially the govt could just do what it wanted by diktat. They had a majority. They passed the academies bill in days with barely any scrutiny, (basically me and Vernon Coaker [the shadow schools minister at the time, effectively Balls’ deputy] with a laptop). I would turn up to debate clause after clause with some speed typed notes... and it felt like at each new clause there was a new set of civil servants with new notes supporting ministers. But nothing mattered anyway – they had the votes and no need to listen. Vernon (and Ian Wright) had been ministers in the department mere weeks before. They knew how the machinery worked. They knew what did and didn’t work well. But the system

incentivised us to blindly oppose and ministers and advisers to shut their ears with no check or balance. As Sam says, working out why your predecessors did what they did and what their goals were would be hugely helpful. But it’s never going to happen unless the system makes you. That’s what people



mean when they bemoan the power of the executive in the UK. It’s not just geekery.”

I think this is a critical point. The ur-problem of the British political system is an overmighty executive – caused by a combination of a majoritarian electoral system, an executive that sits in and controls the main legislature, and a very weak second chamber. As long as you have a majority and can control your own MPs, you can do more or less anything.

Had we had a system that forced me to work with Karim, and my boss with his, I suspect we’d have found some sensible ways forward that combined the best of both our plans. There would, of course, be a trade-off here in making it harder for



the executive to move quickly, but this feels a preferable negative to the status quo where there are few checks on bad government. In the absence of constitutional reform, which doesn't seem likely to happen soon, we could at least institute a formal transition process between political teams when governments change. This happens with the incoming government and civil servants at the moment, but not the previous governing party.

Civil partnership

Gareth Conyard (a former DfE civil servant) asked on Twitter: *“Do you have any reflections on your engagement with civil servants? Where were the positive interactions? And the negative? And what made the difference?”*

What's remarkable – in retrospect – is how keen to please most of the civil servants we worked with were. There's something of a myth (that governments find it useful to maintain) that officials spend all their time trying to frustrate the elected government. That wasn't how it felt at all. The department helped us drive through the Academies Act in record time and moved rapidly on numerous other policies, despite the personal concerns they will have had. The only difficulties were caused by a few people leaking to the press and the

opposition, which was really counterproductive as it stopped us from being open about policies within the department.

If anything, officials didn't push back enough – though I appreciate why that didn't happen. Certainly the presence of Dominic Cummings made it even harder than normal to do so as most officials were understandably scared of him. The most effective civil servants I saw were the ones able to get him to change his mind by standing up to him and finding counter-arguments he saw as compelling. Once he respects you he will listen to advice and a few managed to have a relationship with him.

But it's not reasonable to expect that officials should be able to deal with such tricky people. Instead there are some more systemic changes that could be made to enable better advice to new governments. David Russell, another ex-DfE civil servant with whom I worked, commented:

“One of the maddest conventions in the civil service is that you don't talk to ministers about advice given to previous governments. By the time I was a director (and knew I didn't want to go further up) I decided just to ignore this. I explained as fully as I could to ministers why the policies were as they were and why the previous ministers had taken the decisions they had. Otherwise the assumption just runs that the previous lot

were either wicked or incompetent. Neither is ever true. The civil service says it does this to protect the government's “decision-making space” (i.e. you know your officials won't blab to the other lot in future) but I think it's actually a way of the CS holding power to themselves, as then only officials really know why things are as they are.”

I agree with this. I once managed to get hold of some advice written for the previous government via an ex-Labour minister but it's daft that I had to go round the houses like that. You would probably need to allow ministers to mark particularly contentious or politically sensitive advice as unavailable to their successors. On a more techie point, I'd also significantly strengthen ministers' private offices via the appointment of merit-based experts. Having more policy experts working regularly across different policy issues with ministers would enable better coordination between the core civil service and government. It would also create a bigger group of people who could meet with “stakeholders” including the ones who currently get ignored. ■

For an extended version of this piece, the responses to it and Sam Freedman's other writings, visit Comment is Freed: samf.substack.com

CSW speaks to **Dr Jason Dewhurst** to find out how he is working to put science and technology at the heart of the Home Office



SCIENTIFIC METHOD

How did you get into science? I became fascinated by everything ‘space’ at an early age. At secondary school, I saw a NASA Space Shuttle launch on TV and my heart was set on becoming a scientist. Studying physics and space science at university was great fun. During my PhD studies, I met the world’s experts on the aurora, and learnt a huge amount from them as I analysed spacecraft data to explore the

space-based triggers of the most beautiful light show you will ever see on earth. One of my fondest moments as a scientist was purely random – at a conference in northern Finland, I left my colleagues debating the latest space research developments to prepare for the presentation I was delivering the next day... the snow stopped, the clouds parted, and the northern lights shone brightly, so I laid down on

the fresh snow and enjoyed the moment.

After my studies, I became a spacecraft systems engineer. This was when I really got to grips with understanding customer requirements. I explored design trade-offs while trying to maximise benefits for the customer.

It was the satisfaction of working on complex challenges that made the civil service very appealing. I saw an opportunity to join the Government Operational Research Service and the wider analytical community, so I jumped at it. I was able to translate my scientific problem-solving skills and work on complex policy and operational delivery challenges, which is hugely satisfying.

How has your experience working within the analytical community helped you in your current role? During my time in the civil service, I’ve worked in several departments on topics as diverse as modelling the impact of school-funding policy options through to developing business cases to support large transformation programmes. While I’ve been a member of the Government Operational Research Service throughout, securing the expertise and value-add from the other analytical professions has been vital: each profession brings a different set of tools to a given problem and an alternative perspective can really make the difference. During my last analytical role, I worked closely with the Home Office’s scientific community to bring together the latest science understanding on Covid-19 and the operational modelling expertise within the Home Office to support operational teams to develop business continuity plans. Working with a range of experts to tell the story in an easily digestible way was really important when working at pace.

Tell us what your role involves – how do you work with the science and technology function in the Home Office and wider department? My directorate, Home Office Science, has numerous functions. Its work spans the Home Office and operational partners: we maintain the DNA and fingerprint forensic databases; embed future thinking to help identify long-term issues and challenges; lead and coordinate regulatory policy on the use of animals in science and run the associated regulator; and support the Home Office’s science advisory committees, science related arm’s-length bodies and our chief scientific adviser in their various roles.

We also invest in research and development on important topics such as knife detection and imaging technology that facilitates goods crossing the border.

I understand that a key part of the One Home Office transformation programme has been to improve the department's use of science, evidence and innovation – can you share what that means in practice and how you are aiming to do that?

The One Home Office transformation programme is really exciting. We are putting science, innovation and evidence at the heart of the department, supporting decision making and delivery for our people, partners and the public.

I have three priorities.

The first is supporting the continuous professional development of our scientists and engineers so that we keep pace with scientific developments. Science doesn't sleep, after all.

The second is embedding a scientifically inquisitive and analytically curious culture across the Home Office. In addition to supporting colleagues to explore data and evidence, we need to build confidence to embrace scientific topics.

My third priority is to remove barriers to innovation. Every day I hear of great ideas that may help with some of the country's hardest challenges and it is important to me that those great ideas are nurtured.

How are you supporting science professionals within the Home Office – what are your aims for them as a community?

Community is key. Since taking up my position, I've been impressed with the breadth and depth of scientific expertise across the department. We are establishing scientific community forums to promote knowledge sharing and providing the opportunity for people to assist others by bringing their own expertise, experience and insight to different problems. This will also help our scientists and technologists keep in touch with both the policy and operational context, as well as research and development advances. I'm a huge fan of experiencing "the frontline" in whatever form that takes and recently spent a day with a police force to see a day-in-the-life of two police officers. You learn a lot about your own role in the civil service when you see others in the systems you support go about their work, and I am keen that our scientists seize similar opportunities.

What are you doing to support wider science literacy in the department? Nurturing a scientifically inquisitive and analytically curious culture across the Home Office is a goal worth the investment. There are policy, operational and programme

teams that have excellent knowledge and awareness of relevant scientific disciplines.

We're delivering a series of science-based presentations to introduce other teams to the wide range of scientific topics that the Home Office is interested in. We're also arranging demonstrations of several of our research and development projects, so that colleagues can see what we are investing in and explore the science behind those developments.

I am keen to maximise the awareness of great toolkits that have been developed by the Government Office for Science and analytical professions.

The Home Office is one of government's largest departments, both in scope and size. As a team charged with providing central support, how do you ensure you're keeping well connected with and briefed on the huge range of policy areas and teams?

Through our work, we have developed an extensive network across all areas of the Home Office and beyond. This helps maintain our understanding of emerging challenges and develop awareness of how science can help. Knowledge sharing is really important and we deliver a wide range of seminars and "teach-in" sessions to promote awareness.

My central science and technology research and development commissioning team is a great example of my team's strong engagement across the business. We work across the Home Office's missions and capabilities to identify opportunities where science and technology could address current and future challenges. We then commission a portfolio of research, devel-

"Every day I hear of great ideas that may help with some of the country's hardest challenges and it is important to me that those ideas are nurtured"

opment and innovation which stretches across the department's broad scope. This constant interaction between ourselves and stakeholders ensures we are well briefed on the huge range of policy areas and deliver impactful science and technology solutions.

And how do you ensure you are also connecting with industry and academia, and feeding their insights back into the department? We are supported by the Home Office Science Advisory Council, who provide our chief scientific adviser with independent advice. We have a number of committees that have world-leading academics and external experts

spanning topics such as: the misuse of drugs; age estimation; animals in science; and biometrics and forensic ethics.

When it comes to science and technology innovation, we work with organisations like the Accelerated Capability Environment, which has a diverse community of academic institutions and industry bodies who can explore creative solutions to challenging problems, often deploying a wide range of digitally-enabled technologies and thinking. We also work with the Joint Security and Resilience Centre, which has delivered trials of technology in the world of biometrics capture to support major Home Office programmes. Additionally, we collaborate with the Defence and Security Accelerator, a cross-government team based in the MoD who work to find and fund the best ideas from industry and academia to help keep the UK safe (see *interview p.14*).

Last year, I attended my first Security & Policing Conference – a major annual event hosted by JSaRC. This was a world-class opportunity to come together with UK suppliers and senior decision makers across the law enforcement and security sectors to discuss the latest advances in delivering national security and resilience. I'm really looking forward to the next event in 2023.

What advice would you offer colleagues across government about working most effectively with their S&T colleagues?

Science and technology are essential as we work to overcome complex challenges, innovate to realise better outcomes, and make the most of future opportunities. Each government department has a different setup, but I encourage you to start a conversation with your science and technology colleagues about your work area and how they might be able to assist. Do reach out to your department's chief scientific adviser if you need signposting to the best team.

I've found it works best if you come to us early with a problem to see how we can help. That way your department's scientists and engineers can consider who might be helpful across the scientific, analytical and data community, as well as what options exist to tap into technological research and development and other sources of innovation. ■

Dr Dewhurst is director of science and technology delivery and strategy at the Home Office

Register for Security & Policing 2023 at securityandpolicing.co.uk

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KNOW

The Government Office for Technology Transfer has been set up to help public sector organisations make the most of their knowledge assets. Its chief exec, **Dr Alison Campbell**, tells *CSW* about GOTT's priorities and explains how it will help departments to realise the value of their intellectual resources

them across government to help increase efficiency and cost savings; using them in collaboration with the private sector to co-create new innovation; or offering external advisory services based on deep subject matter knowledge or through commercialisation, for example licensing to an existing company or creating a new spin-out company. The GOTT team includes policy professionals and technology transfer specialists, which means that we can address issues ranging from policy dialogue and influence through to direct involvement with IP and exploitation projects.

You came into the role earlier in the year. What were your initial areas of focus for GOTT? For me, it has been about understanding where GOTT can add most value and working with the team to develop a strategy to support this. As a forerunner to GOTT, the Knowledge Assets Team had

In your own words, what will GOTT do? The Government Office for Technology Transfer is a new cross-government unit. Our role is to provide guidance and to offer practical advice and support across government to help organisations maximise the inherent value in their knowledge assets, or KAs – intangible assets such as intellectual property rights, processes, data and know-how. Our formation stemmed from initial conversations in the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, which then supported the early knowledge-assets

work as part of a wider balance sheet review. That's quite important, as it anchors what we are here to do, which is to drive additional value creation from government investment. It's part of managing public money.

In practical terms, this is about working with the wider government community. GOTT acts as a central focus to support government departments, agencies and public bodies to develop a knowledge-assets strategy and to become more effective at identifying and developing these assets for exploitation. That might mean sharing





“The KA grant fund isn’t solely focused on science and tech opportunities, it is truly pan-government in its remit - we’ve made recent awards to the ONS and the Government Internal Audit Agency”

been stood up as a joint endeavour between HMT and BEIS, so there was a firm foundation in place. The team published the Mackintosh report in 2021, which set out an implementation strategy to get greater value from public sector KAs, followed by publication of the Rose Book, which explains the concepts and practicalities behind managing knowledge assets in government. The Knowledge Assets Grant Fund had been launched to explore the development of early-stage knowledge assets, so getting up to speed with how this was working and how we can further help applications to come into the fund has been a priority.

I have also been able to meet a lot of our key stakeholders and have been really impressed at how active many of them are in knowledge-asset management and utilisation. From the UK Health Security Agency to Kew Gardens, seeing the enthusiasm and the range of opportunities government agencies and public bodies are working on has been helpful for GOTT's strategy development. I have also been impressed by the innovations that are happening within departments and how these are being shared cross-departmentally.

What are your priorities for GOTT in its first year or so of operation? Our priorities are twofold. Firstly, to engage across government to encourage awareness of knowledge-asset management and its increasing importance in helping drive UK innovation and productivity. Secondly, to help organisations and their teams practically, wherever they may be on their KA journey.

To deliver on these, the GOTT team will continue to promote the Rose Book and to actively engage with organisations and departments (our "clients") to help them develop knowledge-asset strategies. We'll also be working with them to identify and unlock barriers to effective KA exploitation, which may be policy related or more operational.

The KA grant fund is an excellent way for organisations to take a first step into exploring the potential of a knowledge

asset and the team in GOTT is keen to talk to potential applicants to guide them through this. Awards can range from £5,000 or £10,000, perhaps for market research, up to £250,000 to develop the asset to bring it nearer to adoption or commercialisation. A priority for us is to spread the message that

KA identification and development. Our KA exploitation specialists are now getting involved with clients, either directly supporting or providing advice on what needs to happen next and signposting to the resources available. We'll be building a framework of experts and advisers and will support making the right connections.

Something that our clients have asked for is specialised training in knowledge-asset and IP identification and exploitation in the public sector context. I'm keen that we develop a programme that is easy to navigate at the point of need and that draws on what is already available, alongside some bespoke content. We plan to work with partners across the public and private sectors to deliver on this. For example, the IPO has some great training and educational resources available and has already worked with us. There are practitioners in several ALBs and public sector research establishments who are interested to share their knowledge and experiences in KA exploitation more widely – we've already benefitted from IP experts in the MoD, for example.

Beyond the IPO and HMT, are there any key departments, professions or roles across government that you'll be especially keen to work with, and why? Any success in KA management will come from working across government and leveraging diverse expertise and perspectives. I'm particularly keen to work with the commercial function to understand how we can maximise value to both HMG and the supplier and ensure that innovation doesn't lie fallow. At the departmental level, I'm hoping that we can develop mechanisms to allow us to share KA developments, successes and challenges within their portfolio of agencies and public bodies, as well as within their own teams.

You've previously chaired the global Association of University Technology Managers – what do you think the UK does well, relatively, and where does it have most room to improve?

the KA grant fund isn't solely focused on science and tech opportunities, it is truly pan-government in its remit. We've made recent awards to the ONS and the Government Internal Audit Agency, for example.

As we grow our strategic partnerships team, we can offer increasing support for



The UK excels in technology transfer and what's called knowledge exchange in the university and public research sectors. We are envied by many other countries – I know this because people tell me. In the UK we've taken a long-term approach, with sustained commitment. Our strategy has been consistent and has encouraged practice to evolve, which has delivered results for UK innovation. For example, the annual Higher Education Business and Community Interaction report shows that the university sector granted over 18,000 licences and formed nearly 200 spin-out companies last year.

As GOTT is based in the BEIS Salford office, I'm particularly interested in Northern Gritstone, which was recently founded by the Universities of Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield to invest in university spin-out companies, leveraging the innovation potential in the north of England. It's a great example of place-based innovation. While the context is different for technology transfer and KA exploitation across government, I'm optimistic that the wealth of UK experience can be harnessed to great advantage.

There is always room to improve! But if I was to pick one area, it's probably around risk appetite. Or lack of. This hits home in terms of how – and how quickly – we make decisions. Decision making can tend to be slow and bureaucratic, which is unsuited to the fast pace needed to deliver on commercialisation and value realisation.

One challenge raised in the Mackintosh report was that organisations don't have a good awareness of the KAs they hold and their value – what do you think causes this? There are a few factors contributing to this. The very nature of assets being intangible is that they can be harder to identify. It's far easier to identify a building or piece of kit! There hasn't been a routine requirement to record knowledge assets, so the culture and the supporting processes aren't there yet. There's also the issue of capacity to get involved in knowledge-asset management. Quite simply, it is hard to find time to resource something that hasn't been seen as a priority amidst competing demands. That's why thinking through a KA strategy is helpful.

Valuation always seems daunting, but it shouldn't be. I'd say that most times, people who have been involved in developing a knowledge asset have a good instinct of whether it might be valuable as they know their field. The quantum will come later when further scoping has been done. And that is where GOTT can bring some help to bear.

What kind of things do you consider when assessing the potential value of a KA, or the potential for transfer? There is one simple question: does anyone want this? Followed by: will they invest in it? Here I'm framing investment not just in terms of a financial transaction but also in respect of the hidden investment needed to get the KA adopted. For example, there may be an attractive process developed that has the potential to generate efficiencies longer term but the cost to change a traditional way of doing things may be too great for a potential customer.

Some upfront research can be helpful to get an understanding of who might be out there that might want the KA, what their problems are and whether what you have will help. It also involves looking at what else might be similar. If there is some kind of competition, it won't necessarily impact the quality of your KA but may well affect its value. That's the kind of local assessment we encourage applicants to the grant fund to make. It's often as simple as searching the internet and talking to colleagues in their profession and to their contractors. We can then get into more detail as part of the funding.

You've worked in various tech transfer roles across different sectors and countries – have you developed a “nose” for the ideas or assets that will work well? Or is it the case that many assets can transfer well if they have the right support?

That's a great question. Although we talk about knowledge assets, it's hard to extract an asset and exploit it in isolation. Successful KA transfer frequently relies on people and the environments they work in. When a venture capitalist looks at a new company investment, they often say they would prefer to back a reasonable business opportunity which has excellent management than an excellent opportunity with average management. It's people that make for success.

It's the same when looking at KAs. Having a champion locally who can explain and enthuse about the asset and can help its transfer through sharing their knowledge, or through leadership and direction, makes a real difference. So does the right environment, which means having both access to the people to help with the KA process and the working environment where KA exploitation is seen as part of normal business and is encouraged.

Departments have been asked to focus on growth, so I'm interested in the GOTT's role around helping develop innovations nearer to adoption or commercialisa-

tion. How much of your role as a leader of an organisation will be about building connections across sectors to find support and opportunities for public sector KAs? Building those connections is vital to our work and to success in KA value creation. An objective is to equip colleagues across the public sector with the information and connections that will help them as they develop KA capability and opportunities. We have established a KA Champions network, which brings together people across government who are active in or interested in KA management. It's a great chance to share experiences, to tackle issues together and for them to be a sounding board for GOTT. This is something that we are looking to expand, both in this format and through additional networks.

The Mackintosh report identified the potential for KAs to both improve public sector efficiency and drive growth, but many people would only think about the latter objective when talking about spinning innovation out of government. Is it unusual to be thinking about public sector KAs as driving efficiency? Do you have a sense about which of these two aims might be easier to realise?

There is a wonderful example of how a public sector KA has driven efficiency across government. The communications directorate at the Department for Education created a proof-of-concept robot, ARNOLD, that has replaced manual data-entry for user emails and letters. It reduced processing time by a third and allowed the team to focus on delivery rather than administration. This was a great use of the Cabinet Office Centre of Excellence for Robotic Process Automation framework and involved getting an understanding of what has been done in other departments. But it didn't stop there – ARNOLD was shared with HMT, which has also seen efficiency gains and early cost savings in the region of several million pounds.

I wouldn't like to call it on whether efficiency or growth will be easier to realise. It's been clear in so many of the conversations I've had recently that leaders see that the role of the public sector now includes stimulating innovation and growth, both locally and nationally. I've also been in conversations where people are reflecting on how their developments and practices could be useful more widely across government, so I think there is lots of potential. It's a matter of surfacing it and finding routes to adoption. My hope is that GOTT can play its part in this unique and emerging innovation ecosystem. ■

PUTTING THE UK ON THE MAP

As new rankings name the UK as a leader in geospatial capability, **Caitlin Ballard** explains what this means and why it matters to policymakers

Last month it was revealed that the UK has retained its position as second in the world for geospatial capability, behind the USA. This is great news for the UK but some *Civil Service World* readers may be wondering what exactly “geospatial” is and what it means for the UK to be world no.2.

Geospatial data, AKA location data, is data with a location or geographic reference – most commonly experienced as part of maps which are products containing location data.

Location data is a significant part of our daily lives. There are countless apps and smart devices that have in-built location features to enhance their

service and the user experience – from personalised travel plans to recording our runs and delivering parcels.

With so much data having this attribute, location is a thread that allows us to connect different datasets together to make them more useful. Geospatial technology is going to be increasingly embedded in our digital lives. Some commentators have recently coined the phrase ‘geoverse’ to articulate the critical role location data will play in our future hybrid reality.

As well as its uses for us as customers and consumers, geospatial data is also crucial for many areas of the public sector and wider economy, such as in transport and urban planning (by helping to decide where to deliver new housing, cycle paths, international shipping lanes

or local amenities), environmental monitoring (by tracking wildlife numbers or illegal poaching), public health (such as the Covid-19 cases interactive map) and emergency response (to pinpoint where a casualty needs help or a crime has been committed). It also came to the fore in planning and monitoring of the queue for Queen Elizabeth II’s lying-in-state.

The UK’s high geospatial ranking is a result of an assessment of several areas but some key points to draw out include:

The UK has a world class set of public sector geospatial and mapping institutions

The Ordnance Survey was established in 1791, the UK Hydrographic Office in 1795 and the British Geological Survey in 1835. These three and several more are world-

renowned for their history, as well as their future-oriented approach, and they have extremely strong sets of foundational geospatial data to put to many uses.

Many of us have used OS maps, whether in paper or digital form, over 90% of the world's shipping uses UKHO's navigational data and technology, and BGS is a sought-after authority on all subsurface information, including on ground source heat and critical minerals for a sustainable future.

Countless other countries look to the UK's public sector for insights and expertise, and many benefit from UK capability and development work carried out in their own organisations, for example via Official Development Assistance programmes. The UK is also closely involved with the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, the leading global forum for all things geospatial, as a founding member.

The UK has a thriving private sector geospatial scene

In the private sector, the UK can boast some incredible geospatial innovators and disruptors, such as What3Words, Citymapper, Dynamon and Gaist. These organisations and many others are making use of the increasing availability of location data to deliver cutting edge products and services with uses across many different sectors from infrastructure to the environment.

There are also important links with innovative companies which may not be labelled as 'geospatial' but make use of geospatial data and technology as a core part of their business. The space sector is a whole other sector in itself that produces geospatial data via satellites and other space-oriented equipment. The UK's private sector space organisations are undoubtedly amongst the best in the world.

Collaboration and formal partnerships between private, public, academic and charitable institutions are enabling innovation, economic growth, skills development and greener outcomes. One example is the Location Data Scotland initiative which facilitates collaboration between Scottish industry, academia, public sector and the third sector to drive innovation, unlock skills and enable economic growth.

So it is an innovative and diverse picture or, as we like to call it, a geospatial ecosystem.

The UK is world-leading in the technologies that are fuelling innovation with location data

The global data ecosystem is transforming with a wave of new technologies that are creating new opportunities to innovate with location data. The UK is set to build and maintain its status as a science and technology superpower – a world-leader in these technologies.

With the Internet of Things, sensors are everywhere – from our watches to our cars. These are creating new datasets with location attributes that enable real time insights. Cloud services are enabling this data to be stored cheaply and processed more effectively. The UK is also a world-leader in artificial intelligence and machine learning, which sit behind these technologies, making it possible to process massive volumes of data quickly.

We have a UK government Geospatial Commission and geospatial strategy for the UK

The UK is recognised internationally as being fairly unique for having a dedicated central co-coordinating government body for geospatial policy. Sitting within the Cabinet Office, the Geospatial Commission is an expert committee aiming to unlock the power of location data and technology across the economy, connecting where relevant with government data, innovation and sector-specific strategies. We set the UK's Geospatial Strategy, and work towards four missions: promoting and safeguarding the use of location data; driving forward better access to high quality location data; boosting geospatial skills and capabilities; and enabling innovation.

Some of the Geospatial Commission's most cutting edge projects include:

- The National Underground Asset Register, which is bringing together information about the location of underground infrastructure, like pipes and cables, to enable better planning, efficiency and safety for construction works.
- The National Land Data Programme, which aims to demonstrate the value of enhanced geospatial capability to inform future land use strategy and scenario planning.
- An electric vehicle infrastructure data discovery project, exploring how location data can be better utilised to support planning and delivery of electric vehicle charge points by local authorities.
- The Transport Location Data Competition (run with InnovateUK) that invested £5m in projects to stimulate commercial innovation to help create geospatial solutions to key transport challenges.
- A policy paper providing ABC guidance on the ethical use of location data based on public dialogue.

The Geospatial Commission has also created and implemented critical contracts supporting data access, such as the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement. This enables more than 5,500 public sector organisations to access key parts of Ordnance Survey's data and maps to help provide more effective and efficient public services.

Location is a key insight in policy work and the delivery of public services. The UK is a world leader in the use of location data, skills and knowledge and we have the opportunity to leverage this as a strength that will support our journey towards a modern, digitally-enabled civil service. However, there are still many areas where the opportunity to use location data is not yet being realised – could it be used in your area of work?

The Geospatial Commission currently has a call for evidence open for responses as part of its work to refresh the UK's Geospatial Strategy. We would encourage you to consider responding if your work is relevant to location data, technology and services and, if not, consider which of your stakeholders and contacts may be interested. The call for evidence is open until Monday 12 December 2022. A refresh of the UK's Geospatial Strategy is due to be published in spring 2023. ■

“Location is a thread that allows us to connect different datasets together to make them more useful - geospatial technology is going to be increasingly embedded in our digital lives”

Caitlin Ballard is international policy adviser at the Geospatial Commission



VOCATION

FOR

LOCATION

As government's chief property officer, **Mark Chivers** has a vast remit but a focused goal: making the government estate work better. He tells **Jim Dunton** about his ambitions for public estates and why he's enjoyed working with ministers

Government chief property officer Mark Chivers has been making a point of getting out and about to see as much as he can of the estate in the 10 months he's been in post. But it's hard to overstate the task. The Office of Government Property has responsibility for more than 136,000 buildings across the UK; and then there's the wider public-sector estate. The task is complicated by the fact that work is progressing at pace to downsize and reform the portfolio.

Chivers joined the civil service in January after 26 years at Boots, where he was most recently director of estates, engineering and energy. He is officially based at the 23 Stephenson Street government hub in Birmingham city centre, but on the week he chats with *Civil Service World* he has also been working from hubs in Nottingham and the capital.

"One of the great joys is going out and seeing different buildings," he says. "Over the summer, during the recess, I went and saw one of the new prisons being built. I went down to Dover to see the Border Force arrangements. I went up to Manchester to see some courts."

Chivers is also a non-executive director at Nottingham University NHS Hospitals Trust, meaning he also gets to see bits of the health estate "fairly often".

Our conversation was originally pencilled in to take place in person in Nottingham, a plan postponed following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Practicalities for the rescheduled date mean a Teams chat trumps a train ride to the East Midlands. A few minutes into our interview, it emerges that Chivers is at the 10 South Colonnade hub at Canary Wharf, and we are talking from adjacent east London postcodes. It is a sign of the times.

Chivers is passionate about the need





Modern estate An aerial view of newly-constructed prison HMP Five Wells in Northamptonshire and (right) an architect's impression of the building

for government employees to be able to work from convenient offices anywhere in the country, regardless of the department or agency that employs them. For him, 23 Stephenson Street – where staff from 20 different government bodies share space – is “the future”.

“For those of who can be mobile and need to be mobile and need to see different people around the country, the right model is to be able to go in and log into that building, use the GovWifi, log into the printer and so on,” he says. “The government word is ‘interoperability’. That ability for people to be more flexible, to be where they need to be, has got to be the right

way forward, rather than these previous bastions of department buildings where no-one else can walk across the threshold without an invitation. We’re on a journey.”

The government hubs that are opening across the United Kingdom are part of that drive. Started by HM Revenue and Customs as a way to consolidate staff from 170 small offices across the nation into 14 large regional office buildings, the programme has morphed into a cross-department programme being led by the Government Property Agency.

Seventeen further hubs are due to be delivered by the end of the current Spending Review period in 2024-25, and the

recently published Government Property Strategy says the figure could increase to 50 by the end of the decade through an additional phase of development.

Hubs play a central role in plans to reduce the civil service’s Whitehall Campus to just 16 buildings from the current 36 by 2030. Chivers says much of this will be achieved through exiting existing leasehold buildings, such as the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’s 1 Victoria Street headquarters. It is due to be vacated by the end of next year.

Hubs are also pivotal to the Places for Growth programme to move 22,000 civil service roles out of the capital by 2030



“There is already that history of working between central government and local authorities - now is the opportunity to put that on steroids and see how big we can make it”



and to the levelling-up agenda. Two of the second-wave hubs are the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' second headquarters in Wolverhampton and HM Treasury's Darlington Campus. Both have been badged as flagship efforts to take government closer to the regions.

Proposals to further consolidate the Whitehall Campus are being worked up in a new Plan for London. It will identify which buildings should be retained and which can be released in the medium or long term.

Chivers says a lot of the Whitehall Campus buildings have now been transferred from departmental ownership to the GPA, which is working with the OGP on the consolidation plan.

“It's being done through the Places for Growth team and it reports into something called the location and property board, which has various perm secs or DGs,” he says. “All of the players are there at the conference table and talking about their demands, so we've got a chance of getting it right!”

Chivers is acutely aware of the potential for confusion between the OGP and the GPA. Public Accounts Committee chair Dame Meg Hillier recently described their battling acronyms as “alphabet soup”. It also doesn't help that both organisations are part of the Cabinet Office, out of whose Government Property Unit they were formed.

Who better than the government chief property officer, leader of the government property function, and head of the OGP to explain?

The OGP is responsible for the strategy, controls and policy for property across the whole of government, including health and education, Chivers

says. Within that, property portfolios are managed by delivery vehicles such as NHS England, individual NHS trusts, councils and the GPA, which is the vehicle for the government's offices and warehouses.

All departments are supposed to transfer their offices to the GPA by 2024-25, so that they can be centrally managed and consolidated into hubs, as part of a savings target of £3.6bn over the next 15 years. As of last month, only just over 40% had been transferred, however.

Chivers recognises the attachment



civil servants have for places they have previously worked, particularly the more iconic ones. But he's also clearly a little exasperated that offices are seen as the mainstay of the government's holdings.

"Offices are only 2% of the government estate," he says. "The whole government estate pulls in the public sector, so we're talking 300,000 buildings across the nations.

"If you look at the split of ownership, two-thirds of it is with local authorities and a third of it is within the central government estate. Even within the central government estate, offices are a relatively small part."

For almost a decade now a programme aimed at delivering "co-located" new facilities for public sector-wide use, and freeing up surplus land for new homes and other opportunities, has been running, set up by the erstwhile GPU and the Local Government Association.

As of March this year, One Public Estate had supported more than 900 projects, provided more than 22,000 jobs, and delivered in excess of 31,000 new homes. It has also raised £501.2m in capital receipts and generated £81.1m in revenue savings for the public sector.

However, Chivers thinks there is a "fantastic opportunity" to go further. "As far as I can see, coming in relatively fresh, the government and local authority portfolios, the public sector portfolios, have never really been optimised in places," he says.

Chivers points to the example of the

Mildenhall Hub in West Suffolk, which provides health, leisure, education, employment and culture services under one roof. "There is already that history of working between central government and local authorities," he says. "Now is the opportunity to put that on steroids and see how big we can make it."

Chivers is enthused about what an optimised public estate across the whole of Birmingham, or the wider West Midlands Combined Authority area, could look like. Or how hospitals could use surplus land to build new homes. He also sees potential in broader mixed-use developments that could combine space for public services, including storage, with residential and retail uses.

A new set of pilot schemes is set to launch to test ideas.

While Chivers is optimistic about future possibilities, he is also realistic about future practicalities. The impact of snowballing inflation is affecting the construction and property sector as much as the cost-of-living crisis is affecting citizens. In fact, construction inflation is outpacing consumer-price inflation.

"You hear stories of 30% and it's a little bit esoteric, but if you've got a £350m prison which is going to cost you £500m for the next one you build, or part of the new-hospital build programme that is a £1bn spend that's going to cost you £1.3bn, it becomes very real very quickly," he says.

Chivers says the impact of rising construction-sector inflation is already

"There's something about having that level of ministerial challenge in the system that has been really, really beneficial to the thinking and the robustness of delivery"



being felt and the logical consequence is that departments will “cut their cloth accordingly” and delay some projects to keep within their Spending Review budgets as a first response.

Longer term, Chivers thinks he and his commercial, legal and project-delivery counterparts in government will be able to flex some combined muscle in the interests of protecting the public purse. “I’m sure that the functions can come together more strongly than they perhaps have done in the past and really see what we can do to drive even small percentages from those construction costs,” he says. “Which could be worth millions and millions of pounds, just because of the magnitude of the sums involved.”

Chivers foresees the specification of new buildings being revisited to cut costs and the need for the government contracts to change to reflect a world of rising inflation. “If you were a developer, you would want some cover,” he says. “Hopefully we’ll get to a position where the risk and the reward is shared in the right way. That’s where the commercial team earn their money.”

If there is an upside to rising prices, Chivers thinks it could be making the sustainability agenda better value, contributing to government’s net-zero carbon commitments and other green goals.

“With utility prices being what they are, anything that we can do on alternative energy sources, on building-envi-

ronment management, better systems, will hopefully pay off a lot better,” he says. “It could be an increase in spec for added sustainability measures because it will give you a better payback.”

Ministers have long been keen to get more private-sector expertise into the civil service and give more civil servants experience of work outside departments and agencies. Last year’s Declaration on Government Reform proposed a range of measures aimed at bringing in new skills.

As he’s a prized catch from the private sector, CSW is keen to know what Chivers would like to import to his current role from Boots, and what he reckons his former employers – properly named Walgreens Boots Alliance – could benefit from in return.

“What I would bring in would be the data,” he says. “When you work for a retailer, it’s all about sales. It’s all about profit as well, but you get that ready flow of information which tells you how well your estate is functioning, because it’s how well sales are going through the tills.”

In an earlier incarnation at Boots, Chivers was responsible for running its Advantage loyalty card, and this would be his import – albeit for geographical information, rather than points to exchange for sandwiches.

“If you’ve got an Advantage card, I know where you live and I know how often you’re visiting a Boots store and how much you’re

spending,” he says. “That gives you the opportunity to build a really, really robust demand surface across the UK. And then you put your shops in to drain that demand.”

“What I would love to be able to do is to create a demand surface for public sector property in any one place and then satisfy that demand by optimising the estate.

“If you could build onto your map how much demand we need in each place for different services, then you’ve got an opportunity of getting the right portfolio to deliver those services.”

Somewhat astonishingly, what Chivers would pass back to Boots is ministers. And he doesn’t mean packing his current political masters off via a one-way ticket to Nottingham, either.

“I wouldn’t have expected to say it, but one of the things that is very different is clearly the ministerial piece,” he says of civil service life. “It has been challenging and focusing. There’s something about that level of challenge back into the system that has been really, really beneficial to the thinking and the robustness of delivery.

“Executives can be a bit hands-off, and I’m sure politicians can be as well. But that active interest and that genuine appetite to improve things has come across very strongly since I’ve been here. So I think I’d take some element of that.”

So brownie points for the Cabinet Office’s political top brass and Advantage points for the civil service it is then. ■

Office of state A reception and (right) common working spaces in new 23 Stephenson Street hub in Birmingham



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

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TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

As the DWP harnesses artificial intelligence to help detect fraud, **Sam Trendall** explores concerns about the transparency of its methods

“**A**lgorithms can be harnessed by public sector organisations to help them make fairer decisions... However, they must be used in decision-making processes in a way that manages risks, upholds the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and builds clear evidence of impact.”

These were the words of Lord Agnew, the (now former) minister charged last year with unveiling a new algorithmic transparency standard developed by government's Central Digital and Data Office.

The standard provides public bodies with a framework through which they can publish information to allow systems to be scrutinised: by civil society groups; tech experts; and the wider public – a growing number of whom are, in turn, subject to scrutiny by algorithms.

Since the standard was released, a handful of agencies have used the guidelines to publish details of tools used in their services or operations.

This includes the Department of Health and Social Care's QCovid system for predicting coronavirus risk, the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool used by Hampshire and Thames Valley Police, and a hygiene-rating algorithm deployed by the Food Standards Agency.

Not included is an automated tool being used by the Department for Work and Pensions to help analyse the possibility of fraud in claims made for Universal Credit advances.

“This analysis is performed by a machine learning algorithm,” the department said in its annual report and accounts for 2021-22, explaining that “the algorithm builds a model based on historic fraud and error data in order to make predictions, without being explicitly programmed by a human being.”

The process is not entirely au-

tomated, however – cases scored as potentially fraudulent are flagged to caseworkers, who then “prioritise the review and processing of such cases accordingly,” according to the report.

“The department is aware of the potential for such a model to generate biased outcomes that could have an adverse impact on certain claimants,” the report added.

The DWP said that it was mitigating against the risk of such outcomes via a system of “pre-launch testing and continuous monitoring” by departmental officials. Caseworkers – who are not given the



specifics of why a claim has been flagged for review – retain the final decision on whether a claim is legitimate or fraudulent.

The department added that it has undertaken a “fairness analysis” focused on protected characteristics, but said that “so far, this analysis has only been performed for three groups and the results are inconclusive”. The groups in question relate to age, gender, and pregnancy, it is understood.

Regardless of what further any analysis may reveal, DWP has been warned of the dangers of not allowing others to reach their own conclusions.

The Public Law Project – a legal charity dedicated to helping those at risk of being marginalised or disadvantaged by public

bodies – campaigns for greater transparency in government's use of algorithms.

As part of a parliamentary inquiry into DWP's annual accounts, the organisation has called on MPs on the Public Accounts Committee to ask the department to release “as a matter of urgency” a range of information on its use of automated decision making in the administration of Universal Credit and other services.

Information that is currently unavailable to the public includes data-protection impact assessments, equalities impact assessments, and data complying with the algorithmic transparency standard.

Talking to CSW, Ariane Adam, the Public Law Project's legal director, says the organisation has found “opacity” to be a recurrent problem in government's use of algorithms.

“In many ways, an algorithm that is used to inform decision making is not that different from a piece of written guidance for decision makers,” she says. “But

what is concerning is that there is very little information on how they operate and whether they operate fairly and effectively.”

She adds: “What we have found is that public bodies in the UK tend to have an approach of secrecy by default.”

Game theory

When contacted by CSW, DWP indicated that it considered that publishing details of its anti-fraud tools would compromise their effectiveness – and pointed out that the Algorithmic Transparency Standard does not recommend publication in such cases.

PLP believes that this argument is not well supported by the evidence of legal and academic study on the potential for “gaming” of algorithms by those who know how they work.

Among the foremost papers on the matter is one by US legal professors Ignacio Cofone and Katherine Strandburg, who examine in detail how and why studied manipulation of an algorithm is, invariably, not made any easier by transparency.

They conclude: “Our analysis suggests that, from a social perspective, the threat from ‘gaming’ is overstated by its invocation as a blanket argument against disclosure. The consequential

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over-secrecy deprives society not only of the benefits of disclosure to decision subjects, but also of the improvements in decision quality that could result when disclosure improves accountability.”

Adam says section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act – the stated aim of which is to prevent the “release of information that may prejudice the prevention or detection of crime” – is the blanket that UK public bodies often use to keep information under wraps.

“The issue that we have is that this is not a blanket exemption,” she says. “Departments need to give a reason, and perform a public-interest test measuring the harm and benefit of disclosure.”

She adds: “Often, they have not engaged in the harms of non-disclosure.”

The possible harm to those who are subject to automated decisions is clear – and recognised by DWP, in its acknowledgment of the “potential for such a model to generate biased outcomes”.

There is little evidence – that is publicly available – with which to make a determination on the size of the risk of such outcomes being generated.

But, in further evidence submitted to parliament, PLP cited work it has done with another civil society group that provides a worrying snapshot.

“The Work Rights Centre have told us that, since August 2022, they have been contacted by 37 service users who reported having their Universal Credit payments suspended,” the evidence said. “Even though the charity advises a range of migrant communities, including Romanian, Ukrainian, Polish, and Spanish speakers, as many as 32 of the service users who reported having their payments suspended were Bulgarian, with four Polish and one Romanian-Ukrainian dual national. This may suggest that the automated tool has a disproportionate impact on people of certain nationalities.”

The risks presented by a lack of algorithmic transparency are not just limited to citizens, a point which Adam illustrates by citing the example of the Australian government’s Online Compliance Intervention programme – otherwise known as Robodebt.

Administered by Services Australia – a body whose duties broadly line up with those of DWP in the UK – the scheme used an automated tool to calculate

“What is concerning is that there is very little information on how they operate and whether they operate fairly and effectively”
Ariane Adam, Public Law project

overpayments and other money owed to the government by benefit recipients. A lack of expert oversight and human input are recognised as being among the major flaws with the system, which was first put in place in 2016 and, in its four years in existence, issued almost 500,000 incorrect debt notices. Following a court ruling last year, the Australian state must now pay AU\$1.8bn in refunds, legal fees, and compensation.

‘Meaningful human input’

Unlike its Australian counterpart, DWP’s system leaves the final decision to a human decision maker – a point which a spokesperson for the department stressed, in a comment sent to CSW.

“DWP does not use artificial intelligence to replace human judgement to determine or deny a payment to a claimant. A final decision in these circumstances always involves a human agent,” they said.

“DWP is always careful to process data lawfully and proportionately with meaningful human input and safeguards for the protection of individuals,” the spokesperson added. “The department has robust processes to ensure data protection and ethical use of data is continuously monitored and are re-evaluated as we learn from using such technologies.”

In response to the call for more transparency information, DWP added that all applicable projects are assessed as required under equalities and data-protection laws.

“The department is conscious to take into account the impact of decisions on protected groups under the Equality Act and carry out data-protection impact assessments for large-scale transformative initiatives that involve personal data, aligned with data-ethics frameworks, codes of practice, and working principles. We have also considered and incorporated advice from independent organisations.” ■

2.8% to 12.4%

The range of estimated overpayment in UC advances in 2021, equating to a total of £20m to £85m

6

Reports published by public bodies so far using the algorithmic transparency standard

AU\$1.8bn

Amount to be paid by the Australian government in refunds, legal fees and compensation over the ‘Robodebt’ scheme

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GDS to offer departments new GOV.UK Forms design platform

Digital unit aims to replace documents like PDFs with accessible, easy-to-use and quick-to-process digital forms

The Government Digital Service is developing a GOV.UK Forms tool to be used throughout government to help non-technical staff design online services.

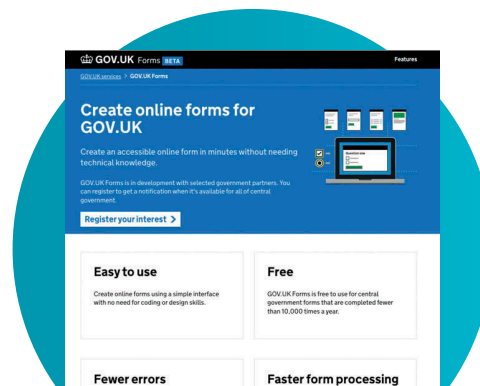
The service also aims to solve issues caused by the ongoing use of thousands of document-based forms that often exclude users with disabilities and fail to comply with accessibility regulation.

The form-building platform is now in private beta phase, during which GDS is working with a selection of partner agencies. One of these – the Insolvency Service – has just launched a new iteration of its Redundancy Payments Service that is the first online citizen service to incorporate elements built using GOV.UK Forms.

The platform is due to be launched for use across government in 2023, and will provide a web-based system enabling

the design of HTML online forms to be included in digital services. No coding knowledge will be required, GDS said.

The digital agency said that the system is being created to address the issues caused by some 8,500 forms on GOV.UK services that use document formats, such as PDFs, rather than HTML. Document-based forms are easier to create than



digital versions – particularly for those without much coding expertise – but they present significant challenges for both civil servants and for citizens.

Forms that are solely offered as PDFs are also often in breach of regulations that require digital public services to comply with international guidelines on accessibility. With a new form added to GOV.UK at the rate of about one a day,

“Currently, forms can be either very difficult or impossible to fill out for users with certain disabilities” GDS

GDS decided that it needed “to act now to stop this number growing further”.

“We want to help colleagues by providing them with a way that allows teams to create accessible, easy-to-use and quick-to-process digital forms,” it said.

Alongside the Insolvency Service, partners supporting the private beta phase include HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. ■

Tourism agency monitors campaigns with influencer software

Brandwatch deal aims to sharpen VisitBritain's work with social-media trendsetters

The British Tourist Authority has invested £31,080 in a software tool to help manage and monitor its work with social-media influencers.

Newly published procurement information reveals the BTA – which operates chiefly under the VisitBritain brand – recently signed a one-year deal with Brandwatch for a “social influencer platform”.

The tool will support its growing work with online influencers based in the UK and overseas. The technology

system will enable the authority to identify influencers, check the authenticity of their online followings, and help assess “brand alignment” with VisitBritain.

Once relationships have been established, the tool will allow the tourist board to “track influencer content and results in real time, providing deeper insights into influencer activity performance and to confirm it is meeting the organisation’s objectives”.

VisitBritain’s previous work with influencers included an international



campaign dubbed “Welcome to Another Side of Britain”, which launched earlier this year. The initiative saw the BTA work with 12 online personalities with global followings, who collectively visited eight cities and took part in different local activities.

“Influencers were contracted to deliver 250 pieces of content, which could be repurposed on VisitBritain-owned channels, in exchange for a content creation fee and experiences organised during the trip,” the BTA said. ■

Civil Service Awards 2022

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Introduction

The Civil Service Awards are now in their 17th year and offer the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the wealth of inspirational individuals and innovative projects within the Civil Service.

In June last year, we launched our new vision 'A Modern Civil Service' that focuses on a Skilled, Innovative and Ambitious workforce. This year's award categories embody this vision with each award falling under one of these themes.

Nominations for the 2022 programme opened on 8 June 2022 and closed on 29 July 2022, and this year we received a staggering 1,144 nominations. Sifting panels were conducted throughout August and September to whittle down the nominations in each category. Panels were chaired by the respective Category Champions,

and panel members consisted of stakeholders and individuals selected either due to their skillset or their membership in a profession or network.

Our Awards Champion, Shona Dunn, and her final judging panel then selected the top 3 finalists for each category, forming the official shortlist for 2022.

Many congratulations to all of you who have been shortlisted in this year's programme. This is a fantastic recognition of the incredible work you have delivered and an achievement you should be proud of.

The Civil Service Awards Team

Meet our Champions



Shona Dunn
Second Permanent
Secretary, Department of
Health and Social Care

"It has been a huge privilege to work with colleagues across the Civil Service to review more than 1,000 nominations. Every year I am moved by the dedication and ambition of civil servants who continue to deliver excellence."



Rizwan Ahmed

**2021 Civil Service Award winner
of the Prime Minister's Award
for Exceptional Public Service**



**Madeleine
Alessandri CMG**

**Permanent Secretary,
Northern Ireland Office**



Sam Beckett

**Second Permanent Secretary,
Office for National Statistics
and Deputy Chief Executive
Officer, UK Statistics Authority
and Joint Head, Government
Economics Service**



Simon Case

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



Alex Chisholm

**Civil Service Chief Operating
Officer and Permanent
Secretary, Cabinet Office**



Jo Farrar

**Second Permanent Secretary
and Chief Executive Officer,
HM Prison & Probation
Service, Ministry of Justice**



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



**Dame Elizabeth
Gardiner**
First Parliamentary Counsel
and Permanent Secretary,
Government in Parliament
Group, Cabinet Office



Sue Gray
Second Permanent
Secretary, Cabinet Office



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



Tricia Hayes CB
Second Permanent
Secretary, Home Office



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



Paul Kett

**Director General, Skills Group,
Department for Education**



**Dr Rannia Leontaridi
OBE FRSA**

**Director General, Aviation,
Maritime and Security,
Department for Transport**



Cat Little

**Non-Executive Director and
Head of the Government Finance
Function and Second Permanent
Secretary, HM Treasury**



Myrtle Lloyd

**Director General, Customer
Service Group, HM
Revenue and Customs**



Emran Mian

**Director General, Regeneration,
Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities**



Mel Nebhrajani CB

**Director General, Employment
with Economic Recovery and
UK Governance Directorate,
Government Legal**



Vijay Rangarajan

Director General, America, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Middle East, Overseas Territories and India, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office



Antonia Romeo

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice



Jae Samant

Director General, Public Safety Group, Home Office



Peter Schofield

Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions



Ceri Smith

Director General, Strategy and Investment, Department for International Trade



Sir Patrick Vallance

Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Head of the Government Science and Engineering Profession and National Technology Adviser

Excellence in Delivery Award

Recognising those who have used their skills and expertise in a range of fields to deliver exceptional outcomes for citizens and made a tangible positive difference to people's lives.

National Operational Leadership Team - Operation PITTING

Home Office: Border Force

Following regional deterioration in Afghanistan, operation PITTING was announced to facilitate the urgent evacuations of British nationals and eligible persons. Within days, Border Force National Operations Command had to nationally coordinate and deliver operational readiness for the largest and fastest humanitarian evacuation in recent history. This included thousands of identity checks for arrivals (many in an extreme state of fear and distress); safeguarding; forgery detection; granting leave; establishing biometric capture processes on an unprecedented scale; and all alongside continuation of critical business as usual. These efforts saved over 15,000 innocent civilians from persecution and is the greatest example of excellence in delivery that Border Force has ever seen.

NHS COVID Pass Programme

Department of Health and Social Care

The NHS COVID Pass continues to be a critical tool for guiding the UK out of the pandemic and helping citizens return to a more normal way of life, unlocking international travel for work, pleasure and reuniting families and friends. Despite extreme time pressures, the service was delivered on budget and ahead of schedule, including supporting services such as a letter service for those with limited or no digital access. The NHS COVID Pass propelled the NHS app to be the most downloaded app in 2021, encouraging expansion of NHS digital services, leading a c700% increase in those using the app to access other health services.

Ukraine Humanitarian Visa Schemes

Home Office: UK Visas and Immigration

UKVI is at the forefront of the UK's operational response to the crisis in Ukraine by delivering three new visa routes in fast time to enable vulnerable and traumatised victims to leave the war zone of Ukraine for safety in the UK. The Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine sponsorship teams have enabled more than 192,000 visas to be issued with more than 138,000 people arriving in the UK. The Ukraine Extension Scheme has offered ongoing protection for Ukrainians unable to return home. The Ukraine visa process now offers a fully digital application process and an improved customer experience.

SKILLED
Civil Service



Driving value for money for everyone: Meeting the challenge of 'Yes', for public sector commercial directors

By Sarah Ashley and John Thompson

The Government Commercial Function is under huge pressure – increasing workloads, fewer people and cost-saving drives bring challenges that can lead to poor outcomes for every stakeholder. Add in inflationary pressures, regulatory reform and sustainability targets, and it's no wonder that some Commercial Directors have a reputation as the people who say 'No' more than 'Yes'.

Of course, a rigorous Commercial function underpins the success of every public sector project, driving value for money, delivering operational efficiencies and managing substantial risk. In this context, saying 'No' can become the norm when doing these things consistently well requires diligence, restraint and challenge on the part of commercial leaders.

Success lies in seeking out opportunities, embracing novel commercial models, empowering expert teams and working closely with operational colleagues. The very best commercial teams are constantly identifying where and how to add most value.

Saying 'Yes' to projects, when they are well-planned and tightly managed, pays dividends. We believe that there are at least three areas with the potential to deliver significant returns:

1. Energy buying: Energy is no longer a commodity purchase given the wholesale market and Government's Net Zero ambitions. Commercial teams without a thorough energy strategy are missing substantial savings. We estimate that Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) can deliver savings in the region of £250m - £350m over a typical 15-year contract for departments and bodies using 1 TWh. By entering into a PPA under current market conditions, electricity costs over the next three years could fall by around 75%. Via PPAs, power can be sourced directly from new-build renewable generators, saving 50 to 100 ktCO₂e each year compared to average grid electricity to help achieve Net Zero goals.

2. Technology: The long shadow of legacy IT and commercial constructs looms large over government. Commercial teams can unlock significant value through focus on innovation, disaggregation, modernisation and migration to the cloud. And it's easier than ever before. Through our work across government, and recently with HMRC's Technology Sourcing Programme, we know that commercial teams can drive value for money by:

- Embracing an array of procurement routes, commercial models, and even establishing new bespoke Frameworks to meet today's needs. For example, our support to HMRC and CCS in

developing both the Big Data and Analytics and Digital and Legacy Applications Frameworks will enable significant technology innovation across government.

- Engaging early and frequently with the new DDaT supplier base – more disaggregated and specialist than ever before – to explain your business needs, existing technology estate and commercial constraints. Suppliers with greater insight can offer better tailored solutions, partner with others to meet your needs, and bring savings through BAFO.

3. Procurement processes and teams:

The planned changes to legislation will arrive in 2023-24, bringing opportunity for commercial teams to innovate and collaborate with the market differently. In preparation, commercial leaders should:

- Use all avenues available for procurements and wean colleagues off the direct awards that accelerated during Covid. The simple act of competition can save 20-25%.
- Build the capacity and capability of in-house commercial teams to meet the new legislation requirements alongside today's challenges of increasing complexity of business requirements, commercial priorities and supplier diversity. Interventions including coaching, automation of routine tasks, upskilling on commercial platforms (e.g. SAP Ariba) and Baringa's Digital Commercial Academy all enable the Government Commercial Function to work smarter.

Change can bring great opportunity

With renewed focus on cost savings across Government, Commercial Directors and their teams have a more vital role than ever to play in delivering value for money for everyone on essential projects. Changing the way things are done can feel daunting, especially at scale. But by challenging established processes and embracing new ways of working, significant savings and enhanced efficiencies are achievable.

Talk to Baringa to discover how our experience and collaborative approach can help unlock potential and address opportunities in *your* department.

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About the author

Sarah Ashley and **John Thompson** work in Baringa's Government and Public Sector team. They have recently advised on large and complex outsourcing projects for the Home Office and NHS England.

For support on how to get your Commercial function functioning more efficiently, contact Sarah.Ashley@baringa.com or John.Thompson@baringa.com www.linkedin.com/company/baringa/ | [@Baringa](https://twitter.com/Baringa)

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Developing and Supporting People Award

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Recognising excellence across learning, skills development, strengthening capability, and talent management, or demonstrating a highly effective contribution to promoting or improving health and wellbeing within the Civil Service.

IT Services Directorate

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

DVLA is on an ambitious digital transformation journey, whilst continuing to grow the skills and talent required to fulfil its strategic ambitions, keeping customers and employees at the centre. As one of the only in-house IT teams in government nurturing digital talent to achieve our ambitions is key to our success. We're taking a generational approach to skills development, as we look to Inspire, Attract and Grow potential across the region through a comprehensive schools, college, and apprenticeship programme. We've also created a culture of continual professional development and employee engagement with initiatives designed to support mental health and wellbeing.

Junior Leaders Networking Events (JLNE) Team

Cross-Government

The Junior Leaders Networking Events (JLNE) team has shown remarkable commitment and made tremendous achievements through intentionally developing, strengthening and building the capability of cross-government junior colleagues (AA-EO) over the last three years. In the context of the pandemic, and completely in addition to their day jobs, they have adapted their offer to deliver online and beyond their initial audience within the East, South East and London (ESEL) region. JLNE has impacted colleagues across 14 departments and several agencies, thus ensuring that our Civil Service junior talent is retained, have access to developmental opportunities and feel valued.

Liz Cox for leading and implementing the 'Progress in prison workshops' tracker

HM Prison and Probation Service

Liz has developed and supported the implementation of a Progress in Workshops Tracker in 76/117 prisons so far, having the potential to reach 54,000 prisoners. This was driven by a long-held passion to empower staff to develop the employability skills of prisoners nationally in prison workshops and industries. The tracker enables staff and prisoners to develop vital skills and improve life chances for successful employment on release, a key reducing reoffending priority. The project required careful navigation and negotiation with numerous stakeholders, showcasing excellence in our values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity, far exceeding the parameters of her remit.

Civil Service



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Diversity and Inclusion Award

Recognising those who work to embed diversity and inclusion, driving positive change for our colleagues and making the Civil Service a model, open and transparent employer to better serve the public.

Jackie Armstrong

Home Office: Immigration and Enforcement

Jackie Armstrong, the IE LGBT+ lead for the ODP (Operational Delivery Profession) inclusion award. In recognition for her incredible work in raising awareness for the LGBT + community, in building a more open and inclusive culture within Immigration Enforcement. She has really spearheaded work in promoting equality and inclusion in all business areas around LGBT+ issues. Moreover, and really in keeping with being a role model, she has done this selflessly as she is an ally and not part of the LGBT+ community.

National Muslim Network

Department for Work and Pensions

The DWP National Muslim Network (founded in 2019 by Aysha Malik) is endorsed by DWP's Faith and Belief Champion for supporting an inclusive workplace and embedding the DWP value 'We value everyone'. The network advanced the Diversity & Inclusion agenda by helping to demystify preconceptions and tackle unconscious bias using innovative channels. The DWP Wellbeing, Inclusion, Social Mobility and Health Team (WISH) has worked closely with the network who have helped develop plans to establish a DWP Faith and Belief Network to create a safe space for colleagues of all backgrounds to connect, learn, collaborate and share lived experiences.

Servicewomen's Health Improvement Focus Team (SHIFT)

Ministry of Defence

The House of Commons Defence Committee's report into 'Women in the Armed Forces' highlighted health and wellbeing (HWB) challenges our Servicewomen face that have an enduring personal effect on them and impact their ability to achieve their full potential in Defence and on Operations. SHIFT brought together Whole Force expertise in HWB, healthcare, human performance research, training, information, and communications to deliver an ambitious project within six months. The team's tireless dedication saw them delivering improvements for Servicewomen in all aspects of their HWB, especially menopause, breastfeeding, urination and menstruation, supported by a campaign to demystify women's health and educate the Chain of Command and colleagues.

SKILLS
Civil Service

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Best Use of Data and Technology Award

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Alice Rayner, Helen Heard – Kitchen Life 2 project team

Food Standards Agency

Food safety matters: there are around 2.4m cases of food-borne illness annually in the UK, costing approximately £9bn. In 2021 the Food Standards Agency (FSA) developed 'Kitchen Life 2'; a project that installs motion-sensitive cameras in kitchens to observe real life behaviour (cooking, cleaning and eating). Using a range of supplementary research techniques (including surveys, interviews and food diaries), findings are mapped to the COM-B behavioural framework to understand the rationale for behaviour and explore the "say do gap". The project, which is still live, is providing fresh insight for the FSA's risk assessment, policy development and behavioural intervention design.

DataMapWales

Welsh Government

DataMapWales is a multi-agency geoportal that serves as a source for public sector data in Wales, providing a shared data platform to members of the public and public authorities using open-source software and innovative ways of sharing new satellite imagery and other multi-agency data. DataMapWales is unique in the UK and highly innovative. It is a true multi-agency geoportal with direct data entry, automated data services to the public and private sector, massive increase in the speed of data transfer to support emergencies, and the team has been working with Mapio Cymru to introduce Welsh Language base mapping.

Team Phoenix

Department for Work and Pensions

DWP Digital has delivered a new Passport Benefit Checking Service that enables NHS Pharmacies across England to perform a real-time DWP benefit check, at the point of dispensing the medication. This provides confirmation that an individual is entitled to free prescriptions based on their benefit. Working in close partnership with NHS colleagues, the service was piloted initially in the North East of England and has now been rolled out nationally, not only saving the NHS c£240 million a year in administration costs but also ensuring citizens don't incorrectly pay for their medication.

Science and Innovation Award

Championing and using the best scientific insights available (including from academia and outside institutions) to support innovative policy design and delivery.

Antivirals and Therapeutics Taskforce

Department of Health and Social Care

This nomination recognises the exemplary use of scientific evidence by the Antivirals and Therapeutics Taskforce (ATTF) and its delivery partners, most notably the NIHR, to identify potential COVID-19 therapeutics, trial them as part of an advanced programme of clinical trials and deploy safe and effective treatments to UK patients. The ATTF used robust scientific evidence collected through horizon scanning for evidence of safety and efficacy generated by UK and global clinical trials, to make decisions about compound prioritisation, procurement and deployment to patients. As a result, the ATTF rapidly identified and made available nine COVID-19 treatments to UK patients.

Evidence Team, Centre for Connected & Autonomous Vehicles

Department for Transport

The CCAV Evidence Team has shown exceptional ingenuity, creativity and scientific rigour in designing and delivering an extensive behavioural research and engagement programme to support self-driving vehicle innovation, which will enable road safety improvements for citizens. Their ambitious roadshows involve self-driving vehicle demonstrations and a role-play game to immerse the public in policy considerations around the technology. The team have championed understanding and responding to public expectations and needs: the comprehensive and representative evidence base generated is already influencing policy development and public communications. The team delivered this from inception to operation, with limited resource and alongside other priority responsibilities.

Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The mNCEA programme provides a world-class evidence-base, and suite of tools where ecological, societal, and economic information is brought together in a holistic way. This improves our understanding of complex trade-offs faced in the sustainable use of the marine environment and is the first time where science and policy interactions are considered at a system level. The programme has innovation at its core such as establishing new ways of working and commissioning approaches in our interactions with ALBs, attracting private sector investments and match funding, establishing partnerships for delivering digital, AI innovation with underwater autonomous vehicles.

Evaluation and Analysis Award

Recognising development in the areas of evaluation and analysis for improved insights and to better inform our work.

Culture and Heritage Capital Team

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The Culture and Heritage Capital Programme (CHC) is a world-leading research programme to help the culture and heritage sectors articulate their impact on society. Our aim is to create a consistent approach, through sector-specific guidance that will enable social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) and the assessment of value for money (VfM) in appraisals and evaluations. The programme is experimenting and innovating with existing and new methodologies by taking a multidisciplinary approach, combining Economics, Heritage Science, and Arts and Humanities. To achieve this ambition, the programme has been designed collaboratively by multiple stakeholders with input from across industry and academia.

Evaluation of Family Hubs

Department for Education

Building and disseminating high-quality evidence on family hubs is key to effective rollout and implementation of integrated, high-quality family support across England. The DfE's Family Hubs Research and Analysis Unit has developed a comprehensive evaluation and analysis programme, collaborating with national and local partners and delivering with rigour, innovation and impact within and beyond Government.

The team's evidence is:

- impacting national policy and local practice
- ensuring effective transformation of local services and building local evaluation capacity saving public money by building effective family help, preventing escalation to expensive late intervention.
- improving outcomes for families and children.

Russia/Ukraine Economic Analysis Team

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

In 2022, economists in the FCDO responded to the unprecedented demands of the Russia / Ukraine crisis with a huge surge in resource, cross-team working and innovative use of data and analysis techniques. The team delivered outstanding analysis that shaped UK policymaking in real time on the full range of Russia and Ukraine issues and remains ongoing to shape policymaking as the conflict continues. The analysis was shared widely with international partners, helping secure UK objectives and building credibility

Civil Service

Project Delivery Award

Recognising skilled programme, project or portfolio management to deliver complex work to a high standard, in line with the Government Functional Project Delivery Standard.

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Despite having only 4.5 years instead of the usual 7, despite some of the wettest winters and hottest summers on record, despite the global pandemic; and despite global supply chain and workforce challenges, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Delivery Unit have worked tirelessly - across HMG and the Games partner organisations - to deliver a Games that was under budget, on time, and with a record attendance for any Commonwealth Games held in the UK. Birmingham 2022 was a global spectacle, a mega event that will leave lasting benefits for the city, region and UK.

Evolve Students Loan Company

In challenging, pandemic circumstances, the Student Loans Company (SLC) has secured the safe payment of billions of pounds to customers and higher education institutions, and in this challenging context also deliver a c£250 million digital transformation programme: Evolve. The Evolve programme recently received a Green IPA rating, has already delivered more than £50 million in benefits to government and has significantly improved the customer journey for those applying for student finance.

School Rebuilding Division

Department for Education

The School Rebuilding Programme is a project speed pathfinder replacing life-expired buildings with modern, energy efficient and carbon net zero buildings. Announced in 2020, we worked quickly to set up the programme, agreeing robust selection criteria, alongside designing and getting spades in the ground for the first schools in September 2021. There are now 161 schools being delivered. The project speed team called it an exemplar programme.

One Civil Service Award

Recognising excellent collaboration that spans the boundaries between administrations, government departments, agencies and bodies.

Cost of Living Payments to low income and disable benefit claimants

Cross-Government

In just 7.5 weeks, a cross-government policy, legal, analytical, communications and project team (from HMT, HMRC, DWP, MoD, OPC, GLD and DAs) designed the Cost-of-Living payment policy and delivered primary legislation enabling payments worth £15bn to be paid to 8million low-income families and 6million disabled people. The team worked collaboratively to problem-solve, meet time-critical deadlines, deliver objective policy advice, and produce legislation and complex delivery mechanisms to pay claimants across multiple benefit types. This project has significant national impact by delivering financial support to the most vulnerable citizens across the UK. By 22 July, 7.2million payments had been made to 99% of eligible low-income, DWP-benefit claimants and 1.2million HMRC payments were made to eligible tax credit claimants in early September.

Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill Team

Home Office and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill Team led expedited delivery of the Bill through all Parliamentary stages to Royal Assent in just 15 days – a critical component of the UK's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Coordinating measures across Home Office, BEIS, HM Treasury, FCDO, and working closely with the Devolved Administrations and operational partners (Companies House and the National Crime Agency), the Bill was passed at extraordinary pace. The Act had an immediate impact, with significant individuals sanctioned within hours of Royal Assent. Longer-term reforms will aid law enforcement to tackle national security priorities illicit finance and kleptocrats

The LAWMAKER Project

Cross-Government

The LAWMAKER project, led by Matt Lynch, has modernised the way in which legislation is drafted, amended and published. The project is a collaboration between Parliamentary Counsel in the Scottish and UK Governments, the Scottish and UK Parliaments and the National Archives. By using open data standards and cloud-based solutions to work across boundaries, the project has developed new digital tools that enable legislation to be drafted and shared more easily throughout the legislative cycle and improve how the resulting laws are made publicly available on the legislation website: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>



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Productive Partnerships Award

Recognising those who successfully build, maintain and make the most of strong relationships between organisations across different sectors (public, private and third).

CEOPS

National Crime Agency

This nomination is for the excellent collaboration between NCA officers and BAE Systems Ltd working in partnership with our international partners to tackle child sexual abuse (CSA). Officers from the NCA, BAE data analysts and BAE data architects worked together in a blended team to develop tooling that assisted and continues to assist, in the identification of CSA offenders globally. The intelligence gained from this tooling has enabled the safeguarding of hundreds of children across the world. It has also provided novel insight into the use of the internet in CSA offending, which is being used to influence industry partners and reduce offending worldwide.

Historical Institutional Abuse Implementation Branch

Northern Ireland Executive

A public inquiry into seven decades of historical institutional childhood abuse recommended the NI Executive should make a public apology. This was an emotive issue, with no consensus among victims on how it should be delivered. By engaging community-based partners and working closely with victims to understand their needs in both drafting the apology and logistical preparations, the team sensitively delivered a momentous event while overcoming multiple political, operational and COVID-related challenges. NI Executive Ministers from five different parties made a public apology to victims and survivors on behalf of government on Friday 11 March 2022. Survivors of historical institutional abuse welcomed the formal apology on behalf of the state.

Windrush Monument Team

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Windrush Monument team delivered on the manifesto commitment of creating a lasting legacy for the Windrush generation and their descendants in the form of the National Windrush Monument at Waterloo station. The team collaborated seamlessly with a wide range of delivery partners and senior external stakeholders to deliver a tribute that now stands testament to the strength of our communities in their diversity, and to the distinct contribution that the Windrush generation has made to our society. The monument was delivered on time and under budget and has been acclaimed as a significant moment in our nation's history.

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Many congratulations to all those shortlisted. We're honoured to have worked alongside some of the nominees to deliver measurable impact for staff and citizens.

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Rising Star Award

Recognising the potential of someone in the first five years of their Civil Service career.

Alexander Newton

Office for National Statistics

Alex is a recognised leader in government on automated and reproducible analytical pipelines (RAPs). He leads a game-changing digital transformation for analysis. He identified the importance and impact of this for government, developed the team, the strategy and the community, and established it at senior levels. Alex led the COVID Press Briefing slides and automated their data. He ensured the best data and evidence was used to inform decisions. Alex works tirelessly with others to ensure government makes best use of data and technology. His expertise and credibility are recognised across government at all levels.

Blake Kennedy

Home Office

Blake began his Civil Service career in 2018 as a mobile apprentice. He keenly identified an area of interest and was successful in applying to become an Immigration Officer on a Northwest enforcement team. Blake quickly settled into the demanding role, becoming a core member of the team, going above and beyond by volunteering to deploy to areas of operational priority. Blake seeks out opportunities to grow, developing his own skills and those of his peers. So, when the call for volunteers to assist with Operation Pitting arose in August 2021, Blake naturally stepped up to the fore.

Kelly Moore

Ministry of Justice

Kelly joined HM Prison and Probation Service as someone with first-hand experience of the criminal justice system, under the Going Forwards into Employment Scheme. She is a shining example of how someone can use their previous experience to transform the way we deliver services. Kelly has been instrumental to integrating community providers into our innovative 'Grand Avenues' project. She has brought partners, the local community, offenders and public along with our vision to radically change the way we deliver probation services.

Matthew Smith

HM Prison and Probation Service

Custodial Manager Matt Smith has injected zest through innovative concepts to create real-life rehabilitative opportunities for some of the most disadvantaged in society. In recognising the cathartic influence of environmental enrichments and animal therapy within the custodial milieu, Matt has grasped the opportunity to become the primary stakeholder in the development, application and throughcare of such tenets of innovation. Through his gusto and meticulous attention to detail Matt has developed strategies linked to the reduction of violence and self-harm.

Tassie Ghilani

HM Prison and Probation Service

Tassie has battled extreme adversity in her life, with experience of both the care and criminal justice systems. She joined MoJ in June 2021 via the GFIE scheme to improve life chances for those leaving prison and demonstrated exceptional policy aptitude and leadership in her work to improve outcomes for prison leavers. Her tremendous potential has been recognised by her securing a permanent appointment on promotion, and she now leads work to improve experiences and outcomes for prison leavers across MoJ.

Cabinet Secretary's Outstanding Leader Award

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

Angus Gray

Department for Work and Pensions

The Cost of Living Payments delivered by DWP provided vital support to more than 14 million people. Angus Gray stepped forward to lead urgent work to ensure millions of the most vulnerable people in the UK would receive help with the rising cost of living. By the end of September, more than 14 million people have received payments with millions more to come. He is a hugely respected, inspiring and supportive leader who maintained a focus on making deliverable policy while enabling his team and colleagues across DWP to deliver high quality work in challenging circumstances.

Haroona Franklin

Department of Health and Social Care

Haroona Franklin, NHS COVID Pass Programme Director, delivers seminal change in the way digital is used to support the NHS, economy and international travel. Her leadership has been integral to the success of the programme; she drives the cross-departmental, cross-nation and cross-specialism working that has ensured a world-leading product that does what it set out to achieve, is easy to use and furthers government goals of transforming patient care with digital technology.

Sara Rathore

Home Office

The Home Office Liaison Officer Team was formed at pace in response to Operation Pitting, the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War, during which HMG evacuated c15,000 individuals to the UK. These individuals were a combination of British nationals and their families, and Afghans eligible for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) having worked alongside British forces and other HMG teams. Sara Rathore was identified as an exceptional civil servant, transferring from her DHSC role as incident lead, managing NHS supply incidents and supporting Managed Quarantine Services, to build dynamic Home Office operational capability.

Programme of the Year Award

Recognising exceptional achievement from a programme anywhere across the Civil Service.

COP26 Unit

Cabinet Office

The COP26 Unit delivered the largest multilateral political event the UK has ever hosted, during a pandemic, reaching agreement among all 196 countries on ambitious action on a global existential issue. This entailed a massive logistical operation to safely gather 38,000 delegates in Glasgow including 120 world leaders, a bespoke global vaccination programme, leadership of the most complex multilateral negotiations process, and a series of initiatives to drive urgent practical action. The result - the historic Glasgow Climate Pact agreed by all countries, and more than 150 enhanced national pledges - accelerates action to reduce emissions, improve resilience and mobilise finance worldwide.

Creating Future Opportunities

HM Prison and Probation Service

59.1% of people sentenced to less than a year, re-offended within a year of release. The cost to the criminal justice system of dealing with the consequences of crime committed by ex-prisoners comes to at least £18 billion per year. The most prolific re-offenders are the hard to help cohort who struggle to access mainstream provision. The HMPPS Creating Future Opportunities (HMPPS-CFO) Team was established to seek out, secure and then use external funding to design, commission and implement innovative and ambitious rehabilitation services to the hardest to help offenders at no cost to HMPPS.

Kickstart Scheme

Department for Work and Pensions

The Kickstart Scheme is multi-disciplinary working at its best! Colleagues across DWP involved in Kickstart collaborated to support as many young people into Kickstart jobs as possible to reduce the chances of long-term unemployment. Teams showed incredible capability and resilience to get this ambitious project running so quickly in response to the pandemic. Colleagues embraced every challenge and change, worked together to come up with better ideas, shared expertise, innovated and created new ways of working to ensure that Kickstart was a success. This passion and dedication improved the service offered to employers and ultimately created valuable jobs for young people.

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