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CIVIL SERVICE WORLD 

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AWARD IN YOUR EAR

Full list of 2023
Civil Service Awards
winners

VANITY AFFAIR

Alexander Evans on ensuring the prestige of being a civil servant doesn't turn toxic

RISKY BUSINESS

The risk management profession explained



Lord Evans
PAMELA DOW
Estonia's tech chief

THE PROBLEM WITH MEETINGS

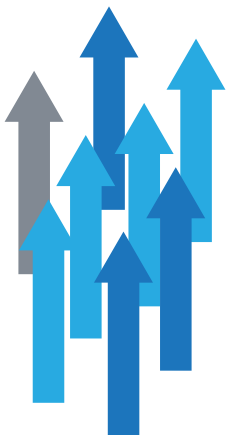
Former perm sec Una O'Brien solves your meeting woes



Exclusive interview

PETER SCHOFIELD

We meet the Department for Work and Pensions permanent secretary



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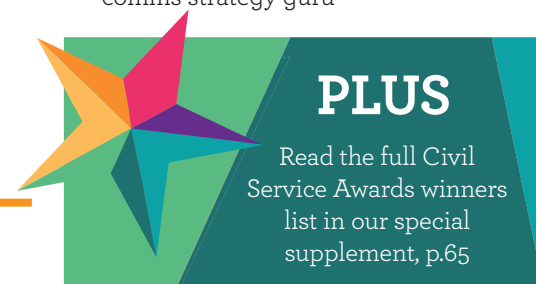
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FROM THE EDITOR

Over the next 12 months voters in 60 countries around the world will be heading to the polls. Whatever else 2024 will be, it will be a year of change.

Some UK civil servants, weary of the turmoil and psychodrama that has characterised the governing party over the last few years, might be looking forward to the change an election could bring. But even if we find ourselves with a stable, majority government by the end of this year, it's unlikely that we'll see a sudden end to the other challenges which have been consistently battering public services and their leaders.

Rising demand, constrained funding, skills shortages, infrastructure headaches, the promise and pitfalls of new technology – all of these will remain.

Recent analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that even if the next government could match previous levels of high performance in, say, schools and hospitals, it would still take seven years to reverse a recent widening of the education attainment gap between rich and poor and around a decade to recover levels of access in the NHS.

Those are daunting timelines. The good news is that the

civil service is full of people who want to drive change and who – as former deputy cabinet secretary Helen MacNamara put it in her evidence to the Covid Inquiry – “run towards broken things” to help fix them.

The bad news is that MacNamara also noted that a team made up of people “who all think individually they are going to save the day” does not make for a happy organisation or culture.

This type of hero leadership is prevalent across the civil service, incentivised and rewarded by a system that promotes people who do high-profile, minister-adjacent roles (see column p.14). It means that despite the many fine words in blogs and leadership statements, there is rarely enough emphasis put on building teams which work together to deliver long-term goals or on supporting the resilience of individuals to keep working on difficult challenges as the crisis moves on. In a year of change, with many years of hard reforming and recovery work ahead, it is not enough to rely on hero leaders and crisis teams.

The IPPR's analysis formed part of a report arguing for a new model of public service reform, one that moves away



from the targets, regulations and competition-driven methods of New Public Management, which underpinned New Labour thinking and lingered into the coalition years. Instead, the think tank makes the case for a “public service playbook” in which governments focus on prevention, personalisation and productivity in public services and use five drivers of improvement to achieve those goals.

The drivers – which include devolving power and building workforce capability – all seek to create an environment which supports the intrinsic motivation of public servants to bring about change. This is in contrast to the NPM model which used extrinsic factors such as targets and league tables, and which – the IPPR argues – is inadequate for the kind of wicked, systemic prob-

lems that public services face.

Embracing a new way of creating change might seem like a tall order for leaders when there is already so much flux, but now is an ideal time to explore new ways of working. When everything's up in the air anyway, why not take the chance to think about how things could be better once they settle back down? ■

CORRECTION

In Issue 325 (Autumn 2023) we included an incorrect biography for book reviewer Nabeela Rasul. Her biography should have read: Nabeela Rasul, civil servant passionate about better and inclusive policymaking and authentic leadership, formerly deputy director for leadership, talent & inclusion at Defra.

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INBOX

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Please try to limit letters to 150 words. CSW reserves the right to edit letters

Dear Jessica and Suzannah, I had to respond to the article about former civil service buildings, and the general impression that they were awful (*Issue 325*).



Maybe my memory is a misty haze of nostalgia, but I have to disagree! I spent many happy years in the old Marsham Towers buildings in the 1980s and early 90s, and also other long-departed buildings from the civil service estate like Lambeth Bridge House, Romney House and Kirkland House.

I started my career in 1984, in my mid-20s, as an EO in the Department of the Environment. The starting salary was in the range £4,728 to £8,492, with the actual starting salary dependent upon which “age point” you were on the scale. Looking back at the paperwork from my early career, it’s remarkable how formal everything was – standardised letters would begin with words like, “Further to you taking up duty on 10 September” and warn about the termination of appointment in the case of misconduct or unsatisfactory service. All this talk about duty and service may seem old fashioned, but in my opinion it instilled in new recruits the fact that their work was important.

Having signed the Official Secrets Act in Lambeth Bridge

House, I trotted across the Thames to Romney House, an elegant old building, formerly a hotel, with some fabulous marble and rather forbidding rooms. My original letter had advised me that my appointment was “subject to satisfactory completion of enquiries into your age, health and other matters”, so they had evidently concluded that I was young, fit and not a card-carrying communist. There was nothing at all in the induction paperwork about wellbeing, diversity, dealing with stress, facilities for disabled staff or other things that officials now (rightly) take for granted.

Romney House was a quiet and studious place, but my colleagues were not always so stiff and formal. I shared an office with my HEO boss, another EO and an AO (all men), there was a connecting door to the principal’s office (which would now be the Grade 7’s office) and the female assistant secretary (Grade 5) had a spacious office and personal secretary a few doors down. We had a rather boozy Christmas lunch in my first year, and later that afternoon the Grade 5 came into our room seeking some information, to be greeted (I kid you not) by the other EO with the words “there’s no point coming in here, we’re all pissed”. Fortunately, she took it with good grace.

My next few postings were in Marsham Towers. It’s true that a visiting American civil servant described the building to me as “a grey building for grey people”, but I found the place to be vibrant and friendly. Yes, we had to hang pints of milk in bags outside the windows to keep them cool, and there was

always the problem of heavy smokers with whom one had to share office space (one boss of mine had a penchant for cigars), but there was a great canteen serving proper food (steak pies, fish and chips and the like), an airy reception area, and the unforgettable annual Christmas party in the basement, where many a staid reputation was undone by riotous goings-on.

There was also a sense of community in the area, with proper shops like greengrocers and gentlemen’s outfitters, the local Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, a proper street market on Strutton Ground rather than today’s tacky “street food” stands, as well as a wider range of pubs, some of which had rather dubious reputations (I dare not speculate what went on behind the velvet curtain in one). It was a genuine mixed neighbourhood.

But for me there was one crowning glory at Marsham Towers: it’s where I met my future wife and romance blossomed. We were both private secretaries to junior ministers on the 18th floor (the ministerial corridor) of the South Tower,

and our eyes met across the photocopier, so to speak. She was in Michael Portillo’s office, I was across the corridor working for Peter Bottomley. Few people knew about an access stairway onto the roof, where you could get one of the best views in London and, more importantly, enjoy a clandestine snog. We were only caught once, by parliamentary clerk Linda, but she kept our secret. One other thing about being a private secretary was that you had a private parking space beneath the building, so I drove into work from Brixton every day. There was no congestion charge

or Ultra Low Emission Zone, and the department parking permit issuers were pretty lax so I kept my space for a long time after I left the private office!

My first Grade 7 job was in Kirkland House, 22 Whitehall, near Trafalgar Square. I was working on secondment to the Civil Service Selection Board. I had a huge office with a large meeting table, a view over Whitehall, and a fireplace (sadly no longer in use), and enjoyed daily visits from the tea ladies with their trollies of goodies. I felt very important. It was great being able to pop out at lunchtime into the beating heart of London. Thankfully we had a good evacuation plan, which we had to activate when the Provisional IRA launched its mortar attack on No.10 on a cold February day in 1991.

I returned to Marsham Towers in its final days in the 1990s. By then its fate was sealed, so minimal maintenance work was being done; bits were literally falling off. However, it was still great. I was part of the rail privatisation directorate, which had a strong *esprit de corps*. My team was leading on the

privatisation of the British Rail heavy freight and parcels businesses, which I managed to see through from initial inception and design to completion of the sales and subsequent National Audit Office examination – we got a clean bill of health. My team had a cosy office, worked hard

to deliver the privatisation, and felt proud of our work.

Happy days, and far removed from the anodyne workplaces of today.

Yours,

Graham Pendlebury CBE
Civil servant 1984–2019
(mostly DfT) ■



Graham Pendlebury

THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

CSW's perm secs round-up for 2023 provided yet another vintage year of insight from departmental leaders. **Tevye Markson** unwraps some takeaways

Civil service leaders have become accustomed to life in “permacrisis” in recent years, and 2023 was no different.

From cross-sector pay strikes and crumbling concrete to the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict, last year was relentless for officials. But there are also signs that civil servants are becoming battle-hardened through this collective experience, as illustrated by the latest CSW perm secs round-up.

In what will be his last

round-up entry before leaving the civil service, Cabinet Office permanent secretary Alex Chisholm said civil servants have a duty to be “calm and capable” and that the “myriad” challenges they have had to handle should make everyone “confident that we can cope with whatever tomorrow asks of us”.

The determination to overcome challenges in government was, perhaps, best exemplified by Jayne Brady, head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. She faced one of

the toughest tasks of any civil service leader, with officials continuing to take charge of affairs in the absence of

a Northern Ireland Executive – and having to find huge cuts to address Stormont’s budget deficit. Brady said

“There is so much passion and commitment for what we can do, and such great results when we collaborate and innovate – that energy is contagious”
Susannah Storey, DCMS



Rolling out

EV charging hubs

Opening the UK's largest public charging hub in Birmingham

NI civil servants “demonstrated incredible professional resilience” in 2023 “against a backdrop of global conflict, cost-of-living issues, stretched public services, the absence of our governing institutions and a very challenging financial position”.

The sense that the civil service has strengthened through adversity is also reflected in answers to our prompt: “Tell us three words that sum up your 2023...”, with “resilience” among the most popular picks.

Last year was also a time when perm secs had to adapt to significant machinery of government changes, with a rejig in February splitting up the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy into three new departments. Perm secs for the new organisations re-

“I can’t think of one major deliverable where the investment we’ve made in collaboration and joint working hasn’t paid off”
Antonia Romeo, MoJ

flected on a “non-stop” year of “immense complexity”.

Other themes that emerged include transformation, progress in relocating civil service jobs across the country and the exploration of AI.

Conversely, another big topic – the looming general election, which must take place by next January – didn’t get much attention in the round-up, with only Chisholm

bringing it up. He urged officials to “maintain the highest standards of commitment and performance” on either side of the vote and said it would be the “key challenge” for Cabinet Office leadership.

Meanwhile, our traditional fun Christmas question – which this year was: “What’s your favourite festive treat, and what makes you say: ‘Bah, humbug?’” – revealed some

very strong opinions about Christmas, including when decorations should go up, when present-buying should start, and the abbreviation “Xmas”. Many leaders had nothing but love for the season, with a quarter not having a single bad thing to say about the festive period.

There was, however, a divide on mince pies, with plenty indicating their love for the festive treat but two leaders admitting they are not fans, and one even suggesting they should go in the bin.

The answers also gave an insight into how the UK’s most senior civil servants like to unwind during the festive holidays, including sitting back and watching films with the family, playing Trivial Pursuit, and even refereeing a football match. If you ask us, never was a break so well deserved. >>



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With entries from leaders across government, the full round-up is well worth a visit. Below you'll find a flavour of some of the themes and highlights



Scan the QR code to go to our full 2023 perm secs round-up

Returning to the office

"As more people have come back to the office, I've realised how much I missed giggling with colleagues over something on the telly, or one of our misadventures (in love or otherwise)." *Paul Willgoss, vice-chair, Civil Service Disability Network*

On being brave

"We need to be bold and innovative, which can mean making brave choices. Over the summer we switched our self-assessment service to online, web-chat and chatbot support... we're evaluating the lessons from that trial and they're really encouraging" *Angela MacDonald, second perm sec, HMRC*

Pay

"It's essential we get our pay and reward strategy right. We need to strike the right balance between delivering value to the taxpayer, while still attracting the top talent that the civil service needs, and the public deserves." *Fiona Ryland, civil service chief people officer*

"Our colleagues are what makes GLD a precious place to work and this year I was thrilled to secure a beneficial pay case for many of our lawyers in delegated grades. I was sad that we were not successful on behalf of our other professions, but I am committed to continuing to work to make improvements through our pay and reward modernisation project." *Susanna McGibbon, perm sec, GLD*

New departments and new faces

"It's been absolutely brilliant getting to know a whole load of new colleagues, and building a new department that covers some of the most important and interesting areas of policy in government... I've seen people do really amazing things this year." *Sarah Munby, permanent secretary, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology*

"I was excited and honoured to be asked to lead the new department at the start of the year. I grew up in Liverpool in the '80s and saw firsthand what happened to com-

munities when investment dries up, businesses close and people lose their jobs. It's been rewarding to see the impact we've had over the last year. But most of all, it's felt non-stop!" *Gareth Davies, permanent secretary, Department for Business and Trade*

"Moving from the banking sector to Whitehall has been eye-opening, but UKEF's uniqueness for feeling, like you've got one foot in the civil service and the other in the private sector, has helped quite a bit. It's been a busy, demanding year but incredibly enjoyable." *Tim Reid, chief executive, UK Export Finance*

The tools you need

"The GOV.UK team's new approach, combining social media, generative AI and short-form video, will help us to build trust in democracy and tackle misinformation." *Tom Read, chief executive, Government Digital Service*

"What truly astonished me in 2023 was the ingenuity and innovation of many of my colleagues in quickly incorporating new tools into their work." *Fiona Ryland, CPO*

It never rains but it pours...

“2023 has been a year when NI civil servants have again demonstrated incredible professional resilience. We commenced the year with optimism and a focus on rebuilding post-pandemic. The reality was quite different as we entered 2023 against a backdrop of global conflict, cost-of-living issues, stretched public services, the absence of our governing institutions and a very challenging financial position. Despite – or perhaps because of – these tests, we asked even more of our people, who continued to deliver their best for those we serve.” *Jayne Brady, head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service*

“Nothing ever goes exactly to plan [...] so the autumn started off dominated by our work to manage RAAC [an aerated concrete used in schools and other buildings, now coming to the end of its lifespan]. I’m proud of how quickly we moved, and how few schools saw significant disruption – and that we’ve got a clear path to removing it all.” *Susan Acland-Hood, permanent secretary, Department for Education*

“Brexit, Covid, Cop26, Russia/Ukraine and now Israel/Gaza: these and the myriad other challenges of this era have made us more agile, imaginative and resourceful in our approach. We have greatly enhanced our expertise in digital, data and delivery. We should feel confident we can cope with whatever tomorrow asks of us.” *Alex Chisholm, civil service chief operating officer and Cabinet Office permanent secretary*

A call to be bold in 2024

“One of our central conclusions is that government must make faster decisions and ambitious goals must be backed up by policies of sufficient scale to move the dial. There are no perfect solutions and inaction – as well as action – has costs.” *James Heath, chief executive, National Infrastructure Commission*

Family

“Outside work, my personal priority is to spend as much time as possible with my teenage girls. I can suddenly see the moment coming when they’ll spread their wings – and though that’s wonderful, I’m realising how much I’ll miss them.” *Susan Acland-Hood, DfE*

“The real treat for me will be spending lots of time with my kids, who are now both teenagers, watching classic Christmas movies. My 13-year-old thinks he’s old enough for *Die Hard*, but honestly the jury is out on that one.” *Tom Read, GDS*

“I would have to say my favourite festive ‘treat’ is starting Christmas morning with a (sometimes rather chilly) run followed by watching my son play football on Boxing Day. I might even end up refereeing a match” *Sir Ian Diamond, national statistician*

So long, farewell

“My personal priorities before I finish my term in April are threefold. First, to help pull together a compelling reform and productivity plan for the next era. Secondly, to manage a smooth handover to my successor. And thirdly, to get ready to walk the Camino.” *Alex Chisholm, civil service COO*

“The commission has existed for over 170 years, and I’m aware that my time as CEO has been just another chapter in that long history. I am very proud of what we have achieved over the years that I have been here.” *Helen Stephenson, chief executive of the Charity Commission*

“2023 is my last full calendar year at the National Archives as my term will conclude by next summer. Having had the privilege of being chief executive and keeper since 2014, the organisation I will leave is very different from the one I joined.” *Jeff James, chief executive of the National Archives*

And finally...

“I am reminded of the words of Seamus Heaney: ‘Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.’” *Jayne Brady, NICS* ■

SSCL continues to build on a decade of transformational success

By transforming services through core and specialist digital solutions and innovation, SSCL is enhancing customer experience whilst enabling smarter public services. Here, SSCL outlines what the future looks like for shared services provision, and how its team intends to build on the gains over the past 12 months

Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL) is a leader in critical business support services for the largest government departments and agencies, the Ministry of Defence, Police and CITB across the UK.

After a year of dynamic change and growth – including celebrating its 10th birthday, SSCL is positioned to continue its transformative journey into 2024. A key driver in our futureproofing of service delivery and enhancing our offers to clients is the emergence of hyperautomation that includes AI and automation tools.

The use of this new technology builds on transformation projects that are already delivering more efficient and reliable services to customers. This year, we have designed and deployed multiple award-winning projects that have effectively revolutionised how organisations process information, deliver services and support their own customers.

From implementing digital transformative solutions to streamlining workflows, we continually improve our service delivery and optimise resource allocation for both our business and our clients.

The heart of transformation is new technology

We recognise that omnichannel and speed-to-resolution are key in today's hyper-connected world and delivering exceptional customer service is paramount. Customers are keen to choose how they interact with our teams and solutions to get the answers they need fast. SSCL specialises in moving time-consuming manual processes to automated and intuitive solutions to improve accuracy, efficiency and compliance.

Throughout 2023, SSCL delivered an award-winning digitisation project. A perfect example of collaboratively working with our clients throughout the process, we used our own team's transformational knowledge and harnessed clients' feedback. To date, over 260,000 digital forms have been processed following the introduction of our digital solution, and for context this is approximately 5,000 forms processed per week – totalling over £3bn in payments.

Since its deployment, the solution has had profound transformational success; it has revolutionised how we process forms and how our clients process their information too. The new

solution's success has given clients the confidence to promote the use of digital forms with their internal users and encourage critical business and cultural change.

A holistic approach

We deliver automation, robotics, vetting and artificial intelligence services to our clients. We know that client expectations, business challenges and technology are ever-changing. That's why we continually optimise the use of innovation and technology in our services.

SSCL recognises that to build on the success of the last 12 months, we must continue to harness the potentials of hyperautomation and that the future of business processing lies in new technology, new ways of working and transformation.

By adopting and embracing new platforms that offer customers the opportunity to make a significant shift in the way businesses operate, SSCL is helping clients to meet their service demands, plot their next steps and successfully deliver the public services for today and tomorrow.

Both SSCL and our parent company, Sopra Steria, are continuing to make

significant investments in the latest technologies and industry partnerships which include AI and Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

Investing in hyperautomation for the future

SSCL's investment in automation solutions has had a positive impact on how we deliver our services, but what about the future?

There are elements of shared services that continue to be manual. We understand that continuous improvement goes hand-in-hand with growth and recognise that hyperautomation will be supported by new technologies in this ever-evolving, hyper-connected world.

Enhancements, including AI, are providing an evolution in user experience and SSCL's development of business transformation programmes delivers an enhanced user experience for business critical (back-office) services. These advancements are helping to drive productivity of UK civil servants, and ultimately deliver operational savings.

Security as standard

We have over 10 years' experience working with a wide range of government clients and understand the need for confidentiality in all areas of our business. AI has the potential to revolutionise how we work, enrich our interactions with technology and create new opportunities for our colleagues.

However, new technology can

pose new threats, and as with all our systems we continually assess for security risks. SSCL's investment into automation and AI-enabled technology will employ a robust programme to ensure our security measures are of the highest standard and good practice is in place throughout every touchpoint within our organisation.

Keeping it human

It's not just technology that SSCL is investing in – it's people too. At SSCL, our people play a key role in delivering our strategy for our clients – they are the DNA of our organisation. We consider them a fundamental investment to building a more robust and dynamic business for the future.

Our 3,100-strong team of highly skilled experts possess a unique blend of public and private sector experience and are well-placed to understand our clients' needs and priorities. By using automation for some parts of the process, our services maximise human impact in the places it matters most. That includes being the decision-maker when using AI tools.

Our people touch the lives of 550,000 public sector workers across the UK every year and their knowledge and commitment has helped save taxpayers over £750m to date. As we continue to futureproof our organisation, we look at enhancing all aspects of the business – from the technology we use to the people we recruit.

SSCL empowers our colleagues

to benefit from the value new technologies bring; meaning our customers have a more seamless and personalised customer experience:

- Our groupwide journey has started with training offered in a multitude of areas and a colleague development hub.
- SSCL has a working environment where colleagues are involved in decisions that affect them and feel trusted and supported when creating suggestions and ideas.
- Everybody has a part to play and a say in how SSCL meets its future demands.

Our customer's needs are constantly developing, and we are striving to enhance our product offer to exceed expectations and meet demand. We recognise that to deliver on these demands there needs to be considerable investment in more advanced AI and conversational analytics.

Leveraging the power of hyperautomation, SSCL and Sopra Steria are delving into data analysis to uncover valuable insights that empower businesses to make more informed decisions. We are well-positioned to assist clients in not only succeeding but exceeding!

As AI continues to shake up the business landscape, Sopra Steria and SSCL are embracing the transformation and leading the way for the future, ensuring they continue to be successful for their customers in this evolving digital landscape.



MOVERS & SHAKERS

Want to hone your dinner party gossip about who's in, who's out and who's shakin' it all about? Look no further than CSW's quarterly guide to all the key moves in government

If you would like to let us know about a move in your team please email csw.editor@totalpolitics.com



CHISHOLM SET FOR NEW PATH

Cabinet Office permanent secretary and civil service chief operating officer **Sir Alex Chisholm** (*below*) has announced plans to leave government in the spring.



By the time he steps down, Chisholm will have served in his current role for four years. Prior to this he was perm sec at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Chisholm was briefly perm sec of the Department for Energy and Climate Change before the creation of BEIS in 2016. He ran the Competition and Markets Authority from 2013 to 2016.

The Cabinet Office recruitment campaign to find Chisholm's successor offered a salary of up to £185,000.

Chisholm told CSW that he plans to walk the Camino de Santiago in Spain after he leaves the Cabinet Office in April.

WELL-QUALIFIED

Sir Ian Bauckham has become interim chief regulator at qualifications watchdog Ofqual, following the departure of **Dr Jo Saxton**.



Bauckham (*above*) has been chair of Ofqual for the past three years but is standing down from that role while he serves as interim chief regulator. He will also stand down as chief executive of the Tenax Schools Academy Trust.

Education secretary **Gillian Keegan** said Bauckham's experience would be "invaluable" to Ofqual.

Saxton is due to take up a new role as chief executive of higher-education admissions service UCAS.

THE BOURGEOIS, SEE?

The Government Property Agency has appointed **Mark Bourgeois** as interim chief executive following the departure of **Stephen Boyd** at the end of November.

Bourgeois (*above, right*) has more than 30 years of experience in commercial real-estate leadership, including serving as managing director of the UK and Ireland divi-

sion of developer and investor Hammerson and as executive director at Capital & Regional.



The agency said Bourgeois' focus will be on "maintaining momentum" on the GPA's work to deliver a smaller, better-connected, better-quality and greener government property estate. In October the GPA hired **Lisa Commane** (*below*) as its chief operating officer. She joined from water-services regulation authority Ofwat, where she was also COO.



FOR THE RECORD

National Archives chief executive **Jeff James** (*below*) is set to leave next summer after serving a second five-year term at its helm.



The organisation, which is headquartered at Kew in south-west London, has a staff of more than 550 and an annual budget of £50m.

In a recruitment campaign that closed in November TNA offered a salary of up to £145,000 a year to find an "inspirational leader with a breadth of expertise" to replace James and take the archives through a "transformational decade".

ETHICAL PICK

MPs have backed former British Army **Lt Gen Doug Chalmers** to become the next chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

He has now succeeded **Lord Jonathan Evans** at the helm of the ethics watchdog, which was created in 1994 as

part of the Major government's response to persistent sleaze allegations in Westminster.



Former MI5 chief Evans' five-year term as chair of CSPL ended in October.

Chalmers (*above*), who saw active service in Afghanistan and Iraq, finished his 37-year military career with a three-year stint as deputy chief of defence staff, responsible for military strategy and operations. He has served as master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge since October 2021 and will continue in that role as CSPL chair.

PROBATION PROSPECT

Parole Board chief executive **Martin Jones** (*below*) has been named as the government's preferred candidate to become the next HM chief inspector of probation for England and Wales.



Members of parliament's Justice Select Committee have also endorsed his appointment, meaning Jones is set to succeed **Justin Russell** in the role.

Russell stepped down as HMCIP at the end of September. **Sue McAllister** has been serving as chief inspector on an interim basis since the beginning of October.

Jones has a three-decade career in the justice system and has run the Parole Board since 2015.

INFRASTRUCTURALLY SOUND

The National Infrastructure Commission has appointed former Transport for London managing director for planning **Michèle Dix** (*below*) as a commissioner. Chancellor **Jeremy Hunt** said Dix's decades of experience in the transport sector would be a boost for the commission, which is chaired by **Sir John Armitt** and overseen by the Treasury.



"We need high quality infrastructure to deliver growth and boost productivity," Hunt said. "Michèle will help ensure that the National Infrastructure Commission has the right skills and talent to help deliver the infrastructure we need."

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

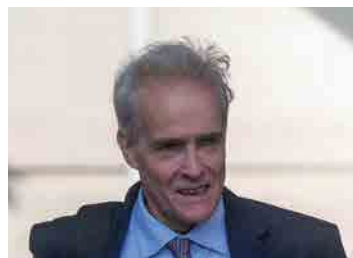
Long-serving Debt Management Office chief executive **Sir Robert Stheeman** has

announced he will step down from the role in June.

Stheeman became DMO chief exec in 2003, after spending 16 years at Deutsche Bank as director of its debt capital markets group.



In his 20 years heading DMO the HM Treasury executive agency has raised more than £3tn of borrowing for the government. **Eleanor Lyons** (*above*) has been appointed to take up the role of independent anti-slavery commissioner, a position that was established by the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Then-home secretary **Suella Braverman** confirmed her selection in October. Lyons was previously deputy children's commissioner for England. **Rob Fletcher** has been appointed as permanent chief executive of Magnox Ltd, the government-owned company tasked with decommissioning UK nuclear sites. Fletcher had served as interim chief exec of Magnox since May. Magnox has now rebranded as Nuclear Restoration Services. **Charlie Taylor** (*below*) has been reappointed for a second three-year term as chief inspector of prisons. His current term will run until 31 October 2026. ■



GOING, GOING, GONG

Max Hill, former director of public prosecutions at the CPS, was named a KCB in the 2024 New Year's Honours list for services to law and order.

Sir Gareth Rhys-Williams, who has been CCO at the Cabinet Office since 2016, was named a CB for public service, along with former HMPO chief **Abi Tierney** and **Ruth Hannant** and **Polly Payne**, job-share directors general for policy at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Jonathan Marron, director general of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities in the health department was also named a CB.

Professor Penny Endersby, chief executive of the Met Office, received a CBE for services to meteorology, defence, science and technology.

Former national security adviser **Sir Stephen Lovegrove** was made a KCMG while Department for Business and Trade second permanent secretary **Crawford Falconer** was made a KCMG, as was **Thomas Drew**, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office director general for defence and intelligence.

Anthony McGee, director of the Ministry of Defence's Ukraine Task Force, received a CBE for public service and **David Levy**, senior community outreach adviser in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Ukraine Humanitarian Taskforce, received an MBE for services to refugee resettlement. **David Olney**, the MoD's assistant head for Ukraine, security policy and operations, and **Iain Reeve**, head of the Department for Transport's Ukraine Rail Response Team, received MBEs for services to defence and services to rail aid in Ukraine respectively.

ALEXANDER EVANS WIELDING A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

PRESTIGE, PROPERLY PRACTISED, CAN ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO JOIN THE CIVIL SERVICE AND KEEP GIVING THEIR BEST. BUT IT CAN ALSO BE TOXIC

It's tempting to buy the line that the civil service has lost prestige and has become a less attractive career. But is that true? Salaries remain challenging, particularly for lower-paid civil servants (especially those in London). Pensions aren't as generous as they were, although a career average defined-benefit scheme is worth more than most private sector defined-contribution plans.

Yet graduates in their tens of thousands still want to be civil servants. The civil service Fast Stream remains highly competitive. It roughly matches Goldman Sachs and other top management consultancies for competitive recruitment – no mean feat when salaries are so different. And most stay in the civil service, even if attrition levels rose to the highest level for a decade in the period 2021 to 2022.

Even so, the civil service departure rate remains low, with less than 10% of civil servants resigning. As the Institute for Government points out, “civil service external turnover is relatively low compared to other organisations”. The increased turnover figures in the period 2021 to 2022 followed an exceptional Covid year of lower turnover in from 2020 to 2021.

There's a mismatch between what civil servants report in staff surveys and what they do. Each year, some 18 to 22% of staff report they plan to leave within the next 12 months or sooner. That sentiment is not reflected in actual departures. Total turnover every year in the last decade has usually been about half of this. The presumed appetite to leave may reflect challenges of motivation on pay or engagement, although many civil servants also report a sense of mission and engagement with their role in government. Many value jobs they perceive as secure, even if political and corporate messaging is that the civil service isn't a “job for life”. The high number of civil servants still on permanent contracts jars with this line.

Prestige matters, though it's a double-edged sword. We want

public service to be appealing so we can get the right people into it and keep officials motivated. A sense of professional elan encourages officials to go above and beyond, as we saw during Covid and across the many crises that the public sector continues to respond to. It can foster goodwill and effective team building. And if stewarded rightly, it can encourage a culture of commitment to citizens, outcomes and collective excellence.

But prestige can also be toxic. One infectious disease for any competitive institution is an outsized sense of exceptionalism. In the diplomatic service, I called this “EOV” – early onset vanity – the risk of taking yourself too seriously once you've been called “Your excellency” a few times. There's also a deeper challenge around prestige that is linked to the internal dynamics of the civil service. Some roles and some departments enjoy higher internal prestige than others: the lure of the centre, the insider privilege of private office, the ‘importance’ of high-profile strategy, policy, and crisis

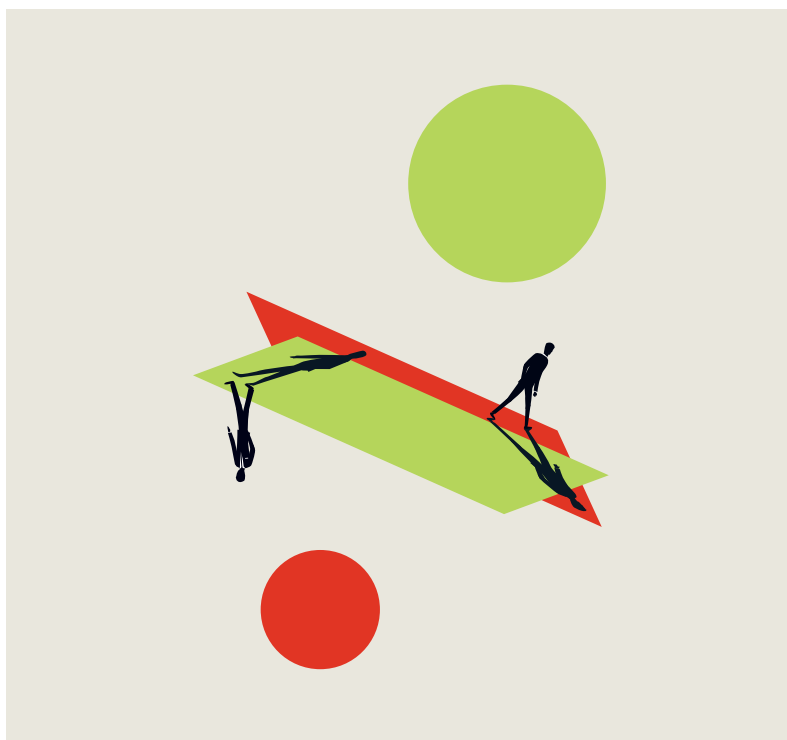
“In the diplomatic service, I called this sense of exceptionalism ‘EOV’ – early onset vanity”

roles. This can foster a ‘West Wing, East Wing’ dynamic. The West Wing consists of those working closely with ministers on strategy and policy, or whose jobs give them access to the tastiest morsels of insight (and yes, that includes you in the press office). The East Wing includes those on the delivery or operations side of government: managing services at scale, delivering directly for citizens, or ensuring the cross-government functions operate effectively.

East Wingers and West Wingers rarely swap sides in government. Too many live a professional life entirely on one side of this invisible – but well understood – wall. The senior management structures of many central departments are dominated by West Wingers. This complicates making sure we properly value what civil servants do. We live in a world where prestige, properly practised, can encourage people to join the civil service and keep giving their best. But one question the government and civil service leadership could focus on more is how to work to make prestige

a consistent asset rather than a sometime liability, both for the civil service as a whole and to bridge the West Wing-East Wing gap. ■

Professor Alexander Evans is programme director of the MPA in Data Science for Public Policy at the London School of Economics and a former senior civil servant



UNA O'BRIEN NICE TO MEET YOU?

A GOOD MEETING REQUIRES MORE THAN A TIGHT AGENDA – THE WAY WE PREPARE, LISTEN AND ENGAGE IS VITAL TO DEVELOPING PRESENCE AND IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

Too many; time wasting; little value – common refrains when it comes to meetings. Even with the wizardry of co-working software it's still true that – love or loathe them – for most of us meetings are wired into the working week. Virtual meetings, brilliant in many ways, have failed to shift the feeling that meetings soak up too much time and are more likely slowing us down than helping get things done.

Yet it doesn't have to be this way. Well-designed organisation wide-protocols, with standards for things like agendas, papers, duration and decision rights should be the norm. Such basic "meeting hygiene" helps to make effective use of everyone's time, enabling good quality discussion, co-ordination and better decision making. Team leaders, project managers and people responsible for regular meetings would do well also to look to their own meetings and ask participants: "What's bugging you and what needs to change?" Research by Forbes Coaches' Council in 2022 suggests that the five things employees most crave to address their negativity about meetings are purpose, action plans, manageable duration, good calibre chairing and clarity about why they personally are in the room. We all need to do a regular refresh of meeting habits and show that we care about getting better value from this time together.

Another reason to think about meetings differently is that they're central to building productive relationships at work. That's why the way we behave in them really matters. Recently, I asked a cross-section of leaders and aspiring leaders from the civil service and wider economy to share their insights. Here are a few examples that best encapsulate the feedback:

What does the term "presence" in meetings mean to you?

"If you have presence people sense through what you say – or don't say – and your attention that you're a person whose intentions are positive and your opinion worth listening to. It means not fiddling with your phone, ensuring you look towards people who are speak-

ing, that you are fully engaged and when you intervene you have thought carefully about what contribution you want to make."

What do you notice about colleagues who bring an influential presence to a meeting?

"They rarely dominate discussion; rather they listen attentively and when they speak usually reference points made earlier by others. They tend to build on or synthesise views, while being generous in their acknowledgement of others' contributions." "The best examples are people who challenge well; who listen to others and who are able to bring context with clarity and insight that moves the discussion forward."

What do you do to make your presence heard and felt?

"I know what I should do but often still fail to do it! Confident body language, eye contact, introducing myself to others on arrival, sitting forward and showing engagement and readiness to speak and share views when appropriate, intervening if there are difficult conversations or disagreements... not speaking too quickly or devaluing my own contributions by downplaying them, not saying "sorry" unnecessarily!"

When is your presence at its best?

"When I'm feeling confident and well rested... When I've thought about the subject under discussion; not necessarily a lot of prep, but where I have enough mental bandwidth to engage with it in a meaningful way."

What evidence could indicate your presence is influential?

"When your contribution turns or reinforces the direction of the discussion or conclusions. Does it appear to energise people? Do others pick up on your ideas and run with them? Do they ask for your continuing involvement?"



"We all spend too much valuable time in meetings for them not to be effective"

However well organised and chaired a meeting, we know instinctively there's still the question of our personal presence: how do we show up; what do we do and say; can we support our points with evidence or are we taking the discussion down rabbit-holes? Choosing to make small changes to how we behave and participate, such as preparing in advance, actively listening to others and contributing to the meeting's aims, can make the experience much more energising and purposeful. That in turn raises the likelihood our meetings will become more effective, and maybe even enjoyable! ■

Dame Una O'Brien is a leadership coach with the Praesta partnership and a former permanent secretary and the Department for Health and Social Care

DAVE PENMAN PLAN 60:40 FROM OUTER SPACE

MINISTERS' DRIVE TO MAKE CIVIL SERVANTS SPEND AT LEAST 60% OF THEIR TIME WORKING FROM OFFICES ISN'T BACKED BY EVIDENCE. IT'S A PITCH TO A VOTER BASE THAT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND MODERN WORK

In Douglas Adams' classic *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, hyper-intelligent pan-dimensional beings designed Deep Thought, the most powerful computer ever made – with one exception – to come up with the Answer to The Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything. It took 7.5m years and, of course, the answer was 42.

In the civil service, it would appear our “ultimate question” is what proportion of time should be spent in the office. I'll let the jokes write themselves about ministers and Deep Thought, but their answer – 60 – is equally perplexing.

Hybrid working is hardly a new phenomenon. The reduction in the Whitehall estate since 2010 and the development of hubs by HM Revenue and Customs and other departments are predicated on agile working. Reduce the size of the estate (saving, you know, hundreds of millions of taxpayer pounds), have flexible high-quality workplaces and bingo jingo, everyone is happy – taxpayer, civil servant and management. When the plans



“It is simply a stick to beat the feckless *wokerati* with”

for the Places for Growth programme were first developed, this was again based on the premise that people could work flexibly across multiple locations. Senior roles could be moved out of London because you didn't need to be in the same location as other members of your team, or even ministers.

It was a journey on which the civil service was already well under way and one of the few competitive advantages it had in the employment market, given how far behind it is on pay. It's one of the reasons why it was able to pivot so quickly under lockdown to home working. Across the economy, often in areas that had a less well-travelled path on flexible working, the lockdown demonstrated that employers could still make money and deliver whilst staff had greater flexibility.

Organisations across the globe are struggling to work out what suits best. It was clear to me early on that this was a profound shift in the dynamic of employment for some. The Great Resignation in the United States may be overstated at times, but it meant workers were choosing employers who offered flexibility. Work-life balance

was suddenly a greater feature of the employment offer. If employees had demonstrated that they could still deliver the same for their employer but not have to come into the office every day, why were they being forced to? What was being produced, rather than where, was a question many organisations had never even contemplated.

It's even more difficult in complex organisations like the civil service. Nearly half a million staff, several hundred different employers doing very different work. Tens of thousands of different roles, teams and locations. Staff in the same team, never mind directorate or location, may be able to work differently depending on their role. As is widely recognised, different jobs have different requirements at different times. Those new to a role, employer or even employment, might benefit from different arrangements. Managers may have different demands from those they manage. Add in for good measure geographically-dispersed teams, the complexities of hot desking arrangements and individual preferences and ways of working. It's an area of management that is focused on the micro rather than macro. For every anecdote on how this has transformed the work-life balance, there will be one where the lack of structure and contact is demotivating. There are countless good and bad examples of how this is operating. In short, it is, as my daughter says, “trifficult”.

What isn't trifficult though, is working out that a top-down politically-motivated diktat is not the solution. There is no evidence that 60% is the answer. We know because we've asked repeatedly. There is some evidence that hybrid is better than full remote working, but beyond that there is no magic number. And 60% has quite literally been plucked from thin air by ministers to suit their political agenda.

Civil servants know that the 60% has absolutely no bearing on the reality of their working practice. Whether they prefer a balance one way or the other, the 60% rule only demonstrates that who-

ever came up with it does not understand – and probably does not care – whether it is practical, manageable or preferable. Ministers can talk wistfully about collaboration and watercooler moments. Those absolutely have their place in a workplace dynamic. Working out how and when to create those, to bring meaning to the benefits of the office, is exactly what management need to do. As has been said by wiser people than me, neither a bottom-up nor top-down approach to these issues works. I do not pretend that the current state of play is ideal for everyone, far from it. But the 60% rule has nothing to do with this. It is simply a stick to beat the feckless *wokerati* with, and play to a voting base that similarly doesn't understand the modern world of work or public services.

And like all of those attacks – which are clearly coming back into vogue as an election approaches – it simply further undermines the morale of half a million public servants, at a time when the country needs the opposite from its elected leaders. ■

Dave Penman is general secretary of the FDA union

CHARLOTTE PICKLES THE PROBLEM WITH PEOPLE

FAILURE TO GRASP POOR PERFORMANCE AND PAINFULLY SLOW RECRUITMENT PROCESSES ARE IMPEDING GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO DELIVER FOR CITIZENS

Whitehall has a people problem, and civil service HR appears to be at the heart of it. A recent report by the National Audit Office (see p48 for details) provided yet another damning indictment of a system lacking that most vital of organisational attributes: talent management.

High performance starts with building brilliant teams, which, by extension, means ensuring efficient and effective processes are in place for removing poor performers. Yet the NAO found that three of the 16 main departments could not even say how many of their staff were underperforming, and almost two-thirds had no idea what happened to those they classified as such.

During the coalition, when I worked as an adviser to the secretary of state for work and pensions, I asked a senior official what the process was for managing out those failing to make the grade: only those who fail to turn up to work or are persistently late can be managed out, I was told. This, and the NAO's analysis, point to a system that would rather avoid difficult conversations.

We're a decade on, and evidence would indicate it hasn't improved. In our recent publication *Civil Unrest*, authored by former civil servant Amy Gandon, many of the former and current officials interviewed were damning about this failure to address poor performance. "If you have a poor performer", explained one, "the easiest way to get rid of them is to encourage them to apply for promotion and help them with their behaviours, which are cookie cutter, and then brush it off on someone else. It needs to change so that we're not just passing people around the system... if there is poor performance, there should be repercussions."

Another pointed out that a model in which poor performers "never get sacked" is "demotivating" for hard workers; and one person argued that even poor performers "being bad managers and acting like bullies... just carry on getting

promoted and moving on to the next job because of the system". You can see why Whitehall has a retention problem.

A second issue highlighted by the NAO is the slow and cumbersome approach to hiring. The average time to hire was over three months, with the Department for Work and Pensions taking an average of a third of a year to get someone in post. That's before including security vetting, with can add on several months more.

Almost a decade ago, Catherine Baxendale's review of SCS external hires cited this ludicrous inefficiency as one of the barriers to bringing in outside talent. "It was far too long - I was tempted to go off and do other jobs," one interviewee said. Baxendale compares this unfavourably with the private sector, which government is actively trying to entice people from.

One of the unintended consequences of sclerotic hiring processes is the development of, as one interviewee for *Civil Unrest* put it, a "shadow" system for filling roles. "The proper HR processes aren't working for people, so there's a shadow system that's being set up, which is one that I have benefited from. Temporary teams are stood up, and people are TP-ed into them," they said.

That may be a pragmatic response, but it exacerbates the already sizeable challenge of civil service homogeneity. As another insider put it, "all you're doing is allowing people of a particular type to get ahead."

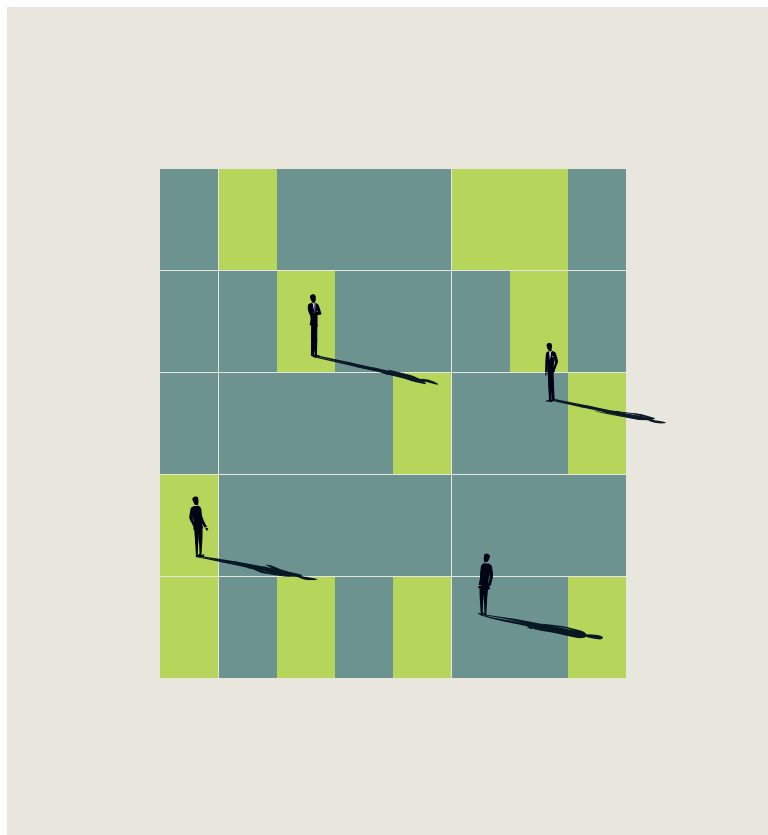
Both the failure to grasp poor performance and the painfully slow recruitment processes are directly impeding Whitehall's ability to deliver for citizens. These HR failings are undermining the very purpose of HR: to enable high-performing teams, filled with diverse talent, based on meritocratic principles.

At a recent Reform event, Pamela Dow, the founder and former head of the Government Skills Campus, posed a rhetorical question on Whitehall

reform: "why was everything so exhaustingly hard and hard won?" Anyone interested in building a more effective government machine should take note

of her answer: because "interest in people and human capital and the workforce sits in corporate HR - it shouldn't, it's too important for that... if you change one thing, take it out of corporate HR". ■

Charlotte Pickles is the director of Reform



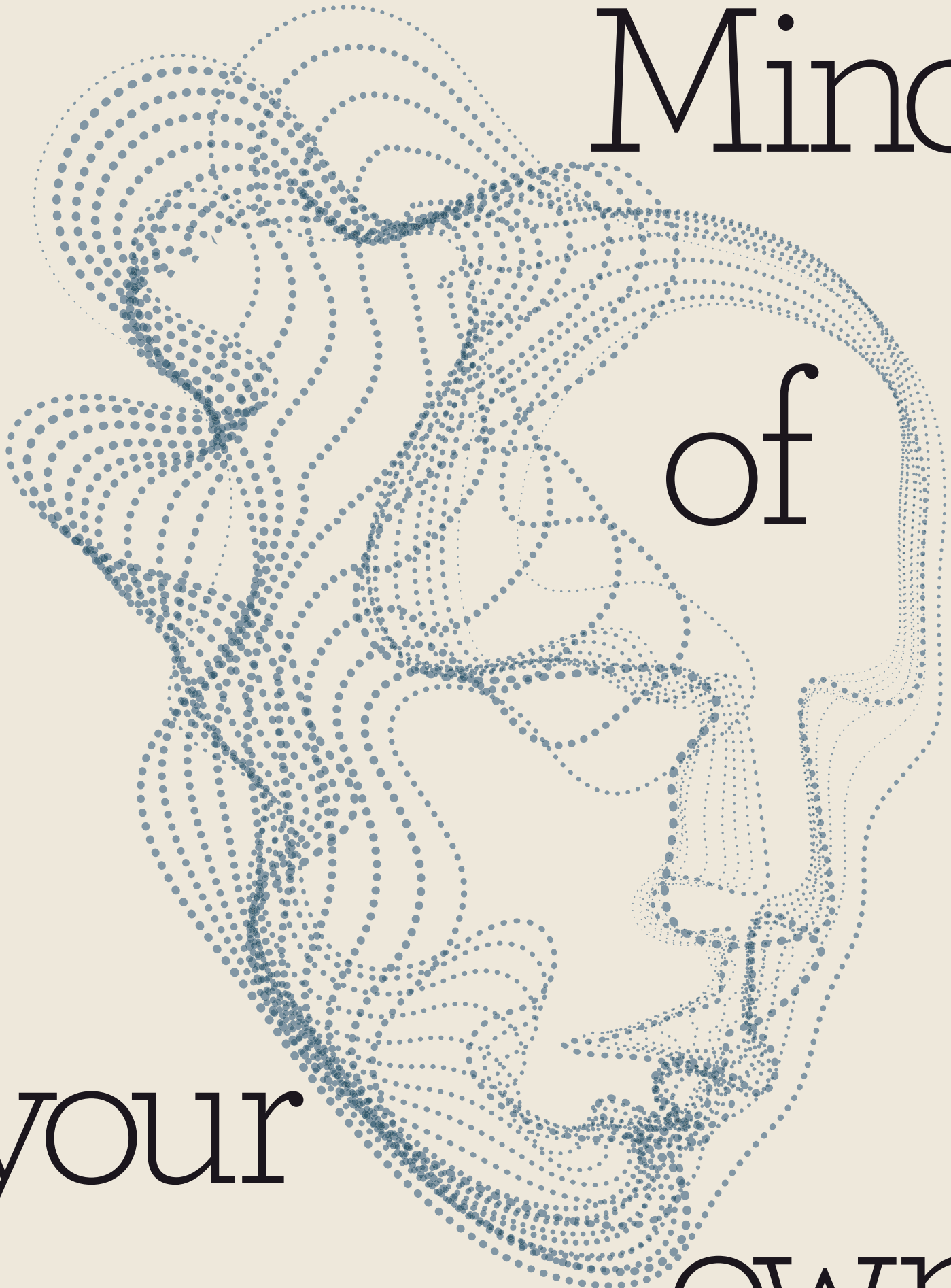
“The NAO report points to a system that would rather avoid difficult conversations”

Mind

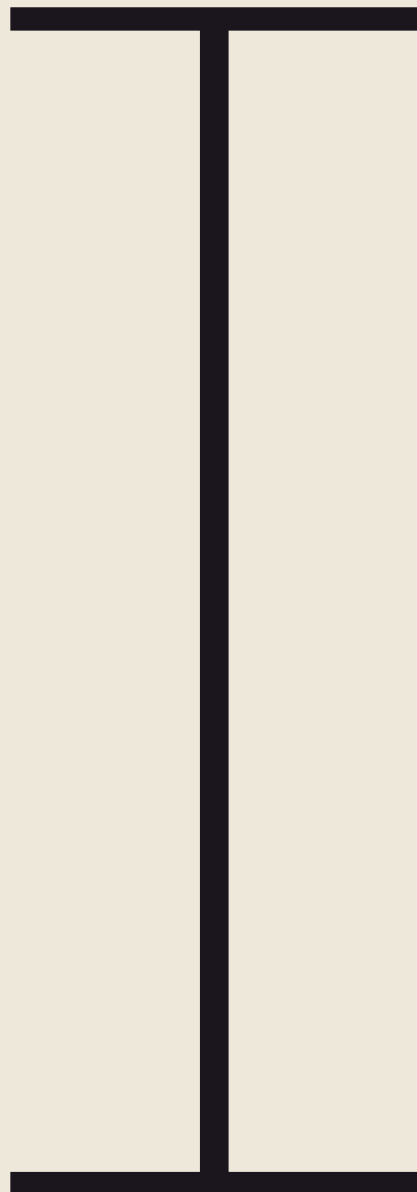
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How can the civil service set up the conditions in which neurodivergent staff can flourish, and deliver their best for citizens? **Tim Gibson** seeks expert insight



In 2003, a research paper appeared in the *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine* entitled: “Did Alan Turing have Asperger’s Syndrome?” The authors, Henry O’Connell and Michael Fitzgerald, compared traits of character reported in Turing’s biography and by his contemporaries with the criteria for diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome, which were formally recognised nearly 40 years after his death. They argued there is “ample evidence” to suggest the famous code-breaker had the condition. No longer a standalone diagnosis, what was then known as Asperger’s is now recognised as part of the autism spectrum, and Turing is widely believed to have been autistic.

In their closing remarks, O’Connell

and Fitzgerald added: “One wonders what more [Turing] might have achieved had his particular talents been fostered, and whether he might have had a happier and more fulfilled life in the long term.”

It is a challenge worth considering even today, with far greater understanding of the range of conditions known broadly as “neurodivergence”. Is enough done to support people who are hardwired to think and behave differently? How do employers help such members of the workforce to flourish?

Changing cultures

Today, one in seven people in the UK is recognised as neurodivergent (approximately one in five of the working population) – with many more likely to self-diagnose.

The term neurodiverse refers to people whose brains function differently from the perceived “norm”, meaning they learn and process information in distinctive ways. It is an umbrella term that encompasses conditions including Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. As well as differences in brain processing, some neurodivergent people can behave unconventionally or experience awkwardness or anxiety in social situations, as the example of Turing evinces.

Because of these differences, and despite greater recognition of their conditions and needs, neurodivergent staff report feeling worried about receiving equal and fair treatment from employers.

Consider, for example, recent research undertaken by global assistive technology specialist Texthelp. It found that 19% of neurodivergent people have had a negative experience when sharing their diagnosis at work. Moreover, 42% of those surveyed said they were concerned their managers would view them differently if they disclosed their neurodivergence, with 44% saying they worried it would negatively impact their career.

In consequence, nearly one in three respondents said they didn’t want to share their neurodivergence with their employers: they would sooner carry on without specific support than risk damaging their career prospects.

Such findings are problematic for all employers. They beg questions about the extent to which neurodivergent staff feel supported in their roles, and empowered to deliver their best work: questions the civil service should be keen to answer as it seeks to model best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion.

An inclusive workplace

Few could doubt the government’s commitment to EDI. In the *Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2022 to 2025*, for example, it says: “...we want the civil service to have a truly diverse workforce and culture of openness and inclusivity, as a means of delivering better outcomes to the citizens we serve.”

Such a commitment is borne out in the government’s employment data. For example, analysis of Office for National Statistics information by the Institute for Government shows the proportion of disabled civil servants, including those who are neurodi-

vergent, rising from less than 2% in 1988 to 14% by 2022. Even so, this is below the UK working population benchmark of 15.5% – suggesting there is room for improvement.

When it comes to neurodiversity, the inclusion agenda is underscored by initiatives such as the

Civil Service Neurodiversity Network and Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network. These voluntary networks provide a means of neurodivergent staff sharing their experiences and supporting each other. Further initiatives like Neurodiversity Celebration Week and the Sir Robert Buckland-led Autism Employment Review express the inclusive culture the government is trying to engender, for both staff and citizens.

“The civil service is better than most



employers when it comes to accepting staff of different neurotypes,” says Rupert McNeil, the government’s former chief people officer. “That’s for two distinct reasons: first, it is part of creating an inclusive workplace and thereby accords with the public sector’s values. Second, it is a way of getting the best from your people, thereby delivering good performance.”

As McNeil reflects, certain parts of the government – particularly in roles where data and analytics are involved – have made a point of attracting neurodivergent staff. “The perspective and personality traits associated with certain neurotypes can be very valuable in certain contexts,” he says. “If you need people who can spot patterns or quickly analyse data, for instance, neurodivergence can be a helpful feature.”

A thriving workplace

The case of Alan Turing illustrates McNeil’s point to strikingly good effect: his autism was key to his suitability for a role at Bletchley Park. But it is the wider productivity gain of creating an inclusive working environment that McNeil regards as being most salient: “Complementarity within and between teams is the key. If you have a diverse workforce, you’re more likely to deliver good results.”

Such a view is echoed by Dr Dan Anthony, a senior lecturer and programme leader at the University of the West of England who used to work for the Intellectual Property Office. Anthony was diagnosed with dyslexia after leaving the IPO, but says the diversity of its staff was key to its success.

“I left just as employers were becoming more aware of neurodiversity,” he says. “But, had we had the knowledge at the time, many of my colleagues would have identified as neurodivergent. Part of what made us a successful team was that mix of talents and perspectives. It’s the same with any group that needs to get a job done. The more diverse the team, the better your chances of success.”

Anthony has taken that mindset into his role in higher education – a context he says is “ahead of the game” when it comes to diversity and inclusion. “We make sure we deliver our teaching and learning in ways that account for all neurotypes, as a matter of course. The idea is that no one should feel disadvantaged by virtue of how their brain functions, which is an approach that applies to staff as well as students.”

Delivering support

This speaks to what McNeil sees as the key feature of a successful approach to neurodiversity in the civil service: “It’s not

always about dealing with specific neurotypes, but about creating an environment in which everyone can be at their best. Of course, there are specific adjustments employers need to make for staff who are autistic, say, or who have ADHD. But there are also things you can do for everyone that improve productivity, whether or not they identify as neurodivergent.”

An example McNeil gives is dictation software. “Twenty years ago, this was seen as a helpful tool in supporting people with dyslexia,” he says. “But it’s widely available now, and useful for anyone to access if they’re short of time or struggle to sit in front of a computer and write. So while it’s a good intervention for neurodivergent staff, there are clear benefits to making it universally available in a workplace.”

Despite the gains of mainstreaming such technology, Dr Nasser Siabi, founder and CEO of Microlink PC, says more bespoke interventions also have their place.

“The Equalities Act 2010 commits employers to making ‘reasonable adjustments’ for staff with disabilities, including neurodivergence,” Siabi says. “But I advocate a programme of ‘workplace adjustments’ that go beyond what’s required by law. If a member of staff is struggling with an aspect of their job, a good manager should ask them what they need support with, then put that in place. It may be through an adjustment like specialist software or flexible working, or noise-cancelling headphones.

“Whatever the intervention, if it helps improve productivity, it is worthwhile, and a good use of resources – even without a formal diagnosis of neurodivergence.”

Siabi’s proposed approach, which he says clients such as Lloyds Bank and HSBC have successfully adopted, demonstrates the organisational advantages of responding to staff need.

“Ultimately, this is about improving performance,” he says. “If you help your people work better, you’ll get better productivity, reduced absenteeism, and less anxiety and fatigue. You also reduce your exposure to charges of discrimination, because, proactively, you’ll have identified staff with disabilities and delivered the required reasonable adjustments.”

To drive such change, Siabi says organisations need senior-level buy-in, plus a dedicated programme manager who can shape the culture and approach. “The investment case can be made by reference to the money saved and the improvement in performance,” he argues. “So the challenge is about delivery. That’s especially true in a government organi-

sation, where the sheer scale of the task can seem overwhelming. When you look at the results, it’s well worth pursuing.”

Shaping attitudes

One thing widespread availability of assistive technology and other interventions can’t change is attitudes to neurodiversity. As the Texthelp survey revealed, there remains a fear of stigmatisation among those who are neurodivergent, which can lead to them withholding information about their needs. Moreover, neurodivergent staff may need help understanding their value to their employer.

“One of my biggest weaknesses has often been asking for help,” wrote Abigail Agyei from the Department of Health in a blog post in March 2022. Agyei has ADHD, and said: “Even after my diagnosis, I’m still having to reframe my thinking and remind myself of the many strengths my neuro-differences add to my work – such as my strong sense of fairness, empathy and emotional intelligence.”

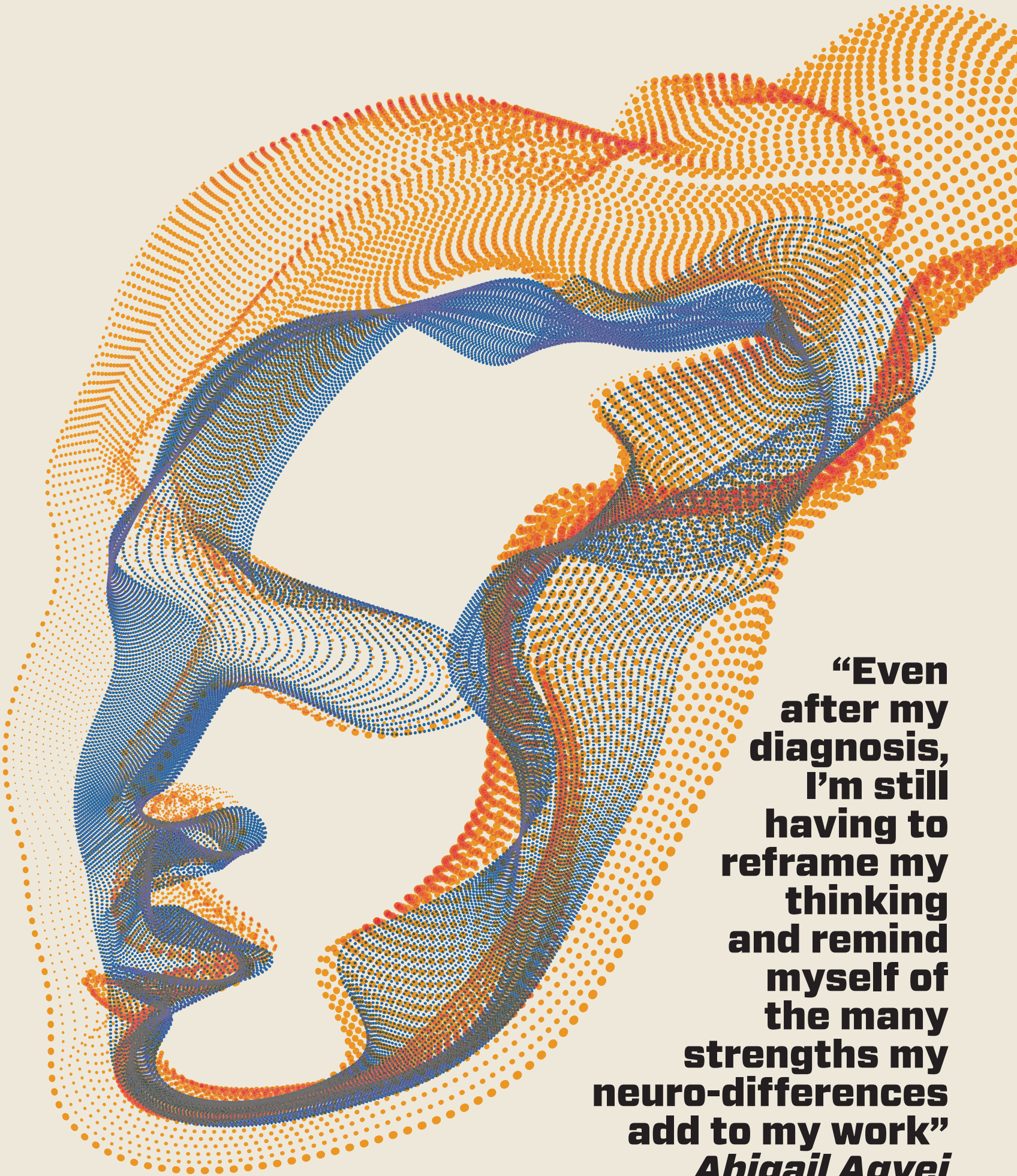
Anthony speaks of a similar experience in his university role, and says it is partly caused by the sense of neurodiversity being a “problem” or “condition” in need of a “cure”.

“Interventions like assistive technology and extra time allowances to complete tasks are great,” he says. “But what would really bring a step change is clearer recognition of what people who are neurodivergent add to organisations. In fact, I’d like to see workplace cultures in which every individual’s characteristics are celebrated for the unique contribution they make.”

McNeil makes a similar point, arguing that organisations should resist automatically “medicalising” neurodivergence, since it can be something which brings benefits alongside challenges. “We need to acknowledge that fact, while providing the right support for those whose brains work differently,” he says.

So the challenge is universal, but meeting it will yield particular benefit to those who are neurodivergent. “The best workplaces are those in which everyone can thrive,” concludes Siabi. “But if you set up the right conditions, it is especially good for people who are neurodivergent, because it helps them understand their value and deliver their best.”

That sounds like a world worth pursuing. After all, few would deny Turing’s brilliance, or the scale of his impact. But, as O’Connell and Fitzgerald intimated in 2003, he may well have been happier and more fulfilled were his neurodivergence more fully understood. ■



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*Abigail Agyei***

Peter Schofield, permanent secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions, tells **Tevye Markson** and **Suzannah Brecknell** about his civil service career, his connection to the DWP's mission, and a profound turning point in his personal life. Photography by Louise Haywood-Schiefer

LEADING THROUGH ADVERSITY



On a crisp January morning in 2018, Peter Schofield walked along Downing Street on his way to meet the prime minister. Theresa May had asked to interview candidates for the role of permanent secretary at the Department for Work and Pensions, and Schofield had made the shortlist.

“I was pinching myself, thinking: ‘Take this in because this is never going to happen again,’” Schofield recalls. “It was just me, her and her private secretary in her study – it was a pretty conventional interview. But then she asked me a question I wasn’t really expecting.

“She said, ‘I’ve looked at your CV, Peter, and you’ve been in the Treasury, you’re currently finance director general, you’re all about economics, money, finance, numbers. Why should you be the DWP permanent secretary because, for me, DWP is all about people?’”

He told the prime minister that his motivation for almost all the jobs he had done was the impact they had on people. “So although in the Treasury I was doing things like saying no to transport projects,

it was really about choosing how to invest people’s money in transport. Working on business policy was to create jobs for people. The housing role was about creating places for people to live. Even in the finance job in DWP, it was about providing the resources to enable people to feel supported.”

The answer must have reassured May because later that day cabinet secretary Jeremy Heywood let him know he had the job. With it came the chance to “play on the biggest canvas of all” and, with the help of over 80,000 colleagues, to have an impact on the lives of some 23 million customers.

Six years on, it’s clear from the admiration Schofield inspires among those who work for him at DWP that Theresa May needn’t have worried. One senior DWP official – when contacted by CSW for their verdict on the perm sec – even inadvertently responds to May’s question, describing Schofield as “a class act...he’s had a serious economic and commercially focused career but somehow pulls great leadership out of the bag, setting a really positive and can-do culture across DWP”.

Asked which roles or moments in his career shaped his approach to leadership, Schofield talks about a journey of three stages.

“Letting go was probably the first part of the leadership challenge for me,” he says. “In my early days of the Treasury, I was learning to empower, to give a structure and set of objectives and to let colleagues fill in the gaps.”

The second element was recognising that success went beyond his own personal achievements.

“It’s quite a big step to take pride in the success of your teams when you haven’t directly been responsible for it, but you’ve appointed the people to roles and nurtured them, supported them and given them some direction,” he says.

The third part of Schofield’s leadership journey has been learning the role of “potentially boring things” like process and governance, and also “how to set a culture using things like values” (see box, right).

“In an organisation with over 80,000 colleagues you don’t know what every person does. You don’t know what every team leader or manager does. Often you don’t even know what every director is doing. But you can set structures and frameworks that enable what you want to see delivered – both by empowering people but also giving people the right accountability system.”

Being perm sec also brings very particular leadership challenges, including mo-



SCHOFIELD ON... THE DWP VALUES

“Our five values as a department are: we care, we deliver, we adapt, we work together, we value everybody. We set them during the pandemic. It had been such an extraordinary period for us, in terms of the demand on our services. Millions of people were coming to DWP for the first time and we rose to the challenge – staff felt really empowered and proud of what they’d done. And so we thought: how do we bottle that? How do we describe what the DWP is like when we are at our best? And that’s where the values came from.”

ments where you must step forward with your views, take risks and then unequivocally be the person with whom the buck stops. Schofield can pinpoint a specific moment where he experienced this: 18 March 2020. Two days before, government had issued guidance encouraging people to stop non-essential contact and telling clinically vulnerable people to begin shielding. The first national Covid lockdown, however, was still a few days away. The DWP executive team had its usual Wednesday meeting, and was presented with data showing a huge spike in new Universal Credit claims the previous day.

The department had a number of business-continuity plans – one designed for pandemic flu, for example, and another preparing for a large economic downturn. These set out what Schofield describes as “a stately, step-by-step withdrawal from the things which are important but not immediately vital, to the things which you just *have* to do as an organisation”, with the final stage to focus on paying new claims for income-related benefits, particularly Universal Credit.

“We looked at the spike in claims and thought, if this is the first indication of the impact of a future lockdown, we’re going to have to do something very dramatic. So we decided – as an executive, but ultimately it was my decision chairing the meeting – that instead of that stately stepping back, we would go straight to the endpoint.

“As a result, we pivoted the whole organisation into paying Universal Credit claims first and foremost. If we hadn’t done it, looking back, we would have been overwhelmed. But at the time, it felt like a massive, dramatic step – and, with a supertanker-type organisation

like DWP, once you pull the rudder, the ship will turn and it will turn inexorably.”

Schofield describes colleagues across DWP as “unsung heroes” for ensuring that benefits continued to be paid in spring 2020, amid demand that just kept rising after that first dramatic spike. But as the department was responding to those challenges, its perm sec was also dealing with another, much more personal shock. In mid-April he was told that he had Parkinson’s disease.

He had first noticed symptoms in early 2019 – a stiffness in his left arm that he initially thought was repetitive strain injury but which didn’t improve despite “all sorts of adjustments” provided by DWP’s occupational health team.

Receiving the life-changing news at the height of the first lockdown while steering the DWP supertanker through uncharted waters was, he recalls, “a really difficult time”.

“You discover that everyone’s experience of Parkinson’s is varied,” he says. “There’s no one, obvious model. It will get worse, there is no cure, but at the same time, it’s one of those things where the rate of progression varies between people. There are symptoms when I’m under pressure or when there’s emotional tension. It might happen when I’m standing in front of a big group of people, slightly out of my comfort zone, or a select committee. But it can also happen when I’m watching a sporting event that I care about.”

Telling people about his diagnosis has been a gradual process, starting with family, friends and close colleagues.

“To begin with, I really didn’t tell many people at all. People didn’t really need to know,” he says. “But I do think there are benefits to sharing it more widely, so I told directors in DWP a few months ago at an event. And I had overwhelming support. People want to hear how you are, but also I think people need senior folk to be role models sometimes with this sort of thing.”

Now he wants to get the word out more widely. “These things should be talked about,” he says. “I don’t want people, when they get a diagnosis like the one I’ve had, to have a sense that you can’t carry on doing a big job. It is something

you’ll have forever and it will get worse, but it can be managed. And I think we do need to have people in big, significant jobs who have this experience as well.

“A silver lining is that I’ve got my own personal experience of leading an organisation when I’ve got a health condition and trying to manage that. I think it’s important for DWP, it’s important for the civil service, but it’s also important more broadly for us as a society, in terms of how we encourage other employers to help people stay in work when they develop a health condition. Because it matters – there are many talented people who otherwise are not benefiting the economy, and also aren’t achieving their own potential in our society.”

Another silver lining: it has spurred him to get fitter than ever.

“The one way that they think you can potentially slow the progression of Parkinson’s is exercise,” Schofield says. “So I find myself working on a quite intense exercise regime every week. I do a long run at the weekend, I try to do eight or nine miles. And I do some intensive interval training during the week as well.

“If you said to me three, four, five years ago, I’d be running eight or nine miles regularly, I’d have looked at you slightly critically and wondered what on earth had happened. There’s this bizarre thing of having a movement disorder, and yet I’ve never felt fitter.”

Despite this,

Schofield admits with a smile that the diagnosis has given him a “good excuse” to stand down from climbing and zipwire activities at GoApe which he used to do with his kids. “You’re about 10 to 15 metres off the ground – not great if you’re afraid of heights,” he says. “I wouldn’t do that again.”

Alongside his impressive exercise regimen, Schofield’s home life is spent with his wife and three teenage children, the eldest of whom has just started university. GoApe may be off the agenda these days but there are plenty of his kids’ rugby and hockey games to attend. His wife is a big fan of open-water swimming and, while he might remain on the shore (“it’s never been for me,” he says), learning more about the hobby has given Schofield a useful metaphor for the kind of leadership he tries to practise at DWP. >>

“When you’re in the waves and you’re ploughing through as best you can, at times you look up and around – it’s called spotting – and work out: where am I going? Am I still getting where I need to?”

It’s the role of a perm sec, he says, to be clear on where an organisation is going and give a sense of direction to teams who are bobbing up and down in the waves. Leaders need to keep an eye on spending controls, headcounts and day-to-day policy challenges, he says, “but you also need to be the person who’s saying: ‘This is the vision’, and keep connecting people with that future so that they move towards it”.

For DWP, he says, that vision is the opportunity to transform the way business is done, to change the support provided to deliver services more efficiently, “using machines to do things that machines do best, and people to do things people do best” – namely helping the department’s most vulnerable customers.

Universal Credit is a “classic” example of the opportunities that transformation programmes present, he says.

“We streamlined the number of benefits,” he says. “We took six benefits

and took complexity out and had one benefit, Universal Credit. We’ve put it on a digital platform – that’s taken out the need for so many people to do processing work. We’ve reinvested the savings, so we’ve now got more people in work coach roles helping people into work.”

The department is also exploring the use of artificial intelligence, for example using a machine which scans incoming letters to identify anything that might suggest the writer needs immediate support. Instead of being dealt with weeks later, concerns are flagged up straight away.

CSW asks Schofield how he feels when he reads articles in the press about DWP staff who allegedly take a ‘tick box’ approach to deny people benefits.

Such stories affect him profoundly, he says before adding that while “you cannot fix each and every case that goes wrong in such a vast organisation” you can change the processes, the structures and the values. He points to the Serious Case Panel as one of the ways the department has been responding to tales of the benefits sanctions regime.

While the panel – which has evolved

since its creation in 2019 to include the whole of DWP’s executive team – doesn’t take on every individual case, it looks at the themes raised by particular types of problem to try to get ahead of those problems in the future.

“One of the earliest things we talked about on the panel was those situations where someone might have made a claim and then we lose contact with them,” Schofield says. “Or they may have been in payment but we needed to check something and we can’t get hold of them. You get to a point where you’ve got to protect taxpayers’ money, so ultimately there is a point where you switch off the benefits. But how do you make absolutely sure, before you do that, that someone is not vulnerable and the reason that they haven’t been in touch is because of a situation in their own lives which they need care and support for, rather than just that they weren’t entitled to the benefit?”

“So, as a result, we’ve created advanced customer senior support leads whose job is to check what we know about that individual, or what other agencies know about them, as a way of understanding

“That is part of the power of an integrated department like DWP. There are not many organisations at this scale that link big policy through to on-the-ground delivery”



their vulnerabilities. It's about double checking that you don't end up making a decision that you may wish that you hadn't made further down the track."

A key part of how Schofield has been trying to shape the department during his tenure has been to ensure DWP sees its role as part of "a wider set of systems that involves other players, particularly other government departments".

"Often in DWP, you're trying to address an issue, but it's arisen because of something that needs to be fixed further up the stream," he says. The department's Back to Work plan, which includes proposals to get long-term sick and disabled benefits claimants back into employment, is one example of this, with DWP working jointly with the Department of Health and Social Care on the proposals.

Another principle of "Schofieldism" is developing multidisciplinary teams. "Having policy and delivery together in one place is a great strength of the department," he says. "So when we're developing a new policy, we do it through the lens of how we're going to make it happen."

Schofield says a "brilliant" example of this was the one-off cost-of-living payments announced by then-chancellor Rishi Sunak in May 2022, "a whole new benefit we'd never really done before", he explains. As the scheme was developed with the Treasury, Schofield ensured policy, delivery and digital officials were all together in the room. He says this meant the department could make the first payments just six weeks after the policy was announced.

Indeed, Schofield had a unique opportunity to understand the value of connecting across the organisation in the early months of the pandemic. With non-essential travel limited, he began to work from his local jobcentre, joining its staff meeting each morning.

It really hammered home the importance of listening to colleagues on the frontline of customer service, Schofield says. "That is part of the power of an integrated department like DWP," he adds. "There are not many organisations at this scale that link big policy through to on-the-ground delivery."

Given his evident pride in his employees and their work, it's unsurprising that Schofield says it hits him hard when he hears that a member of the public has come into a jobcentre and threatened staff. To support colleagues working in potentially volatile environments, he says the department tries to ensure that any employee who has "had a difficult conversation and is finding that challenging"

is provided with immediate support.

Schofield's personal drive to help those in need within the civil service community extends beyond DWP's staff. As chair of the Charity for Civil Servants, he shares insight and advice with the charity – something which its CEO Graham Hooper says is "invaluable". "Kindness is such an important, yet under-rated quality," Hooper tells CSW over email, "but it's something which Peter demonstrates so powerfully in everything he does."

The charity's work often involves providing current or former civil servants with financial assistance. As with colleagues in other departments, the last few years have been a real challenge for some DWP officials. They have had to deal with a cost-of-living crisis and a battle for better pay, with thousands going on strike. But they have also faced significant staff shortages which have led the PCS union to call for the department to recruit some 30,000 extra employees.

On the staffing crisis, he says the department is "making good progress" with its plans to recruit thousands of extra work coaches and officials to combat fraud and error in the benefits system. "It's always a challenge, because as well as recruiting, you need to train and support people so that they are as effective as possible. But we're doing that as fast as we can," he says.

During CSW's wide-ranging conversation with Schofield – which flits across decades, geographical locations and those who have inspired him – the discussion turns to the importance of one's personal moral purpose during difficult periods. He speaks of a former permanent secretary who gave a talk about going through hard times and facing pressure to make unpalatable choices.

"He said, 'You can always find another job but you can't reinvent your values – something might feel like the easiest course of action in the short term but you need to remember the long term perspective, who you are as a person'."

Schofield adds that while everyone has their own way of doing this, for him, his Christian faith has helped him "think about who I am as a person and what really matters to me".

"I believe we're put on this earth in order to hopefully make a difference and make life better for our fellow citizens," he says.

It seems that the sudden curveball life threw at him in 2020 has only sharpened his sense of purpose, particularly when it comes to his work.

"You don't know what lies ahead," he

SCHOFIELD ON... THE LATE ALISTAIR DARLING

"Alistair and I had kept in touch a bit since I'd been his private secretary in 1997 and it was great to see him in action in the chancellor role when I returned to the Treasury as a director in 2008.

"I have very fond memories of him. He was a kind, gentle person, but at the same time, very clear-sighted about what needed to be done. He was wise, and very, very calm in what were unbelievably difficult circumstances. I don't know what his emotions were underneath, but the importance of people in leadership roles keeping a calmness about them can't be underestimated. Alistair role-modelled that brilliantly, and I think I absorbed a lot from watching how he did that.

"Then there was his wonderfully dry sense of humour. He always managed to lighten the mood at the times when that was needed. On his very first day as chief secretary to the Treasury in 1997 I was running his private office. Here was the first Labour chief secretary in 18 years. Everyone was very nervous. He and I sat down to work through a thick file of briefing papers while my private office colleagues went to make him some coffee. But in their nervousness, they poured the coffee into an empty sugar bowl, which looked exactly the same as the coffee cups except for the fact it didn't have a handle.

"The coffee arrived on a saucer but I was too anxious to take my eyes off the new minister so I didn't notice anything – until I finally realised that he was looking down at his 'cup' and trying to work out how to pick it up. And I thought 'Oh, gosh', but I kept talking. And eventually he said, 'Peter, you're going to have to stop. You're telling me about the state of the public finances, but I can see it's even worse than you say because the Treasury can't even afford handles for your coffee cups.'"

says. "There's one path where there's a Parkinson's cure between now and then, progression is limited and I manage through. There's another where my period of being as active as I am is shorter. It's that lack of knowledge about the future that is most difficult. But other than doing the exercise, there's nothing I can do to affect that.

"It's about making as much difference as you can in the here and now, and this is a role where I feel I can make a massive difference." ■

BOSSING IT

This overview of a progressive corporate culture offers some interesting lessons for those leading public sector organisations too, writes **Sir Bernard Jenkin**

► **Be a Better Boss:**
Learn to build great teams and lead any organization to success
► **Henry Engelhardt**
► **Whitefox Publishing Ltd**

As the Liaison Committee is embarking on its inquiry into strategic thinking in government, I wonder what the civil and diplomatic services could learn from how the founder and CEO of Admiral Group, Henry Engelhardt, grew his company. From starting with just a handful of staff, the company now has over 10,000 employees, with £3.4bn in revenues. It is worth £7.8bn. *Be a Better Boss* sets out what Engelhardt believes is Admiral Group's unique management philosophy. In the introduction, he writes: "I believe that even if you're a manager in the public sector... much in this book can work for you."

Don't be put off by the initial biographical details. There is more value in the later Admiral stories. From Elephant, a market leader in digitising the insurance sign-up process, to the decision to offer customers eight-month rather than 12-month contracts, these stories are intriguing. Why an eight rather than a 12-month contract? Because competitors contacted customers with marketing materials three months after they had already renewed with Admiral. In return, customers received their annual no-claims discount four months early.

This book gives insight into what one kind of functional

corporate culture looks like. Engelhardt explains that Admiral was rarely – if ever – a first mover. They were not the first to target high premium clients or to cut out intermediaries. What separated Admiral from the competition was effective communication, teamwork, equality, rewarding success and having fun. These might seem like buzzwords but Engelhardt makes a case that Admiral's business adopted these values and embedded them in positive attitudes and behaviour.

He urges managers to value teamwork over individual achievement, citing a story from his time at INSEAD Business School where a professor asked everyone to carry out a task, first as a team and then individually. All but a handful of students produced a better report when they worked as a team. Individual star performers

should be rewarded generously, but he rejects any outward signs of inequality among employees. Admiral has no offices for executives, no company cars, and everyone receives the same company pension contribution.

Engelhardt also believes most employees under-communicate. He stuck a picture of a golf course on his wall and used a ball of blue tack to tell his employees how he was feeling. When the blue-tack ball was in the water, he was not to be disturbed. Irritating perhaps, but very human.

What lessons are there in this book for ministers and civil service leaders? Unlike Francis Maude, Engelhardt opposes outside hires. Instead, he recommends hiring promising recruits and watching how they function in junior positions. It is certainly true that Whitehall outside hires have either been

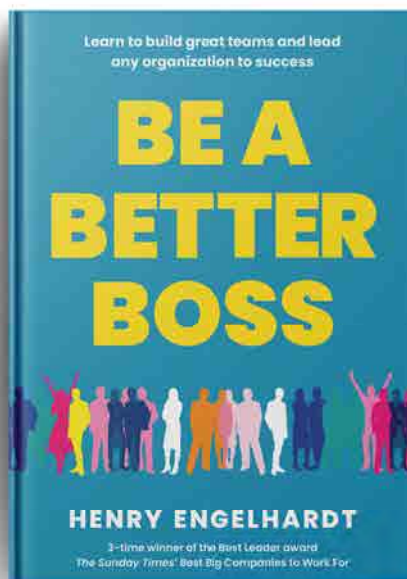
absorbed into the prevailing culture or have left, leaving no impact. More sympathetic to the Maude world view, he argues against outsourcing to consultants. Too often, when a management consultant puts together a slide deck and you have a question about the methodology, it can take weeks to receive a proper answer. The person presenting should be able to explain where the data came from, what assumptions they made, and how to reproduce a modified version of the chart. There is no substitute for in-house expertise, experience and knowledge, made all but impossible by the present churning of officials across roles and departments.

After reading Engelhardt's book, you might be left wondering whether an effective manager (or permanent secretary) can transform an existing organisation. When Engelhardt visited the office of a potential acquisition in America, he noticed that the managers all had exterior offices with city views. The rest of the employees were boxed into the centre of the office without natural light. Engelhardt decided this reflected a hierarchical culture antithetical to Admiral's emphasis on equality. He did not make an offer.

If a civil service department has a poor culture, starting over is not an option. Governments cannot govern at all unless ministers learn to lead the civil servants they have got, but that does not preclude also having a transformation plan. Perhaps there is a management book by a CEO who transformed an existing business. Sir John Egan at Jaguar in the early 1980s was my hero. It is far harder to transform engrained cultures than create new institutions from scratch, but that is the challenge facing this generation of permanent secretaries – and the next. ■

Sir Bernard Jenkin is MP for Harwich and North Essex and chair of the Liaison Committee

“Unlike Francis Maude, Engelhardt opposes outside hires”



A SIMPLE EXPLANATION

Ros Atkins has created an honest, readable and practical guide to communication but don't hope for shortcuts. Review by **Cecilia Da Forno**

» **The Art of Explanation:
How to Communicate with
Clarity and Confidence**
» Ros Atkins
» Wildfire

Why should I read this? Because explaining complex

subjects effectively is likely key to your role, whether you write policy advice or see clients in a Job Centre, and because not doing so efficiently wastes time you don't have.

If you want your audience to pay attention when you are presenting, to understand and respond positively to your submissions and requests and, most of all, you want to cut down on unnecessary e-mail traffic, this book is for you.

It is engagingly written, avoids sound-bites and is packed with useful information and practical suggestions you can implement. I liked that it showcases many of the tricks it talks about, for example telling interesting personal stories to bring the points to life while maintaining a personable, humble tone that is very far away from the aggressive positivity of so many "How to" manuals.

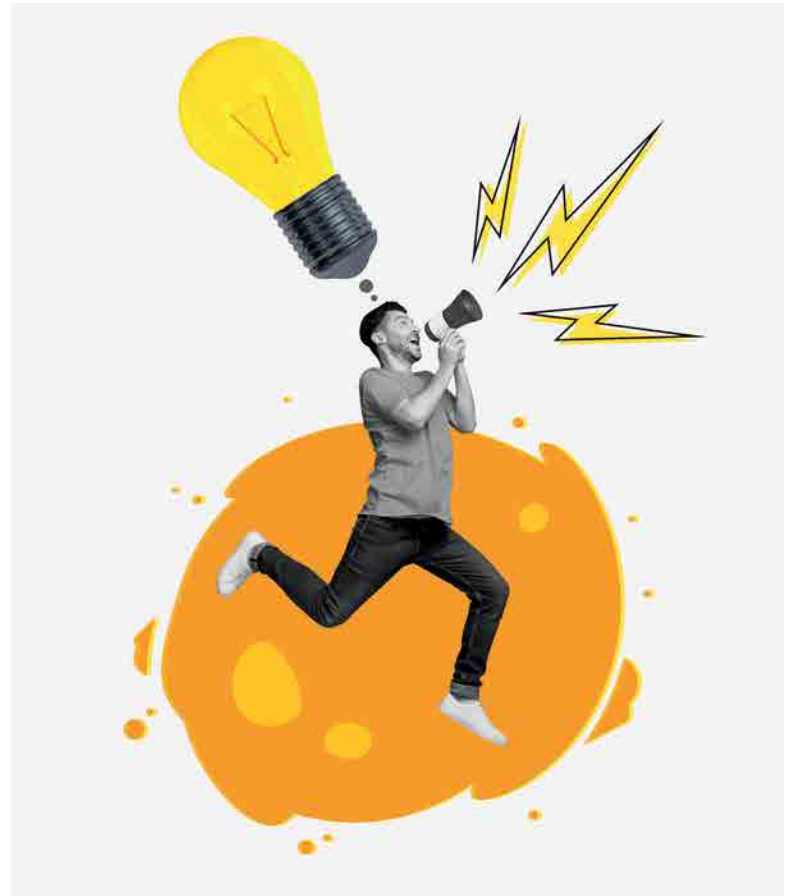
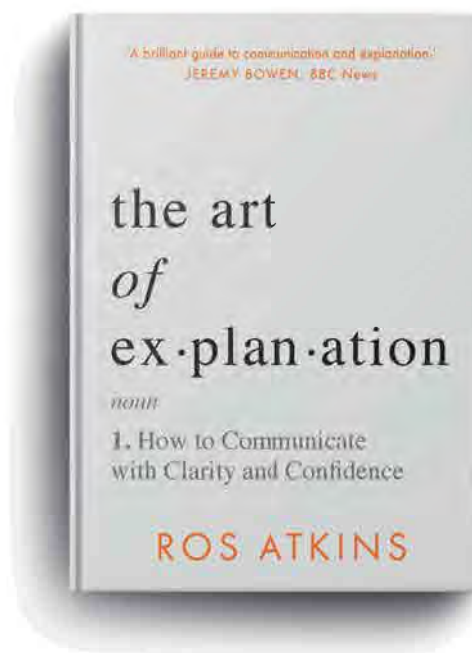
After reading this, I felt confident I could implement many of the ideas presented in the book. I have since put some of them into practice (including in this review) and have started to see their positive impact on my communication style.

What will I learn?

A seven-step structure to set out your arguments clearly, whether in formal contexts like a meeting, or informal discussions and impromptu Q&As. You will also discover many ways to apply it flexibly and tricks to make it yours, so the final product feels fluid, effortless and reflects your own style.

You will see the techniques in action in the book itself and there are plenty of relatable examples and practical tips that can be implemented straight away. You will return to this book again and again as you weave its techniques into your individual approach.

“You will return to this book again and again as you weave its techniques into your individual approach”



Finally, you will never start your e-mails with "I hope you are well" again – you will have

to trust me on that and read the book to find out more.

Was there anything you were hoping for that you did not get?

I was hoping for short-cuts and instead this book is honest about the fact that there are none. Diligent research, preparation and humility are all needed to improve how we explain ourselves and there is no way to avoid practising many, many times. The upside is that having a proven structure to rely on can boost motivation and has meant I was so familiar with the material by the time I presented it that my confidence alone improved the final performance and my credibility.

Best paired with:

A warm and zesty herbal infusion to keep you relaxed but focused; an energy-rich snack like dates to keep your brain happy while you read. ■

Cecilia Da Forno is a HR business partner in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

BEFORE THE FLOOD

With flooding in the UK becoming more frequent, access to resilient infrastructure and robust forward planning is a must to secure people's safety. We speak to **Jan Przydatek** and **Savina Carluccio** to explore how government can enact change and save lives

The United Kingdom has become accustomed to named storms battering its shores, bringing flood water inland and submerging already vulnerable, low-level places of residence. In recent months, storms Babet, Ciarán and Debi all hit our country, bringing destruction and disruption to critical and built infrastructure. The economic cost of flooding to the UK has been estimated at £740m per year.

Data from the Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF), a charity which promotes safety, engineering-related research and education, highlights flooding as one of the most common natural hazards the UK has experienced in the last five years. Given this, you would be forgiven for thinking that the country's infrastructure, both new and legacy, would be resilient against intense rainfall. Sadly, that's not the case. A reactive approach to infrastructure resilience in the UK has left homes, buildings, and critical infrastructure vulnerable to significant damage when storms hit, according to Jan Przydatek, director of technologies at LRF. At present, communities are reliant on short-term fixes such as sandbags.

"Reactive methods do not prepare the built environment for the severe weather that is expected to become more frequent," he says. "Our changing climate is already demonstrating that established methods used to build infrastructure are no longer as effective at protecting those who depend on services and structures. This is why a different approach is needed to build resilient critical infrastructure."

Structural instability

The National Audit Office's latest value for money report on resilience to flooding, published in November 2023, noted that

government doubled its capital funding in the six years to 2027 "to combat the growing dangers from flooding". However, the report also stated that a £34m shortfall in the Environment Agency's annual maintenance funding between 2022 to 2023 has put more than 200,000 UK properties at increased risk of flooding.

The report also found that significant underspending by Defra and the Environment Agency has led to poor value for money in the first two years of the government funded capital programme, stating that "building new flood defences and maintaining existing ones is no longer enough and that a wider range of interventions is now needed to build resilience against increasing flood risk".

As Przydatek explains: "The UK's infrastructure is not viewed with the same strategic urgency as other national challenges such as health or security, leaving us with a reactive approach to infrastructure which, as the NAO states, is not working. For too long, the UK has built structures, including homes, that are not equipped to withstand environmental change.

"The government has a crucial part to play in enacting the required change, such as retrofitting the 30m

homes which make up a huge proportion of the UK legacy building stock with more resilient building materials."

The human cost

Ultimately, the built environment should be designed to keep its inhabitants safe. "Whether it's homes, or places of education or work, we subconsciously rely on our built environment often without acknowledging it," Przydatek says. "But buildings cannot withstand changing natural hazards to the extent we are seeing without crucial adjustments being made. Resilience requires these places to be purposefully built to avoid flooding before it strikes."

The human cost of flooding is well documented. Fallen trees cut off power to communities and lives are taken in flash flooding and strong currents. Loss of access to critical services means many people also find themselves isolated for a prolonged period, regardless of their geographical location. As a result, the public's level of trust in national and local government often fluctuates when flooding occurs.

Data from the latest *World Risk Poll* – LRF's annual global study of perceptions and experiences of risk to people's safety – highlighted northern and western Europe (including the UK) as bucking a global trend when it came to trusting national government during natural disasters. When asked how well prepared national and local government were to deal with a disaster from a natural hazard, respondents in the region had more confidence in local government's preparedness (40%) compared to national government (37%) – the reverse of perceptions in much of the world.

This gap in trust is further highlighted when looking at respondents who have lost access to critical infrastructure as a result of a disaster. In the UK, 45% of respondents who had lost access to either electricity, clean water, food, medicine, medical care, or telephone services said they had confidence in their local government to deal with a disaster, four percentage points higher than their confidence in national government (41%). Globally,



Protective measures The River Hull tidal surge barrier in Kingston-upon-Hull

most respondents showed higher levels of trust in their national government.

“With an evidenced lack of trust in the UK national government’s level of preparedness when it comes to dealing with disasters, it is imperative that plans for a collaborative approach between local and national governments are improved,” Przydatek adds.

A joint approach

According to Przydatek, sufficient levels of infrastructure resilience are only possible with strong involvement and investment from national government. Informed decision making in infrastructure planning can help building stock absorb and recover from shocks and stresses caused by flooding, but only if the right equipment and steps are in place.

To enact cultural change in building and project design, both local and national government must work together to develop and communicate the best resilience strategies based on robust standards.

Savina Carluccio, executive director of the International Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure, who works with policymak-

“To ignore the changing climate when we build our new infrastructure will come at a social and economic cost in the future”

Jan Przydatek, Lloyd’s Register Foundation

ers to improve the uptake of effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies, says: “It is imperative that governments urgently improve the uptake of DRR and resilience measures, and communicate these measures to the public and businesses in a way they can relate to. Actions that can be taken include incentivising and prioritising the development of projects

aimed at enhancing the climate and disaster resilience of critical infrastructure and protecting vulnerable populations, as well as promoting adoption and implementation of global frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“Policymakers should adopt multi-disciplinary advisory panels for disaster risk reduction and resilience. The inclusion

University of Hull, as well as global design and delivery company Stantec. Using the expertise of all the parties involved, alongside a range of digital tools and community consultation, the partnership has been able to restore floodplains, create wetlands and use sustainable draining systems to absorb and slow down rainwater runoff in the area.

Other green infrastructure elements



Plain pain Flooding from the river Trent in Nottinghamshire

of multi-disciplinary technical advisers would increase the influence of technically driven disaster risk reduction and resilience measures in policy, as well as help restore confidence from the public that what is being planned and implemented is grounded in evidence and practice and that it will deliver safe, future-proof, resilient infrastructure that is fit for people and the planet.”

A UK example of a multi-stakeholder DRR project can be found in Hull and Haltemprice, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The region’s sloping topography and bowl shape means a mere two per cent of the area is *not* considered at risk of flooding. This risk necessitates a joined-up approach from multiple bodies to build flood resilience and develop innovative and natural water management systems.

This ‘Living With Water’ partnership includes stakeholders such as Yorkshire Water, Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire, the Environment Agency and the

such as green roofs, permeable pavements and bioswales mimicking natural processes allow rainwater to be absorbed into the ground, reducing surface runoff. As a result, the risk of flooding has been reduced.

A resilient future

Przydatek concludes: “Our Foresight review of resilience engineering highlights the importance of having critical infrastructures that can accommodate change. At Lloyd’s Register Foundation we have already awarded grants in excess of £10m in response to the review’s recommendations on growing capability and capacity in resilience.

“To ignore the changing climate when we build our new infrastructure will come at a social and economic cost in the future. We have too easily accepted that the destruction climate change brings is unpreventable. This doesn’t have to be the case. We have the potential and the solutions to build resiliently, but we need more concerted leadership and action.” ■

To find out more about Lloyd’s Register Foundation, go to: lrfoundation.org.uk

Banking on success



The Treasury-backed UK Infrastructure Bank, launched in 2021, aims to advance both net-zero and levelling up ambitions. **Vivienne Russell** talks to some of its leaders about the challenge of doing something new and blending the best of the public and private sectors

Setting a new arms-length body up from scratch is an “unusual privilege”, Kate McGavin reflects. Along with her job share partner Helen Williams, McGavin is director of policy at the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), which launched in June 2021. Indeed, the pair enjoyed their secondment stint so much - they were the twelfth and thirteenth employees through the door during the bank’s formative days - they decided to stay for the long term, accepting permanent contracts this summer. “We felt that we couldn’t leave,” Williams tells CSW. “We were having too much fun.” The pair like to talk about the “privilege of the blank sheet of paper”. There is

no template for how UKIB should carry out its mission of driving local growth and helping the United Kingdom reach net-zero carbon by 2050, so McGavin and Williams have forged their own path forward, harnessing the best of public and private sector skills and knowledge, and continuously learning on the job.

“We don’t have to do things the same way that other organisations have done things,” says McGavin.

“We are here to solve problems that the private markets and public sector can’t solve by themselves. In order to do that, you have to be able to think imaginatively, you have to be able to work really collaboratively across the different skills that we’ve got in the bank.”

Collaboration, imagination, generosity, humility, commitment to learning - these are some of the phrases that pepper the conversation with CSW, which is also joined by the bank’s chief people officer Patricia Galloway.

UKIB’s remit, according to all three women, is a very special one. With £22bn to invest in green infrastructure projects via equity, loans and guarantees, it has a dual mission: both to advance progress towards net zero and to tackle the levelling up agenda, working alongside local government to stimulate local and regional economic growth. It’s no accident that UKIB’s headquarters are located in Leeds and its launch was attended by a range of local voices celebrating the choice to site a national institution in a northern city.

For McGavin, the appeal of working at UKIB can be distilled down to three things: its mission, its money and its influence.

Working across big ticket policy agendas like net zero and levelling up, having billions to invest on behalf of taxpayers (especially at a time of tightening public sector budgets) and the ability to influence both wider government and the markets is a highly unusual position to be in, she says.

“Lots of jobs out there might have one or two of those things, but it’s really rare to find all three.”

UKIB is a relatively small operation – once at full capacity the bank will only employ around 280 people – but it is determined to have a big impact. Led by former HSBC Group chief executive John Flint, the bank has moved quickly and to date has closed 20 deals, which have together invested around £1.9bn of the £22bn at its disposal. This in turn has unlocked around £9.7bn in private capital for a range of critical infrastructure projects. It has identi-

THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE UKIB’S INVESTMENTS

- 1 Advancing UKIB’s twin objectives of tackling climate change and supporting regional and local economic growth
- 2 Supporting infrastructure assets, networks or new technology, with a particular focus on clean energy, transport, digital, water, and waste
- 3 Delivering a positive financial return
- 4 Crowding in significant private capital over time

fied five core sectors which are priorities for investment: clean energy, transport, digital, water, and waste. Investments need to meet four tests (see box) and financing deals agreed so far support everything from the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points across the motorway network and the rewilding of the Scottish Highlands to a rapid transport scheme in the West Midlands. Details of its future pipeline are not made public, but UKIB says it expects to diversify further into areas including hydrogen, carbon capture, usage and storage, zero-emission buses and heat networks.

While the establishment of UKIB may recall the Green Investment Bank – the government bank established in 2012 before being sold off to Macquarie in 2017 – it is quite a different endeavour, McGavin says. The Green Investment Bank did not have UKIB’s remit around regional and local economic growth nor its broad reach.

“The infrastructure sectors that we cover gets us into all sorts of interesting parts of the economy, and I love that breadth. It makes for a really interesting portfolio.”

Recruitment has been a major focus for the bank over the past 12 months. Galloway joined the bank in September 2022 after a 20-year private sector career running human resources for banks. She says the executive team’s focus since then has been on building up the permanent team.

“We were staffed with great teams of contractors but the heavy focus for me



Re-e-wild A nature restoration project in part of the Scottish Highlands (below and left) is one of the financing deals the UKIB has already agreed



and for the rest of the ExCo [executive committee] for the last year has been that transition from a contracted workforce into our permanent employee base.

“We’ve been doing a significant amount of recruitment. But within that recruitment, our bar is high. We want exceptionally talented individuals to come into the bank because the mission we have is a tough one.”

The bank’s employee base is a mix of people from banking, consultancy and the wider civil service. It’s important to keep networks with the wider civil service open and regularly refreshed, Williams explains.

“We’ve got a set of great secondees who are from various government departments, and they come with fantastic connections back into policy teams in central government. And we always want to keep that dynamism going.”

The mix of public and private sector cultures in play at the bank is providing a rich learning environment and is clearly valued.

“It feels really blended,” says Galloway.

While UKIB is a bank, she says, it’s one with public interest at its heart. “The people who join [from the private sector] have that ethos and then obviously our public sector colleagues live and breathe it.”

Williams stresses the strong sense of collaboration and camaraderie at the bank.

“For me, there’s been a really fantastic learning opportunity to understand how private financing particularly, but also on the local authority side, can help to amplify government policy,” says Williams.

“I can bring my specific experience in central government policymaking, but also layer on this new commercial and banking experience that one of my colleagues brings to bear, so I have been really enjoying that. Everyone’s got a piece of the jigsaw.”

McGavin agrees. “It’s good to have people who approach problems and challenges from different perspectives.”

UKIB has set out to be a “diverse by design” organisation. Galloway highlights the diverse leadership team at the bank but stresses the importance of diversity of thought alongside diversity of characteristics.

“We’ve got a big problem that we need to solve, but we need people who are going to look at it from different angles. So that’s also very much built into the recruitment when we’re looking at candidates.”

McGavin and Williams’ job share arrangement – the pair have been working together for seven years and the UKIB role is

“We are here to solve problems that the private markets and public sector can’t solve by themselves”

McGavin and Williams’ job share arrangement – the pair have been working together for seven years and the UKIB role is

Helen Williams



Kate McGavin



Patricia Galloway

their third job – was greeted with some curiosity by their private sector colleagues who are less used to such arrangements, particularly at a senior level.

But the pair have been warmly welcomed and feedback has been positive. “I must say Kate and Helen role model how to do a job share brilliantly,” Galloway adds.

They’ve even married up another couple of colleagues who have gone off elsewhere on promotion as a job share partnership.

“We’ve added to the job share

universe and I’m very pleased about that,” McGavin smiles.

With the bank birthed during the pandemic, the blank sheet of paper came in handy again when crafting a working culture. Where private sector banks might still be wrestling with strategies to coax employees back to the office, Galloway says the UKIB team are having fun working together. The bank operates a hybrid model, expecting employees to attend the office for three days a week. The approach has been a great success.

“We have great energy. We get so much done,” Galloway says.

“We’re building a bank, we need to be around each other and everyone’s been very receptive to it.”

Relationships with the Treasury – UKIB’s sole shareholder – are described as “really good”. “They are a great department to be anchored to,” says McGavin. But she stresses there are important relationships across Whitehall more broadly, and the team talks regularly to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport among others, and has come to be viewed as a supportive, critical friend.

“We are definitely bringing something to policymaking,” she says. “Whilst we don’t make policy ourselves, we are here to help Whitehall accelerate and develop policy in the best way they can.”

Relationships with local government are also key. UKIB has a small advisory team working with councils to help them craft financing solutions to the problems they face such as heat networks, property retrofits and electric vehicle charging networks. The bank can also offer finance at preferential rates, lower than what is available from the Public Sector Loans Board.

In addition, the bank’s UK footprint is important and, while much of policy is reserved to Westminster and Whitehall, UKIB is conscious that the devolved administrations have an important role to play in its agenda, so it is in the process of recruiting a director for each of the devolved nations.

With 20 deals done in the first two years of operation, UKIB has made rapid progress, but McGavin stresses that it is early days, and the bank is still continuing to build its balance sheet.

As UKIB commits more of its capital and its pipeline starts to fill up, the bank will have to start making some decisions around what to prioritise. Impact metrics will become more important to guide the bank towards those projects most likely

THE UK INFRASTRUCTURE BANK IN ACTION: CORNISH LITHIUM

In August 2023 UKIB closed its first equity deal, taking a £24m stake in Cornish Lithium, focused on lithium mining, a metal crucial to scaling up the manufacture of electric vehicle batteries and the

development of battery energy storage. UKIB's equity attracted matched funding from US-based private equity fund the Energy and Minerals Group and helped attract £5.6m in

additional funding from Cornish Lithium's existing shareholder TechMet. While UK-based lithium extraction will support the development of vital green technologies, UKIB investment will also boost

the local economy in Cornwall and is expected to allow Cornish Lithium to grow its workforce from 70 to over 300. Announcing the deal, UKIB CEO John Flint said it "perfectly encapsulates

a key part of our mission - to drive forward new and emerging markets that the UK will rely on to meet its net-zero goals, and which will deliver an enduring and positive impact on local economies".



Good for the planet and the local economy Lithium extraction for electric vehicle batteries in Cornwall

to generate a good return for the taxpayer while advancing the bank's strategic aims.

McGavin talks about the "triple bottom line". UKIB needs to generate a return on its equity, and to deploy into priority sectors against its twin objectives of advancing net zero and supporting local and regional economic growth. Thirdly, "we have to be additional," McGavin explains. "We mustn't replace private capital and we have to have an impact beyond the economic return that we make."

Impact is extremely important to the bank and a quick look at the UKIB website shows that the bank is very keen to be transparent to demonstrate the difference it is making. In broad terms, impact might be tracked by the amount of carbon abated, jobs created or by improved connectivity, all of which link back to the ambitions set out in the government's net-zero strategy and the levelling up white paper.

There is also value in problem solving, McGavin adds. The bank has some advantages over traditional private lenders and is both able to tolerate some slightly elevated risks and to act as a bridge between the public and private sectors.

"We're out there to look to do new things... things that haven't been done before. And that in and of itself has intrinsic value for the public and the private sector."

Williams points to the bank's investment in a natural capital project on rewilding part of the Scottish Highlands as a good example of it pushing nascent markets forward and supporting innovative practice.

UKIB's first deal for Scotland committed £12m to a nature restoration project on the 1,300 hectare Tayvallich estate in Argyll, which - thanks to the funding - has been acquired by Highland Rewilding Ltd. The finance will support the restoration of temperate rainforest on the estate,

which will be able to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It is also expected to lead to job creation in the area and support eco-tourism, advancing UKIB's regional economic growth objective.

"It's definitely one of the deals we are particularly proud of," says Williams. "The investment we have made has all been about moving that market forward."

UKIB doesn't just sit back and "admire problems", McGavin adds by way of conclusion.

"We roll up our sleeves and we look at how we can deploy our capital. We won't always get that right. But the challenges that we've got are really urgent and they're really tricky.

"We are absolutely in the market for having those conversations and trying to get rapidly to a point where we can think about whether there's a solution that our capital can unlock." ■

PROFESSIONS PRIMER

In an ongoing series, CSW provides a guide to professions and functions across the civil service. Each briefing looks at a different group, offering a glimpse at what they do, and how they work with other parts of government

RISK MANAGEMENT

Who are they?

The government risk profession is relatively new – it sits within the government finance function and was only formalised as a profession following the Covid-19 pandemic. Working across the public sector, the profession helps ministers and officials understand and manage key risks in their line of work and bring coherence to cross-government processes. The profession provides oversight and assurance, confirming that proper management is in place across government and ensuring that all decisions taken by government provide value for money to taxpayers.

A common role in the profession is a risk manager position, responsible for supporting leaders in identifying, managing and understanding the risk exposure of both business-as-usual work and stand-alone projects.

What do they do?

Risks are varied and wide ranging. They might encompass anything from considering the potential loss of life that might be caused by a poor-quality building proposal to the barriers for a project delivering against policy outcomes. In all, risk professionals are responsible for spotlighting challenges that could prevent the effective delivery of government projects.

It's less about providing solutions, and more about spotting potential problems and helping the teams decide the best ways to manage them. While policy teams will deliver alternatives when a risk is spotted, those in risk management are responsible for making sure the information around all government decisions has been considered fully, and that correct processes have been followed to reach a final decision.

Civil servants are often stereotyped as risk-averse, but Dan Tope-Charlton, head of risk management effectiveness for the profession, explains that it's not about derailing progress. Risk-orientated provision provides a full picture of all potential decision outcomes. "We're making clear what the risks are when making decisions," he says. "It's not a 'no'; it's a 'if you want to do that, this might be a safer way to achieve the same thing'."

Where can they be found?

Embedded roles are found in every department, and the number in each organisation varies. Currently, there are more than 800 risk managers working in the profession at large. The central team – led by head of profession Clive Martin (see box) – is based in the Treasury where the wider finance function is based.

What is a typical career path like?

Most civil servants begin their careers outside of risk management. A typical

starting point is in project delivery. Likewise, transfers from financial functions are common. Auditors in finance and defence roles will likely have the requisite skills needed for the profession.

Others arrive in the profession through the private sector, according to Tope-Charlton. Former insurance and risk analysts from heavily regulated industries like insurance or financial services sectors are common hires.

Which professions do they work most closely with?

Project delivery and finance. Ensuring risk is considered from the outset of government work is key, according to Tope-Charlton: "It's really important for us to be able to influence at the point where the decisions are taken," he says. "By influencing project delivery, we're able to make sure that decisions are taken as early as possible within a lifecycle of developing and delivery."

What are they most likely to say?

"What keeps you awake at night?" is a regularly heard phrase. The core objective of the profession is to discover the "big things" that senior officials are worried about, so most risk assessments start with this question.

Another commonly heard phrase is: "Why are we worried about it, and what are we going to do about it?" Working through worries, writing them down and talking about them before managing them properly helps take the stress out of professional decision-making. Tope-Charlton explains: "People don't want to engage with risk managers... They think we're boring... but the number of times you hear how therapeutic the conversation has been at the end of [a project] is amazing." Ergo, another commonly heard phrase heard on the lips of those who work

VIEW FROM THE TOP

**CLIVE MARTIN
HEAD OF THE
GOVERNMENT RISK
PROFESSION**

Like many in the profession, Martin started his career in the private sector. After studying risk management at university in the 1980s – "when Kylie Minogue was first in the charts" – he completed a certified qualification at the Institute of Risk Management, embarking on risk management roles in a variety of industries including hospitality, insurance and financial services. Following 17 years at EY, the last nine of which involved developing client-facing risk management practices as an equity partner, he joined the civil service.

As head of a newly-formed government profession, Martin is the first person to hold the role. He was attracted to the scope and impact it offered: "The opportunity to make a difference is huge".

Martin oversees a "very broad remit" making his job "one of the most fascinating risk management roles on the planet". Projects may deal with long-term risks, such as those related to climate change, or consider more immediate threats, like cyber breaches. He notes that increased complexity, uncertainty, variability and volatility makes the job an ever-evolving challenge which "can mean that your risks aren't what you thought they were".

He sees maintaining and

developing relationships as a key part of his role. Responsibilities include working with public bodies, participating and leading conversations with senior officials and collaborating with other risk experts in specialist fields. One overarching duty is to develop a cohesive risk management vision across government.



Eighteen months into the job, the creation of an accreditation mechanism for the profession is one of the projects he is most proud of. The scheme, launched with the aim of standardising the profession in government, allows individuals to become accredited risk managers. The first cohort recently qualified. "We're working on a new vision for the risk profession as part of a wider vision for risk management across government," Martin tells *CSW*.

What's a simple way to sum up his job? "It's all about helping people that are not in the profession better manage risk," Martin says, explaining that his team essentially support other civil servants as they grapple with uncertainty. Looking ahead, he hopes to increase the influence risk professionals have in government even further.

with risk managers is: "This was really therapeutic".

How is the profession being developed?

Formalised as a profession following the pandemic, the

government risk profession is now growing rapidly, with a concerted effort underway to raise its profile and increase awareness of risk management more generally across government.

The central team, which develops guidance products, is currently being built up, and they recently launched a risk management accreditation to deliver good practice at a cross-government level. So far, over 40 people have been accredited.

The top team is also focused on developing a sense of community within the profession, running monthly

webinars that bring together good practice learning, with real examples provided by current risk management professionals.

What are their priorities at the moment?

A key priority is understanding and facilitating a pipeline of risk management professionals who can be scattered across government departments. “How can we get people qualified to do risk management?” asks Tope-Charlton. “How can we keep them, and how can we grow our collective knowledge and ability to influence on a real level?” Accreditation is one solution, but Tope-

Charlton also highlights the development of an e-learning course for the civil service, which will introduce individuals to related frameworks and cover core risk principles.

Another priority is working on cross-government approaches: “We do the Civil Service Board risk reporting”, says Tope-Charlton. “It’s a fantastic way for us to highlight or raise the profile of

risk areas that cut across multiple ministerial departments and public service areas.” The Civil Service Board – which is responsible for the strategic leadership of the civil service – acts at the most senior level of government, so implementing risk management here ensures the necessary processes and frameworks become part and parcel of government working. ■

“The core objective of the profession is to discover the ‘big things’ that senior officials are worried about”

FRONTLINE VIEW

**OLIVER STADON
HEAD OF RISK
MANAGEMENT,
HOME OFFICE**

“There is no other role I would do,” Oliver Stadon says. “I’ve fallen in love with risk.”

Stadon began his civil service career as a “summer casual” in the Ministry of Defence after leaving university. It was 2003 and Stadon had figured out that his plan to become a history teacher would take too long to realise before it would start paying the bills. Stadon ended up staying in the MoD – in Defence Equipment & Support – for 17 years, until February 2020.

A highlight of that time was being in Afghanistan for seven months, and witnessing in real-time the net impact of his previous roles in DE&S. His experience on the ground also helped with those tricky negotiations with the Treasury back in London. Stadon recalls the time when he was leading a commercial team and, during one meeting, managed to secure additional funding for the United Kingdom’s operations in Afghanistan.

“I brandished a piece of body armor with a bullet hole in it to say: ‘Look, this is why we need the money. This is the difference it makes. This serviceman’s life was saved because he didn’t have critical injuries,’” Stadon says.

It was during that time that he began to engage with the idea that risk management helps you prepare for things going awry.

“You can’t plan the future, no one has a crystal ball. But you can think about scenarios upstream: some-

times, there can be one thing that goes wrong that ruins the whole plan,” he says.

For the best part of four years, Stadon has worked in the Home Office as head of risk management. He is based in the corporate centre, leading risk management teams and setting policy processes



while looking at the big risks facing the department.

His focus is setting a standard for what good risk management looks like across the Home Office, and his goal is to foster a culture where people integrate risk prevention into their everyday working practices.

Stadon says that risk management can sometimes feel “counterintuitive”.

“We’re not always in the habit of learning from experience and thinking about what could go wrong,” he says. “You could avoid problems in the future if you think about them now, but people don’t work like that. We tend to plan for success. That’s the human condition.”

Thankfully, that’s where his profession steps in.

Stadon recently sprained his ankle by sliding on the gravel drive outside his front door – the exact place where he’d had the same accident before. He says that incidents like this serve as a daily reminder that risk management is a difficult, yet essential art to master.



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GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

CSW meets **Ben Cropper**, director of analysis and chief economist at the Department for Business and Trade, to discuss the importance of challenging perceptions and crossing disciplinary barriers

We're meeting at the first DBT Analysis & Evidence conference. Tell me how this event came about.

We wanted to get the Department for Business and Trade off on a good footing, so we planned this conference with an agenda spanning the whole remit of the new department: everything from domestic business support all the way through to striking trade deals with India. It's an opportunity to bring the whole analytical community of DBT together, and we've keen to build good links with the experts in academia, business and elsewhere. We've been given this objective of getting the economy growing again and there's no way we can do that from within our four walls.

What does your role involve?

My title is director of analysis and, also, chief economist, but I'm quite clear that I'm director of analysis, because we've got economists and we've got lots of brilliant data scientists, statisticians, social researchers, and operational researchers. My job is to build that team – and the body of work that the team is providing evidence for – in order to aid better decision making.

Much of my day-to-day is about overseeing work and supporting my teams, who are the real experts in any individual area, giving them guidance and formal sign off when needed. Then, sometimes, I'm fronting that evidence, in particular with ministers, to translate more technical work into insightful policy messages.

The rest of my time is about building that team. A huge amount of underlying work is identifying gaps, whether it be particular policy areas or particular skill sets that we need more of, and thinking about how you do that skill building. Then, there is also taking my head out of the day-to-

day to ask: "What is the question that will be asked of us in two, three years' time? Or six months? What's the underlying analysis that we need to have so that we're ready to answer that question?" There's nothing worse than when you have to say: "We don't have that answer, but we'll give you our best guess on the analysis". That's not very good for the analyst or for policy.

A lot of what's been discussed today interfaces with other depart-

ments. How do you ensure good connections across government?

Cross-government collaboration is something that I'm evangelical about. My team would say I go on about this a bit too much. DBT is the department for economic growth, but if you actually look at the individual levers we have to pull, there are only so many. Other departments have many levers, particularly the Treasury on economic policy, so it's vital that we're as open as

possible, and that we are working as one seamless team across government.

Previously I worked for

the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Covid Taskforce. Both of those are perfect examples where you need collaboration across government, and you can do that in a number of ways. Part of it is just me, as a leader, having good personal connections with my fellow chief economists or whoever in other depart-





and lots of them will be coding and doing data science. Getting different professions talking to each other is also important. That's why we build teams which mix together all sorts of different disciplines.

On the Covid team, I spent two years working out how to bring together an analysis of the economy, economic impacts, health impacts and social impacts. The analysis function, led by [national statistician] Sir Ian Diamond, was useful in bringing that group of skills together. I learnt a huge amount from working with epidemiologists and health experts. It refreshed my view of economics and how we should do it.

Several talks today have referred to the tough economic situation globally, and the need to find a balance between optimism and realism in that context. How do you seek to encourage that balance in the teams you lead?

It's a difficult one. I'm keen to challenge our preconceptions and find the balance to give advice which alerts people to possible downside risks and challenges, but also gives a balanced view of how likely those are to happen, as well as positive factors and outcomes. But then, the outcome of what you predict is never what you predicted, so you should be just a little bit humble and accept that *ex ante*.

How do we encourage people to be confident in the ability of government to make change after so many tough years?

The whole world economy has had a tough road. When I joined the civil service around 2005, [then-cabinet secretary] Gus O'Donnell gave an introductory speech. He said "Well, we've fixed macroeconomics, it's all solved". We'd had something like 54 quarters of growth. But then, three months later, I came into work and somebody in the United States subprime mortgages sector had a problem... [problems which would precipitate the 2007 financial crash].

It felt like, from that moment, it was challenge after challenge. But along the way, civil servants have done brilliantly at working their way through those challenges, advising and learning, to see the best possible outcome. If you hold that as your core, then it gets you through challenging periods.

For me the more challenging periods have been the most exciting parts of my career. But we need to get our heads up and realise that the paradigm of economics, and how policy is made, have completely shifted. Where we're going in the next 10 years is not what we learnt at university or in our careers thus far – and that's actually really interesting! What a brilliant time to be working on that. ■

ments. But sometimes you need to build structures and groups to make sure there's a forum to bring that collaboration together. If you find yourself in a world where one department is sending out blank commissions – "Please send us your best answer to these three questions, and we will synthesise it, and you'll never see it again" – that's not good. For true collaboration, you need to be working across departments.

Do you observe differences between the professions within the analysis function?

Absolutely there are many differences and somebody more intelligent than me can explain whether the differences explain why that individual chose that discipline, or whether they learned the differences through their discipline. But more and more, we are seeing that individual analytical professions cannot just stick to one area. Lots of my economists will now have social research training,

QUICK FIRE QUESTIONS

What was your first job in government? HEO Fast Stream assistant economist, Department for Education.

What's your proudest professional achievement (so far)? Being offered the role of deputy head of the Economics Profession at the Home Office. I didn't think I'd get through to the interview stage, but then I did and smashed it. Taking up the post was a very proud moment.

What does it take to

do your job well?

A curious, analytical mindset, effective communication, collaboration skills, some creativity and an empathetic approach to leadership and management.

If you weren't a civil servant, what would you be? Probably a GP.

What's the best professional advice you've been given?

Not sure if this was specifically professional advice, but it's the recommendation to be bold and take opportunities. Apparently, people who take chances are on average more successful and potentially happier.

SINK OR SWIM

Supporting distressed companies can be complex but a recent NAO guide aims to help government better prepare.

Eloise Peck sets out some key lessons

On the face of it, you might not think a steel company, an energy supplier, a social care provider, a bank and a travel agent have much in common. But, if I name the companies – Sheffield Forgemasters, Bulb, Southern Cross, Northern Rock and Thomas Cook – you might recall the headlines about their financial difficulties that attracted a government response.

In general, government believes that private sector companies should be allowed to fail as part of the efficient working of markets and the economy. However, when a company failure could have serious consequences for public services or citizens government sometimes decides it needs to intervene – either to prevent the company from failing, rescue it, or manage the situation to prevent a disorderly collapse.

At the National Audit Office, we have examined the value for money of government interventions in a wide variety of distressed companies over a period of 20 years. Drawing on this body of work, and insights from experts at the centre of government, we produced a report and guide to collate this learning and set out good practice. This comes at a time when we have seen an unusual level of state intervention to keep companies or services functioning in response to the pandemic and energy crisis. With company insolvencies set to be at their highest levels since the depths of the financial crisis in 2009, how can government be alive to the risks this poses and ready to respond if necessary?

Identifying vulnerabilities and preparing for distress

Government is increasingly aware of the risks associated with company failure and its new approach to resilience focuses on prevention and

preparation for these types of risk.

Our guide highlights the importance of departments understanding where their objectives and the systems they oversee could be vulnerable to company, market or supply chain failure. This can be challenging – especially where a company provides services to several departments or cuts across multiple sectors.

Without good data and clarity over all the bodies involved and their responsibilities, monitoring and assessing these risks and coordinating contingency plans becomes challenging and time pressured. Government is aware of this – and Cabinet Office recently requested all departments assign a single point of responsibility to enable better understanding of cross-government exposure to supply chain risks and help coordinate responses.

Responding to distress and managing complex interventions

If, or when, it comes to intervening, ministers and officials quickly become embroiled in complex decision making at speed. As we regularly find in our audits, ensuring value for money means careful consideration not just

of short-term objectives but of longer-term scenarios. This includes plans for how government might manage and eventually exit the intervention and recover taxpayer funding. It also means accounting for the wider implications of intervening and risks for the whole market.

In the case of Carillion, the Cabinet Office rejected its requests for support to avoid setting an unhelpful precedent of bailout for other distressed suppliers (the

moral hazard risk). Instead, it opted to fund a trading liquidation, with the company continuing to provide public services until alternative arrangements could be made. Despite government not providing direct support to the company, Carillion remains in the news more than five years after its collapse, with a recent record fine for its auditors and the Insolvency Service being left £8m out of pocket over Carillion proceedings. In any intervention decision, government needs to be aware of the potential for a long tail of involvement, which might include unforeseen costs and ongoing commitment of resources.

Demand for skills, experience and expertise

The examples we have looked at in the guide show that preparing for and responding to these situations requires access to specialist skills not always readily available within government. To support the special administration of Bulb, government spending on advisers had reached £53m at

the end of January 2023. Amidst an increase in corporate finance work across government, the Public Accounts Committee has called for government to ensure all departments have access to the right skills and experience from

within the civil service to handle future failures. And with a high turnover of civil servants working in this area, it is all the more important that lessons from these cases are not simply put on the shelf, never to be dusted off again. Our guide and report stand ready as a reference point for civil servants navigating these challenges. ■

Eloise Peck is a senior analyst at the National Audit Office



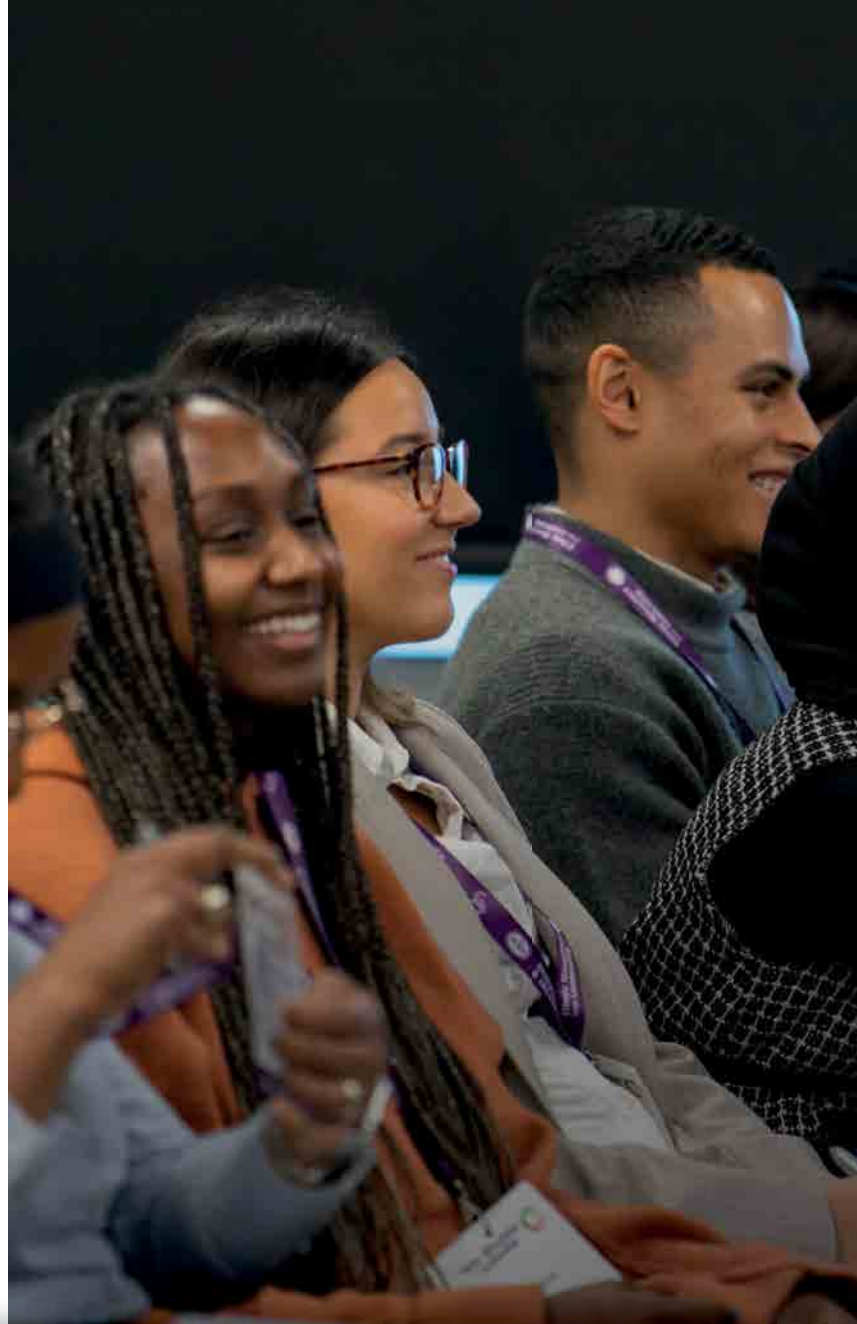
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REPORT IN A STORM

Here CSW rounds up the key reports and recommendations you might have missed from watchdogs and select committees in recent weeks

WORK TOGETHER

Civil service workforce: Recruitment, pay and performance management

Who? National Audit Office

When? November 2023

Key quote “The Cabinet Office and departments need to work together more effectively to drive efficiency and help the civil service meet the challenges and pressures it faces.”

In brief The Cabinet Office must tackle pay differences across departments which contribute to an “internal civil service market” competing for the same pool of staff. The NAO identified differences of up to £3,500 a year in the median pay of EOs working for different government departments in Newcastle and similar differentials in other cities. It also found a difference of £6,100 a year between the highest and

lowest median departmental pay for SEOs across the civil service. There were even bigger differentials for specialist roles. The watchdog also found that most departments were unable to provide data on their full recruitment costs and that two thirds of departments did not know what happened to staff after they were classified as underperforming.

Key recommendations

The Cabinet Office should:

- Produce an annual report on pay differentials and work with departments to fix the most problematic imbalances
- Review recruitment across the civil service by the end of 2025
- Help departments assess their performance-management systems ■

PEOPLE POWER

Civil Service People Survey

Who? Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

When? October 2023

Key quote “Given that data and extensive analyses are readily available across government months ahead of their public release, current delays in the publication of data are indefensible.”

In brief The government should make better use of the wealth of data collected as part of the annual Civil Service People Survey. The committee commended the Cabinet Office for establishing the survey, which garnered well over 300,000 responses in 2022, but said results are “not yet being used to drive improvements across the civil

service”. MPs were “surprised” by the lack of robust evidence that survey results are being used to drive change when the Cabinet Office describes the findings as a “management tool”. MPs also questioned the purpose of the survey’s flagship Employee Engagement Index.

Key recommendations

- Departments should develop action plans in response to future People Survey results, which define measurable and timely intervention. These should be included in departmental annual reports and accounts, and departments should evaluate their success in future annual reports and accounts
- The Cabinet Office should instigate a review of the future of the Employee Engagement Index ■

BACKLOG BURDEN

The Asylum Transformation Programme

Who? Public Accounts Committee

When? October 2023

Key quote “Unless the Home Office improves its understanding and communicates this across the system quickly, people seeking refuge may just be passed from one backlog in the Home Office to another backlog elsewhere in the system.”

In brief The Home Office’s plan to improve the asylum system by rapidly clearing the backlog in legacy cases “risks simply transferring backlogs to elsewhere in the system”. The Home Office “does not understand” the impact its Asylum Transformation Programme will have on the wider asylum system. The department’s “incomplete and unrealistic business case” for the programme “ignores the impact of a rapid clearing of the asylum backlog on immigration enforcement and the courts”. The programme is also expected

to impact on the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education.

Key recommendations

The Home Office should:

- Update the committee on its progress in increasing caseworker numbers and decisions and clearing the legacy backlog. It should also set out how it intends to reduce the backlog of newer claims that it has allowed to build up
- Set out how internal quality assurance arrangements have changed and what further evaluation is planned, in particular to ensure the Home Office makes the right asylum decisions
- Set out in detail the measures it will take to identify any vulnerabilities individuals waiting for a decision have, and how it will manage the risks that these may present
- Publish its updated business case so the intentions and impacts of the programme are clear and transparent to parliament, the public and other organisations ■



HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Revising health assessments for disability benefits

Who? Public Accounts Committee

When? November 2023

Key quote “The DWP must expand its focus to genuinely put claimants right at the heart of this work if it is to achieve the wider benefits of this programme”

In brief The Department for Work and Pensions’ £1bn programme to digitise the process for applying for disability benefits faces “significant risks” including failing to deliver transformational change for service users. MPs expressed concerns that the Health Transformation Programme – which is intended to enable online applications, improve case management, and triage claims – may not have enough public input in its design. They also warned that DWP’s approach to working with contractors could leave

the taxpayer vulnerable to contractual disputes, higher costs and delays, which are common problems for integrating digital systems. The new health assessment service that the HTP will deliver the bedrock IT for is due to be rolled out by 2029.

Key recommendations

The DWP should:

- Produce annual reports detailing how well the evaluation of the new service is progressing and whether it is on track to achieve its targeted benefits for claimants and taxpayers
- Set out how it will incentivise contractors operating under standard service contracts to co-operate with the expansion of test-and-learn activities to the necessary levels without incurring “excessive” costs and delays
- Explain how it will fully involve claimants in the design and implementation of the changes to the benefits system ■



STANDARDS BEARER

After five years chairing the Committee on Standards in Public Life, **Lord Evans** speaks to **Tevye Markson** about the challenges of fostering ethical integrity in government

W

hen former MI5 director general Jonathan Evans was appointed chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 2018, his intention was to help “continue the strong tradition of high public standards” in the UK, he tells CSW.

What he didn’t expect was to be thrust into a ringside seat at one of the most tumultuous periods for public standards in the modern era.

After the 1990s cash-for-questions affair, which triggered the creation of the standards committee, and the parliamentary expenses scandal in the late 2000s, ethical standards in public

life dropped off newspaper front pages. Then, shortly after Lord Evans joined the committee, a string of crises arrived all at once: Greensill, the Owen Paterson affair and Partygate. The former spymaster’s new role evolved into something that was rather different from what he had anticipated.

“I thought it would be more like a select committee role where you are [gathering] evidence [and] issuing reports,” Evans says. “But in the period from 2020 through to this time last year, public standards became a big public media issue.”

One might think he was well prepared for the challenge. A career security service officer who worked at MI5 for more

than three decades, Evans spearheaded attempts to bring transparency to the service. Leading one of Britain’s most opaque public services into an era of increased openness required careful navigation of questionable past behaviours by MI5, and brought with it increased media scrutiny – skills Evans found necessary to revisit in his committee role.

“I certainly seemed to spend a lot of time talking to media, appearing on the *Today* programme, the *World at One* and so on,” Evans says. “Public standards became a very big public story, and therefore we felt, as a committee, that we needed to make our voice heard. I don’t think I was anticipating that that would be what was involved in this role at the time.”

Evans’ five-year term ended in October. Despite the succession of scandals that marked the middle of his chairmanship, he believes a “slight recalibration” in ethical standards has taken place in the last 12 months. So, why does he think things got so choppy





**“Expressing
concerns
without looking
as though we’re
joining in some
sort of political
fight is a tricky
line to tread”**

under Boris Johnson's leadership?

"There's never been a golden age of standards when everyone was completely saintly, and everyone did everything right," he says. Long before the cash-for-questions scandal of the 1990s, there was, after all, the 1922 cash-for-honours furore involving then-prime minister David Lloyd George.

"There is always a tension between individual ambition, party and personal interests, and the public good. Sometimes, those get out of alignment," Evans says.



Evans believes increased political polarisation and a move towards "getting stuff done" at the expense of checks and balances under the Johnson government, at times out of necessity owing to the pandemic, were responsible for the mounting examples of impropriety.

Moving quickly to deliver policies is an understandable instinct, Evans says, but in the long term it leads to poor governance.

"And then there were some very specific things, like the scandalous decisions at the beginning of the Owen Paterson affair of demolishing the machinery in the middle of a process because you don't like the outcome," he adds, referring to the government's response to a committee report that recommended Paterson be suspended for breaching paid advocacy rules in November 2021. Johnson supported an amendment to disarm the motion to carry out the committee's recommendations. "That was very bad practice. It's against natural justice, and it's against what public standards are about and integrity in government." Following criticism from media and MPs in all parties, the government U-turned and announced a vote on the suspension. Paterson resigned.

Spying his next move

Evans joined MI5 in 1980, working on counter-espionage investigations and counter-terrorism. He left the service in April 2013, feeling he

had "run out of room" after a 33-year stint that saw him rise to the top position. Despite the perceived glamour and derring-do of a job in the Security Service, those who worked with him have painted a picture of careful professionalism. "He's not a risk-taker," a senior politician told *The Independent* in 2009. Former home secretary David Blunkett labelled him "a quiet professional".

Upon leaving the service in 2013, Evans felt the draw of a "portfolio with a variety of different roles", he tells CSW. He became a non-executive director at HSBC later that year, and was appointed a cross-bench peer in 2014. He also, briefly, became a non-executive director at the National Crime Agency from 2014 to 2015. In November 2018, he was appointed chair of CSPL for a five-year term.

The public service function of the role attracted Evans to the job, as did an active interest in upholding public standards which had developed at MI5 "dealing with countries [with] serious corruption issues".

"When you look at a country where there aren't decent standards in public life, where there is corruption, you realise how enormously damaging it is and how difficult it is to get out of that problem because all the handholds have been taken away," he explains.

"It seemed to me to be very important that we should continue the strong tradition of high public standards that, on the whole, the UK has had."

Mission control

Coming into the chairmanship, Evans says he didn't have a one-track "mission to do XYZ". Instead, he planned to consult the committee and other experts on public standards before deciding CSPL's focus during his term.



Pastures old MI5 headquarters in London

There were pressures on public standards that he felt were necessary to explore, however. One, in particular, surprised his colleagues: the impact of artificial intelligence.

Prior to taking the role, Evans says a visit to Google to discuss the tech firm's AI ambitions gave him further inspiration. "I thought, 'This is very interesting because if this is the way the world's going to go, then this could potentially have an impact on public standards issues'."

As a result, the committee published the report *Artificial Intelligence and Public Standards* in 2020. It proved prescient: in October 2023, the UK government hosted the first global summit on the risks of AI technologies.

"Some members of the committee were slightly surprised at going in that direction, but it turned out to be a good report and we were welcomed in by people who were thinking about these things," Evans says.

During a valedictory speech at the Institute for Government a few days before our interview, Evans said the report "may have been a bit ahead of time because nobody took much interest in it when we published it, but it's having a second life".

Analysing AI wasn't the only idea Evans was keen to consider: the committee's final major report under his leadership, *Leading in Practice* published in January 2023, bears the imprint of comments he made in his pre-appointment hearing with MPs in 2018, where he extolled the importance of leadership in driving good standards; of paying close attention to examples of best practice; and having ethics and standards form part of new employees' induction processes.

Five years later, he still believes standards are developed, rather than being innate. Asked what one reform he would introduce if he were given the keys to No.10,

he says: "It would be to ensure that public standards [and] ethics were an important part of induction and training for all people coming into public service, and that there was space created for people to talk, think and discuss around those issues at the beginning and throughout their careers."

Balancing act

The government took two years to respond to the committee's

“There’s never been a golden age of standards when everyone was completely saintly, and everyone did everything right”



EVANS ON... VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT

“It’s worth giving serious thought to [introducing values-based recruitment] if you’re running an organisation, because you will get the best out of an organisation if you are recruiting people who feel that what they are doing aligns with their values.

“That’s not to say that everybody must think the same. You can have people with very different skills and perspectives, but

whose fundamental values – what matters in terms of outcomes and behaviours – can be the same. That’s something which makes individuals thrive and [creates] organisations which are coherent, and which perform strongly.

“We expect people in public service to adhere to the seven principles of public life [selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness,

honesty and leadership].

“Is that something that chimes with the people that we’re recruiting or do they throw their hands up and say, ‘I don’t know what all this nonsense is about? I don’t want a job where I have to worry about all that?’

“If they don’t want to worry about all that, they may find it difficult to contribute to the sort of public service we want.”

2021 *Upholding Standards in Public Life* report and, while it accepted some recommendations, many others were ignored. Does Evans feel government has taken the committee seriously enough?

“I said two or three years ago that the government was being rather careless about standards issues,” he says delicately. “The government has been reluctant to accept the recommendations that we have made on a number of important areas, even though our report was based on the evidence that we had gathered and which

was informed by cross-party conversations. Particularly on electoral finance, to more or less say ‘No, we don’t really want to do anything’ is very regrettable.”

The government’s decision to cut the committee’s resources in 2013, which meant CSPL was no longer able to carry out public trust and attitude surveys, is also on the “regrettable” pile. The cut to funding came alongside a change to the committee’s remit, limiting its ability to examine current cases in favour of focusing on future threats.

Evans says balancing the two has

been one of the most challenging parts of the role.

“We’re there to advise government. We’re not there to criticise or to attack but equally, when things arise that are concerning, I don’t think we can not say anything,” he says. “So, expressing our concerns and why we have those concerns without looking as though we’re joining in some sort of political fight is a tricky line to tread. I hope we have generally managed it.”

While the government has not always paid as much attention to CSPL as he would have liked, Evans says one of

his fondest memories will be the respect the committee received among his peers.

“I was pleasantly surprised by the strong network that the committee has and the support that there is for what we stand for,” he says. “The committee has influence. We don’t have any power but we do have an influential voice, and it was a nice surprise to find how people cared about public standards and cared about the work of the committee given it’s a small and relatively back room function within public service.” ■

ON THE EDGE OF SUCCESS

This autobiographical amble through Rory Stewart’s political career highlights much of the former Conservative minister’s unmet potential, writes **Russell Barnes**

► **Politics on the Edge: A Memoir from Within**
 ► **Rory Stewart**
 ► **Jonathan Cape**

Whilst all political memoirs agree on being commute-challengingly massive, beyond that they tend to fall into two distinct genres: overly technocratic plods through the writer’s parliamentary hobby horse or lengthy exercises in axe-grinding and point scoring now the writer has faded onto the back benches and beyond.

Rory Stewart manages to combine both while reflecting on a political career in the Conservative Party that came to an end following his resignation after the 2019 leadership campaign.

Like all memoirs, the secret is to work out what is true and what is not being said in order to flatter the writer’s own ego and salve any stings of failures. So, what do we get here?

Beginning at the end with the second televised leadership debate – in which it’s fair to say Stewart tanked – *Politics on the Edge* offers 400-odd pages of how right he was at the time, and how much history will prove him to be a visionary.

It’s a shame because hidden behind the self-mythologising is the more interesting story of how good Stewart was as a constituency MP and how effective his practical, hands-on approach to ministerial briefs was in generating good policy changes, like the 5p plastic bag charge.

“Rory Stewart turns out to

be a broadly effective minister” probably isn’t the epitaph he’s looking for, so instead the narrative thread he weaves majors on his view of himself as a benign demi-god, alighting on departments and bringing great change wherever he goes.

Stewart comes across as incredibly likeable, personable, bursting with ideas and driven by a strong sense of purpose. This is very much a book of many Rorys, starting with the political ingenue fired up by his time in Afghanistan, heeding a political call.

People warm to his down-to-earth willingness to get involved with his vast rural constituency. His love of the countryside and the people who populate the far northwest shines through and once elected, he morphs into an archetypal local MP fighting against fire sta-

tion and cinema closures, and pushing for better broadband and for more local investment. He does a lot of walking.

Following the 2015 general election, we meet “ministerial Rory” when he is appointed parliamentary under-secretary of state at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The 2015 Christmas floods combines both “minister” and “man of action” in a blaze of publicity as he bestrode the sodden county like a

saint in high-vis, bringing succour to the good folk of Cumbria for the news cameras.

David Cameron’s defeat in the 2016

European referendum and Theresa May’s accession sees Stewart’s ministerial career blossom. He has stints in the now-closed Department for International Development

“Despite his best efforts to be right on every subject under the sun, Stewart comes across as warm and engaging”

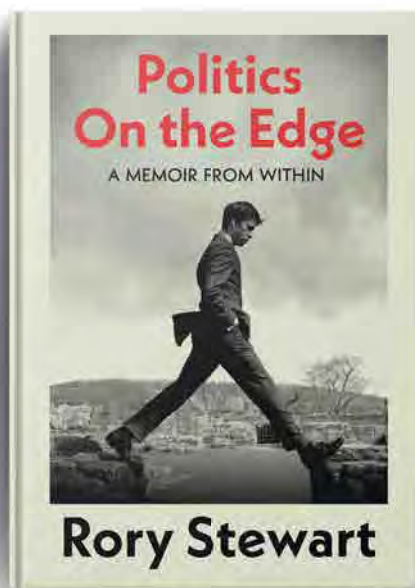
and the Foreign Office and a role as prisons and probation minister at the Ministry of Justice before finally becoming secretary of state back at DfID. With this context in mind, it’s understandable why May gets a fairly positive portrayal compared to Cameron (who he had no relationship with) and Johnson (who he probably had more of a relationship with than he’d have liked, and who he clearly loathes).

In each role, he either gets beneath the brief because he’s an expert or he gets experts in to challenge his civil servants. His return to DfID as secretary of state is particularly eye-opening, laying bare how previous relationships are skewed as the power dynamic shifts. While being a champion of the civil service, Stewart is very clear on our need to be more flexible than we’d perhaps like to be – not necessarily cleaving to the party line but aiming to be more dynamic and innovative, and to search for more radical solutions that are free of political view, particularly in the aid space.

The leadership campaign and the death of “Rorymania” (if it ever existed) tops and tails the book, with a sense of lost opportunities and the end of his career in frontline politics.

Despite his best efforts to be right on every subject under the sun, Stewart comes across as warm and engaging. Listeners to his podcast with Alistair Campbell will be well aware of his chatty style with regular detours down conversational byways and wanders around the subject at hand. That charisma translates into an eminently readable canter through a career that probably promised more than he could deliver. ■

Russell Barnes is head of probation communications at HM Prison and Probation Service. He has worked in digital and communications roles across government, most recently at the Legal Aid Agency, Defra and Cabinet Office



LIFE AT THE FRONTIER

The first woman political adviser to a British prime minister, Marcia Williams may have had her share of failings but, as Linda McDougall's excellent book makes clear, she deserves to be remembered as a trailblazer. Labour peer **Baroness Nye** writes

› The Life and Times of
Baroness Falkender
› Linda McDougall
› Biteback

I confess I have always had a soft spot for Marcia Williams as she was responsible for setting me on my own political journey. As Linda McDougall's excellent biography explains, when Marcia first entered Downing Street she was taken aback by the old-school culture that existed – especially the practice of recruiting secretaries in Downing Street's Garden Rooms solely from elite London secretarial colleges. She had it changed to a system of open competition from within the entire civil service secretarial pool and thus gave an opportunity to this young woman in 1976 to work behind the famous black door during Jim Callaghan's premiership.

So the story told in this book is of the distant past to many, but one for which I have sympathy and understanding. It is also why Marcia Williams – with her fair share of human failings – should be remembered as a trailblazer. It might have been the Swinging Sixties but the workplace, including the civil service, was still incredibly misogynistic. In 1964 only two senior civil service positions were held by women but on a different pay scale to their male colleagues, and women of executive rank were banned from the diplomatic service.

The radicalism of the 1945 government had been almost forgotten during the 13 years of Conservative government that

followed. It was almost seen as an aberration from the natural order. When Labour won the election in 1964, prime minister Harold Wilson needed Marcia to continue the pivotal political role she had been playing that had won him the leadership and then the premiership. But there was no precedent for a political office in No.10, nor for a woman to lead it.

Coming into government after a long period in opposition is a paradigm shift for both politicians and civil servants and nothing prepares you for the relentless nature of being at the centre of government, whatever the era. Wilson needed the loyal eyes and ears of Marcia as well as her highly developed political brain and acumen.

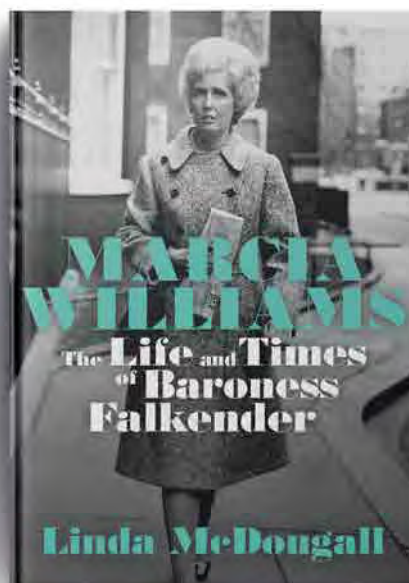
McDougall describes herself as a storyteller and not a historian and there is quite a tale to be told of a woman who crossed the boundaries of what was normal for a woman of that time. She tells the story of a woman who lived and breathed politics and formed a partnership with Wilson that won four historic elections but never aspired to



“Wilson needed the loyal eyes and ears of Marcia as well as her highly developed political brain and acumen”

be in the front line herself. A woman who hid two pregnancies and in later years used prescriptions for uppers and downers to get her through the day. This book doesn't shy away from Marcia Williams' faults but it does chart the start of the enormous societal change that was beginning with the election of Labour in '64 and which continues even now. In the '80s, Labour women were still wearing badges proclaiming that “Labour Women Make Policy Not Tea”. So I am glad that Linda McDougall has written this book to explain *The Life and Times of Baroness Falkender* – and that I got to thank Marcia in person towards the end of her life for being a frontierswoman for those of us that followed. ■

Baroness Sue Nye is a Labour peer and former director of government relations for Gordon Brown



MAKING A



Following the release of a major new data strategy, Office for National Statistics chief data officer **Fiona James** talks to **Sam Trendall** about the power of linking information, and why departments must build data into spending review plans

CONNECTION

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



Over the coming months and years, “radical and ambitious principles” will be the bedrock of the work of the Office for National Statistics, according to the opening sentence of the organisation’s recently published *Data Strategy*.

This work will all support the ONS’s ambition of “moving to a new phase as both a data and technology leader”, adds the introduction, written by ONS chief data officer Fiona James.

Such grand terminology may come as something of a surprise for many citizens whose primary association with the statistics agency is the experience of filling out and posting back their census questionnaire once a decade.

But, as the strategy explains, a lot has changed at the ONS – and continues to do so.

“There is a trend of falling response rates to surveys, and people are more in control of their data and how they wish to share it,” the intro says. “This strategy sets out a vision for the ONS to pivot towards realising the full value of data as a strategic asset, while maintaining high levels of trust and transparency.”

Since the publication of the ONS’s previous data strategy in 2020, a lot has also changed in the world beyond the organisation, James tells CSW.

“Since then we’ve had a pandemic, the war in Ukraine, an energy crisis, [and] interest rate increases,” she says. “And more recently... we’ve had generative AI releases. This strategy is about recognising that data has become the number-

one critical enabler to our operations.”

According to James, the plan also recognises that, for an organisation that has always tended to “think a lot about our outputs... [such as] GDP figures, population statistics, or the census”, it is equally significant to reflect on “the essential input” that enables these insights: data.

From this starting point, the strategy sets out eight core missions:

- To enhance data in the ONS and across government by making it more findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable, as well as better linked
- To build a comprehensive understanding of data needs and opportunities
- To maintain high levels of trust in the ONS while raising awareness, understanding, and support for its new data approaches
- To deliver a smooth, commonly understood end-to-end data journey
- To treat data as an essential input to ONS ways of working and central to future operations
- To ensure that quality of data is known, communicated, and managed consistently throughout its full data lifecycle
- To develop secure options that provide business with expanded access to data, maintain public and stakeholder trust, and make available data for statistics and research purposes
- To ensure the ONS will have the skills to meet its current commitments as well as future chal-

lenges and opportunities

James explains that the strategy was originally meant to be purely an internal document, but it serves as such an effective statement of intent that the decision was taken to release the plan publicly.

A wider move towards being “outwardly focused” was accelerated by ONS work during the pandemic, which required the organisation to ensure it was “very joined up with a lot of partners [to deliver] the insights that we produced”, she adds.

“The strategy has a really big focus on strengthening our collaboration, particularly with the rest of government and those data communities and users. The Integrated Data Service is positioned front and centre,” James says.

“As we run up to the next spending review, we need to bang the drum for sufficient investment in data foundations”

The cloud-based platform, which is currently operating in public beta mode ahead of a full launch of a live service later this year, offers a single unified facility from which accredited analysts

– largely within central government, but also including the devolved administrations and some external users – can access data to support research and decision-making.

The Integrated Data Service recently received an accreditation via the Digital Economy Act “which essentially means it’s open for business”, James says.

The IDS forms part of a “new set of data products that we’re delivering, which >>

2,000 Amount of data assets held in the ONS’s internal platform – a figure that has increased 50% in the past two years

3 years Length of time covered by the Data Strategy

£6m Approximate amount ONS spends on acquiring data each year

20 million Number of records in the ECHILD database

Local, longitudinal, linked The ‘three Ls of data’, as set out in the strategy

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combine core reference data sources and matching services around people, businesses and locations”, James says, allowing for different data sets to be brought together, linked and correlated and, ultimately, enabling greater insight.

This is exemplified by the ECHILD database, in which the ONS has helped to bring together a wide range of government and NHS data sets to help public sector researchers link information from different sources to explore the relationship between health and education, and how the two impact one another during a child’s early years.

The database is comprised of 20m individual records of children – which have been pseudonymised, with all personally identifiable information stripped out – including details of NHS hospital treatment, maternity, mental health



and medicine-dispensing data, as well as pupil databases, census information, and births and deaths records.

University College London, which leads the project, has already used the ECHILD database to study the impact of the pandemic and lockdown measures on children that require additional education support. ECHILD is now available via the ONS’s Secure Research Service, the access platform that is in the process of being replaced by the IDS.

Costs and benefits

As well as collating public sector data, the strategy also recognises the growing role of external data sources, including commercial providers, and other suppliers of support services to assist the ONS’s work.

James says that the strategy’s ambitions to progress this engagement “are more like an evolution than a step change”.

“I think we recognise that we need to work with external providers to support where we want to get to, with the pace at which things are moving,” she adds.

Some data is provided to the ONS at no cost, on a “value-exchange” basis. This includes information derived from the CHAPS payment database operated by the Bank of England. Other data is acquired by the agency at a cumulative cost of about £6m a year – with further investment also often required to prepare data and put it to use.

The publication of the new *Data Strategy* comes as government agencies enter the final 12 months of the current three-year spending-review period. As departments work towards a submission for the next comprehensive review, due to take place in late 2024, the ONS is keen to use its growing collaboration with them to ensure plans and programmes involving the use of data are properly costed.

“Departments need to recognise that they don’t just produce data, but they consume data as well, and there are wider benefits,” James says. “For example, we’ve recently been doing something with mobility data – which is quite a high-demand analytical data set – and we’ve been negotiating with a particular commercial provider that could provide us with historical mobility data, as well as real-time data. And this is

on behalf of government – not just for ONS use. So, we are contracting with them on a broad basis, rather than each department contracting with the supplier on an individual basis. As we run up to the next spending review, we need to bang the drum for sufficient investment in these data foundations: the data engineering and the data preparation costs need to be factored in properly, by departments and by programmes. If you’ve got a programme and you have a data element, you need to be costing in that data-standard work because, if you don’t, we’re never going to get to a point where it’s easy to interoperate between departments.”

Survey says

The statistical surveys that have long been the mainstay of the ONS’s work, meanwhile, will remain an important source of information, but James says their use will likely become more targeted, with the aim

of complementing other data sources.

“The data strategy is aligned to the survey strategy that was produced a few years ago. And that points to surveys being used to address data gaps, where we need additional validation,” James says. “So, [for example], the vision for our business survey going forward – which this strategy supports – is that we have a much more integrated, more modularised design of a smaller number of business surveys. And we now have a business unit that’s supporting engagement with businesses, and we also have conceptual plans to put in place an interface – which would be built in partnership with businesses and accountancy software providers – so people can provide us with data via APIs much quicker than we are able to do now.”

However the data is provided, the strategy sets out the importance of building trust and transparency around it. Three of the eight missions reference the importance of public trust and these objectives will be supported by a public-facing programme of “transparency and listening”, according to James.

“We want to make sure we know what good looks like, and that everyone can find out what data ONS has access to, what we’re using that data for, and that we’re clearly setting out our intentions on data, how we comply with policies, and that we publish lists of all the data sources that we’re using, and how it tracks on to thematic analysis,” she says.

While citizens may feel a greater stake – and desire greater control – in how their data is used, James says that trust and support can be engendered if people feel the relationship with the data processors is mutually beneficial.

“We’ve been doing a lot on this recently around how do we create a much more connected relationship with citizens around how they use their data?,” she adds. “For example, individuals have a great relationship with their bank – because you get something back from the data that you have with them. So [we’re asking] what more can we do in this space, to create a much, much more personalised kind of experience – so you get something back from the data that, at the end of the day, is being used for the greater good.” ■

Sam Trendall is editor of *PublicTechnology.net*

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TALLINN



TALES

Estonia has long been renowned as one of the world's leading digital governments. **Sam Trendall** talks to **Tarmo Hanga** from the country's Information System Authority about its latest innovations – including virtual marriages and mobile elections

Efficiency is generally cited as one of the main benefits of digitising public services. But sometimes, perhaps, the inefficient part is the whole point. This is exemplified by the most recent addition to the near-comprehensive suite of digital services offered by the Estonian government – which has long been regarded among the global standard bearers for transformation.

In recent months, Estonians have been newly able – if they so wish – to get married digitally. “Two parties can fill in a form online [stating] that they want to marry each other,” says Tarmo Hanga, chief architect at Estonia's Information System Authority (RIA).

“Of course, there is a waiting window, of 30 days, [during which] you must wait with this decision. And, if you are still sure that you want to get married, it takes effect. And, of course, both sides' electronic signatures are needed as well, and they must each agree: ‘I do’, electronically.”

This process, for all its obvious efficiency, lacks the photo opportunity of beatifically signing a register – to say nothing of the suits, dresses, vows, speeches, food, drink, dancing and company of loved ones that tend to represent what people most value about getting married.

Now that sacred union can be achieved in just a couple of clicks, Es-

tonia's government claims to have only one remaining public service that is yet to be digitised: divorce.

This final piece of the puzzle is due to be put in place in the coming months. Once it has been, those going through an “e-divorce” will, unlike those at the other end of their matrimonial journey, surely welcome the opportunity to complete the whole process without even having to be in the same room.

Hanga tells CSW that the digitisation of marriages is an exemplar of the coming wave of ongoing change for a government that is often characterised – not least in its own online strapline – as having completed its transformation into a fully “digital society”.

But even if many processes are wholly digitised, the RIA technical chief believes there is still plenty of scope for the operations of the state to be better designed around the lives of citizens – and the milestone events that define them.

“In terms of new plans, what we are trying to do now is about human-centric digital government and we think that government services must be more based on life events,” he says.

“For example, if you change your name when you get married, you must get the new identity practically automatically – so you don't need to visit an office

to get a new passport. That's our goal to move this way and we started about two years ago with a project [focused on] event-based and proactive services.”

Another such event for which Estonia hopes to provide citizens with ongoing and proactive support is the birth or adoption of a child.

“The flow of information is available right now in the state portal,” Hanga says. “But, when you have a child currently, you must register for any benefits [you are entitled to], and register with local government for a kindergarten place, [for example]. Those are the things we hope to change so that, if you live in a local government area and you have a child, that means the child is automatically registered to this local government waiting list for kindergarten, that you receive the benefits that are available for that child, that your child is automatically registered for your family doctor. That's an example of how we think services should occur.”

The work on event-based services is initially focusing on three landmark moments in citizens' lives. Alongside marriage and having or adopting a child, the last of these is the mandatory period of up to 11 months of national military service that must be completed by all Estonian men – and those women that choose to – at the age of 18. The aim is to ensure registration processes for

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the appropriate courses and branch of the military is automated, according to Hanga.

After launching digital marriages, the RIA – which fulfils a similar role as the United Kingdom's Government Digital Service and Central Digital and Data Office – is “making good steps” with work on delivering further proactive services.

But the unit faces challenges that will no doubt be familiar to its counterparts in the UK and beyond.

“We are making baby steps,” Hanga says. “There are sometimes problems if it is written in law who can and who can't use a state registry – which then means we must make a lot of changes to allow for the services to happen. And, of course, changing the mindset of people is also a process – one that doesn't go as fast as you hope. All this takes time, of course, and funding also, if you need to make new integrations [between departments] for services... But we are in the process and we are quite hopeful.”

Kratt bot

As one might expect, the Estonian government is also striving to get the most out of artificial intelligence.

While “AI will have roles”, according to Hanga, the most visible of those to date is the *Bürokratt* platform, which is described as “a virtual assistant, thanks to which citizens no longer have to spend a single extra minute communicating with the state”.

As well as the allusion to bureaucracy, the name also plays on a creature from Estonian folklore: the magical – if not always entirely benevolent – kratt which, according to the mythology, would perform tasks and bring treasure to its master.

The hope is that its software-based namesake – which is already available via text or voice interaction for desktop web-pages, with plans in place to enable its use on mobile devices – will be equally helpful.

Hanga says: “Usually, chatbots are quite dumb and are just answering machines for questions. But if we are able to connect those chatbots to our registries that means, for example, if you come to the state portal and ask questions about car insurance, the chatbot will redirect you to the correct institution or even the correct officer.”

The RIA hopes to enable more sophisticated functionality over time, including “data analysis, text, translations, text-to-speech and speech-to-text”.

“We also need to find a solution for using chatbot services in the public cloud, or in terms of working with re-

stricted information – which is not legislated for at the moment, so we need to deal with that as well,” says Hanga.

Another area where Estonia hopes to progress the delivery of services via mobile platforms is in systems for voting in elections.

The country has allowed online voting since 2005 and, in national parliamentary elections held earlier this year, the proportion of votes submitted digitally exceeded 50% for the first time.

The laws that enabled online voting have

now been extended to allow the process to take place via an app. The RIA has developed prototypes of Android and iOS programs, and is confident that the technology will be ready to be put into use by the time of European parliament elections in June.

“Mobile voting gives the opportunity to grab the younger generation as well, who are using mostly mobile phones, so let's see where that brings us,” Hanga says. “If there are no problems with security, I think that mobile voting will become just one of the choices for [citizens]: you can use PC, you can use mobile and, of course, you can always walk to the election place as well.”

The latter is an option which, after 18 years of offering online elections, is still favoured by 49% of Estonians.

Whether you are walking to the altar or the ballot box – even in a wholly digital society – it seems sometimes the joy is in the journey. ■

“What we are trying to do now is about human-centric digital government and we think that government services must be more based on life events”

Mythical creature Aleksander Promet's vision of a kratt



ESTONIA STAT ATTACK

106,000

Number of overseas citizens that have registered for Estonian e-Residency

51%

Proportion of votes submitted online in 2023 Estonian parliamentary elections

30 days

Waiting period after which a digital marriage comes into effect

Three drops of blood

Offering required – to the devil – in order to bring a kratt to life, according to folklore

NET ZERO



HEROES

A tech team supporting the cross-government push to make the UK a net-zero carbon economy by 2050 has won a prestigious award for its work. **Tevye Markson** finds out more

Achieving net zero will require a huge, collaborative effort across government. In 2021, a newly-formed net-zero systems team at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy was tasked with aiding the challenge by creating a tool to help officials think more widely beyond their immediate policy area.

Two years later the Operational Research Society awarded the team its

coveted President's Medal award for the project's "innovative spirit" and "potential to drive positive change".

Adam Mackenzie-Jones leads the net-zero systems team, which now sits in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero following February 2023's machinery of government changes that split BEIS up.

He says the team was set up partly in response to a recommendation from the Council for Science and Technology that the UK would require a "whole systems

approach” strategy for reaching net zero. Then-prime minister Boris Johnson backed its call in 2020, a year after the UK became the first G7 country to legislate for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The CST said its proposed approach would “reveal the effects that policy decisions in all areas of government will have on delivery of net zero, enabling decision-makers to understand how different policies interact and influence the transition of the whole economy towards net zero”.

Jonathan Hoare, a deputy director in the net zero strategy directorate at DESNZ, says the whole-systems approach wasn’t new in itself, but notes that the CST’s letter triggered a “turbocharge” of what government was already doing.

After winning funding from HM Treasury’s Shared Outcomes Fund in early 2021, the team started work on the interactive visualisation which would become an award-winning tool. Recognising the need to create something bespoke, they began by building systems maps – which was a lengthy process because of the complexity and wide-ranging nature of net zero and the need to get lots of feedback from inside and outside of government.

“There’s no real way of deciding that a map is correct, it’s a representation of a system,” Mackenzie-Jones says. “So the best you can do is to iteratively test the map with as many people from as many different perspectives as you can to make sure that you don’t have any clangers in there and that there is a confidence you’re representing the system fairly and adequately.”

A key challenge was making the tool accessible, at a level where training isn’t needed, but where it is also not overly simple. “Systems thinking could risk being seen as a technical thing and we wanted to take it off that potential pedestal and make it accessible to a wide range of officials,” Mackenzie-Jones says.

With the Treasury’s Shared Outcomes funding in-hand, the team had time to develop a tool that could be subjected to proper user-testing to ensure people could use and interact with it, he adds.

The team got some inspiration for the design from a systems-thinking website. “It inspired the concept of being able to interact with a systems map where you can press play and say, what happens if I make a decision like this? That helped us with the concept of ‘flowing through’. You take any variable in net zero policy and ask: What happens if this increases? You click on it and then it flows through the system,” Mackenzie-Jones says.

ORS judges were full of praise for the team’s process, lauding its “excellence”. Mackenzie-Jones says the key elements of process were the collaborative setup, the “analytical backbone” underpinning the tool and the project’s “fail fast” mentality.

The analytical backbone came from the early decision to make the tool qualitative rather than quantitative, which avoided creating a tool that gives falsely precise information, Mackenzie-Jones says.

“It’s supposed to highlight a potential risk that you might want to look at, not to say ‘that decision will mean that you would definitely have a specific, quantitative impact on your carbon budgets,’” he explains.

The process of creating the tool went far beyond one department, with input from officials in the Department for Transport; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; and the Cabinet Office. BEIS set up a cross-government systems team that brought officials across government together.

There are also three individual teams in DESNZ, the DfT and Defra focused on embedding the tool in their departmental portfolios.

A “dynamic plate of spaghetti” and a “crime investigation evidence board” are not things you would associate with net zero. But these are the images Mackenzie-Jones and Hoare reach for when CSW asks why ORS President’s Medal judges praised the tool for capturing “the innovative spirit of operational research”.

The innovative part of the tool is its dynamism, Mackenzie-Jones says:

“It is about trying to spot where there might be unintended consequences of an action and to have that visualised. It’s something people strive for in the policy profession” Jonathan Hoare, DESNZ

“What people have struggled with in the past has been really taking systems thinking from that static map into something that’s interactive.”

Systems maps, which articulate how everything in a policy area is connected, have “lots of circles and lines all interconnected with each other”, creating “a bit of a spaghetti”, he says. The net-zero systems tool makes these circles and lines “interrogable and exploratory”, allowing users to cut the data in different ways and isolate the parts of the map that are of most interest.

Hoare says a different way to visual-

ise the tool is like a crime-investigation evidence board with pictures of suspects linked by red string. “It will highlight the connections between those people, and the things that are influencing those two parts of the system,” he says. “What you want is for policy professionals to be thinking about the system as broadly as they can, as much as they can. This tool is about trying to make that easier in this domain.”

Hoare adds: “A lot of it is about trying to spot where there might be unintended consequences of an action and to have that visualised for people, and particularly for people who are quite deep in a particular area. This lets them see across the system. It’s something people strive for within the policy profession.”

Along with the plaudits from the ORS, the team had the tool reviewed by external systems-thinking experts who “identified it as a sector leading product”, Mackenzie-Jones says. Perhaps most importantly, the tool has been embraced by civil servants.

It is available to officials in Defra, DLUHC, DESNZ and DfT, and had around 400-500 users in its first month. Many users report the tool has helped them identify areas where further research and analysis is needed, Mackenzie-Jones says. Officials also told the team they use it as a “sense check”.

The code for the tool could soon be used for other policy areas, Mackenzie-Jones believes, adding that officials across government are “pretty much banging down the door” to use it.

“We’ve developed a capability that really can be applied to any policy area,” he says.

The team has Treasury funding to keep working on the tool until the end of 2024-25, which will involve adapting it in response to feedback from users, updating the map content and embedding it more deeply into government.

This begs the question of what happens after 2025.

“My answer would be that we’ll get to net zero by 2050 and then Adam can have a conversation with me about what he does next,” Hoare quips.

“I would love that if we’re still doing this,” Mackenzie-Jones responds. “I’m happy to do it.” ■

LUNCH WITH... PAMELA DOW

Jess Bowie meets the civil service skills evangelist and co-founder of Civic Future. Photography by Dinendra Haria

Who? Pamela Dow is a former senior civil servant and co-founder and chief operating officer of Civic Future, a non-party political charity which identifies and trains talented people for careers in public life. Before leaving the civil service in 2022 she was executive director in the Cabinet Office where she founded and led the Government Skills Campus, designed and delivered the first curriculum for civil service knowledge and skills, and established the Leadership College for Government. Her career also includes senior roles in the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Education and stints in the private sector.

Where

The Civil Service Club is in Great Scotland Yard, between Whitehall and Northumberland Avenue. It provides a restaurant for members and their guests in comfortable, friendly surroundings.

We discussed

Why she left the civil service

My co-founder Munira [Mirza, former director of the No 10 Policy Unit under Boris Johnson] and I knew of each other for quite a long time because we had been in the same world, but we had never worked directly together. We had a conversation in summer 2022 and realised that we both shared the

same concerns about institutions which weren't attracting the most talented people for public service, or training them to be effective. Munira's background is more on the political side of policy and government, and mine on the civil service or business side, so we realised we had hugely complementary skills, knowledge and networks.

We were also both influenced by the military strategist John Boyd's phrase: "People, ideas, technology – in that order." We had noticed that in politics and policy there was a lot of emphasis on ideas and technology, but far less emphasis on people.

The United Kingdom used to have more institutions that were either directly or indirectly about talent pipelines. The civil service, for example, had Sunningdale, where you would go to learn your vocational skills. But more important than the actual content of the training would be the mentors you would meet and the relationships. The Conservative Party once had Swinton College, its training base in North Yorkshire, where you'd have debates about Edmund Burke, and how to campaign, how to govern, how to build strong networks. The Labour Party had something similar in the trade union movement or Ruskin College.

Of course, I can understand why a lot of these places were done away with: they're expensive to heat, it's hard to show the direct impact that would meet an accountant's approval.

But things like that make institutions strong and resilient, because they make the people competent and confident.

In the summer of 2022 government – political and permanent – was rocky. I had been in the Cabinet Office since 2019, and Munira and I had been through big system stresses – Brexit, Covid. We had separately reached the conclusion that it was now an existential threat to our democracy that we won't have many young people looking at roles in public life with a sense of aspiration and inspiration. Munira had spent time looking at what other countries were doing, and what had worked in the past, and the various models. Civic Future – the fellowship, and wider programme – was her brainchild. I've never started something from scratch before. I've been in small organisations and big organisations, but to have created something from nothing, to be there at the start, has been exhilarating.

If any idea is a new idea in the civil service

Quite often in government you find that someone else has tried to tackle the same problem, whether years, decades or centuries before. The Government Skills Campus and civil service curriculum, which came out of Michael Gove's 2021 speech "The Privilege of Public Service", gave a new form to a very old challenge.

No-one had ever tried to write a curriculum for vocational

skills in the civil service before and I understand why. The range of knowledge and skills needed for 450,000 different people – from people who wear uniforms and police the borders to people who manage a minister's diary – is mammoth.

But just because it's hard it doesn't mean you shouldn't have a go, and do it with specificity and clarity. Luckily, we were coming out of a period where learning and development had been dominated by various HR fads, where there had been more focus on abstract nouns and subjective qualities than on precise and necessary expertise to do a job. Excellent administration requires excellence in management – of people, of resources – but I inherited a veritable alphabet soup of unconnected "leadership" programmes, and absolutely nothing for management.

The new campus and curriculum, the Leadership College, started to reverse that trend. A single authorial mind focusing on what things we need all these people to know in different departments, functions and at different career stages. Helping people build multidisciplinary teams to take through a policy to delivery. One of the reasons we relied so much on military planners from 2016 onwards was because they had that vocational skill. They trained



“I’m so proud to have been involved with the reforms to education. Being part of the team that did something sustainable and measurable is amazing, and quite rare in Whitehall”



for it, they didn't just think that it happened by osmosis.

What the military gets right about skills

In that period I looked internationally, at the Civil Ser-

vice College in Singapore, at Western Australia, at France and Germany, and I spent time at Sandhurst, and Herford – places where serious training is the most important thing, not an afterthought.

Sandhurst is globally lauded and is where the army forms its leadership cadre. They do it very specifically, with a clear curriculum and the transmission of a culture through tradition and practice.

You could argue that the civil service – prior to 2020 – had it completely the wrong way round. Trying to transmit the values and culture through pseudo-pedagogy: a Friday webinar on “empathetic lead- »

ership”, or some such. But no standards or criteria for actual knowledge or skills to do a job.

Wokeness and the importance of evidence-based L&D

I try not to use “the W-word” as it’s become such bad faith shorthand for the culture war. Being “awakened” to life in different shoes to your own is one of the joys of being a human being and always was. Diversity in your friendship group, in your work teams, makes you a bigger person. This is the message of every single story we’ve told ourselves as a species since the dawn of time! It’s so ignorant – and arrogant – to imply we only started thinking

about these topics in the last decade, or that we can define the “diversity” of our endlessly fascinating human selves with crude, single, identity markers. Some of the solutions – for example to the challenge of

“Being ‘awakened’ to life in different shoes to your own is one of the joys of being a human being and always was”

lack of diversity in senior positions – are completely untested. And often based on shoddy thinking, for example that every disparity is a result of discrimination. Sometimes when interventions have been

tested they are proven to be at best net neutral, if not outright counterproductive – things like unconscious bias or microaggression training.

It’s not just the civil service making mistakes of performativity and superficiality on this topic. I’ve spoken to so many people from the private sector who think something weird has happened in HR and DEI in the last few years. It’s not the first “profession” to go through this reckoning either. I started at the education department in a period of recognition that some classroom practice was more based on fads and whims. Teacher training was not always an evidence and data-rich place.

Health went through it about 20 years before, too. So I’m optimistic that we’re at the end of junk science in DEI.

Back in 2020, when I was looking at what was on the training framework, I wrote a note to the then-Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove and [civil service chief operating officer] Alex Chisholm, saying: We’re going to have to do something about this. We’ve got all this expensive, time-consuming stuff going on, and we have no idea about quality and impact. Commercial providers are selling to HR managers by saying: “There is a diversity problem and my webinar on checking your privilege is what your organisation needs.”

Gove gave exactly the right direction to the quiet and methodical removal of 400-plus courses without any evidence between 2020 and 2022. Kemi Badenoch, as minister for equalities and business secretary, has built on this with the Inclusive Britain recommendations, and the panel I’ve been chairing for her.

What she is most proud of

The reforms to education. In 2010, Michael Gove [who was then education secretary] and his team were fighting the prevailing Ken Robinson Ted-Talk idea that kids didn’t need to be taught things like phonics. They’re old-fashioned and stifle creativity. “Children are naturally curious, so if we let them play with building blocks in the garden and so on they’ll eventually learn to read and write!”

It’s a charming idea, but it’s just not true – especially for poor kids. If your mum and dad are reading Shakespeare’s tales to you, and you’ve got a piano in the sitting room, you’ll probably be alright. It doesn’t matter if you don’t do phonics and your teacher doesn’t enforce discipline in the classroom – you’ll muddle through. But for a poor kid, a structured day, with the most creative

IN THE CLUB

The Civil Service Club, celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, was established using funds originally raised to celebrate the wedding of then-Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip. It opened in 1953 to provide “social facilities in reach of

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The club continues to thrive, with more than 13,500 members for whom it provides a varied programme of activities including comedy and quiz nights. Members can also use facilities in the form of the Queen Elizabeth Dining Room, a convivial bar also serving food,

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teachers who really understand how you learn, in a way that is backed by scientific evidence... that is your only chance.

It was a time when teachers, education leaders, and ministers realised we needed a core knowledge curriculum and high standards of discipline in the classroom. There's this sticky, false distinction between creativity and hard

knowledge, which is wrong, wrong, wrong. If you teach music, art or drama properly, they're rigorous, serious subjects. And learning maths should be engaging and creative. These ideas are now the norm in education, but at the time that wasn't the case.

All of us who were involved in that team – advisers, ministers and officials – felt that we

were working hard and doing a good job to make a change, and it was so unifying to work on something like that. Being part of a team to do something sustainable and measurable is amazing. It's quite rare in Whitehall to be able to look at something like England's rising place in the international assessment tables and think, "Oh, I was part of that."

The importance of good management

The other thing I'm proud of from that time is that it really taught me to be a manager. Before that job I'd subscribed to the view that I was better just being in charge of myself, that personal performance was everything, and that that was where career fulfilment lay. When I became a PPS I went from managing two people to managing 70. It was a real shift in my career; I became prouder of the achievements of someone I'd recruited or encouraged or mentored. It's a very particular sort of pride. You can be proud of something that you've done, but it's not as big an achievement as being proud of something that you've helped other people to do. During that period I really understood the importance of good management and that was probably when being in the business of talent development started to appeal.

Most *Thick of It* moment

Just after the coalition was formed in 2010, when the new ministers in DfE were finally in place, they had their mugshots taken. A lovely female Lib Dem minister casually regretted out loud that she hadn't worn earrings on the day of her photo. Later, when she was shown the proofs of the pictures, she saw that she'd been "given" earrings, the handiwork of a very well-meaning comms official who had – in the 10 days while we were all waiting for the details of the coalition to be hammered out – done a Photoshop course. She'd had a go at some different earlobes complete with Pat Butcheresque jewels. Now, that image should never have got to the minister. Something broke down slightly in the frenzy of the new government and she was given the photo choices, at which she very politely asked if she could "possibly just have her own ears" in her official ministerial picture... ■



Former strategist **Guy Dominy** explains why research, relationships and a knack for knowing what people really want are key to a successful communications career

After a varied career in the world of advertising and communications, I joined the Central Office of Information aged 41. Set up in 1946, the COI was the government's marketing and communications agency. When I joined in 2006, it was a Cabinet Office agency and – unusually – a “trading fund”, meaning it charged other government departments a fee to use its services.

Much of what COI did was procurement and contract management, though there were exceptions. I joined the strategic consulting team. Alongside procurement exercises, we carried out consulting projects. I was hired as a G7 strategic consultant to help departments and agencies tackle their comms challenges. I led 60 successful projects. Memorable highlights include developing comms strategies for Department of Health programmes on patient and public empowerment (which, pre-Covid, was what the department meant when it used the acronym PPE), and helping the education department reform early years education and persuade teenagers to choose maths.

I also completed a highly sensitive review of the Department for International Development's programme to increase support for foreign aid within the UK. The

smallest project I worked on was facilitating a single workshop with the Student Loans Company to stop them from creating a second brand for repayments.

The election of 2010 changed everything. An initial review process made the bottom 40% of the department redundant. A few weeks later, we all lost out jobs, though the doors didn't close until April 2012. Many staff were absorbed by departments they had worked with. Others went into the Cabinet Office, where a miniature COI had been developed, or left government.

My time in COI was one of the most rewarding periods of my career. I was privileged to meet and work with fascinating and gifted individuals. Here's what I learnt.

Always go back to first principles.

People will say they want “awareness” or to “promote” a programme or something equally fluffy. What they really want is a group of people to start doing something, stop doing something or change something. Until you have wrestled this information from the policy team, you cannot do your job effectively.

Be “media neutral”. Don't start with a solution in mind. COI was not selling a specific solution, like a PR consultancy, so we had the luxury of being able to think up the best way to solve a problem.

Invest in building relationships with the policy teams you support. We were (almost) always asked for a solution too late. Communication is speedier to get up and running than policy interventions, but can still take several months. Invest in building relationships so you are in the loop from the start.

Build contingency into your schedule. Approvals are (almost) always a nightmare. Build contingency into your schedule – and if you are planning TV advertising make the timeframe weeks.

Bring strong evidence to the table. Too many people think they are a marketing expert, possibly because we have all been exposed to a nonstop barrage of marketing communication from an early age. The answer? When presenting ideas, research your craft and provide evidence. Even more importantly, evaluate your own activity so that you have your own evidence to use.

Follow the news. Civil servants should be politically neutral, not politically naïve. Approvals, scrutiny and people second-guessing outcomes will be more difficult to navigate the closer your project is to a hot political agenda. Keep yourself informed. ■

Guy Dominy works in consultancy and training in the public and private sectors



Civil Service Awards 2023

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Introduction

The Civil Service Awards are now in their 18th year and offer the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the wealth of inspirational individuals and innovative projects within the Civil Service.

We launched A Modern Civil Service that is more Skilled, Innovative and Ambitious last year. This year's Civil Service Awards categories embody this vision and each award fall under the headings.

The nominations process opened on 10th May 2023 and closed 28th July 2023. This year we received 1,962 nominations against 12 award categories.

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

Our Awards Champion, Shona Dunn, and the final judging panel then selected the top 3 finalists in each category, forming the official shortlist for 2023.

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

A word from Awards Champion, Shona Dunn CB



Shona Dunn CB

Second Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Care

"The Civil Service Awards celebrates the very best of what the Civil Service does, and the people who do it! It's an opportunity to reflect on another year of astonishing achievements, at every level, across the whole country, whether it's frontline staff working directly with the public, teams working overseas on humanitarian aid, or individuals making their departments great places to work. We all know we need to celebrate more - we have so much to be proud of and the Awards are our opportunity to showcase that, and to take a bow in the spotlight that we otherwise avoid."

Meet our Champions

The Civil Service Awards Category Champions are proud supporters of the awards and promote their specific category to colleagues through networks across government and actively encourage nominations.

Our Category Champions select an expert panel to support them in reviewing the nominations before choosing the top entries within their category.



Excellence in Delivery
Award Co-Champion

Peter Schofield CB

Permanent Secretary,
Department for Work
and Pensions



Excellence in Delivery
Award Co-Champion

Myrtle Lloyd

Director General,
Customer Services, HM
Revenue and Customs



Developing and
Supporting People
Award Co-Champion

**Sarah Healey
CB CVO**

Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities



Developing and
Supporting People
Award Co-Champion

**Madeleine
Alessandri CMG**

Chair of the Joint
Intelligence Committee,
Cabinet Office



Diversity and Inclusion
Award Co-Champion

**Dame Elizabeth
Gardiner**

First Parliamentary
Counsel, Permanent
Secretary of the
Government in
Parliament Group,
Cabinet Office



Diversity and Inclusion
Award Co-Champion

**Emran Mian
CB OBE**

Director General, Digital
Technologies and
Telecoms, Department
for Science, Innovation
and Technology



Best Use of Data,
Science, and
Technology Award
Co-Champion

**Professor Dame
Angela McLean**

Government Chief
Scientific Adviser,
Government Office
for Science



Best Use of Data,
Science, and
Technology Award
Co-Champion

Megan Lee Devlin

Chief Executive
Officer, Central Digital
and Data Office



Creative Solutions
Award Co-Champion

**Sir Matthew
Rycroft KCMG CBE**

Permanent Secretary,
Home Office



Creative Solutions
Award Co-Champion

Vijay Rangarajan

Director General,
Afghanistan, Pakistan,
Overseas Territories,
Middle East and
North Africa, Foreign,
Commonwealth and
Development Office



Evaluation and
Analysis Award
Co-Champion

Sam Beckett

Chief Economic Adviser,
Head of the GES and
Second Permanent
Secretary, HM Treasury



Evaluation and
Analysis Award
Co-Champion

Mel Nebhrajani CB

Director General,
Litigation with
Justice and Security,
Government Legal
Department



Programme of the Year
Award Co-Champion

**Sir Alex
Chisholm KBC**

Civil Service Chief
Operating Officer and
Permanent Secretary,
Cabinet Office



Programme of the Year
Award Co-Champion

Cat Little CB

Second Permanent
Secretary and Head of
the Government Finance
Function, HM Treasury



**Collaboration Award
Co-Champion**

Jim Harra CB

First Permanent
Secretary and Chief
Executive, HM Revenue
and Customs



**Collaboration Award
Co-Champion**

**Dr Rannia
Leontaridi
OBE FRSA**

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



**Delivering for Citizens
Award Co-Champion**

**Tamara
Finklestein CB**

Permanent Secretary,
Department for
Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs



**Delivering for Citizens
Award Co-Champion**

Jae Samant

Director General,
Public Safety Group,
Home Office



**Rising Star Award
Co-Champion**

Antonia Romeo

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Justice



**Rising Star Award
Co-Champion**

Tassie Ghilani

HMPPS Officer and
winner of the Rising
Star Award 2022



**Cabinet Secretary's
Outstanding Leader
Award Co-Champion**

Simon Case OVO

Cabinet Secretary and
Head of the Civil Service



**Cabinet Secretary's
Outstanding Leader
Award Co-Champion**

Clarice Pettit

2022 Prime Minister's
Award winner



Proud sponsors of the

Excellence in Delivery Award

Certified



Corporation

Congratulations to all the nominees, those shortlisted, and the winners of this year's Civil Service Awards.

We admire the fantastic work, teams, and individuals celebrated in the Excellence in Delivery Award. We see the dedication and innovation shown by people in Government to solve complex problems and deliver long-term improvements for individuals across society.

We set out to build the world's most trusted consulting firm – creating lasting impact for clients and pioneering a positive, people-first way of working – and we are proud that it means we get to work side-by-side with our Civil Service colleagues, delivering on some of the biggest challenges we face.

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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.



Warm Scots Welcome Programme

Scottish Government

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Scottish Government worked at pace with partners to stand-up the 'Warm Scots Welcome', a Scotland-wide humanitarian programme which has welcomed more than 25,000 arrivals - the majority women and children - more per head of population than any other UK nation. Informed by the experiences of those arriving, improvements include dedicated housing fund, volunteer campaign and support to match arrivals with settled accommodation. As a result, guests in temporary welcome accommodation have more than halved with many thousands settling in communities right across Scotland.

Proud sponsors of The Developing and Supporting People Award



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Developing and Supporting People Award

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.



Grief Café

Food Standards Agency

The Grief Café started with just two people having a coffee and connecting over grief. In just 2.5 years, it has grown to 3000 people on the mailing list, reaching 96 Departments and Agencies, and hosts Grief events every other week...all down to the power of volunteers. Within the café, we talk about types of bereavement, types of grief, we say the loved ones name, and we create a safe space to talk about their grief. Participants call it a 'lifeline', a great space for support, and attend Grief Café alongside counselling.



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customer.service@dods-events.com | +44 (0)20 7593 5669

To view our upcoming event
schedule, please visit:

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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.



Anti-racist Wales Plan Policy Team

Welsh Government

Usha Ladwa-Thomas, Ayanna Mathurine and Nashima Begum are three female civil servants in the Welsh Government who identify as ethnic minority. In the context of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan – they brought a diversity of lived experience which added immeasurable value to the formulation of policy and in enhancing their professional, civil service values. Usha drew on community experience gained in the third sector as well as from working long term on environmental public policy. Ayanna brought legal skills and an experience of being a first-generation migrant. Nashima is a policy professional with a lived experience of a cross cultural family.

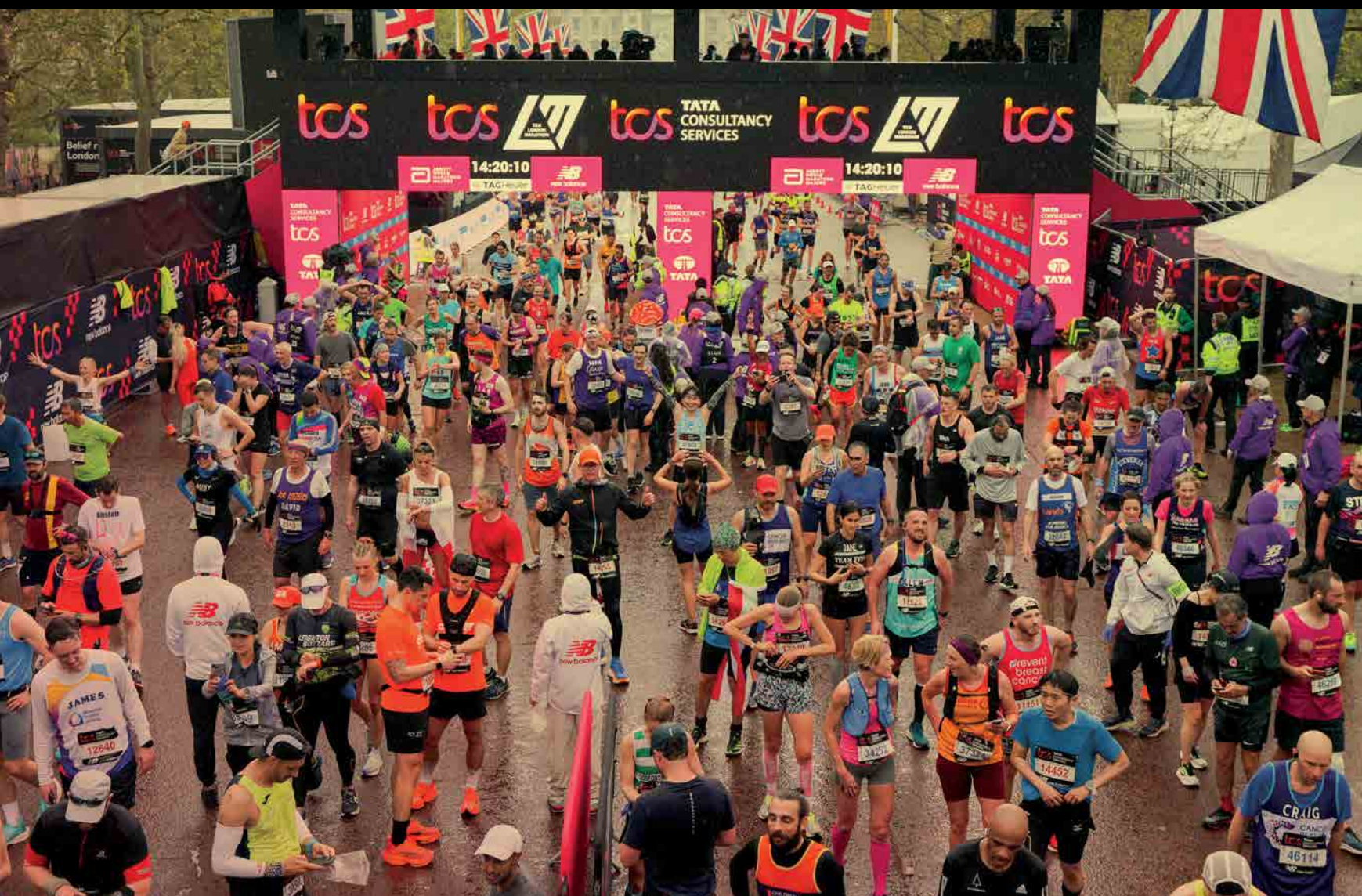


Proud sponsor of the 'Best Use of Data, Science, and Technology' Award

Congratulations to the shortlisted teams.

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Best Use of Data, Science, and Technology Award

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Recognising excellence in the application of data, science or digital technology to solve problems or improve things; celebrating people whose commitment to technological improvements creates measurable outcomes.



GOV.UK One Login

Cabinet Office

"The future is here - 5/5 stars. Wow. Who knew that with a smartphone and biometric passport it would be so easy (borderline fun) and a futuristic light show thrown in to boot!" These are not our words, but those of someone who used the new GOV.UK One Login digital identity service. This programme is making life simpler for millions of people across the UK. The team worked with HMRC to build an app in under six months that has now been downloaded over 2.5 million times and gets 4.5 stars in both app stores.



Pearl of wisdom



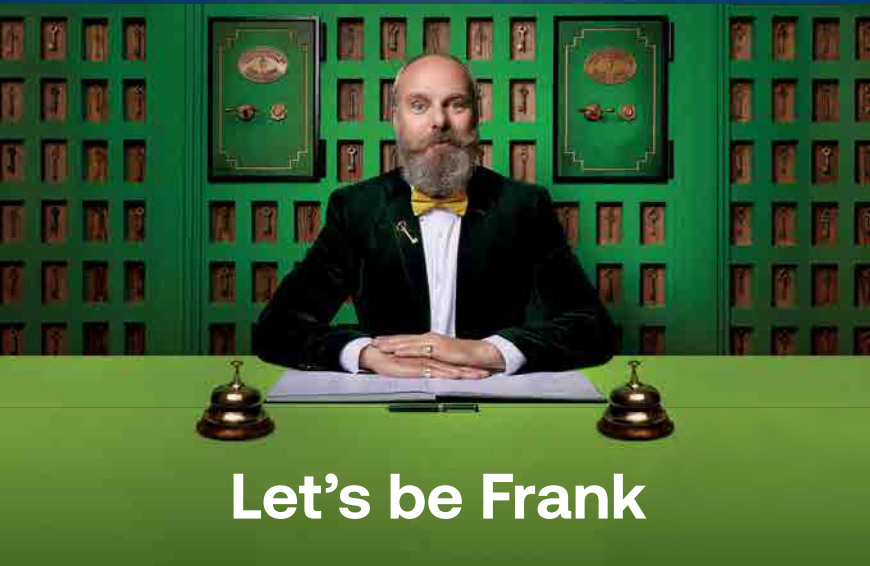
Krystal clear



Where there's a Will



Blue Skye thinking



Let's be Frank



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Creative Solutions Award

Recognising innovation and creativity and how it translates into real world benefits.



SARI Data Studio

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

The Self-Assessment Repayment Incident (SARI) Data Studio is a collaboration between CDIO Data Science and RIS (Risk and Intelligence Service), using cutting edge data science techniques to answer a question set by ExCom: to estimate levels of unknown fraud and compromised accounts in the Self-Assessment and VAT heads of duty. The work had never been undertaken before, and consequently by its very nature, was innovative in its approach, deploying network analysis and machine learning to process large amounts of data, providing insight never previously possible, and enabling mitigating actions to be introduced to services to protect revenue and customer accounts from criminal fraud.



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Evaluation and Analysis Award

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



Connectivity and Planning

Department for Transport (DfT)

The Model of Connectivity is an innovative new model that now enables us to provide a holistic view of how well people can get to where they need to go. For 180,000 output areas in E&W it measures how easy it is to get to jobs, services, retail and each other. This combines novel methodology, massive datasets, and is scaled on the cloud to perform trillions of calculations. This new insight is transformational for our ability to measure levelling-up and sustainability; e.g. measuring the impact of potential infrastructure investments, or identifying ideal locations for housing developments with sustainable travel options.

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Programme of the Year Award

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



HM Land Registry's Local Land Charges

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Local Land Charges (LLCs) are statutory restrictions on land e.g. conditional planning consents, tree preservation orders, and listed buildings. When buying property, this customer information is critical. Historically, they were held by local authorities with variable data standards, accessibility, and cost. This Programme has transformed how LLC data is held and accessed. A new digital, national register and search service provides instant, cheaper, online results. Travel to physically inspect reports is eliminated, reducing carbon-emissions. Improved, accessible, geospatial data also enables entrepreneurs to develop new services, worth billions to the UK, generating up to £14 of benefit for every £1 invested.



Proud sponsors of the
**Collaboration
Award**



Congratulations to all the nominees, those shortlisted, and the winners of this year's Civil Service Awards.

We believe in the power of collaboration to drive positive change. For us, teaming effectively across government is essential for delivering better public services, fostering innovation, and enhancing citizen experience.

Our award winning, people-first, philosophy has always made us distinctive. We believe that together we achieve more.

At Baringa we are proudly geeky experts, passionate about working shoulder-to-shoulder with our civil service colleagues to solve complex challenges and deliver meaningful, lasting impact.

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Collaboration Award

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



Eurovision 2023 Team

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

The UK hosted the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 on behalf of Ukraine. DCMS was the lead government department. The Eurovision team in DCMS was assembled from across the department from officials volunteering part of their time in addition to their day jobs. In just six months (half the usual amount of time to prepare for the Eurovision Song Contest) the team in DCMS collaborated across Arms Length Bodies, central government, regional and local government in Liverpool, the BBC, operational partners, and Ukrainian institutions to ensure that the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 and Liverpool's host city programme were a success.



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Create & Deliver



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Delivering for Citizens Award

Recognising those who have public service at the centre of delivery; including efficiency and ensuring value for money, actions which result in better outcomes for citizens, and demonstrating world class service to the public.



DCMS Digital Communications Team

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

This nomination is for the DCMS Digital Comms Team for its service during Her Majesty The Queen's funeral, by creating, launching and managing the innovative live Queue Tracker for the queue to view the Lying-in-State. After consulting several large providers who hadn't yet identified a solution, the team built their own within 48 hours, ready to launch when the Lying-in-State opened days later. This was a hugely successful public service, helping people plan their visit with live data 24/7 that reached 10 million people on YouTube and was broadcast around the world.



Proud sponsors of the Civil Service Awards.

Many congratulations to all those shortlisted and this year's winners.

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Rising Star Award

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



Patrick Gilligan
Companies House

When it comes to exemplary dedication, courage, resilience, and exceptional contributions to the UKG Civil Service in Northern Ireland, Patrick Gilligan stands out as a shining star. Since joining Companies House just 3 years ago in his first EO position, Patrick has demonstrated remarkable potential as he genuinely embraces all opportunities to expand his knowledge and experience. Patrick has successfully applied for challenging promotions and is now the acting Head of Belfast Operations, with responsibility for office performance and the preparations for implementation of the new Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill into Northern Ireland.

Cabinet Secretary's Outstanding Leader Award

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



With thanks to Tamara Torrilla, for accepting the award on behalf of:

Maria Loizou-Griggs

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Maria was instrumental in the success of the first jury with a deaf juror supported by interpreters, following the legislative changes in 2022. Due to the unprecedented nature, there was no guidance readily available, so Maria took the initiative to work with the juror, interpreters and HQ teams to pull together guidance, that has since been shared nationwide, ensuring it was fit for purpose for the court and future jurors and interpreters. Feedback has been resoundingly positive, including from the juror and interpreters who praised "...the exemplary preparation and support provided and couldn't fault the arrangements put in place."

Prime Minister's Award for Exceptional Public Service

Recognising individuals or teams who performed exceptionally, going above and beyond the call of duty to make a tangible difference to our nation and the lives of its citizens.



Martin Harvey

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

As Lead Advisor for the Durham Tees Valley District pilot for the Patient Advisory Service, Martin has taken the lead since the launch in 2008 to build a valuable and successful support programme. This support service enables both employed and unemployed patients to build their confidence towards a return to work helping to reduce the risk of long term unemployment and /or long term health journeys. Martin and the team have helped to support over 1600 patients back into work since the programme started.



A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION

CIVIL SERVICE AWARDS

2023





Congratulations to our winners!

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EVENTS



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