

CIVIL SERVICE QUARTERLY

Issue 17
June 2018

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TACKLED THE COLLAPSE OF
CARILLION

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CONTENTS

HARMONISING THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO EBOLA	Dr Christian Schneider, Director of the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC)	4
PUTTING A FUNCTION TO THE TEST	Gareth Rhys Williams, Government Chief Commercial Officer	8
TOP THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE OPERATIONAL DELIVERY PROFESSION	Jon Thompson, Chief Executive and Permanent Secretary, HM Revenue & Customs	12
A CENTURY OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS	Simon Holder, Government Communication Service	16
IMPROVING INTERNAL AUDIT - A SHARED LEGACY	Jon Whitfield, Chief Executive, Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA)	22
BUILDING THE FUTURE CIVIL SERVICE FOR EVERYONE	Greg Hobbs, Head of Fast Stream and Early Talent	26
EXPERTS IN SECURITY, AT HOME AND ABROAD	Stephen Lovegrove, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence	30
A NEW APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION IN THE CIVIL SERVICE	Rupert McNeil, Civil Service Chief People Officer	34
THE CIVIL SERVICE QUARTERLY INTERVIEW	Harriet Matthews, Director of Policy, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)	40

Civil Service Quarterly opens up the Civil Service to greater collaboration and challenge, showcases excellence and invites discussion. If the Civil Service is to be truly world-leading, it needs to collaborate more, learn from experts outside the Civil Service, listen more to the public and front-line staff and respond to new challenges with innovation and boldness.

Any civil servant can write for Civil Service Quarterly - contact csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

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EDITORIAL

Civil Service Quarterly 17

Welcome to this, the 17th edition of Civil Service Quarterly.

Since becoming Chief Executive of the Civil Service in 2014, I've spoken often about the role of Functions in providing more efficient and effective government. They serve to deepen the experience of our teams in all aspects of delivery and implementation, and enhance collaboration across our established organisational boundaries

Developing functional leadership across government is one of the priorities I set for transforming the Civil Service in a fundamental and lasting way.

Over the last four years, the importance of Functions in helping us to deliver the Government's programme while tackling a range of tests has only increased. To add to financial constraints, an ageing population, and advances in digital technology that citizens take for granted as 21st-century consumers - and expect government to match - we now have the challenge of Brexit.

CORE FUNCTIONS

In CSQ 17 we look at developments in some key functional areas. This reflects the centrality of cross-government functions to the changes and improvements we must make to meet the challenges we face.

We currently have 10 core functions, in areas essential to delivering policy and services: Commercial, Communications, Digital, Finance, Human Resources, Internal Audit, Legal, Major Project Delivery, Property and Security. The Functions, which we are developing to build up the experience we need, are complemented by professional networks connecting civil servants right across government.

NETWORK

Essentially, Functions are about having the right professional expertise in the right place at the right time. The network of interconnections they create makes it easier to collaborate across government, share good practice, set consistent standards, raise capability and, as a result, support the delivery of better services.

It was the network of commercial professionals working as a function in many departments that enabled us to protect public services after the collapse of government supplier Carillion earlier this year.

ATTRACTIVE OFFER

I hope you enjoy this edition of Civil Service Quarterly. Like previous editions, it highlights the vast range of roles available in the Civil Service, each making an important contribution to tackling the often complex problems we face as a country

More than that, it shows how we are working to create an attractive, inclusive offer for new talent with a range of experience and interests. This is an offer with clear career paths that encourage and support breadth of experience and depth of expertise, building a pipeline for our future leadership.



John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

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HARMONISING THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO EBOLA

Dr Christian K. Schneider, Director of the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC)

Protecting and improving public health is the work of a little-known body that played a leading part in containing the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

In December 2013, a two-year-old boy named Emile fell ill and died in Guinea, West Africa. Within months, his family members and local hospital staff were struck down with similar symptoms. It took more than 3 months for experts to finally identify that they were dealing with the start of the largest Ebola outbreak ever known. This affected over 28,000 people and left more than 11,000 dead.

Rapid diagnosis is critical for the effective control of infectious diseases. If an outbreak is spotted early, we can quickly isolate and treat those who are infected and prevent the spread of disease. But with emerging infections such as Ebola, we don't always have the appropriate diagnostic tools to hand. When the Ebola outbreak was announced, the world had to respond fast, with governments, public health organisations, regulators and manufacturers joining together to accelerate initiatives to support diagnosis as well as treatment.

When healthcare staff and scientists across the globe are working to address the same problem, it's imperative that everyone is working to the same standards. For example, it's important to ensure that the tests used to diagnose Ebola in rural Africa are as sensitive and reliable as those used in Europe or the US. At the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC), scientific staff are helping to harmonise the international Ebola response by producing biological standards that act as universal 'benchmarks' for monitoring diagnosis and vaccine development.

THE NIBSC IS ONE OF THREE CENTRES RUN BY THE GOVERNMENT'S MEDICINES AND HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS REGULATORY AGENCY

The NIBSC works to protect and improve public health by supporting the regulation of biological medicines such as vaccines, which are made from living organisms.

For over 40 years the institute has produced biological standards that help monitor and compare tests used to ensure the quality of biological medicines and products. Biological standards can also be used in diagnosis, where standards of a known value are run alongside patient samples to ensure the accuracy and reliability of diagnostic test results.

While laboratories have internal ways to control and monitor their testing methods on a day-to-day basis, biological standards allow comparisons between results from different laboratories or using different types of tests. Their use is vital for ensuring that patients receive a reliable diagnosis wherever and whenever they are tested, or for vaccine developers to evaluate results from different clinical trials to make decisions on the best candidates.

HOW WE DIAGNOSE EBOLA

Diagnosing Ebola can be difficult. Symptoms such as fever, headache and diarrhoea are common to other diseases such as malaria, so we can't diagnose Ebola based on symptoms alone. To identify if a patient has Ebola, we turn instead to scientific tests that can detect the virus itself.

Tests based on Nucleic acid Amplification Technique (NAT) are commonly used for disease diagnosis. They work by detecting the genetic material of pathogens, like bacteria or viruses, in a patient specimen such as a blood sample. As this technique can recognise very low levels of the Ebola virus, these tests are extremely

sensitive and help diagnose the disease in its early stages.

However, NAT tests often rely on complex equipment, guaranteed electrical supply and highly trained lab personnel, which are rarely available in remote African villages where the next outbreak might occur. Scientists are, therefore, working to develop new 'point-of-care' tests that detect viral proteins, are easy to use and can be performed at a patient's bedside. Often these require small disposable devices, where a patient sample can be added at one end and the result is shown, within a couple of minutes, at the other, much like a pregnancy test. As doctors can get results immediately, this type of test helps ensure the patient receives the right care as quickly as possible, and that the spread of disease is limited.

STANDARDS TO SUPPORT DIAGNOSIS

During outbreaks, countries look to public health bodies such as WHO (the World Health Organization) for advice. With Ebola, many different diagnostic tests were in development by independent manufacturers, and WHO was relied upon to provide recommendations about which tests to use. Ultimately, those working to control Ebola needed to be sure that the tests they used could effectively identify real cases of the disease while minimising the chance of false positives.

On news of the Ebola outbreak, WHO asked the NIBSC to produce standards that could support the comparison and evaluation of all the different diagnostic tests coming onto the market.

Diagnostic standards are usually made using a diluted sample of the real virus. With a dangerous virus like Ebola, however, an alternative approach is needed. With their knowledge and experience in developing biological reference materials, NIBSC scientists were able to identify and work towards another direction. This involved capturing the genetic material of the Ebola virus in a

safe, non-infectious virus-like particle. Making the standard in this ‘synthetic’ way eliminates any risk of those using the material becoming infected with Ebola.

Although this novel approach works to address issues of harmonising NAT tests, many of the bedside tests for Ebola look for viral proteins, rather than genetic material. This means that additional reference materials based on Ebola proteins are needed to support the success of these new tests. The institute has already begun to tackle this problem by producing a standard for VP40, a common protein found in Ebola virus, to monitor the performance of rapid diagnostic tests targeting this viral protein.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT OUTBREAK

One of the major lessons from the Ebola outbreak was the need for the global health community to plan for, rather than just respond to, epidemics. It signalled the start of renewed momentum from health organisations, research institutes and governments worldwide to work together and support progress towards vaccines, drugs and diagnostic tests to combat Ebola. With a new Ebola outbreak recently declared in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), initiatives established in response to the 2014 outbreak are now being put to the test.

The strong global relationships established following the last outbreak have helped to speed up the launch of interventions to

control the new epidemic. This time, armed with experimental drugs and an Ebola vaccine, the plan is slightly different. Rather than looking simply to contain the spread of the disease, WHO has proposed that research should form part of the response. In May, 4,000 doses of the experimental vaccine, rVSV-ZEBOV, were deployed in the DRC, awaiting the greenlight to be administered.

NIBSC promptly engaged with global health partners and agreed to provide their standards to support efforts to control the epidemic. Aside from diagnostic standards, another NIBSC reference material, an Ebola antibody standard, will be important for the planned response. This standard can be used to measure immune responses in infected patients, or in volunteers in clinical trials. It is hoped, therefore, that it will support vaccine development by helping scientists to understand the results of any experimental vaccine treatment in DRC and make comparisons with other innovative vaccines in the pipeline.

However, Ebola isn't the only public health threat facing the world. Many other emerging

viruses may be waiting for their own opportunity to strike. In 2015, WHO put together a list of priority diseases that, based on current evidence, had the potential to follow in the footsteps of Ebola and trigger a public health emergency. Working with key partners such as WHO and the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), NIBSC has already developed reference materials for Zika virus diagnosis. It is also working to produce standards for the other identified top priority viruses, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus (MERS-CoV), Nipah Virus (NiV) and Lassa fever.

The world has learnt from the Ebola outbreak in 2014, and we now understand that the best way to protect against epidemics is to get ahead of them.



PUTTING A FUNCTION TO THE TEST

Gareth Rhys Williams, Government Chief Commercial Officer

The Government Commercial Function was instrumental in cushioning the impact of the collapse of Carillion.

On the morning of 15 January, Carillion, a major supplier of services to government, declared itself insolvent and went into liquidation. From the initial profits warning on 10 July 2017, the Cabinet Office intensified its work with other government departments to monitor the company's financial position and plan for the possibility of its collapse.

This was not the outcome we wanted, but by planning for it we achieved our first priority of avoiding damage to the delivery of vital public services. How we managed this would test the robustness of the functional arrangements we had put in place over the previous two years. It is widely acknowledged that the function passed this test, through effective contingency planning and resilient contracting (whereby other suppliers were part of joint ventures and were committed to step in to cover Carillion's obligations), working with operations colleagues across the country.

Our success was in great part due to our working as a function. There are now 10 core functions in operation across the Civil Service, including Commercial, complemented by professional networks connecting civil servants right across government.

Having an effective commercial function is important not only for managing a crisis, but also for delivering normal business.

What is the Commercial Function?

The Government Commercial Function (GCF) consists of 4,000 commercial staff who work across government. They are connected through knowledge-sharing systems and common operating standards, and led by the Commercial Function Leadership Group of commercial directors in every central government department, chaired by the Government Chief Commercial Officer. Most of the function (about three-quarters) sits in government departments and delivers the commercial strategy for their particular department. The rest sit in either the Crown Commercial Service (CCS), which buys common goods and services, or the Central Commercial Teams in Cabinet Office, who support commercial capability, market intelligence and strategic supplier relationship management, complex transactions and continuous improvement.

The GCF is also supported by the Government Commercial Organisation (GCO), which recruits and directly employs (on standard contracts) the most senior 300 commercial staff who are then deployed back into their host departments. The GCO is underpinned by a robust assessment process for accrediting senior commercial staff (internal or externally recruited) and a substantial training and development programme to support them.



This is because commercial activities account for significant spending across government and the wider public sector. The latest estimate from the National Audit Office (NAO) shows that central government spent around £49 billion on commercial contracts in 2016/17 (excluding capital spending, intangible assets and PFI interest).¹

During the same financial year (2016/17), the Government Commercial Function (GCF) saved around £2 billion by securing better commercial deals. This is achieved by making smarter decisions in specifying what we need to buy, using our collective purchasing power to get the right price, and being better at managing the contracts that flow from these decisions. But it is not just about cost savings. Functions make it easier for colleagues to collaborate across government, share good practice and, as a result, support the delivery of better services. Also, as seen with Carillion, functions make us more resilient.

MANAGING OUR BIGGEST SUPPLIERS

Another benefit of working as a function is that it makes us better at managing the relationships with our biggest suppliers. The largest 27, known as ‘strategic suppliers’, are

so important that we have put in place pan-government systems for managing our relationships with them. The Markets & Suppliers area of the central GCF teams take a whole-government perspective, working with commercial colleagues across departments.

Strategic suppliers also have a nominated ‘crown representative’. This is a senior figure with a commercial background, who acts as the main point of contact between top executives of the supplier and the Government, working alongside our supplier partnering managers. Although the Carillion crown rep role was vacant for a period, the combination of the supplier partnering manager and the increased involvement of other senior staff (including myself) meant our engagement with the company wasn’t affected.

Our approach to managing our strategic suppliers proved vital in the contingency planning for Carillion. In the run-up to the company’s collapse, commercial and operational teams came together from across government and the wider public sector, including the Cabinet Office, Ministry of Justice, Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS, Department for Transport, Department for Education and more. While keeping in close contact with Carillion, large numbers of staff worked over a period of months and put in place more than 65 contingency plans, from 26 public bodies, covering 154 Carillion contracts.

Because the network of commercial professionals working as a function had already been established, it was easier to determine the extent of the Government’s contractual arrangements and initiate contingency planning. We were able to spot commonalities

across many contracts and put in place ‘umbrella’ plans. These ensured that crucial public services were maintained following the failure of the company.

Speaking about the Carillion collapse in a speech on Civil Service transformation, Civil Service Chief Executive John Manzoni said: “If this had happened two years ago, we would not have had the expertise or cross-government structure to manage it.”² Similar reflections have come from independent commentators, including Julian McCrae of the Institute for Government.³

Indeed, such is the progress we have made in building capability and cross-functional working, that some vendors worry that the balance of professional expertise has shifted towards us, and that we are now negotiating deals that make it difficult for them to make a profit.⁴ However, while we need to get good commercial deals, this would miss the point if we were driving vendors out of business. We need a strong supply chain. Vendors making a reasonable profit, in exchange for delivering the agreed services, is in everyone’s interest.

WHERE NEXT?

Progress has been made, acknowledged by both external and internal stakeholders, but there is a big programme of further improvement ahead to complete the transformation of the Commercial Function.

The Government Commercial Operating Standards set out a consistent operating model across departments.⁵ Specific standards look at how central government departments manage areas such as ‘commercial pipeline and planning’, ‘maximising competition’ and ‘contract management’. Commercial teams in departments and wider public bodies are measuring

themselves against these standards in order to identify where they have the greatest need for improvement and areas of strength they can showcase to others.

Putting contracts in place is only half the story. A number of reputable bodies estimate that good contract management can save around 10% of the contract value. Estimates of the numbers of civil servants involved in managing contracts and suppliers range from 12,000 to 100,000. The vast majority of these staff sit outside the Commercial Function. The new Contract Management Professional Standards set out our expectations of everyone involved in this important area.⁶ We are identifying contract managers and assessing their skills against these standards so that we can give them the training and development they need to become accredited. This will give them, their departments and us confidence in their ability to manage effectively the contracts they are responsible for.

When you combine the £49 billion of commercial contracts that central government is responsible for, and with the commercial spending of wider public bodies, the NAO believes

that the total amount involved is £192 billion (or £251.5 billion, if you include capital spending, intangible assets and PFI interest).⁷ This is why we are delivering a programme to support arms’ length bodies (ALBs) that deliver vital services and account for major spending. Our successful assessment and development centre has assessed over 1,100 civil servants and external candidates to fill our 300 most senior roles. We are now offering this service to ALBs alongside a tailored training and development programme.

BECOMING THE BEST

Our vision is to make the Government Commercial Function the best commercial function in the UK. The scale of our spending and the services that we buy are too significant for us to settle for second best. Watch this space as we continue on our journey of improvement.

TRANSFORMING CONTRACT AND SUPPLIER MANAGEMENT

For all of our suppliers, large or small, good contract management is essential if we are to get the best from them. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has placed great emphasis on transforming its contract management capability, and we are seeing real results. An example is the Courts Language Service. At the end of 2016 the service was re-tendered and most of it was awarded to a new supplier. Around 750 court cases each day require interpreters. Because of effective contract management, a high level of performance was maintained through the contract transition, getting the right interpreters to the right courts on time. This avoided the postponement of hundreds of court cases each day that happened during the previous change-over.

Contract management staff in the commercial teams of the MOJ and 16 other departments worked as a GCF team to develop a contract management toolkit and guide for our online knowledge sharing platform (the GCF Knowledge Hub). With around 20,000 page views, it is widely used, helping to strengthen contract management across the Commercial Function. The toolkit, which has drawn on standards set by industry professional bodies and the NAO, won a top award in the 2018 UK GO Excellence in Public Procurement Awards.

¹ ‘A Short Guide to Commercial Relationships’, National Audit Office, December 2017.

² John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service, speech to LSE on Civil Service Transformation on 24 January 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/civil-service-transformation-speech>).

³ Julian McCrae, Senior Fellow at Institute for Government, tweet on 25 April 2018: ‘...Risks are clear. But govt also getting better at handling them. Existence of govt commercial function means Carillion handled far better than was possible even a few years before. And signs are that function using experience to push next round of improvement.’

⁴ Civil Service World online article (23 February 2018): ‘Improved government commercial skills have hit outsourcers, says Serco chief’.

⁵ Government Commercial Operating Standards, published 4 February 2016 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commercial-operating-standards-for-government>).

⁶ Contract Management Professional Standards, published 22 February 2018 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contract-management>).

⁷ ‘A Short Guide to Commercial Relationships’, National Audit Office, December 2017.



TOP THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE OPERATIONAL DELIVERY PROFESSION

Jon Thompson, Chief Executive and Permanent Secretary of HM Revenue & Customs

Operational Delivery professionals are the most numerous in the Civil Service and, for many people using public services, are the face and voice of government.



I was delighted to accept the role of cross-government Head of Profession for Operational Delivery. At the Ministry of Defence, HMRC and across government, I have seen the vital role that Operational Delivery colleagues undertake on a daily basis. They are the people that work with the public and keep all our key services running. I am excited about supporting all the colleagues working in the profession and helping them to prepare for the challenges of the next few years.

The following gives a flavour of why the profession was formed, what the profession can offer and what challenges lie ahead.

Jon Thompson,
Head of ODP

Operational Delivery Profession (ODP) colleagues are the face of government. They are the point at which citizens experience government.

Civil servants are recognised as members of the ODP if they: deal directly with, provide support to, or manage people who deal directly with citizens or businesses.

Operational Delivery colleagues work in a multitude of departments and agencies across government, undertaking a wide variety of activities delivering and supporting frontline services to millions of UK citizens every day. That might be in issuing passports or driving licences, collecting taxes, paying benefits, or supporting the administration of justice in a court.

The ODP aims are:

- for those working within operations to be acknowledged as professionals;
- to develop transferable capability and skills that are recognised and respected across government and the wider economy; and
- to improve the service to our customers and achieve the same status as the more established professions.

The Operational Delivery Profession has **over 230,000** civil servants

Over **70%** of the **UK Civil Service** work in Operational Delivery

Operational Delivery colleagues work in more than **80 departments and agencies**

Operational Delivery colleagues deliver and support frontline services to **millions of citizens every day**

To support these aims, ODP offers help to operational colleagues to develop the flexibility and skills to be able to move across a range of operational roles in government. This offer is based on building existing cross-government capability and future needs that meet the aims of 'A Brilliant Civil Service'.

The ODP offer includes:

- Qualifications

There are six levels of qualifications, beginning at the equivalent of GCSE (Level 2) and building up to postgraduate level (level 7). All qualifications have been developed by people in operational roles, working with City & Guilds (C&G) and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). They are recognised across government, externally, and even internationally.

- Learning

It has never been more important that colleagues providing services to customers continue to develop professionally and enhance their

skills. There is a vast array of learning available, developed with Civil Service Learning, as well as tools to help colleagues track their learning and career journey.

- Talent

For Senior Civil Service (SCS) colleagues, the profession offers tools including Indicators of Potential and an ODP SCS Biography template. The aim is to work with senior ODP leaders across government to identify and drive up talent capability levels across the profession, share talent across departments and develop effective succession plans.

In addition, and to build strong talent pipelines, the profession launched the ODP Talent Management pilot for Grade 6 & 7 colleagues in Wales in September 2017. Plans are in hand to extend this following appropriate evaluation. The profession is also exploring the development of a Talent Toolkit, bringing together a range of hints, tips, links and other useful information to support personal development and help identify talent at grades below Grade 7.

- Communications and engagement

raising awareness and developing understanding of, maximising engagement in the profession while providing opportunities to build a professional community, are key to building inclusivity within ODP. The Profession runs a programme of communication campaigns, including one in support of the central 'A Brilliant Civil Service' campaign and engagement activities designed to resonate with the ODP community. Communication routes including the ODP website and social media are in place, along with a monthly newsletter sent directly to over 26,000 colleagues. Additionally, the

ODP holds a series of events aimed at colleagues across the profession, from SCS through to EOs, to raise awareness and promote the opportunities ODP affords. ODP also hosts a stand, and presents, at Civil Service Live events.

- Apprenticeships

ODP has developed the Operational Delivery Apprenticeship Scheme (ODAS) as a new way for talented people over the age of 16 to begin a rewarding career in the profession. It is a great alternative to full-time education for people aged 16, has no upper age limit, and promotes social mobility. ODAS is marketed to all departments, working to shape departmental transformation plans to meet the aim of the Civil Service 2020 apprenticeship strategy (to deliver at least 30,000 high-quality apprenticeships) and ensuring the ODP apprenticeship delivers the 'civil servant of tomorrow'.

- Surge and Rapid Response Team (SRRT)

In 2015 the Civil Service People Board commissioned a cross-government response model to support HMG operational departments in managing service peaks and unexpected crises. The team has grown in reputation and size. In 2017/18 SRRT supported 71 deployments across 16 departments with its team of operational delivery apprentices and graduates from the apprenticeship.

BEYOND 2018/19

The profession will continue to work with Heads of Profession in each department to drive a sense of community across the ODP. With a membership of 230,000 colleagues, engagement and community building is always a challenge.

Driving up capability levels, recognising the great work that professionals do across ODP every day, making a difference to the lives of millions of people, and ensuring they have the learning and qualification curriculum that supports them in achieving that aim, is key for the profession. We will also continue to support the broader work of government, assisting with crisis and peaks through the SRRT.

To find out more about the profession, the ODP Central Team can be contacted on info.odp@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk.



I've worked in operational delivery all my life, starting as a casual AA when I left school, and now I lead the team that helps to develop the Operational Delivery profession across government. I am proud to be part of the largest profession in the Civil Service that supports the delivery of quality services to customers each and every day.

The profession was launched formally in 2011. It is by far the largest of the 28 Civil Service professions, with a membership of 230,000 civil servants, or over 70% of the Civil Service. Historically, however, it has been one of the least recognised professions when compared to others such as Policy, Project and Legal, yet it is key to delivering reform across the Civil Service.

Sandra Aston,
Head of ODP Central Team





A CENTURY OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Simon Holder, Government Communication Service

How has the approach to government communications changed over the last 100 years, and what lessons have we learnt?

Over the last 100 years, UK Government communicators have dealt with some of the most significant events in our history. From world wars and the retreat from Empire, to closer ties with Europe and, now, EU withdrawal and the prospect of a new global role for the country.

Government communications have helped to shape modern Britain and have themselves been shaped by the changing media landscape and changes in society.

But what's the value and purpose of government communications? How have they changed in the last century? And what have we learned?

LEAPS FORWARD

Historical breakthroughs in technology have made it possible to reach more and more people; and for more and more people to publicise their own opinions.

The impact of a previous giant leap forward, the invention of the printing press, happened almost in slow motion compared with that of the rapid advances in digital technology during the last 30 years or so. These have been accompanied by massive changes in the speed and reach of communications. Keeping up with this rate of change is one of the major challenges for government communicators.

In an era when the spread of social media and the proliferation of digital information sources makes us question the very nature of news and what constitutes a 'fact', it is worth remembering two things. First, we have been here before: communications can, often deliberately, distort and mislead. A royal proclamation in 1688 specifically referred to tackling the spread of 'false news' (echoing the

'fake news' of today). And, second, at their best - honest, open, informative and effective - communications can help to shape, improve and even save lives.

FIRST CAMPAIGNS

The last 100 years are full of examples of the beneficial use of government communications. Public information campaigns in areas like public health, military recruitment and voter registration have relied on brilliant marketing activity. Some of the best material from the last century is available in the Online Museum of Government Communications.⁹

Some of the first formal government communications were to do with behaviour change. In the 1860s, handbills and newspaper advertisements sought to persuade working people to save for retirement or ill-health. Influencing people to do things differently in their own interests remains a preoccupation of modern government communicators.

The first Whitehall press office was established in the Foreign Office in 1914; and the first major centralised communications campaign was for the recruitment of a volunteer army of over 2 million men in 1914 and 1915. From the Empire Marketing Board in the late 1920s to the GREAT campaign in this decade, the projection of Britain overseas has also been a key role for government communicators, while the core task of explaining the Government's policies and programmes has been continuous.

The first central government communications function was created in 1917, when defeat in the First World War was still a possibility. A year later, the Ministry of Information was established - but was abolished at the end of the war. For much of the next century, the UK Government's communication capacity grew at similar moments of national crisis, and shrank again when the crisis had passed, suggesting a lack of strategic clarity on what government comms were actually for. It is only in the last

couple of decades that the cycle of expansion and contraction has been broken.

INFORMED AND TARGETED

However, the organisation of government communication has continued to evolve.

During the Second World War, the Ministry of Information recognised the value of government listening. Minister of Information Brendan Bracken was a leader in gathering insight and getting the Government to understand what the British people actually thought and felt. This made it possible to move communication with the public from exhortation to engagement, from declamation to more of a dialogue.

This model for informed and targeted communication remains the goal for good government communications to this day.

The experience of the war years increased government knowledge, experience and understanding of the role and importance of communication in delivering policy. So, having abolished the Ministry of Information in 1946 - but having decided to retain information and communication at the centre of government - the Government created the Central Office of Information (COI).

COI concentrated expertise in one place and benefited from centralised purchasing of marketing and advertising for government departments.

In 1931 there were only 45 people working wholly or partially on government publicity. In 1946, COI employed over 1,600 people, while a further 800 worked on communications in departments.

COI was responsible for poster advertising, exhibitions, photographs, publications and films, and provided a central channel for the distribution of news from departments. This, more or less, was the arrangement for government comms for over 60 years.

OVERHAUL

The decision in 1957 to expand communications after the Suez debacle was the next

milestone. Again it illustrates how international events and national crises have spurred the development of government comms.

The perceived failure of government communications during the Suez crisis led to an overhaul of domestic communications. Overseen by minister Dr Charles Hill, COI began the practice of regular meetings of departmental Chief Information Officers to coordinate comms that continues in weekly Heads of News meeting today.

Increasingly in the latter half of the 20th century, government comms had to react to more pervasive media: first the newspapers, then radio, TV and finally the internet and digital revolution.

OFFICIAL REVIEWS

The 1998 Mountfield review of a government comms function battling with technological change and the volume of information, restated the need for communications to be: a two-way process of engagement with the public; more proactive; and to take a longer, more strategic view. Other recommendations included establishing a central 24-hour news monitoring function, and the creation of the first strategic communications unit in No. 10.

By the early 2000s, questions were being asked about central government comms and whether it deserved its increasing share of public expenditure.

The Phillis Review of 2003 spoke of restoring “trust in, and the credibility of, government communications”. It emphasised engagement and coordination across departments and the use of channels other than national media ones. For the first time the Cabinet Office would have a major communications role. Phillis also recommended the creation of a single government website for government information and public services. GOV.UK arrived eight years later. It now receives 3.6 million daily visits, with a staggering 14 billion page views to date. ⁸

A COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSION

The Government Communication Service (GCS) was established in 2014, recognising the status of comms as one of the four main levers of government, alongside legislation, regulation and taxation. GCS identifies its purpose as supporting communications professionals in helping the public understand the Government’s vision and priorities; explaining requirements such as tax returns; encouraging people to lead safe, healthy lives; informing people about public services; and promoting UK interests internationally.

There is a huge public appetite for government information. This means not only from official sources for immediate guidance during a possible public health emergency or terrorist incident, for example. It also means having factual information that helps them make life choices: where to live, which school to send their children to, which hospital to be treated in, how to register to vote or, for employers, knowing about workplace legislation, such as why they need to set up workplace pensions and how.

LESSONS

What are the lessons of 100 years of government comms?

First, that it’s not enough simply to put information out there, you have to explain why you are doing it, what you are asking people to do, and what options there may be.

Second, the need to put

listening, responding and understanding at the centre of communications, alongside providing information.

Third, the value to ministers of the daily input from professional communicators of advice and information on media matters and the developing range of communication tools – from behavioural nudges to the support of partners and regional tours.

Lastly, that government communications need to be quick on their feet to adapt to the regular disruption caused by technological change. Over time, government communicators have embraced and harnessed the new, whether in terms of film, mass advertising, TV, the internet or social media. Rebuttal of inaccurate media reporting and misinformation can now be rapid, almost instantaneous.

With technology advancing at a hugely accelerated rate, the proliferation of media channels offers an unprecedented opportunity to get government messages across in different ways, to different groups. We can use insights from our world-leading behavioural science capability – supported by cutting-edge data science techniques – to tailor effective

messages and ‘nudges’ to action for specific audiences. At its best, this translates into modern communications supporting the best modern services, based on the evidence of what people really need to be healthy, safe and secure. For example, following analysis of road accident statistics, police correspondence with drivers caught speeding in the West Midlands included a single-sided explanation of why and how speeding limits are set. This led to a 20% reduction in reoffending in the ensuing six months. ⁹





EVALUATION

As well as the skills in digital and IT to use the advances in technology to best advantage, we need the capability to measure our effectiveness as communicators. As George

Bernard Shaw observed, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” We have to be able to show that it has and to what effect.

To meet this requirement, the GCS made evaluation a central plank of its Modern Communications Operating Model. This model is based on the best advice for organising effective communications teams that are integrated, digital by default and use data and audience insight to produce comms with real and demonstrable impact. It is supported by a new Evaluation Framework, with a core set of metrics to help communicators

prove that the comms they produce are delivering the desired results. As well as showing what does work, these metrics will show more clearly what doesn't.

UNDERSTANDING AND TRUST

As we continue to listen, we are more likely to act appropriately on what people are telling us about what they need - and earn their trust - if we understand the public we serve. The Civil Service's ambition to be the most diverse and inclusive employer in the UK by 2020 supports this aspiration.

Excellent communication that people trust is essential to a properly functioning democracy. That trust, built on the dialogue between public and state, is the touchstone of modern government communications.

The GCS set out eight challenges for government comms in 2018, arising from advances in how information is processed and shared and changes in audience behaviour:

1. Enhance two-way communications, using active listening to build trust and to better all major government campaigns.
2. Build a rapid response social media capability to deal quickly with disinformation and reclaim a fact-based public debate with a new team to lead this work in the Cabinet Office.
3. Raise standards by ending opaque digital marketing, with a focus on value, safety and transparency, creating greater accountability for the Government.
4. Maximise the role of government comms in challenging declining trust in institutions through honest, relevant and responsive campaigns.
5. Demonstrate the role of communication as a valuable strategic tool that can deliver cost-effective public policy solutions.
6. Work harder to master the techniques of behavioural science and start considering audiences by personality as well as demographic.
7. Create engaging content that will be shared and owned by audiences - pictures, videos and facts.
8. Transform the mass of data we have about audiences into actionable insight, which will be used to improve government campaigns.

⁸ <https://medium.com/@History100/celebrating-100-years-of-government-communications-f860181cb5cc>.

⁹ The Behavioural Insights Team Update Report 2016-17: http://38r8om2xjhl25mw24492dir.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/BIT_Update-16-17_E_.pdf

LOOKING AT INTERNAL AUDIT THROUGH A NEW LENS

Jon Whitfield, Chief Executive, Government Internal Audit Agency

The Government Internal Audit Agency joins up audit professionals across government, providing assurance on how customers manage risks to their business objectives.

We established the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) in 2015 with the aim of creating a single audit practice for government. GIAA is now a professional organisation employing nearly 500 civil servants. They deliver internal audit, risk assurance and counter fraud services for 14 government departments and around 140 arm's length bodies.

The agency covers three-quarters of central government - a significant step in transforming how the Civil Service uses internal audit. By linking our work to our customers' risk-management frameworks, we provide assurance on how well they are managing the key risks to achieving their business objectives.

We came together as a melting pot of audit teams and other professionals from a wide range of departmental backgrounds. The Civil Service may speak a common language, but there are different 'dialects' and we have learned to listen to every voice. Diversity is one of our greatest strengths - bringing with it a wealth of experience and plenty of different ideas and opinions. It's this mix that's helped us to navigate a wave of cultural change.

BREAKING OUT OF SILOS

The challenge is to bring this change to life and reap the benefits across the Civil Service by providing insight, resilience and sharing knowledge. We simply couldn't do that if we continued to work in silos, as we were doing.

Tim Le Mare, Delivery Director, GIAA: "One of our greatest strengths in the agency is the rich pool of talent and ideas we can rely on to help us move forward. As an organisation created to provide risk-based assurance, we're also surprisingly confident about venturing into unknown territory."

We've had to be brave and take a few risks ourselves trying out new ideas. We supported our people through change by providing an evidence-based toolkit drawing on behavioural science. We worked with an organisational psychologist to develop sessions to explore mindfulness, personal values and mindset to help build personal resilience.

I was prepared for a degree of scepticism, but these workshops turned out to be hugely popular.

Organisational psychologist Ross McIntosh, who worked with GIAA said: "I'm overwhelmed by the positive response to our 'skills for change' sessions. Colleagues have been really open to the idea and we've had requests to do more - both face-to-face and online."

CONNECTING OUR PEOPLE

I've always felt strongly about being as inclusive as possible. Our workforce is dispersed

around the country, and using technology to connect our people has helped us build a new working community. We now hold regular webinars - including our first all-agency session in May this year - so that everyone can join in.

I hold my own monthly forums in a different office each time. It's important for me to see our people where they actually work and to get a feel for what's happening locally. It's unrealistic to try to do that with all our agency meetings, so we've found new ways - including Skype meetings and webinars - to stay connected.

We've also found innovative ways to encourage engagement through our new intranet system, enabling more user input. Blogging and discussion groups have opened new channels for sharing ideas, discussing common concerns and, importantly, celebrating success and promoting opportunity.

NEW AUDIT METHODOLOGY

As well as managing the cultural aspect of change, it was imperative that we provided the training tools to ensure that everyone understood our new audit methodology and the bespoke software to support it.

Our auditors have come from teams who were previously working in other government departments using a variety of audit management software packages or, in some cases, none at all. Providing a new software package to help everyone plan and complete high-quality audits was a big ask. It was also an opportunity to make improvements and establish new standards.

Under the umbrella of the NAMMS project (New Audit Methodology and Management System), we designed and built a new training portal. Our NAMMS Academy offers a flexible learning resource that addresses both the cultural and technical aspects of the change programme.

Before fully rolling out NAMMS, user testing and pilots helped us assess its benefits

and identify any problems. Feedback was important in avoiding technical problems as we transitioned across from different systems. It was the first time our teams had worked together using a common platform, sharing experience and agreeing a way forward.

SPEAKING CUSTOMERS' LANGUAGE

We based our new methodology and audit management system on best practice from the public and private sectors. To address the needs of our UK Government customers we use best practice business process frameworks developed by the Civil Service professions in partnership with government departments. These common frameworks help us speak the language of our customers, apply consistent models to similar work and share best practice across government.

An example of this is GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), which gives enhanced protection for

personal data, and imposes stricter obligations on those who process personal data. To prepare for this, we worked with customers using our standard framework to assess their readiness. This enabled us to then publish a thought leadership paper and an Accounting Officer bulletin to summarise our findings on best practice.

MORE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

We designed the NAMMS project to achieve GIAA's aim to "become greater than the sum of our individual parts". Senior colleagues have adapted to a new way of leading to support me at every crucial step of that journey. Previously, many of our senior leaders took the major decisions about internal audit in their teams and departments. Now, they work together to provide the customer insight and expertise that our executive management team and I need to make those decisions.

It took time to adjust to this more collaborative style, but it is now becoming embedded at all levels in the organisation. One fundamental principle that we're committed to is the value of consultation.

CONSISTENT APPROACH

We now plan our audit work to a common methodology with common risks and business processes. This allows us to

analyse our plans, identify key themes and common audit areas and bring people together to work on them, improving our own people's skills and knowledge and ultimately, the service to customers.

A consistent approach to performance appraisal means our people are assessed as professionals relative to their peers. To provide an attractive prospect for upcoming talent, we're focusing on building a pipeline for leadership and providing choice by offering general and specialist career paths in the internal audit and counter fraud professions.

GIAA Professional Practice Director Jo Rowley said: "Talking to and listening to each other is essential when creating a new organisation, but what really makes the difference for GIAA is working together outside of our old, familiar teams to build something new that we all own."

NEW TOOLS, NEW SKILLS

The future looks exciting. Developments in technology will enable us to explore how data analytics, robotics and even artificial intelligence can play a role in risk-based auditing. Our specialist commercial auditors are already performing data-mining tests, which enable us to compare information quickly. For example, we can look at data from an external supplier alongside payroll master data to identify errors and fraud risks.

Our profession will need to learn new skills to make the most of these tools so we can make quicker comparisons on a

larger scale. The time saved will allow auditors to look at more information in greater depth.

Having said that, nothing will replace the human touch when it comes to building relationships. So, my parting wish is that GIAA continues to listen to every member of the team and to our customers.

PRIDE AND RESPONSIBILITY

From the start, our aim has been to provide the best possible internal audit service across government. As part of the wider government Finance Function we are entrusted with helping to protect public money. That's a huge responsibility and a great motivator. It's helped us to focus on bringing together all the best elements of our melting pot culture so that our customers and, ultimately, the public reap the benefits.

As I come to the end of my Civil Service career I am proud that we have established an organisation, and given it the tools, to deliver an internal audit and investigation service that can work beyond departmental silos. GIAA is well placed to support the Civil Service in meeting its current and future challenges.

Bringing former departmental audit teams together in one agency has enabled greater working opportunities for individuals. Gareth Edwards is a member of our award-winning GIAA team in Swansea, who mostly audit the DVLA. As he describes, joining the agency allowed him to broaden his skills:

"I wanted to learn by helping in another area of work. My usual customer is the DVLA, so I was pleased to get a chance to support our team based at HM Treasury with their audit work.

"I'm based some 150 miles from Westminster, and wasn't sure how would it work or how I would prioritise my work when accountable to two teams. I needn't have worried. We built a good relationship and my new colleagues were just a phone-call away. Both my managers were flexible and encouraging.

"I completed audit assignments for HM Treasury and its arm's-length bodies and was surprised by just how much I could achieve working remotely.

"Working with multiple clients let me identify and share good practice and I feel motivated by the variety of work. I've grown as an auditor and enjoyed testing myself with new clients and extending my network."

Government
Internal Audit
Agency

 **Government
Internal Audit
Agency**

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BUILDING THE FUTURE CIVIL SERVICE FOR EVERYONE

Greg Hobbs, Deputy Director, Head of Fast Stream and Early Talent

The Civil Service Fast Stream is working to open the flagship graduate recruitment scheme to talented people from a wider range of backgrounds.

The Civil Service Fast Stream was described as being less diverse than the student body of Oxford University. This shock finding came in a 2016 report commissioned by the Cabinet Office to look into socio-economic diversity in the talent programme.

The Fast Stream asked for the Bridge Group report, the first of its kind published by any employer in the country, to help deliver its ambition to provide a diverse talent pipeline for the Senior Civil Service.

The Fast Stream is one of the UK's most sought-after graduate schemes. It remains a highly competitive process for recruiting talented people from all backgrounds to develop as future leaders of the Civil Service.

The report, led by independent charity the Bridge Group, certainly pulled no punches. Its recommendations were a critical turning point in the Fast Stream's approach to recruiting.

Two years on, a revamped approach has seen individuals and industry peers recognise efforts to improve the diversity of the scheme's intake. The Fast Stream moved to number two in the Times Top 100 list of graduate employers. In 2017 it was the highest-placed public sector agency in the UK Social Mobility Employer Index. And in 2018 it has already won awards for its diversity and inclusion strategy, including TARGETjobs Best Diversity Strategy Award.

The secret to our success? Hard work, a focus on inspiring people and continually improving the way we work.

PEOPLE RESPOND POSITIVELY TO PEOPLE

The Fast Stream previously had a modest presence on university campuses. This lack of a physical visibility – the most impactful way to influence students' decisions to apply – was due to limited resource. The staffing and operational budget of the Fast Stream for attraction activity is considerably lower than that of most peer employers.

The most immediate solution to this challenge was to engage serving Fast Streamers much more actively in recruitment activity. While this was already happening in a modest ad hoc manner, the team increased its engagement with carefully targeted academic departments to reach a diverse student body.

We trained 400 Fast Stream ambassadors, running 245 events across 45 university and other venues.

People tend to respond most positively to people they can relate to. Engaging Fast Streamers themselves to advocate and communicate the value and openness of the Fast Stream, and what the job involves, can strongly influence whether students decide to apply.

We have, for example, focused attraction activities on Fast Stream schemes such as Commercial and Digital, which have delivered some positive success rates in terms of ethnicity and disability.

Supporting this work was targeted attraction by diversity partners with networks of diverse candidates; and a marketing campaign that used live recruitment data to direct resource more effectively throughout the attraction process. Our programme of organic social media saw us reach unprecedented levels of engagement. The campaign saw Facebook impressions increase by 67%, Twitter by 72% and LinkedIn by 116%. This smarter use of data optimises Fast Stream staff focus and budget.

INSPIRING PEOPLE

The Cabinet Office launched the Summer Diversity Internship Programme (SDIP) more than 10 years ago. It was created to encourage more undergraduates and graduates from under-represented groups (including from lower socio-economic backgrounds, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates, and those declaring a disability) to spend time working in the Civil Service before applying for the Fast Stream.

The paid internship scheme gives talented penultimate and final year university students a six- to nine-week placement in a government department.

It certainly succeeds in inspiring people. Interns give it a near-universal thumbs-up, saying that, based on their experience, they are really keen to return to the Civil Service.

However, unlike most other employers, there were no allowances in the Fast Stream selection process for candidates who successfully completed an internship. They had to go through the whole application process again. Accordingly, we worked with the Civil Service Commission to introduce the Fast Pass. This allows successful SDIP participants to progress straight to the Fast Stream assessment centre, and has delivered significantly increased success rates for internship participants at Fast Stream.

STEPPING STONES

Research points to the importance of connecting with people early to promote awareness of, and access to, the Civil Service and the Fast Stream.

Our Early Diversity Internship programme (EDIP) helps us to do just that. EDIP is a one-week spring placement for first-year undergraduate students, again exclusively those from underrepresented groups. Interns shadow Fast Streamers and take part in networking sessions and skills workshops.



MUMDOOD PASSA, FORMER SDIP PARTICIPANT AND NOW A FAST STREAMER AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE (DIT).

“I first got involved in the Civil Service in quite a strange way. After I left school I didn’t really know what I wanted to do. Neither of my parents went to university. My mum used to work at a dry cleaners and my dad is a cab driver, but they didn’t offer much career advice beyond: ‘do something that you’re good at and do something you enjoy’. I ended up getting a job collecting measurements for public health



NAOMI ADENIS, 2018 EDIP PARTICIPANT CURRENTLY STUDYING POLITICS WITH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK

“EDIP offered me invaluable networking and shadowing opportunities in Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy that have empowered me to join the Civil Service. Working alongside civil servants from different backgrounds and

EDIP acts as a stepping stone, preparing diverse students for the longer SDIP.

The Fast Stream has also seized the opportunity to invest in school outreach programmes, while achieving greater coordination with the outreach activities of the wider Civil Service.

study, and it happened to be that the participants for the study were all civil servants. They came from across the Civil Service, from all levels and grades and walks of life. I met clerks who worked at Jobcentres, former ambassadors, cleaners, nurses, an Olympic athlete, someone with a knighthood and pretty much everything in between.

I didn’t really know anything about the Civil Service before the job, but I learned about the huge range of things you can do. I eventually decided to go to university, and then I heard about the SDIP, so I applied and got a place. I ended up working on information management and policy for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I really enjoyed my placement, so I eventually applied for the Fast Stream.

meeting a member of the Cabinet Office who had attended my state school, taught me to never shy away from being a woman of African heritage, but to use it as a tool that can positively contribute towards the development of the Civil Service.”

Fast Stream outreach targets high-potential students from underprivileged backgrounds to inform them about government and the work of civil servants, to raise their aspirations and inspire them to consider the Civil Service as a career choice.

We started with only a small mentoring pilot of 22 schools. We now have a target of 200 schools. We have run discovery events for over 3,000 13- to 14-year-olds and deliver work experience for over 100 students each year.

Our ambition is to achieve greater coordination, and we saw the launch this year of the Civil Service Schools Outreach Network to collaborate and build on work across government.

Currently, I work in DIT, promoting and helping UK healthcare companies to export and expand their business. This involves working with embassies and foreign buyers to understand what demand there is overseas, and then working with UK companies to meet those demands.

I’m about to move to the Ministry of Justice, working on reviewing the guidance and arrangements to manage the risk posed by known dangerous offenders in order to protect the public (so, quite different to my current job!).

All in all I would say the Civil Service is great and a really varied place to work. There are so many things that you will be able to do.”

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The Fast Stream has made great strides on diversity in the last few years, and is proud of the progress it has made. But it recognises there is still much more to do if it is properly to represent modern Britain.

We held up a mirror to ourselves with the Bridge Report. We saw the challenges that we face more clearly and how to overcome them.

The release of the 2016 Annual Report earlier this year (the 2016 recruitment campaign completed before we introduced the Bridge Group changes) brought our diversity back into the public space with a critical eye.

The 2016 data showed that none of the 1,245 places offered to applicants went to a candidate who identified themselves as from a Black Caribbean background, which was obviously hugely disappointing.

We know that the picture has moved on. We expect the 2017 data, when it is officially published, will show a much improved picture across a

number of diversity categories. This will be a direct result of implementing actions. One of the most significant was investing in a new purpose-built assessment centre in Newcastle-upon-Tyne as part of a commitment to reduce the scheme’s geographical focus on London and make it more accessible to a wider demographic.

We continue to use that spotlight to maintain our momentum on improving our diversity, introducing more further-reaching improvements this year.

There is no end game, there is always more that we can and should do. With the increase in our efforts to inspire people,

provide the stepping stones to raise their aspirations and see the opportunities, we are absolutely determined for the Fast Stream to support the Civil Service in becoming the best place to succeed, whatever your background.





EXPERTS IN SECURITY, AT HOME AND ABROAD

Stephen Lovegrove, Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Defence

The expert response to the Salisbury nerve agent attack involved multiple departments, the emergency services and other public bodies working together to protect the public.

This year we have seen increasing challenges to the security situation in Europe and the rules-based international system on which we all depend. A recent and shocking example was the nerve agent attack in Salisbury in March. This brazen and reckless act threatened the lives of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, those who came to their aid and the wider public. Only the Russian state has the technical means, operational experience and motive to target the Skripals in this way.

It is in these moments that we rely on all parts of government to protect us. Some of these are obvious such as the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Home Office and Public Health England; others perhaps less so, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

All played a crucial role. In this article I want to talk about some of the less visible work that was vital to dealing with this most unusual and dangerous event.

RAPID RESPONSE

At the beginning of March the MOD deployed over 180 Service personnel to assist in the cross-government response to the Salisbury attack. Even before this, from the moment the attack became apparent, scientists from the MOD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) had been providing expertise in identifying the substance used and advising on how to deal with it.

That Dstl was able so quickly and so accurately to identify the nerve agent was vital in different ways. It enabled the medical staff at Salisbury Hospital to design and implement life-saving treatment for the Skripals and Detective Sergeant Bailey, who had come to their aid. Working with colleagues from across national security, Dstl's involvement enabled the unequivocal attribution of the attack to Russia. In today's world, with so many 'deniable' technologies being used by so many different actors, the ability authoritatively to point to those responsible and act accordingly is indispensable.

SCALE AND COMPLEXITY

On the ground, very quickly Dstl experts began to work shifts so that they could provide critical advice 24/7 for the police and military personnel responding to the incident. Their flexibility allowed for timely and accurate advice, not just for the areas impacted by the nerve agent, but also on personal protection measures for on-the-scene responders and NHS staff.

What really struck me was the scale and complexity of the response. Dstl took more than 1,000 samples from multiple locations to determine the level of contamination in the city. This included recovering hundreds of items for forensic analysis; a huge logistical effort, with the logging, testing and storing of each item. A priority exercise, this forensic analysis has informed the clean-up work led by Defra to bring the contaminated sites back into safe use for the people of Salisbury.

In addition to the logistical challenges, the safety precautions for the team working on the scene were extensive and time-consuming. Precautions for staff included the preparation of special personal protection equipment

and the taking of daily blood samples – up to 100 blood tests per day, including for the emergency services and military personnel involved. For a team that would normally process around 40 blood samples a week, this was an enormous increase in the volume of work. However, it was vital to guaranteeing the safety of those responding to the attack and ensuring the containment of the affected areas.

WORKING GROUPS

At the same time that this work was happening, a huge amount of cross-government collaboration was taking place. From the outset, national and local-level working groups were set up, involving a number of departments as well as scientists, health professionals and the military. These working groups provided timely and accurate updates to senior officials and ministers, keeping them abreast of developments and able to make informed decisions – for example, supplying the scientific advice to determine the best decontamination process.

Cross-government collaboration extended well beyond Whitehall. Defence civil servants were temporarily posted to Salisbury as Government Liaison Officers to assist in local planning efforts. Specialist military teams from across the Army, Royal Air Force and joint organisations, provided with scientific evidence and guidance from Dstl, have been deployed to deliver elements of Defra's recovery plan. This decontamination effort is proving successful, with many of the affected areas made safe and fully open to the public.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Given the heightened level of risk following the Salisbury attack, a key role for MOD was to instruct on the protection and resilience of our people, bases and infrastructure overseas. We also played an important part in support of the government effort to ensure an international

The Manchester bombing

Dstl also encompasses the Forensic Explosives Laboratory (FEL), which is funded by the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) at the Home Office. FEL has provided crucial work in support of many recent counter-terrorism investigations.

Following the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017, FEL scientists deployed to the arena within just a few hours. In less than 36 hours after the attack they identified the explosives used; and soon after it was identified they deployed to the address where the explosive device was put together.

After the attack, OSCT commissioned the Royal Society and the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) to seek innovative ways to help protect against future attacks. A wide range of experts from industry, academia, the police and government were engaged, leading to a subsequent DASA competition on 'Improving Crowd Resilience.' This has resulted in a number of promising projects being taken forward. These range from a proposal from QinetiQ to develop a crowd emotion 'heatmap', to a bid from the University of Southampton to use visual perception research to enhance a crowd's ability to detect threats.

response to the attack. This work saw MOD ministers, senior officials and defence attachés engage across the world.

I would also like to thank our colleagues behind the scenes who make the visible 'main effort' possible. Caterers, cleaning staff, business management teams and others across government have gone above and beyond their day jobs or normal working hours to support the sudden need for additional resource.

RESILIENCE

Work on the Salisbury incident continues, and it will be a while until we can fully evaluate the cross-government effort. In the short-term, however, the resilience of our staff in these challenging situations has been exemplary. I am not just referring to people working in Whitehall or at other department hubs. Our agencies and arm's-length bodies comprise thousands of people who have worked tirelessly to respond quickly and effectively to these threats.

Dealing with a situation such as the Salisbury attack requires a comprehensive and joined-up effort across government, and important decisions must be made and implemented quickly. The co-ordination and complex project management required to get people where they need to be, to do the jobs they need to do, has been seamless. At times like these I am reminded that, regardless of department or job role, we all work in government for the same reason: to serve the public and keep the country safe.

Wider Dstl work

Dstl is made up of over 3,000 technical specialists and scientists, allowing them to deliver defence- and security-related science and technology to over 40 government partners. Organised into six key areas, Dstl leads on a range of different activities to ensure the protection of our troops.

Work ranges from the use of system engineering to develop the Future Soldier Vision and armour protection, to solving the complex policy, planning and operational problems associated with our activity across the world. In September 2017, Dstl were on hand to monitor our work delivering humanitarian aid in the Caribbean after the devastating hurricanes that hit the region.

As the threats we face change and intensify, so do our skills. Recently, the Centre for Applied Science and Technology transferred from the Home Office to become part of Dstl, bringing with it unique capabilities and expertise to make the laboratory a more resilient and capable organisation.

Importantly, the transfer of S&T capability from the Home Office means that Dstl now supports a wider range of security and policing partners. This helps to ensure that science and technology are further harnessed to support justice and security.



If you're a civil servant, think back to when you joined government or got your most recent post. Do you remember filling in the application form? How long did it take? And how long did it take to be invited to interview, and to start your new job once you were offered it?

The Civil Service has always prided itself on having a fair and impartial recruitment process – and this is still the case. However, feedback from Civil Service job applicants and

recruiters has brought home the fact that recruitment procedures can be cumbersome, rigid and subject to delay.

We've listened to this feedback and are changing the ways in which we recruit people. We've worked extensively with staff groups and recruitment specialists, both internally and from outside the Civil Service, to devise an approach that continues to be fair and impartial but that works better for every applicant.

After all, we need people to deliver a brilliant Civil Service. At a time of multiple policy challenges, it's never been more important to recruit a diverse range of talent and give all our people more opportunities to achieve their potential. By the end of this financial year, recruitment decisions will be based on 'Success Profiles' rather than purely on competencies.

WHY WAS THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK INTRODUCED?

The Competency Framework as we know it has been used across the Civil Service since April 2013. It has provided a consistent approach to recruitment – identifying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance and breaking down how these can be demonstrated at each grade. The focus has been on using examples of past behaviour to predict future behaviour, with reference to particular job areas.

This approach has ensured all job applicants are assessed against the same criteria, and that people across government use the same language for recruitment purposes. As such, the Competency Framework has taken the Civil Service forward – and it still has its place.

However, critics argue that, used on its own, the Competency Framework fails to provide a picture of a whole person – the focus is on snapshots of how that person has behaved in specific situations. The Competency Framework can also inadvertently favour candidates with the knack of 'bending' examples to fit the criteria, with a degree of rigidity creeping into how these are applied. External candidates in particular have struggled with this approach.

WHAT ARE SUCCESS PROFILES?

Success Profiles provide a more flexible approach to recruitment. While they retain the Competency Framework in the form of shorter, clearer Civil Service behaviours, they draw on a much wider range of elements – providing a more inclusive and accurate approach to assessment and recruitment.

Competencies or, more specifically, Civil Service Behaviours, will be just one of five recruitment elements available within Success Profiles – the others are strengths, ability, experience and technical skills. This approach builds on an individual's natural strengths and talents, giving job applicants greater opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for a specific role. It also enables recruiting managers to tailor criteria and selection methods to vacancies, maximising their ability to match the best candidate to each role.

For these reasons, Success Profiles are set to create a more level playing field for internal and external candidates alike. They will modernise and open up Civil Service recruitment, attracting a more diverse pool of candidates while helping to unlock the talent that already exists within government – an important driver for ensuring the Civil Service is a great place to work.

PROMOTING 'A BRILLIANT CIVIL SERVICE' THROUGH THE WORKFORCE PLAN

This brings me to the Civil Service Workforce Plan, the framework for delivering our vision of 'A Brilliant Civil Service' – one that is inclusive, innovative and empowering. This far-reaching plan sets out key areas of transformation for the Civil Service between 2016 and 2020. It will help to ensure we have the skilled and motivated workforce we need to navigate our way not only through EU Exit, but through the revolution in digital technology that has transformed all our lives and ways of working.

Underpinned by a commitment to get the basics right, the Workforce Plan is already delivering on its promises to transform the way our people work. Progress is faster in some areas than others, but the work under way is providing the foundation for the changes and improvements we want to see.

The Workforce Plan is defined and supported by five challenges:

1. THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST ATTRACT AND RETAIN PEOPLE OF TALENT AND EXPERIENCE FROM A RANGE OF SECTORS AND ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

The ability to draw upon the largest talent pool possible, and

A NEW APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

Rupert McNeil, Civil Service Chief People Officer

The new Success Profiles will allow managers to take a broader view of job candidates and whether they have the right skills, experience, behaviours and strengths for the role.



to move people swiftly into and across the Civil Service, is the driving force behind Success Profiles.

2. THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST BUILD CAREER PATHS THAT ENCOURAGE A BREADTH OF EXPERIENCE AND A DEPTH OF EXPERTISE.

We've already begun to recognise the range of professions that make up the Civil Service, and the Workforce Plan will take this work further. Career frameworks and career pathways are increasingly enabling individuals to build and transfer job skills and behaviours from one context to another, supported by focused learning.

Added to this, the new Careers Website and Government Recruitment Platform will deliver a customer experience that is quick, efficient and meets the needs of users at every stage of recruitment.

3. THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST DEVELOP WORLD-CLASS LEADERS WHO ARE INSPIRING, CONFIDENT AND EMPOWERING.

The Leadership Academy launched in 2017 takes a 'leaders teaching leaders' approach, bringing leaders together from across the Civil Service to share experiences and expertise.

4. THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST BE THE MOST INCLUSIVE EMPLOYER IN THE UK.

This is the ambition set out in the Civil Service Diversity and

Inclusion Strategy published in October 2017.

The strategy promises targets for the representation of ethnic minority and disabled staff within the Senior Civil Service by 2020. It pledges to build a culture that attracts, retains and nurtures the best and most diverse talent – putting us in the right place to meet the needs of a modern and diverse Britain. To help make that a reality, departmental goals are incorporated into permanent secretaries' performance objectives; and a task force, chaired by Civil Service Chief Executive John Manzoni, will support departments to reach those goals.

5. THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST DEVELOP COST-EFFECTIVE AND FLEXIBLE REWARD STRUCTURES THAT ENABLE US TO ATTRACT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP THE VERY BEST TALENT.

The Civil Service is committed to developing a long-term reward framework that supports the transfer of skills into, out of and across government – one that maintains financial

constraint while ensuring coherence in pay levels for similar roles across government.

We're already creating a flexible reward framework in the Government Commercial Organisation and introducing new pay ranges for roles in the Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) Function, which help to ensure consistency and competitiveness with the wider market. We're continuing to work on pay solutions for other specialist groups.

These are exciting as well as challenging times for the Civil Service. While there is some way still to go, the Workforce Plan provides a framework that is both aspirational and practical.

and retaining
of talent and
experience
Building career paths
Developing world class
leaders
Being the most inclusive
employer
Developing cost
effective and flexible
reward structures





Success Profile pilots in Government

To test how Success Profiles were likely to land in government, Civil Service researchers ran pilots in a number of departments. These included a focus on strengths-based assessment, one of the five recruitment elements available within Success Profiles.

An important conclusion was that a 'blended' approach, which uses strengths alongside competencies, provides a fairer approach for all. This is because less experienced candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate their potential, strengths, enthusiasm and transferable skills, not just their experience.

To ensure the best possible approach to recruitment and retention, Civil Service researchers also looked at what organisations outside government are doing.



Transition to Success Profiles

Between April 2018 and early 2019, there will be a period of transition while departments are putting Success Profiles in place. During this period:

- if you're applying for a job, please check the advertisement for information about the selection criteria you'll be assessed on; and
- if you have a vacancy, check with HR to see which approach your department is using.



Summary of outcomes

- Most departments felt 'blended' interviews provided better insight to the candidate.
- Case studies showed candidates enjoyed the interview process more.
- There was some evidence that strengths-based assessment in structured interviews added unique value, although competency-based assessment still had a place. The blended approach was considered optimal.
- Provided interviews were structured for a consistent candidate experience and that all interviewers received appropriate training, there appeared to be no practical difference in how candidates performed in either competency-based or strengths-based questions in terms of ethnicity, gender and age. Neither approach appeared to advantage or disadvantage particular groups.



What's being delivered in 2018/19?

Civil Service Success Profiles – a new approach to recruitment.

Civil Service Careers Website – to ensure we get the best engagement with the best talent.

New Civil Service Jobs platform for civil servants to find and apply for jobs.

New recruitment platform – a candidate website and applicant tracking system (ATS) designed to support the recruitment process.

New platform for learning to deliver Civil Service Learning products. Like the other websites, this will conform to Government Digital Service (GDS) standards and will be tested with diverse user groups before it's launched.



1. WHAT IS CHOGM AND WHAT WAS THIS YEAR'S THEME?

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, or CHOGM, is the biennial gathering of the leaders of the Commonwealth's 53 member countries to discuss common challenges and opportunities facing the organisation.

This year the UK hosted CHOGM, the largest summit of its kind in our history, between 16 and 20 April across London and Windsor. The summit also brought together thousands of delegates from across the Commonwealth's six continents for four 'Forums' on business, women, youth and civil society.

With a remarkable 60% of the Commonwealth's 2.4 billion

people under the age of 30, we were determined to put young people at the heart of this year's agenda - 'Towards a Common Future' - looking at how we build a modern Commonwealth which responds to their aspirations for a better life.

2. WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE?

As Director of Policy, I oversaw a team of about 30 people who worked with departments across Whitehall and member countries to develop a series of policy proposals around the four themes endorsed by them at UNGA (United Nations General Assembly), last year - prosperity, security, sustainability and fairness. As a responsible host, a key part of our role was to build a policy agenda which worked for all members, in the Commonwealth spirit of consensus and equality between its members, large and small. The Commonwealth is a broad church so a lot of my time, and that of my team, was spent consulting and negotiating these draft outcomes between the membership, both overseas and through High Commissioners in London.

Of course, delivering a summit of this scale was also a significant moment for us as a Civil Service, so in the earlier days much of my focus was also on building a fantastic team from across Whitehall in order to deliver the event successfully. Once the unit was up and running, it was equally important to keep our staff motivated and supported through what was an exceptionally busy and demanding experience for everyone.

3. HOW WAS THE EVENT DELIVERED?

The summit was run by the Commonwealth Summit Unit (CSU), based in the Cabinet Office; a team of more than 60 people drawn from across Whitehall under our Chief Executive, Tim Hitchens. Our unit reported directly into the Prime Minister.

The unit also supported an Inter-Ministerial Group co-chaired by the Foreign and Home Secretaries, put in place to ensure that ambition was as high as it could be, and that every part of Whitehall did its bit to make the summit a success.

THE CIVIL SERVICE QUARTERLY INTERVIEW

Harriet Matthews, Director of Policy, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018 was the biggest event of its kind ever held in the UK. What were the keys to its success? We asked Harriet Matthews, Director of Policy for CHOGM.

COMMONWEALTH
HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING
LONDON 2018



We worked incredibly closely with the Foreign Office Protocol team, who delivered the core logistics ranging from airport arrivals and vehicle transport, to building our venues and how we accredited thousands of people to access them. The Home Office and Metropolitan Police were also key partners from day one, working to ensure that we delivered not only a memorable summit, but a safe and secure one.

But the summit wasn't just delivered in Whitehall – close working with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Royal Household was also key to our success, for which our unit was responsible. For the week of the summit our collective teams were boosted by thousands of volunteers from across Whitehall who supported us across the full breadth of summit work, whether as Delegation Liaison Officers, or staffing the media centre.

CHOGM was much more than just a week-long summit, beginning in earnest with a reception for Commonwealth leaders in the margins of the UN General Assembly in 2017, where the Prime Minister launched our theme and branding. In the months that followed, our campaigns team worked hard to raise the profile of the Commonwealth and create a sense of celebration and anticipation, reaching up to 100,000 people across the UK and the Commonwealth with our 'Commonwealth Big Lunches' and 'Commonwealth Schools' programmes. The #OurCommonwealth campaign helped us tap into the ideas and give a voice to our young people, reaching an incredible 8.7 million people on Twitter and 3.7 million on Facebook alone.

4. WHY WAS THE THEME 'TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE' CHOSEN?

Ever since the UN General Assembly last year, the Prime Minister was determined to put young people at the heart of the summit, and to renew the Commonwealth to ensure its relevance to them this century.

So we needed a theme which encapsulated the essence of this mission – forward looking, which spoke to a common future for everyone, irrespective of whether you are a large or small state, and of your gender, race, sexuality, creed or other status.

Within this, member states agreed to pursue action under the four broad themes I've already mentioned: how to make the compelling case for free trade as the best way to promote higher living standards around the world, and so create a more prosperous commonwealth; how to mitigate the effects of climate change, especially as it affects small island states, and so create a more sustainable Commonwealth; how to address new security challenges, like cyber terrorism, and online extremism, and so create a more secure Commonwealth; and how to protect and promote the values we all share and so create a fairer, freer and more tolerant Commonwealth.

5. WHAT WERE THE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE EVENT?

The Summit delivered significant policy outcomes, supported by a genuinely cross Whitehall package of announcements from FCO, DFID, DIT, Defra, BEIS and the Home Office. For example, we secured the largest global commitment on Cyber Security Cooperation; a 'Blue Charter' that will develop marine economies and tackle plastics in oceans across the Commonwealth; improved Commonwealth election monitoring; support to improve the resilience of small and vulnerable states, steps to tackle trade barriers between Member States, and a strengthened pledge to ensure an equal voice for minorities. Leaders also agreed that His Royal Highness Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales would be the next Head of the Commonwealth. We set

ourselves the goal of having a real impact for Commonwealth citizens and this paid off - in the closing press conference, the Prime Minister of Grenada stated this was the most productive CHOGM he had ever been to (since 1997).

6. WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES AND HOW WERE THESE ADDRESSED?

There are always challenges that come with an event of this scale: from those that arise from the early days of establishing a new Whitehall unit at such a pace; to those which stem from the Commonwealth's many idiosyncrasies. As for policy, I would focus on a couple.

It was sometimes a challenge to build consensus around some of the biggest global challenges we face with such a diverse membership – the key was to turn this diversity and geographical reach to an advantage, so that when the Commonwealth did speak with one voice on an issue, as the Prime Minister said, the world had to listen. I'm confident we achieved this with the first Commonwealth statement against protectionism, or the world's most ambitious and geographically diverse commitment on cyber security cooperation.

As with any global summit, events outside the CSU's control meant we also had to be flexible, keep a cool head and our staff focused on the prize at hand. The unfortunate events around

the Windrush generation, and targeted action in Syria to degrade the Assad regime's chemical weapons capabilities, could have easily distracted us if we hadn't remained focused on our core role of delivering a fantastic CHOGM.

7. HOW WILL CHOGM IMPACT THE WORK OF THE CIVIL SERVICE IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

Having set in train an ambitious agenda across so many Whitehall departments last month, be it on plastics pollution, cyber security, or girls' education, there's much to deliver on throughout the Prime Minister's 'Chair-in-Office' ('Presidency in other circles'). The Prime Minister expects every part of government to

play a role to ensure we build on the momentum of last month's summit to 2020, when Rwanda hosts CHOGM and takes the Commonwealth reins.

As the Commonwealth Summit Unit winds down in the Cabinet Office, a new joint unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will take forward this work with a new Commonwealth Envoy.



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*A Brilliant
Civil Service*