

# CIVIL SERVICE QUARTERLY

AUSTRALIA'S TOP  
CIVIL SERVANT,  
MARTIN PARKINSON:

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SERVICE FIT FOR  
PURPOSE IN A  
POST-BREXIT  
BRITAIN?

LESSONS FROM  
THE ORIENT

TAKING CARE  
OF CHILDREN

THE RISE OF  
SELF-DRIVING  
VEHICLES



Civil Service

Issue 18 – October 2018

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#CSQuarterly

# CONTENTS

LANDING THE CASE FOR HEATHROW EXPANSION	Caroline Low, Director of Heathrow Expansion, Department for Transport	4
MAKING 30 HOURS CHILDCARE COUNT	Michelle Dyson, Director, Early Years and Childcare, Department for Education	8
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT FRAUD	Mark Cheeseman, Deputy Director, Public Sector Fraud, Cabinet Office	12
MODERNISING THE GOVERNMENT ESTATE: A TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY	James Turner, Deputy Director Strategy & Engagement, Office of Government Property, Cabinet Office	16
THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT: PUTTING THE UK IN THE DRIVING SEAT	Iain Forbes, Head of the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, Department for Transport and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy	20
DELIVERING JUSTICE IN A DIGITAL WORLD	Susan Acland-Hood, CEO, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Ministry of Justice	24
SPOTLIGHT: DEVELOPING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW	Fiona Linnard, Government Digital Service Rob Kent-Smith, UK Statistics Authority	28
DODGING THE ICEBERGS - HOW TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE AGILE	Charlene Chang, Senior Director, Transformation, Public Service Division, Singapore Jalees Mohammed, Senior Assistant Director, Transformation, Public Service Division, Singapore	30
IN CONVERSATION: DR MARTIN PARKINSON, AUSTRALIA'S SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET	Martin Parkinson, Australia's Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	36

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](mailto:csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)**

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# EDITORIAL



Welcome to this, the 18th edition of Civil Service Quarterly, which takes as its broad theme, public sector efficiency - from major infrastructure projects to reform of the justice system, and government measures to counter fraud.

In our lead article, **Caroline Low, Director of Heathrow Expansion**, recounts the work of the Department for Transport in promoting and gaining agreement to the government's case for a third runway at Heathrow Airport. This campaign culminated in a favourable vote in the House of Commons in June 2018.

As the **Department for Education's Michelle Dyson** sets out, the delivery of the government's manifesto commitment to 30 hours of free childcare for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in England is an object lesson in successful collaboration between departments.

Public sector fraud comes in many different forms. **Mark Cheeseman, Deputy Director, Public Sector Fraud**, surveys the fraud landscape and explains the rationale behind the creation of a specialist Government Counter Fraud Profession, which carries a message for would-be fraudsters: "government is not a soft target."

The ambition of the Government Estate Strategy is to provide an estate that works for everyone. **James Turner, a Deputy Director in the Office of Government Property**, outlines how the strategy aims to deliver on the government's responsibility to ensure its estate not only delivers value for money but also acts as an enabler for its wider policy commitments, from releasing land for housing, to improving public services.

The advent of self-driving vehicles is one of the most exciting and, potentially, transformative developments in transport. However, as **Iain Forbes, Head of the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles in the Department for Transport** knows better than most, it poses an array of questions, legal, moral and technical. Not least of these is, how does government set a regulatory framework for a technology that is not yet fully formed?

The justice system in England and Wales is in the middle of a programme of modernisation to make it more transparent, accessible and efficient. As **Susan Acland-Hood, CEO of HM Courts & Tribunals Service** writes, this involves not only structural adjustments, and a move to online services and digital tools that cut waste and inconvenience, but a fundamental change in the way the courts and their people work.

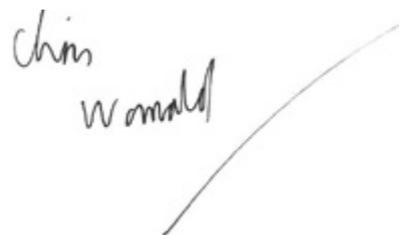
How is government nurturing the leaders of the future? We feature the views of participants in two talent development programmes: the **Government Digital Service Academy**, and the **UK Statistics Authority's High Potential Programme**.

To close this edition of Civil Service Quarterly, we feature two overseas perspectives on some of the issues and challenges that governments around the world have in common.

Singapore has an international reputation for innovation in government and public policy. We asked **Charlene Chang** from the **Singapore Government** to describe its approach to making the 'ship of state' more agile and responsive to changes in society in a turbulent world.

Finally, we present our interview with **Martin Parkinson**, Australia's equivalent of our Cabinet Secretary. He gives his trenchant views on subjects ranging from the challenges facing the UK after it exits the EU, to bridging the gap between policy development and implementation, and rebuilding the public's trust in the institutions that serve them.

**Sir Chris Wormald**, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health



# LANDING THE CASE FOR HEATHROW EXPANSION

**Caroline Low**, Director of Heathrow Expansion,  
Department for Transport



**M**onday 25 June 2018 was the day Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new piece of airport policy. With a majority of 296, you would be forgiven for thinking this was a straightforward decision for MPs. But the vote was about airport expansion; the proposed location was Heathrow; and the outcome was an historic moment.

The scale of this achievement becomes apparent when you consider that the Heathrow expansion debate has experienced intense turbulence for 50 years. From 1968 to now, numerous reports and independent commissions have been set up, and nearly all have concluded that the country needs a new runway at Heathrow. Clearly, there is something of a theme.

In 2012 the independent Airports Commission was set up after the Coalition Government overturned Labour's plans for a third runway. After years of analysis and consultation, the Airports Commission shortlisted three schemes: a second runway at Gatwick, an extension of the existing northern runway at

Heathrow (put forward by an independent group, Heathrow Hub Ltd), and a new northwest runway at Heathrow. In its July 2015 final report, the Airports Commission unanimously recommended that the best option for increasing airport capacity was a new northwest runway at Heathrow, combined with a significant package of measures to address its environmental and community impacts. But why was it so important that a decision was finally made?

### CRITICAL ASSET

Britain has the third largest aviation sector in the world – second only to the USA and China. It is a critical national asset – contributing an annual £22 billion to our GDP, employing 500,000 people, and carrying 285 million passengers and 2.6 million tonnes of freight each year.

However, our airports are filling up. Heathrow has been running at full capacity for years. Evidence shows that the other London airports will be full by 2030. The need for increased capacity is ever-growing, and a policy was needed, especially in light of the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

Heathrow is the busiest two-runway airport in the world.

As we sat on our hands and pondered the options for expansion, the rest of the globe was taking action. Heathrow hasn't had any runway development since 1970. Meanwhile, major competitors

like Dubai (four runways), Frankfurt (four) and Schiphol (six) were taking passengers away from Heathrow and expanding their hubs. We were falling behind in the aviation race.

So, what did we do? In 2016, after a careful review of the Airports Commission's final report and all the evidence, the government accepted the recommendation and confirmed its preference for a new northwest runway at Heathrow. This was not an easy decision. All three schemes had their own strengths and weaknesses, and careful work was required to ensure the relative merits were assessed carefully and impartially. Our job as civil servants is to tune out the political rhetoric and campaigning around such projects. Extensive analysis was required to ensure ministers were able to take a decision based on robust evidence – not least as it would inevitably be (and is being) challenged in the courts.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT

The expansion of Heathrow naturally brings with it a significant impact on local communities, including important effects on things like noise, air quality and road traffic congestion. Just as important as examining the case for expansion is understanding these impacts and ensuring that the proposals address them. What followed was a 16-week consultation on the government's proposals, which ran from February to May 2017. To encourage people to take part, we carried out a large-scale publicity campaign, including delivery of 1.5 million leaflets to households around the airport; press adverts in 22 local newspapers and three commuter newspapers; radio adverts on national and local radio stations;



digital adverts; Facebook adverts; and targeted engagement with ethnic minority communities.

We ran 20 local consultation events in the areas around Heathrow, and worked with local authorities to identify suitable venues and raise awareness of the consultation. Over 100 Department for Transport volunteers staffed the long days and weekends to offer the public, particularly those around Heathrow, an opportunity to review the plans and ask questions.

A scheme like this is never going to please everyone and we needed to address the impacts on those living closest to the airport, and the potential adverse effects on their quality of life. The government believed that the scheme was in the national interest and that its benefits outweighed the negatives, but that it was vital to acknowledge its impacts and set out plans for a world-class package of compensation and mitigation.

## GENERAL ELECTION

When the local events concluded, we travelled around the UK, including to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool and Newcastle, for 12 regional consultation events. Just as we were ready to publish the final pieces of evidence for consultation, we were as surprised as everyone by the announcement of a General Election, and the uncertainty it brought to a decision on a new runway.

We waited with bated breath for the election result in June 2017, given the range of positions on expansion held by the political parties. In the end, the Conservative victory – albeit with the challenges a minority government presents – meant that Heathrow expansion remained on the table. However, we still needed to publish recently updated economic evidence. In October 2017 we ran a further consultation, this time for eight weeks.

## INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

The two consultation periods combined amounted to one of the largest consultation exercises ever undertaken by government, receiving over 80,000 responses, which required careful consideration.

For both phases of the consultation, we engaged the services of an independent adviser, Sir Jeremy Sullivan. A former Court of Appeal judge, Sir Jeremy's role was not to consider the merits of Heathrow expansion, but to be a further critical eye on the consultation process, to ensure that it was as fair, accessible and legally sound as possible. After all, it was not the first time this subject had been consulted on, and we wanted to explore every possible avenue for proper process. Sir Jeremy reported back after both consultation phases and the reports were published online. He concluded, overall, that best practice had been followed.



The next stage of the process was Parliamentary scrutiny. The Transport Committee took extensive evidence before publishing its report in March 2018. In general, the committee was in favour of a new runway at Heathrow, highlighting areas they felt needed further consideration.

### FINAL PROPOSAL

After carefully considering the committee's recommendations – and almost three years after the Airports Commission's final report recommending Heathrow's northwest runway as the best scheme to deliver much-needed new runway capacity – the government decided it was time to lay a final proposal in Parliament.

On 5 June, the final draft of the Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) – the policy framework for a new northwest runway – was laid in the House of Commons. Alongside this, nearly 2,000 pages of evidence were published online. This was the culmination of months of work developing the policy proposals

and, later, taking into account the views of the thousands who replied to the consultations. We had been working closely with stakeholders and produced digital content for each region; a Summary Document that explained our position without the need to trawl through swathes of evidence; and regional factsheets for bite-size information on what expansion at Heathrow would mean for different parts of the UK.

What followed included 69 Parliamentary Questions, an Urgent Question and a flurry of correspondence to the department. The next phase of work was planning for the MPs' vote – which could take place any time within 21 sitting days of laying of the NPS.

### FINAL PUSH

The communications team delivered a plan of positive coverage – a news story each day reiterating the case for expansion. For MPs around the UK to be able to vote, we had to explain what it meant for them and ensure

they had all the information on which to base a decision. We worked closely with stakeholders to explain the benefits of the scheme, including increased airline connectivity within the UK, and a pledge that around 15% of new slots would be reserved for domestic connections. With increased long-haul destinations come increased opportunities for businesses around the UK to reach new markets.

Following a final push of intensive media and stakeholder engagement, decision day was upon us. MPs from both sides of the House joined in the debate. At around 10pm the votes were in. Ayes to the right: 415. Nays to the left: 119. A decision at last, in favour of expansion at Heathrow.

The scheme is now with Heathrow Airport Limited, which has to develop a planning application, known as Development Consent. We are still some years away from being ready for take-off on the expansion of Heathrow, but we have come a long, long way.



# MAKING 30 HOURS CHILDCARE COUNT

**Michelle Dyson**, Director, Early Years and Childcare, Department for Education



Childcare costs place a significant burden on many families' finances. The 2015 Conservative Manifesto promised to cut the cost of childcare and support parents to work, with the introduction of two new policies: 30 hours of childcare for working parents; and Tax-Free Childcare.

The first saves families up to £5,000 each year by providing 15 hours of additional free childcare for three- and four-year-olds, on top of the existing universal entitlement of 15 hours. Under the second, government pays £2 for every £8 a parent pays to their childcare provider, up to a maximum contribution of £2,000 a year for each child up to the age of 12 (or £4,000 each year for disabled children up to the age of 17).

For the 30 hours, we faced a significant implementation challenge – we had just 2 years to legislate, reform our funding formula, design and run pilots, and create a complex digital infrastructure.

To help us deliver all of this to a tight deadline, we designed 30 hours in partnership with childcare providers, over 300 local authority officers, an expert local delivery contractor (Childcare Works), and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). We worked hard to create a culture of transparency and openness, underpinned by robust governance structures, and integrated programme plans.

## OUR PARTNERS

Our most important partners were the childcare providers. We needed around 50,000 providers to offer 30 hours, but we had no levers to require them to do so. Many were anxious or angry, fuelled by negative media coverage driven, in turn, by vocal campaign groups. Surveys suggested that 40% of providers were reluctant to offer 30 hours, as they thought the funding rate was too low and that it would jeopardise their business.

However, we had experience of rolling out 15 hours a week of free early learning to disadvantaged two-year-olds, so we used the lessons learned from that programme, to hit the ground running. Our small team went out and talked to hundreds of childcare providers to make sure we were designing the policy with them in mind, and our expert delivery contractor gave them expert business support so that they could be confident that 30 hours would be good for their finances.

We were also reliant on local authority early years teams, who are legally responsible for making sure that there are enough free childcare places available in their area. Some were better prepared than others, so we offered every local authority a range of support and challenge, and gave those

facing particularly tricky delivery challenges extra help. Throughout the programme, local authorities have told us that they have valued our engagement with them.

We worked with both childcare providers and local authorities when piloting 30 hours in 12 areas in the run-up to going live nationally. Successfully testing and evaluating the offer played a key part in identifying and overcoming key delivery challenges, and allowed us to demonstrate that the offer could work in practice.

Our third key partner, HMRC, was already developing a groundbreaking digital application for Tax-Free Childcare. We were delighted when they agreed to transform it into a joint digital application system for both offers (Tax-Free



*Michelle Dyson*

Childcare and 30 hours), which became known as the 'childcare service'. Building a joint system simplified the customer journey for parents, enabled us to deliver the system much earlier than if we had started from scratch, and consequently reduced costs to the taxpayer.

## BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

HMRC and the Department for Education (DfE) are very different departments – one operational, one ministerial – and the differences in culture, language and priorities presented challenges. However, by staying focused on what was best for parents and committing time and effort to building strong relationships across all levels of the organisations, we built a strong partnership. We created a multi-disciplinary virtual team, which was drawn from both DfE and HMRC. It included policy professionals, Project Portfolio Management and digital experts, legal advisors, communications colleagues and analysts.

The journey has not always been smooth and learning lessons as we go along has been really important. Effective working relationships across HMRC and DfE enabled us to draw on each other's expertise and resources. This was particularly

important when the childcare service experienced technical and operational challenges following its launch in April 2017. We immediately developed a joint action plan: engaging directly with parents, providers and local authorities to manage issues; developing new operational processes; and prioritising customer-focused technical fixes.

## THE IMPACTS

This innovative application system is now working well, allows parents to apply for both offers simultaneously, and minimises burdens on local authorities and childcare providers who don't have to check parents' paperwork.

The childcare service has now supported over 420,000 families to apply for both schemes. In the summer term, more than 340,000 parents benefited from a 30 hours place; and by May 2018, £47 million had been paid into parents' Tax-Free Childcare accounts.

Together, these offers are making childcare more affordable and increasing the opportunities for parents to work. This has already had a transformational effect on many – putting more money in their pockets and supporting them in work.

## HOW PROVIDERS HAVE REACTED

Providers play a pivotal role in delivering the 30 hours childcare, and the introduction of a new entitlement has required a shift in the market. We continue to monitor delivery costs and keep funding under review – through commissioned research and a survey of over 10,000 providers, the results of which are expected during autumn – to ensure providers are fully supported in delivering the offer.

However, despite initial concerns, many childcare providers are now reporting that 30 hours is helping them to fill childcare places throughout the week, allowing them to become more efficient and maximise profit. Over 80% of providers who offered the existing 15 hours of free childcare opted into 30 hours in our pilot areas, and similar numbers have done so in the national roll-out. Rather than providers leaving the market, we have seen 2,000 more childminders start to offer the government free childcare offers, often working in partnership with other providers to give flexible care for working parents.

*"The 30 hours free childcare has resulted in a lot more partnership work. It's really good because we're sharing lots of knowledge and lots of experience."*

**April Orr, Nursery Manager and Early Years professional**

*"Knowing there is someone... who understands the issues we face makes all the difference. I have always felt that the team are listening to our concerns and acting on them when necessary."*

**Fran Butler, Local Authority Early Years Sufficiency lead**

The journey from manifesto commitment to hundreds of thousands of children receiving childcare support has been made a success by teams across central and local government who have shown outstanding commitment to end-to-end project delivery and to joint working, despite significant challenges and resistance along the way.



**"I work in a care home and do long shifts, the childcare offer helps me to ensure my daughter is being looked after. Without it I would not be able to afford to work."**

Mary Bell  
Daughter attends West End Pre-School  
Bedlington

Childcare  
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#Investingtohelpyou



# WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT FRAUD

**Mark Cheeseman**, Deputy Director, Public Sector Fraud, Cabinet Office



Sadly, fraud is a constant threat to all sectors, and the public sector is no different. The public services we all work to deliver are funded by public money, and people will always be tempted to ‘step over the line’ and defraud the system. When they do, the services many of them rely upon are damaged, as is our reputation in delivering those services.

In August, for example, an NHS manager, who had raised £650,000 of fraudulent purchase orders to fund the lavish development of his and his friends’ homes, was convicted of fraud. As a result of his actions, money was taken from the system that could otherwise have paid for medical treatments or healthcare staff salaries.

The public expect us to find fraudsters like these, in order to protect taxpayers money; and government takes this expectation seriously.

Furthermore, it recognises the importance of the particular skills and infrastructure needed to meet the expectation. That is why we are introducing a professional structure for our counter fraud specialists; and why the launch of the new Government Counter Fraud Profession (GCFP) this October has an important message for fraudsters: “government is not a soft target”.

However, the fight against fraud is not just the responsibility of those who will become part of this new profession – everyone has a role to play. In this article we will focus on three key points:

1. You shouldn’t underestimate the threat and likelihood of fraud.
2. Counter fraud activity is becoming increasingly specialised and complex.
3. The GCFP will help the public sector to protect public services and fight economic crime.

## **DON’T UNDERESTIMATE THE THREAT AND LIKELIHOOD OF FRAUD**

Fraud is inherently a ‘hidden’ crime, which means we only know about it when we find it. Research carried out by the Cabinet Office’s Centre of Expertise for Counter Fraud points to one undeniable fact: fraud is very likely to be present in any large organisation, even if it is not immediately visible.

If you think about our individual experiences of fraud, it is highly likely that you or someone you know has been a target of some type of fraud; perhaps relating to the cards we use to make payments, an online scam, or being overcharged for a service we have received. Fraudsters attack where there is opportunity. What’s more, as a non-physical crime, the rewards can often feel as if they outweigh the risk, making it an attractive crime for opportunists.

What this means is that fraud is out there, and we should not think that public sector organisations are any less likely to be a target.

Based on data from fraud measurement programmes in the UK public sector, available comparators from other sectors and administrations, and the research of academics, government estimates fraud loss across the public sector at between £31 billion and £49 billion every year\*. That’s why the government is committed to finding and preventing more fraud – and to do this, we need skilled counter fraud people in every part of the public sector.

## **COUNTER FRAUD ACTIVITY IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND SPECIALISED**

Fraud is increasingly complex, and the types of attacks on our public services vary significantly. They range from an individual providing or withholding accurate personal information in an

application form, to a group working together to manipulate a procurement process. Also, as technologies evolve, the means by which these crimes, and other forms of fraud, are carried out is also becoming more complex and varied.

As well as the high-profile fraud cases committed by organised groups that we read about in the news, there is all the low-volume fraud committed by opportunistic individuals. These people are often under significant pressures, financial or personal, and commit fraud as a means of rectifying the challenges they see in their lives. Others are motivated solely by personal gain. Attacks on the public sector come from outside; but, sadly, also from within.

The skills needed to fight fraud are similarly complex and becoming increasingly so. Over years of development, more and more areas of counter fraud expertise have developed to help effectively combat fraudsters. This is reflected in a highly skilled population of around 10,000 counter fraud specialists working across government, as well as in local government and our police forces.

These public servants work in a variety of roles, such as investigation, intelligence, policy and process review, and management. And they can specialise in areas such as benefit fraud, tax fraud, insolvency, money-laundering or bribery and corruption. They sit in the organisations you might expect, such as the Department for Work & Pensions or HM Revenue & Customs, but also in parts of government you might not, such as HM Land Registry and the Student Loans Company.

Fraud and economic crime has not traditionally been an area of cross-government focus. Organisations developed their own response, and the skills and learning environments designed to support their staff have reflected this diversity.

\*Government’s 2017 Fraud Landscape Report.

The independent evolution of capability has had one main drawback. Much of the knowledge, skills and experience that help counter fraud specialists succeed is common across organisations. Yet, without a coordinated approach, the skills and experience developed in one part of government have not been shared with others.

The GCFP tackles this issue. It provides a structure within which our counter fraud capability – responding to this increasingly complex and diverse crime – is codified and made transparent. This enables organisations and individuals to enhance their capability against these common standards and for government as a whole to get better and better at finding and preventing fraud.

### THE GOVERNMENT COUNTER FRAUD PROFESSION IS HERE TO HELP

Where government’s counter fraud specialists were previously separated in silos, there is now a professional structure that brings them together as one community. The list of benefits this will bring, in terms of collaboration, the sharing of information, expertise and best practice, is long, both for individual specialists and the organisations they work for.

For instance, there are the Professional Standards and Competencies, which underpin the GCFP. These detail the knowledge, skills and experience needed in a variety of counter fraud areas, known as ‘disciplines’ (see the graphic below). The

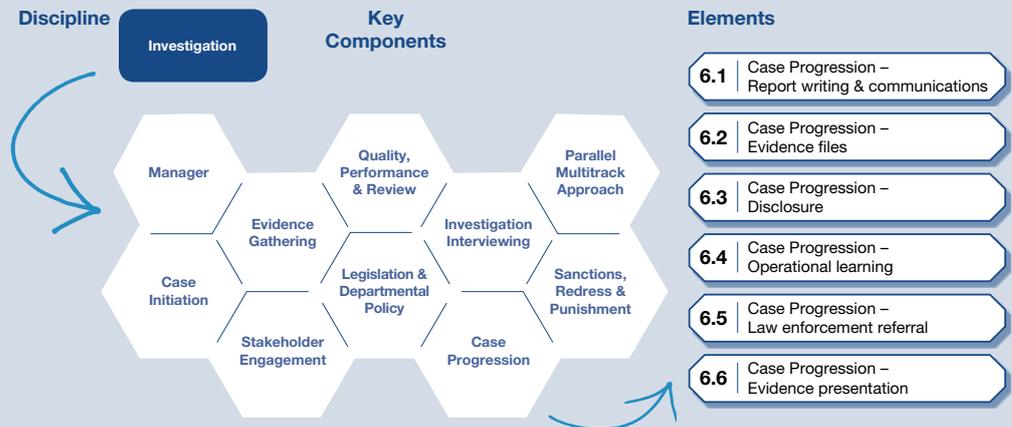
disciplines move beyond the traditional focus on investigation, to incorporate other areas of counter fraud activity, such as risk assessment, prevention and cyber-fraud.

Built upon these standards, the GCFP enables:

- organisations to understand the skills in counter fraud;
- the development of discipline-specific training; and
- members to self-assess against a variety of counter fraud skill sets.

The GCFP will help all public sector organisations understand what building counter fraud capability looks like, as they will be able to work from a common structure and body of knowledge.

Each Discipline breaks down into Key Components, and then individual Elements, against which members can self-assess.



There are 10 Core Disciplines and 5 Sub-Disciplines in the counter fraud framework.



## A PROFESSION BUILT ON FOUR PRINCIPLES

How we built the profession is just as important as why. Delivering large cross-governmental initiatives is not easy, but the Professionals Board – which oversees the development of the profession – remain committed to four guiding principles:

- 1. Choice** – Appreciating the culture and governance of the public sector, all organisations and individuals have a choice in how they engage with the GCFP. This principle has run right through the profession's development, including how to join.
- 2. Collaboration** – This stretches beyond the 18 organisations represented on the GCFP Board. The profession has had input from over 100 external organisations, through its Cross Sector Advisory Group, Practitioners Advisory Group and Working Groups.
- 3. Empowerment** – Practitioners from the counter fraud community have been involved in shaping the GCFP, and the standards that underpin it. This is their profession; and how it works in five years' time is for them to determine.
- 4. Pace** – As anyone in counter fraud will tell you, there has been a real need for the profession for some time. However, we have not rushed the GCFP's development. We have remained focused on delivering quality products but at a good pace.

## GUIDANCE FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The emphasis on 'collaboration' was paramount, which is why we were keen to work with other sectors from the outset. If you look inside some private sector organisations, such as banks, you'll see a much more sophisticated counter fraud infrastructure. They will all have comprehensive dashboards and a full view of their current fraud risk exposures and how they're addressing them.

In the public sector, we're not quite there yet – but it's where we may be going. This is why the Cross Sector Advisory Group has been such a vital source of challenge, guidance and idea-generation. The group's contribution to the development of the Professional Standards and Competencies is particularly noteworthy. Group members have also helped us think about how the GCFP may one day roll out into other sectors, including the third sector.

## THERE'S A ROLE FOR EVERYONE

It is unrealistic, and undesirable, for every civil servant to be thinking every minute about how to counter fraud. Of course, those not working directly in counter fraud need to focus on the other big challenges facing departments and the wider public sector.

However, dealing with fraud is vital to the future efficiency of our public services and it is the responsibility of every civil servant that our taxpayers' money is spent on those services that are needed the most.

That's why we all have a role to play in the fight against fraud. If I were running any public organisation, I'd want to have that fraud expertise close at hand, with the right capabilities in the organisation to help me understand and counter the fraud threat. I'd also want the organisation's staff to be alert to fraud, to know how to identify it and report it in the right way. And I'd want the organisation's counter fraud specialists to be recognised and their skills advanced, so that they can lead us in this fight.

This is where the public sector is heading, and the launch of the Government Counter Fraud Profession is set to be a key player in helping all public servants and their organisations to stop fraud and protect public services.



# MODERNISING THE GOVERNMENT ESTATE

## A TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

**James Turner**, Deputy Director Strategy & Engagement,  
Office of Government Property, Cabinet Office

# GOVERNMENT ESTATE STRATEGY

Better Estate,  
Better Services,  
Better Government  
July 2018

The Government Estate is made up of hundreds of thousands of assets, from railways, ports, prisons and power stations, to schools, hospitals and health surgeries, job centres, administrative offices, and many more, spread all the around the UK.

The 2018 Government Estate Strategy, published this July, will transform how we use these assets. It contains commitments that not only deliver value for money, but that consider property as a platform for the delivery of government's wider objectives, including delivering the best possible public services, releasing surplus land for housing, reducing the state's carbon footprint, and boosting growth across the UK.

## REDUCING COSTS

In the past, such strategies have concentrated on minimising the expense of running the estate, and been principally concerned with how to reduce costs, an approach that has brought great success.

Since 2014 we have reduced the Government Estate by over 1,000 properties, raising £2 billion in building sales and saving a further £300 million per annum in operating costs. Furthermore, vacant space has been reduced across the central Government Estate by 73%, and is now just a fifth of the average private sector vacancy rate, at 1.5% (private sector average: 7.5%). Additionally, our more modern, sustainable estate now supports the government's wider environmental commitments, with carbon emissions reduced by 33% and paper consumption by 50%.

## FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The latest Government Estate Strategy continues to encourage a smarter, leaner, more fit-for-purpose estate, with a focus on efficiency. This includes introducing a new framework

for assessing the whole-life cost of property – from planning and design, through to construction, operation and decommission – and embedding a new property model through the Government Property Agency (GPA).

The GPA is a new executive agency of the Cabinet Office, set up to provide professional property asset management services across central government's general purpose estate. It will make the administrative estate operate more effectively by replacing older, less efficient, buildings with purpose-built offices. This will reduce the number of office buildings in which central government operates from 800 to around 200, while enabling the Civil Service to work more effectively together, with Government Hubs housing a number of departments under one roof. This model is expected to deliver £3.6 billion of savings over 20 years, of which £2.5 billion is expected to be delivered by the Hubs programme.

## TRANSFORMING HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS

However, the value of our estate lies in more than bricks and mortar, and plans for it aim to deliver more than simply greater efficiency. The strategy shows how the estate can be a powerful catalyst for transforming, for the better, the way that government works – both in how its services reach the public, and in how its own civil servants work. It also sets out how we can use the power of our estate to energise the housing market, create supportive infrastructure and release surplus land for house building.

The estate exists to support government activity – much of which involves public-facing services. The way in which we deliver these services is changing, thanks to new technology, changing lifestyles and the evolving needs of the population. Our estate itself needs to change

to reflect this. For example, the NHS Five Year Forward View set out plans to ease pressure on A&E and acute hospital services by providing more services in the community. Changes to the NHS estate to house such services are fundamental to making that happen. Elsewhere, introducing technology and online services into our justice system means we will be less reliant on physical court buildings in the future. And the introduction of Universal Credit means Jobcentres are increasingly co-locating with councils to deliver a more integrated service for customers.

## BOOSTING LOCAL GROWTH

Decisions on where to locate government land, buildings and civil servants, and the type of working environment we offer, also have the power to transform places and services, and boost local growth, creating great places to work and helping deliver a Brilliant Civil Service.

The Civil Service is too London-centric. We plan to tackle this through the Places for Growth Programme. The programme will work with departments and public bodies to relocate up to a thousand public sector posts out of London and South East England to all of the nations and regions of the United Kingdom by 2022. This will be followed by thousands more posts, including at senior grades, by 2030.

As outlined in the Industrial Strategy White Paper, we want jobs to go to cities that have the existing skills and capacity to enable both organisations and the destination locations to flourish and better connect the relevant parts of government with local economies. This will help boost local growth and use our estate as a driver to ensure that the Civil Service more closely reflects and connects with the people and communities it serves. We will support the development of at least three specialist clusters in cities across the UK by 2022.

**LOCATIONS FOR FUTURE GOVERNMENT HUBS**



Erskine House, Belfast



Central Square, Cardiff



**BECOMING LESS LONDON-CENTRIC**

In relocating roles across the whole of the UK, properly clustered around the required skills and similar roles, we will also help to ensure the creation of sustainable career paths for civil servants, and offer career progression into senior roles, without their having to be based in London.

By the end of this Parliament, under the Government Hubs scheme, the GPA will establish a network of around 20 multi-agency hubs across the UK. For example, New Waverley, in Edinburgh, will bring together around 2,900 UK Government civil servants who work in Scotland, consolidating the UK Government estate in modern office space with ministerial and press facilities. In Wales, Central Square, Cardiff, will accommodate over 4,000 public servants from several different UK Government departments. And in Northern Ireland, Erskine House, Belfast, will ensure that the UK Government remains one of the largest employers in the city.

**SMARTER WORKING - ENABLING PEOPLE**

The hubs will move thousands of civil servants into new, fit-for-purpose offices, helping us to both make the working experience of civil servants better and improve service delivery. The hubs will also take advantage of a profound shift in the way the Civil Service will work in the future, in environments that embrace smarter working practices and technology that equip and enable the person, rather than the office. This in turn will allow for greater diversity in our workforce and career paths – and a focus on cross-department collaboration in activities such as analysis, communications and business support.



These policies will also help deliver our longer-term ambition of a Whitehall Campus of no more than 20 efficient, fit-for purpose buildings (reduced from 65 now). We see this operating as a single entity, with flexible space, shared services and – where possible – integrated security systems, including a common access pass. We will also work with government partners to enhance the experience of the many thousands each year who visit and work in Whitehall, making it more welcoming, more secure and more accessible for all.

We are aware that the future is hard to predict. Overall Civil Service numbers, having fallen in recent years, have risen again as part of our preparations for exiting the European Union, which will also see us repatriating jobs from Brussels and creating new jobs in the UK. This is why it is critical that we continue to manage the overall asset portfolio efficiently and flexibly, so that we can contract or expand the supply of property as demand changes.

### **MORE JOINED-UP SERVICES**

And we're not just focusing on the Government Estate. The public wants to see more joined-up public services. Through the One Public Estate programme we are supporting bodies across the public sector to collaborate on ambitious property-led schemes. This programme, delivered in partnership with the Local Government Association, supports government and local bodies to bring services together under one roof. This will drive better collaboration and support the delivery of £615 million in capital receipts, a target of £158 million in running-cost savings, land for 25,000 homes, and 44,000 jobs by 2020. This is both more cost-efficient and works to break down organisational barriers and provide a more integrated, accessible service to the public.

It has long been our ambition to create a 'digital estate' – a complete and secure public data record of our property assets that is open and transparent and can be used to promote more strategic decision-making. By the end of this Parliament, this will be made possible through the creation of a Digital National Asset Register. This will join up data from hundreds of entities under one geospatial umbrella, providing a strategic view of all public estate data, and helping to ensure that public services are provided where they are most needed.

We will also continue to drive efficiency by expanding reporting of key performance metrics in the annual State of The Estate Report. For the first time, this will include laboratories, job centres, courts and storage buildings.

We cannot fulfil our commitments without a highly motivated, skilled and diverse Government Property Profession (GPP). The 5,000 people working in government property play a major role in policies that impact on the delivery of government priorities. The strategy will ensure that the GPP gives them the support they need to flourish in their careers.

### **AN ESTATE THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE**

As custodians of the strategy, the OGP in the Cabinet Office will work with departments, their arms-length bodies and other cross-government functions, to ensure their plans dovetail with the strategy – enabling service delivery while still serving as a vehicle for change. This, alongside the work of the GPA, will allow a greater commercial focus and more consistent and professional management across the estate.

To deliver the best possible services we need an estate that is fit for purpose and built around the service need. The commitments in the Estate Strategy are designed to deliver a Government Estate that truly works for everyone – a Public Estate for Public Benefit.

### **MOJ NATIONAL**

Successive programmes run by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to maximise the efficiency of its estate have resulted in the disposal of over half of its office estate and a saving of around £50 million per annum in running costs and £100 million in capital receipts.

In line with the Government Estate Strategy, the department has continued to transform not just its estate but the way it works. Under 'MoJ National' it has moved away from a single London HQ and adopted a four-headquarters model (102 Petty France, Canary Wharf, Croydon and Leeds) all operating a desk ratio of 6 desks to every 10 FTE (full-time equivalent) employees.

The goal of MoJ National is to become a de-centralised, yet connected, national organisation. This will be achieved by maximising the efficiency of the space it retains through modern workplace design and technology, and smarter working principles. It is also reducing the pressure on its workspaces, and creating an attractive offer for employees, by providing places to work closer to home through a commuter hubs programme.

In reducing its Petty France footprint, the MoJ has created a multi-tenant government hub, which already includes the Office for Budget Responsibility, the Charities Commission and the Crown Prosecution Service. This has helped to unlock a complex property chain and enable government to generate estimated annual savings of £65 million, through the release of seven central London properties

# THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT

## PUTTING THE UK IN THE DRIVING SEAT

**Iain Forbes**, Head of the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, Department for Transport and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

In 1908 Wilbur Wright, reflected on the difficulty of predicting the future of transport:

“Scarcely ten years ago, all hope of flying had almost been abandoned; even the most convinced had become doubtful, and I confess that, in 1901, I said to my brother Orville that men would not fly for 50 years. Two years later, we ourselves were making flights.”

The advent of commercial aviation transformed the world. But, in its early days, planning for that transformation and its consequences – both those that were foreseeable and those that weren’t – must have been tough.

Transport is on the cusp of a similar transformation right now, with self-driving cars promising radical improvements in the safety, efficiency and accessibility of the way we live, work and travel. However, that change will bring with it a similar array of issues – legal, moral and technical. One key question for government is, how do you set a regulatory framework for a technology that doesn’t yet exist?

That is one of the questions facing my team – the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CCAV) – as part of our work to ensure the UK is at the forefront of the safe development and deployment of self-driving vehicles.

### A BIG CHANGE

If you live near Greenwich, Coventry, Bristol, Oxford or Milton Keynes, you may already have seen some of the vehicles in government-funded trials, winding their way through traffic, navigating using a sophisticated combination of lasers, cameras and some very clever software developed by UK researchers.

These vehicles are still learning, but in time this technology could trigger as big a change in how we get around as the arrival of the motor car in the early 20th century. Self-driving cars could reduce the number of collisions on our roads, help disadvantaged groups by increasing access to road transport, and improve the experience of travel for users. The technology is right at the centre of the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge in the Government’s Industrial Strategy, as the companies that successfully commercialise their research in this field will unlock significant economic opportunities.

### CUTTING EDGE BRITISH DEVELOPMENT

While US companies may get more media attention, British companies and universities are at the cutting edge of this emerging field. Some of the world’s brightest and best in software engineering are working on this technology

here in the UK. What’s unusual about the UK programme is the way in which it is successfully bringing together different players to work together to understand what the technology might mean for their future strategy.

Household names from the automotive sector and tech spin-outs from universities are developing new vehicles and new control systems; insurance companies and law firms are thinking about the enabling environment; and city authorities are thinking through what the technology could do to help them serve their citizens. The industrial opportunity could be huge. One estimate values the global market for self-driving vehicles at £907 billion by 2035.

### REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

We won’t be able to get there, however, without a regulatory framework to enable the technology to be used safely on UK roads, especially when interacting with other road users. People won’t feel comfortable, either, using self-driving cars or sharing the road if they haven’t been certified as safe; and industry



won't feel comfortable with the massive investments necessary to develop the technology without a clear route to market.

Designing this framework is no small job. It turns out that 'the driver' is a fairly important concept in law relating to road vehicles! Once you start to think through the areas of law touched by the technology, the scale of the task quickly becomes clear. What reforms might be needed for vehicle safety approvals? For motor insurance? For taxi licensing? For criminal liability? Where to start?

Helpfully, CCAV is a joint unit of two different ministries – the Department for Transport and the Department for

Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. We run the government's regulatory programme, but we also work with Innovate UK to oversee the £250 million the government has committed for R&D and test sites to accelerate the safe development of the technology.

### **BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION**

We are one of a growing number of joint units that have sprung up in recent years. You will find similar teams in policy areas

where there is a greater than normal case for cross-departmental working.

For us, this means that the people working on regulatory reform have a direct link into the companies working on the technology. This close engagement has helped to both inform the approach we have taken and prioritise safety as the underlying principle through the progression of the technology.

In a nutshell, our view is that there are some problems that you can solve through



creating new regulations; there are some problems you don't need to solve through new regulations (or at least not yet); and there are some problems you can create through regulation and rules. We aim to focus ruthlessly on the first, keep an eye on the second, and avoid the third.

### WHAT PROBLEMS CAN YOU SOLVE?

A couple of years ago we picked motor insurance as one of our first areas of focus. In the UK, the driver's use of the vehicle, rather than the vehicle itself, is insured. In a world of self-driving vehicle technology, this could cause messy legal wrangles if there was a crash while a vehicle was driving in automated mode.

Our R&D programme had given UK industry enough insight to know that setting out a framework to address this

would be possible, and that clarity would help both vehicle manufacturers and the insurance industry.

Perhaps surprisingly, the insurance industry asked the government to force them to pay out claims – not necessarily something you would expect them to do!

Their proposal was that when there is a crash involving a self-driving vehicle driving in automated mode, the insurance company that issued this policy should have first instance liability. In other words, where an innocent party experiences harm, the insurance company should be compelled to pay the claim. In return, they suggested, they should have strengthened rights to reclaim the damages from the party that was ultimately

responsible, whether that is the manufacturer, or a supplier, or someone else.

### WORLD FIRST

This was a neat solution to a tricky problem. Fast forward to July this year, and Parliament passed an Act to set out a new framework for motor insurance for self-driving vehicles. We believe this is a world first.

Over the next few years we will be working with both the English and Welsh, and Scottish Law Commissions to keep pace with the technology and introduce the right rules at the right time. If we get it right, we have every chance of putting the UK safely in the driving seat of this new and exciting technology.



## GOVERNMENT-FUNDED RESEARCH INTO SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES

Building on the UK's regulatory and business environment, the government is investing more than £250 million into R&D and testing infrastructure for self-driving vehicles to allow private sector innovation to flourish.

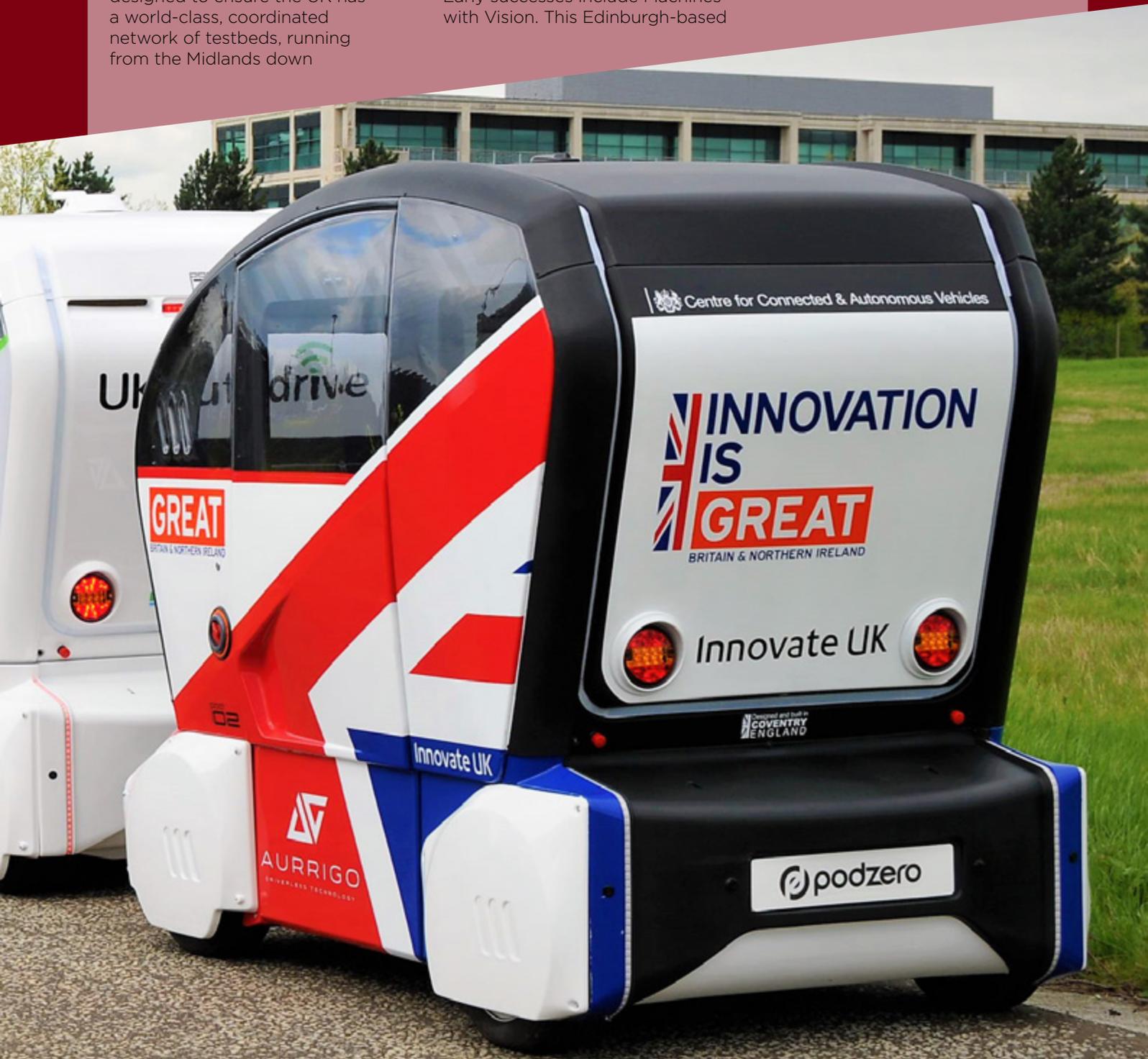
You can already trial self-driving vehicles on any public road in the UK under a Code of Practice published in 2015. Investment in the industry since then has been designed to ensure the UK has a world-class, coordinated network of testbeds, running from the Midlands down

to London, that is easy to access for national and international organisations.

The R&D programme now has more than 70 live research projects, involving more than 200 organisations. These projects are truly collaborative, with vehicle manufacturers and technology companies working with universities and local authorities and other companies in adjacent sectors such as telecommunications, insurance and design.

Early successes include Machines with Vision. This Edinburgh-based

technology company, founded in 2016, secured £122,000 of government funding. Alongside some angel investment, this provided start-up capital to develop a new method for vehicle map positioning. This led to another grant, of £768,000, to work with Jaguar Land Rover and the University of Durham to develop the technology further. The technology has now hit the market, with Deutsche Bahn recently becoming Machines with Vision's first commercial customer.



# DELIVERING JUSTICE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

**Susan Acland-Hood**, CEO, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Ministry of Justice



One of the most rewarding parts of my job is to read the positive comments from members of the public using our new digital services.

“It’s marvellous, pain-free and less stressful than the paper form.”

“Thank you ever so much for making this process so much less painful than it could have been. I found it very easy as an autistic person to get support from the team when I had questions.”

This feedback to our new online divorce service, rolled out earlier this year, illustrates the core purpose of our ambitious programme - to shape our justice system around the needs of those who use it.

In doing so, we are transforming how we work to provide better, more accessible justice for all.

## WHY IS CHANGE NEEDED?

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales - and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. We handle about four million cases a year, operate from 345 court and tribunal buildings, and there are more than 16,000 people, most of whom are frontline, operational staff, working for the service.

Our people are deeply committed to fair and efficient administration of justice. But the processes they work with are often labour-intensive and heavily reliant on paper (or old legacy systems that need a lot of re-keying), producing error, duplication and inefficiency.

Our courts and tribunals system has also been over-reliant on physical, face-to-face court and tribunal hearings, even for straightforward matters. More importantly, the justice system can sometimes feel complicated, forbidding, and indifferent to the time and trouble of those who use it. At its worst, this can hinder access to justice – a fundamental right for us all.

## DELIVERING CHANGE

The reform programme was launched in 2016 with a joint statement from the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals. It said:

“The reforms will [combine]... our respected traditions with the enabling power of technology. The vision is to modernise and upgrade our justice system so that it works even better for everyone, from judges and legal professionals, to witnesses, litigants and the vulnerable victims of crime.”

The programme has been designed around three fundamental tenets:

- First, that we can move work out of physical courts that doesn’t need to be done there, and – in doing so – make justice more accessible.
- Second, that we can free-up judicial time through better digital tools that eliminate tasks that judges don’t need to do (like chasing down submissions from parties to a case).
- Third, that we can cut waste, inconvenience, dissatisfaction and overheads by creating systems and processes that are truly designed around the people who need and use them - both citizens and our own staff.

The programme is ambitious. There are more than 50 distinct projects across all jurisdictions (in criminal, civil, family and tribunals), and we are investing more than £1 billion over six years.

We are developing the system incrementally, using agile methods; and proceeding in small blocks allows us to run pilots with real users quickly, refining and improving as necessary, without risking a big failure. We are also building many common components to be re-used across different areas.

And we are delivering new services to those who need to use the justice system.

Our online divorce service (which attracted the positive feedback above) was made available after several months of controlled testing and development. More than 11,000 applications were made in its first four months of operation – more than half of all applications received.

Better design provides a simpler, speedier application process to the public and cuts waste. Almost half of paper-based divorce application forms had to be returned, because they contained simple mistakes caused by a form that was complicated and hard to fill in. The new service has cut that error rate to less than 1%.

Since the end of March, our Civil Money Claims service has enabled the wider public to make, defend, and settle money claims under £10,000 online. More than 20,000 claims were made in its first five months of operation, with user satisfaction rates currently at 88%.

More online services are being introduced to help the public, making it easier to seek probate and to appeal decisions on welfare payments. Meanwhile, in the criminal justice system, 2,000 online pleas are now made weekly via our online Make a Plea tool for minor traffic offences – and this has been extended to fare evasion cases with Transport for London.

## CHALLENGES

This is a large-scale programme of change and the National Audit Office has noted its ambitious scale. We must work hard to maintain our pace and momentum while taking the time to communicate, consult and bring people with us.

Many parts of the programme are uncontroversial – the challenge is execution rather than principle. But others raise questions.

We have hundreds of buildings arranged in a patchwork that is a legacy of several predecessor organisations; and many are under-used. We expect to need fewer of them in future, but closing courts will always be controversial, and needs careful thought and consultation.

When it comes to change to the criminal justice system, we are part of a much wider ecosystem (indeed, our digital change here is being taken forward jointly with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service). The criminal system also comes with the highest possible stakes, so change needs to be thoughtful and well-evaluated.

Moving to more digital working also raises concerns about digital exclusion, so we are adding new routes rather than mandating them. New ways of giving evidence and conducting hearings – including video and ‘continuous online hearings’ – cannot come too quickly for some (early tests show that many users prefer them). But they must also be used for the right kinds of case and individual, with the judge always determining the approach that is in the best interests of justice.

The deep and fundamental principle of open justice – that justice must be seen to be done – needs to be preserved and enhanced. However, it needs to be given practical effect differently in a world where some hearings may be online or over video.

And all of this is part of a ‘refit at sea’ – in other words, making changes to a system that also needs to carry on delivering justice effectively every day. One that faces all the usual changes and pressures, including wide fluctuations in workload in many parts of the system.

## WHAT NEXT?

By January 2019, our early services, all of which are now available to the public, will be operating at scale, and we’ll be well under way with the next set of projects (including, for example, reform of the public family law system).

To underpin this, we will be fundamentally changing the way we work. This will mean bigger structural changes, such as moving increasing numbers of staff to work in new national courts and tribunals service centres.

These centres will administer the system more coherently and provide expert support and guidance to the public, especially those who struggle to use the justice system. This means a lot of change for our own staff, and continuing to work closely with them on reform is essential.

Our internal engagement programme – ‘One Conversation’ – allows our staff to ask questions and think about what reform means to them. We can’t eliminate the anxiety that comes from change, but we can give opportunities to understand and be part of this change.

More widely, we need to continue to put the citizen at the heart of everything we do, user-testing with real people everything we develop. But we also know we need to do more to communicate and invite contributions from others – including lawyers and others who work in the courts and tribunals.

We have, therefore, ramped up our work on this to satisfy an increasing demand for information, engagement and contact. We are using roadshows, webinars, blogs, Twitter, working groups and written material to help stakeholders interact with us, as well as using ‘discovery’ phases of each project to engage people directly in co-creating new services. But there’s always more we could be doing.

## CONCLUSION

So, while we are making good progress, there is still a long way to go to deliver the programme as a whole. The public has responded positively to the new digital services we are introducing. However, real challenges remain, with more to do – for example – to ensure legal professionals and all those working within the system get a meaningful chance to contribute.

It’s hard work. But the prize of building a justice system that is more accessible, more straightforward and more efficient for all is one worth striving for.



# SPOTLIGHT: DEVELOPING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW



## MY EXPERIENCE ON THE GDS ACADEMY INTERNSHIP: FIONA LINNARD

I'm Fiona Linnard, and I'm about to go into the final year of my History degree at the University of Leeds. I'm also one of six interns coming to the end of an 8-week internship with the Government Digital Service (GDS) Academy in Leeds.

One of the things that makes the internship unique, and one of my favourite things about it, is the range of tasks and roles we've been given. After a fortnight in the GDS Academy learning 'Agile' ways of working – an umbrella term, which covers forward-thinking methods of project management – we started a four-week placement with various teams in the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). For this, I headed upstairs to start with Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI).

With the SMI team, I was fortunate enough to have sessions with everyone from content designers to web developers and product owners, which meant I got to see the mechanics of creating a digital service from every angle.

In many ways the placement surprised me. Any preconceptions I had of the Civil Service being archaic and using the oldest technology disintegrated. Services were constantly being rethought and improved, and the nature of 'sprints' meant that as often as every few weeks a better, more user-friendly version of the product was produced. Sprints, which come under the 'scrum' framework, were something I'd learnt about in my two weeks at the GDS Academy.

My time with the SMI team has challenged my way of thinking and how I tackle problems in everyday life. Seeing the theory we learnt in the GDS Academy applied in the workplace cemented my understanding, which in turn has made me rethink the traditional 'waterfall' approach to developing projects. I look forward to applying the transferrable skills I acquired in the final project to my university work and beyond.

## WHY I JOINED THE HIGH POTENTIAL PROGRAMME: ROB KENT-SMITH

The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) is transforming, embracing new technology and data sources to help Britain make better decisions. To do this, it's important that our leaders have the skills to inspire and lead people through change. Improving my skills in this area and building a strong network across the office were fundamental in my decision to apply for the UKSA High Potential Programme (HPP).

The programme, aimed at Grade 7 and Grade 6 staff, had three primary drivers:

1. Equipping a cohort with the necessary skills to help support our transformation and change agenda.
2. Growing our leadership capability to achieve transformation.
3. Promoting diversity of thought.

The pilot programme was delivered with the Whitehall & Industry Group (WIG) and followed a blended learning approach, incorporating: three residential events; two organisational insight visits (to Oracle and Eversheds); masterclasses; mentoring from senior civil servants; and delivery of a business change project.

The formal feedback from the programme was overwhelmingly positive. For me, there is a wide range of tangible changes I can make in my approach as a leader. Above all, I have a greater self-awareness and challenge the way I do things more ('reflexivity', in leadership speak!). This has led me to change how I behave in challenging situations, and in turn has enabled me to build better relationships, both in the workplace and in my personal life.

While sessions with an acting coach were outside the group's comfort zone, we have all benefited from an increase in our personal presence and effectiveness in delivering challenging messages. This learning has been especially valuable to me, as I am currently leading an SCS 1 post responsible for implementing a once in a generation transformation of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistics.

Of course, the most valuable part of the experience has been the diverse network of support I have built up – I don't hesitate to pick up the phone or drop by when I need some advice or a friendly face!

To find out more about the GDS Academy internships please email [gds.academy@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk](mailto:gds.academy@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk). To find out more about GDS Academy courses, please visit their website: [gov.uk/gdsacademy](http://gov.uk/gdsacademy).

# DODGING THE ICEBERGS - HOW TO MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE AGILE

**Charlene Chang**, Senior Director, Transformation, Public Service Division, Singapore & **Jalees Mohammed**, Senior Assistant Director, Transformation, Public Service Division, Singapore



*Singapore public service 'makeathon' in progress*

Large, complex structures are not designed to move quickly and be 'agile'. In 1912, the RMS Titanic failed to course-correct in time and collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic, resulting in over 1,500 casualties. The sheer mass of something so large, combined with its established momentum, results in an inertial force that makes it difficult to shift gears and change direction.

The same principle can be applied to large groups of people working together in a bureaucracy. In his book *Bureaucracy*, James Q. Wilson notes that government agencies are averse to taking risks, because they are given specific, clear and unquestionable goals. This means large numbers of public officers (mass), combined with an established rhythm or momentum (norms and cultures), that results in a great reluctance to change course 'in the way things are done'.

### WHY THE PUBLIC SECTOR NEEDS TO BE MORE AGILE

This inertia and the resistance of government agencies to change is untenable today. The accelerating pace of technology and the widespread use of artificial intelligence and data to provide anticipatory products and services to consumers, increases their expectations of public services. The public sector has a monopoly over public services, but comparisons with private sector services are unavoidable, and the trust between citizens and government is at stake if the latter consistently falls short.

### THE SINGAPORE CONTEXT

In Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said that "the world around us is changing very quickly, the competition has become stiffer."<sup>1</sup> Minister of Finance Heng Swee Keat remarked that "our ship of state is a small boat in a turbulent ocean."<sup>2</sup> Several advanced economies, such as the US and UK, have adopted a more inward-facing stance in recent years, owing to domestic pressures. Meanwhile, key trading partners the US and China are engaged in a trade war that will affect small economies like Singapore.

The 'fourth industrial revolution', characterised by data, artificial intelligence and all things digital, is already upon us, forcing industries to rethink their business models.

Meanwhile, our population is ageing, which will lead to a significant increase in healthcare and social expenditure. This will also mean a shrinking resident workforce, a tightened labour market and economic slowdown – unless we do something about it. Singapore is also among the most diverse countries in the world, so, harmony and mutual understanding are absolutely essential for stability and well-being.

In essence, the need to innovate and, at the same time, maintain operational excellence, weighs heavily on a small country that needs constantly to find ways and means to stay afloat in a volatile global economy.

### EXPERIMENTATION CULTURE

How do you keep a 145,000-strong public service nimble? The answer is to create a culture of experimentation and entrepreneurship, so that every public officer can make a difference in his or her area of work.

The Singapore Public Service has a rich history of promoting continuous improvement and innovation. Under the Public Service 21 movement in the mid-1990s, the Staff Suggestion Scheme (SSS) and Work Improvement Teams (WITs) were set up as platforms for all public officers to take part in continuous improvement.<sup>3</sup>

SSS gave individual officers a platform to suggest workplace improvements; and WITs improved workplace productivity by giving officers the tools, such as Six Sigma, to improve work processes.

Leaders were expected to support these platforms, and agencies to report their participation rates to the Public Service Division (PSD). Every officer was required to be a member of a WIT and offer suggestions for improving work processes as part of the SSS.

### MAKEATHONS

Over the years, we evolved our approaches to embedding innovation among our public officers. In 2012, we replaced WITs and SSS with new ways of promoting innovation, such as makeathons<sup>4</sup> and hackathons. These events bring together public officers and citizens to define problem statements,

1 PM Lee Hsien Loong's speech at Keppel Corporation's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner, 3 August 2018.

2 Budget Speech, 2018.

3 WITs was based on the belief that "when people get together, ideas grow, people learn, things happen and good results come". It aimed to institutionalise team-based effort in improving work processes using a standardised set of thinking and discussion tools. SSS was based on the premise that officers "want to and are able to make a positive difference in their work", regardless of their place in the organisational hierarchy.

4 The term "makeathon" is inspired by the word "hackathon". Whereas a hackathon can be described as a "problem-focused computer programming event" or a "contest to pitch, programme and present instances of prototype digital innovation", a makeathon has a broader scope, beyond digital innovation. It is an innovation workshop that brings together public officers (and citizens) to develop ideas that answer a challenge question or questions.

interview stakeholders and ‘make’ or ‘hack’ prototype solutions to problems. The prototypes are then refined through user-testing and mini-interviews to shape what a final product might look like.

Between 2013 and 2015, makeathons were conducted by different public agencies on topics such as designing libraries of the future and reducing waste at large-scale events. Agencies have also run public hackathons to generate IT solutions. The largest to date, Hackathon@SG 2015, supported by 18 public agencies, saw 1,100 participants build solutions for healthcare, urban living, city planning and public services.

Makeathons held across the whole of government are more recent. They focus on addressing key public service priorities that cut across agency boundaries. PSD organised two such makeathons in 2016, with these challenges:

- How might we make the Public Service more vibrant and productive?
- How might we create a Public Service that officers are proud to be a part of and can deliver seamlessly?

They attracted more than 100 public officers and generated useful ideas. One was for a ‘marketplace’ of professional skills that public officers could share with agencies that needed skills such as event hosting or graphic design on an ad-hoc basis. The aim was to tap into officers’

talents and willingness to go the extra mile, instead of purchasing services from vendors.

Following the Public Service Conference 2017’s message to directors to “Think Big, Start Small and Act Fast”, PSD organised a Directors’ Makeathon in November 2017, to:

- role-model new behaviours for collaboration across agency boundaries; and
- rally directors to contribute solutions to an issue of national importance.

The challenge statement for the makeathon was, “How might we realise Singapore’s Smart Nation vision, to support better living, stronger communities and create opportunities for all?” In all, 29 directors from 21 agencies participated, interviewing citizens in the Tampines area of Singapore, and coming up with ideas. One



was for a customisable mobile phone app, activated by dialect-friendly voice commands, that senior citizens could use to track their health and diet and locate social activities nearby.

Makeathons tightened the nexus between ideas, core work and implementation. Some makeathons focused on key government priorities that cut across agency boundaries, and the solutions were assessed by senior public sector leaders. This provided officers with a platform from which to work on problem statements and focus on implementing ideas. They learnt to adopt a citizen-centric approach in scoping problem statements and developing solutions iteratively.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE INNOVATION CHALLENGE**

The Public Service Innovation Challenge (PSIC), created in 2017, brings officers together across agencies to co-create solutions and get funding for experiments. This addressed public officers' feedback that there could be more support to encourage innovation and bypass tedious approval processes.

The Innovation Challenge provides seed funding of up to \$70,000 for experiments with new ideas or prototypes. For the Challenge's first two open calls, 305 officers have submitted over 100 ideas. Two that have been implemented and scaled across different agencies are: a simple, time-saving digital application that can aggregate news and social media information on specific topics; and an easy-to-use 'form builder' for converting paper forms into simple electronic ones that can be embedded in government websites, avoiding expensive solutions.

Makeathons and the PSIC have had a real impact in generating quick, useful solutions – other agencies have begun conducting their own makeathons and challenges to meet specific needs.

### **INNOVATION LAB**

PSD's Innovation Lab was set up in 2016 to provide consultancy and coaching in three mindsets for Public Service Innovation:

- 'empathy', for all stakeholders to better diagnose issues;
- 'collaboration', across agency/department silos and with all stakeholders for holistic outcomes; and

- 'experimentation', to try ideas, test assumptions and gain evidence-based validation for proposals.

The Lab builds an innovative culture by injecting new ways of thinking and uncovering new insights. An example of its impact is found in its consultancy with the National Library Board. The Lab facilitated discussions and identified the board's aspiration for a library of the future. A key component of the intervention was to help the board identify 'pain points' for customers using library services. The Lab then focused on identifying the service improvements, capabilities and technology tools required to provide visitors with an experience that matched their aspirations.

Over the last four years, the Innovation Lab developed an innovation framework to cultivate an empathetic, collaborative, experimental, inquisitive and skilled Public Service to, in turn, generate repeated innovative successes. Equipped with a common mindset, language and suite of innovative tools through the sharing of best practices in the innovation framework, public officers with varying experience in innovation can now ignite it to resolve problems.



The Public Service Innovation Process Framework (PSIPF) consists of disciplines including behavioural insights, business process re-engineering, data analytics, design thinking, organisational development, scenario planning, and systems thinking, blended to help deliver better outcomes for citizens.

This framework (see graphic below) is not a linear process. One can start anywhere in the process and iterate, but completing the key steps is recommended to ensure consistent and holistic outcomes. The framework is also an open-source guide, and is not exhaustive or prescriptive.

### THE TAMPINES HUB

The Public Service Centre of our Tampines hub was the result of successful innovation guided by the PSIPF. The service concept, using the conceptual service model, brought six service agencies under one roof: those that oversee community and social cohesion, housing issues, job training and job placements, other social services (such as financial help), and sports activities.

To help visualise the real-life issues this model might face, a full mock-up of the Public Service Centre was created for the project team to simulate its processes in various scenarios. Scripts were written

for volunteers to role-play real customers, so that they could stress-test the actual service centre. Through this low-resolution prototype, the team was able to gain valuable insights and improve its processes and service model.

### UNION PARTNERSHIP

PSD partnered with the Amalgamated Union of Public Employees and the Ministry of Education to better understand the challenges faced by more than 2,000 Operations Support Officers (OSOs), many of whom were not confident conversing in English. Guided by the PSIPF, the project team conducted a visual mapping exercise to describe a day in the working lives of OSOs and identify the 'pain points'. The team also sat the national Workplace Literacy and Numeracy Test (mandatory for OSO promotion) and found it to be irrelevant to OSOs' job scope.

The data produced by this research, coupled with empathy, gives the team the information

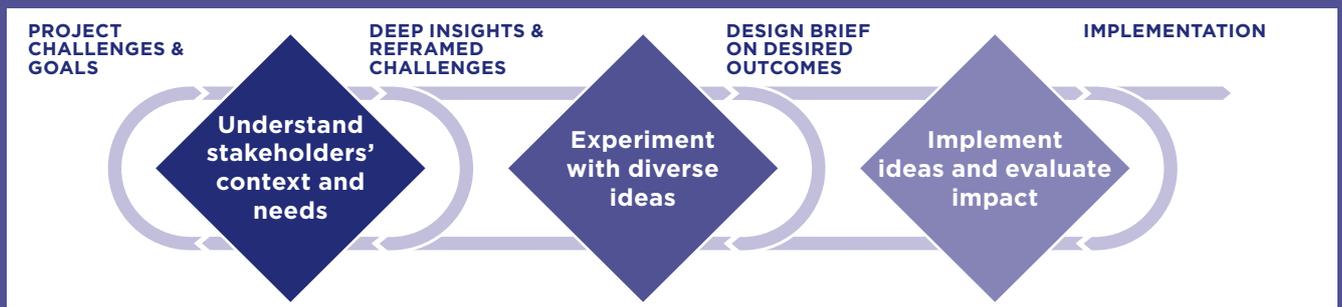
to push boundaries and deliver policy changes to the benefit of officers' careers, skills and salaries.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2019, we will be experimenting with an improved version of WITS. Every public agency will be invited to examine their workplace processes and the citizen's experience when using public services, and then to re-engineer those processes to save time. We will be setting a common and measurable goal of hours saved through streamlined processes or reduced manpower, to energise and mobilise the Singapore Public Service.



## THE PUBLIC SERVICE INNOVATION FRAMEWORK



## AIDS TO INNOVATION: TOP TIPS

- **Dedicate time and resources for innovation.** The 'kick-off' session for the Innovation Challenge's first open call brought more than 100 officers together to share ideas, form teams and pitch to a panel of judges, and led to 50 ideas.
- **Leadership support is critical.** Innovation directors need to be influential, resourceful and have direct links to their agency head to be effective and drive a culture of innovation. For their part, officers often simply require permission and support to conduct an experiment, rather than a large amount of funding. For innovations to be implemented, managers, especially middle managers, need to be open to new ideas from below or from outside their organisations.
- **A robust process is important to scale good ideas across government.** Good ideas from officers can only go so far without leadership support and resources. A robust process for selecting ideas to pursue and then scaling them up is critical, especially for projects without clear agency owners.
- **Innovation need not be expensive and protracted.** Small amounts of funding (\$500 for the Innovation Challenge's lowest tier) and a predefined period of three months proved effective in giving officers confidence and urgency to create a workable product.
- **Be bold, fail fast, always learn.** With a clear goal in mind, officers take calculated risks and constantly learn from user-feedback and minor setbacks.
- **Cultivate new sensibilities for innovation.** Innovation requires constant challenging of assumptions and questioning of how something could be enhanced. The Directors' Makeathon saw participants re-examining their earlier assumptions after interviewing residents in Tampines.
- **Multi-disciplinary teams expand the capacity to devise innovative solutions.** In the Directors' Makeathon, multi-agency teams were creative and resourceful because of their different backgrounds and expertise. Directors also offered resources to other directors keen to run makeathons in their own agencies.
- **Awards incentivise behaviour.** Annual awards celebrating innovation and risk-taking are clear signals that these behaviours are encouraged. Awards also encourage middle managers to support good ideas for doing things differently.

# IN CONVERSATION: **DR MARTIN PARKINSON,** AUSTRALIA'S SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET



Your task is to provide continuity through Brexit and to take a long-term strategic view to shaping post-Brexit Britain



## 1. One of the main challenges facing the UK Civil Service is exiting the European Union. What opportunities do you think will open up to UK public services as part of a post-Brexit Britain?

Through Brexit, the UK is making a conscious decision to withdraw from an economic and broader strategic grouping of nations in which you wield disproportionate weight. I'm not being critical of the decision, but framing it this way makes clear the scale of the challenges it presents and the need to exploit new opportunities for a post-Brexit Britain.

The opportunities for the public sector will of course depend in part on the final terms of Brexit. But several things are clear:

- You'll certainly need to rebuild capability in areas that were EU responsibilities, like your trade negotiating function.
- You'll need to focus on other important issues too, like migration, and creating a regulatory environment and skills pipeline that support business growth in London and across the country.
- Potential negative impacts on GDP growth from any reduction in EU market access can only be offset by finding new markets, so competitiveness will take on added importance. So, issues that currently hold back productivity growth will need to be tackled.
- Your foreign policy – in all its economic, cultural, military and broader strategic dimensions – will clearly need to pivot. While maintaining your EU links, you'll need to build broader regional and global relationships.

I suspect that, as you reorient to a post-Brexit Britain, you might also need to ask whether the current structure of the Civil Service, and its approach to issues, are fit-for-purpose.

Over and above these points, your task is to provide continuity through Brexit and to take a long-term strategic view to shaping post-Brexit Britain.

I imagine things are pretty busy and sometimes confusing right now – but the UK public service also has a tremendous opportunity to help set a foundation blueprint for your country. It's an exciting position to be in.

Australia and the UK have similar institutions, values and economic frameworks, and our public services have a lot to learn from each other. We're operating in different environments, but the bottom line is that we both need to be smart, confident and professional!

## 2. What are the challenges that face public services in a nation not belonging to a natural regional or cultural grouping?

Peter Varghese, who stepped down as Secretary of our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade last year, pointed out that Australia belongs to no natural regional or cultural grouping, and cannot buy or bully our way in the world.

Post-Brexit, Britain may find itself in a similar position.

For Australia, our strategic imperative is to be firm advocates for multilateralism, alongside our bilateral relationships; to be creative and constructive advocates and negotiators in international affairs; and to default to openness, not defensiveness, in engaging with the world.

Every country's foreign policy is guided by, and founded upon, its values and the strength of its economy, society, military capability, and its political systems. We prepared a significant Foreign Policy White Paper in 2017, which concluded that "an outward-looking Australia fully engaged with the world is essential to our future security and prosperity". The value of the White Paper process was to have a realistic picture of our contested world, and to set out basic principles for how we engage.

One of the key challenges for us, whether in Australia, the UK or

other democracies, is to integrate economic and broader strategic aspects of foreign policy. Too often we treat them as separate, partly reflecting the siloed nature of our bureaucracies.

Yet, successful foreign policy is based on taking a broad view of our national interest and effectively deploying all aspects of our power – diplomatic, economic, military and cultural.

## 3. We recently featured an article in Civil Service Quarterly that explored the challenge of developing and then delivering public service policy. Is this an issue experienced in Australia, and if so how can we bridge the gap between the two?

I've made clear my concern about a degradation of policy expertise over time in the Australian Public Service.

This is partly about a loss of capability in the outsourcing era. It also reflects the challenge of adapting to policy-making in a very different world, as we grapple with complex, adaptive problems that aren't amenable to simple, top-down solutions. We spend too much time on policy design and not enough on implementation – when you tackle really tough issues like domestic violence or entrenched disadvantage, you've got to spend as much time thinking about the local and delivery elements of policy as you do on the big picture.

I suspect many public services face similar issues.

This is one of the reasons that I recommended our former PM, Malcolm Turnbull, launch a major independent review of the Australian Public Service. The review's job is to make sure we're fit-for-purpose in coming decades, given the pace and scale of the change in the world today. The review is studying the UK's development of a 'policy profession' and the other service professions with interest.

We're rolling out some service-wide measures to lift policy

capability, and agencies are also renewing their own professional development. But we all know how important on-the-job coaching and mentoring are – passing on traditions, insight and guidance is like a capability multiplier.

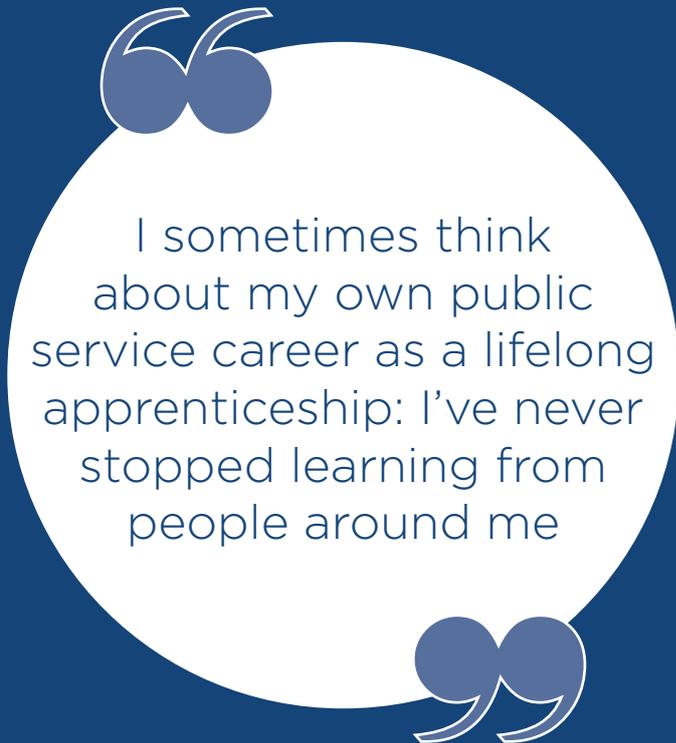
I sometimes think about my own public service career as a lifelong apprenticeship: I've never stopped learning from people around me and hope the Australian Public Service can deliver this for all its members.

socialise and debate political ideas. I can't see this process stopping, and there's every reason to think that technology will dramatically disrupt industries and our labour market over the next 10 or 15 years.

I'm optimistic about this change. When it works well, capitalism is a remarkably effective mechanism for redistributing resources and promoting and adapting to innovation. And successful innovation will drive productivity and provide the potential to lift

But equally we need to get this technological revolution right. Technology can and should make lives and our jobs better, not worse – we have a responsibility to ensure change doesn't alienate groups in society, exacerbate inequality, or leave people behind. One phrase I like is, ensuring that we can 'grow together'.

This is a huge public policy challenge. Whether you work in health, education or welfare, tax, industry policy or regulation, foreign policy, justice or many other domains, over the next decade we'll all grapple with the underlying challenge of how to make the technological revolution something that ensures people's lives are made better, not worse.



**4. The UK Government's Industrial Strategy outlined four 'grand challenges': big data; clean growth; the future of mobility; and meeting the needs of an ageing society. What 'grand challenges' does Australia face, and how is it tackling them?**

We haven't used the 'grand challenge' language in Australia, but I like the way you've structured your thinking on these issues.

Let me talk about one big challenge we face in Australia and around the developed world: making the most of technology.

We've already seen significant technological change over the last decade. It has had an enormous impact on the way we shop, work,

living standards – whether it does improve living standards, though, will depend on the policies we pursue.

It might not seem like it when trying to rip an iPad from your teenager playing Fortnite or spending too much time on Facebook, but technology really can make lives better. There's no better example than the way technology can empower marginalised people, whether it's giving sight to the blind or helping deaf people hear. Technologies like better data analytics and artificial intelligence are already giving us amazing tools to improve government services; and maybe technology can help us start to tackle some of those really intractable social challenges, too.

**5. At the recent Australia UK Leadership Forum in London, you referenced the rising mistrust in government in the developed world. How can we ensure that the public trust policy decisions and ultimately the services they receive?**

Many of you will have seen various publications demonstrating the long-term fall in trust of government and traditional institutions in advanced economies around the world. This is a problem because trust gives policy-makers 'reform currency' – the ability to work with the public in understanding the problem, developing solutions and getting buy-in for their delivery. The most elegant policy solution is no good if people fundamentally don't trust it or the people rolling it out.

In response to evidence of the decline in trust, we often think about how to rebuild it. To me, this is asking the wrong question. Instead, the real question is: how do we earn trust.

I'm really interested in a few aspects of the data on trust. First, people tend to trust the public servants they deal with most, like teachers, police and other people actually delivering local services. Trust in government declines the further away it is. The second point I'm interested in is the degree of trust people place in new online

communities and digital platforms, even after Cambridge Analytica-type scandals.

This data tells me that part of the solution for us is trying to create a public service that feels like its local, personal and responsive to each citizen, even if we can't physically be there all the time. That's why I'm so interested in place-based approaches to policy problems, better use of data to understand both macro trends and micro issues, and the opportunities to develop genuinely responsive and tailored digital services.

## 6. What role do you think the media plays in shaping policy decisions and delivery?

Great question. It's clear the media has always had an enormous influence on policy and the political environment. That's democracy and a free press.

But how this works has changed dramatically. Even 15 or 20 years ago, the 'media' really only comprised a relatively small number of television, radio and newspaper or magazine outlets. Now, the media landscape is so much more diverse. It shapes and filters public opinion in such different ways.

A good way to understand this is looking back, two decades ago, to when the Australian Government introduced a goods and services tax, what we call the GST.

Before announcing the plan, ministers and public servants spent a great deal of time talking to the major economic journalists about it. This meant that the first reporting of the plan was accompanied by in-depth analysis in the major daily newspapers.

While the media reporting didn't shy away from sensationalist issues, it ultimately played an important part in the government's ability to get public understanding and support for the reform.

A government would need a vastly different approach to this sort of reform today, and honestly I think

many governments – and certainly public services – haven't really worked out how to effectively get buy-in for hard reforms in the new media environment. I'm worried by the amount of misinformation peddled online and by the ability for communities of interest to rapidly come together, united only by their opposition to a change. Opposition is legitimate, but social media magnifies the voice and it can be difficult to determine the true extent of disagreement, or to explain the case for change.

There is a lot of criticism of social media, so let me be clear – it's not the fault of social media per se, rather that we haven't worked out how to use it as a tool for positive reform more generally. We can take for granted the freedoms social media provides. Social media gives everyone a voice. A few decades ago you needed a spot at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, but now everyone's phone is their soapbox. This helps hold government to account and is part of the way social forces operate. So, even with all its challenges, I'd prefer free speech and social media over severe restrictions of the net.

## 7. What would your advice be to someone working in policy keen to nurture and reward innovation?

Simple: have a go! You'll be surprised what you can achieve if you have a plan and something to suggest.

At its heart, innovation really just means doing new things or doing old things better. It's about making a difference, whether it's exploiting the latest technology, dreaming up new approaches, or simply pushing back on the status quo.

I know this is easier said than done. There is a great quote from Machiavelli about the difficulty of changing things:

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

He went on to explain that reform has only lukewarm defenders among its advocates, and fierce opposition from those who stand to lose from change.

The antidote to this is good old-fashioned policy work, from understanding the problem and collecting and analysing the evidence, to understanding your political and operating environment and the motivations and interests of stakeholders. You can't advocate change as if you're proving a mathematical equation – you need to appeal to people's heads and their hearts.

And of course, we need a healthy approach to taking risks. While we shouldn't licence recklessness, we need to accept that innovations don't always work and you can't crucify people when things go wrong.

# *A Brilliant Civil Service*

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