

# Our Civil Service

shaping  
our future  
together



As civil servants, we have much to be proud of. We work tirelessly for citizens and ministers, always finding a way to get things done. It is the privilege of public service.



But 'finding a way to get things done' shouldn't be the only way we operate. We must face the future with confidence, knowing that we are going about our work in the best way.

We are responding to some of the biggest peacetime challenges this country has faced: from exiting the European Union to COVID-19.

Our response has shown what is great about our Civil Service. We are passionate about improving citizen's lives. We are willing and able to adapt.

Opportunities arise from challenges and we have a chance to emerge as a stronger, better organisation.

We will face more challenges, that is certain. To overcome them successfully we have to understand the extent of the change needed and be ready to change ourselves.



Whether we're working on existing priorities or facing new ones – decarbonising the economy or getting citizens back into work following COVID-19 – the need for modernisation is clear.

If we improve the way we work, embrace new technologies and improve our culture we can make the best possible difference for citizens across the country and that is why we choose to be civil servants.

Public service is a privilege. It doesn't bring great wealth and it is rarely easy, but every day it offers us the chance to improve lives.

Previous attempts to improve the Civil Service provide us with valuable lessons. We should take note of the successes as well as the failures.

We need to build on those successes and the progress we've made as we renew our ambition.

We must look at the whole system, at every level. From our people and skills to diversity and inclusion. From the tools we have available to the culture we use them in. We must consider where we are: our location, in our careers, in the delivery of our projects.

This is how we can ensure that our Civil Service is a great place for everyone to be. One in which everyone feels valued, fulfilled and supported to do excellent work.

We have great talent within the Civil Service. To widen and deepen our expertise, more rigorous training and smarter incentives are needed.

Making sure that there is equality of opportunity across the UK is a priority of this government.

We will make the Civil Service less London-centric, with roles across the country. Career progression should no longer depend on location.





It is also right that civil servants are closer and more connected to the communities they serve. This will allow us to better understand the experiences of everyone in our society. Local need and context should inform our decisions.

The world is changing fast. Technological advances are happening all the time. To realise the benefits for citizens, the Civil Service should be more open to innovation.

It should make better use of technology and the data that underpin it when designing and implementing policy.

The Civil Service must create a culture in which there is more room for experimentation. This will increase the pace of learning and improvement.

To find the solutions that work best, we should experiment, so that if things fail, they fail fast on a small scale. This will then allow us to iterate at pace.

We know this is possible. We worked at speed and across boundaries to tackle highly specific problems in response to COVID-19. For example, the creation of the Nightingale intensive care facilities, the acceleration of ventilator production and procurement and the rapid design and creation of a job furlough scheme.

COVID-19 gave us a great sense of national purpose. We should now build on this. We need to make working together as one Civil Service the norm and remove the barriers that prevent it.



# What does this mean for me?

By creating an excellent Civil Service today, we ensure the prosperity and happiness of the UK tomorrow. We have a unique opportunity to realise a new, ambitious vision while still retaining the very best of our spirit and achievements so far.

This document invites you to join in building a Civil Service that delivers for citizens. A Civil Service where you can:

- build a successful career regardless of background or location
- reach your full potential and access high quality, relevant training to help you develop expertise and do your job well, whatever role you're in
- try new ways of doing things and be supported and rewarded for doing so

- access the data you need to make good decisions
- use modern technology to deliver a great service and maximise the time available to you to add value
- work together seamlessly as one team across the whole public sector
- use the best of the private, public and voluntary sectors as well as academics and other experts to enhance policy and delivery
- always put citizens at the heart of everything you do, ensuring the services we deliver improve citizen's lives; the thing we care about most.

# A movement for change, shaped by the views of civil servants



This is a change of great scale and ambition. We all have a part to play in achieving it, across all the nations that make up the UK.

Meaningful change relies on a complete picture of what works and what doesn't. This can only be understood by collecting a diverse range of views. Here, we are seeking your views as civil servants but it is also important for us to listen to the opinions of those outside the Civil Service about how we can serve them better.

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## A Movement for Change

This is as much about understanding and retaining the best of what we do as it is about creative new ideas – those things which speak to our core values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity. To give us the greatest chance of success, this must be a collective effort with senior support from both political and Civil Service leadership, from the centre and departments, from policy to the front line.

Now is the time to be ambitious.

If you've felt frustrated by the way things work, held back or lacked the traction you need to try a new idea, now is the time to speak up.

Your views are valuable. They will shape the approach. In fact, some of you helped to develop this document by sharing your thoughts through surveys, engagement events and workshops. These engagement opportunities will continue.

A recent survey showed that collaboration across teams, accessing learning and development, poor communication and outdated infrastructure are stopping you from delivering the best possible services.

The survey confirmed our passion for serving the public and pride in how we responded to COVID-19.



Simon Davis/DFID

## A Movement for Change

Your views, with data from across government, will help to identify the problems we need to fix. It will also inform the actions we need to take at all levels to improve how we work.

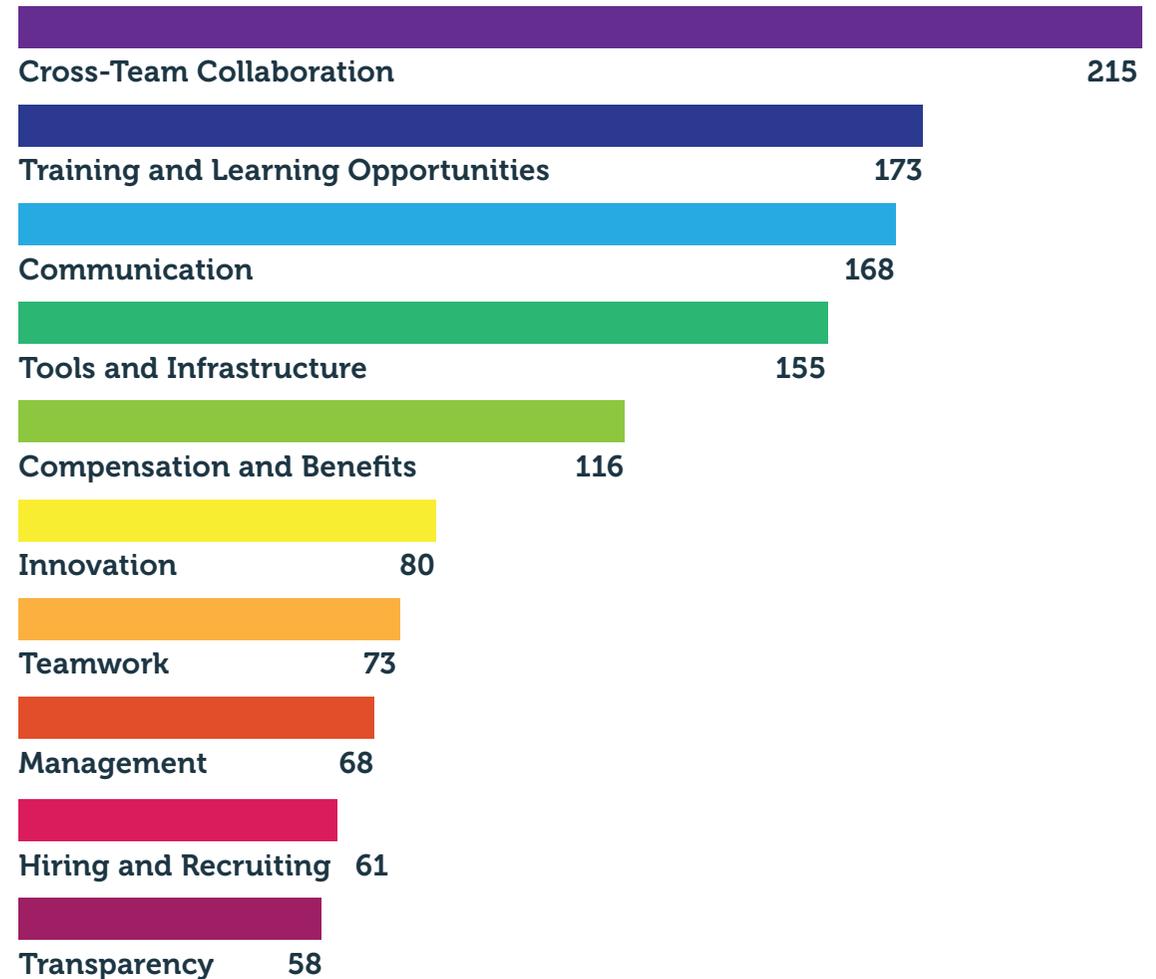
Culture and behaviours are as important as policies and processes. We must challenge ourselves to work in different ways and role model the behaviours we want to see. Culture change is hard to do, but essential if we are to truly improve.

The next part of this document sets out how we can make positive changes so we have:

- Great people
- New ideas
- Better results

## Challenges to delivering better public services

We asked Civil Servants: is there anything that prevents the Civil Service from delivering the best services to citizens? Of 1,698 people who responded, this diagram shows the range of the challenges they named.



Source: Civil Service Reform – Futures Survey  
June 2020

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### **John Ward**

Lawyer, Government Legal Department



“I’m proud to be a government lawyer, advising DWP paying unprecedented volumes of Universal Credit claims to citizens across the country and doing it on time. We’ve learnt through the COVID-19 lockdown that many of us can work effectively and as a team from any part of the country and I hope that remains part of our culture. I want to be part of a Civil Service where no one based outside London ever feels that their career will be limited by being based outside London.”

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### **Bernadette Thompson**

Deputy Director, Inclusion, MHCLG



"I would like to walk into a boardroom and not be the only ethnic minority there. I would like to see a strong and healthy pipeline of ethnically diverse directors and directors general, to hope that the Civil Service is on track to have greater diversity at permanent secretary level. And I know we can do it."

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### **Ali Gerrard**

Work Coach, Jobcentre Plus, Bexhill

“My Civil Service of the future? Well, I see it already happening. People moving from departments to roles that they’ve never done before almost seamlessly. More blended, more cohesive. We need to be ‘one Civil Service’ in the way our technology works so we can best deliver for the public in the way they want.”



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### **Prateek Buch**

Senior Data Adviser, National Leadership Centre



“Two things are vital to the future of the Civil Service: diversity and fluidity. Diversity in thought and perspective, so we can collectively challenge our biases. Fluidity so multi-disciplinary teams can work across boundaries and locations. That is the only way the Civil Service can truly tackle the wicked problems that are only likely to get more common in the next 15-20 years.”

# Great People

The Civil Service is at its best when it reflects the diversity of the country and is able to understand the needs of citizens.

When people from diverse backgrounds are involved in creating the public services we all rely on, we get better services that work for everyone.

## Great People

We must be open to talent from across the country, regardless of background or sector. That is not simply about attracting the best people or the processes through which we select candidates. It's also about how we operate and how we train.

True diversity of thought, ideas and experience will help us solve problems and deliver the very best public services.

We must build an environment which better supports professional development and creative thinking. One in which everyone has the confidence to express their ideas and for those ideas to be heard.

This environment should allow us to combine our skills and expertise to both improve services and tackle the social inequalities that exist in the UK.

Making more opportunities available to work for the Civil Service outside of London is a top priority, at every level.

Our experiences of working flexibly during the COVID-19 crisis should be a lens through which we can see the potential for change.

79% of Grades 6 and 7 based outside London agreed that working in their current location has placed restrictions upon their career.



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## Great People

At the moment, 62% of senior civil servants, and 80% of SCS in policy roles, are based in London. The growth in the number of staff based in London has outpaced growth in all other regions in recent years. We will reverse that trend. By creating sustainable Civil Service hubs outside of London and the South East, we will widen our talent pool.

The Civil Service is at its best when it reflects the diversity of the country and is able to understand the needs of citizens.

When people from diverse backgrounds are involved in creating the public services we all rely on, we get better services that work for everyone.

We have made progress in our efforts to create a more inclusive and diverse place to work.

Since 2010, the representation of women in the Civil Service has remained above 50%. For grades HEO and above, the proportion of women has increased and is getting closer to achieving gender parity.



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## Great People

The overall percentage of civil servants from an ethnic minority background has increased since 2010 and in 2019, it stood at 12.7%. 14.2% of this year's Fast Stream intake were of a Black, Asian or an ethnic minority background, notably more than the Civil Service as a whole.

Overall, 11.7% of civil servants recorded that they have a disability in 2019. People with disabilities are less likely to feel included and more likely to report bullying and harassment. It is vital that the Civil Service we create leaves no one behind.

We are also building a stronger understanding of socio-economic background. Around 25% of Senior Civil Servants attended an independent school compared to 7% of the population.

Further types of diversity must be championed. To be a Civil Service that truly reflects the country we serve we must look at cognitive and geographical diversity.

Only half of civil servants felt that the learning and development activities completed in the last 12 months improved their performance. Fewer still felt that the activities completed helped to develop their careers.



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## Great People

To be successful now and in the future, the Civil Service needs to build on the specialisms we already have across a range of functions and improve skills in the use and analysis of data, in harnessing technological developments, commercial and project delivery skills and a much greater emphasis on the development of deep area-specific knowledge.

A properly resourced, high quality curriculum for core and specialised skills will help us to achieve this alongside the ability to recruit openly.

We must also provide the right incentives, so that we reward and recognise expertise, new ideas and make an impact on citizen's lives.

This is about making improvements for everyone across the whole of the UK.

Share your thoughts on how we can attract the best people, enable them to flourish.

Share your views at  
**[shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk](https://shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk)**

Ideas we are considering include

- moving more roles out of London
- a clear curriculum of core and specialised skills, with higher quality training
- incentives to stay in post longer and develop deep expertise



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## Great People

### Success stories

#### **Jenny Sandham** Waterfront Senior Officer – UK Ministry of Defence

“As someone who has progressed from Admin Assistant to SCS across different departments in the north of England, I think we need to grow talent and opportunity ‘Beyond Whitehall’. Over the next decade I would like to see clearer career pathways to attract and retain the skills and enthusiasm needed to deliver exemplar public services across the entire country, embracing the digital age and COVID-19 learning to enable more people to live and work anywhere in the country.”

## **Service Centre Network: Main sites with a headcount of 250+**



### **Success stories**

## **People and Locations Programme**

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) developed the People and Locations Programme. It involved the redesign of 960 public buildings which benefited around 79,000 employees and approximately 22 million customers who use DWP's services. A locations programme of this scale and magnitude had not been carried out before in DWP.

The programme successfully managed the exit of a 20-year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. The replacement of these outdated and expensive contracts is set to generate savings in excess of £1.4 billion over the next 10 years. Working well with a large number of stakeholders from Ministers to employees to customers was key to the programme's success.

# New Ideas



To provide the best services to citizens and successfully tackle the biggest and most complex issues of our time, we need a Civil Service in which people are connected, knowledge is shared and creativity is encouraged.

## New Ideas

Our response to COVID-19 has shown that it is possible to react quickly and do things differently. Not every aspect of our current ways of working are sustainable for the long term. But there are many things we should hold onto, like the sense of shared mission.

We need to embrace more experimental, test and learn approaches so we can constantly improve. This will help us to be more confident that our policies will work before we deliver them at full scale.

In 2019, only 50% of civil servants believed it was “safe to challenge the way things are done” in their organisation (2019 People Survey).

There should be incentives and rewards for innovation. Testing ideas – trying and failing – are essential components of learning. This must be recognised so that the ideas of today can become the solutions of tomorrow.

That innovation must be matched with rigorous evaluation.

Policy decisions can be improved by ministers and civil servants in a number of ways. For example by putting greater focus on evidence and data; involving outside experts more routinely; by opening ourselves up to scrutiny and challenge.



of civil servants, in 2019, believed it was “safe to challenge the way things are done” in their organisation (2019 People Survey).

## New Ideas

There is more that we can do to ensure policy making is more inclusive – by drawing on multi-disciplinary teams which include analysis, project and operational delivery, finance, commercial and digital experience; by understanding the experience of front line workers and, most importantly, the needs of citizens.

We have made huge progress in how we use technology, transforming the way in which passports are renewed, driving licenses are applied for and citizens are alerted to flooding.

There is untapped potential to make other services and processes work better. The 2019 InCise index ranks the UK 27th in the world for digital services. We need to put technology and the use of data at the heart of all our work, not treat it as an add on.

Too many of us have to wrestle with outdated IT systems that are difficult to use and waste time. These systems are expensive to maintain and result in poor outcomes. We spend up to a third of our working time on processes which could be automated or digitised. This would allow us to focus on the work that makes the greatest impact.



## New Ideas

Our response to COVID-19 has shown the fundamental importance of good data but our approach remains fragmented. We do not have a set of common standards – for example, there are more than 20 different ways of identifying individuals and businesses across 10 departments and agencies. There are few incentives to share data, especially where those benefits are gained elsewhere in government.

By making routine the use and sharing of data across government, we can provide seamless services to citizens and help tackle challenges which do not fall within the remit of just one department.

Share your views at  
**[shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk](https://shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk)**

**Below: DVLA's Centre of Digital Excellence partners with universities and colleges to develop Software Engineering, Business & Systems Analysis and Cyber Security capability in South Wales.**



Ideas we are considering include

- More encouragement and support for people who develop innovative solutions that improve citizens lives
- Facilitating data sharing across government where it provides citizen benefits
- Upgrading our legacy IT systems
- Automating and digitising repetitive tasks, freeing up time and money for activities that have greater impact
- Shifting the policy-making culture to put more emphasis on effective delivery, evaluation, and outcomes for citizens

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## New Ideas

### Success stories

## GOV.UK/ASK and the Business Volunteering Service

The GOV.UK team developed GOV.UK/ask – which allows citizens to ask questions at the daily COVID-19 press conferences. It involved collaborative working between GOV.UK and Cabinet Office communications. The team also developed the business volunteering service, which enabled the government to secure offers of COVID-19 support from businesses and other organisations and helped source 3 billion pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE).



## Success stories

### Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (Northern Ireland)

The Home Office in Northern Ireland has been working closely with the NI Executive and numerous delivery partners on resettling vulnerable refugees displaced by the Syrian conflict. From a standing start, this has been a significant multi-agency effort to contribute to the overall UK target of bringing in 20,000 refugees by 2020; despite its relatively small size Northern Ireland has taken 1815 refugees to date.

This is a significant achievement considering Northern Ireland has not taken part in any sort of resettlement scheme for many decades and that this was done without local Ministers being in place for much of the time. It is the first time the Home Office and the NI Executive have worked closely together on a joint project of this scale and has been widely recognised locally as a model of joint working.



# Better results



Across the Civil Service, people are passionate about their jobs because they have an opportunity to improve lives. Doing that better is what this is all about.

## Better results

Our major projects and programmes can have a huge and positive impact, whether that is building new infrastructure, recruiting new front line staff or implementing new services. If those things face delay or costs increase, that matters.

In 2019, 34% of major government projects had a red or amber/red rating (IPA). To improve this we need to increase our focus on getting things right up front as well as consistent evaluation.

Of the 108 major programmes for which the government is responsible, only 8% are actually assessed to judge if they have been delivered effectively and have

brought about the desired effects. We must ensure we take full account of the delivery implications of announcements and guard against the temptation to overcommit and underestimate cost.

That requires constant discipline and rigour. We need to recruit, develop and select people with the necessary skills, time and experience and ensure continuity for the time it takes to deliver a project. These skilled professionals need to be appropriately incentivised and supported by high quality oversight from ministers and non executives.



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## Better results

Organisational boundaries can get in the way of working together. Yet the social, economic and environmental challenges we face don't respect those boundaries.

Some of the difficulties in working across departments relate to culture, funding streams and incentives. However, basic things like IT, building access and HR rules also present barriers that must be addressed.

The centre of government has an important role in setting priorities and strategy and using HM Treasury and Cabinet Office levers to support good decision making.

Share your views at  
[shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk](https://shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk)

## Ideas we are considering include

- more training to develop project delivery skills
- strengthened planning and scrutiny for major projects
- reinforced and clarified accountability for delivery
- ensuring our systems, processes, structures and infrastructure change to support collaboration

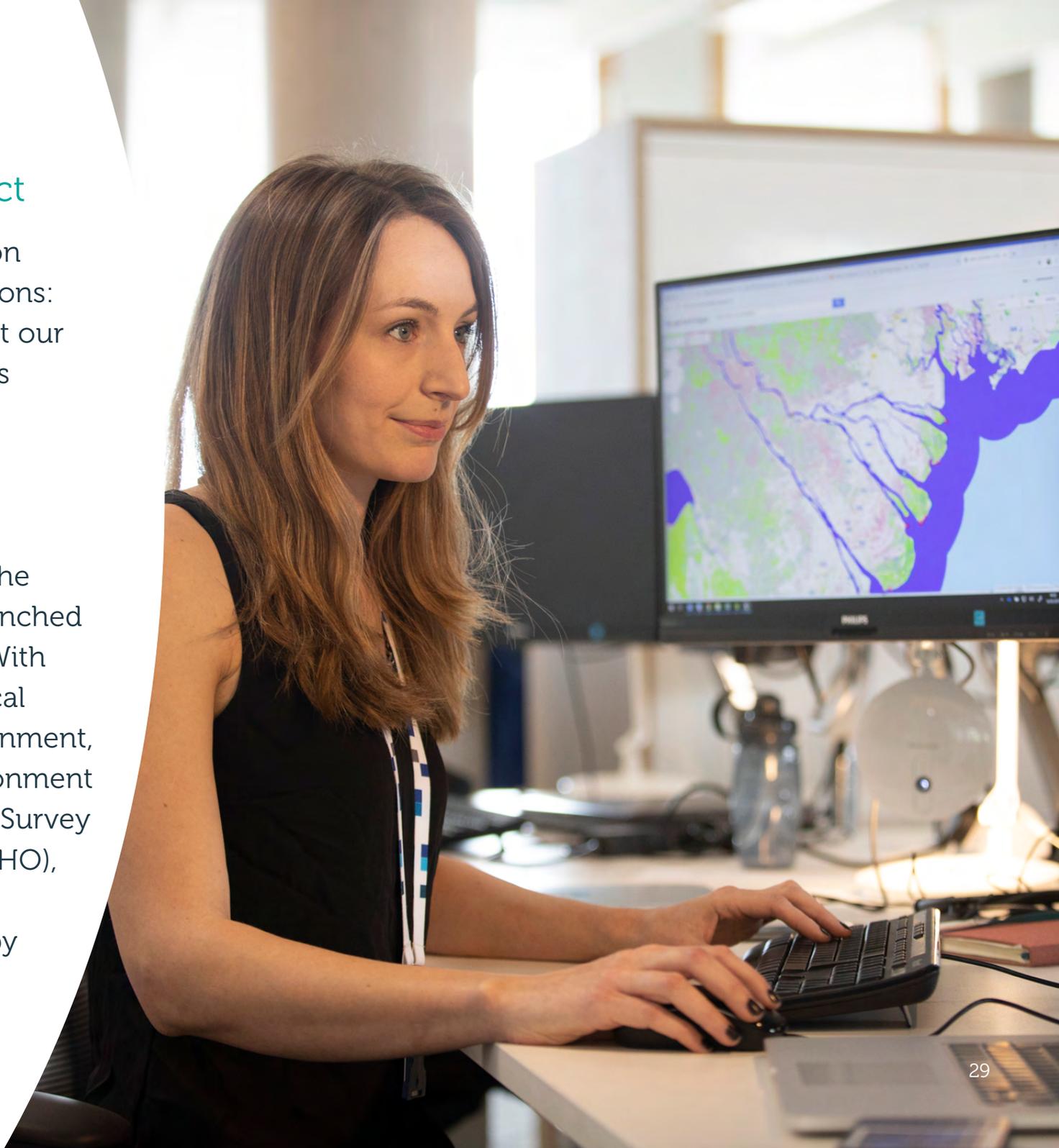


## Success stories

### Coastal Zone Mapping Project

Those who use our coasts depend on geospatial data to make good decisions: from the port operators who support our shipping industry to conservationists working to protect critical marine environments.

Getting an accurate picture of the coast can be extremely difficult, so the Geospatial Commission recently launched the Coastal Zone Mapping Project. With representation from British Geological Survey (BGS), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Environment Agency, Natural England, Ordnance Survey and the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO), the project aims to create a better understanding of challenges faced by coastal data users and find new ways to overcome them.



## Better results

### Success stories

#### HM Passport Office and DWP

As a result of COVID-19, colleagues across HM Passport Office and DWP worked together to retrain frontline Passport staff in Glasgow on vital service delivery to support Universal Credit claimants.

Within a tight 3 week period, the small implementation team overcame IT, training and estate hurdles. HMPO and DWP virtually trained over 100 operational colleagues to successfully manage customer enquiries through inbound telephony, emails and case management ,helping thousands of families receive much needed help and financial support.

## Rozanne Kidd

### Deputy Director, HMPO Operations

“I am very proud to have been part in this cross-gov collaboration, leading a great HMPO team of ‘can do’ Operational Delivery Professionals making a real difference with their DWP colleagues, to people’s lives.”



# Why now?

We have learned how to work differently out of necessity. We have adopted new approaches and we are more joined up than ever before.

We need to keep what we've learned, take advantage of the opportunities to improve and make sure we don't snap back to old ways of working.

We will face new challenges and this is the moment for us to assess and take action so that we can meet them.

This is our moment to make a difference, to become the organisation we want to be and to deliver the very best for citizens across the country.



# How you can get involved



Meaningful change cannot be achieved with a 'top-down' approach. Improvements must be shaped for and by us all.

Your expertise, your ideas and your energy are needed. We all have a role to play in building our skills and knowledge, enabling ourselves and others to work and think in new, bold, innovative ways.

There will be many opportunities to get involved. Your views will be used to shape the vision and guide the action.

Please share your views and ideas at [shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk](https://shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk)

where you will find updates and further opportunities to be part of the change. A network of change leaders will lead conversations in departments, your internal comms teams will provide more information.

We all need to feel empowered to make changes and improve how we work.

Help build a movement for change in your organisations. By building networks, holding events and sharing success stories, we can broaden the conversation.

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## How you can get involved

### Janet Hughes

Director, Future Farming and  
Countryside Programme, Defra

“I work on a major project in Defra. I want to help make the Civil Service more open, inclusive and user-centred because doing that will make things better for us and the people we’re here to serve. I can do that in my own work, of course, and I do, but this is a great opportunity to work with colleagues to bring about change at a much greater scale. I think as we come out of the COVID-19 crisis there will be a huge opportunity to radically rethink the way we work, and I’m really keen to help make sure we make the most of that opportunity.”



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## How you can get involved

### Roxanne Ohene

Deputy Director,  
National Leadership Centre

“The UK Civil Service is already world leading and there are many things that we are brilliant at, but we can and should be better. We operate in a world that is continuously changing and to meet the needs of all of the communities that we serve we need to continually improve. We need to be innovative, delivery focussed, representative of our communities and keep citizens at the heart of all what we do. I’m excited to be part of a group of colleagues who are working towards excellence in all that we do.”



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## How you can get involved

### Jacek Markiewicz

Organisational Development  
and Design Practitioner, DWP

"I work in DWP as an Organisational Development and Design practitioner and the reason for me being a leader of change is to make a difference to the lives of our service user. The Civil Service touches most people's lives and is often the only support our service users have. By working together and across the Civil Service, we can make best use of our experience as well as join up the change effort to ensure we can improve the life experiences for those we serve."



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## How you can get involved

### Michelle Leong

Deputy Director, Corporate Systems  
Transformation, DCMS

“I’m passionate about technology and enabling teams to think in innovative ways to understand the root of a problem, design practical and scalable solutions, and being able to challenge processes when necessary. I want to help demystify transformation and automation, break down the perception that it’s too vast a mountain to climb. We can do this collectively by sharing experiences and talking openly about the challenges we face, but equally championing the successes we have (no matter how small) along the way.”





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civilservice.gov.uk](https://shapingourfuture.civilservice.gov.uk)



Civil Service



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