Government
Social Research

Government Social Research Strategy 2021-2025:
Social Research In and For Government

Impactful & Influential

Expert & Valued

Diverse & Inclusive

Year 1 Review

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Introduction

Welcome to the Government Social Research Strategy 2021-2025: Social Research In and For Government Year 1 Review. This document sets out the year 1 plan and progress made against each objective (Mar 21-Feb 22) by the multiple GSR member working groups and GESR Team. All priorities have been overseen by GSR Heads of Profession (HoP) via assigned roles and the GSR Strategy and GSR Profession Boards.

In March 2021, over 30 GSR members, from across 15 departments, volunteered to drive forward the year 1 delivery plan. Members were split across 6 working groups, each with a GSR HoP lead and GESR lead to provide direction and support.

Work has focused on a range of topics and new opportunities for the profession, including:

- Defining our external stakeholder map and developing an approach to improve on how we engage
- Beginning to understand how to best nurture development across the range of disciplines we have in GSR – this work is continuing throughout the life of the strategy
- Brand new guidance to support your professional skills development – GSR Professional Skills Framework
- Significant updates and revisions to GSR guidance (e.g. ethics guidance)
- A mammoth review of the range of guidance available across GSR departments, which will result in an up-to-date list of resources for GSR members development – available soon
- Brand new focused seminar series concept – we had the very success qualitative research methods series recently
- Brand new guidance to support embedding diversity, inclusion and equality into research from the outset and throughout
- GSR communities of practice have facilitated bringing together GSR members from across government to discuss shared interests and shared learning
- Updates to the GSR Technical Framework
- New ways to recognise the excellent work of GSR members – more information to be circulated soon – and most importantly a new streamlined and simplified process for the GSR Award submission process
- New GSR online test specification developed; contract has been placed
- New GSR Bitesize seminar series – an opportunity for GSR members to present and share with the membership
- New GSR Website (coming soon)
- First GSR virtual conference
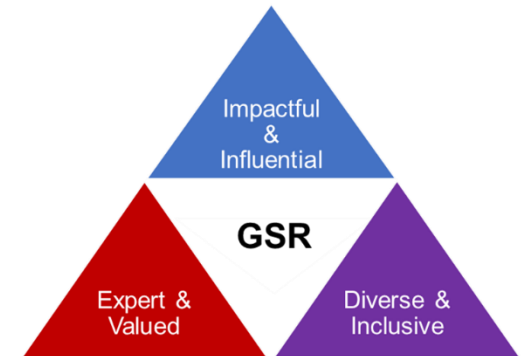
Progress has been steady – in some areas we have not achieved our aims yet, but we are continuing to work on these in the coming years of the strategy. More details are provided against each of our priorities in the following pages.

Impactful & Influential

GSR informs government decision-making and policy debate through impactful and influential input, engagement and collaboration

By proactively contributing and promoting the relevance and use of social and behavioural science in policy, delivery and spending decisions. Achieved through contributing evidence, advice and design, and engaging with relevant stakeholders to create a holistic picture and joined-up response. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) will be championed throughout our work

Impactful
&
Influential

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S1. Maintain and promote stakeholder engagement both internally and externally, continuing to build on strong foundations to champion the expertise, evidence, advice, value and reach across the broader social research agenda	a. Define a stakeholder map and explore existing links with internal and external stakeholders and associations to identify opportunities to engage and collaborate. **Delivered by**: – **GSR Working Group 1** b. Create guidance on how departments and external experts can work better together **Delivered by:** – **GSR Working Group 1**	**a**. A broad stakeholder map was developed to identify the range of stakeholders associated with GSR. An initial focus was placed on developing the external stakeholder engagement map **b**. This has resulted in a planned workshop to agree a network approach across GSR HoPs drawing on existing relationships, whilst also considering how to bring stakeholders together when helpful. This work will continue into the next year of the strategy **Further progress**: We now have regular items at the GSR Profession Board for ESRC and POST and invite relevant guests to boards to build up relationships with GSR Also worked with ESRC to develop a series of Actionable Insight seminar series to build on our relationship. These started in Jul 21 and will completed in Mar 22. The seminars below ran from Jul 21-Jan 22: • Economic impact & recovery – insights on business resilience and innovation • Mental health, resilience and wellbeing – insights on how to mitigate impacts on children and families • Employment & Work - Remote Working and the Future of Work • Living with Covid - Behaviour, Attitudes and Social Distancing • Effective Public Services • Vulnerable Communities – Responding to the Domestic Abuse Crisis

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
		• Levelling up – The impact of geography and region on fiscal responses to COVID-19 • Understanding disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Minority Ethnic communities

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S2. Influence and collaborate with analytical, strategy, policy and delivery colleagues, ensuring analytical insight about people, society, resources and spending are at the forefront of the consideration of core issues facing government (e.g. Green recovery, Covid-19, UK post transition).	a. Identify and develop relationships with key points of contact for the next spending review and ensure key GSR members are engaged and informing from the outset **Delivered by**: – GSR HoPs	**a**. Had success at department level leading to increased GSR research funding for some departments. This is something that will continue to be a focus for departmental HoPs as spending reviews come around.
	b. Build relationships with allied disciplines to inform and guide thinking around making social and behavioural research at forefront of government issues **Delivered by**: – Allied Professions Working Group	**b**. Work was completed to develop the relationship between GSR and allied disciplines. This has involved attending network meetings and building relationships across government to facilitate discussion and collaboration. Key contacts have been made The future objective is to provide great learning and development support for the range of disciplines found within GSR to ensure that all members have the opportunity to expand their skill sets. This will be progressed under a different strategy strand. We also invited allied discipline colleagues to the GSR 2021 conference, both as potential presenters and attendees, and invited review of the new GSR Professional Skills Framework. This work will continue through the life of the strategy – a revised working group will be developed for year 2 to focus on opportunities to upskill GSR members in the range of skills present in GSR.

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S3. Be at the heart of decision-making and advice both internally and externally demonstrating the breadth of knowledge, experience and skills the profession can bring to a multitude of issues	a. Work with the Analysis Function to create an outline for Ministers/ Senior leaders to know why and where to find GSR expertise **Delivered by:** – GESR (Head of GSR Strategy) – Link up with Analysis Function	**a**. A one-page description was provided to the AF.
	c. Review GSR professional guidance and identify what should be recognised and embedded cross-government to demonstrate the 'gold standard' (e.g. Social research approaches (tbc e.g. qualitative approaches) **Delivered by:** – **GSR Working Group 2** – GESR	**c**. The group have reviewed over 50 documents and assessed them against quality criteria to determine those which are of most use for GSR members; these are being finalised and will be made available on the new GSR members site. The group have also been developing an infographic on social research for policy makers, a pack on user research to encourage engagement between social and user research, and been involved in running the qualitative research seminar series
	d. Review GSR website requirements considering the use and purpose, and content requirements **Delivered by:** – GESR (Priority Projects/Head of GSR Strategy)	**d**. The website review itself was initially delayed, but due to an underspend in our funding during the Financial Year, the initial development of the new members site has been pulled up into this financial year. The review started in Jan 2022 with a proposed launch of the new GSR members site to be in Jun 2022 This action will straddle year 1 and year 2 of the strategy and GSR members will be consulted as part of the process to ensure the new site is fit for purpose There will be a period of transition between the sites and ensuring that all guidance that includes member site links are updated (bear with us!)

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S4. Model excellence in the generation and use of diversity and inclusion data by supporting, advising and improving data collection methods and the use of existing sources across government through effective collaboration and training	a. Develop principles and guidelines on when and how diversity, inclusion and equalities analysis should be embedded in work, to include identifying and developing relationships with relevant stakeholders (e.g. PSED, D&I leads, Chief analysts) **Delivered by:** – **GSR Working Group 3** – Link up with Analysis Function D&I group – Link up with GSR D&I Reps	**a**. New GSR guidance has been developed to help GSR members and others working in research to ensure that diversity, inclusion and equality are considered from the outset and embedded in all stages of research work. The group have worked with the Inclusive Data Taskforce and the work has been peer-reviewed. Guidance is being finalised during 2022 having been reviewed by the GSR Profession Board
	b. Identify and support the development of D&I research leads in departments to provide advice and expertise **Delivered by:** – GESR D&I Lead – GSR D&I Dept Reps	**b**. A GSR D&I Community of Practice was set up to encourage cross-government knowledge sharing. This involves D&I reps and other interested members coming together regularly virtually to discuss D&I initiatives and/or queries. It also provided a good opportunity for the D&I strategy working groups to test ideas and gain views from across government. Regular meetings were scheduled bringing departments together to share learning and encourage discussion cross-government. For example, a meeting might consist of someone presenting on an initiative/or query they have, taking questions and advice, updates on any general D&I activities in departments, D&I working groups outlining ideas and gaining some initial feedback.

Expert & Valued

| GSR supports all members to maximise their personal impact, achieve their individual potential and experience a fulfilling career |

By ensuring members are at the forefront of new methodological developments and are equipped with the skills and experience necessary to be effective social scientists, and by providing access to opportunities to be effective in current and/or future roles and grades across the Civil Service

This priority links to the **GSR D&I Strategy priority of 'Retaining and embedding an inclusive culture'** which includes progression pathways, developing with the needs of the profession, equal opportunities – more information can be found in the GSR D&I Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S5. Develop skills and experience through professional development opportunities, both internal and external, to enable all GSR members the skills necessary to be effective and innovative, and be at the cutting-edge of their profession	No actions on this objective in the first year (2021)	

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S6. Empower members to achieve a fulfilling career by ensuring relevant career related support and guidance is accessible and professional communities of practice are available to facilitate individual potential within grade/role or through promotion	b. Develop cross GSR and government recognition schemes to include Departmental/GSR awards/performance awards plus consider collaborations with academia, international groups etc **Delivered by**: – **GSR Working Group 4** – GESR (Talent & Events Branch) – HoPs engagement essential – Link up with Analysis Function and relevant external stakeholders/colleague	**b**. A range of new ideas were proposed and discussed with GSR HoPs before determining the initial focus. The main focus has been on updating and improving the process associated with the annual GSR Award, including potentially introducing some kind of sponsorship relationship with relevant external stakeholders (watch this space) It was acknowledged that departments often have their own approaches and there was a decision that we didn't want to complicate the area or make it difficult. Key recommendations include: - HoP Thank you emails - GSR Newsletter Shout Out - Revamped process for the annual GSR Award Information on these will be circulated to members early 2022
	d. Complete a GSR Skills audit to include review and promotion of the Analysis Function Online Skills tool **Delivered by**: – **GSR Working Group 4** – GESR (Talent & Events branch) – Link up with Analysis Function L&D group	**d**. An updated and refreshed GSR Professional Skills Framework has been developed and published in the interim on the current GSR members site. This will be included on the new Website along with other new content. This framework outlines the broad range of professional skills that GSR contains – it is intended as a useful high-level summary. It is designed to support members and line managers of GSR members to identify areas for development based on the individual's career and development aspirations. This work has also informed other strategy work including the new GSR online test, updates to the GSR Technical Framework, GSRs input to the Analysis Function Online Skills tool, and future thinking about professional guidance, support and development opportunities. The Analysis Function Online Skills tool is being reviewed. There is a potential pilot planned for mid-2022 to allow evaluation and consideration of future use.

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
	e. Review assessments: Development of online test **Delivered by**: – **Existing Recruitment Working Group**	**e**. The working group reviewed current practices, i.e. current GSR knowledge test and approaches to our assessments, considered the 'ask' from a new online test learning from the lessons of the initial online test that GSR has. This information was used to develop a specification for the new version of the online test. The tender specification has been developed and been taken forward by procurement. It is hoped the new test will be available early Summer 2022.

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S7. Embed a learning culture so that identification of career aspirations and continuing professional development are at the forefront of goals for all members, and achievements are understood, recognised and championed by default to ensure the best social and behavioural scientists are retained in government	a. Embed goals/objective setting within departments that support individual aspirations **Delivered by**: – GSR HoPs – GSR Members	**a**. This is an ongoing action for all GSR members. Further work in the strategy will look at what opportunities might be available for members To support this GESR also developed GSR Bitesize seminars to encourage members to share their work with other members to aid learning and knowledge sharing. These started in Sep, and ran through Oct, Nov and Dec. • Live Facial Recognition Technology in Policing • Rapidly evaluating the transition to remote inspections in response to Covid-19 – HMICFRS • Make Your Next Car Electric? Results from an online behavioural science trial with 4.5million people renewing their annual vehicle tax • Data analysis and visualisation of secondary schools' cyber education in Scotland • Exploring consumer handwashing in COVID-19: an innovative mixed methods approach by the FSA • A multidisciplinary effort to support the delivery of the May 21 Elections

Objectives	Actions	Review/Outcomes
S8. Confident and capable leading inclusive research by promoting and developing inclusive research skills and being the leading voice in providing advice and guidance on D&I data collection and analysis across government	No actions for this objective in 2021	

Diverse & Inclusive

GSR is as diverse in our profile and perspectives as the society we serve, across all levels of the profession, through our culture and the careers we offer

To have a diverse membership and culture that is positive for all, where members are supported, developed, respected and appreciated for their unique characteristics and who feel proud to be part of the social research community. This will be achieved through attracting a diverse workforce, ensuring fair selection, and embedding and retaining an inclusive culture. It will be demonstrated and monitored through accurate data and metrics

The first-year delivery plan for this priority can be found on the Gov.uk site – below is a summary of the outcomes for Year 1 – see main D&I Review for details.

Objectives	Overview of Actions	Review/Outcomes
Attracting a diverse profession: GSR has a diverse and inclusive population (in the first instance this will prioritise increasing ethnic minority and increasing lower socio-economic representation)	By targeting and developing outreach activities, engaging with cross-government networks and wider research sector, and exploring alternative application routes into the profession: – Visible & attractive – Explores alternative entry mechanisms	New outreach materials for schools. colleges, universities have been produced. Ambitious outreach strategy has been developed and implemented with a new Outreach Delivery Group Alternative entry routes explored and discussed at the GSR Recruitment Sub-Board - proposals are being take to the GSR Profession Board for final sign off Spring 2022 Work has begun on apprenticeship scoping
Inclusive and fair recruitment and selection: There is no discrimination within GSR's selection and assessment processes	By ensuring there is no overt or unconscious discrimination during recruitment processes, thereby reassuring potential candidates they are entering a fair and unbiased process, through improved guidance, training, materials, assessments and processes, resulting in a more diverse workforce: • Identifies & overcomes possible sources of bias & discrimination • Selection guidance & processes are clear & transparent	Working on improving D&I data from recruitment Developed and ran a successful pilot GSR mainstream campaign 2021 – bids for the next round have doubled. Research completed on experience of candidates to help inform year 2 priorities, such as reviewing our recruitment processes and informing thinking on our membership criteria review
Embedding and retaining an inclusive culture: There is an inclusive and supportive culture within GSR, where all members have the opportunity to develop their career	By providing positive action and tailored support aligned to need, ensuring everyone can reach their full potential without any barriers: • Supports all members • Provides accessible opportunities & diversity • Knows what factors influence retention	Research has been completed to understand barriers experienced by underrepresented groups to inform future thinking on GSR assessment approaches. Work is being taken forward into future work on understanding how to retain people.
Accurate monitoring of GSR data: Accurate and timely data with which to monitor and prioritise D&I interventions within GSR	By working with the Analysis Function to ensure relevant and appropriate data are collected and used to monitor career progress and any emerging issues across the protected characteristics: • Knows where relevant GSR D&I data are • Effective & accurate process to monitor D&I related data	GSR D&I survey was developed and implemented in 2021 resulting in the most accurate picture we have had of the diversity profile of GSR. Results will be released Spring 2022 and used to inform future priorities and monitor our progress