Civil Service
QUARTERLY

Feature
Building a smarter state

National Citizen Service

New Year, new motivation

Civil Service

Issue 10 » January 2016
Civil Service Quarterly

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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.

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Editorial

» Civil Service Quarterly: open, consistent, professional

Chris Wormald

Happy New Year and welcome to issue 10 of Civil Service Quarterly – our first issue of 2016.

Following November's Spending Review, our "Building a smarter state" feature looks in detail at developing and delivering the high quality public services we need for less.

In "The Spending Review in 1000 words," Julian Kelly – Director General of public spending and finance at HM Treasury – sets the agenda, with an overview of the recent Spending Review and what this means for Government departments in terms of savings, reforms and our priorities in the years ahead.

David Allen and Johannes Wolff, also from the Treasury, continue that conversation in "Understanding costs to unlock opportunities," explaining how HM Government Finance is helping officials to achieve these essential savings sustainably. Building on this work, Stephen Aldridge, Angus Hawkins and Cody Xuereb, from the Department for Communities and Local Government, discuss the trends in, and drivers of, public sector efficiency and how we can do more to embed them across Whitehall.

Charlotte Roberts, Cabinet Office, then explores the evolution of the National Citizen Service. Similarly, in "Professional value-added volunteering," Andrea Lee shows the ways in which civil servants can use their professional skills to benefit third sector organisations, and we feature the stories of some of those colleagues – recognised at last year's Civil Service Awards – whose volunteering is having a huge impact across communities.

January is the time of year we commit to live a little healthier and happier. And, in "New Year, New Motivation," Professor Kevin Fenton, Public Health England, gives a snapshot of the insights and techniques used to motivate individuals to change their lives for the better.

Focusing on our professional development is another important resolution to make and, in "The public face of the Civil Service," James Bishop – from the Operational Delivery Profession – sets out how the profession's members are taking control of their careers and boosting our operational capabilities.

Our final three articles shine a spotlight on useful lessons and techniques we can use to work more effectively. Colin Dingwall, former Director of the Electoral Registration Transformation Programme, walks us through the crucial steps his team took to implement this fundamental change to the voter registration process. Richard Sandford, from the Government Office for Science, offers a beginners' guide to Horizon Scanning, while Mark Purver and Helen Williams, at the Ministry of Justice, describe the analysis and insight offered by the Justice Data Lab to help design and provide rehabilitation programmes that work.

We hope you find this issue interesting. You can share your comments and views at our Civil Service Quarterly blog or use #CSQuarterly on social media. And if you have an idea for a feature in a future issue, please get in touch.

Chris Wormald
Permanent Secretary,
Department for Education

Cover photo: © NCS Trust
NCS participants on their social action project, 2014.

Let us know what you think by email (**csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk**) or on twitter **#CSQuarterly**.

The Spending Review in 1,000 words

» **The challenge to build a smarter state, with more and better public services for less, has been taken up by finance professionals and analysts across the Civil Service. Following the 2015 Spending Review, some of the leading officials involved talk about their work. We start with Julian Kelly, Director General, Public Spending and Finance, HM Treasury.**

The Chancellor announced the outcome of the Spending Review on 25 November, following months of work by officials and ministers across government. It marks the next phase in the Government's plans for this Parliament, building on its manifesto commitments. It will be rounded off with the publication of departments' business plans (Single Departmental Plans) in January.

Let's start with some numbers. At the heart of the Spending Review was a plan to complete the consolidation of the public finances begun by Alistair Darling in 2009 and given further momentum by the Coalition in 2010. Back in 2010, the prospective gap between receipts and spending was 10.5% of GDP. This year, that deficit is forecast to be 3.9%[1]. And the plans set out last month aim to move Britain's public finances out of deficit altogether in 2019/20. At the same time, the stock of debt will fall from 80% of GDP to 71%[2].

These are the critical numbers behind the Government's decision to achieve further savings from public spending. They also show that the Government is on track to finish the job and give future governments more financial space to deal with shocks, such as the 2008 global and economic crisis.

The first part of the plan – to secure a surplus – was published in the Summer Budget, with measures to reduce tax evasion and avoidance and to lower welfare spending. The Spending Review set out the second part: how to find the final £18 billion needed.

Allocating £4 trillion to public priorities

Much of the public focus in the run-up to the Spending Review was about savings and cuts. But the real choice here is about how to spend around £800 billion of public money a year – or £4 trillion over the Parliament.

The NHS will get a £10 billion real increase, by 2020/21, to deliver a seven-day NHS and the other reforms defined in the Five Year Forward View. There are significant funding increases for defence and the intelligence agencies and a new £3.5 billion Joint Security Fund to support the outcomes of the Strategic Defence and Security Review. To the surprise of at least some chief constables, police spending is protected in real terms.

The Government is also prioritising investment in education from childcare to college. Including childcare, total spending on education will increase in cash terms from £60 billion in 2015/16 to nearly £65 billion in 2020. This covers:

- investing over £1 billion more a year by 2019/20 to deliver free childcare places for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds.
- protecting the core schools budget in real terms, enabling the per pupil rate for the Dedicated Schools Grant to be protected in cash terms, including £390 million of additional funding given to the least fairly funded areas in 2015/16.
- protecting the cash budget for Further Education (FE) core adult skills funding after significant reductions in the previous Parliament.
- a big increase in apprenticeships' funding to enable 3 million new apprentices by 2020, financed by employers themselves, who will be able to get back more than they put in – if they employ enough apprentices.
- stimulating the FE sector to provide higher-skilled training places.
- lifting the cap on the number of students who can pursue a university education.

The Government has decided to increase aggregate capital investment over the course of this Parliament because targeted capital spending increases productivity growth. Total public sector investment is forecast to increase from £74 billion to £90 billion a year over the next five years[3], enabling a significant increase in road, rail, flood defences, science research, energy and, in particular, housing. Total public investment in housing supply will more than double over the course of the Parliament, with a much greater focus on building houses for affordable home ownership.

Reform

With new investment and protection come tough choices and reform. Of all reductions to central government grants, the most significant is to that given to local authorities, which will fall by around £6 billion over the next four years. Offsetting this, councils will retain more of the receipts from business rates and council tax and gain a new power to raise council tax to deal with increasing demand on adult social care. In the round, local government spending power (government grant plus income from council tax and business rates) will be flat in cash terms over the Parliament. Grant funding will be more geared to those local authorities with greatest service pressures.

This is part of a broader reform of local government finance. Councils will become almost entirely self-funded through locally-raised property taxes such as council

tax and business rates. They will also have greater control of their own destiny and stronger financial incentives to promote development and so local economic growth.

The Spending Review went further in reforming and finding savings from the way we support people looking for jobs and receiving financial support once in work. The Department for Work and Pensions will roll out Universal Credit across the country. Through technology-enabled business change, the Department will transform the way it works and save money. Some savings will be reinvested to provide more support to around a million people claiming out-of-work benefits, in return for extra responsibilities on them to look for work. The aim is for a leaner public administration, a lower welfare bill and a better public service.

Across the Department for Work and Pensions, HMRC, Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and several other departments, Government will spend around £2 billion in digitally-enabled business change, with the aim of delivering better public services at a lower cost.

Of course, announcing a Spending Review or even publishing Departmental Plans is just the beginning. The real work of implementing the plans put forward by departments has already started. Departments' success in the last Parliament at reducing spending and maintaining, and even improving, services[4] gives confidence about what can be done over the next five years.

3 Table 1.6: Total Managed Expenditure, SR15 document
4 www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3644/Coming-to-terms-with-austerity.aspx

Understanding costs to unlock opportunities

» How do we build a 'smarter state', alongside delivering £20 billion worth of consolidation measures? David Allen, Director of Public Spending at HM Treasury and Deputy Head of the Finance Function, and Johannes Wolff, Deputy Director, explain how HM Government Finance is helping the Civil Service rise to the challenge, developing a new way to break down departmental silos, unlock opportunities and put financial management at the heart of decision making.

In November, the Chancellor set out how the Government plans to achieve a £20 billion reduction in spending, as part of the 2015 Spending Review. As the Prime Minister has said, this challenge demands that the UK develop 'a smarter state' – built around the principles of reform, devolution and efficiency.

The New Year brings opportunities to secure these savings and essential reforms to improve public services. The Government Finance Function has a central role to play in ensuring you and other officials succeed.
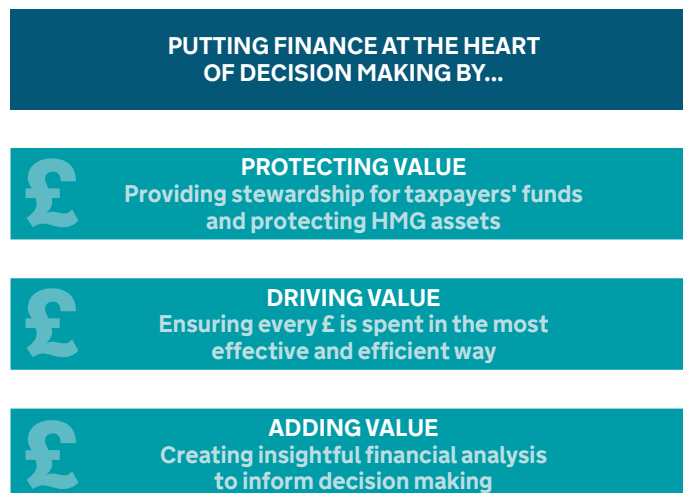
Putting finance at the heart of decision-making

The preparation to put expertise and support in place across Whitehall began two years ago, with the Government's review of financial management[1]. This was a call to arms to improve financial management in every department. Its central aim was to ensure finance has the right people, operating model, data and tools to deliver public sector reform and better public services.

A crucial part of this programme is working with front-line officials and others to better understand and analyse the cost of public services. This includes a forensic understanding of cost and cost drivers to understand, both, what we spend and what we get for it. This knowledge – what drives costs, why they vary and why they change over time – is essential to highlight the most effective and sustainable ways in which the Civil Service can achieve essential savings in the years ahead.

Reviewing your costs

The Financial Management Reform programme has a new

Figure 1: Review of financial management

PUTTING FINANCE AT THE HEART OF DECISION MAKING BY…

£ **PROTECTING VALUE**
Providing stewardship for taxpayers' funds and protecting HMG assets

£ **DRIVING VALUE**
Ensuring every £ is spent in the most effective and efficient way

£ **ADDING VALUE**
Creating insightful financial analysis to inform decision making

dedicated team based in HM Treasury (HMT), who undertake 'Cost Reviews' as a practical way to achieve this.

Working closely with departments' finance, strategy, analysis and policy teams, the reviews have examined different areas of public spending. In particular, they have focused on taking a whole-system approach to services being delivered across organisations to break down silos. By using existing financial and operational performance data to provide new financial-based insights, the reviews increase understanding of costs and opportunities for benchmarking and find new, smarter ways of working.

Case Study I – Further Education

Further Education (FE) is a large, varied and fragmented sector. With that in mind, the review team started by comparing the financial health metrics for over 1,200 FE institutions, looking in detail at cost breakdowns for 341 colleges and visiting 20 providers.

From this work, they identified significant variation in the profitability of institutions, driven by differences in costs and income. For example, administrative costs vary between 10 and 28% of total FE providers' income. Almost half of providers' income is spent on teaching staff, the main cost driver.

Digging deeper into a sample of 20 institutions, the team identified what colleges have done to achieve low costs. Firstly, they manage their staffing mix to make the most of cost-effective learning support staff.

Secondly, they actively control their costs per teacher, for example, by making greater use of high-performing staff from lower tenure pay bands.

Finally, they achieve a positive balance between optimum class size and teaching quality, for example, combining learners from different, but similar courses for some classes to help maintain larger class sizes.

Julian Gravatt from the Association of Colleges said, "The 2015 review has helped develop a better shared understanding of the factors driving costs, which has stimulated further work to develop better cost benchmarks."

1   https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-financial-management-in-government

Understanding costs to unlock opportunities

Figure 2: On average, FE providers operate at a 1% profit
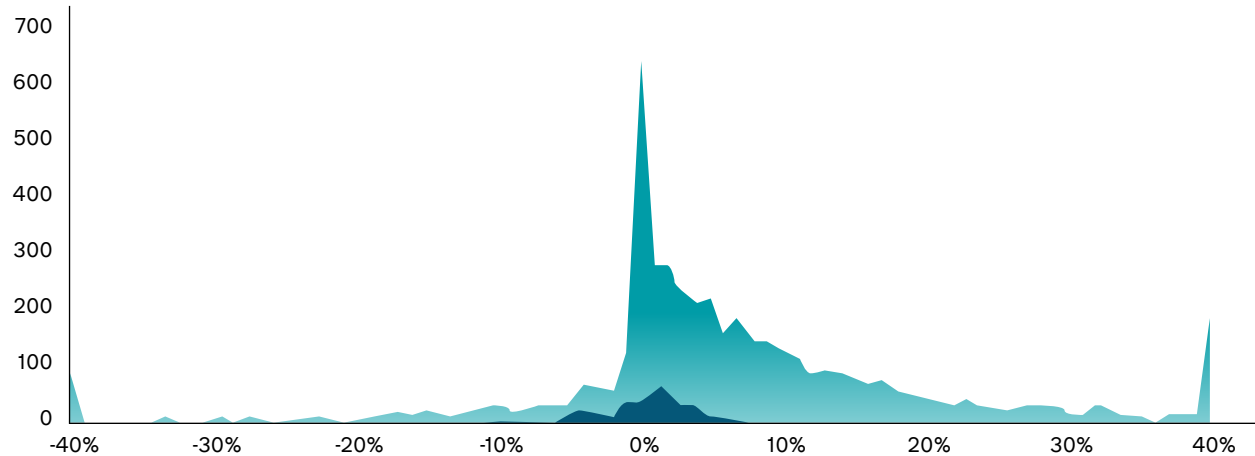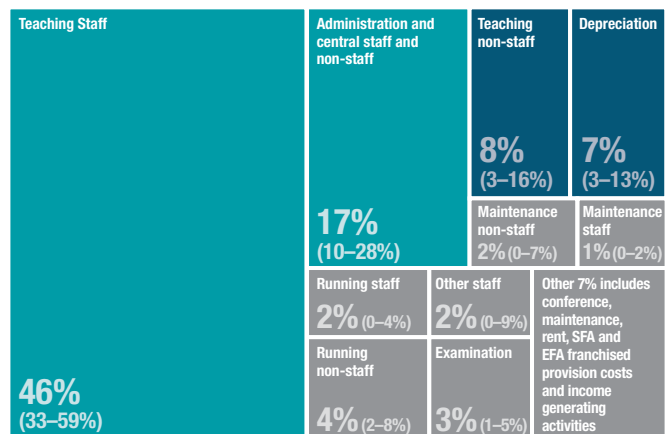

Figure 3: Value map of the FE sector

There is a significant variation in all major areas of spend

N = 338, All AoC Providers

Total cost of AoC providers (12/13), % of total income; variation in % of total income for upper and lower deciles.

- > 15% variation
- 10–15% variation
- < 10% variation

Case Study II – Mental Health

This review examined the cost of providing mental health services in England, looking across health, social care and welfare silos. This starkly showed – for the first time – the significant impact of both welfare payments in supporting people with mental health issues and the contribution of unpaid care.

Taking a whole system approach highlighted that one million people with mental health issues receive Employment and Support Allowance, but employment schemes are not tailored to people with mental health issues.

This suggests we can improve outcomes and opportunities for people in considerable need, by looking across the health, social care and welfare landscape. (see 'Working for better mental health' – October 2015 issue)

The Review also identified large variation in the unit cost of provision of similar services, with potential for significant savings. For example, the unit cost per patient of talking therapies varies from between £800 and £5,400. Evidence suggested some correlation between level of investment and outcomes.

The costing approach

Based on our experience in the field so far, the Cost Review team has developed a simple approach to understand the costs of public services. By starting with a broad understanding and going into more detail in several areas, Cost Reviews can get you the evidence needed for reform.

1 **A broad understanding**: Start by understanding your total spend and costs. Is it just from one department or many? For example, over 20% of the total cost of mental health care is funded through welfare payments. Do the charitable and private sector also play a role? How are costs allocated across outputs of activity? How do these activities contribute to the Government's outcomes?

2 **Going into more detail**: Next, you need to identify areas where you would benefit most from a deeper understanding, for example, where there is big variation in costs.

Figure 4: Mental health expenditure in England in 2013/14 (£bn)

NHS MH services   **MH in other NHS services**   **Other HMG services**
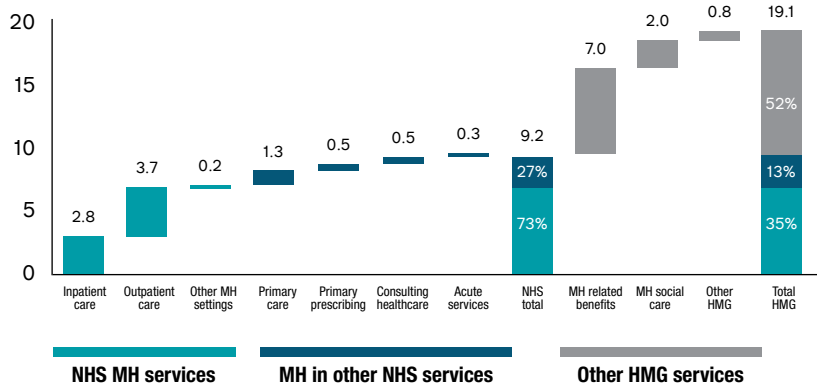
Figure 5: Relationship between investment in Talking Therapies and outcomes by CCG
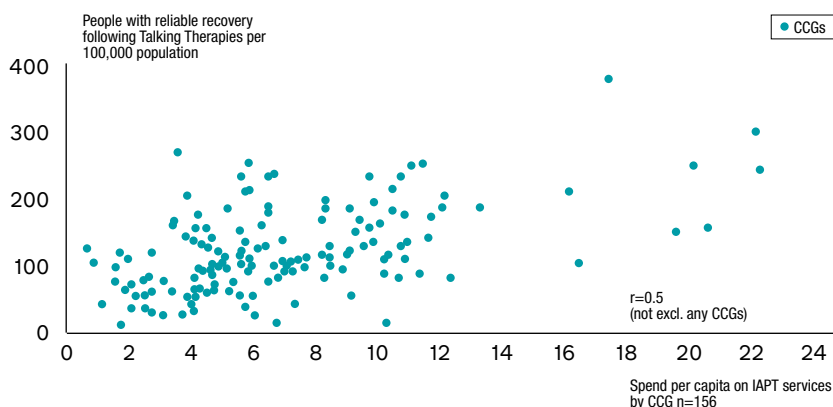
By analysing cost-drivers, benchmarking and looking at ways of working, Cost Reviews can come up with practical recommendations in targeted areas (which – if designed properly – can be extrapolated more widely).

3 Evidence for reform: Cost Reviews can provide evidence for how to provide better public services for less. By understanding our costs, we can come up with new, smarter ways of working across Government.

What we've learnt

The team has completed a number of Cost Reviews over the last year, covering diverse public services. In addition to reviews on FE and mental health, the team has examined spend on health and social care, the UK border, immigration and departures, criminal justice in London, counter-terrorism, infrastructure policing and research.

All Reviews are delivered in 6 to 8 weeks and, whilst the team don't provide direct policy recommendations, they can give you the evidence base you need to drive change.

One of the areas we looked at for the Health & Social Care Cost Review was North-East Lincolnshire. Cathy Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer of North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said, "The pilot has helped us to look at the use of local resources in a very different way, which has helped us to identify new opportunities.

One example is the work with our ambulance service colleagues to reduce the rate of ambulance calls that are resulting in transfer to the local hospital."

Cost reviews are focused on strengthening financial expertise across Government. Seminars run throughout this year have had very positive feedback, highlighting the wider appetite for more costing tools to use in your day-to-day work.

Most importantly, this work is helping staff to improve public services, while also reducing costs. So far, the reviews have identified potential savings of up to £1 billion through reform.

Robert Arnott, Director of Strategy and Planning at the Home Office, was a key stakeholder in the UK Border Review. He said, "The costing project offered pacey and clear-sighted insights for doing things better as well as more cheaply. We will be using the outputs as an evidence base for strategic work over the next few years, not just for the Spending Review. And we liked the approach the Treasury took in working with us on this, which was genuinely collaborative and value-adding."

The future

In light of the plans set out at the 2015 Spending Review, the team is helping officials build the evidence base, providing the know-how to implement greater reform, devolution and efficiency in a sustainable and informed way.

As this work continues, the review team's focus will increasingly turn to capability building, creating a finance community equipped with the experience and expertise to ensure we understand what we spend and what we get for it.

To find out how you can go about undertaking your own cost review, **contact govfinance@ hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk**

Improving public sector efficiency to deliver a smarter state

» **Stephen Aldridge, Director for Analysis and Data, Angus Hawkins, Assistant Economist, and Cody Xuereb, Economic Adviser, from the Department for Communities and Local Government, write about the Public Sector Efficiency Group's focus on improving the understanding of public sector efficiency across departments, looking at the trends in, and drivers of, efficiency and evidence of the scope for improving desired outcomes further.**

Why public sector efficiency?

The argument for greater efficiency in the public sector at a time of spending reductions and increased pressure on services is obvious, but the importance of efficiency goes beyond saving money.

Government output currently makes up around a fifth of Gross Domestic Product and any effort to boost economy-wide productivity must include the public sector and public services. However, productivity is only one aspect of efficiency. As the Prime Minister highlighted earlier this year, efficiency is also key to delivering a 'smarter state' capable not only of delivering more for less, but better public services.

Boosting public sector productivity and creating a 'smarter state' require both

an evidence-based understanding of what public services have been able to deliver so far, the drivers of these outcomes and the different options available.

Since the beginning of 2014, a group of Civil Service analysts established by Dave Ramsden, Head of the Government Economic Service, and chaired by Stephen Aldridge has been building this understanding through the Public Sector Efficiency Group.

What do we mean by efficiency?

Efficiency refers to the entire process of turning public money into positive outcomes for individuals and society (as set out in Figure 1). It goes beyond back-office savings, and means thinking about how government funds, designs and delivers frontline services. Improving efficiency does not just mean reducing spend.

It also means delivering better outcomes and more effective government, while using public money in the smartest way possible.

To highlight this, the Group made one concept central to its work – the distinction between 'technical' and 'allocative' efficiency (see Figure 2 on the next page). Technical efficiency means doing what we do now, but better. ▶

Figure 1: The public sector and public service production function

Economy
How cheaply are the inputs being purchased?

Productivity
How much output is produced for each unit of input?

Effectiveness and resilience
How do the outputs affect desired outcomes?

Public Money → **Inputs** → **Outputs** → **Desired Outcomes**

Inputs → **Outputs**

Allocative Efficiency
Are the right outputs being produced?

Technical Efficiency

Allocative Efficiency

Public Sector Efficiency
Relevant to the entire process of turning public money into desired outcomes

Improving public sector efficiency to deliver a smarter state

It means asking questions like – can we purchase inputs, such as hospital equipment or teaching staff, at a lower cost without affecting quality? Can we produce more outputs, such as medical operations or A* GCSE pupils, for the resources we're putting in?

Allocative efficiency means finding wholly different ways of achieving the outcomes we want. It requires asking further, more difficult questions – are we doing the right things? Does this policy really work? It became clear through the Group's work that government is very good at asking (and answering) questions about technical efficiency, but can sometimes struggle with questions about allocative efficiency.

The UK has a strong track record in measuring public sector efficiency. Ever since the independent review by Sir Tony Atkinson in 2005, the UK has been at the forefront of tracking the ef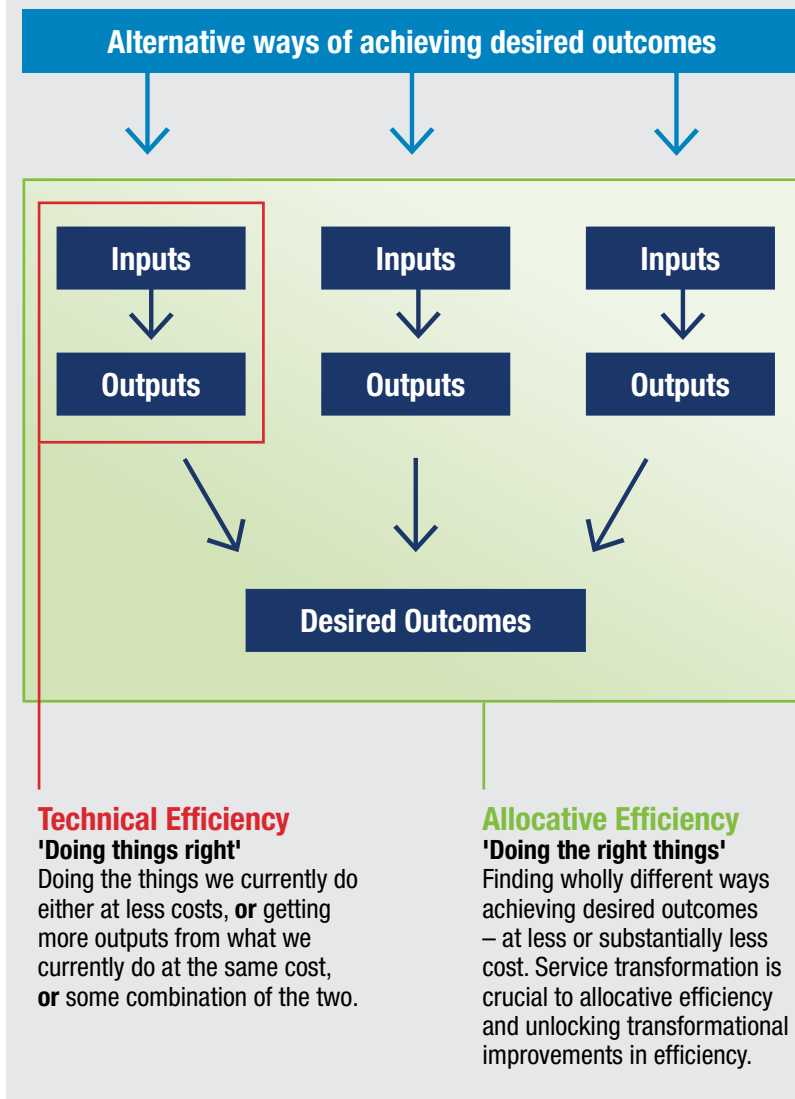ficiency of government services. The Office for National Statistics, for example, publishes statistics on the productivity of public services as a whole, as well as detailed articles on education and healthcare.

The Group recognised that any efficiency metric would be subject to measurement challenges – possibly significant ones. However, these can usually be at least partially overcome provided the limitations are understood and conclusions drawn with care.

The Group's work was always intended to do more than just measure efficiency – it was intended to facilitate constructive challenge to every part of Whitehall, help each department better understand the efficiency of their services, activities and programmes

Figure 2: A simple but powerful concept – technical and allocative efficiency

Alternative ways of achieving desired outcomes

Inputs → Outputs

Inputs → Outputs

Inputs → Outputs

Desired Outcomes

Technical Efficiency
'Doing things right'
Doing the things we currently do either at less costs, **or** getting more outputs from what we currently do at the same cost, **or** some combination of the two.

Allocative Efficiency
'Doing the right things'
Finding wholly different ways achieving desired outcomes – at less or substantially less cost. Service transformation is crucial to allocative efficiency and unlocking transformational improvements in efficiency.

and recognise where/how they might be improved.

What have we learned about the trends in efficiency?

The Group has surveyed evidence on both technical and allocative efficiency from the main spending departments to bring together a comprehensive analysis of trends in public sector efficiency. The Group's final report is one of the most encompassing undertaken in recent memory – though many

gaps remain.

One of the most interesting findings was the apparent break in the long run trend around 2010. Since then, outputs and/ or outcomes have remained stable or improved across many government services, despite having fewer resources. Of course, that doesn't mean this trend will continue, but it does suggest that placing hard budget constraints can increase efficiency. The following box summarises the data on the trend in productivity in the National Health Service.

Efficiency in the National Health Service

Using largely in-house monitoring data, the Department of Health (DH) has estimated that between 1975 and 2010/11, NHS England's labour productivity rose by an average of 0.8 % per annum, much of this driven by reduced average length of hospital stay and shifting activity to day cases. This allowed fewer beds and nurses per episode, though the average need of patients in hospital increased.

Between 2010/11 and 2013/14, labour productivity growth almost doubled to 1.4% per annum. A combination of pay restraint, cuts in central budgets and the abolition of some tiers of management helped deliver unprecedented savings over this period.

Figure 3: NHS productivity in England 1974/75 − 2012/13

Since 1975, NHS productivity has risen by an average of 0.8% per annum

Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 it averaged 1.4% per annum

Between 2009/10 and 2013/14 productivity increased by 5.8%

2013/14
5.8%
increase

2009

Outputs

Inputs

Productivity

Index 1975−76 =100

Source: DH
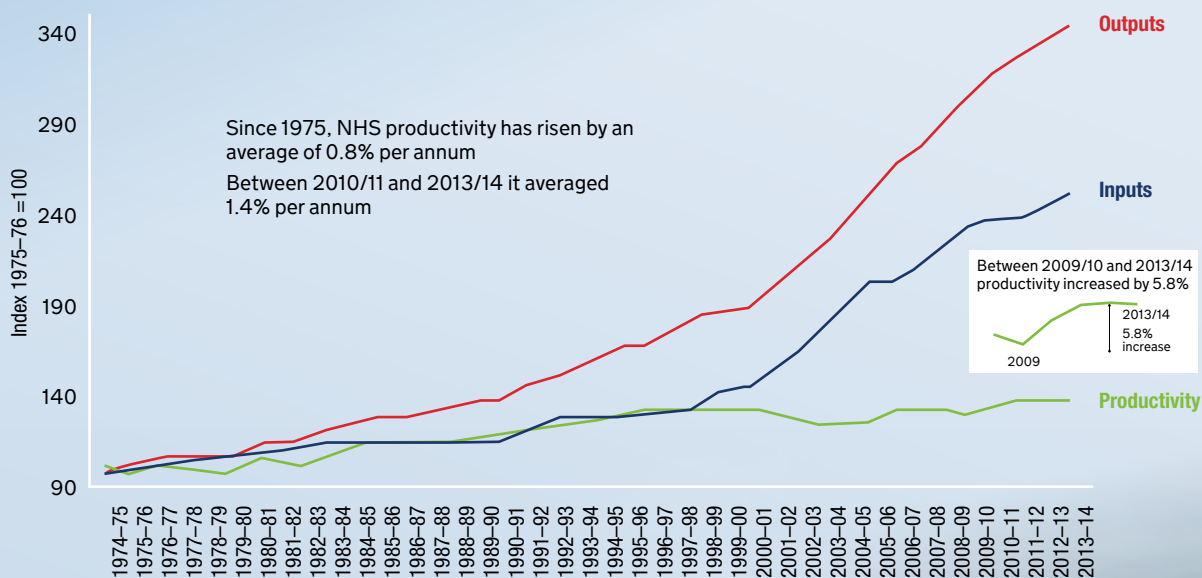
This story of the shift in productivity performance since 2010 is confirmed using data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and York University. ONS data also shows that from 2010 to 2013, NHS productivity has grown well above its long run trend (1.9% per annum compared to 0.8% per annum on average since 1996). The ONS index measures healthcare productivity growth across the UK and includes spending on capital, goods and services inputs, as well as labour.

Note: Labour productivity is the ratio of an index of outputs to labour inputs. Outputs include a variety of measures, including in- and out-patients treated, GP consultations and prescriptions issued. These are quality-adjusted using survival rates, patient surveys and waiting times.

Improving public sector efficiency to deliver a smarter state

What have we learned about what drives efficiency?

Behind the analysis of trends in public sector efficiency, the Group has built up a wealth of case studies. Through these case studies and other evidence, it became clear there were five key broad drivers of public sector efficiency improvement

(see Figure 3):

- the use of markets and competition
- service redesign and alternative delivery mechanisms
- organisation and workforce drivers
- technology, data and targeting
- hard budget constraints and spending flexibility.

Crucially, though perhaps unsurprisingly, there doesn't appear to be a single key driver. Improving public sector performance relies on a number of levers being pulled simultaneously.

The more challenging part of the Group's work was assessing the scope for further efficiency improvement. It concluded that there remains significant

Figure 3: The drivers of efficiency identified by the Public Sector Efficiency Group

Markets and Competition

- New entry competition/ market creation
- Intelligent outsourcing
- Strengthened incentives
- Cost benchmarking

Service Redesign and Alternative Delivery Mechanisms

- Prevention/early intervention
- Frontline service integration
- Reconfiguring services
- Empowering users: Co-production and co-design

HARD BUDGET CONSTRAINTS + SPENDING FLEXIBILITY

Organisation and Workforce

- Holding down pay
- Pay systems
- Shared services
- Sharing best practice
- Workforce capability and leadership
- Organisational structure

Technology, Data and Targeting

- Effective use of ICT
- Channel shift
- Technological advances
- Effective use of data

There is no efficiency 'silver bullet'. There are many levers that need to be pulled to improve efficiency.

scope for efficiency improvement over the medium to longer term – in particular, through service redesign, the use of markets and competition and the use of new technology and data.

Embedding the approach across Whitehall

The government analytical community's work on efficiency did not end with the production of a final report. The Group's findings have, for example, been discussed with Permanent Secretaries at their weekly gathering and fed into HM Treasury's plan for boosting productivity.

The Group is now taking its work further by collaborating with the Government Finance Profession to develop 'Value Maps' – a framework being piloted that aims to help every government department analyse and visualise the entirety of its spend, assess its understanding of the efficiency of different services, activities and programmes and identify the scope for improvement.

The Group has also made all of its materials readily available to civil servants. This includes the final report and an 'Efficiency Toolkit' – a two-page tool bringing together the Group's key insights into a set of practical steps for applying these to any area of government spending.

For more information about the Group's work, including a copy of its Final Report, or the ongoing work with the Finance profession, **please visit the online Civil Service Learning pages or contact Stephen Aldridge (stephen.aldridge@ communities.gsi.gov.uk).** The authors of this article are grateful to analysts and other colleagues across departments for their invaluable contributions to the work of the Public Sector Efficiency Group.

Markets and competition in action: The Prison Unit Cost Programme

The Prison Unit Cost Programme applies a cost benchmark to each public sector prison, based on overall prison costs and prison-specific attributes. The tailored benchmarks incentivise less efficient prisons to identify areas for improvement and learn from more efficient prisons. This has also been combined with intelligent outsourcing to further drive costs down.

The programme aims to achieve a saving of around **£300 million** per annum and reduce the overall unit cost by approximately **£2,200 per prison place**.

National Citizen Service: supporting our young people to make a difference

» **It's all too easy to criticise the next generation for not being as hard working or focused. Yet, as Charlotte Roberts from the Youth Policy Team in Cabinet Office highlights in this article, the Government's National Citizen Service is proof positive that our young people are more passionately committed than ever to making their local communities and wider world a better place.**

When you were younger, how did you spend your school holidays? Maybe you went away with family, hung out with friends or stayed at home watching TV. You might have found yourself a part-time job or studied hard for upcoming exams. Whatever you did, and however long ago it was, you never really forget just how exciting the start of those precious school-free weeks felt.

Six years ago, the Cabinet Office set out to harness that promise and enthusiasm, giving young people from all walks of life the chance to learn new skills, make new friends and give back to their communities – in their spare time. The Prime Minister stated his ambition for a National Citizen Service that would become a rite of passage for all young people and a national institution.

National Citizen Service (NCS) was piloted in 2011 with just 8,000 participants between 15 and 17 years old. In the years since, over 200,000 young people have participated in NCS. And in the most recent Spending Review, the Chancellor reiterated this

Government's commitment to expanding NCS. He announced funding to provide this opportunity to 300,000 young people in 2019/20.

This has helped make NCS the fastest-growing youth movement in the UK since the Scouts started a century ago. There will be nearly 80,000 new participants involved in the 2015 programme alone.

Crucially, evidence shows just how much NCS is helping to benefit young people, local communities and the country as a whole, with its focus on building a more cohesive, responsible and engaged society.

The NCS journey

Each region has a team of NCS providers, who deliver the programme in their local school holidays. Despite some variations in delivery, the NCS programme is broadly divided into four phases.

In the first phase, new recruits go away to participate in a series of outward-bound activities. This may be the

first time away from home for some young people, but it enables them to meet other participants, face new challenges, from hiking to rock climbing, and work as a team with each other.

Teams are carefully balanced with members from diverse social groups. NCS actively recruits across all backgrounds and identities, mixing genders, ethnicities, faiths, sexualities, abilities and socio-economic groups. This team-building phase allows them to establish relationships that cross social divides.

During phase two, these young people stay closer to home, working on a community-based residential course. Here, they learn new skills like photography and journalism and meet with local charities, businesses and other organisations to help design and develop the social action project they will deliver in stage three of the programme.

The scale, scope and objectives of this project are for them to decide. But they must dedicate 30 hours of their time to making a tangible

National Citizen Service: supporting our young people to make a difference

difference in their community. NCS participants have risen to the challenge with a huge range of projects, from organising a fundraising concert to gardening in community spaces and organising care packages for homeless people.

Finally, in part four of the programme, NCS participants graduate with a ceremony to celebrate their achievements and welcome them to the elite NCS graduate network.

Inspiring a national movement

As well as delivering all phases of the programme, providers are also responsible for recruitment. This has been a key challenge for such a fast-growing programme. Each year, there is a whole new year group eligible for NCS. How can we get the word out – not just to young people, but to the people who influence them, such as their parents?

Cabinet Office have worked with the NCS Trust to implement innovative marketing strategies, from YouTube partnerships to the NCS YES LIVE festival and the TV advertisements you may have seen for yourself. Filling places is essential – not just to ensure taxpayer value for money, but also to open this opportunity up to as many young people as possible, so that we all see the benefits.

The results speak for themselves

Independent evaluations have returned overwhelmingly positive outcomes throughout the programme, from parents, teachers and the young people themselves. And the Cabinet Office has commissioned

annual reports to quantify these accurately.

According to the most recent evidence, 90%* of 2014 NCS graduates considered their NCS experience worthwhile. The same number were proud of what they had achieved and wanted to continue to be involved in the programme. Some 80%* believed they had learned something new about themselves.

A lot of this is down to the incredible people who deliver these programmes. Team leaders, assistants and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure a safe and supportive environment for these young people, helping them to take on the new challenges and opportunities the NCS offers. Around 90%* of NCS participants talk positively about the personal help they received from NCS personnel, especially during their social action projects.

A stronger, fairer society

More widely, NCS is helping to boost the aspirations of these young people and promote social cohesion. It's bringing young people together, who otherwise might never meet, to build ties and give them a powerful, common learning experience.

A core part of this is ensuring NCS is accessible to people from all backgrounds. So, bursaries and funding are available to help those who need it to cover the initial £50 sign-up fee and any costs of additional support.

As they go through the programme, participants get to understand each other better. Evidence shows this strengthens their trust in each other and improves attitudes

towards other people of all backgrounds and identities. Nine out of ten parents questioned felt that their child had a better understanding of people from different backgrounds after the programme.

In this way, NCS is helping to contribute to stronger communities and a more integrated, cohesive society – just one way the Office for Civil Society fosters a vibrant and independent civil society.

Better skills, better lives

Another important part of NCS is the essential skills that young people learn to help them lead successful lives in the future. This includes teamwork, communication and leadership. Learning is reinforced with hands-on experience, gained through time spent away from home.

Young volunteers talk about the greater sense of independence and resilience that this gives them. For example, 2014 NCS graduates felt 24%* more confident leading a team, 21%* more confident explaining ideas clearly and 18%* more confident meeting new people. These are all skills essential to their academic futures and careers.

Delivering their own projects, participants also meet local organisations and learn more about the impact they can have as members of their communities – even after the programme has finished.

And many participants do continue to play an active part in their local communities outside of school and college. This includes a commitment to lead more healthy and productive lives.

More personally, NCS participants build lasting friendships with each other

▶

and leave with a strong local network to call on. Together, they are more likely to know how to deal with a problem in their community and feel that they can influence the world around them.

Get involved

As the NCS programme has grown, more departments have become involved, ensuring it supports the Government's ambitions in areas as diverse as health, skills, employment and social mobility. In the past six years, the reach and impact of NCS has far exceeded original plans.

NCS is estimated to generate a return of up to £4 for every £1* of taxpayer money it spends. More importantly, it is helping to change the prospects of millions of young people across the country.

Visit **www.ipsos-mori. com/researchpublications/ publications** to see the independent evaluations of the impacts of the NCS programme.

And, if you know a teenager looking for something to do in their holidays, tell them to **check out www.ncsyes. co.uk**, sign up to NCS and change their lives. *Based on Standard Summer Impact, National Citizen Service 2014 Evaluation, Ipsos MORI 2015.

Going forward

The NCS programme has been a major undertaking, one that we are proud of, but also one the wider Civil Service can learn from, in particular, on the following points:

Ask the experts: Although originally delivered by Cabinet Office, in 2013, the decision was taken to create a new delivering body in the form of the NCS Trust. The NCS Trust is independent and so able to hire specialists in areas such as youth marketing. Their political neutrality also enables them to build better relationships with the rest of the youth and voluntary sector. These sources of expertise are essential to improved delivery.

Evaluate: It is often difficult to quantify the impact of a social programme like NCS. How can you measure improved wellbeing or greater confidence? However, at Cabinet Office, we have found that evidence from regular, rigorous, independent evaluations has been vital in order to prove results and ensure both financial and political support.

Collaborate: Any policy has links and overlaps with others. Sometimes, we have been surprised by the connections, for example, the positive impacts on smoking and drinking habits. An important part of our work in Cabinet Office has been reaching out to other departments to see how we can best work together. It has always been rewarding to hear the ideas and perspectives of other teams, and this has opened up an array of new options.

Be ambitious: It can be very difficult to set realistic targets for a new programme. We have challenging targets around participant numbers, but there are other areas where NCS is succeeding, such as its social mix. NCS shows that, with the right support, you can aspire to start a movement.

Professional value-added volunteering

» **Every civil servant now gets five days of special leave a year to volunteer. In this article, Andrea Lee, Deputy Director of Strategy at the Department of Health, shows how government economists and analysts are using their professional skills to volunteer in an impactful way – helping third sector and public sector organisations in need of their particular expertise and experience.**

With constraints on public spending, there's a real premium on civil servants delivering more and better for less. This is fertile territory for economists and other analysts whose skills are increasingly in demand.

The drive for open policy making also means that forging stronger networks outside government – in academia, think tanks and the private sector – is more important than ever. And, with officials now able to take up to five days of special leave a year to volunteer, what could be better than government economists offering their professional skills to help charities?

This is exactly what's been happening since Pro Bono Economics (PBE) was founded in 2009 by Andy Haldane of the Bank of England, where he is now Chief Economist, and Martin Brookes, now CEO of the charity Tomorrow's People. They saw an opportunity for economists to help charities struggling to demonstrate their impact. At the same time, they want to help economists broaden their horizons and develop their skills beyond their day jobs.

It's probably fair to say that the economics profession had no real tradition of volunteering. Dave Ramsden, Head of the Government Economic Service (GES) and Chief Economic Adviser to the Treasury, joined the board of trustees at PBE at an early stage.

He recognised the huge contribution that government economists could make and how this, in turn, could benefit their professional development.

Valuable experience

Through PBE, nearly 100 GES economists have worked on more than 40 projects over the years, producing some fantastic pieces of work for a wide range of charities, including the Mo Farah Foundation, Chance UK and Prisoners Abroad. Some of these projects were about advising the charity on better data collection, others analysed existing data and a handful looked at the cost of dealing with a particular issue.

Economist volunteers and charities both report how valuable the experience is. Many third-sector organisations feel they are making a difference, but they may not have the skills in house to quantify this. That's where Pro-Bono Economics can help.

A team from the National Audit Office (NAO) worked with National Numeracy to estimate the cost to the economy of low levels of adult numeracy. They put the figure at £20.2 billion per year (about 1.3% of Gross Domestic Product, or the value of everything the country produces).

Wendy Jones, a trustee of National Numeracy, says the collaboration has helped them to challenge negative attitudes, influence public policy and promote effective approaches to improving numeracy. "The figure has become one that everyone uses," she says, "including our funders and partners. Nowadays, everyone wants things quantified and having a robust figure like this helps us to tell our story in a compelling way. It also complements the stories of the people who struggle with poor numeracy and we use it a lot."

Exploring the benefits of family services

In a similar way, a team from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) volunteered to work for Family Action, a charity that has been providing services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families since 1869.

It works with over 45,000 families a year, providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 140 services based in communities across England. One of the services is support for women at risk of developing mental illness during pregnancy.

The Perinatal Support Service is led by a professional co-ordinator

Professional value-added volunteering

with a health and social care background. Support comes from a team of volunteer befrienders who have experience of parenthood and in some cases have received help from the service themselves. Family Action works with families from before the baby is born to at least one year after. They had approached PBE because they wanted to demonstrate the benefits of the service.

The DCLG team were more used to analysing the bricks and mortar of housing and regeneration programmes. They knew little about the lives of the women at risk of perinatal depression who were supported by Family Action. To add to the challenge, the team quickly realised that there was very little research in this area to draw on.

So, they set about using their contacts and networks and applied their knowledge of how to cost services, how to mine big national surveys for useful data and select the right measures by which to value benefits.

Finally, the team showed that the service could deliver a financial benefit of around £2,430 for each woman receiving support.

The personal benefits of this work are even more valuable, helping these parents, children and families to recover and thrive in the future.

The professional rewards of volunteering

Volunteering in this way is not without its challenges, when you're going into a situation with no prior knowledge of the subject area and continuing to manage your day job. But there can be considerable

rewards for the volunteers and for the departments that support them.

The DCLG team, say, "Looking back on the experience, it gave us an insight into how the charity sector operates, the pressures organisations face and the practical realities of supporting people in need. As volunteers, we learnt to work as a team, share our diverse skills and experience and keep the project on track. We're proud of what we were able to do and to show that Family Action services made a difference."

Solving problems, improving services

Volunteering professional skills in government is not confined to economists. Several departments actively offer analytical support to other organisations. For example, mixed teams of analysts at the Department of Health, including statisticians, operational and social researchers, are participating in the department's Connecting for Change programme (see 'From Whitehall to hospital ward' – January 2015 issue).

This is all about gaining first-hand insight and understanding from patients and people using health and care services. Analysts use their skills to help solve problems, collect data and provide new analysis.

Six Department of Health analysts recently 'connected' with Harrogate and Rural District Foundation Trust in North Yorkshire, visiting the acute and community health facilities and analysing data on hospital bed use. The Department's analysts produced a high level model of the Harrogate health economy.

This helped the Clinical

Commissioning Group and Trust identify which categories of patients to target with their new models of care. The analysts also used national data to kick-start intelligent benchmarking data based on patients' average length of stay and admissions for conditions that can, and an ideal system would, be managed in primary and community settings.

A similar Connecting for Change project in the London Borough of Sutton involved Department of Health analysts. They gathered information about a health and care system when it was most stretched in December 2014. Then, they carried out a thorough cost-benefit appraisal of Sutton's Re-ablement service, designed to help prevent emergency hospital admissions of frail elderly people.

This connecting programme has demonstrated that sharing the valuable bank of skills acquired by government analysts has benefits all round – and these are not just one-off effects. Partnerships mean different perspectives can be routinely drawn on and the accumulated knowledge of volunteers can be pooled to build a better picture of what's happening in local areas.

Government departments already support staff to spend a number of days away from their desks volunteering their professional skills, with yet more inspirational volunteers celebrated at this year's Civil Service Awards (see box on page 22). What better way is there to get a reality check on policy-making and at the same time make a contribution to improving services?

For more information about Pro Bono Economics and to volunteer: **http://probonoeconomics.com/how-can-i-volunteer**

Volunteers in the Civil Service

The Civil Service Awards highlighted the outstanding contribution that civil servants from across government have made to their local community, civil society and country. Below are just some of the shortlisted candidates for the volunteering award, whose passion and commitment have created a positive impact for their cause.

Liz Formby (winner) – West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner's Office, Department for Education

Liz received this award for her selfless determination in developing the Akamba Children's Education Fund (ACEF). The Fund supports the education and welfare of 946 street children in one of the largest slums in Kenya. The charity provides them with a home, school, food and their basic needs. Liz has connected with schools and groups in the UK that raise funds for ACEF.
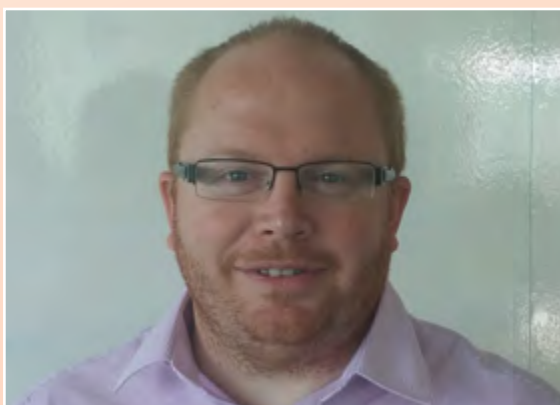
Chris Lamb (runner-up) – Technology HR Business Partner Support, Department for Work and Pensions

Chris has been raising funds for local and national charities for many years. His latest work is his Chocolate Orange delivery project where he collects chocolate oranges from across the UK, and delivers them to hospital staff in memory of his son Elliot. The project is now in its fifth year and has grown to over 5,000 chocolate orange deliveries. His work has touched the lives of many people and his enthusiasm for helping others has been inspirational and contagious.

Sharan Ghuman (runner-up) – Border Force Higher Officer, Home Office

As a trustee for UK Friends of Unique Home, Sharan provides education to local communities, both in the UK and India, about girl infanticide with the aim of changing historical cultural behaviours towards women. She has been involved in numerous fundraisers and social media campaigns and given television and radio interviews on the subject. She is also a board member of the Sikh Council UK Safeguarding Committee which has recently launched a brand new national initiative to encourage and assist all Sikh faith-based organisations in the UK to have Safeguarding policies in place. In addition, Sharan is a trustee for Aaisha's Hope – a charity raising awareness and acceptance of autism in people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

New Year, new motivation for health changes

» **We are all too familiar with New Year's resolutions to stop smoking, drink less alcohol or exercise more. Professor Kevin Fenton, Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England, discusses some of the techniques used to help motivate people to make the healthy changes they need and turn them into longer lasting habits.**

In public health, we aim to give people the necessary information and tools to help them make the right choices so they, and their families, can live healthier lives for longer.

The fact is, although people in the UK are living longer, their quality of life is often poor, with too many living with ill health and disability due to illness that could have been prevented. Obesity continues to be one of the leading causes of heart disease and early death, yet 62% of adults in England are overweight, and the picture looks no better for our children with one in ten already classed as obese.

So how can public health professionals influence population behaviours that are seemingly inherent in society, such as frequently eating at fast food outlets and drinking alcohol throughout the week? At Public Health England, we use behavioural insights to help shape our public campaigns to encourage people to lead healthier lives, including stopping smoking, eating healthier and exercising regularly.

The New Year brings renewed motivation for personal change and an opportunity to reassess and reengage with our health. Of course, most people don't structure their lives around the latest health campaign – and human nature dictates that we might decide to alter our lifestyle at any point. However, evidence shows that rallying together for a fresh start on a specific date can lead to successful behaviour change and this is something we try to incorporate into many of our public health initiatives.

The 'fresh start' moment

We are all too familiar with New Year's resolutions to stop smoking, drink less alcohol or exercise more. Unsurprisingly, Google search terms such as 'diet' and 'gym visit' increase significantly in the New Year period.

Part of the appeal of these resolutions is what is known as the 'fresh-start' effect; a moment in time where we feel closer to our future, healthier self and more distant from our past unhealthy behaviour.

The Dry January campaign takes advantage of the 'fresh-start' effect. It supports people to go without alcohol for a month as a means of encouraging them to reassess their relationship with alcohol. And the fact that many people will have been drinking more than usual throughout the festive period should make their decision to sign up to the challenge that bit easier.

However, we need to be careful about making resolutions at times when we lack the ability to accurately predict our future behaviour, such as deciding to quit eating chocolate just after a hearty and indulgent Christmas dinner. This type of decision leads to a higher chance of abandoning our resolution, as we fail to appreciate how we will feel in the New Year when we're back at work and hungry for a sweet treat. Support and tools to help people stick to their resolution are essential.

For example, the Booze Buster is a free tool that emails you with tips and support to help you choose less booze. An online Drinks Checker and a Drinks Tracker app are also available to make it easier to keep tabs on how much you are drinking.

The social context and physical environment: applying behavioural insights

Healthy behaviours are a result of the decisions an individual makes on a daily basis, but we know that many of these decisions are automatic, and a person's environment – both social and physical – can make it easier or harder to make healthy choices. For example, smokers often socialise with other smokers, with research showing that a person is 61% more likely to smoke if their partner or a close friend smokes[1].

However, this premise can work positively too. For example, smokers are two-thirds more likely to quit when their spouse stops smoking. A third are more likely to quit when a close friend or someone they work with stops[2]. Quitting together forms an integral component of our Stoptober campaign, which encourages people to sign up with their friends, family and colleagues. The physical environment also plays a crucial role in smoking behaviour: an essential step for someone aiming to quit is to remove smoking 'cues' such as ashtrays and lighters.

So, to achieve better health, we must make sure our environment supports our new behaviours – for example, place your gym shoes in sight and put junk food out of reach. Social support is also consistently shown to increase success of weight loss goals and group weight loss interventions are generally more effective.

It doesn't have to be 'all or nothing'

In addition, incremental changes are useful as a way to improve healthy behaviours over a period of time. Referred to as 'chunking', dividing complex or large goals into manageable sub-goals increases the probability of successful behaviour change. For example, the NHS 'Couch to 5K' running plan, which can be downloaded as a handy app, is a great example of breaking a large goal into small manageable chunks.

Healthy change is not necessarily an 'all or nothing' solution; tangible, small steps can be incredibly effective. Change4Life's 'Smart Restart' and 'Do One Thing' tools, for example, can be used to encourage small step changes such as swapping high sugar lunchbox items for healthier alternatives or walking for 30 minutes per day.

1&2   Christakis, N A, Quitting in Droves: Collective Dynamics of Smoking Behaviour in a Large Social Network, May 2008

New Year, new motivation for health changes

Our Change4Life '10-minute shake-up' initiative also helps children to reach the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day, breaking it up and providing a range of 10-minute activities for them to do throughout the day. Last year's campaign saw an extra 40,000 kids reach the recommended hour a day.

As public health practitioners, we recognise the importance of the social and physical environment in making healthy choices. By utilising behavioural insights to develop public health interventions, we can support individuals to make positive changes to their behaviour. We need to nudge people into change, influence behaviour and make healthier options easier for people to make so that they become the social norm.

Long-lasting change

It is clear that achieving healthy behaviours across the population is a complex challenge. But there are a number of methods that public health professionals can use to help people make healthy changes.

The biggest challenge to a new resolution is the brilliantly named 'what-the-hell' effect. Generally we set rules to help us to meet our goals: 'I will eat a banana for my afternoon snack rather than a chocolate bar'. If we break these rules we become vulnerable to the 'what-the-hell' effect.

Once the rule is broken, we overindulge, abandon our resolution and slip back into our previous unhealthy behaviours. It is likely that we will break our rules at some point, but to get over this hurdle it is vital that we understand how to manage these situations. For example, the Change4Life 'Fruit & Veg Boost' is a great tool for those trying to eat more healthily, sending hints and tips via email every Friday and a free recipe to help you stick with your chosen plan.

New Year is a great opportunity to think about health and plan for the year ahead, but behaviour change is not limited to this one moment in time. The 'fresh-start effect' can be channelled at the beginning of a new week, the start of a new month, following a birthday or even after a holiday.

If you are planning a public campaign in 2016, behavioural insights can be a really useful tool. If you're setting your own resolution, make sure your goals are achievable and sustainable. And for an even greater chance of success, why not get a family member or friend on board too?

Stoptober

Stoptober is a great example of a campaign that takes these behavioural insights into account, offering people the chance to get together with friends to stop smoking and starting on a specific date.

It also uses the concept of 'chunking', challenging people to stop smoking for the month of October, rather than aiming to quit for good. Yet those that reach the 28 day-goal are five times more likely to remain smoke free.

The public face of the Civil Service – creating a professional operational delivery workforce

» Operational Delivery is the Civil Service's largest profession. In this article, James Bishop from the Operational Delivery Professions team, sets out the innovative work now taking place to help the profession's 280,000 members learn new skills, progress their careers and ensure the Civil Service has the right operational capabilities for times of crisis and beyond.

Operational Delivery is the public face of the Civil Service, covering over 70% of the organisation's workforce. This is every official who works to support and protect UK citizens and businesses at home and abroad. Their roles range from processing visas or driving licence applications to checking passports, supporting citizens in court, managing prisoners, collecting taxes or helping people find jobs and get the help they need to live their lives.

The 2012 Civil Service Reform Plan outlined the learning, development and reforms needed to ensure the Civil Service had the skilled people it needs to become more agile and focused on delivery and results.

This is all in a days work for many of the organisation's operational staff. But, in the past, many of those working on the frontline were often the last to be offered structured learning opportunities, being given instead just the technical learning necessary to carry out their roles.

For some, that amounted to little more than being told to read the large paper-based instruction manual they'd been handed on their first day in the job.

Any professional development beyond that – like long-term career planning, accessible

The public face of the Civil Service – creating a professional operational delivery workforce

learning and programmes tailored to meet individual development needs – was unheard of. Even, as the technology developed, with the launch of e-learning, frontline staff still found it difficult to find inspiring development opportunities when they needed them.

It resulted in a poorer service for both our customers and staff alike. The Operational Delivery Professions (ODP) team is designed to change that, creating learning programmes that not only reinforce the capability of operational personnel across departments, but also help them to plan and progress their future careers.

As Ruth Owen, Head of the Operational Delivery Profession, says, "The job we do in Operations is vital to how Government services are delivered to every individual and business in this country. That is why it is so important that we develop as a profession – set high standards and support every member of the profession to be the best they can be."

So, how does that work in practice?

Operational qualifications

Firstly, it means giving people the opportunities and tools they need to bolster their skills and career choices, including providing access to a new curriculum of learning and development via Civil Service Learning.

This includes a range of internationally recognised qualifications in Operational Delivery. Created by the ODP team, these are City & Guilds and Chartered Management Institute accredited, starting at Level 2 (GCSE-equivalent) and going right up to Level 7 (post-graduate equivalent).

Each qualification contains a variety of units, covering everything from 'working in operational delivery' to 'planning' and 'leadership'.

These courses are open to operational professionals at all grades and departments, and the ODP team has worked hard to ensure they offer staff value for money compared to similar qualifications available externally.

The qualifications are knowledge-based and use work-based scenarios to reinforce students' understanding. They are also designed to be flexible, fitting around people's day jobs with online learning. Candidates can use these digital tools to submit assessments, complete tests, carry out learning and receive feedback at a time and pace of their choosing.

Working for departments and operational professionals

Over 3,000 staff members have signed up for these courses so far and the feedback from students has been incredibly positive.

A Higher Executive Officer at the Legal Aid Agency, studying for a Level 6 Operational Delivery qualification, said, "I have been impressed with the high quality of the qualification and the fantastic learning products and tools created by ODP."

A Senior Executive Officer, who recently completed their Level 7 Operational Delivery qualification, agrees, "It taught me new skills including planning and project management, which helped me to reflect on projects I had managed before and identify how I could do it differently in the future."

This support echoes wider industry research, where 80% of managers said that a CMI qualification is a key part of becoming a professional manager. And 93% of managers

undertaking a CMI programme said they would recommend these qualifications.

Building on this success, the ODP team has just launched three new qualifications – developed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), City & Guilds, Capita and Premier Partnership – that they believe will further develop their understanding of how to manage the delivery of services to customers and build their relationship management skills.

These are:
- C&G Level 4 Award in Relationship Management (open to all staff).
- C&G Level 4 Award in Managing the Delivery of Services to Customers (bespoke to DWP only).
- C&G Level 4 Certificate in Managing the Delivery of Services to Customers (open to all staff).

And, again, frontline staff are seeing the benefits.

A DWP staff member, who completed their Level 2 Operational Delivery qualification said, "I have found the ODP e-learning straightforward, concise and relevant. That this learning leads to a qualification, recognised both inside and outside the Civil Service, is a definite plus and should be viewed as such for anyone, whether they are looking to progress here or elsewhere long term, or simply to improve themselves as a professional."

Looking forward, the team is keen to produce more bespoke work like this: creating new professional qualifications and/or training units, in collaboration with departments, that can bolster operational capability.

As Ruth Owen states, "Achieving externally recognised qualifications

is a core part of our strategy for professionalising Operations. We want to increase the take up of our qualifications and ensure they are well embedded into the day-to-day work we do so that the learning also impacts on the service we give. I am very proud to be Head of Profession for Operational Delivery, and want that pride to be felt by every operational professional in the Civil Service too."

A trailblazing apprenticeship scheme

In addition, the ODP is focused on inspiring and training the next generation of operational delivery professionals.

During the course of this Parliament, the Government has committed to create 3 million new apprenticeships across the country. In response, the ODP team has created its own apprenticeship scheme to help future proof the Civil Service's frontline skills.

Nearly 500 new apprentices have signed up already this year.

Apprenticeships like this help motivate staff, increase productivity and strengthen the organisation's skills base. For young apprentices, these schemes offer a sound foundation for their future career, mixing practical experience with high-level, internationally recognised qualifications.

Civil Service Surge Management and Rapid Response Team

But the work doesn't stop there. When crises strike, it's operational people who are called in first to help. That's why the ODP unit has established a new Surge and Rapid Response Team (SRRT). This is a game-changer

in the way the Civil Service can respond to sudden surges in customer demand and/or unforeseen urgent events, which tend to require small numbers of people to support departments for short periods of time.

The ODP has already recruited 200 administrative officer apprentices to help pilot a team that departments can call on in operational emergencies.

This team is currently based at three locations: Longbenton (Tyne & Wear), Merryhill (West Midlands) and Peterlee (County Durham), working to specially designed employment contracts that enable them to be deployed quickly to anywhere in the UK or overseas and work flexibly on evening, weekend and night shifts, as needed.

The Surge Management Steering Group, led by Ruth Owen, Head of Profession, considers requests for the team to respond to unexpected surges or critical incidents. And, so far, the SRRT have supported HMRC, the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, DWP and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Ruth says: "This is one of the most exciting initiatives in the Civil Service right now. We are testing new ways of working across departmental boundaries and meeting the needs of very different sets of customers at times of peak demand. The team are demonstrating a high degree of flexibility and adaptability in their deployments and we are still learning just how broad their remit could be."

Looking forward

The ODP team prides itself as being on the leading edge of professionalising the Civil Service. Providing new resources and changing the

way in which the Civil Service operates in times of need are helping to improve services and also give ODP staff more professional transferable skills that can be used in roles across government departments.

The team are working to ensure that operational staff can take greater control of their own development and career path, gaining the recognition, opportunities and support they deserve.

Top priorities for the future include:
- Further testing of the surge management capacity and capability to better respond to peak customer service demands.
- Developing and designing the future concept of operations in government, alongside the digital transformation already underway in departments.
- Identifying and supporting talent in the operational. delivery profession.
- Supporting the Government's strategy to recruit thousands more apprentices into government.
- Continuing to support its members in career management, personal development and building their skills and expertise to enable departments to meet their delivery objectives.

So, if you're an operational professional looking for a new challenge in the New Year, make sure you sign up to learn and develop with your peers – opening up a world of possibility for the future.

Discover more at: https:// civilservicelearning. civilservice.gov.uk/ professions/operational-delivery-profession

No More Head of Household – lessons from the Electoral Registration Transformation Programme

» Colin Dingwall, the former Director of the Electoral Registration Transformation Programme, describes the key lessons he and his colleagues learnt delivering this fundamental change to the UK's Electoral Registration System and what their experience means for other large scale public sector projects. ▶

If you were one of the millions of people across the UK watching the BBC General Election debate in April, you would have seen David Dimbleby encouraging those who hadn't already registered to vote to visit **www.gov.uk/register-to-vote**.

This was a massive moment for the Electoral Registration Transformation Programme team, helping to generate the biggest spike in traffic to the Register to Vote website of the whole election campaign.

The number of users on the site just kept climbing 13,000… 16,000… 20,000 and then, finally 25,000 trying to register to vote at the same time. The team quickly contacted Marianne Ainsworth-Smith, the Service Director, to check the site could handle this major boost in traffic. While we had some nervous moments, it was no surprise, given the preparation that had gone into this, that her answer was yes.

And, on deadline day for voter registration, that number rose even higher. In total, 500,000 more people registered in those final hours, with the vast majority of them going online to do it. This number is similar to the total number of registration forms downloaded during the entire 2010 General Election campaign. In the end, it helped secure the highest-ever numbers of people registered on the electoral roll to vote in a General Election.

This success was a far cry from the 2011 media headlines which suggested that this landmark shift to individual electoral registration could see the number of registered voters drop to as low as 60% of the eligible population.

Ensuring that didn't happen

took five years of focused effort from the programme team, based in the Cabinet Office and working in partnership with the Government Digital Service (GDS), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Electoral Commission and 400 local authorities across the country.

A more convenient, secure and fairer system

Our mission was to deliver the Government's commitment to ensure a more convenient, secure and fairer voter registration process for millions of people.

At its heart was the shift from the decades-old paper-based system, which asked the 'head of household' to register everyone living at their address and required no verification of identity, to a more modern

> **… a more modern system where every individual is able to register digitally for themselves, establishing their entitlement to vote simply and easily.**

system where every individual is able to register digitally for themselves, establishing their entitlement to vote simply and easily.

Behind the scenes, this added up to a major change management programme, requiring a fundamental shift in behaviour, culture and new technologies to deliver a better service for the public. But, as the programme shows, it can

be done on time and to budget. Here are the top five lessons the programme team learned along the way.

1. Start early. Don't be afraid to learn from failure

We started piloting elements of the new approach as soon as we could. The programme's first data-matching pilot in 2011 (the first of many) didn't give the team the answers we thought it would. In fact, in Parliament and the media, it was branded a 'failure'. But it did teach us something incredibly valuable about the relationship between the electoral register and the DWP data – being used to automatically check and transfer 90% of existing registered voters to the new system without having to do anything. This, in turn, helped to dramatically reduce the costs and risks involved in the programme.

2. The Government Digital Service approach really helped to de-risk the digital service delivery

We were one of the first Digital Transformation Programmes to work with GDS and their approach really helped to de-risk the digital delivery. Under Mark O'Neill, the GDS designed and built the digital service that underpins the new system.

The team, which used agile methodology, worked closely with the programme team and their partners to build and test the new service over and over again.

Elements of the service were piloted continuously with local authorities, culminating in a full

No more Head of Household – lessons from the Electoral Registration Transformation Programme

national test in summer 2013. This constant user testing and responsive approach to website development ensured that when it came to launch, the 'Register to Vote' system was something that people wanted to use.

And the team rapidly went from a baseline of 0 to 75% digital transactions, securing satisfaction scores that were consistently over 90%.

It's a powerful example of how the GDS's flexible, digital approach can transform and improve the way the Civil Service delivers change of this kind.

3. Regularly assess your issues and risks, learn from them and apply these lessons consistently

Risk management was at the heart of our approach. Connecting 400 local authorities to a new digital service in the middle of the migration from the GCSX service to the Public Services Network (PSN) took a huge amount of work. It demanded that the programme team keep in constant contact with these authorities, their suppliers and other partners and worked closely with the PSN team to align roll-out plans.

Managing a major supply chain, comprising both prime and sub-contractors, is always a challenge. To mitigate this risk, the team identified the contractors they were most dependent on at each stage of the project, analysing the specific constraints, challenges

and risks that each of the organisations posed.

This detailed understanding of our risks enabled the programme team to avoid these becoming issues that threatened successful delivery. This was especially important given the programme was being delivered just ahead of the General Election, resulting in a rising volume of applications and likely surges in interest.

It also meant that when the inevitable unexpected problem did occur, in our case a digger in a car park sliced through a vital service cable supporting the IT infrastructure, the team were able to respond quickly. We identified every single possible point of failure for the programme to strengthen resilience.

4. Deliver this change in partnership with your stakeholders

The team made a conscious and consistent effort to talk to the people responsible for running the new electoral registration service on the ground. The programme's Head of Relationships, Mark Hughes spent years visiting councils, Chief Executives, region and county groups of Authorities and branches of the professional body – the Association of Electoral Administrators. The aim was to get to know people, hear their concerns and ensure this intelligence informed the programme's major decisions. It made all the difference.

The team also set up an expert panel of experienced

practitioners to act as a sounding board for project decisions. No major steps were taken without their input. They gave the team the extra knowledge, credibility and capacity they needed to get things done. And other departments can learn a lot by replicating this approach in other major programmes.

## 5. Build external challenge and assurance in from the start

Ministers appointed two non-executive directors to the Programme, Geraldine Terry, Non-Executive Director at the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, and Eric Gregory, Non-Executive board member of the Legal Aid Agency.

Both brought a wealth of private and public sector experience and ensured that the entire team and its partners were robustly, but constructively challenged throughout to deliver the best service possible.

The team also made use of external assurance, with successive reviews and health checks across the programme.

It was tough going, but it ensured that the programme team weren't afraid to ask themselves hard, challenging questions before anyone else did. It gave the team the confidence they needed to identify and deal with issues rapidly.

In conclusion, there is no single blueprint for success in the public sector. But, as the Electoral Registration Team shows, with a keen focus on detail, huge amount of hard work and collaborative approach, you can deliver revolutionary change on budget and to time – creating a fairer, more secure and convenient way to register your vote.
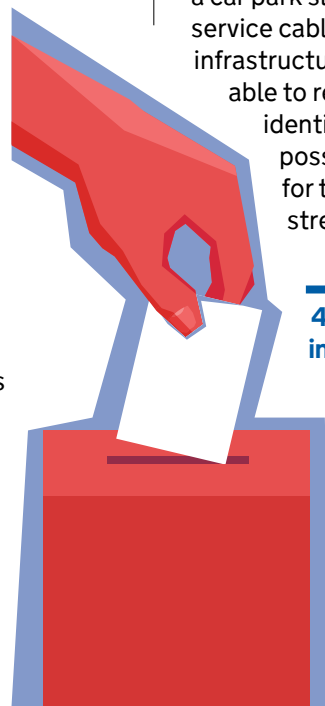
Horizon scanning: helping policy makers in an uncertain world

» It isn't easy to predict what we're going to be doing in the future. In this article, Richard Sandford from the Government Office for Science sets out the core principles of Horizon Scanning and the techniques civil servants can use to make the future a less uncertain place.

The future. In sci-fi films, it's living with cyborgs in a sleek metropolis or a rust-coloured sandscape and violent struggles for dwindling resources. In technology magazines, it's gadgets and gizmos. For our ancestors, it was a mystery only revealed to seers and fortune-tellers. Throughout human existence, the future has given rise to fear and fascination.

But, as civil servants, do we really need a crystal ball to know what's ahead? We actually have a whole range of tools in everyday life to plan for upcoming events and manage risk, from Outlook calendars to car insurance. And, if you've ever opened a savings account or planted a seed, you know it's possible to shape your future as well.

What the future holds

Meanwhile, every decision that Government takes in the present helps to bring about a particular future for the country – a better one, we hope. So, it's important that these decisions don't just consider the present, but also think about the different futures they make possible. In the short term, analysts offer projections and forecasts to help determine the best course to follow. But, beyond a certain point, these statistical approaches are limited. If we want to think about the medium to long term we need to be able to manage uncertainty.

The good news is that this isn't difficult. There are a whole range of techniques and approaches we can use. In Government, this is called 'horizon scanning' and every Whitehall department undertakes it in some form.

Horizon scanning: helping policy makers in an uncertain world

Since Jon Day's review of horizon scanning across government in 2013, ultimate responsibility for this strategic capability rests with the Cabinet Secretary. The Horizon Scanning Programme team support him, a partnership between Cabinet Office and the Government Office for Science that works with Communities of Interest and other relevant groups to identify emerging issues, trends, risks and opportunities for Government.

In this way, people at the centre of government can be confident they have a cross-Whitehall view of the issues shaping policy.

The work commissioned through these bodies is as diverse and varied as the challenges facing the Government. From working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to explore the future of work in the UK to understanding the forces shaping public trust in institutions, each issue that horizon scanners consider is both relevant to policy debates happening now and a crucial force in shaping the future of the UK.

And underpinning all this is a basic set of principles that every civil servant can follow. Let's consider the three most important.

The core principles of horizon scanning

The future is open, not closed. This means that, from our position in the present, there are multiple future possibilities ahead of us, not one pre-determined fate. That's good news for policymakers – it means we can make choices that change the future. And it means that because there is always more than one route ahead of us, the obvious choice isn't the only choice.

Perceptions and assumptions matter. Received wisdom and common sense ideas about what can or can't happen lead to 'business-as-usual' thinking – even when the wider world is far from 'usual'. So, if we want to be able to respond to change and complexity, we need to question our assumptions and set narrow thinking of what's possible to one side.

Speculation without action is a waste of time. By knowing when opportunities to act are approaching and which conversations they need to be in to make change happen, horizon scanners can make sure the policy implications of their work are followed through.

Scanning the future

So, how do we do all this?

There's a bewildering array of techniques available, but they all boil down to two key tasks: understanding the present better and describing the future credibly.

Evidence is vital for building a better picture of the present. Identifying the factors that shape society and using data to understand how these trends are moving, grounds our descriptions of the future in the latest scientific thinking. Of course, forecasts and projections are used every day in the Civil Service, produced by departmental analysts, government scientists and bodies such as the Office for National Statistics. Examples include the medium-term economic forecasts produced by the Office for Budget Responsibility, demographic projections from the Office for National Statistics, or carbon emissions from the aviation industry generated by the Department for Transport.

These are produced for factors that we know have an influence on policy delivery and for which we have reliable quantitative data. But the job of horizon scanning is to make sure that we identify and consider all important factors – and include issues in our thinking for which quantitative data is not available.

A technique called 'driver analysis' is useful here, for sorting forces driving change by impact and uncertainty. It allows a team to prioritise and assess the relative importance of these driving forces, distinguishing between high-impact, low-uncertainty events (such as an ageing population) and high-impact, high-uncertainty events (such as the impact of automation on our skilled workforce).

Working out how these factors might interact is another vital task for understanding complex policy areas. Here, again, horizon scanning can extend the range of evidence analysts can work with, building on techniques such as systems modelling.

These tools help us to think about the different ways trends might interact, which is often useful in itself. But it's even more useful to take what we know about trends to create coherent accounts of different possible futures. Horizon scanners call these 'scenarios'. They help to manage and work with uncertainty, rather than trying to resolve it – which can give policy makers space to consider alternative courses of action and identify new opportunities.

Scenarios can be used in many ways. For policymakers, two of the more frequently used techniques are 'windtunnelling' and 'backcasting'. Borrowing a metaphor from the automotive industry, windtunnelling involves testing a policy or project in the context of different possible future circumstances. By systematically evaluating how a planned action might

perform in different scenarios, policymakers can form an idea of how resilient it is and understand the assumptions that must hold true for it to remain on a safe course.

Backcasting works backwards from a desired future state to map out the actions necessary to bring it about. It's a tool for building consensus around a shared vision and moving towards action. And working backwards from a preferred future can demonstrate that the changes needed to achieve it are not as substantial as people might imagine.

There are many other techniques developed over the years and expert futurists continue to develop new methods, drawing on the power of big data and new technologies.

Doing it yourself

The Horizon Scanning Programme team offers a range of ways for civil servants across government to learn more about horizon scanning and its role in making policy more resilient. Formal training from external experts is available through Civil Service Learning. The team co-ordinates a cross-government network of practitioners, sharing challenges, successes and new ideas. There is a Futures Procurement Framework, administered by UK SBS, to make commissioning work easier. And the team regularly works with individual department teams to develop their horizon scanning capability, through coaching and workshops.

But, of course, you don't need a team of horizon scanners to start thinking about the future. What's coming up for you in 2016? What's fixed? What's uncertain? And what sort of possible futures await?

Horizon scanning in practice

So what does horizon scanning look like in practice? The outputs of this kind of work can have wide-ranging impact, from driving investment in new diagnostic techniques for infectious diseases (Foresight's 'Infectious Diseases' report, 2006) to allocating £35 million to developing new technologies for the 'internet of things' ('The Internet of Things: making the most of the second digital revolution', GO-Science, 2014). Current projects in Government are exploring the future of the UK rail network (in the Department for Transport) and the role of machine intelligence in government decision-making (in the Government Office for Science).

For horizon scanning to be able to highlight new opportunities and to challenge established ways of thinking, it needs to draw on a wide range of perspectives, with contributions and expertise from across government. One recent example of this collaborative approach is the Futures Symposium, organised by the Horizon Scanning Programme, the Government Office for Science and Kings College. This two-day hands-on learning event brought together over 100 civil servants from across Whitehall with external futures experts and internationally renowned authorities from (among others) McKinsey Global Institute, OECD and the Economist to think about the future of productivity.

Groups worked with a wide range of evidence, using established horizon scanning techniques to develop new policy ideas and perspectives on the challenges set out in the Productivity Plan, before presenting to a panel of senior representatives from HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Outputs highlighted the need to develop new skills throughout life, changes to the labour market through automation and the demographic pressures of an ageing society. The ideas developed included R&D mutual funds, pooling contributions from self-employed workers to invest in the development of innovative technology, 'OAP au pairs' to offset the costs of caring for older people and create new intergenerational ties and a data-powered opportunity radar, matching jobs to education and experience.

None of these are likely to become policy, at least in their current form, but they challenge policy-makers to look again at the assumptions that shape their thinking. And colleagues across many departments have a new appreciation of the importance of increasing national productivity.
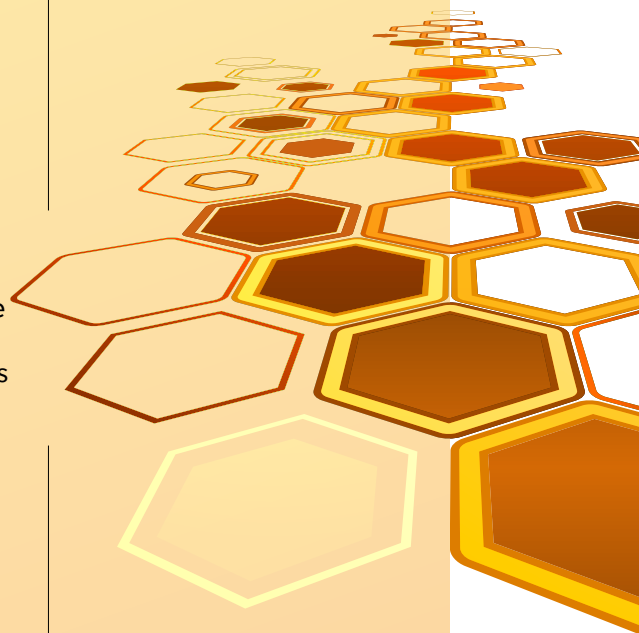
Finding out what works in preventing reoffending

» **If you run a rehabilitation programme for people who have committed criminal offences, how do you decide whether it is successful? It seems a simple question, but suppose that you are an organisation with limited resources, working with a specific group of individuals. How can you find the data to compare them to a similar group who have not been through your programme? How can you be confident that the results are not down to chance? In this article, Mark Purver and Helen Williams, from the Ministry of Justice, describe how the Justice Data Lab can provide the necessary expertise to help these organisations measure their success.**

The Justice Data Lab (JDL) is the realisation of an idea originally proposed by the charity think tank New Philanthropy Capital. In April 2013, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) established the JDL to improve the evidence base available on successful rehabilitation – giving organisations working with offenders secure access to reoffending metrics. Organisations can then use this information to better assess the impact of their work on reoffending. The JDL was formally established following a two year pilot, and is being used as a template for other Data Labs across Government.

What a Data Lab can and cannot do

The purpose of a Data Lab is to provide people and organisations with meaningful information and analysis that will help them develop and deliver their services in the real world. The Data Lab is not there to tell them what to do, instead it presents as full and accurate a picture of the evidence available as possible to make sure these organisations can make their own informed decisions about the focus of their work in the future. An organisation's recognition of these limitations is essential to them understanding and benefiting from the Data Lab's work.

The information used in the analysis must be of sufficient quantity and quality to draw conclusions. Data Labs, like the JDL, essentially compare two types of people, first, the treatment group – which comprises a user's clients and, second, a control group

> **reoffending statistics form just one of the many ways to judge success in offender rehabilitation. You might also choose employment, mental health or self-worth as further pieces of the picture.**

made up of people, similar in background, circumstances or experience to the control group, who have not worked with the organisation in question. The smaller the number of people in the treatment group, the more likely it is that any difference between the treatment group and the control group will be down to chance.

Therefore, the JDL requires organisations to provide details of at least 60 people with which they have worked. It will then only proceed with an analysis, if – following further checks – they can form a treatment group of at least 30 people from the original list. Organisations are advised not to exclude people selectively from their records, as this could limit the number in the treatment group and bias the final results.

It's important to remember that, even with the most careful analysis, the results provided by a Data Lab should always be seen as 'evidence', not 'proof' of something. Why? Because, there is a 5% chance of wrongly concluding that there is evidence of an effect when no effect actually exists. This can be higher, if information needed to effectively compare

the treatment and control groups is not available. Take for example, an offender's willingness to change. This could be down to a number of factors, beyond the support they received from the organisation being assessed. As such, JDL reports include caveats, which highlight gaps or information that could not be analysed, but which the JDL believes or knows could have affected the selection of the treatment group.

Data Lab results are most valuable when placed within a wider context and considered alongside other information. For example, reoffending statistics form just one of the many ways to judge success in offender rehabilitation. You might also choose employment, mental health or self-worth as further pieces of the picture.

A person's confidence in a particular result also depends on their assessment of all other relevant evidence they have encountered. This means that, when an organisation needs to justify its rehabilitation programme, it is not enough to declare that a significant result has been found.

They need to look also at all of the other information and analysis available to them, for example, evidence about similar treatment programmes, to build as strong a case as possible.

How the Justice Data Lab works

So, if you think you can benefit from working with the JDL, what do you need to do? Once you've requested assistance, the JDL will ask you to provide details of the people you have worked with

Finding out what works in preventing reoffending

and information about your intervention or programme to better understand how it works to inform the analysis.

The JDL team will then match these details against data available to the Ministry of Justice to verify their background and offending history. The team then uses this information to assemble a control group of other similar offenders who are closely matched to the treatment group on a number of personal characteristics: including (but not limited to) age, employment status and criminal history.

This is a crucial step, but difficult for organisations to do without access to the Police National Computer (PNC). It aims to ensure a process in which all differences between the two groups have been minimised (except one, that the treatment group undertook the programme being tested and the control group did not), to allow for as meaningful a comparison as possible.

The JDL will exclude offenders who cannot be matched to the PNC or administrative datasets from the treatment group, as well as those for whom similar control group members cannot be found. The groups are matched as closely as possible, by considering a range of characteristics that affect the probability that an individual would reoffend or enter the programme being tested.

The JDL then examines whether the treatment and control groups are significantly different from one another, primarily using three quantities as proxy measures of success:

• the proportion of each group who committed a proven reoffence during the year following their release from prison or the start of their probation order, normally called the 'reoffending rate'.
• the average number of reoffences committed per person during that year.
• the average number of days to first reoffence among those who reoffended within the year.

If an organisation is having a positive impact on reoffending, it is expected that the reoffending rate and average number of reoffences will be lower and the average time to first reoffence will be longer.

The differences between the treatment and control groups are assessed using a process called significance testing, which tests the assumption that the programme makes no difference to the measure and that any difference between the groups is down to chance.

If the answer is no, then the assumption is rejected. We can be confident that there is a real difference in the reoffending rates of the treatment and control groups. If the answer is yes, then the assumption is accepted. This does not mean the organisation is having no impact on the reoffending rate of its participants, but that there is insufficient evidence to draw a definite conclusion about that impact.

The results of the JDL's analysis are published in a report that is freely accessible online. This is designed to be easily understood and used, without omitting important details or caveats. The summarised results from all analyses conducted to date are also published regularly and are grouped into categories such as 'education' and 'accommodation' to give a broad overview of the success levels of different types of programme. Crucially, information on individual offenders is never revealed publicly and even the organisation that provided the details cannot personally identify those who have reoffended. If any statistics could be used to identify individuals, those statistics would not be released.

The Justice Data Lab so far

The team has already produced almost 130 reports and continues to work with a variety of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to interpret their data and better meet their needs.

A user feedback summary, released in June 2015, revealed that two-thirds of JDL users had made changes to their offender rehabilitation programme as a result of their report. Following the recommendations of this feedback, the team has introduced additional measures such as reoffence severity. It is also exploring the use of information from the Offender Assessment System (OASys) to form more closely matched control groups, particularly for programmes which treat people with specific characteristics that are not recorded on the PNC such as mental illness or homelessness.

The JDL has analysed reoffence data for treatment groups containing tens to thousands of individuals. Where the treatment group is smaller, the difference between the treatment and control groups is less likely to be significant.

However, nearly a fifth of requests where a significant result was found had smaller treatment groups (between 30 and 100).

The team is committed to working with organisations of all sizes, including smaller organisations and those carrying out specific programmes. As demonstrated by user feedback, the results help to direct future rehabilitation efforts, even when they are not statistically significant. Meanwhile, a detailed picture of what works in preventing reoffending is gradually emerging.

The Justice Data Lab aims to bridge the gap between those who work with offender data and those who work with offenders themselves. The team is keen to spread the word about this free service, and encourages anyone wishing to enquire about it to contact the team by e-mailing **justice.datalab@gsi.justice.gov. uk or by calling 0203 334 4770.**