

Feature
The productivity plan

Funding the fight against dementia

Making law in a digital world

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



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Editorial

» Civil Service Quarterly: open, consistent, professional



Chris Wormald

Welcome to the ninth edition of Civil Service Quarterly. In this, the first issue since the General Election, we focus on how teams across Government are taking bold, new approaches to tackling some of the biggest issues we face, as a country, now and in the future.

In 'Social change through local action', the Community Action team share the lessons they've learnt successfully recruiting and training over 6,000 community organisers to secure positive social change in local communities.

Siobhan Jones, Deputy Director at Department of Health, describes her team's innovative work, with pharmaceutical companies and private sector investors, to boost global investment in dementia research in 'Funding the fight against dementia'.

Economically, 'The productivity plan' sets out HM Treasury's route map to tackle Britain's long-standing productivity challenge. It explains why a boost to the UK's productivity matters so much and the fundamental foundations that need to be in place – such as long-term investment, flexible, fair markets and infrastructure – for it to happen.

Meanwhile, in 'Using data to prevent fraud', HMRC shows how a shift to the mantra 'check first, pay later' made such a important difference in their fight to reduce error and fraud in the tax credits system.

'Making law in a digital world' emphasises the importance of new technologies in shaping our work and focus in the years to come. In particular, the impact that the Government's digital agenda has had on the development of new legislation - pushing legal teams to make the language we use more concise, accessible and usable.

Of course, all of these innovations need to be backed up with the right skills, expertise and experience to succeed.

In 'Saving the world one equation at a time', we see how the combined brain power of experts at the Health and Safety Laboratory in Buxton are helping to keep people and workplaces across the world safe.

Ultimately, we need to be able to show how these efforts to make the Civil Service a more modern, diverse, accountable and open organisation are resulting in better services for the public. 'How good are we?' explores how the Cabinet Office's Analysis and Insight team is working with the OECD and others to develop a new indicator to measure and benchmark world-class performance from civil services across the world.

Finally, with Ursula Brennan retiring as Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice, we asked her to look back over her 40-year career in the Civil Service, sharing her favourite memories, what she sees next for public services and her own plans for the future.

We hope you enjoy this issue, please do comment and share your views at the Civil Service Quarterly blog or use #CSQuarterly on social media. We look forward to hearing from you.

Chris Wormald
Permanent Secretary,
Department for Education

Cover photo: The Prime Minister and the Chancellor speaking to staff at the Hanson Brickworks in Accrington, Lancashire (photographer – Arron Hoare).

Let us know what you think by email (csq@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) or on twitter [#CSQuarterly](https://twitter.com/CSQuarterly).

Saving the world one equation at a time

» How can you ensure the safe operation of nuclear reactors when it is too dangerous to physically check their cores? Nick Warren, Head of Statistical Modelling at the Health and Safety Laboratory, explains how his team have developed the only truly independent and impartial model for estimating the viable life expectancy of the UK's nuclear reactors.

According to the average Hollywood blockbuster, you're only really qualified to avert global disaster if you have superpowers. But even then, it's an expensive business.

For example, it's been estimated that, in real life, the climactic battle at the end of the most recent Superman film would have cost the taxpayers of Metropolis around \$750 billion worth of physical damage and \$2 trillion in economic impact, with hundreds of thousands of people missing, injured or killed.

As the work of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Science Directorate shows, however, you don't need x-ray vision or superhuman strength to save lives or the world – just the right expertise, experience and mathematical skill to make a difference.

The Health and Safety Laboratory

The Science Directorate is largely based at the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) in Buxton, Derbyshire. Originally established in 1911

as an experimental station to investigate explosions and hazards in coalmines, the Laboratory's remit has since grown to investigate, research and reduce health and safety risks right across every sector of industry.

Down the years, the Science Directorate's specialists have worked on many high-profile incidents and cases. These include the 1987 Kings Cross fire, believed to have been started by a discarded match on a wooden escalator; the Potter's Bar rail crash, attributed to a faulty set of points on the Norfolk-London line in 2002; and, more recently, the collision between two carriages – one empty, one containing 16 people – on the 'Smiler' rollercoaster at Alton Towers.

As one of the world's leading providers of health and safety solutions, HSE's Science Directorate now employs more than 400 scientific, technical and medical experts,



specialising in disciplines as diverse as ergonomics, falls prevention, fire explosion safety, nanotechnology, microbiology and behaviour change.

At their purpose-built laboratory and large-scale experimental facility, the efforts of these experts are helping to make our work environment and everyday lives safer across the UK and the world.

For example, HSL's Falls Prevention team ensured that the floor of Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 is not only hardwearing, but also has slip-resistant qualities to protect the 31 million passengers who walk upon it each year.

While HSL's ergonomists help major manufacturers such as Toyota and Honda to optimise the interactions between employees and their workplace to minimise the risk of workplace ill-health and accidents.

Securing Britain's safety and energy supplies

As a result, there's no such thing as a typical day or job in the Science Directorate. Take the work of its Mathematical Sciences Team.

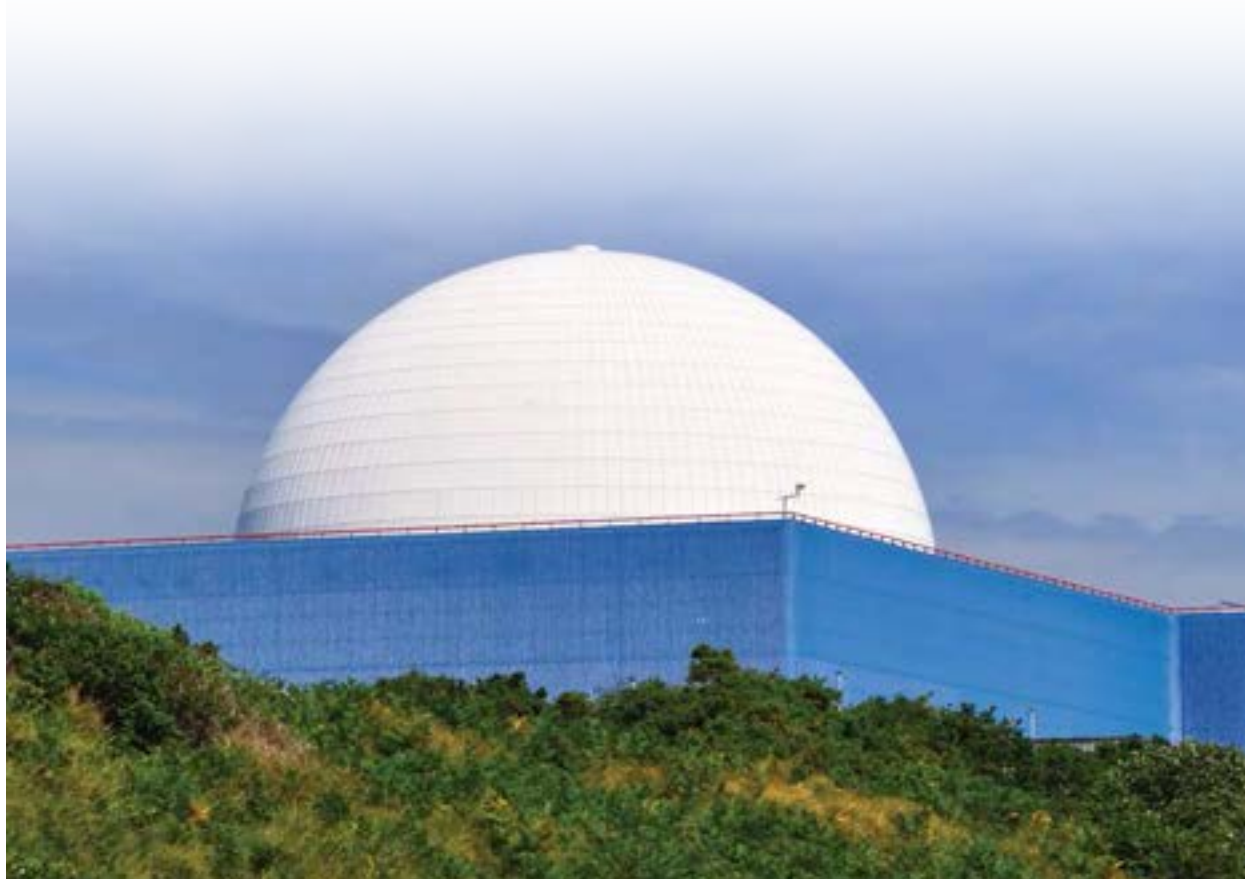
Mathematical modelling helps us reach those parts, where it's just too expensive, impractical or dangerous for conventional research or experiments to go.

For instance, using applied mathematics, physics and specially designed software, the Mathematical Sciences Team can simulate real-world conditions to predict the possible transmission of infectious diseases, anticipate the hazards posed by flammable gas clouds and better understand the spread and effects of toxic substances when they enter the human body.

One of the team's most complex challenges is to estimate with confidence the viable life expectancy of the nuclear reactors that generate over a fifth of the electricity consumed in the UK.

Unlike others around the world, Britain's Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors use a core made of graphite bricks to keep the nuclear reaction needed to generate electricity under control. Fuelled by uranium, this nuclear chain reaction generates heat that converts water to superheated steam. At pressure, this steam drives a series of turbines to produce electricity.

The interlocking tubular graphite bricks that make up the reactor's core play a crucial safety role. They both moderate and sustain the chain reaction and, with operating temperatures reaching more than 500°C, are



Saving the world one equation at a time

cooled by pressurised carbon dioxide gas. Over time, these graphite cores – which cannot be renewed or replaced – are subject to the ageing effects of radiation and regulators need to assess just how many years these bricks and, ultimately, the reactor can operate safely.

It is too expensive and potentially dangerous for anyone to check the condition of each and every one of these graphite bricks. That's where the Mathematical Sciences Team steps in. Working with the School of Metallurgy and Materials at the University of Birmingham and the Nuclear Graphite Research Group at the University of Manchester, the team have developed the only truly independent and impartial model to predict the behaviour of the graphite core in these situations.

The model runs simulations, using data gained from regular inspections of reactors, core graphite samples and other sources, which enable regulators to evaluate operators' safety plans, increase their understanding of graphite's properties and inform regulation.

No mathematical model can be 100% accurate, but in assessing their predictions the team at HSL compensate for any uncertainties in order to advise regulators appropriately. But mathematical modelling is just one of the clever ways in which experts in HSE's Science Directorate are protecting Britain's safety.

Preparing for the worst

Accidents will always happen, whether as a result of natural causes such as floods or landslides or man-made hazards

like chemical explosions or major fires. And every one of us faces a degree of risk in our daily lives. But some sections of the population are at greater risk than others, i.e. because of their age, occupation or location.

Trying to estimate how many and which people could be impacted when the unexpected or unknown happens, particularly in areas that are hard to evacuate, is a seemingly impossible task. But it is crucial to ensuring effective planning and response by the Government and our emergency services.

HSL's expert Data Analysts created the National Population Database (NPD) to help solve that challenge. This incredibly useful tool, which combines geographical data from sources such as the Ordnance Survey with current population statistics, enables operators to estimate the likely population of any particular area at a particular time.

Government can use this data to quantify the number and specific types of people such as children, the elderly or hospital patients at risk in

the event of a major incident and plan appropriately to help those affected as quickly and effectively as possible.

That's not all. This database can also tell you about different kinds of buildings and how many of them are at risk from a hazard; identify those workplaces that have the greatest need for risk management; and even estimate the likely costs arising from a major disaster, taking into account factors such as loss of activity and cleaning up afterwards.

It's an invaluable resource and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, local authorities and other organisations are now using the database to help them with contingency planning.

So the next time, you're sat in the cinema or at home watching some Hollywood hero save the day, spare a thought for the experts of HSE's Science Directorate working quietly behind the scenes at HSL to ensure the health and safety of people across Britain and the world.



Social change through local action

» **Hannah Rignell, Head of Community Action in the Cabinet Office, explains how they have recruited and trained over 6,000 community organisers to inspire communities to deliver positive social change through collective action.**

No-one knows more about what an area needs to thrive than the people who live and work there. They have an inside knowledge and connection to their local communities that Whitehall just can't rival.

This is the reality that has driven Government's ambitions for localism and devolution in the last five years – with more power, flexibility and control pushed out from the centre than ever before.

At the local level, this revolution is being driven in England via a whole new

generation of community organisers: trained individuals and volunteers committed to building relationships between people and inspiring communities to deliver positive social and political change through collective action.

This kind of local activism has a long history in the United States, with high-profile advocates including President Barack Obama who worked himself as a community organiser in Chicago, but it's still a relatively new idea in the UK.

Recruiting volunteers

Launching the programme in 2010, former Minister for the Cabinet Office, Lord Maude set a target to sign up 5,000 community organisers by March 2015. In the end, the team went further than anyone thought possible: with well over 6,000 volunteers recruited and trained in 400 neighbourhoods, supporting more than 150,000 residents and 1,500 community projects. Locality, a network of community-led, locally rooted organisations, delivered the programme on behalf of Government.

Community organisers come from all kinds of backgrounds. Some start the job straight out of university; others have worked in community development for many years; and, for some, this is a way back into work after years of unemployment. Those who get involved to improve their communities are diverse too – young and old, long-term residents or new arrivals and recent asylum seekers.

The organisers begin by talking to local residents; listening to the changes they believe their local area needs; before bringing people together and supporting them to take action on the issues they care about.

The golden rule of being



Social change through local action

a community organiser is not to do anything for people that they can do for themselves.

So what have this band of officials and volunteers learnt and achieved together in the last five years and what next for the UK's Community Organisers programme?

Local solutions flourish with local people in the lead

The Civil Service is committed to becoming an ever more transparent and open organisation as part of its reform agenda. This includes drawing on a wider, more diverse range of opinions, individuals and groups to help shape and deliver public services in the coming years.

Through community

organising, Government can help build trust, support and capacity in communities to help deal with local issues more quickly and effectively. This goes beyond engaging with communities: a guiding principle of this project is that it's local people who decide which improvements they want to make in their area and when.

Local people trust independent community organisers

One of a community organiser's greatest strengths is their independence.

Local people trust community organisers who are committed to their area and can give impartial and objective support independent

of any Government or other organisations' agenda.

As civil servants, that means we need to rein in our desire to connect with and use these influential community representatives as a channel to help implement Government policies successfully in their local area.

That's not what they are there to do and Ministers remain committed to ensuring these volunteers never become, or appear to be, another arm of Government.

It's local people, not Government, who need to set the agenda

The Community Organisers programme is there to make a difference, so it's



Boosting local employment in Portland

Community organisers in Portland, one of the most socially deprived areas of Dorset, heard from residents that the lack of job opportunities locally was a key concern – especially for young people.

The community organisers recruited and helped volunteers to set up the DT5 project, which aims to support unemployed people into more positive and productive lifestyles. This includes activities such as digital skills training and mentoring.

The DT5 Trust has been operational since March 2015. So far, it's helped 19 people to find work, four participants have started to volunteer with the DT5 Trust themselves, while 15 have been receiving development support and reports show incidences of anti-social behaviour in the area have fallen.



important that Government finds ways to measure and show the tangible impact that this work is having in local communities.

At the same time, it's important that the community

72%

of employers and

75%

of organisers...

think it is more common that people form new groups around shared ideas and projects.*

64%

of employers and

70%

of organisers...

think it is more common that people have the skills to organise activities and projects for themselves and others.*

organisers – along with local citizens – are the ones who identify the issues they want to tackle, outcomes they hope to achieve and timetable for their work.

This demands a more innovative evaluation approach, with the evaluators using measures including wellbeing and social cohesion to capture impact.

Alongside positive local stories such as those included in this article, there's clear emerging quantitative evidence that these organisers are already helping to strengthen their communities.

According to TNS BRMB* research, people in areas where community organisers are working are significantly more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood. They are also more likely to agree that local people pull together to improve their area.

The organisers are also seeing for themselves the benefits of getting involved: boosting their self esteem, expanding their social networks and increasing their pride in their local area.

The future

An independent body, the Company of Community Organisers Ltd (COLtd) will continue to build this movement in England in the years ahead. This includes backing existing volunteers, recruiting future generations of community organisers and ensuring more communities are able to thrive.

You too can be involved. If you're interested in finding out more, please email socialaction@cabinetoffice.gov.uk for further information.

Bill's story

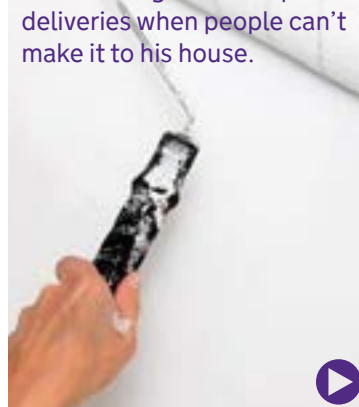
Working with their community organiser, residents in one area were able to come together to help local families save money and support a pensioner, who was struggling to get by on their estate.

Bill, a 90 year-old man, was sleeping rough in a nearby park. He had a home, but his life had gone to pieces and he was finding it hard to look after himself. As a result, his house had become unfit to live in.

Led by their community organiser, a team of residents pitched in to get Bill's life back on track, clearing up and decorating his home and garden. And Bill now heads up another local initiative, organising the bulk buying of essential items such as nappies, food and so on, to ensure household budgets across the estate can go further.

Families pay upfront and Bill sources the best deal for the items they need. The supplies are then delivered to Bill's house, with residents bringing meals for Bill and helping out with chores, when they come to pick up their items.

Overall, it's helped bring people across the estate closer together and Bill has recruited a team of volunteers known as 'Bill's runners' to take messages and help with deliveries when people can't make it to his house.



Kirsty's story

Kristy, a community organiser with the charity 'Kissing It Better', helped design a project working with young people who'd told her they wanted to show they cared about their community and older residents who'd said they felt isolated and lonely.

Kristy set up a project that connected local Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) students with people living with dementia in a local residential home. The students came up with the idea of getting older people in their local area to tell their

stories in the form of a digital life book, which is available via a specially designed app.

Those contributors dealing with early onset dementia were then able to watch, listen and share their memories with others. It helped them to save and remember those special times that dementia can take away, as well as aiding their ability to re-orientate and focus. In addition, it enabled others such as the care home staff to pick up the story and provide personal support to the individual concerned.



Funding the fight against dementia

» The Department of Health is leading the development of a \$100 million global Dementia Discovery Fund. Siobhan Jones, Deputy Director of the Dementia Fund at the Department of Health explains how they plan to use private investment to deliver positive social returns.



Funding the fight against dementia

“My greatest wish is that my children, our children – the next generation – do not have to face what I am facing... I rail against myself for not being able to remember things... struggling to be a part of things to stay connected to whom I was once.”

Still Alice, Lisa Genova

This year, the film ‘Still Alice’, based on the fictional story of a 50 year-old professor diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, and the death of Sir Terry Pratchett, author of the Discworld series, highlighted again for many the challenges of living with dementia.

The impact of dementia on individuals and their families can be devastating and only exacerbated by the lack of treatments for symptoms and absence of a cure.

In February 2015, the Prime Minister sought to change that reality, launching his Challenge on Dementia 2020 which aimed to make England the best country in the world for dementia care and support and researching dementia.

As part of this work, the Department of Health is leading the development of a global Dementia Discovery Fund. This innovative \$100 million fund aims to reverse the decline of private investment in dementia research, building new collaborations between leading global pharmaceutical companies

and the public, private and civil sectors. It draws on venture capital principles to generate socially positive financing, with the potential to deliver significant returns for our economy and wider society, building on the UK’s reputation as a global hub for innovative investment for social impact.

Why do we need to do something?

The term ‘dementia’ describes a progressive set of symptoms which result from cognitive diseases, like Alzheimer’s, or strokes that damage brain tissue and lead to the gradual loss of neurons, disability and death.

Right now, dementia affects 44 million people globally, with 7.7 million new cases diagnosed each year. This is one of the top five underlying causes of death and one in three people who die over 65 have dementia.

On the current trajectory of diagnoses, it is estimated that the cost of caring for close to 90 million global dementia patients could be \$1,208 billion by 2030, if no improvements in treatment and care are made.

That’s bigger than the annual revenues of major corporations Walmart (\$414 billion) and Exxon Mobil (\$311 billion) combined. In the UK alone, dementia costs society an estimated £26 billion a year. That’s more than cancer, heart disease or stroke.

The personal toll on individuals and families affected by this disease is even higher – demanding a huge amount of courage and strength, often just to get through the day.

As a world leader in health services and research, the UK is already working hard to help address this challenge and improve care. In England, more people than ever before are being diagnosed and working with the Alzheimer’s Society. There are over a million Dementia friends in the UK, alongside more than 100 Dementia Friendly communities – all demonstrating the big difference small changes can make to the lives of those living with dementia.

The WHO First Ministerial Conference on Dementia, brought together over 400 individuals, representing over 80 countries, 45 NGOs and 80 research institutes and foundations. The conference adopted a Call for Action on dementia, which set out an ambition for global change across a breadth of priorities for dementia, including risk reduction, care, leadership, research collaboration, technology and innovation.

The G8 has set the ambition to identify a cure or a disease-modifying therapy for dementia by 2025.

The UK Government has already prioritised funding for research, increasing spending to £66 million in 2014–15, alongside the Prime Minister’s pledge to establish a new International Dementia Institute in England in the next five years, to help give us a leading edge in medical trials and research.

But this alone won’t deliver the new treatments needed. The proportion of dementia specific research projects in the pipeline for the years ahead is comparatively low. This is partly due to the complexity of the brain, which makes finding new treatments for

neurodegenerative conditions challenging.

On behalf of the G8, the World Dementia Council has challenged the UK Government to identify new ways to boost investment into this type of preclinical dementia research.

In answer, the Department of Health, working across Government, is developing the Dementia Discovery Fund – a unique venture capital fund announced this year – which is a key example of the bold, innovative work that the UK is doing to deliver against this agenda.

Why is this project different?

The Fund is at the forefront of work, including social impact bonds and guarantee funds, to use private sector investment to help address challenging public policy issues and deliver positive social returns.

Working with J.P. Morgan, the Department of Health is developing a fund structure capable of increasing capital commitment to dementia research, lower the risk of investment and engage leaders from pharmaceutical and biotech drug development organisations.

The UK Government has already committed £15 million to help kick-start the fund. It's a unique project for all involved. The Government does not traditionally participate in such funds and the global pharmaceutical companies involved – GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Lilly and Biogen – make this one of the biggest collaborations of its kind. This partnership is strengthened through the investment, insight and experience of the leading UK charity, Alzheimer's Research UK.

What now?

So far, the team has secured over \$100 million of investment. The aim is to support novel, innovative 'assets'. These are new dementia treatments in the early stages of research, known as the pre-clinical phase. They aim to help bridge that gap between early development and the testing necessary to produce a cure or disease modifying treatment for dementia.

The scale of this challenge shouldn't be underestimated. Between 2002 and 2012, over 99% of the drug trials that aimed to prevent, cure or treat Alzheimer's symptoms either failed or were discontinued.

The fund will be there to not only provide financial support, but also access to leading scientists, laboratories and pharmaceutical and biotech partners to help the best solutions succeed – when other sources of funding aren't available.

Work to build the Dementia Discovery Fund is now being completed, with the official launch planned for later this year. This approach has the potential to make a step change in drug research in this area, as well as Government's approach to funding and finding answers to our biggest challenges more widely – giving millions of people the help and support they need to live happier, healthier lives.



How good are we?

» In the Civil Service, we are constantly trying to improve our performance and the services that we offer to the public. We often use data or research to help measure and improve our own team or department's performance, but how would we go about measuring the performance of the Civil Service as a whole? The Analysis & Insight team in Cabinet Office have been exploring this question.



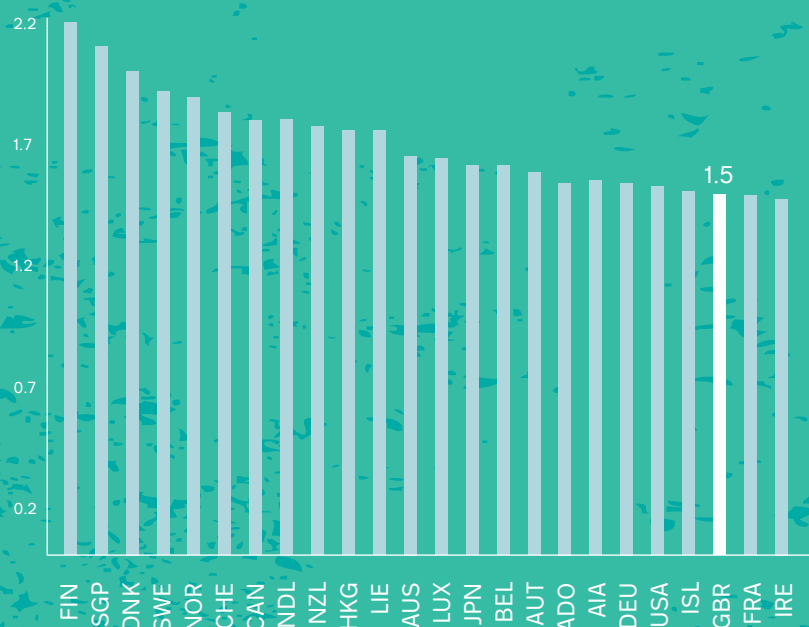
In this article, we take a look at how existing international measures can give us some insights into how the Civil Service is performing. Reviewing the existing indicators made it clear that there is scope to produce a new measure of performance – one which tries to measure the aspects of the Civil Service which matter and which we can use to improve our own performance. We are currently working with the OECD to agree on what a new indicator should attempt to measure and think through the practicalities of setting up a new indicator.

A key question is how we establish what we try to measure – how do we know what really matters? We have set out some ideas about what we should try to measure below, but we'd welcome your views on whether we are focusing on the right areas.

Existing measures – the Worldwide Governance Indicators

The first indicator we looked at was the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) that are produced by an analytical team funded by the World Bank. The UK ranked 22nd out of 210 countries in the latest (2013) Government Effectiveness measure. We were below the Scandinavian countries and others such as Canada and Australia.

Chart 1. World Bank Government Effectiveness score 2013.
The score ranges from -2.5 to +2.5. Only selected countries are shown.



How good are we?

Chart 2. Bertelsmann Foundation's Executive Capacity score 2015 (top 15 countries).



At first glance, this measure appeared to meet our objectives. These were to find an independent measure of Civil Service effectiveness that provided some insights into Civil Service performance and allowed for international comparison. However, we soon realised this measure wasn't really suitable for what we wanted to measure.

The way this indicator measured government effectiveness didn't fit well with our idea of what makes the Civil Service effective. The focus appeared to be on the extent to which 'bureaucracy' or red tape impinges on businesses. Of course, this is an important aspect of performance. But the Civil Service does so much more than create regulations that the WGI ended up being a very narrow measure of government effectiveness.

Furthermore, one of the

reasons we want to measure Civil Service performance is to learn how we can improve it. However, the UK score in the WGI is driven heavily by data provided by two external organisations: EIU and IHS Global Insight. The underlying data they produce is not published by the WGI, nor available without a subscription to these organisations. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to examine whether the assessment of UK performance is accurate and to take action to improve it.

Existing measures – the Bertelsmann Foundation's Sustainable Government Indicators

The next measure we explored was the Bertelsmann Foundation's Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGIs). The UK

ranked 8th in the latest (2015) measure of executive capacity, ahead of France and Germany but behind the USA.

The Executive Capacity dimension of this indicator is more directly focussed on the work of the Civil Service than the WGI Government Effectiveness indicator. It assesses activities that the Civil Service carries out on a daily basis, such as the impact of implementing regulations, the level of policy coordination and how well policies are communicated to the public. The SGIs also include a UK report which details how the UK performs across each of the sub-indicators which make up the Executive Capacity score.

At this stage, the Bertelsmann Foundation's indicator seemed to be moving out in front in the search for the best international indicator of Civil Service performance. However, as with the WGIs, we also had some concerns with the methodology employed. Firstly, Bertelsmann gives different weightings to the sub-indicators that make up the overall score. For example, they give 'Self-Monitoring' more than seven times as much weight as 'Government Office Expertise'. We are not sure that this is the right judgement.

Secondly, the SGIs employ just two UK country experts to assess the UK in over 60 areas of governance performance – this limits the experts' capacity to fully understand some of the developments the UK has made in these areas. As a result, the indicators are a limited tool for driving improvements.



What else should be included?

Reviewing these measures of government performance has given us insight into how UK Government performance is currently assessed. Yet neither of these measures provided us with an objective, comprehensive and transparent measure of Civil Service effectiveness.

Our search persuaded us of the value of measuring the performance of the Civil Service as a whole and comparing our performance with our international peers. However, as the existing measures didn't meet our criteria, we are exploring how we could create a new measure of Civil Service effectiveness. We think the new indicator should attempt to measure what matters to the Civil Service in the 21st century. It should measure areas such as openness, digital, innovation and value for money.

The UK Civil Service is increasingly moving to a more open and more digital way of operating to ensure we can deliver the best services and user experience possible. We are increasingly interested in securing value for money in the way we operate and we aim to provide innovative solutions to complex problems. The extent to which governments use innovative approaches in policy development; the way governments use technology; and the way governments interact with citizens are

also important measures of effective governance. Neither the WGI nor the Bertelsmann explicitly captured digital and openness, but perhaps a new indicator could?

Other organisations produce indicators that focus solely on these elements and show the UK performing very strongly, particularly on measures related to openness.

For example, the UK ranked top in the Open Knowledge Foundation's Open Data Index in 2014. This indicator measures whether publicly held data across ten themes are defined as open.

The UK ranked 4th in 2014 in the UN's e-Participation index which is a broader measure of openness, capturing the use of online services to provide information to citizens and also how governments are engaging citizens to contribute to policy making. The UK also performed well in the UN's Online Service Index ranking 11th out of 193 countries in 2014. In this indicator, the scope and quality of national governments' online services are assessed.

We think these elements should be captured in a new indicator.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators and the Bertelsmann Foundation also failed to measure innovation or value for money. We recognise that these are

very difficult to measure and we are continuing to look for stand-alone indicators that measure government performance in these two areas.

Where next?

Recently we began to test our thinking with others – including through a blog post written by the Department for International Development Permanent Secretary, Mark Lowcock, who is acting as a champion for this work. However, a key question for us was whether other countries would also be interested in developing new indicators to help benchmark their performance and facilitate learning from others. Happily, the answer is yes. We were able to have a number of discussions with other countries during the course of Public Governance week at the OECD in April and there was significant interest in taking this forward. We are now working with the OECD and other interested countries to make progress on this.

If reading this article has inspired you to think about how we should measure our performance, we would welcome views on what should be included in a new measure of Civil Service effectiveness, as well as how it might best be developed and published. What matters to you? And what matters to the citizens we serve?

Read more about the Analysis & Insight Team on our blog: <https://coanalysis.blog.gov.uk>



Using data to prevent fraud

» HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has reduced error and fraud in the tax credits system to its lowest level since they were introduced in 2003. Tom Smith, HMRC's Director of Customers, Strategy and Policy (Benefits and Credits) examines the reasons for the turnaround and lessons learned.



Tax credits play an important role in supporting working people. Most people who receive them are honest and rightly want to know that others cannot get away with incorrectly claiming them. Success in this area has never been more important.


Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit were introduced as Chancellor Gordon Brown's chosen instrument for making work pay and tackling child poverty.

The concept of a tax credit was not new. But the ambitions of the new system were intended to have a greater impact by being more generous and comprehensive.

From the outset, there was huge levels of claimant demand, putting critical strain on the computer system. Once those glitches were tackled, attention turned to the risk that large amounts of tax credits were not going to the right place.

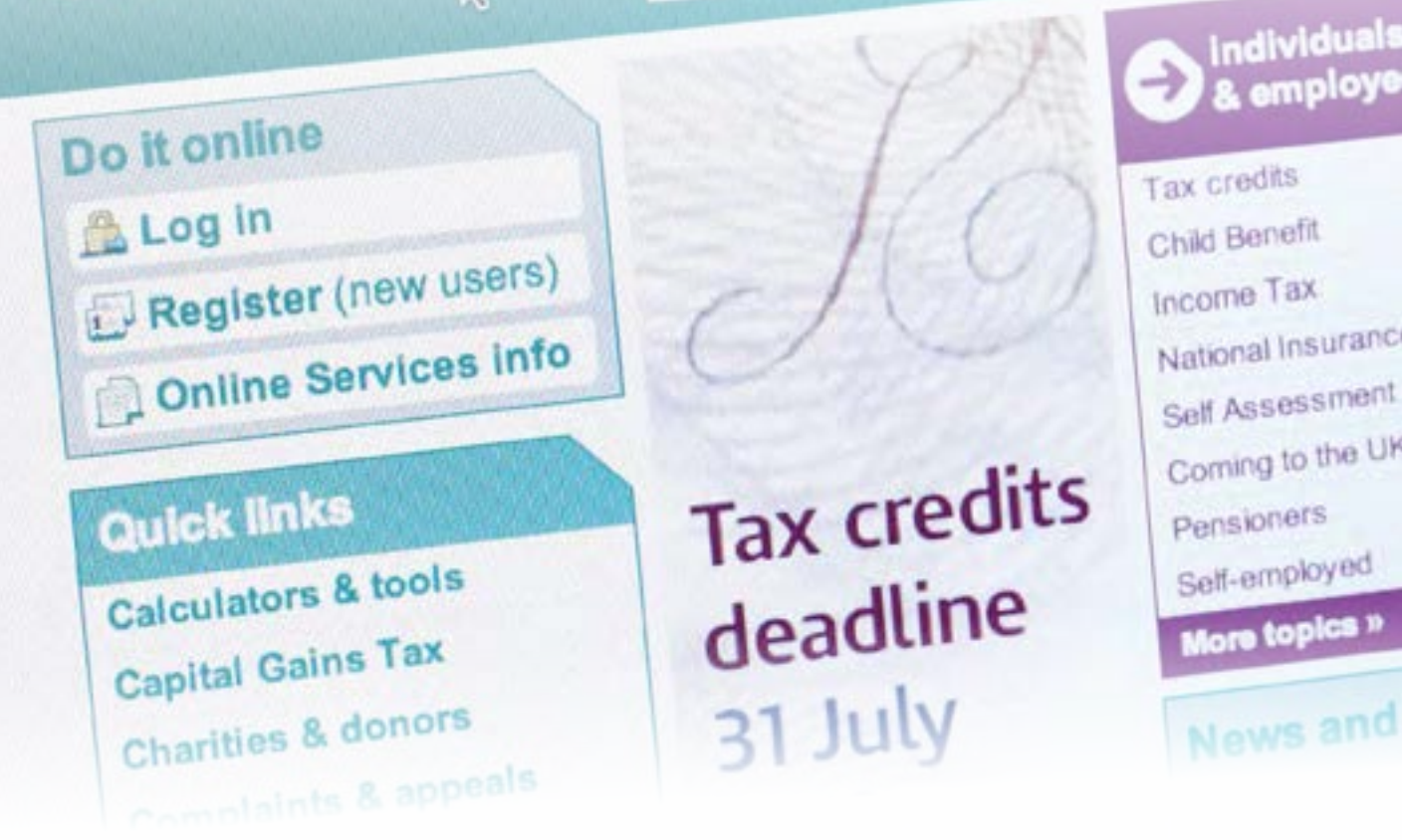
Complexity increases risks

In many cases, the problem arose from claimants struggling to get their heads round a system which – with the benefit of hindsight – was too complex in its design.

The problem began because tax credit awards were calculated on an annual basis. This was designed to mirror the tax system so that the two could fit together. 



Using data to prevent fraud



However, instead of simply reporting their current income and childcare costs, claimants had to make estimates covering the whole year. This was not always easy.

It was made harder because tax credits were designed to be responsive. This made sense in theory – people's lives did change and it seemed right that tax credits should respond accordingly. But, in practice, it put the obligation on the claimant to understand when they needed to tell HMRC about something that had happened in their life and to do so without delay.

The system was complex, people's lives were fluid and many changes were not reported. All of this was reflected in the annual published figures, which estimated that around £2 billion a year was being paid incorrectly as a result of error and fraud. The percentage

figure hovered stubbornly around 8–9%.

HMRC faced a growing mountain of tax credits debt running into billions of pounds. The complexities of the system meant that claimants were being overpaid and HMRC was struggling to get the money back.

Check first, pay later

HMRC set a target to get the percentage down to 5% by 2010–11. At the heart of the plan was a fundamental change of approach. The new mantra was “check first, pay later”.

To support this, we built teams that could pursue compliance on an industrial scale. We intervened in over a million claims each year, systematically checking discrepancies and correcting errors.

But this was not just about

boots on the ground. We pulled in and analysed the data so that we knew which cases to investigate. We put in a new system that enabled us to stop a large amount of error and fraud from entering the tax credit system at the point when someone made a new claim.

We pioneered the use of Credit Reference Agency data to find those cases where someone was claiming tax credits as a single person despite the fact that they were clearly living as a couple.

Strong customer service

We knew that this tough approach would only be acceptable if at the same time we provided good levels of customer service. So one of our key targets was to ensure that we were processing new claims and changes of

circumstances in 22 days and we consistently achieved this.

This was not an overnight success. 2010–11 came and went with the 5% target not achieved. Our efforts were not yet getting the results we had hoped. But we knew we had laid the foundations for success and it was a question of building on them.

Real Time Information and behavioural change

This building work consisted of new tools and new interventions. HMRC's own PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) made a huge difference – we used it on a large scale for the first time during the annual tax credit renewal exercise in 2014.

A tiny system change – writing to all parents of 18 year olds to get them to confirm whether or not their “young person” was still in full-time education and therefore eligible – yielded £120 million in its first year of operation in 2014 alone.

At the same time, we sought to halt the inexorable increase in tax credit debt – recovering overpayments by regular deductions from a tax credit awards whenever we could; more effective means of direct debt recovery when other options had been exhausted.

By now the percentage figure was finally edging down – to 7.3%, then to 7%. Our front line staff were telling us that things were feeling good. But the 4.4% figure we achieved was better than we had dared hope.

Prevent not respond

We do not have a lot of time to take tax credits further, given



that it is one of the benefits shortly to be replaced by Universal Credit. But we are not resting on our laurels.

The main thing we want to do is to shift our approach towards engaging with our customers to help them get it right as opposed to catching them when they get it wrong. “Prevent” not “Respond”. We will be launching a new digital service for tax credit customers later in the year. Exploiting the full potential of this service will be one of the key planks of our strategy.

Lessons learned

Where possible, design error and fraud out of your system. This is not something we can change given the short shelf-life of tax credits. But when we design something new – like the Tax-Free Childcare scheme that will be introduced in 2017 – we

are doing it very differently.

Be rigorous about using data to help you. We could not have achieved the results we did without a range of data sources, both public and private sector. But make sure you have people who actually know how to make sense of data and turn it into intelligence.

Be organised – use operational best practice to plan and execute your compliance activity.

As part of this, empower your front-line staff. Engage and communicate with them; focus on their skills and knowledge; and welcome their suggestions for how things can be done better. The best systems and processes are useless if you don't unlock the potential of your people.

Be persistent and resilient. Not everything you try will work. Changing customer behaviour can be a long slog. Don't give up!

Making law in a digital world: the Universal Credit experience

» From several textbooks worth of legislation to just over 100 pages, Nicolette Sanders, from the Government Legal Department, explains how government lawyers have simplified Universal Credit legislation using Agile service development principles.

The Government's digital agenda may not seem to have much to do with legislation. But many of the areas in which Government interacts with its citizens have their foundations in legislation, from the moment a child's birth is registered and for the rest of

their lives as citizens. The law – particularly Acts of Parliament and statutory instruments – might be thought of as a barrier to digital delivery. It evokes images of reams of ancient fusty paper, containing out of date, hard to understand technical language.



The Government is working to change that, with the Good Law Project run by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, modernising the law to make it more usable and accessible to people in the 21st century and driving digitisation of the statute book by the National Archives. Part of this is about making the language that law uses simpler. But it is also about ensuring that law enables fast and easy digital delivery of the services provided by Government. Lawyers in the Government Legal Department advising the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had to consider this recently, when they came to draft the legislation to implement a major welfare reform, Universal Credit (UC).

The task

UC is a key transformational welfare reform for DWP – within this new system, six separate benefits and tax credits are removed, merging disconnected in and out of work systems into one integrated system for working age people to reduce the barriers to work. The new service will ultimately be delivered primarily through digital channels, enabling users of the technology to access and manage UC via mobile devices and multiple digital channels and enabling DWP to take innovative approaches to helping claimants into work.

The benefits system

is created by legislation. Hundreds of pages of primary and secondary legislation set out in detail what current claimants are entitled to get through benefits. Much of the legislation was drafted many years ago and is now difficult to follow and to understand. It can be hard to make sense of even if you are a benefits specialist!

In a digital world, benefits legislation still needs to respond to complex and rapidly changing personal circumstances that can impact on a claimant's benefit amount, but in a way which is simple and clear. Delivering UC via digital channels also offers the prospect of higher levels of automated processing which was not anticipated in older legislation. 

“...this is about making the language that law uses simpler. But it is also about ensuring that law enables fast and easy digital delivery of the services provided by Government.”

Making law in a digital world: the Universal Credit experience

As Bridget Hornibrook, the main drafting lawyer at DWP Legal Advisers on the UC secondary legislation, says, “expectations were high for UC and it was clear that, as drafters, we had to deliver something different”.

How we went about it

The starting point for lawyers was to ask their policy and operational colleagues who were designing and implementing UC what they liked about the law – and what they disliked. The outcome was interesting. They liked practical provisions, such as formulae and also provisions containing tables and steps which help the user navigate the legislation. And they disliked cross-references to other legislation, which required the user to go off and search for that legislation, and they particularly disliked language such as “subject to” and “for the purposes of”. In short, the demand from those implementing and those drafting was for plain language.

Taking those principles as their guiding light, lawyers set about reducing the hundreds of pages of existing legislation to something more manageable. The structure of the law was carefully designed to make it easy to read – for all readers. The main secondary legislation was given “signposts” with a clear explanation of what each part of the legislation does, so as to aid the user. That user could be a systems designer working on implementation or a lay person wondering how UC works. Even such apparently simple steps were not without controversy – surprisingly perhaps to the non-lawyer, that kind of thing is unusual in

the law and it was the subject of further discussion between lawyers in and outside Government.

Aside from clarity, the other issue for the legislation to address was the need to reconcile the legislation with the needs of a primarily digital service. In a modern and digitally integrated service such as UC, many of the interactions between claimants and the service will be undertaken digitally and, therefore, remotely rather than face to face in a benefit office. Lawyers drafting the legislation needed to reconcile that kind of functionality with the need for a legal framework which:

- is fair to claimants;
- permits DWP staff to intervene in decisions where necessary; and
- provides an appropriate audit trail for the correction of error and the prosecution of fraud.

After several months of drafting, the legislation was laid before Parliament. DWP lawyers achieved their goal of simplifying and shortening the key piece of secondary legislation, to just over a hundred pages (compared to several textbooks’ worth in the case of existing benefits).

The cultural challenge

The need to collaboratively design the legislation required lawyers – not traditionally considered to be the most innovative or imaginative of people – to work side by side with software designers and coders. Lawyers visiting the development centre of the UC digital service were

faced with new and different ways of working and needed to adapt quickly. They had to learn about Agile software development (which breaks down the delivery of the product or service into small bite-sized chunks) and get on top of the language that the developers and coders spoke – and quickly. In doing so, they also realised that in fact the drafters of legislation and the designers of IT programmes are not operating in such different spheres as they might first seem. Both want to get the internal logic of a system right. Both wanted to embrace agile methodology. The team drafting the regulations worked collaboratively in an “agile” way with the rest of the team, implementing UC by getting stuck into discussions and challenge sessions and actively involving themselves in each development “sprint”. The success of this approach has led lawyers working in DWP Legal Advisers to adopt such a methodology in other projects going forwards.

What about the future?

DWP Legal Advisers are also working with the Department on a number of digital delivery projects and are reaping the fruits of the experience on UC and lessons learned from that project. Digital service development is now the standard and, looking forward, the creation of the Government Legal Department, bringing together many of the legal divisions across Government, will also mean that it is easier to spread good practice on making law fit for purpose in the digital age.

The Productivity Plan: a route map to a more prosperous nation

» If Britain was to match US levels of productivity, our GDP would be boosted by 31% – equivalent to £21,000 a year for every household in the country. Susan Acland-Hood, Director of the Enterprise and Growth Unit, HM Treasury explains why productivity matters and how the Government plans to raise productivity and thus boost our economy by ‘Fixing the Foundations’.

“ Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it is almost everything. ”

Paul Krugman,
The Age of Diminished Expectation (1990)



The Productivity Plan: a route map to a more prosperous nation

When George Osborne returned to the Treasury in May, one of the first pieces of advice he asked for was a bold plan to boost productivity. We were keen to take advantage of the unique opportunity presented by an incoming Chancellor keen to set out his stall, focused on the long-term and ready to take bold steps to tackle Britain's long-standing productivity challenge.

The plan – called 'Fixing the Foundations' – was launched in Budget week. This article explains why productivity matters, how the Chancellor and the Treasury – working across Whitehall – developed the plan and some of the key changes in it.

Why productivity?

Productivity growth really matters. It isn't some obscure metric of interest only to economists or policy wonks, but is the driver of faster – and more sustainable – economic growth. If Britain was to match US levels of productivity, our GDP would be boosted by 31% – equivalent to £21,000 a year for every household in the country. Every OECD country with higher average wages than Britain also has higher productivity levels.

So the stalling of productivity growth since the financial crisis matters to all of us and the revival of productivity is by no means a certainty. In their 2015 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) stated in their forecast that productivity growth will pick up slowly to more normal rates. It was critical to make this a 'Parliament of productivity' and to set out strong proposals for an incoming Government. That meant building a well-founded and common understanding inside the Treasury about which measures really mattered.

In Britain, productivity has

increased more than seven-fold over the last 100 years, with huge benefits to wages, living standards and to the goods and services citizens enjoy. However, productivity growth has been uneven and our relative performance has fluctuated, reflecting both domestic policy choices and external factors.

Since the financial crisis, despite a strong recovery and an impressive job creation record, Britain has fallen further behind relative to our comparatively productive peers and has lost much of the ground caught up since the 1980s. The ONS estimates that UK output per hour is 17% below the G7 average, 27% below France, 28% below Germany and 31% below the US. In fact, in comparison with the US and Germany, Britain is now back where it was in 1992.

We spent some time assessing the wide range of different explanations that have been given for the recent 'productivity puzzle' (and you can find a

longer discussion of this in the plan itself). But what became very clear was that a plan which responded only to the immediate 'puzzle' would not be enough. The UK's productivity weakness existed well before the financial crisis and the literature showed us that the greatest drivers of productivity were those that had both caused the long-standing gap in productivity and started to help us close it in the '80s and '90s – which meant we had to focus on the long-term fundamentals.

The Government's framework for raising productivity was therefore built around two simple pillars:


- Encouraging long-term investment in economic capital, including infrastructure, skills and knowledge; and
- Promoting a dynamic economy that encourages innovation and helps resources flow to their most productive use. 

Chart 1: Labour Productivity per hour worked since the 1950s (in 1990 US\$)

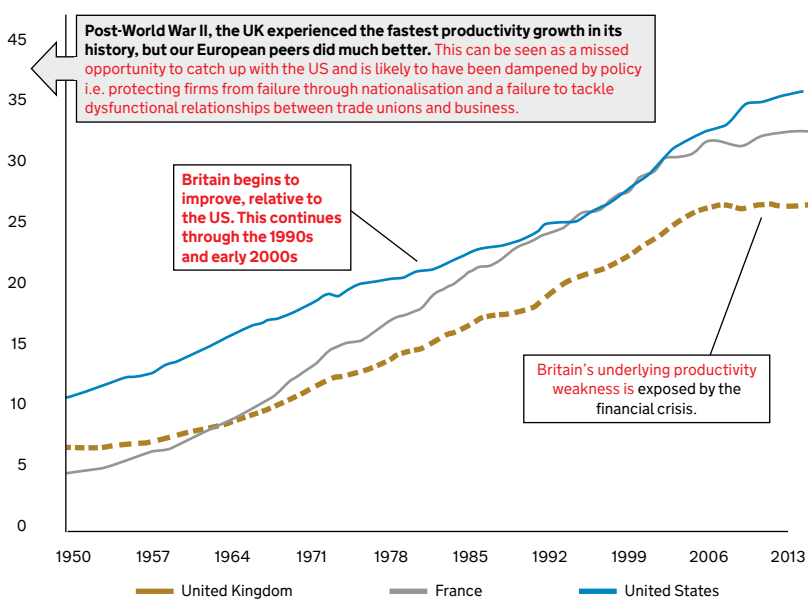
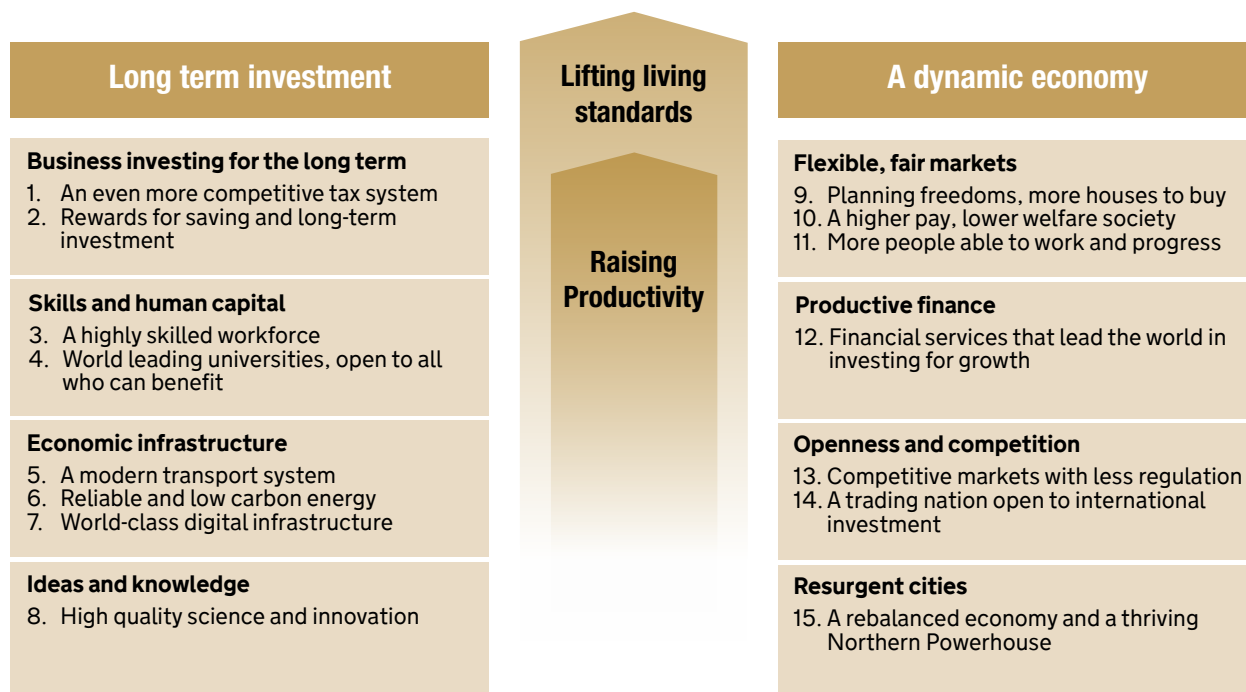


Chart 2: A Framework for Raising Productivity



Source: HM Treasury

Under each of these headings, we looked both at areas of strength that Britain needed to build on and preserve (like our strong science base) and identify our areas of long-standing actual or perceived weakness (like infrastructure).

The politics of productivity

In many ways, the real challenge was not developing a methodological framework, but being prepared to take the radical steps necessary to break historic patterns of weakness. The Chancellor was critical to this – he was ready to think big, to work across Government and even to break some taboos.

For example, there has been a lively debate in the UK on hypothecation of tax. But the evidence on infrastructure investment told us how important the

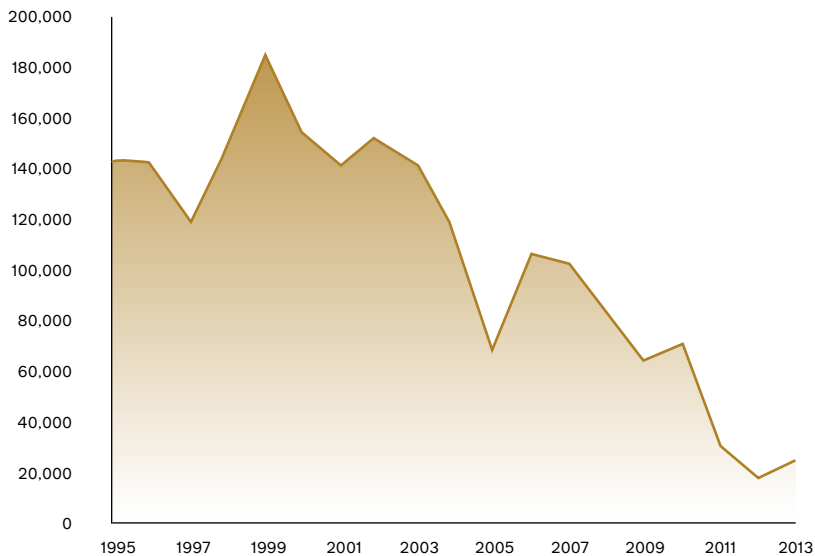
roads infrastructure is as an enabler of growth (car journeys represented 77% of distance travelled in the UK in 2013) and also highlighted historic underinvestment and weakness (the World Economic Forum ranks the UK 30th in the world for the quality of our road network, behind Namibia and Puerto Rico). One-off injections of cash will not be as effective as a long-term commitment to investment and so the Chancellor was prepared to hypothecate Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax) revenues in their entirety, promising to spend them all on the roads.

The Chancellor, with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was also ready to take on the notoriously difficult political hot potato that is the planning system. The link between productivity and planning may not be immediately obvious, but the

LSE Growth Commission and others have argued that the planning system is one of the most distorting features of the British economy and one of the greatest interferences in the flexibility of the labour market. People can't choose where to work and assume they can find somewhere reasonably-priced to live near their job; they often end up choosing their job based on where they can afford to live. And the growth of our most productive places is directly – and severely – constrained by planning. So the move to a 'zonal' planning system for brownfield land (which effectively gives automatic planning permission for brownfield areas identified in local plans) and the new regime for ensuring every area has a good local plan for providing the housing that's needed (with the threat that Government will step in if they do not) represents a shift not just



Chart 3: Training for those in work has dropped off sharply



Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey.
*Number of people in employment whose actual hours worked in reference week was less than usual hours because of training course away from workplace.

for all those who aspire to own their own home but can't, but also for anyone interested in UK productivity.

The UK's weaknesses in skills, particularly in technical skills and those most sought by employers, is almost axiomatic (without action, the UK is forecast to fall to 28th out of 33 OECD countries for intermediate skills by 2020). Training by employers themselves – which is clearly the most effective way to make sure the skills built are those employers really value – has fallen off a cliff.

Once again, the Government took radical action and set out plans for an apprenticeship levy, which will both fund the commitment to 3 million apprenticeships and – crucially – make certain that larger employers have 'skin in the game,' and are incentivised to make sure the training is good-quality and relevant to real workplace skills, and no longer have the option to simply not train their workforce.

Finally – starting well before the publication of 'Fixing the Foundations' – the Chancellor has shown his commitment to tackling one of the biggest challenges of UK growth, that of re-balancing the economy. The Chancellor's announcement of a historic deal with Manchester in the spring changed the political weather around devolution; and 'Fixing the Foundations' continues the work of building the Northern Powerhouse, with new devolved planning powers, a clear plan for Transport for the North and a route map to a further set of devolution deals alongside the Spending Review.

What about the public sector?

Of course, the public sector represents around 20% of the economy and so improving our own productivity and efficiency makes a significant difference to the overall numbers, as well as benefitting taxpayers and those who use public services.

There are grounds for optimism here. In the two years after 2010 (following a period of flat public sector productivity), the ONS estimates that productivity increased by 2.5% and 1.2% respectively, as service outputs increased, despite reduced budgets. Budget cuts don't always lead to productivity gains and it's hugely to the credit of policymakers and public servants everywhere that the reductions in spend have been well enough targeted and managed that certain sections of the public sector have outperformed the private sector average in its productivity in recent years. It's no surprise that public sector productivity will continue to feature as a key driver of the Spending Review that has just been launched.

Will it work? And what next?

Early views of the Productivity Plan from business stakeholders, such as the CBI, have been positive. But the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. And despite great cries of joy on the second floor of the Treasury when the first productivity figures since the plan showed a slight up-tick, it will be a slow burn. The next stage is to make sure that we implement the plan well, with a cross-Whitehall group to own and drive progress (given that the landscape of productivity is so wide and touches so much of what Government does).

But we are also clear that we need to take a wider view of whose role it is to build British productivity – many of the things that can make the most difference are not for Government. After the plan was published, we received a letter picking up on a metaphor used in the annex. The



metaphor was that productivity is like cooking – it depends both on the ingredients (long-term investment) and the recipe (a dynamic economy that uses the ingredients well). Our correspondent thought we should have said more about the cooks – the managers who run Britain's biggest firms.

And it's true that one of the bits of analysis that came through our early work, but didn't survive the late-night pruning of the plan was that the UK suffers from weakness in management skills compared to competitors. But there's a real question about whether this is an issue best solved by Government. So to address this, and issues like it, some of the country's most senior business leaders, led by Sir Charlie Mayfield, will be taking forward a business-led action group for productivity, focusing on practical steps to drive greater

productivity in different sectors and workplaces across the UK – and we will be working with many others, including in groups convened by the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce, to continue a wider conversation about productivity growth.

“ ...the public sector represents around

20% of the economy, and so improving our own productivity and efficiency makes a significant difference to the overall numbers, as well as benefitting taxpayers, and those who use public services.

”

Looking forward

Our aim is that 'Fixing the Foundations' will do what it says on the tin – lay the foundations of a truly 'long-run' economic plan. It has been the product of deep economic analysis, collaborative discussions across Whitehall and thoughtful engagement with academics and business leaders beyond, as well as of the boldness of this Government in tackling long-standing problems with radical solutions. It has the potential to deliver real change – not just higher living-standards for us, but the all-important promise that our children's prospects will be yet better than our own. Many of the measures in the plan will not bear fruit overnight. But, as the proverb says, the best time to plant a tree is ten years ago; the second-best time is now.



Insights from Ursula Brennan

» Ursula Brennan, retiring Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Justice, shares her experiences after 40 years working in the Civil Service.

Ursula Brennan joined the Civil Service Fast Stream in 1975 after spending two years working for the Inner London Educational Authority. Her early Civil Service career was spent in the Department for Health and Social Security (now Department for Work and Pensions) working on 'welfare to work' and disability benefits.

Ursula then went on to take a number of senior roles across Whitehall including Chief Executive of the Office for Criminal Justice Reform and permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Now retiring as permanent secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Ursula reflects on a 40 year career in the Civil Service and passes on her advice to others.

What has been the biggest change to the Civil Service in your 40-year career?

The digital revolution. Not in the way we use technology in the office, but as an enabler for us to talk directly with users. It is only the beginning. I believe we are on the cusp of something quite profound: a move from insular policy-making where we try to solve problems on our own to an open and engaged conversation with the user of the services.

What was the Civil Service like in the 1970 and 80s?

My cohort of fast-streamers was a large and varied intake with a

substantial number of women. However, the Civil Service as whole was predominantly male. We used to discuss how this would change over time as younger cohorts worked their way up the ladder. That didn't happen automatically in the way we thought it would but the Civil Service has changed a lot since then and diversity is now a major priority across all departments.

What are your top tips for someone starting his or her career in the Civil Service today?

You will have a long career so try different things to keep yourself fresh and interested. Experience what it is like to deliver policy to break any misconceptions about how easy it is to deliver change. You may discover that operational delivery is more fun than you expected.

I first applied for the Fast Stream in 1973 but didn't get an offer, probably because I turned up late to the final interview – don't do that!



When did you start thinking about a long-term career?

I was offered a Grade 7 (Band A) job in Social Security – at the time considered second-class to the exciting world of Health policy. It was on promotion so I jumped at the chance and ended up loving it. Although I started on policy work, I got involved in an IT operational delivery project. I found project management very interesting so I made a conscious move into IT.

At the time, everyone was saying you need a breadth of experience and this held me in good stead later on in my career. By 1999, I had had a career in policy, IT and operational delivery. This mix was unusual at the time and I think that helped me get my first DG role.

What does a job in the Civil Service offer over the private sector?

No matter what you do in the public sector, it matters to people. If what we do wasn't difficult, we wouldn't be doing it. The Civil Service offers a diversity of jobs, responsibility from the start of your career and an understanding that there is not one single career trajectory. We do not write people off: if they don't succeed they can try again in a new location or a different set of responsibilities.

What key thing have you learnt from an organisation external to the Civil Service?

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) executive committee spent a morning at Unilever (courtesy of the Whitehall & Industry Group).

The Chief Executive explained that, after every item their Board discusses, they ask themselves 'have we made the issue simpler or more complicated?' There is a tendency for senior people who deal with high levels of complexity to make things more complicated. However, it is a leader's job to bring clarity for those people in the organisation who have to deliver the solution.

What are you most proud of?

While I was at the MoD, I oversaw a review of military aviation safety and then sponsored a new safety regime that I believe has made a practical difference to the safety of military personnel.

What is the most innovative thing you've seen in the Civil Service?

I was at the MoD when the war in Afghanistan was at its peak. The MoD engineers (civil servants) were developing on a weekly basis innovation in armoured vehicles, improving both the levels of protection offered and keeping the weight down so the vehicles could still move at speed.

What things will you miss and not miss from your daily work?

I will not miss the Friday afternoon call about an article in the Sunday press. I will not miss the still proliferating quantity of things we are required to report on for other people. I will miss the people and the spirit of working in a team focused on improving services for the public.



What are your lasting images of your career?

My trips to Afghanistan including trying to sleep in the back of a Hercules and running out of a helicopter in full body armour. And, while at DEFRA, I spent a late summer afternoon on Dartmoor hawking. I'd spent the day learning about the poisoning of protected birds of prey and ended by watching beautiful red marlins in flight. Quite a contrast.

What's next for the Civil Service?

I believe the Civil Service will continue to get smaller as we become less a doer and more a commissioner. We will create platforms that support people to solve their own problems. However, our fundamental job of accountability to Parliament will remain.

What's next for you? What will your first day after retiring look like?

Getting-up later, not listening to the Today Programme, spending time on some charitable commitments, going for a long walk and then sitting down to make something. I'm a frustrated crafter – be it sewing, embroidery or learning a new skill like pattern cutting. I'll be keeping myself busy.

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