

The GSR Strategy: One Year On

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Introduction

It is now a year since the Government Social Research (GSR) Service strategy was published.¹ In it we set out the priorities for GSR up to 2020. In the strategy, we made a commitment to review progress and check priorities. One year into our five year strategy I want to celebrate the successful delivery of parts of the plan and to note other progress.

Delivering the strategy has involved many groups and individuals across GSR and the enthusiasm, dedication and skills shown by them has been tremendous. Key teams have been the central GESR team, strategy groups directly supporting each objective, the Task & Finish and Working Groups set up to look at specific issues and the departmental Heads of Profession working with their GSR members. Monitoring across all of these groups is coordinated centrally, with quarterly progress reports delivered to the GSR Heads of Profession Board. Progress on specific projects is regularly fed back to members

Over the past year we have put greater emphasis on stakeholder engagement and social researchers continue to achieve impact by shaping policy and delivery. In government, we are uniquely placed to advise policy makers on what works (and why) and on the formulation of policy questions. By building relationships with policy makers at the early stage of the policy process and providing appropriate challenge, social researchers are influential in shaping policy and practice.

We have continued our commitment to transparency during the course of the year, following on from the refresh of the GSR Publication Protocol in 2015. We have worked with civil society bodies to promote the value of evidence transparency across government.

Our stated ambition remains to build a workforce that is consistently inspired, confident and empowered as well as being innovative, collaborative, forward-thinking, tech-savvy and diverse. New priorities for the coming year will be for the profession to develop a coherent and strengthened Talent Management strategy, so all members can drive their careers forward in the way they want to. An updated GSR competency framework will be also launched, taking into account data science and quality assurance skills.

The context in which social researchers work is also constantly changing. Over the coming years of the strategy, we will continue to review progress, check priorities and respond to emerging developments.

Jenny Dibden

Jenny Dibden,

Head of GSR

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-social-research-profession-strategy-2015-to-2020>

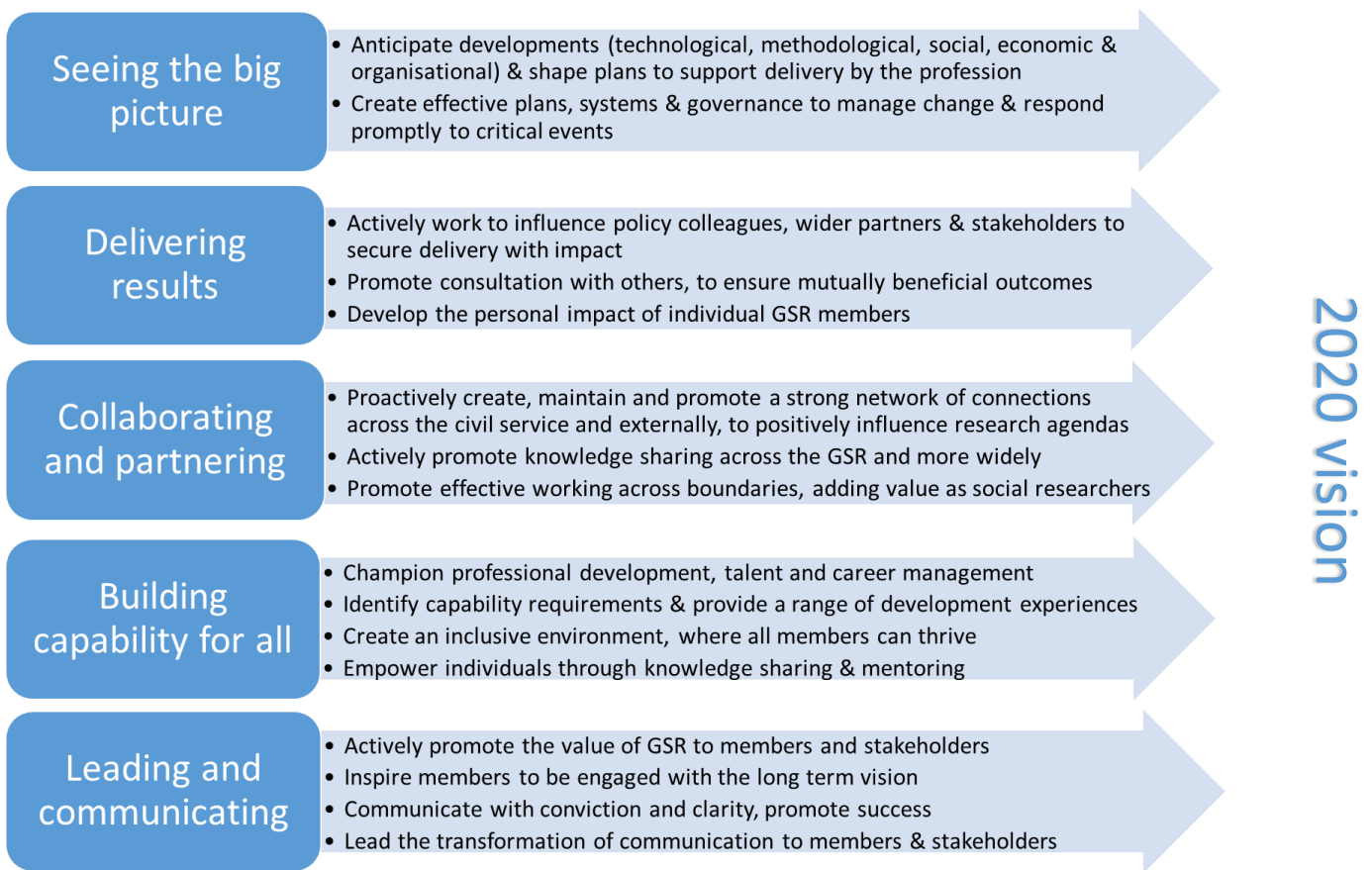
Report Card

For each of the five key objectives in the strategy we set what was happening in each area at the time of the launch and what needed to happen over the next five years to achieve success. The five key objectives were:

1. Seeing the bigger picture
2. Delivering results
3. Collaborating and partnering
4. Building capability for all
5. Leading and communicating




Figure 1 summarises the vision behind the five strategy objectives in the Strategy.










Figure 1: The five key objectives of the GSR strategy 2015 – 2020










The ratings in Table 1 reflect how close GSR is to achieving success, 1-year on. The commentary explains how this has been achieved, or what is being done to achieve future success.

Table 1: A summary of progress one year on

Green = completed  Yellow = in progress  Red = little or no progress 

Objective	What success would look like by 2020	Progress in year 1	Rating
Seeing the bigger picture	GSR Ethics guidance updated to refer to new methods of collecting data (e.g. social media)	GSR Ethics Guidance on use of social media has been published	
	Promote development of good quantitative skills in GSR members (new and existing)	We are updating the GSR competency framework to put greater emphasis on the quantitative analytical skills (data science & quality assurance).	
	Be proactively anticipating future developments (technological, methodological) & managing change	We have supported new developments through the Innovative Methods Group and Learning and Development events e.g. Big Data Mini Conference	
Delivering results	Case studies to be promoted to showcase the value GSR members add & updated regularly	We are developing case studies to showcase the value GSR members add, which will be published by the end of 2016 and subsequently on a regular basis	
	Set up more panel discussion events for senior GSR analysts & academics, inviting members to attend and contribute, to engage membership in cross-cutting issues and facilitate networking	We have delivered a suite of networking events for GSR members & academics, in collaboration with the other analytical professions, as well as the inaugural GSR annual lecture, and a joint British Academy/GSR event for early career academic and government social researchers.	
	Promote development of personal impact to all	We will include personal impact as an integral part of the new Talent Management & Engagement programme we are developing in 2016/17.	
Collaborating & partnering	Actively build stakeholder networks across departments so GSR develops stronger links with specialists, leading to better informed analysis & advice	We are engaging with stakeholder networks across departments so GSR plays an active role in cross-disciplinary and cross-government initiatives to improve the demand, supply and use of high quality research and analysis. Examples include chairing the multidisciplinary Cross Government Evaluation Group, and Policy Profession groups involved in up-skilling policy makers in the understanding and use of evidence.	
	Task senior GSR members to be named 'account managers' for specific external stakeholders, to keep momentum in developing these relationships	Senior GSR members have continued to be actively involved with external stakeholders over the past year. In addition, Heads of Profession have completed a stakeholder mapping exercise to ensure future engagement is efficiently targeted.	
	Develop & promote an evidence-base of the benefits of internships and secondments, to demonstrate the value this type of partnering delivers to individuals & organisations	Over the next year, we will develop case studies to promote the benefits of internships and secondments to GSR members	

Objective	What success would look like by 2020	Progress towards success in year 1	Rating
Building capability for all	CPD opportunities mapped to GSR & generic competencies, to illustrate learning pathways	We have mapped CPD opportunities to GSR & generic competencies, illustrating learning pathways, and published this on the GSR intranet site.	
	GSR Board actively managing talent in the profession	We have started to develop a Talent Management Programme for GSR building on existing activities	
	Strengthened role for the GSR North group and promote active engagement with other GSR groups (e.g. those based in Wales and Scotland)	We have actively promoted the GSR profession in Scotland, Wales and the north of England by attending and speaking at a range of events, explaining to members how they can get involved. We have also strengthened the engagement of these groups with the Heads of Profession Board, with each giving an update on rotation at meetings.	
	Actively promote secondment and job swap opportunities	Regular notifications of secondment opportunities are circulated across GSR	
	Social science students involved in the Q-step programme joining GSR on graduation, with enhanced quantitative skills	Senior GSR members are actively involved in supporting the undergraduate Q Step programme and have hosted a number of Summer internships in departments, as well as leading other initiatives to up-skill post-graduate students in the work of government, e.g. ESRC-funded internships	
Leading & communicating	Strengthen the role of Head of Profession within departments, to lead on the delivery of the GSR Strategy	GSR Heads of Profession have been actively involved in evaluating the success of the strategy, and in supporting researchers within their departments to get engaged with the profession.	
	Lead on case for a pan-government procurement strategy for social research	Procurement continues to be an important long term issue for the GSR profession but progress has been slower than planned due to resource constraints.	
	Deliver the 2015 GSR Communications Strategy	We have delivered the 2015 GSR Communications Strategy capitalising on new technology e.g. new GSR intranet and external internet sites, redesigned the Learning & Development update and are developing a GSR Blog.	