

REPORT FROM THE ANALYTICAL FUNCTION CONFERENCE

The Analytical Function conference was held in London on 31st January 2018 with the theme of cross-government working and collaboration of analytical specialists in the UK public sector, with a focus on developing the Analytical Function Strategy.

The event brought together senior analysts from across the public sector and showcased examples of analysts achieving greater impact through collaboration, including a presentation from GAD.



Evie Calcutt

The 'Analytical Function' includes professional analysts, statisticians, economists, scientists, engineers and actuaries from across government and its arm's length bodies. Together they have a broad range of valuable technical expertise, and embedded across government have an important role supporting evidence-based policy and decision making. The conference was an opportunity for discussion and knowledge sharing between these senior analysts. It highlighted that analysts across specialities face a lot of the same challenges, such as how to communicate uncertainty clearly. Actuaries have experience in this area and can share learning.

Some Analytical Function member organisations:



Cross-government collaboration examples

The morning sessions showcased how analysts are achieving impact through cross profession collaboration with presentations from:

- A cross-government [Trial Advice Panel](#) on how they are bringing experts together from academia and government (Cabinet Office, Department for Transport and the HM Courts and Tribunal Service) to advise on interventions and experimental design.
- The Open Innovation Team at Cabinet Office on their role to help the public sector better collaborate with academics and [PhD projects](#) on high profile policy issues.
- UK Statistics Authority on the importance of the [Code of Practice](#) to everyone in the analytical function.
- The Government Office for Science on how publishing [Areas of Research Interest](#) documents, detailing the main research questions facing departments, aids engagement.

- The Data Science Campus at the Office for National Statistics on how they are training analysts in the latest techniques.
- GAD actuaries Anna Edwards and myself on the use of financial risk analysis to support developing countries in making informed decisions about climate risk management. This included our 2016 [climate change research project](#) and our current work with the Department for International Development and the World Bank in the area of [disaster risk financing](#).

What skills can actuaries usefully share with others?

All analytical professions share similar issues and challenges when it comes to clear communication and communicating uncertainty and variability. The GAD presentation showed our approach to these challenges. Audience feedback highlighted that actuaries at GAD are particularly skilled in this respect enabling us to better connect and build understanding with colleagues.

The actuarial profession focuses on the importance of communication as one of the key skills of an actuary. This is initially addressed by the communication elements of the actuarial exam program and further developed as part of the requirement for continuing professional development. GAD itself runs internal training on communication and other soft skills to develop its actuaries. The Analytical Function Board will want to consider how to best capture the skills of different functions and facilitate shared learning.

Analytical Function Strategy

The afternoon sessions focused on the Analytical Function Strategy, with break-out sessions providing opportunities for attendees to contribute suggestions on how to improve and develop the strategy further.

The day was very positive and thought provoking and left lots to consider as GAD looks to further embed itself across government departments and learn from other analysts, as well as using its own actuaries' and analysts' experience and skills to help.