

## **SUCCESSFUL DEPUTY HEADS OF MISSION CHECKLIST**

Deputy Heads of Mission (DHMs) have a critical role to play in ensuring our overseas posts work effectively and deliver one HMG objectives.

Each DHM role is different, from working in a VSEP to helping to lead a large or multilateral post. But in all cases, DHMs will need to balance the need to ensure their post runs smoothly with an active outward-facing role, not least when acting as Chargé d’Affaires. DHMs should see their role in the context of the steer from senior FCO management that “diplomats should do diplomacy”.

There are core skills each DHM should have:

**Leadership:** DHMs have a critical role in supporting their HoM to lead work and support morale in the mission. In public, they must form an inseparable team, speaking to a common agenda and advocating the same values with both external and internal stakeholders. An effective DHM will also challenge their HoM and act as a “sounding board”, ensuring differences are thrashed out in private and better policies and/or practices follow as a result. DHMs are often best-placed to lead on business planning and evaluation, ensuring plans are strategic and reflect the priorities of all One HMG partners. They should be clear about what the HoM and mission as a whole can expect in return from PAGs. They should, with their HoM, champion and promote diversity;

**Delegation:** the best DHMs show a keen interest in all staff in their mission, empowering and supporting them to deliver objectives, and listening genuinely to their ideas and concerns. The reality for many DHMs is that too many stakeholders turn to them for everything, including on low level and mundane issues. DHMs must therefore delegate proactively and also push back on unnecessary tasking;

**Policy:** DHMs need to be policy savvy. Some will oversee the policy output of the whole mission directly or because they line manage the Head of Political Section. More and more directorates are outsourcing policy work to posts. This means DHMs should have strong policy skills and be able to sense test ideas with HOMs and HMG partners. It helps to be creative too. They may also lead on a discreet policy area, developing contacts at a suitably senior level.

**Communication:** DHMs are part of the public face of their mission, especially when Chargé. They will have a critical role within the mission, walking the corridors and making links and connections to ensure different teams across One HMG work together as a coherent whole. DHMs will often lead on cross-cutting issues at post,

such as Learning & Development, helping to set the right tone and create the right culture;

**Corporate oversight:** DHMs have an important corporate function, ensuring the mission functions smoothly. As such, they are often seen as Chief Operating Officer (with HoMs as CEO). DHMs will need to chair some Post committees e.g. the One HMG Management Board or Post Security Committee (given that in most places they will be PSO). But they should not chair all post committees that might exist. In general, DHMs should avoid getting sucked into the day-to-day running of the mission; that is the role of the Corporate Services Manager whom the DHM will likely manage. The DHM's role is likely to be one of setting the right strategic direction, giving a UKB/FCO perspective and ensuring robust corporate policies are in place, supported by the appropriate management structures and committees. They may need to get involved in difficult/sensitive issues, keeping as many detailed issues as possible off their HoM's plate. The Corporate Capability Change Programme is looking at how it might be possible to meet the aspiration that DHMs spend only 30% of their time on corporate issues;

**Consular:** some DHMs are also HM Consul. They should empower their consular team to manage everyday issues. But DHMs can add real value as a "sounding board" and ensuring standards are met. DHMs may need to conduct some ceremonies (e.g. naturalisation);

**Crisis management:** DHMs will likely be the Crisis Manager in the event of a real life crisis at post. As such, they will manage and direct the mission's response, creating space for their HoM to focus on strategic direction. When Chargé, DHMs will become Crisis Leader. DHMs often leading on crisis planning/preparation across the whole mission.