



Government
Legal Department

Government Legal Department Business Plan

2023-24

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Foreword

I am pleased to share the Government Legal Department's (GLD) Business Plan for 2023-24.

The past year has yet again seen teams across our department rise to the challenge of ensuring the Government has had outstanding legal support, as it has navigated a particularly turbulent period. From the cost-of-living crisis to industrial relations, negotiating the Windsor Framework through to the war in Ukraine, our legal work has been central to the Government's response – great work delivered by great teams.

In 2023-24, GLD will continue to play a vital role in “helping the government to govern well, within the rule of law” which remains our core purpose. We will do this working closely with the Attorney General in her role as chief legal adviser to the Government, supporting the Prime Minister in the delivery of his priorities.

This business plan outlines the wide range of high profile and complex legal work that will form our delivery priorities for the coming year as well as setting out how we plan to continue to build the department we aspire to be, playing our part in ongoing Civil Service reform.

This year we reach the final year of GLD's Strategy 2019-2024. I am delighted with the progress we have made in delivering this strategy over the last few years and now is the time to look forward to what comes next. In the coming year, we have decided to focus on 3 areas – **becoming a national GLD** that provides **rewarding careers for all** in an **environment that is fit for the future** and these are the themes that underpin this business plan. A key priority this year will be to develop a new strategy for 2024 onwards. We will take this opportunity to develop a clear and ambitious vision for how we deliver our legal services, ensuring government gets the best overall legal support it needs. We also want to ensure we provide the best career offer to all our people, while modernising our technology and offices to support our evolving ways of working.



Our values are crucial to achieving these ambitions and I believe they play a central role in what makes us special – in **valuing and respecting** one another, taking pride in the **high standard** of our service and embracing **new ideas and collaborating**. I want GLD to be a place where everyone feels welcome – where we support each other whatever our background or role. Diversity and inclusion, including improving social mobility, will continue to be at the heart of my leadership of GLD.

I want GLD to attract talent from across the country and every area of society. We have recently opened our new office in Salford, adding to our offices in Bristol, Leeds and London, meaning we are well on the way to becoming a truly national organisation. We will continue to raise our profile and play a strong role across the legal profession; showcasing the unique work our teams undertake for the benefit of our fellow citizens.

Leading GLD as Treasury Solicitor continues to be a great privilege; I am constantly proud of the amazing people who work here. I know that together we have the professionalism, commitment and skills to achieve the ambitious priorities presented in this plan. Thank you to all our colleagues who will help us to do that.

Susanna McGibbon
Permanent Secretary and Treasury Solicitor
Government Legal Department

Our organisation

The GLD is led by the Treasury Solicitor and Permanent Secretary, Susanna McGibbon. The Treasury Solicitor chairs the GLD Board, which is also made up of the 3 Directors General, Director of Strategy, People and Culture, Director of Finance, Operations and Digital, Director General of the Attorney General's Office and 3 non-executives.

GLD is sponsored by the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General is chief legal adviser to the Crown and has a number of independent public interest functions, as well as overseeing the Law Officers' departments. The Law Officers are accountable to Parliament for the performance of GLD.



Our purpose, vision and values

GLD's purpose is to help the government to govern well, within the rule of law.

Our vision is to be an outstanding legal organisation, committed to the highest standards of service and professionalism and a brilliant place to work, where we can all thrive and fulfil our potential.

We do this whilst remaining true to our values:

One GLD, working together:

- we value and respect each other
- we take pride in the high standards of our service
- we embrace new ideas and collaborate

Working in partnership to deliver for citizens

GLD is committed to providing outstanding legal advice and support to government, to help it to govern well, within the rule of law. We have a position at the heart of government and play a crucial role in changing and developing the law to enable key policies to be realised.

At the centre of our work are those areas where GLD provides a unique perspective, because of our trusted expertise, our strategic insights and our strong relationships with clients. This is based on a shared commitment, as civil servants, to support the Government of the day.

GLD is an inherently agile and responsive department, able to sustain high-quality services throughout periods of change, for example in the Machinery of Government, and emerging challenges and crises, such as Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine. In the year ahead, we will be working on an extensive programme of policies and legislation, helping ministers and departments to deliver their priorities for citizens. We will also be poised to respond to new priorities and events.



Employment, with Economic Recovery and UK Governance

We will deliver the legal work to enable the:

- Department for Work and Pensions to continue providing mean-tested benefits and pensions and, this year in particular, to implement pensions and Universal Credit policy set out in the Spring Budget and provide consistent, targeted and substantial support to those who most need it through **the cost-of-living crisis**
- Department for Health and Social Care to **reduce NHS waiting times** and support the implementation of the Health and Care Act
- Government to **maintain key services impacted by industrial disputes**, with our Employment Group continuing to advise on a wide range of employee matters, industrial relations and trade union issues
- Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to give local leaders and communities the tools they need to **deliver levelling up** by taking the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill through Parliament and ensure **homes across the country are safer** giving homeowners more rights, powers and protections. This includes implementing the recommendations of Grenfell Tower Inquiry
- UK to learn lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic by representing the Government at and working with the **UK Covid-19 Inquiry**
- Cabinet Office to maintain the constitution, including the **Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen** in May and to ensure the Government has the highest standards of **propriety and ethics**. We will also work across government departments to advise on **how the devolution settlements impact government policy** and public services



Commercial, with Trade and International

We will deliver the legal work to enable the:

- Government to respond effectively and efficiently to domestic commercial litigation challenges and World Trade Organisation legal disputes across all areas of its work
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to increase energy reliability by leveraging investment in clean technologies and maintaining **the safety, security and resilience of energy systems**
- Department for Business and Trade to lead the programme of legislative work for delivering and implementing the **Retained EU Law Bill**, in cross-cutting collaboration across the Government Legal Profession with the Statutory Instrument (SI) Hub
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to **tackle climate change** and reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050
- HM Treasury to develop a set of reforms to **drive growth and competitiveness in the financial services sector**
- Government Commercial Function and Cabinet Office to **simplify and modernise procurement rules** and procedures, with the Commercial Law Group supporting its implementation for the Government's own contracting
- Department for Business and Trade to deliver an ambitious programme of **Free Trade Agreements**
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to deliver its **ambitious roadmap for a cleaner, green country** and support the Government's **bio-diversity net-gain** agenda

Litigation, with Justice and Security

We will deliver the legal work to enable the:

- Home Office and Ministry of Justice to take the Illegal Migration Bill through Parliament to **tackle illegal migration**, supported by our Litigation Group as the measures are implemented
- Home Office to ensure our immigration system gives the flexibility and power to establish safe and legal routes to the UK, including the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, to **improve the fairness and efficacy of the immigration system**
- Ministry of Defence to support the international coalition in **support of Ukraine**, with our Litigation Group representing the Government in litigation arising from sanctions imposed
- Home Office and Ministry of Justice to **tackle economic crime and protect national security**
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to **drive forward change through science and technology** and work on new legislation relating to competition and consumers, jointly with the Department for Business and Trade
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport to continue work on the draft **Media Bill** and to **deliver reforms to football governance**



GLD Strategy 2019-2024

Our strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision to be an outstanding legal organisation, committed to the highest standards of service and professionalism and a brilliant place to work, where we can all thrive and fulfil our potential.

It is underpinned by 6 strategic outcomes, which are closely aligned with the vision for A Modern Civil Service – skilled, innovative and ambitious – as set out in the Declaration on Government Reform.

Our strategic outcomes



Leadership

Improve our leadership at all levels by developing and embedding a leadership framework with clear standards linked to progression and retention, with a shared expectation, confidence and accountability.



Be recognised

Be recognised across the Civil Service and externally, as a leading employer in relation to diversity and inclusion and wellbeing.



Improved offer

Put in place an improved offer to attract, retain, reward and develop the talented people we need to be an outstanding organisation.



Connected

Increase our numbers outside London whilst operating as a fully integrated department, connected across our many sites within and outside London and exploiting the opportunities technology provides to enhance the working experience of our staff and the quality of our service for clients.



Capability

Enhance the capability and capacity of our staff through the operation of a fully integrated digital knowledge management system accessible to all throughout GLD, an enhanced training offer through the use of digital delivery platforms alongside traditional techniques and the further development of gld.digital.



Professionalise

Professionalise and modernise all aspects of our service, both corporate and legal services, using a 'fail fast / learn quickly' approach to encourage innovation.

Our strategic priorities for 2023-24

As we begin to anticipate our future GLD Strategy we remain committed to realising the strategic outcomes we set in 2019 to deliver our vision. Each of our subsequent business plans has seen significant progress towards achieving these outcomes, from expanding our national footprint and introducing collaborative technology such as our knowledge management system, through to delivering our leadership framework 'Leadership the GLD Way' and delivery of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

This year we will complete projects and actions to fulfil our 2019 strategic vision by focusing on 3 core areas – **becoming a national GLD** that provides **rewarding careers for all** in an **environment that is fit for the future**. This is how we will provide government with outstanding legal services and be a brilliant place to work.



Becoming a national GLD

We will continue to grow our presence outside of London, in line with the Government's Places for Growth Strategy so that GLD reflects the country we serve. We have established a new office in Salford (Manchester) and relocating our offices within Croydon and Bristol. We will also continue work to consider our London estate while increasing the number of roles outside of London to enable our people to build sustainable career pathways wherever they work.

We will embrace future ways of working to enable a hybrid approach that delivers inclusive and sustainable working practices for our people and continues to deliver for our clients. To make this happen we will use the right technology and modernise our office spaces to support collaboration and make it easier for our people to perform their roles.

We will ensure that the development of our national presence increases, reflecting the rewarding, high quality, impactful roles in life-changing law and attracting individuals across the UK to provide the talent we need to succeed into the future.

Rewarding careers for all

We are implementing a new capability-based pay system for our lawyers and continue to develop the experience for all working in GLD, including on development, remuneration and wider benefits.

We will continue our strong commitment to inclusion for all, removing barriers and clearing the path to enable everyone to reach their potential through the delivery of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan. At the heart of making GLD a brilliant place to work is creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where everyone's talent and contribution are recognised and where we all have a meaningful voice on matters that affect us.

We will continue to develop and diversify our talent pipelines and build rewarding careers across the professions in GLD. We will continue to enhance and expand our legal trainee scheme and are introducing new solicitor and paralegal apprenticeships.

We will continue to invest in the professional development needs of all. We will implement our Legal Learning Framework and for corporate teams will continue our adoption of Government functional and professional standards. From those new to the organisation through to experienced GLD employees, this will provide a clear development pathway throughout their career.

We will continue to provide the right expertise in the right places at the right time to meet the most important priorities for government. We will increase the agility and resilience of our resourcing system to deploy our resources at pace and continue to invest in our relationships with, and strategic use of, our panel firms.

Environment that is fit for the future

We have begun the development of a successor to our current strategy setting a course for a sustainable, future GLD which is equipped to deliver the expectations of government and aspirations of A Modern Civil Service. This will include work to consider how best we structure and utilise our collective resources to deliver legal services.

We will embed new governance and performance systems and portfolio management to support our corporate planning and decision-making. This will improve the balance between the quality and openness of decision-making that we need to achieve our strategic outcomes, with a desire for greater empowerment and a focus on delivery and accountability.

We will continue to modernise our legal services and Corporate Services support to ensure they are efficiently and effectively delivered, by investing in our professional capability across all areas. This will include enhancing our corporate communications and building our project delivery capability to ensure successful delivery across our projects and programmes to continue to embed a culture of better outcomes.

We will build the department's digital capability by introducing new ways of working across the department, enhancing the way we deliver legal services for our clients. We will complete the rollout of Lawmaker (a web-based legislation drafting and checking tool) to GLD lawyers and undertake other legal process improvement projects, while continuing to deploy Office 365 tools improving productivity and collaboration. We will begin our work to improve interoperability with our client based legal teams, migrate our technology services to the cloud and develop options on our future case management system.



Who we are and what we do

Advisory

GLD has several expert advisory teams, each specialising in the work of its client department, providing risk-based and solution-focused legal advice. GLD lawyers advise on and draft legislation and work to take it through Parliament; advising departments and ministers on the legal implications of Government policy and ensuring it stands up to Parliamentary scrutiny.

Employment

As one of the largest employment law practices in the country, GLD's Employment Group advises on complex and fast-moving legal areas including: claims for unfair dismissal and relating to discrimination, pay issues, contractual issues and terms and conditions, and whistleblowing claims.

Commercial

The Commercial Law Group provides expert advice on transactional, litigation, property and advisory commercial legal matters. Transactional and advisory teams advise government departments on their commercial work, ensuring value for money in the purchase of goods and services for the public sector. The Litigation and Dispute Resolution team supports the government in high profile legal claims and saves taxpayer money by pursuing alternative forums (mediation, adjudication).

Litigation

GLD's Litigation Group is comprised of 3 divisions: Defence and Security, Home Office and Immigration, and Justice and Development. Litigation lawyers handle high-profile public and private law litigation for central government departments, security agencies and other public bodies, including UK military and security bodies. The divisions also undertake inquest, inquiry and injunctive work for GLD's clients.

Centres of Excellence

GLD has 15 Centres of Excellence; formal networks of lawyers who have recognised expertise in an area of law or legal practice that has relevance across a number of GLD divisions and teams. These include the SI Hub which is GLD's specialist statutory instrument drafting service and Centre of Excellence for secondary legislation.

Bona Vacantia

The Bona Vacantia Division deals with ownerless property which passes to the Crown: the assets of dissolved companies, the estates of persons who die without leaving a will and without kin and other miscellaneous bona vacantia in England and Wales.

Income arising from bona vacantia goes to our client, HM Treasury, as part of the Consolidated Fund for the benefit of the general exchequer. This is another method by which GLD provides a value for money service both to our client departments and to the taxpayer.

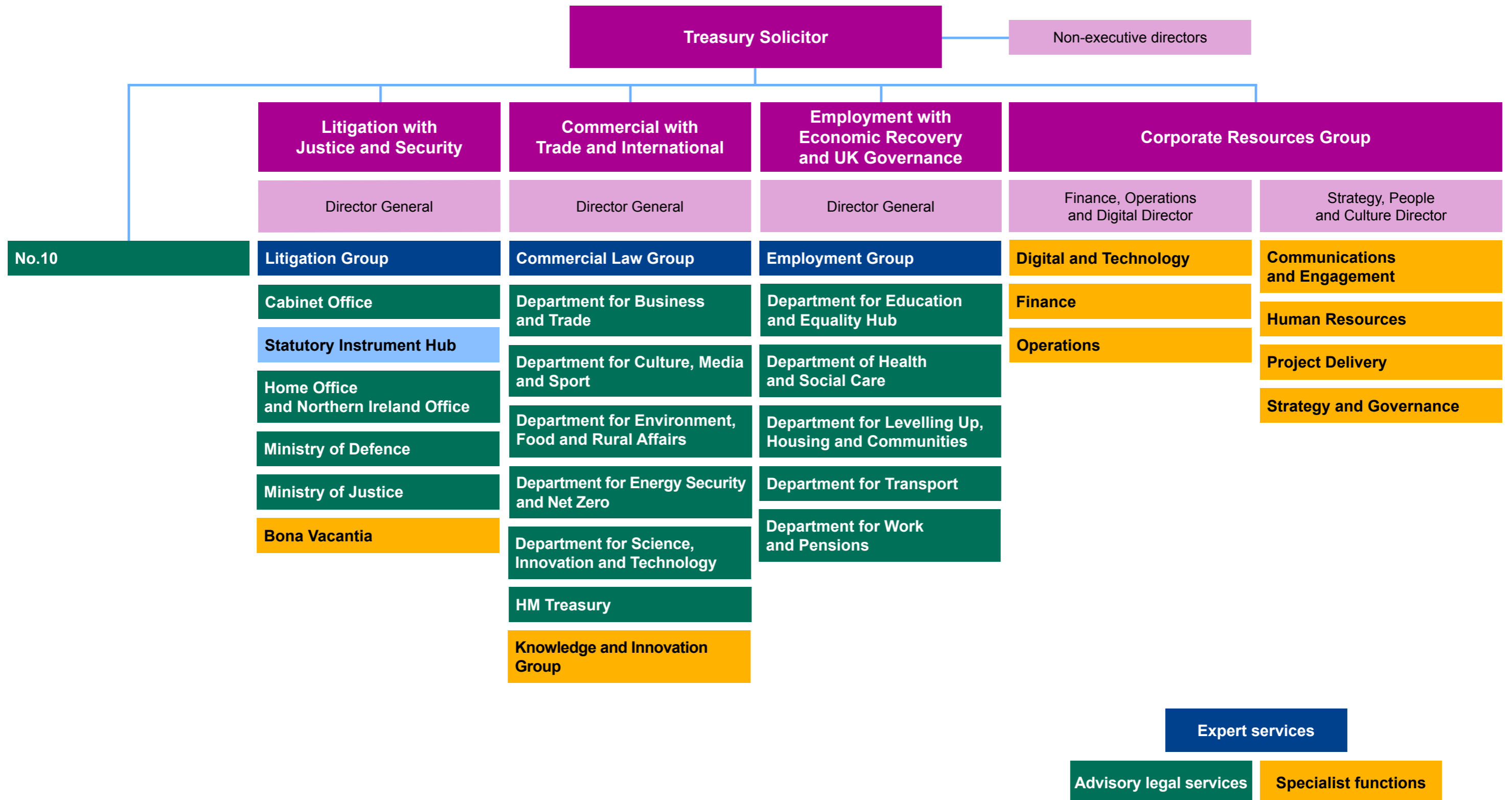
Finance, Operations and Digital, and Strategy, People and Culture

Responsible for developing the department's strategy and plans and delivering key programmes and services for our clients and staff across the department. Our Corporate Services teams provide crucial support to enable GLD to successfully deliver our legal services.

Knowledge and Innovation

Responsible for the department's first integrated Legal Knowledge, Capability and Innovation Strategy, working with our lawyers to improve how we create and share our expertise and to seize opportunities to streamline and transform the way we deliver our legal services to our clients.

Our organisation structure



Our performance measures

The performance measures we have agreed with HM Treasury for 2023-24 reflect our continued commitment to maintain our high professional standards as well as delivering excellent client satisfaction.

The measures are:

- our client satisfaction rating (our aim is for 95% or above)
- to maintain Lexcel (the Law Society's Practice Standard) accreditation
- to recover from clients the full operating costs of chargeable services

We will also draw on our People Survey scores and other workforce insight and feedback, to ensure that GLD continues to develop its people offer and is a demonstrably brilliant place to work. This will contribute to the next step in the development of GLD's Strategy by creating a set of quantitative performance metrics to provide tangible evidence of performance and delivery against our strategy and the qualitative outcomes within it.

Our financial performance will be monitored closely by the Executive Committee and the Board throughout the year. Demonstrating value for money and delivering a high-quality legal service to our clients will remain paramount. If necessary, however, we will need to consider making interventions to reduce our operating costs and/or to adjust the fixed fees and hourly rates we charge our clients, to ensure that we achieve full cost recovery for the year.



Our resources

We plan to use the following number of people to deliver our objectives in 2023-24:

	Full Time Equivalents
Advisory divisions	1,594
Litigation Group	619
Commercial Law Group	224
Employment Group	161
Legal trainees	82
Bona Vacantia	46
Staff seconded to inquiries	19
Total front-line staff	2,745
Corporate support staff	345
Total staff	3,090

We plan to spend £m (net), the main components of which are:

	£'000
Staff costs (excludes secondees)	243,369
Other operating costs	1,904
Accommodation (net of income)	6,526
Depreciation	10,691
Project delivery and management	500
ICT maintenance and network	7,054
Training	2,981
LION information site (net of income)	1,875
Other administration costs	7,839
Total operating costs	282,739
Net disbursements	200
Total costs	282,939

These costs will be funded by:

	£'000
Legal fees and charges to clients	277,732
Recovery of the cost of Bona Vacantia	4,807
Funding from the Parliamentary Estimate	2,180



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