



**HM Government**

To: **Dianne Jeans**, Senior Responsible Owner for the **Synergy Programme**

From: Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary of Department for Work and Pensions;

Tamara Finkelstein, Permanent Secretary of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;

Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Justice;

Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary of the Home Office; and

Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

**21 March 2025**

Dear **Dianne**,

## **APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE SYNERGY PROGRAMME**

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Synergy Programme (the programme) with effect from 6 January 2025. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

The programme is a cross departmental collaboration between the DWP as lead and sponsor department, and the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Home Office.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to Debbie Alder, Synergy Cluster Sponsor Director General, under the oversight of Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer for the Department for Work and Pensions and lead Accounting Officer for the programme, and Liz Kendall, Secretary of State. Uniquely this appointment is made by four Accounting Officers, reflecting the shared nature of accountabilities. Peter Schofield has lead accountability as Accounting Officer for DWP. However, as Accounting Officers for Defra, MoJ and Home Office, we retain responsibility for the expected outcomes and benefits that impact our departments locally and will provide the required support and challenge to enable you, as SRO, to deliver on our behalf.

Your programme is funded as a dedicated, ring fenced, cross departmental programme under the sponsorship of DWP and with oversight by the DWP Change Portfolio Board. The programme is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP), and you are required to work with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority for the major assurance of the programme and its cross departmental position within the GMPP.

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, policy intent and outcomes expected. This encompasses securing and protecting its vision, ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported on honestly, escalated appropriately and for influencing the context, culture, and operating environment of the programme. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the programme and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise that you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to the clusters' Sponsoring Director General, the Synergy DG Steering Group, and/or the Accounting Officers Forum.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the programme in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, SROs for GMPP projects and programmes are personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. This means that, from the date of this letter, you will be held personally accountable to and could be called by Select Committees to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the programme.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation, within the agreed terms in this letter; it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees - Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the SRO are detailed in Government Project Delivery's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#),

You are expected to run your project/programme in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), and the requirements of [other functional standards](#) as required, which is mandated for government departments and arm's length bodies to follow. You should also make yourself familiar with [The Teal Book](#), Government Project Delivery's code of practice for project delivery.

## Time commitment and tenure

You are required to undertake this full-time role until programme closure planned for 2028. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role will require both departmental and Infrastructure and Projects Authority consent.

## Objectives and performance criteria

The programme has been set up to deliver the Synergy Cluster response to the 2021 Government's Shared Services Strategy. The programme will drive business change through the design, development, procurement and implementation of the new technologies and capabilities to modernise our 'back office' systems. It will deliver a high quality, and good value, system and support service to help streamline the transactions and activities that underpin the way departments are run.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the Programme Strategic Board and may be subject to further levels of approval.

All four departments agreed the programme vision and objective:

The vision of the programme is 'Our people enjoy the experience of using better shared services and are able to focus on their jobs. Our organisation is more efficient and has good data and insights. The public receives a more effective service'.

The objective of the programme is “Synergy will transform the business-critical services (people, finance, commercial) for the four departments: DWP, DEFRA, MoJ and HO. It will be delivered through shared capabilities and technology as a platform for innovation, automation and improved customer experience. It will make it easier for our people to do their job and deliver efficiencies that free up resources to focus on public outcomes’.

In appointing you to deliver this programme, we collectively stand in support of driving efficiencies and transformation through standardisation of our corporate data and processes and adopting a common system and harmonised ways of working.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the programme are:

- Lead and manage the operating environment, direct the programme to meet its objectives and deliver the projected benefits;
- Iterate the case for change by developing the business case, including development and delivery of agreed benefits and securing investment to enable delivery;
- Agree the programme organisation structure and logical plans, controls and governance to support decision making;
- Ensure all necessary consultations, engagements and communication to proactively seek solutions and broker decisions across stakeholder environment using agreed governance; and
- Provide leadership to people in establishing a shared vision of programme and ways of working that ensures a culture that demonstrates commitment to Civil Service Values and Professional Skills for Government.

## Extent and limit of accountability

### Finance and Controls

HM Treasury spending controls will apply on the basis set out within the department’s delegated authority letter. Synergy funding is expected to be approved and operated on a ring-fenced central fund basis, within the DWP environment.

Where the programme exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply, and the details of each approval process must be agreed with your HM Treasury spending team. You should consult departmental finance colleagues on how to go about this.

You should note that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required, regardless of whether the programme expenditure exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury. If in doubt about whether approval is required you should, in the first instance, consult departmental finance colleagues before raising with the relevant HM Treasury spending team.

The overall estimated budget, resourcing requirements and tolerances for your project/programme will be agreed as part of the approval process. You will be expected to deliver within these tolerances and report quarterly on these as part of GMPP reporting.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

## Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- approve expenditure as set out in the DWP financial delegation authority;
- agree project rescheduling as set out in the Synergy Implementation and Delivery controls; and
- recommend to the Synergy Programme Board the need to either pause or terminate the programme where necessary and in a timely manner.

These authority limits are subject to change and other conditions or tolerances may be set as part of the business case approval and ongoing monitoring processes which you should then operate within.

Where issues arise which take you outside of these authority limits which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to the cluster Sponsoring Director General, the Synergy DG Steering Group, and if necessary to the AO Forum.

## Appointments

You should appoint a full time Programme Director to support you in the management of this programme and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of your programme within your delegated authority.

## Governance and assurance

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance for your programme, including the establishment of a strategic programme board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference, and clarity on the single apex of control through the Principal Accounting Officer.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the programme secures business case approval from the Programme Board, the DG Steering Group and from Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, as needed. You should also ensure that the programme remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business case as well as monitoring the context within which the programme is being delivered to ensure it remains valid.

Where a change impacts the scope, costs, benefits, or planned delivery milestones agreed as part of an agreed business case, you are responsible for following the agreed change request approval process and setting a new, approved, business case baseline.

You should ensure that an accounting officer assessment is completed and published on GOV.UK as part of the government's transparency requirements on major projects. You are responsible for bringing to the attention of the accounting officer any material changes in the programme which could require a new accounting officer assessment to be completed and published. [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

Although you are directly accountable for this programme, you are also expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors both within DWP and the other three cluster departments in adjacent projects and programmes and with the requisite departmental portfolio management offices and directors to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall changes the departments need to achieve their strategic objectives.

You should ensure that appropriate and proportionate assurance is in place and agree on the level and frequency of assurance reviews through the maintenance of an integrated assurance and approvals plan.

You should develop this plan and its maintenance in collaboration with the Departmental Assurance Coordinator and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

## Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements

The programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and is the agreed position as you assume formal ownership of the programme.

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the Department of Work and Pensions portfolio management office as required. Reporting should include carbon measurement, and other sustainable development goals demonstrating evidence that the project contributes to an overarching environmental strategy and is aligned with defined Net Zero pathways. Information on the programme will be published annually by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As part of the government's commitment to transparency on major infrastructure projects, you are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK:

- A summary of the HM Treasury approved Full Business Case
- A summary of the accounting officer assessment completed in line with the approval of the Full Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required; and
- A close out report after the programme has completed.

You are also responsible for registering all planned, live and completed evaluations on the Government Evaluation Registry. [Guidance on using the evaluation registry](#) is available on GOV.UK.

## Development and support

As a graduate of the Major Projects Leadership Academy, you are expected to maintain your continuing professional development as a project leader, including your status as an accredited assurance reviewer. To maintain your accreditation, you will be required to participate in a review at least once every 12 months.

The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's Head of Profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and development of your delivery and leadership skills.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the programme's time on the GMPP.

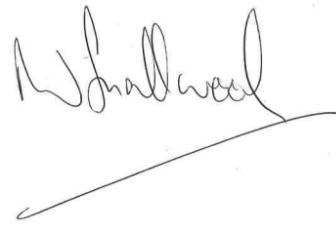
We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



**Peter Schofield**

Permanent Secretary, Department for  
Work and Pensions



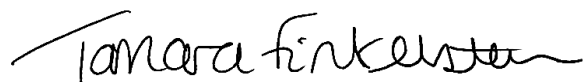
**Nick Smallwood**

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and  
Projects Authority



**Matthew Rycroft**

Permanent Secretary, Home Office



**Tamara Finkelstein**

Permanent Secretary, Department of  
Environment, Food and environmental Affairs



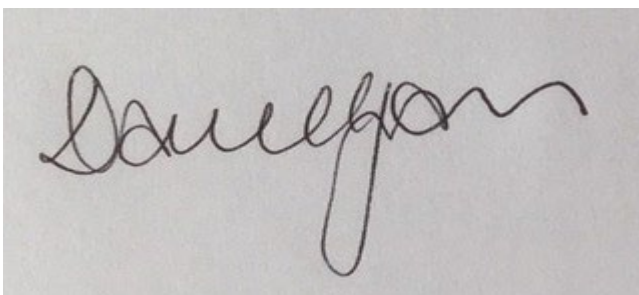
**Antonia Romeo**

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice

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## CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the Synergy Programme, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.



**Dianne Jeans**

SRO, Synergy Programme

Dated: 25 March 2025