

To: Alexander Chaplin, Senior Responsible Owner for the Service Modernisation Programme

From: Peter Schofield, Permanent Secretary of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP); and
Karina Singh, Government Head of Profession for Project Delivery and the Deputy Government
Head of Function for Project Delivery

30 June 2026

Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP)

Dear Alexander

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE SERVICE MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the **Service Modernisation Programme** with effect from April 2025. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department, Government Project Delivery and the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA).

As SRO, you are directly accountable to Helen Wylie, Director General of Digital and Transformation Group, under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary, Peter Schofield, as accounting officer for DWP and Andrew Western, the Minister for Transformation.

Your Service Modernisation Programme forms part of the DWP Digital and Transformation Group, under the oversight of the Strategy and Transformation Board and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Service Modernisation Programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, policy intent and outcomes. 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 Service Modernisation Programme. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the Service Modernisation Programme and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise, you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to the appropriate governance forum.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project 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 Service Modernisation 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 are mandated for government departments and Arm's Length Bodies. You should also make yourself familiar with [The Teal Book](#), Government Project Delivery's code of practice for project delivery, and any further guidance and requirements set by DWP Departmental Change Portfolio Office.

Time commitment and tenure

This will be a full-time role to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role until achievement of Programme Closure, planned for Q4 2030/31. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role, as set out above, will require both departmental and NISTA consent.

Objectives and performance criteria

The policy intent supported by this Programme is modernising benefit services to vastly improve customer experience, build trust in our services and the decisions we make, and create a more efficient service for taxpayers. This Programme does not have specific objectives related to Net Zero or greenhouse gas reduction.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the Accounting Officer who may delegate his decision-making authority to DWP's Investment Committee (IC) and may be subject to further levels of approval.

The vision of the **Service Modernisation Programme** is:

- **Positively transform the customer experience** of approximately 20 million DWP customers.
- Fundamentally **change the role**, and services delivered for approximately **14,000 (16.5%) of our colleagues**.
- **Deliver modernisation across** Care Services (Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance and DLA Child), Later Life Services (Bereavement, Pension Credit including Cold Weather Payments, and State Pension), Children's Services (Child Maintenance and Maternity Allowance), and Customer Contact (Customer Account, improved telephony and paper, print and post)
- Enable **delivery of DWP's strategic objective to deliver excellent services for citizens and taxpayers**, whilst also supporting efforts to achieve the further objectives of improving people's quality of life and improve customer outcomes. It will also **contribute to improved DWP efficiency and protect AME through reduced error**.

and its objectives are to:

- Create the conditions for colleagues to thrive, do their jobs effectively and serve customers well
 - Empowered colleagues with all the right skills, able to join up and tailor services to meet individual customer needs, being supported by confident leaders that are landing change effectively
- Give our customers fast, efficient services – and effective routing to the right support – through the most appropriate channels
 - More intuitive data-driven systems, automation and self-service, enabling customers to do simple things at a time that suits them without having to wait to speak to someone, and giving colleagues more time to help customers that need more support.
- Provide the right support to our customers at the time they need it
 - Simplified and accessible services, rooted in user insight, making a clear contribution to the department's strategic objectives to maximise employment, improve people's quality of life, and deliver excellent services for citizens and taxpayers.
- Create the environment, tools and capabilities for the services in scope and continually modernise beyond the timeframe of the Programme.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the Service Modernisation Programme are:

- To note whilst, the Service Modernisation Business Case includes the case for the Department's Strategic Reference Architecture the Department has agreed that its design, development and deployment planning is the accountability of the Departments Chief Digital and Information Officer
- To set Service Modernisation strategy, policy intent and lead organisational wide stakeholder management in support of programme objectives
- To support the Department in closing the SR funding gap through identifying further opportunities within the scope of the Service Modernisation Programme team
- To support the Department in meeting its ambitions to improve quality, customer experience and reduce fraud and error
- To effectively introduce a modernised service architecture including facilitating delivery of aspects of the people strategy through the Service Modernisation Programme
- To improve the communications relating Service Modernisation so that it engages the whole Department in one effort
- To develop and deliver a change management approach that ensures that colleagues are effectively engaged in making a difference and realising the benefits of modernisation
- To build, buy and make the appropriate capabilities to effectively deliver the scope of the Service Modernisation Programme
- To lead the development of the Programme Business Case so that it can feed effectively into a future DWP Spending Review bid
- To ensure ownership of aspects of data strategy and its implementation across all service lines in support of Service Modernisation achieving its ambitions safely and securely, including specifically ownership of the migration of data from legacy systems to the new infrastructure and ensuring organisation commitment to its success.

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. Where the Service Modernisation 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 Department's specific HM Treasury delegated limits and with the wider approach to functional controls set out in the Department's Memorandum of Understanding with HM Treasury, in relation to a multi-disciplinary, single approval point within the Treasury Approvals Process.

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- approve expenditure of £5m;
- approve project rescheduling of agreed milestones, where slippage does not create substantial and subsequent rescheduling impacting on outcomes. Approval of substantial rescheduling and scope change must be agreed with Service Modernisation Programme Board; and
- recommend to Service Modernisation Programme Board and Strategy and Transformation 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 within which you should then operate.

Where issues arise which take you outside of these authority limits which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues in the first instance to Helen Wylie, Director General of Digital and Transformation Group.

Appointments

You should appoint a full time Programme Director to support you in the management of this Service Modernisation 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 Service Modernisation Programme, including the establishment of a Service Modernisation Programme Board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the Service Modernisation Programme secures business case approval from DWP Investment Committee and HMT. You should also ensure that the Service Modernisation 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 Service Modernisation 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 alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case and that this is 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 Service Modernisation 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.

You are responsible for providing assurance to the accounting officer and relevant oversight bodies that the Environmental Principles Policy Statement legal duty has been considered by ministers in policy decision underpinning the Service Modernisation Programme.

Although you are directly accountable for this Service Modernisation Programme, you are also expected to support delivery of the department's overall strategic objectives. This means that you are expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors in adjacent projects and programmes to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall change the department needs to achieve its 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 NISTA

Service Modernisation Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements

The Service Modernisation Programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the Service Modernisation Programme to NISTA 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 Service Modernisation Programme to NISTA via the Government Reporting Integration Platform (*GRIP*) while it remains on the GMPP, and for providing reports and information to the Departmental Change Portfolio 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 Service Modernisation Programme will be published annually by NISTA.

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

- Business cases for projects and programmes that form part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). This business case may be a Summary Business Case, a Full Business Case or a Programme Business Case. The business case must be published within four months of the project or programme receiving HM Treasury approval

- A summary of the Accounting Officer assessment completed in line with the approval of the Outline Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required

Guidance on the [publication of business cases](#) and on the completion of [accounting officer assessments](#) is available from HM Treasury.

Evaluation

Evaluation of major projects is a requirement. Given the scale and complexity of major projects, it is essential that they are evaluated properly to learn lessons and help ensure accountability. As an SRO of a GMPP project, you are responsible for ensuring that your project/programme has proportionate and suitably resourced evaluation in place. Evaluation planning should begin from the very start of the policy development and the initiation of the programme or project. Progress with the development and implementation of evaluation plans will be monitored through the major project assurance process.

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 (Cohort 20) 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 Service Modernisation 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.

NISTA and Government Project Delivery will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the Service Modernisation Programme's time on the GMPP. Government Project Delivery's suite of standards, guidance, tools, templates and services can be accessed from projectdelivery.gov.uk and we encourage you and your team to register for accounts

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the DWP Change Portfolio, the Change Portfolio Board will provide ongoing oversight and support and will take steps to help resolve and escalate risks, issues or constraints that are acting as a blocker to successful delivery.

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

KARINA SINGH

Government Head of Profession for Project
Delivery Qand the Deputy Government Head of
Function

National Infrastructure and Service
Transformation Authority

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Chaplin', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alexander Chaplin

30 June 2026