

Embrace data to deliver for the public, Chief Secretary tells Whitehall

News story

The government must overhaul its use of data to deliver for the public following the coronavirus pandemic, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said today.



- Steve Barclay brands Treasury as 'the new radicals' in government, creating a faster and smarter culture, in first speech as Chief Secretary to the Treasury
- says Whitehall has proven it can work at pace when needed during the pandemic and needs to continue to do so once the machinery of government returns to normal
- comments come ahead of Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn

In his first speech since taking on the role, Steve Barclay called on government departments to make data a key part of policymaking to improve public services and measure outcomes, ahead of the autumn's Comprehensive Spending Review.

He announced that he has set up a team of data experts at the Treasury to scrutinise departmental spending, in a bid to make the government's economic ministry the 'new radicals' of Whitehall and lead the way with this new agenda.

Looking ahead to the Comprehensive Spending Review, launched by the Chancellor last week, he told the audience:

Coming as it does in the wake of a crisis that has fully tested the machinery of government, this Spending Review is a moment to ingrain a new approach into the public finances.

Instead of being seen as a brake on progress, I want the Treasury

to put a foot on the accelerator.

The Chief Secretary also emphasised the need for speed when designing policy and delivering services – drawing on the pace at which the Treasury had implemented policies in the wake of coronavirus, including the furlough and self-employment support schemes.

Discussing the need to build a fully digital state he said that a key focus of the Spending Review will be addressing legacy IT issues which have plagued the public sector. This investment in data infrastructure will aim to improve security and ways of working – including IT solutions across Whitehall departments that will make it easier to share data to aid better policymaking and modern public services.

The Chief Secretary also discussed successful bids from the government's Shared Outcomes Fund – a scheme designed to test innovative approaches to address cross-cutting issues affecting society.

This included £28 million to help join up agencies to break up serious and organised crime gangs whilst tackling addiction in a crackdown on drug abuse.

A further £4 million will fund pilots to encourage the use of green “social prescribing”, where outdoor and nature related interventions will be used to help people's mental health.

Further information

- the speech can be read in full [here](#)

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