

Government reform and the Government Science and Engineering (GSE) Profession Strategy refresh

When I took up the role of government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Science and Engineering profession in 2017, I could not have predicted the events of the last 14 months. Scientists and engineers have found themselves thrust into the limelight, while the world battled COVID-19 and a race started to find vaccines and treatments. Thankfully, we are now in a position where we have several safe and effective vaccines as well as plans in place to prepare for a future pandemic. In large part, this has been down to the hard work of scientists and engineers across academia, industry, and government both in the UK and around the world.

However, the impact of the pandemic on the UK and government needs little explanation. We have all had to work differently, to adapt, to work across departments and bring in expertise from industry and academia. We must now work together to learn lessons from the pandemic and to grasp this opportunity for change.

The [Declaration on Government Reform](#) had input from ministers and permanent secretaries across government and highlighted key areas in which the Civil Service must improve in light of the pandemic. It highlights the need to build expertise in science, engineering, data, and technology across government. This builds on the recommendations made in the [Science Capability Review](#) where we called for greater science and engineering skills and capability to be developed within departments. I know that the GSE profession has superb people at every level, working across a wide range of science and engineering disciplines. We must now act together to build an enduring science and engineering capability within government that is equipped to face the challenges of the future.

The Declaration on Government Reform also calls on us to champion innovation, science, and technology and to continue to forge close bonds with colleagues in industry and academia. Over the last 14 months we have all innovated and learnt from each other by providing challenging and creative solutions to problems. When dealing with problems and supporting our colleague with policy we should continue to ask ourselves “how can science and technology help?”. The success of the vaccine rollout has shown the value of partnering with academia and industry to deliver government objectives. We will continue to work with institutions outside of government by drawing on their knowledge and collaborating where possible. This will be essential as we emerge from the pandemic and refocus on complex, cross-cutting global issues such as climate change.

Going forward, we will publish a refreshed GSE Profession Strategy ([see the 2016 version](#)). Building on the opportunities highlighted in the Government Reform Declaration and the recommendations in the Science Capability Review,

the strategy will lay out my ambitions for the GSE profession. It will focus on 6 key areas of action illustrating how the GSE profession can build on our knowledge, talent, and networks to achieve these objectives. We are already a diverse and knowledgeable profession and during the pandemic we have provided an unprecedented level of scientific support and guidance. This strategy will support the GSE profession by capitalising on our work so far and positioning us as the first port of call for scientific knowledge and expertise.

These objectives are challenging but reflect my ambition for the GSE profession and science and engineering capability across government. With your support, we will continue to build on the hard work and lessons learnt over the past year and act together to put science and engineering at the heart of government decision making.