

GFSL's CRED scheme hires first ex prisoner

GFSL's CRED (Clean Rehabilitative Enabling and Decent) has successfully offered its first employment placement to a prison leaver. This is the UK's first successful example of a prison leaver joining the service as a permanent employee.

The CRED programme enables prisoners to join purposeful work placements while still in custody which help to progress them to full time work and financial independence. It also builds skills, confidence and employability.

On completion of his sentence at Hollesley Bay in the East of England, an ex prisoner will commence work this month as a GFSL Escort Handyperson based at Sterling House, a prison training centre.

Helena Butler, Justice Solutions Manager said:

We are delighted to announce this news which is the result of a great deal of hard work by all those involved. We've overcome obstacles such as vetting and acceptance of risk, but this has proved it can be done.

The ex prisoner said:

This opportunity has allowed me to turn my life around. I'm looking forward to starting my new role at GFSL and being a valuable team member. I hope to make full use of the training available and be able to progress within the company.

CEO Paul Ryder summarised:

This is a landmark achievement for GFSL's CRED programme and a living example of how rehabilitation can work in a prison environment.

We are extremely proud to be welcoming our new team member and wish him every success in his new career.

Despite the year-long pandemic, 20 GFSL sites continue to drive the CRED programme, involving over 240 residents. The trades include plumbers, electricians and carpenters. Others join the scheme and gain recognised qualifications from nearby colleges during their sentence.

About GFSL: Gov Facility Services Limited (GFSL) is a Ministry of Justice

owned not-for-profit company. Set up in 2018, we work closely with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to deliver a range of facility services to 48 prisons in the south of England, including statutory and mandatory planned maintenance, reactive repair, cleaning, stores operation and Project works. We also help the Prison Service reduce reoffending by providing opportunities for prisoners to develop skills and gain work experience. Under the current COVID restrictions, we currently support up to 750,000 hours per year of work by prisoners across the 48 prisons we maintain.

[Break down the barriers for prisoners with learning needs](#)

As Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, I spend every day immersed in the inner workings of the criminal justice system. After almost 2 years in the job, there is one statistic that continues to spur me on to do better.

Every year repeat offending costs society about £18 billion. That is a staggering figure and one we should never be prepared to accept. As we begin to recover from a global pandemic, it is a price we can ill afford to pay.

While I'm proud of this government's work to see offenders punished for their wrongdoing, I'm acutely aware that releasing prisoners without finding solutions to help ensure they turn their lives round will ultimately result in more crime, greater harm to victims and an increased economic cost to society.

We know that education can play a huge role in cutting crime. Figures published in 2017 showed prisoners who undertook study during their sentence were 9 per cent less likely to go on to commit further crimes compared to those who didn't. When individuals are equipped with skills needed to find jobs and contribute to society, they are better placed to accomplish this once released.

I have seen for myself how education changes lives. As a barrister, part-time judge and now as Lord Chancellor, I have too often seen people with conditions such as autism and dyslexia struggle through the criminal justice system. I know from my own family experience how difficult it is to get a proper diagnosis of these conditions. As chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Autism when I was a backbencher, I campaigned hard for better awareness and provision.

The same can be said for victims with neurodivergent conditions who may also find the justice system daunting. The new Victims' Code, which came into effect last month, outlines the minimum level of information and service

victims can expect at every stage of the justice process. It also provides enhanced rights for those with impaired social functioning, including special measures to help them to give evidence in court.

I have also had the privilege to see how much those with neurodivergent conditions like these have to offer with the right help and support – which is why I'm determined to make huge strides towards improving the education on offer inside our prison system, so that it better supports those with diverse learning needs.

We need to ensure all prisoners, including those with life-long learning conditions, get the help they need to engage with their rehabilitation and reduce their chances of reoffending.

This makes even more sense when we consider the fact that at least a third of all offenders in England and Wales have a learning disability or challenge, compared with an estimated 2 per cent of the population.

Creating a system that allows every offender to get the help they need will not just make our country fairer, it will also ease the financial burden inflicted on the law-abiding majority of the public by a criminal minority.

Today (15 June 2021), I can announce plans for an overhaul of the education on offer for prisoners with learning needs, which will be led by a team of educational specialists with experience in supporting those with neurodivergent conditions.

Crucially the team will identify prisoners with learning needs such as autism and dyslexia far quicker, so that we will know where to target improved education and training, which will be delivered using new and innovative methods of teaching.

If we are serious about rehabilitating neurodivergent offenders, then it is vital that we do this, so that we can fully understand the support they may need to get their lives back on track. It will then be up to them to put in the work.

My own family experience has taught me a huge amount about what it can be like for people with neurodivergent conditions to navigate a world that too often fails to understand their needs.

We can make a huge difference by setting those with similar conditions in the criminal justice system on the right path to better lives. In the long run I believe it can help us to build back a better and fairer country – one with fewer victims and safer streets.

This will be an investment in our future and a price worth paying.

This was first published on [Redbox in the Times](#).

The Obligations We Owe: Reforming government in the shadow of COVID-19

Can I first of all thank my friend and colleague Nick Herbert for hosting today's speech. Nick has been a passionate campaigner for causes from the environment to the fight against HIV, and was a reforming minister who brought real moral clarity and intellectual rigour to the task of modernising the criminal justice system.

Now, his Commission for Smart Government, bringing together politicians, business leaders and former Government officials, is driving the intellectual effort required to reform how government works. By definition, the work of reforming government never ends, but there are times in our nation's life when the need for reform is greater and our plans must be more ambitious.

As I hope to explain, this is just such a time and the Commission for Smart Government's work could not be more relevant or necessary. The COVID-19 pandemic has been the biggest challenge governments across the globe have faced since the Second World War. Indeed, the response to the virus has had many of the qualities and features of a war-time mobilisation.

The scope of government action has had to expand to deal with the crisis and keep the population safe. Government has been compelled to hold large sections of the economy in a state of suspended animation and, of course, to borrow unprecedented sums. Technological innovation has accelerated as traditional constraints on scientific research have been set aside.

We've also seen greater co-operation between public and private sectors, and between scientists and business innovators. And we've also been fortunate that community spirit and public solidarity have been drawn on to weather the storm. Indeed we have also seen how both strengths and weaknesses in government have been made more vividly apparent than in normal times.

And there is another similarity too. After past conflicts and crises there has been a shared national determination to demonstrate that the sacrifices that so many endured were not in vain. That the suffering that so many faced should be an impetus to building a better future.

It's been a consistent feature of our national story that the weaknesses, fissures or fractures that have been laid bare or exacerbated by crises should be addressed with the same energy and single-mindedness required for a successful response to the crisis itself.

Over a hundred and fifty years ago, for example, we saw how crisis begets reform. The Crimean War was a remarkable catalyst for remarkable change. The amateurism, incompetence and complacency revealed by Britain's initial conduct in the war led to an irresistible movement for fundamental reform of the state. The rather prosaically titled Administrative Reform Association was set up at that time to press for smarter government and its campaign was

championed by the Nick Herbert of it's time, Charles Dickens, who denounced the "obstinate rubbish" which stood in the way of greater meritocracy and proper accountability.

That clamour for change led to the implementation of the great Northcote-Trevelyan reforms which created a civil service where promotion was due to merit, careers were professionalised and the whole machinery of government was modernised. Gladstone, who as Chancellor of the Exchequer was midwife to these reforms, also introduced reforms into the Army, the system of national taxation, education and local government and these changes powered Britain's success in the second half of the nineteenth century.

And of course there was a similar impetus to domestic reform during and after the First World War. The aristocratic liberalism of the Asquith Government was superseded by a drive for greater national efficiency under Lloyd George and his coalition. The creation of the Cabinet Office under Maurice Hankey, its support for near-daily meetings of the War Cabinet and other innovations as well as innovations such as the Manpower Committee, brought greater rigour and focus to Whitehall.

The imperative to bring similar energy and direction to domestic policy – such that a population which had sacrificed so much should feel that a better world could be built – also drove other reforms.

H.A.L Fisher's Education Act extended universal schooling. Subsidies were given to local authorities to provide council housing. Unemployment insurance was extended to cover almost all workers. Agricultural workers were guaranteed a minimum wage. And the Ministry of Health was established to give the State a critical role in improving public health. But of course the most powerful example of a conflict and crisis spurring dramatic domestic reform is the Second World War. Churchill's coalition and the Attlee Government which followed it generated sweeping change in how government worked and how the citizen was served.

A principal feature of the wartime coalition was restless innovation in the organisation of Government itself, a willingness to draft in outsiders to augment delivery and the marshalling of resources to meet specific cross-departmental challenges.

Look at Beaverbrook's role in aircraft production, Lord Woolton's work as Minister for Food and Minister for Reconstruction, and also the catalytic genius of the physicist Professor Lindemann – these are all examples of creativity and flexibility in administrative problem-solving that helped us win the War.

And even as the War was being fought, reforms were advanced at home. The Butler Education Act and the Beveridge Report were momentous – they extended universal education and providing the underpinning for a comprehensive welfare state.

The Attlee Government from 1945 to 1951 enacted even more sweeping domestic reform. It created the National Health Service, improved workers' rights and

protections, massively extended social housing, as well as pensions and other benefits; it reformed agriculture, it invented National Parks and it established the Arts Council.

I would argue that four crucial lessons stand out from a review of these eras of reform in the wake of crisis.

The first is that crises, like power, reveal.

Whether they are military conflicts or natural disasters, wars or pandemics, the threats to life and order, economic growth and human flourishing. All of these compel governments and leaders to act imaginatively, mobilise effectively because they are being against a remorseless arithmetic of mortality and loss.

Crisis also reveal which arms of the state are effective; and which buckle under pressure.

An army unchanged in many ways since Wellington's day came to grief in the Crimea. The eirianic gentlemanliness of Asquith's approach to Cabinet government was inadequate to the challenge of the First World War. And Churchill and Attlee had to jolt a government machine which was built for comfort rather than speed into a state fit for total war and mass mobilisation.

The second lesson is that crises spur innovation.

Faced with gathering threats and accumulating pressures, the normal rhythm of administration has to accelerate; ossified structures have to change, and the "obstinate rubbish" of which Dickens spoke has to be cleared away, to allow for better, more flexible and more adaptive methods of delivering for citizens.

From Northcote-Trevelyan and the creation of the Cabinet Office and War Cabinet, to the bespoke ministries of which I've spoken, cross-departmental task forces and the drafting-in of external expertise and talent, the nature of all of these crises made necessary change in the way Government works, compelling.

The third lesson is that the shared sacrifice a population endures during a crisis places an obligation on leaders to build back better. The populations' view after such a sacrifice is there can be no going back to a status quo ante whose weaknesses have been more cruelly revealed by the suffering that so many have endured.

Extending educational opportunity, improving public health, providing citizens with better housing – all these and more have been the urgent demands of post-crisis renewal in the past.

And the fourth lesson is that the advance of science, technology and knowledge which crises spur also generates both new opportunities and higher expectations of what our societies can achieve in the future.

Whether it's improved telegraphy and communications, new ways of organising emergency hospital care, greater mobility, better analysis of economic and other forces, enhanced scrutiny of data, unleashing nuclear energy or improving food production – previous crises and conflicts have driven scientific and technical innovations which has changed our world irreversibly.

As we emerge from the COVID crisis we can see that all these lessons from the past hold for us today.

In the COVID crisis, many arms and areas of government responded successfully, others did not.

The vaccination programme, the ventilator challenge, the rapid establishment of the Nightingale hospitals, the furlough programme, the delivery of an extended Universal Credit programme, the identification of those who needed to be shielded and the delivery of direct support, the rapid escalation of testing and sequencing – and, above all, the commitment, courage and compassion of frontline public sector workers are all examples of the state and public servants responding effectively to the unprecedented set of challenges that has been the covid pandemic.

But there were also areas where real weaknesses in government were laid bare. The disease both exposed and exacerbated existing health inequalities. It revealed, once again, how confused lines of accountability and the wrong incentives impede effective delivery, especially when policies cross over from being the responsibility of an individual department to other parts of the public sector.

There were problems over PPE procurement, test availability, the clarity of data required for decision-making, the structure of Public Health England, the Cabinet Office's own co-ordinating functions, all these and a number of other areas all rose to the surface during the crisis.

These weaknesses, problems, failures have been recognised and are being addressed. But the deeper factors that impeded effective delivery must also be faced and reformed. The forthcoming Public Inquiry into COVID will help us do just that – but we must not wait until it concludes before improving what we already know has been deficient.

If the first lesson, that crises reveal, is clearly true of the COVID crisis, so is the second – that crises accelerate and drive change. Government had to become more open, more porous.

In order to make a success of the vaccination programme, outsiders like the newly-honoured Kate Bingham had to be enlisted, and Paul Deighton was similarly co-opted to overhaul PPE sourcing.

New, more agile, committee structures were established across government to bring together scientists, clinicians, civil servants, ministers and outside thinkers to address problems in real time rather than remitting everything for further consideration. Digital dashboards, visualising the latest data to

inform ministerial decision-making, superseded the traditional lengthy submission-drafting process and the bureaucratic inertia that sometimes accompanies it.

The third lesson – that crises generate a public demand for the recognition of their sacrifices and a resolution to serve the country better – is also true of the pandemic. The inequalities in health provision, inadequacies in social care, and a growing backlog of deferred treatments create an imperative for reform to improve public health, overhaul social care and modernise the diagnosis, treatment and care which the NHS provides for citizens.

Similarly, months of lost learning, which have hit the poorest hardest, require a renewed focus on education reform and the wider deployment of the interventions which we know drive higher attainment. And we also need actions to improve poor housing provision, extend economic opportunity and build on the spirit of community solidarity the crisis generated.

And the fourth lesson from past crises – that underline the importance of technological progress and spur scientific innovation – could also not be more resonant.

We have seen it in the speed with which vaccines have been developed, alongside advances in other medical treatments, including the deployment of therapeutics such as dexamethasone; and we have seen it in the pioneering use of large-scale genomic sequencing and also our greater knowledge of the impact of environmental degradation on public health. Technology has of course enabled remote working and the development of new data sharing and analytical tools; and it has allowed for the rapid re-purposing of manufacturing capacity for the pandemic response. These all point to new opportunities for rebuilding our society on better foundations.

It is precisely because the COVID crisis revealed weaknesses in our government and society, because it also showcased strengths, because it forced government to adapt and improve delivery, because the public demand we build back better and because we have knowledge now that we did not previously possess, that this Government is now determined to deepen and accelerate our programme for reform.

Almost a year ago, in a lecture at Ditchley to which Nick referred, I outlined the need for reform in how government works, which was already visibly urgent before the COVID crisis.

I argued that changes in our politics, driven by failures in preceding decades, made an overhaul of government necessary.

I maintained that government had to be closer to citizens, less tolerant of groupthink and more open to challenge – that we needed to modernise meritocracy. I also argued that the skills and knowledge needed by all of us in public service were changing, so we had to. I stressed the importance of using new data and digital tools to rethink government delivery. And I underlined the need for clearer accountability at every level.

I argued that Brexit created new opportunities and new demands. It was an unfrozen moment when we could reshape the State to serve citizens better, especially those who had felt overlooked and undervalued. And Brexit was also a process that removed an excuse for Ministerial inaction. Free of EU law and regulation, ministers had no hiding place. They were now more directly accountable to a rightly more demanding citizenry.

Since I made those arguments, it is clear to me that the COVID crisis has only intensified the need to go further. That is why this morning we published a Declaration on Government Reform, which sets out the need for change, the areas in which we will act and the specific initiatives we need to undertake to make reform real.

The Declaration broadly endorses the Ditchley analysis, and the actions we have in hand already to improve how government works – but it injects additional urgency into our programme.

We have, already, taken steps to bring government closer to citizens. Senior civil servants – the decision-makers who help determine government policy choices – have begun the process of relocating from London.

MHCLG is establishing a new headquarters in Wolverhampton, the Treasury will open a new economic campus in Darlington, the Home Office has announced a new centre of excellence in Stoke, and we in the Cabinet Office now have a second headquarters in Glasgow.

But we have much more to do – there are new institutions such as the National Cyber Force which can be located close to clusters of talent in Northern England and other departments will be moving as well.

This dispersal of decision-making must, of course, be accompanied by an enhancement of devolution. The example of metro mayors such as Ben Houchen and Andy Street shows how strong local leadership is vital to making all of government more responsive and addressing the inequalities which still hold us back.

Levelling up was the government's central mission before the COVID crisis hit. The Prime Minister's powerful vision of a country where opportunities are as universal as the talent and ambition of the British people, and where communities across these islands share in the UK's success, speaks to each of us.

But the experience of the last year only underlines how critical it is that we accelerate that ambition, that we now crack on and make up for time lost to the pandemic – or as the Prime Minister would put it, we need to switch on the afterburners.

In the Ditchley Lecture I also outlined the need for improved training for everyone in government. And indeed a new Government Skills and Curriculum Unit has launched a programme that will drive up core skills, hone areas of specialist expertise, improve understanding of how to make the state more resilient and adaptive, and the unit will also harness new talent for the

Civil Service from a wider range of backgrounds.

And another of the Ditchley actions – improving how Government uses data and provides digital services – has been taken forward. The creation of a new Central Digital and Data Office, led by gifted public servants in the shape of Tom Read and Joanna Davinson, and the external input of outside experts such as Doug Gurr and Paul Wilmott.

But while we have made progress in all these areas, today's Declaration affirms there is much, much more to do. And it also confirms that we can only make the progress we need at the pace we need if we work collaboratively.

Civil servants, politicians, everyone who works in public service is driven by the same imperative and motivated by the same ambition. What I've called the privilege of public service is the chance to make a difference, to improve the lives of our fellow citizens, to use the money and powers they entrust to us to extend their opportunities and support them through life's challenges.

On some occasions when we have been talking about the reform of Government, it has been regrettable that this has been seen as something that's been driven by politicians against the mulish opposition of bureaucrats.

And I also feel it's been a bit of a missed opportunity in the past when reform was felt as something done by ministers to civil servants, rather than with them. And I also feel it's been a real missed opportunity when we've been talking about open-ness and the deployment of outside talent and that's somehow been seen as a replacement for, or usurpation of, the vital role civil servants play. So it's time for a reset.

In more than ten years as a minister I have depended on talented, committed, public-spirited civil servants to deliver change and the Declaration published today is the fruit of discussion between ministers and officials; collaborative working, candid challenge between us and honesty about what needs to change.

Indeed, just as we share the same determination to improve outcomes for citizens, it was striking as ministers and civil servants worked together, how many of the frustrations felt by officials were mirrored by ministers' experiences.

Whether it was the failure to reward risk-taking, the unmerited tolerance of poor performance, the soft bigotry of low expectations, the need for honest evaluation of the mistakes that we've made or the benefits that outside expertise can bring, there was an alignment in both analysis and support for radical solutions.

That is why when this morning, as Nick mentioned, Cabinet Ministers and Permanent Secretaries met together – for the very first time – to approve the Declaration there was a unity of resolve that we need to see these changes through.

The Declaration sets out a series of actions to which we can be held to

account and we are collectively committed to driving them forward.

The first set of actions relates to how we improve the way that all of us perform and manage performance.

There is a new emphasis on serving every part of the UK more effectively. So we're going to accelerating the deployment of decision-makers closer to the communities they serve.

And we will ensure that public servants working in government and in the devolved governments of the UK – the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive – can spend more time in each others' administrations. This should improve mutual understanding across the whole UK. It should help us to appreciate the different concerns and ways of working in different parts of the United Kingdom and it should also strengthen the bonds between public servants across the Union.

There is also an increased level of ambition about opening up public service to new talent.

That's not just about recruiting more talented people from under-represented groups – especially from working-class and non-metropolitan backgrounds – it's also about giving people from other professions and disciplines the chance to spend tours of duty in the Civil Service. And, critically, it's also about extending the range of routes for people with expertise, a different perspective and real creativity. Giving them the ability to challenge and to serve for a period in government.

The recent controversy about Lex Greensill's role in government and subsequent lobbying of ministers has led some to conclude that we should re-erect barriers to outsiders coming in to serve and support ministers and public servants.

We'll wait for Nigel Boardman's review to look into the specifics of that case. But we must not allow the questions raised by that appointment to see a Berlin Wall rebuilt between the permanent Civil Service and others who can help us to enhance the performance of government.

In my time in government I have always been determined to bring in people who can counter groupthink, who can provide new perspectives and they have served in a number of roles – as non-executive directors of departments, policy advisers, policy fellows or in other positions.

Some of them, I confess, have had party political backgrounds. One was a Liberal Democrat donor, another a Liberal Democrat adviser and another went on to become a Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate. There's been people from other parties as well. I've worked with former Labour MPs, former Labour special advisers and former Labour party strategists. One has been a financial supporter of the Green Party, another the head of a charity which has been consistently critical of Conservative policy. Some have been individuals who have no party allegiance.

But one thing united all of them – they were all there to help government

ministers and officials deliver the policy which the government was elected to enact and which the public demanded we deliver.

That's why I think efforts to restrict the openness of government are retrograde and blinkered. They misunderstand how government does, and should, operate.

While we should be wary of cronyism we must not run a closed shop. And acting impartially does not mean one should be ignorant of politics or the levers that change lives – indeed, an understanding of politics is central to making the right call, because the best decisions in government are made where political judgment, technical expertise and lived experience intersect.

Which is why our Declaration commits us to expand secondments, recruit more outsiders and considering how those with a commitment to serve can do so without unnecessary obstruction.

The example of Kate Bingham and Paul Deighton, the efforts of those from the military who drove the expansion of our testing programme – all are testament to the need to bring people into Whitehall and make it into an open marketplace of ideas.

The quid pro quo, of course, for increased porosity is clearer accountability. Which is why our Declaration commits us to stronger performance management, capability-based pay, enhanced scrutiny by non-executive directors of departmental delivery and also Permanent Secretaries being held to account against their departments' outcome delivery plans.

We all know that it's opacity in accountability, incoherence in reporting lines and a failure to be clear about what departments, ministers and permanent secretaries must deliver which has bedevilled effective government in the past.

Now, Permanent Secretaries will be liberated to deliver their essential responsibilities, and recognised, rewarded, for policy and delivery success. They will also be given the tools to 'manage out' poor performers and reward real achievement. The old rigidities of pay structures which incentivise churn, people moving on from job-to-job in pursuit of better rewards will go. The failure to consider past performance in post when considering promotion will end. The shuffling off of under-performing colleagues into new, and under-scrutinised, berths must no longer be tolerated.

And ministers too will accept greater responsibility and accountability. We will ensure we devote time and consideration to senior official appointments within our departments. Outcome Delivery Plans will be clear about what is demanded of us. We will commit to a training programme, so that we ourselves have a better understanding of project management and policy delivery.

And a new Evaluation Taskforce in the Cabinet Office will ruthlessly scrutinise the effectiveness of policies against the claims people like me make for them – it will be a counterweight to what I referred to in my Ditchley lecture as the sugar rush addiction we can develop to new policy

announcements.

Policies which are failing to drive positive change in communities around the UK will be reformed, or terminated, no matter how invested any individual may have been in their creation.

Now all of our reforms will, of course, be subject to the same rigorous evaluation we demand of all others. Some initiatives will have to be altered and adjusted, others may prove counter-productive, and there will, undoubtedly, be the need still to press even further and even faster in some areas.

But I hope the direction of what i've talked about is clear – a government closer to the citizen, more open to challenge, more eager to learn, more welcoming of outsiders, clearer in our accountability, more energetic in our management of both strong and poor performance, more transparent in what we seek to achieve, more honest about what works, more determined to adapt and evolve faster and more rigorously.

And of course, as well as improving the approach to those working in government, our reform programme also envisages a reshaping of the structure of government itself – reflecting the changes through which we are all living.

Public service delivery in the past has tended to segment the citizen's interaction with government into departmental silos or baronies. Whether it's with the Department for Transport and the DVLA for driving licences or the Department for Work and Pensions for Universal Credit, HMRC for tax returns or the Home Office for passports – the citizen has to navigate a disaggregated landscape of individual departmental baronies. And government departments themselves tend to sort individuals into groups of stakeholders, categories of recipients or clients, or clusters of need.

That is why we need to change. We need to build government around the individual – rather than brigading the individual into the sort of categories that suit government – that's got to be the way forward.

GOV.UK is a perfect example of what this means in practice. The citizen does not care which department has the information they want or runs the service they wish to use – so GOV.UK, the government's digital platform, doesn't either. And the wisdom of this approach is borne out by its popularity, which is now greater in terms of visits than the Guardian or Netflix.

Our plans for a single digital sign on will take this approach a step further, enabling everyone to secure rapid, responsive access to government services without boundaries impeding delivery. But we need to go further still. We need to rethink all of government so it responds effectively and rapidly, and in the same tailored fashion, as the digital platforms citizens have become used to.

Whether it's Amazon, Deliveroo or Uber, the thing about these platforms is that they understand their users, provide bespoke responses to individual

needs, use accumulated data to refine delivery and also take account of the niche requirements of individuals. The principle of the “long tail” – the satisfaction of individual or small group needs – trump generalised delivery and that should be embedded into public service.

The need to look beyond the outdated model of individual departmental baronies was at the heart of the reforms introduced by my predecessor Francis Maude. Francis introduced a programme of change whereby those functions that were shared across individual government departments – HR, data security and so on, should be provided in a way that reduced inconsistencies, confusion and costs.

Francis’s reforms meant that we saved money and we improved coherence overall. But there is still more to do to ensure we reduce duplication of effort, incoherence and waste. And of course we are conducting this work with the Treasury.

We are fortunate in the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary, and in Cat Little, their Director General for Public Spending, we have such committed allies. And they will join us in pushing the need for functional reform, particularly when it comes to ensuring that we have a more unified response than ever before to digital and data requirements for government.

That means really driving the principal that government should be one platform. A unified service for all citizens, which allows tailored responses to each citizen’s needs – but it’s also the case that we need to make sure that government as well as providing these services, also assembles and analyses the data we have to improve public service.

The COVID crisis exposed how inadequate data-sharing across government had been.

The Department of Health and Social Care, when ordering new PPE, was, initially, unable to discern what the PPE stocks in individual NHS Trusts might be. Information which should have been shared between the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, and HMRC on the need for government support was, at its best, imperfect. There are huge pools of information within each government department which, when we share them, can enable much more effective delivery of public services.

For example, when we think about levelling-up, we need to consider everything from educational opportunities and attainment to unemployment and welfare figures, transport links and digital connectivity to social capital and the rate of business formation. Only when we pool and cross-refer data from different departments and agencies can we really determine which interventions are best for specific geographical areas.

By sharing this information and analysing it appropriately, we can then discern the deeper patterns and policy relationships between all these factors. Rather than aiming blind at the targets we need to hit, we can focus on the specific suite of reforms which can transform an area. Through the noise of all these numbers we can see the signal which points to lasting

regeneration.

In an area like education, the more data we gather, pool and share with others, the better able we are to identify those factors which really do drive change – from Pupil Premium funding to universal infant free school meals; direct instruction in the classroom to a knowledge-rich curriculum.

We can also look at teacher turnover, wider employment opportunities, family poverty levels and other environmental factors which enable or hold back young people's opportunities as well as what is going on in schools.

Government data, effectively used, thus becomes a liberator of individuals. It enables us to arrive at conclusions drawn from evidence about what works to improve peoples' lives. It lets us compare interventions between areas. And it gives students and their families the ability to hold government to account.

Handling data requires government, of course, to protect privacy and safeguard individuals' rights. But data can be anonymised, ensuring that government departments observe the right protocols and are transparent in their working. And the prize of greater knowledge of what works, sharper accountability to the citizen and more control for communities is so enormously valuable that government cannot afford but to grasp it.

Working across these departmental boundaries must also extend not just to sharing data but also meeting specific policy challenges in new ways.

We must be ready to create new structures in government to deliver particular policies and projects where the accountability is vested in a single lead minister and one senior responsible official – but where the delivery team is drawn from different departments and agencies. Give that team a single budget allocated to the task and give them a fixed deadline for delivery.

I have been influenced in particular by my experience of the Brexit Operations Committee – or 'XO' in our internal parlance. Here, ministers, officials and delivery partners from organisations such as Highways England and the Kent Resilience Forum, met around the table almost daily with a clear, shared responsibility to prepare every arm of the state for the end of the Brexit transition period.

We also created new teams, such as the Border and Protocol Delivery Group, to bring together expertise from multiple departments including Transport, HMRC, and the Home Office, all under one leader to resolve a single over-arching policy challenge.

A similar approach has been taken through the COVID crisis with the creation of the COVID Operations Committee and the COVID-19 Taskforce, to co-ordinate the domestic policy response to the pandemic. Scientists, clinicians, data analysts, policy officials, ministers and outside experts have all worked together. And drawing talent from different areas of government has ensured the departmental perfect does not become the enemy of the public good.

Similar approaches can help overcome the disconnects in the criminal justice

system, the development of the UK's space strategy, the more effective functioning of our Union and the levelling-up of our country.

Now, in outlining the scale and nature of the reforms in our declaration, I recognise there will be pushback, criticism and some cynicism.

Is our analysis correct, are our policies proportionate, are we lacking in ambition, do we miss what's truly important?

Well, in the spirit of honest evaluation, I hope tough questions are asked. Not just by the Commission for Smart Government but by politicians from all parties, Civil Service colleagues, other public servants and indeed citizens across the country. The plans we outline today are there to be tested, analysed and critiqued in order to inform them.

Because the most useful response to any government initiative is not "Yes, Minister" but "Why, Minister?". The duty we owe to our fellow citizens is to argue our point, deploy evidence, listen to challenge and try to convince by the quality of our case, or alter it. We need to show not just that we are acting, effectively and urgently, in citizens' interest – but also that we are working with them in a shared endeavour. Government not as aloof overlord, but accountable partner.

These are the obligations we owe to the public. We know that the vision and the actions that we signed up to this morning, and that I have talked about here, are just the beginning. They will help us to meet the demands of today and to build back better.

But we also know that in the future we will need to go further, and widen the dialogue on reform, in order to meet the looming challenges of tomorrow: speeding our progress towards net zero, forging a new place for our country on the world stage and making sure that the benefits of levelling up become an entrenched reality in every community in the country.

This is the mission that Simon Case, Alex Chisholm and I will be discussing tomorrow with thousands of colleagues at Civil Service Live. It is the task to which both the Cabinet and the Permanent Secretaries committed themselves earlier today. And it is the right way to respond to the obligations we owe the country as we emerge from the shadow of COVID-19.

Now we must get on with the job.

[New government reform programme to ensure UK builds back better from](#)

COVID-19

The programme will ensure that the government has the tools and resources it needs to deliver on its agenda to level up across the UK.

It will rebalance government away from Whitehall, open up the Civil Service to fresh skills, talent and ideas, and embrace digital technology and data based decision-making.

A first ever joint meeting of the Cabinet and departmental Permanent Secretaries agreed today the Declaration on Government Reform.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also delivered a speech entitled 'The Obligations We Owe: Reforming government in the shadow of COVID-19':

He said:

It's been a consistent feature of our history that the national weaknesses, fissures or fractures that have been laid bare or exacerbated by crises should be addressed with the same energy and single-mindedness required for a successful response to the crisis itself.

It is precisely because the Covid crisis revealed weaknesses in our government and society, because it also showcased strengths, because it forced government to adapt and improve delivery, because the public demand we build back better and because we have knowledge now that we did not possess before that this government is determined to deepen and accelerate our programme of reform.

Key parts of the reform declaration include:

- Making the civil service more open to external talent, with all senior civil service roles advertised externally and new, flexible entry routes to the civil service
- Looking beyond London to all corners of the UK, relocating 22,000 civil service roles outside of the capital by 2030, including 50% of senior civil servant roles – rebalancing of the workforce as most senior and policy positions are currently in London
- Investing in new training for both civil servants and ministers, strengthening traditional skills and building expertise in digital, data, science, and project and commercial delivery. A new training campus will be established, the prestigious Fast Stream graduate scheme will be updated and new apprenticeships will be introduced
- Embracing digital technology and data to deliver better services, developing a single sign-on for online government services, making it easier for citizens to access the services they need, and improving data sharing across government
- Improving delivery of projects and programmes with more rigour and

accountability, and launching a new Evaluation Task Force, based in the Cabinet Office, to ensure proper scrutiny of real world results

- A new system of pay, reward and performance management, including the introduction of capability based pay for the senior civil service will be brought in. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary will oversee the performance of Permanent Secretaries, ensuring that they are delivering within their departments
- More opportunities for interchange and secondments for civil servants between the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments and the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Our brilliant Civil Service is always seeking to improve and it is that dynamism that has helped us to accomplish extraordinary things during the pandemic to keep our communities safe and economy moving.

As we look ahead to the opportunities ahead of us to build back a better and fairer Britain, we owe it to the people of this country to make sure their government is best equipped to deliver on their priorities.

That's why we are launching our blueprint for reform – to keep building on our expertise, modernise how government is run and transform this country for the better.

Mr Gove underlined the joint nature of tomorrow's reform plans, with ministers and the Civil Service working in partnership to deliver the changes.

On some past occasions, it has been regrettable that reform overall was seen as something driven by politicians, against the mulish opposition of bureaucrats. It is a missed opportunity when reform is felt as something done by ministers to civil servants, rather than with them. And greater open-ness in the deployment of outside talent to drive progress should never be understood as somehow a replacement for or usurpation of the vital role civil servants play.

The Declaration published today is the fruit of discussion between ministers and officials. That is why when this morning Cabinet Ministers and Permanent Secretaries met together – for the first time – to approve the Declaration, there was a unity of resolve that we need to see these changes through.

The strategy launched today provides concrete reform across three areas:

- People – ensuring that government and the Civil Service has the right

people, working in the right places, with strengthened performance management, aligned to rewards and bonuses, with stepped-up and more strategic monitoring of departmental performance, including through enhanced roles for non-executive directors.

- Performance – modernising how government works by putting digital at the heart of everything we do; with clear-eyed prioritisation, objective setting and evaluation; and champions for innovation, science and technology.
- Partnership – strengthening the bond between ministers and officials, operating as one team from policy through to delivery and between central government and the institutions outside of it.

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service Simon Case said:

Over the past 15 months, the pandemic response has proved what is possible when public servants go above and beyond to deliver for people all across the country.

As we look forward now to renewal and recovery, this reform programme created by ministers and officials ensures that we will grip the challenges and opportunities together, as one government team.

Civil Service Chief Operating Officer Alex Chisholm said:

This new programme builds on the positive strides made to reform government and modernise the Civil Service over the last decade and gives it fresh impetus for the 2020's.

We have started on this journey already with new investment and new leadership in digital technology, the launch of a new curriculum and skills offer, and all the major departments relocating roles across the UK.

With enhanced skills, better use of data, and a relentless focus on the end user, we can transform public services.

The reform declaration can be read [here](#).

[Special feature: GAD's coronavirus response 1 year on](#)

[This time last year](#) the coronavirus pandemic appeared to have passed its peak

in the UK. While challenges remained, there was optimism that we were moving in the right direction and that a new normal would develop.

Twelve months on and we are again at a lower point following a peak. There is renewed optimism about the future as the roll-out of the vaccination programme continues at pace.

This special feature looks back at GAD's coronavirus response over the last year and looks ahead to what could come next.

Supporting the response

Throughout the pandemic, GAD staff have been working with colleagues around the public sector to support the coronavirus response. Some of the many areas in which we have been supporting:

- providing modelling and actuarial expertise to support the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport develop a solution to allow the UK [film and TV production industry](#) to operate, supporting over 180,000 UK jobs
- seconding staff to the [NHS Test and Trace](#) analytics team, carrying out system-level modelling and analysis to assess future demand and support policy decisions
- seconding staff to the Department of Health and Social Care to support in the delivery of the [COVID-19 Population Risk Assessment](#) ensuring those at high-risk from COVID-19 are added to the Shielded Patient List and prioritised for vaccination
- producing the Government Actuary's annual report on the financial position of the [National Insurance Fund](#) considering the impact of the pandemic on the income and expenditure from the fund
- working as part of a team to ensure community pharmacies had the clinical negligence indemnity cover needed to administer vaccines in key areas of England
- GAD also supported the British Business Bank and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to forecast the costs of the various coronavirus loan schemes which have supported businesses that were losing revenue due to the pandemic

Thought Leadership

Throughout this period, we have sought to share our learnings and experiences with clients and colleagues across the public sector.

Our [webinar series](#) has covered such areas as potential implications for longevity and the impact COVID-19 has had on commercial insurance.

We continue to develop new event content and welcome views from our clients and public sector colleagues on areas of interest.

Supplementing our event series, we also produce a range of [publications](#), including some which you can subscribe to, including:

Partnering with clients

Clients have had to respond quickly to issues arising from COVID-19 and at GAD we've also adapted our approach which is:

- flexible and iterative
- getting involved earlier in project development stages
- creating innovative methods to analyse the incomplete data sets available for the fast-moving projects

GAD has delivered substantial pieces of work at short notice. We have worked together with our clients to form an integral part of the policy partnership.

As well as providing direct support on pandemic responses and thought leadership, we have continued to support our clients with other challenges they face.

New ways of working

Many clients have been under considerable pressure with regular activity continuing in addition to demands related to the pandemic response, while also managing new ways of working.

We have not been able to work onsite with clients as we had done in many cases before the start of the crisis. Instead we have made use of video conferencing technologies to increase our opportunities for discussions.

This has allowed us to join team meetings and project discussions much more flexibly and as a result become a fully embedded member of the team.

Clients have recognised the value of this close collaboration and the added value we can provide when we better understand the background and other issues involved in a project.

Screen sharing has meant that work can be discussed as it progresses and problems can be solved collaboratively, strengthening the partnership

approach to projects.

Looking ahead

As the restrictions on our lives begin to ease, we look ahead with hope, expectation and no little uncertainty. The pandemic has impacted all of us in some way, and as we gradually ease lockdowns, we will try to retain the positive aspects of the last year:

- our secondment programme has helped us immerse ourselves in some of our clients' challenges and provide the immediate support required
- the use of technology to deliver events and maintain regular client contact has allowed closer engagement with larger groups
- the pandemic required rapid responses and we have improved our approach to redeploying support to meet new demands and building collaborative links across the public sector
- technology has also ensured that we can work remotely very effectively, providing greater flexibility to staff and the opportunity to develop a more hybrid style of working

With these lessons learnt, GAD is in a stronger position to support government through any challenges which may arise in the future.