



## **DECLARATION ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**

The COVID-19 pandemic has strained our country's resilience like nothing we have seen out of wartime. We have lost more than a hundred thousand of our fellow citizens. The public has shown amazing forbearance as normal life has been up-ended. Large sections of our economy have been held in suspended animation. Students have lost learning, victims of crime have seen justice delayed, backlogs have built up in the health system leaving too many suffering for longer than is tolerable. The public who have endured so much rightly expect that the government they pay for, and which acts in their name, now leads a recovery equal in scale and ambition to any post-war recovery.

During the fight against the virus, as in any significant conflict, the government has had to adapt quickly to a crisis situation. There have been successes – the speedy introduction of furlough, the delivery of universal credit, the vaccination programme – which attest to the brilliance, imagination and dedication of public servants. But as with any crisis, the pandemic has also exposed shortcomings in how government works. Some processes have been too cumbersome. Accountability for delivery of services has at points been confused. The speed with which good practice in one department or area of government has been adopted by others has not always been rapid enough. If we are to power the recovery we need, it is imperative we both learn from our successes and are honest about where improvements must come.

The government has the tools to serve the whole country better. But we must use them to maximum effect, and we must show, demonstrably and transparently, how we are improving real-world outcomes on the ground.

We have superb people at every level of public service, working at home and abroad. But we must do better at attracting an even wider range of talent from more diverse backgrounds. We must do better at providing public servants with the skills and support they need to serve others and find fulfilment in their careers. We must do better at managing performance, incentivising effective delivery, and identifying and managing the consequences of poor service. We must do better at retaining individuals with deep subject expertise – from service delivery to international trade to national security – while being open to new voices which can challenge established ways of thinking.

We have and expect high standards for conduct in public life. But we must continually reinforce these with leadership, proper process and transparency so that the public can have trust and confidence in the operation of government at all levels.

We have a wealth of information and data on how public services operate. That data allows us to learn from the best and support improvement in areas which are under-performing. But we must do better at pooling and sharing data so we can analyse in depth the impact of our policies. We must do better at making our data available to all so that we can be more effectively held to account. We must do better at evaluating the success of our programmes – not just in terms of meeting budgets but meeting the needs of those we serve.

We have the budgets and resources to make a real difference in the lives of all our fellow citizens. But we must do better at using the money we spend to support innovation, growth and enterprise across our whole country. We must do better at monitoring and managing how we spend, encouraging new organisations to provide public services, holding those with whom we contract more rigorously to account, and minimising the risk of fraud, error and waste.

Improving how we operate in all these areas and more requires leadership from Ministers and civil servants – a willingness to challenge each other candidly, co-operate intensively and be open-minded about what needs to change – because the scale of what our recovery must involve is huge.

We have a mission to level-up our country; to make opportunity more equal. Talent is spread equally across our nation but opportunity is not. We have to ensure overlooked families and undervalued communities see material change in their lives. That means improving educational outcomes, attracting investment and building infrastructure to ensure parts of our country with lower levels of productivity and opportunity benefit most. It also means restoring and enhancing local and civic pride by helping communities to shape their areas more effectively, and strengthening the ties that bind us across the whole United Kingdom.

The public expects that the sacrifices they have endured will be a spur to even greater ambition on the part of government to transform the country for the better - and we must deliver on their priorities:

- millions of new homes that are sustainable, beautiful and affordable;
- more police officers, visibly reducing crime and disorder;
- courts that deal with criminals more quickly and prisons that rehabilitate offenders more effectively;
- rapid progress towards environmental enhancement – our landscapes restored to health, wildlife returning, our air and rivers cleaner, carbon emissions falling, our energy mix more sustainable;

- a health service that bounces back stronger than before, tackling backlogs, relieving pain, enhancing life expectancy, improving mental health and well-being, harnessing technology, providing higher quality care in more settings, and leading the world in new treatments and therapies;
- an education system that raises the bar of achievement for all, closes the gap between the fortunate and the disadvantaged, provides an opportunity for individuals to acquire skills throughout their lives, generates new job opportunities and produces technological, scientific and cultural advances;
- the power of science, never more visible a saviour than in this pandemic, harnessed and unleashed so we become a science superpower; and
- jobs – more highly-paid, more fulfilling, more flexible and family-friendly, and more evenly spread across the country.

These are not unreasonable demands or irrational expectations.

In the aftermath of 1945, Britain built back better – with new housing, safer streets, national parks and a healthier countryside, higher than ever standards of universal healthcare, increased educational opportunity, technological advances, and a commitment to greater economic justice.

Those changes required the re-wiring, and renewal, of government. That is why reform is necessary now – not as an end in itself, but as a means of delivering the better Britain the public demands and deserves.

To that end, the Cabinet and Permanent Secretaries met today and have committed themselves to a collective vision for reform, agreeing immediate action on three fronts:

- people** - ensuring that the right people are working in the right places with the right incentives;
- performance** - modernising the operation of government, being clear-eyed about our priorities, and objective in our evaluation of what is and is not working; and
- partnership** - strengthening the bond between Ministers and officials, always operating as one team from policy through to delivery, and between central government and institutions outside it.

## PEOPLE

**We will have the best people leading and working in government to deliver better outcomes for citizens.** Our Civil Service is world-leading in many areas, and its values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity are the bedrock of its success - as is its commitment to always aiming higher. Now we must also go further. We will deepen our understanding of citizens in all parts of the country; draw on a more diverse range of experiences, skills and backgrounds; set the standard for inclusive workplaces where people

achieve their full potential; keep pace in areas of growing importance, including digital and technology; invest in training to equip our people with the skills and knowledge they need to tackle the challenges of the future; support and encourage multidisciplinary teams; and better reward those who excel.

1. We will **look beyond London to all corners of the UK**, as part of our mission to be a government more like the country we serve. More civil servants, including senior leaders, will work outside of the capital, joining the many dedicated front line staff already based in towns and cities across the UK. We will move beyond the major centres in which we already have a significant footprint, relocating jobs and areas of activity across government to places including Darlington, Stoke, Wolverhampton, Glasgow, East Kilbride, Leeds, Loughborough, Cardiff and Belfast. Ministers will similarly spend more time out of London, working with teams wherever they are based.
2. We will **improve the way we recruit and the way we manage moves into and out of government**. Civil servants are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. That principle, embedded in the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms, is inviolable. There is however more we must do to attract a broader range of people to the privilege of public service. It should be natural for people with careers and skills built in business to serve in government for a period, and for those in public service to spend time in organisations which are not dependent on public money - so long as there is clarity on roles and responsibilities, transparent and consistent processes, effective management of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest, and induction which firmly instils the Civil Service Code and its values. Guided by those principles, we will open all senior appointments to public competition by default, advertised in such a way as to ensure the widest possible pool of applicants. We will ensure that Ministers have visibility of Senior Civil Service appointments in the departments they lead, and provide the Prime Minister and Cabinet Secretary with the broadest possible choice of new Permanent Secretaries and Directors General. We will work with the Civil Service Commission to look at how it can best support the bringing in of new skills. We will develop new entry routes from industry, academia, the third sector and the wider public sector, with flexibility to suit those who want to build a career in government and those who want a shorter tour of duty. We will work with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government, and Northern Ireland Executive to increase interchange between civil servants supporting all four governments, deepening the ties that bind us across the UK. We will encourage Civil Service leaders to spend time in the private and third sectors.
3. We will **invest in training for civil servants and for Ministers**, with high standards for online provision as well as the creation of a new physical campus. We will bolster traditional skills such as drafting written advice, understanding statistical concepts, and appreciating how Parliament works, as well as developing expertise in areas including digital, data, science, and project and commercial delivery. We will revamp the Fast Stream so that it remains among the best graduate programmes in the world, attracting

talent from the widest range of disciplines and locations, and we will develop our apprenticeship schemes so every department is nurturing talent from across the country. We will also ensure Ministers receive training in how to assess evidence, monitor delivery, and work effectively with Civil Service colleagues.

4. We will **promote mixed-disciplinary teams and avoid hierarchies slowing down action**. We will make sure that the teams devoted to overcoming the most complex public policy challenges are drawn from a range of disciplines and backgrounds, fostering originality and system-wide approaches. We will use ‘red teams’ and outside secondees to challenge conventional thinking, requiring that policy options be presented showing how radical alternatives have been evaluated and considered. We will reduce the number of people needed to make decisions, taking out layers of reporting wherever we can.
5. We will **reward people for being exceptional in what they deliver for the public**. Performance management for the Senior Civil Service will be overhauled so there is a clear link from overall priorities to individual objectives. We will define the outcomes for which Ministers and senior officials are responsible, with measurable targets for delivery. We will assess Permanent Secretaries more transparently and systematically against departmental performance. We will link rewards and bonuses to meeting those targets and demonstrating wider performance. We will incentivise those with deep subject expertise who stay in areas where they add value and continue to develop. We will intervene to help improve performance in areas of weakness – providing the support, mentoring and resources to match the best – and we will manage out those whose performance consistently falls below the level the public have a right to expect.
6. We will **set a new standard for diversity and inclusion**, challenging tired prejudices and championing a diversity of backgrounds and opinions, with the merit principle front and centre. Government must be a model employer: open and transparent in the way it works; committed to the highest standards of service to others; rigorous in how it uses the resources provided by the taxpayer; and accountable for how it improves the lives of others every day. In order to better serve the public, the government must also ensure it draws on the talents of the widest possible range of geographical, social and career backgrounds. We will make sure that citizens from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living with disabilities and those who have experienced disadvantage in their early lives can flourish in public service. We will develop an ethos of a connected government across the UK - with career opportunities in every part of the country open to all, a dismantling of barriers and a willingness to ask always how the way we are structured helps all our citizens and tackles disadvantage in their daily lives. We will guarantee fairness at work, take a zero tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination and harassment, and grow a culture that welcomes challenge and demands rigour in how we assess delivery for citizens.

## PERFORMANCE

**We will modernise the operation of government, and be more disciplined in prioritising and evaluating what we do.** Updating the wiring of government is not a new ambition, but rapid change in the world around us means we cannot afford to fail; digital platforms and services are altering the relationship between the state and the citizen, and data when used well is telling us so much more about what works and what does not. Departments will set clear targets and goals for the areas in which they have to deliver, with regular and public reporting. They will also be encouraged to be creative and imaginative in problem-solving and policy formulation, but expected to be rigorous in welcoming evaluation and scrutiny. In order that departments can focus on solving the policy and delivery problems they face, we will ensure that the centre supports them effectively by providing the functions and platforms they need to excel: all departments will have access to interoperable data and IT services; there will be a single digital log-on for all government services; government communications will be organised more coherently from the centre; the HR needs of all departments will be better coordinated; and procurement processes will be reformed and simplified now we have left the EU, helping departments benefit from economies of scale and the best commercial expertise. These enhanced corporate functions will have their own targets for improved performance – including the financial savings they are expected to bring year-on-year.

7. We will **reinvigorate the principle of departmental accountability**, trusting departments to deliver their objectives, supported by a smarter centre. We will ensure there is transparency over what departments are expected to achieve with simple plans setting out their priorities and the targets against which delivery can be judged. We will establish a new Evaluation Task Force to act as an in-house scrutineer not just of value for money in programmes but effectiveness against published ambitions. We will make better use of Non-Executive Directors to challenge performance in their departments and across government, under the leadership of the Government's Lead Non-Executive Director.
8. We will **improve cross-government functions** – such as digital, commercial, finance and human resources – to better support departments' corporate activity, acting on the recommendations of the Digital Economy Council and the Maude Reviews. We will require all departments to meet clear standards set by the functions, backed up by strict adherence to spending controls that help ensure the government is delivering value for money for the taxpayer.
9. We will **put data at the heart of our decision-making**, learning explicitly from the approach we have taken in responding to COVID-19. We will set a presumption in favour of openness and a requirement to share data across departments, so that policies are informed by the best data analysis from across government. We will create data inventories to ensure we know what data exists, where it is stored, and how it can be

accessed. We will make data visualisation a common tool to ensure Ministers and officials understand in real time the latest evidence underpinning decisions.

10. We will **champion innovation and harness science, engineering and technology** to improve policy and services. We will expect officials to ask ‘how can science help’ when approaching problems and have the skills to deliver on this. We will encourage considered risk taking to find new ways to solve challenges, expanding our use of experimentation and randomised controlled trials, and increase procurement and adoption of innovation. We will build internal capability and external networks to access and understand the best scientific insights available in support of our policy goals and their delivery. We will invest in the latest technology, and replace legacy IT systems that are overly complex and difficult to use.
11. We will **seek excellence in project and service delivery**. We will have a dedicated Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for all major projects, with approval tied to competent leadership. We will not allow hierarchy to impede rapid problem-solving or effective delivery, and ensure we have the right structures in place to deliver the outcomes we want as efficiently as possible. We will strengthen the operational delivery profession to ensure consistent high quality service.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

**We will act together, as one government team, to deliver for citizens.** One of the great strengths of the UK system of government is the unique partnership that exists between Ministers and officials, who work together to create and deliver policy. We want to build an even closer partnership, making sure that there is a unity of purpose and of action that is shared across government. That means greater accountability for all, targets against which Ministers can be judged, and performance indicators for the Senior Civil Service – all constructed to show success in delivering for the public rather than satisfaction with internal priorities.

12. We will **create more opportunities for Ministers and officials to discuss and hone policy collaboratively**. One of the principal lessons from our preparations for EU Exit, and from our response to the pandemic, has been that the best decisions are made when both Ministers and officials contribute to discussions in mixed forums, rather than relying on the traditional approach of a Minister alone representing their department. We will extend this principle across government business, expecting that policy discussions are open and non-hierarchical. We will also improve how we track the decisions and actions that flow from Cabinet Committee discussions.
13. We will **bring greater clarity to the roles, responsibilities and accountability of Ministers and senior officials** when taking decisions. We will create an environment that supports open, collaborative policy-making and well-judged risk-taking, with the

focus on delivery. We will consider how these roles should interact and be communicated, and how leaders should be held to account for their decisions in different contexts, including taking account of the role and design of ministerial directions. We will ensure this serves to reinforce our commitment to the highest standards of propriety, with Ministers and Permanent Secretaries having clear responsibility for standards in their departments.

14. We will **embrace the links between our domestic agenda and our work on the international stage**. We will draw on insights and learnings from other countries to help inform actions we take at home, leveraging the UK's strong global network, and make sure that in designing domestic policies we consider how they can contribute to our objectives for Global Britain.
15. We will **operate more seamlessly with institutions outside government**, building partnerships with the wider public sector, private sector and community organisations to secure the best outcomes for citizens. We will bolster dialogue between leaders from all sectors to make sure we are spotting and tackling problems together, and explore new forms of collaboration in service delivery.

These actions are intended to make government work better and help us focus on our most important priorities, so we must move quickly to implement them. They are not, however, ends in themselves. Their true value lies in the wider reforms they will underpin - reforms which will unleash the UK's potential, level up our country, and improve people's everyday lives. Everything we do is in service of those goals.

**Personal Data**

**PRIME MINISTER**  
*On behalf of Cabinet*

**Personal Data**

**CABINET SECRETARY**  
*On behalf of the Permanent Secretaries*

## **ANNEX - ACTIONS IN 2021**

The above declaration sets out our vision for making government work better in service of citizens. What counts, however, is not what we say but what we do. This annex therefore outlines specific actions we will take in 2021. The government will work transparently, and report regularly on our progress.

### **PEOPLE**

1. Implement plans to move 22,000 roles out of London by 2030, including 50% of Senior Civil Servant (SCS) roles, confirming at least five major departmental relocations this year.
2. Establish new, appropriately and consistently managed, entry routes for professionals from outside government, including for time-limited periods to be attached to specific projects or tasks.
3. Work with the Civil Service Commission to review how it can encourage entrants with specific, high-demand skills, particularly scientists and engineers.
4. Reinvigorate the interchange scheme for civil servants between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Civil Service.
5. Develop a pipeline of secondments from the Civil Service into major organisations within the UK and internationally, including other governments, led by professions and departments, with support from Non-Executive Directors, as a core part of talent development.
6. Establish a new curriculum and training campus for government, with a new digital way to access learning, a mandatory induction package, and a data masterclass for the SCS.
7. Launch the new Government Projects Academy and Project Delivery Framework to build project delivery capability.
8. Refresh the current apprenticeships strategy, with an emphasis on quality and relevance rather than numerical targets, including the development of a Government Administration apprenticeship.
9. Put in place a training programme for Ministers, including project and commercial skills.
10. Set expected assignment durations on appointment for all SCS posts, taking account of the requirements of the role.
11. Implement capability-based pay, starting with the SCS.
12. Set a new performance management framework for the SCS – with targets to ensure visibility over delivery – alongside revised performance management arrangements for Permanent Secretaries that are closely aligned to the new departmental Outcome Delivery Plans.
13. Implement consistent Non-Executive Director challenge of departmental performance, under the leadership of the Government's Lead Non-Executive Director.
14. Publish a diversity and inclusion strategy to better promote fairness and performance.

## **PERFORMANCE**

15. Set Outcome Delivery Plans for each department, and ensure that every department has a Delivery Board with Non-Executive Director involvement to monitor performance.
16. Implement clear standards for all functions and ensure they are used consistently across government to improve quality and efficiency.
17. Ensure all departments adhere to a strengthened spending controls framework.
18. Establish the Central Digital and Data Office with a mandate and the expertise to drive digital and data innovation, including extending the use of data visualisation tools.
19. Launch a single sign-on for online government services.
20. Introduce mandatory reporting of the costs and risks of outdated IT systems, and ensure that no new IT systems are created without interoperability with other relevant government systems.
21. Move all eligible major projects into the Government Major Projects Portfolio, publishing it with the names of dedicated and suitably qualified SROs for each project as a condition of approval.
22. Institute the Government Major Contracts Portfolio, to improve the contract management of the most critical contracts.
23. Set up the Evaluation Task Force to ensure consistent high quality impact evaluation and transparency, and a refreshed delivery unit to drive progress on the government's headline priorities.
24. Commence a review programme for Arm's Length Bodies and increase the effectiveness of their departmental sponsorship, underpinned by clear performance metrics and rigorous new governance and sponsorship standards.
25. Ensure all data is as open as possible to public and third parties.
26. Publish a central record (Domesday Book) of all government property - department by department and agency by agency.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

27. Revise guidance on Cabinet Committee attendance to ensure relevant senior officials attend and participate where appropriate, and to replicate across all relevant committees best practice on tracking actions and decisions.
28. Hold extraordinary Cabinet meetings at least once a year, bringing together Cabinet and the Permanent Secretaries, to review progress on the government's key priorities.
29. Complete a review of Civil Service governance, including consideration of the appropriate roles for senior officials, Non-Executive Directors and Ministers.
30. Complete a review of models of accountability for decisions, drawing on international best practice and experiences during the pandemic and taking account of the role and design of ministerial directions.