

Civil Service Live 2017

Keynote address by John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

London, 12 July

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Civil Service Live 2017.

In the last six weeks, this event has visited five cities in England, Scotland and Wales. I've seen great enthusiasm, energy and commitment to learning everywhere we've been.

It's really important that we get out to see civil servants in every part of the UK, from every department, discipline and profession. Because if we want to get better as an organisation, we have to do it together; we have to learn together, breaking down barriers and building collaboration.

As One Civil Service, we are united by our values and our commitment to public service; we are all subject to the same pressures, and need to respond as one to common challenges to how we work, and the demands of a world that grows more complex every day.

Across the Civil Service, we've had a momentous year. There have been challenges and achievement. And everyone has played their part.

So I want to say thank you. Thank you for everything you do. You are essential to Britain. You, and the 400,000 civil servants you represent, are the bedrock of stability and continuity in our democracy.

The year ahead presents a new set of generation-defining challenges that will involve every one of us in different ways.

We have a new UK Government that is negotiating a complex and delicate path after the election. And we will be managing the UK's exit from the European Union and working to forge new partnerships and a new global role outside the EU.

In practical terms this means continuing challenges for many of you:

- to understand across government departments what our exit from the EU means in terms of legislation, and how to guide that through Parliament.

- to define, plan, and execute the steps necessary to implement whatever is agreed as part of our exit from the EU, quite possibly even before it is agreed;
- to guide the complex relationships not only with the EU, but also between the devolved administrations here in the UK, and:
- to support the ongoing negotiations - week in, week out in Brussels.

This is incredibly important work.

But I have a simple message for us all today: that in spite of these challenges we must continue the process of transforming our Civil Service, quite simply because that is the only way we can handle today's challenges, and set ourselves up for the future.

To succeed in this we must:

- work smarter and more collaboratively, using technology to help us;

- we must plan and prioritise our work effectively across government;
- and we must build our skills as individuals and as an organisation so that we can provide better and better services to the public.

This transformation won't happen overnight. But we've set our ambition to be 'A Brilliant Civil Service' precisely to meet the challenges head on, and focus on delivering better outcomes for citizens as expectations intensify.

We launched the vision and its supporting pillars at Civil Service Live, 12 months ago. Since then, we've built momentum and made real progress towards making it a reality.

Our first pillar, **Improved Outcomes**, is about the digital transformation of services, concentrating on what's best for the user.

We're building more digital services that make people's lives easier.

Like the Universal Credit programme.

This new service is a fully digital service for customers.

It has been a huge task to implement – combining multiple benefits into a single claim, providing a digital interface with customers, training the staff to interact with customers in a different way, and changing back office structures and processes to support it – all underpinned by new technology.

And it's delivering positive results. Under Universal Credit people are moving into work faster and staying in work longer than under the old system.

Digital take up is proving a real success, with 99% of new Universal Credit claims made online, and 82% of customers reporting they are satisfied, or very satisfied, with the service.

And there's a strong feedback loop too, that quickly picks up comments and issues from users and builds them into improvements to the service.

It's Agile methodology that puts the customer right at the centre of the service.

HMRC's Personal Tax Account provides taxpayers a secure, real-time picture of their tax affairs, through which they can check their tax code, view their National Insurance contribution history, make payments, and more.

Since the service launched in November 2015, nearly 11 million unique users have accessed their account, and more than 2.1 million customers have claimed a repayment through the service, allowing HMRC to repay more than £1 billion directly to its customers within five working days.

It means that HMRC can do more tax in real time, and provides customers an increasingly personalised picture of their tax affairs, along with prompts, advice and support - all from the convenience of their tablet or smartphone.

These are genuinely Improved Outcomes, they make our services work better for our citizens - more efficient, and easier to use.

In fact, by 2020 we expect there to be as many as 89 different government services available digitally.

Services like online voter registration, which has already seen 27 million applications since it launched in 2014. This service

ensures more people than ever before can register to vote and has helped significantly increase the size of the electoral register. Or passport renewal, which by 2020 will see more than 90% of applications made online. The platform features both a photo upload and digital guarantor service and will mean applicants no longer need to submit paper documentation to HM Passport Office.

This in turn will help reduce customer error and processing time, and provide a service that strikes the right balance between public protection and customer excellence, while providing an annual saving of £22 million.

And while digital transformation is critical to improving public services, Improved Outcomes is also about innovative services that make a real difference to people's lives.

The very first winner of the monthly 'A Brilliant Civil Service' award was HM Prison Ford, in West Sussex.

Phil Turnbull and the Reducing Reoffending team there have worked to increase educational and vocational opportunities for prisoners.

By the end of 2016 the number of prisoners in full-time education outside Ford prison had risen tenfold to more than 30, with courses ranging from hairdressing to web design.

And all those on the scheme who have since been released from HMP Ford went directly into either full-time employment or full-time education.

The Reducing Reoffending Team showed that they could make a real difference to the lives of prisoners and show them and the wider community that successful rehabilitation is achievable.

That's an Improved Outcome.

The second pillar of our Brilliant Civil Service is **Skilled People**. This is about getting better at delivery and operational skills.

It means improving our commercial, digital and project management skills; building expertise in property, finance, and other disciplines.

We are offering new career paths that allow our people - and us as an organisation - to accumulate deeper experience in these key areas.

We are putting in place structures throughout the Civil Service so we can deploy this professional expertise where it's needed, when it's needed.

The Government Commercial Function has recruited more than 100 senior commercial experts in the last 12 months through its newly centralised recruitment hub, while more than 600 have been through its customised assessment centre; helping us ensure we've got the commercial expertise across departments to hold our own with private sector suppliers, making us more joined up, and ensuring we get the best deal for taxpayers.

The security teams are working hard to rationalise the multiple security structures across government, to bring increased clarity and coherence to our approach, and at the same time increase the security of our data, our people, and our systems.

We have trained nearly 1,000 people across government through the Major Projects Leadership Academy and Project Leadership Programme, to build our capability in managing projects – which will now be even more essential in light of the EU exit implementation.

And we have created an overarching Analysis function to help bring together our analytics professionals across government.

This will strengthen their combined voice as we continue to develop our capability in sharing and analysing data.

We're also flexible in the way we source skills. Across the departments there are more than 300 different strands of Brexit-related work being defined.

To meet the challenges and opportunities this presents, we've created 2,000 additional roles to tackle this work.

Two-thirds of these posts have already been filled and we expect to create a similar number of roles in the coming year, as negotiations progress and we begin to implement new policies.

We have to continue to develop our digital skills to meet the challenges of the future.

The Digital Academy will provide skills training right across government, in data and technology as well as digital.

This will complement and build on similar approaches being rolled out across some departments today.

We have defined a common suite of job functions for our digital colleagues, so that when we hire new people, we can transfer them across government with a common understanding of their skillset.

And with an eye on the next generation of civil servants, DFE has been doing excellent work to ensure we create at least 30,000 apprenticeship starts by 2020.

By then we want all the Civil Service professions to have an apprenticeship scheme and a clear career pathway that will allow the most talented to progress inside the Civil Service right to the top.

And here today at Civil Service Live we have one of the biggest learning events in the country.

The third pillar is **A Great Place to Work**.

Brilliant civil servants need brilliant workplaces.

We have to modernise our technology – to give us all better tools to work with. At the same time, we’re making good progress on sharing data to improve the service we provide.

We also want to work across boundaries, collaborate and share office space across government. We have made a good start here, too – the Office Hubs programme envisages 22 major Government Hubs across the UK, supported by a regional outreach of around 200 Regional Hubs.

Hubs combine multiple departments in single, more modern, workplaces with better technology, encouraging people to work productively from a variety of locations, rather than being tied to the same desk.

I know it isn't easy if you're asked to move your place of work – but it's necessary because today we have too many distributed offices that are too small.

Nowhere was this more acute than here in London. Since 2010, we've reduced our estates footprint in London from 180 buildings to just 54.

Across the country that work has so far saved us more than £1 billion in running costs and released £3 billion in proceeds from disposals.

Our plans continue that direction of travel.

We've already established our first Government Hub in Canary Wharf, which by 2018 will be home to more than 5,000 staff from different government departments and arm's length bodies.

Our job is to make sure these new Hubs really do offer a modern, efficient work environment that makes up for the disruption I know is felt by individuals, as they move.

HMRC is delivering one of the largest transformation programmes in government. Its Locations Programme will replace 140 offices with 13 Regional Centres, five specialist sites and a smaller HQ in Whitehall by 2021.

Its first regional centre, at Ruskin Square in Croydon, will open later this month, and is an excellent example of what a government hub should be: state-of-the-art facilities that will drive collaboration, and provide a truly inspiring workspace.

We are also proposing hubs in Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh, to name just a few.

The Treasury's Information Workplace Solutions prides itself on continuously improving IT and the working environment for over 6,000 staff and their stakeholders in a multi-department hub.

Staff can now work at a range of workstations or breakout spaces, on the move, or at home. Secure laptops and tablets are used as standard in meetings to record actions, give presentations or to hold video conferences and share content.

And a new USB stick turns most home devices into work PCs. The Workplace Improvement programme is also providing more flexible meeting spaces.

So right here in the centre of Whitehall, we are working in a modern hub with multiple departments sharing the Treasury building.

But a great place to work is not just about the physical environment and better equipment. It's also about a working culture that gives opportunity to people from all and any background, and where everyone feels included.

The Civil Service is rightly ambitious to be the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020 - one that truly represents the people it serves, where everyone believes they have the opportunity to contribute equally and no one left behind.

With that sense of inclusion, we are much more likely to perform at our best, individually and together.

We are already more diverse than at any time in our history. We're doing well – 9.2% of civil servants declare a disability and 11.2% are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background. These proportions are at record highs.

Currently, 54% of the workforce are women - and women make up over 40% of senior civil servants. And 12 Civil Service departments and agencies made the top 100 in the 2017 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

This is good progress. But there's much more work to do before we fully reflect the communities we serve - particularly at senior levels.

We need to bring in talented young people, whoever they are and wherever they come from – and provide an environment where they can flourish.

The final pillar of a Brilliant Civil Service is **Effective Leaders**.

Times of change require leadership.

Whether it's about helping manage the multiple priorities and demands which we are facing here in Whitehall, or implementing the proposed changes I've talked about as we transform the civil service, or ensuring that critical services can continue to be delivered across the country; it all takes substantial leadership.

And we must prepare our leaders for the task.

Later this year we will formally start to roll out the Leadership Academy, with new learning opportunities to help leaders at every level in the Civil Service build their skills.

We're also expanding our accelerated development schemes, such as the Future Leaders Scheme - including the META programme, a bespoke offer for participants from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

So, you're already doing brilliant things, individually and collectively, and we're making progress.

A Brilliant Civil Service is a daily reality for more and more of you in how you work and in the results you produce for citizens.

Now we must build on this progress and accelerate.

The next phase will define our Civil Service:

- we must provide excellent services for the citizens of the country;
- we must deliver a new relationship with the European Union, and increasing numbers of you will become involved in that, and;
- we must continue to build on the progress in modernising the Civil Service.

We are beginning to see elements of the transformation programmes which were set in train a few years ago become a reality for increasing numbers of people:

- new buildings are being occupied;
- new skills are being built;
- new technologies are being deployed;
- new structures are being put in place;
- and our workforce is becoming increasingly diverse.

We must continue to develop new ways of working, becoming ever more collaborative, more flexible, and continue to share common ways of doing things, and better ways of sharing our data between us.

Only then can we meet the increasing demands of the citizens, the increased workload as we exit the European Union, and the ever tighter fiscal envelope which we have committed to.

And when the negotiations are complete, it will be the Civil Service that will be implementing whatever is agreed.

Our role is to prepare for that, and at the same time take the opportunity it presents to ensure that the UK Civil Service remains the most advanced, and the best Civil Service in the world.

You can be enormously proud to be a part of the best Civil Service there is:

- proud to be delivering first-class modern services;
- proud to be making a difference to people's lives;
- and proud to represent Britain and to present it to the world.

So while we navigate the country through this period of change. Let's remember two things. We must continue to transform, to be better skilled, better leaders, delivering better outcomes.

And we must continue to deliver for the people of this country. You are the constant - none of it can happen without you, whoever you are and wherever you work.

So ladies and gentlemen, I end where I began - thanking you for all you do, day in, day out, and for being here today - it's fabulous to see so many of you.

**Let's make the most of this opportunity - to continue to build
A Brilliant Civil Service.**