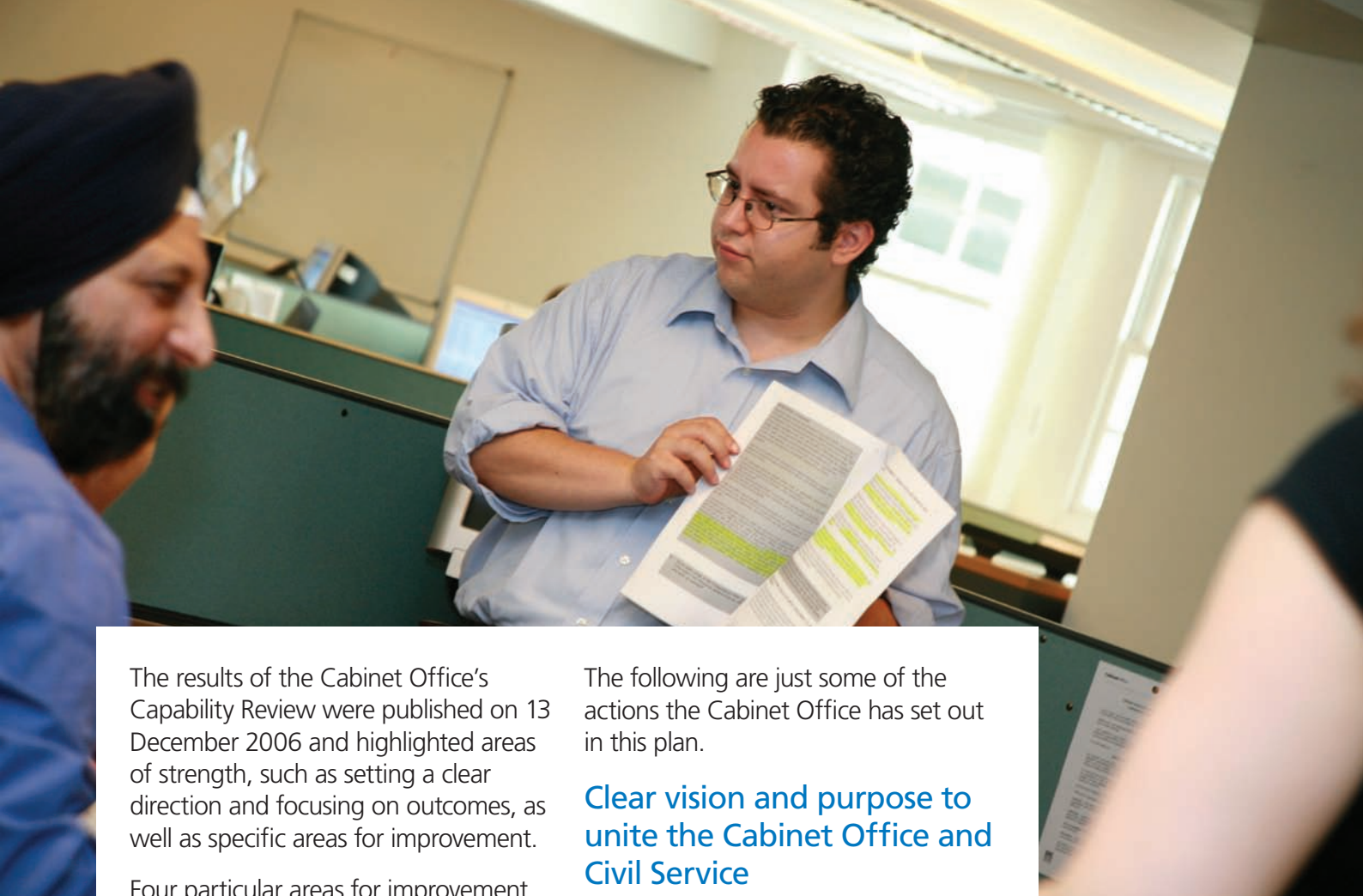


Making government work better by...

Building Cabinet Office **CAPABILITY**

In the last quarter of 2006 a group of independent impartial assessors examined the challenges the Cabinet Office is likely to face in the future, its level of capability to meet them, and what needs to be done to ensure success.





The results of the Cabinet Office's Capability Review were published on 13 December 2006 and highlighted areas of strength, such as setting a clear direction and focusing on outcomes, as well as specific areas for improvement.

Four particular areas for improvement were identified: defining more clearly how things get done across government; strengthening the Cabinet Secretary's capacity to lead transformation across the Civil Service; making the high-level vision for the Cabinet Office come alive for staff; and creating greater coherence to improve delivery.

In response to these points the Cabinet Office Board published a two-year change plan: the *Cabinet Office Capability Review Implementation Plan*.

The following are just some of the actions the Cabinet Office has set out in this plan.

Clear vision and purpose to unite the Cabinet Office and Civil Service

Sir Suma Chakrabarti, Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Development, along with input from other senior leaders, is leading a project to help make the role and aims of the Cabinet Office clearer to all. One potential output of this will be a 'compact' between the Cabinet Office and other departments spelling out what each can expect from the relationship between them. This will lead to greater cooperation and better results for the public.

Enabling and encouraging people to work across boundaries

The Board is devoting a significant proportion of its time to making the Cabinet Office a more coherent and effective department, by changing the way it operates internally to become more than 'the sum of its parts'.



This work has involved staff at all levels and looks at ways of improving how the different parts of the Department work together. It includes breaking down barriers, promoting more cross-unit cooperation and involvement in wider Cabinet Office and Civil Service initiatives.

Another project has explored how and why cross-cutting units are brought into the Department and how to make the process more systematic and sensitive to the needs of the people affected. The aim will be to make everyone clear about expectations in terms of processes and people, and this is currently 'work in progress'.

Developing people skills

The Cabinet Office People Strategy sets out a clear framework for achieving excellence in the way we lead, manage and develop our people to build longer-term capability. Consultation is happening in late spring/early summer.

The Corporate Development Group is also developing a People Strategy for the whole of the Civil Service to ensure that it has effective leaders, it recruits and develops staff, and it manages talent proficiently across departments.



Engaging and communicating with our people

Engaging Cabinet Office staff in how the Cabinet Office does business, through ongoing information sharing and activities and events, is clearly essential to our success.

Information sharing activities include articles in the Cabinet Office e-newsletter *Inside*, Board minutes, updates on the intranet and even videos, as well as dedicated webpages called One Cabinet Office.

In terms of activities and events, staff have an opportunity to take part in consultation on key Board papers and to hear updates on progress. We also run quarterly Senior Civil Service events, and will run a one-off event for staff in July 2007.

All senior leaders are committed to working together to ensure that the Cabinet Office rises to the challenges it faces and that the vision of making government work better through One Cabinet Office is achieved. We are confident, given the ability and commitment of our staff, that we can deliver these improvements. In our last staff survey, 94% said they would be willing to go the extra mile to help us reach our goals. As Gus O'Donnell wrote in his response to the Capability Review, 'A successful Cabinet Office is critical to a successful government.'

