


Making government work better by...



Ensuring **FUTURE** capability

The world is changing and for Britain to remain competitive, effective and successful, we need to keep pace with the challenges of tomorrow such as globalisation, migration, energy consumption and the environment. How can we make sure that government is equipped to do this?

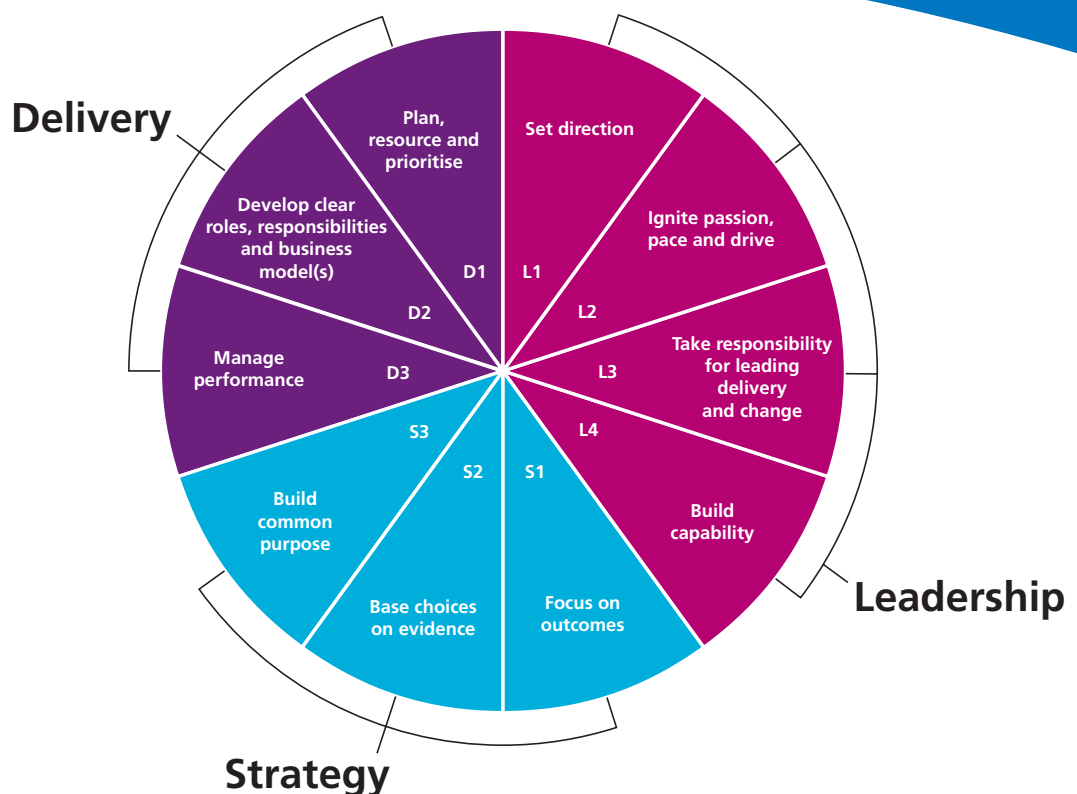


Capability Reviews, run by the Cabinet Office and a team comprised of Whitehall and independent assessors, seek to address this question by rigorously assessing the performance of each government department and its Senior Civil Service (SCS) team to establish whether they are capable of meeting these future challenges.

The reviews explore three key areas – leadership, strategy and delivery – with former Cabinet Secretary Lord Wilson describing them as, ‘rigorous to the point of self-flagellation’! The calibre of the assessors and the candour of the questions asked for each review bear testament to this. The reviewers are senior, highly credible individuals, many drawn from outside of Whitehall, such as Sir James Crosby, former Chief Executive of HBOS and Geoff Lamb of the Bill Gates Foundation and former Director of the World Bank.

Questions ranged from ‘Do departments know how well they are performing and do they have the tools to fix their problems when they underachieve?’ to ‘Do they engage effectively with their key stakeholders, partners and public?’

As well as assessing the performance of a department, each review triggers an implementation plan, which is owned and managed by the department, to address the issues raised by the review. Peter Thomas, Review Programme Director, emphasises this point, ‘The reviews are not just a historical record of performance. The implementation plans within them are a contract between the department and the Cabinet Secretary, and progress against these plans will be reviewed regularly.’



By March 2007, 12 departments had been reviewed: the Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Skills, Home Office, Cabinet Office, Department of Trade and Industry, Communities and Local Government, Department for International Development, Ministry of Defence, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The remaining departments will be reviewed through 2007.

Already the review teams have identified cross-Whitehall issues in the management of the Civil Service, in particular the need for strong, dynamic, cohesive board leadership

Each report is published, a fact that has made quite an impression on one of the reviewers, Sir James Crosby, who says, 'I can't imagine any shareholder-owned company doing this in similar

circumstances.' He notes that 'the sheer number of people involved in workshops, interviews and repeat interviews ensures that each review is thorough. Publication ensures that each review is totally transparent.'

The public, now more than ever, have high expectations of public services, which they want to be tailored to their needs and delivered in a way that is convenient to them.

The aim of Capability Reviews is to make sure that the Civil Service is more professional, flexible and adaptable, in order to respond to the needs of the public and to the challenges of tomorrow.



External perceptions of the Civil Service have shifted because it was prepared to challenge itself in a rigorous fashion.

Absolutely the right thing to do at the right time.

Views from the top. What the Permanent Secretaries thought





Enhancing the performance and reputation of the Civil Service

The Civil Service Steering Board was established in 2007 to enhance the performance and reputation of the Civil Service. It plays a key role in communicating the vision and values, ensuring that staff have the capabilities and skills to do their job and making sure the Civil Service is operationally sound.

Providing corporate leadership

The Permanent Secretaries Management Group was created in 2007 and meets every quarter to focus on those issues that are important to the Civil Service as a whole, such as HR, reputation management, risk, financial management and the overall capability of the Civil Service.

For more information, take a look at www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform

Making the Civil Service better

Developing leadership skills

In March 2006, the Cabinet Office launched a new leadership framework for the top 200 senior civil servants. The leadership framework provides the focus for individuals to improve their leadership skills and self-confidence as leaders.

