Re:State

PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT

A NEW CIVIL SERVICE CODE

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ABOUT RE:STATE

Re:State is established as the leading Westminster think tank for public service reform. We believe that the State has a fundamental role to play in enabling individuals, families, and communities to thrive. But our vision is one in which the State delivers only the services that it is best placed to deliver, within sound public finances, and where both decision-making and delivery is devolved to the most appropriate level. We are committed to driving systemic change that will deliver better outcomes for all.

We are determinedly independent and strictly non-party in our approach. This is reflected in our cross-party Advisory Board and our events programme which seeks to convene likeminded reformers from across the political spectrum.

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ABOUT PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT

Re:State's 'Plan for Government' programme provides a series of ready to implement products that the current or an incoming government can use to rewire Whitehall.

Successive governments have pledged to reform the Civil Service. Yet while there have been some changes, the fundamental and systemic problems plaguing the Civil Service remain. While most ministers quickly come to realise that reform is required, by then they are in the midst of trying to deliver their administration's priorities, and lack the time and expertise to achieve fundamental Whitehall reform. Simultaneously, the absence of a self-reforming culture, and bias towards the status quo, means that the Civil Service is not itself driving the change required to ensure it is fit for purpose. The result is continuing frustration with a machine that embraces process over outcome, confuses impartiality with passivity, too often stifles creativity and dynamism, and fails to reward ownership, drive and delivery.

Rather than producing policy papers and briefings in the hope that civil servants or ministers will translate them into implementable products, this programme cuts out this translation step. *Re:State's* 'Plan for Government' will produce the draft codes, guidance, legislation, rules, frameworks and management plans that are needed to unstick Whitehall and ensure it is fit for the future.

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1. Introduction

Criticisms of the UK Civil Service are well rehearsed, with a general consensus that, among other things, the Whitehall machine is too slow, too siloed, too skewed towards generalists, and too closed (minded, to outside talent, and to external input). The result is successive governments declaring the need to, in the latest parlance, "re-wire" the State.[1]

Some of the sclerosis stems from the system's design – aspects like the departmental model, the grade structure, remuneration packages and accountability lines all create problems that impede effective and swift delivery. But equally responsible is a culture that favours the status quo, is deeply risk averse and places a premium on process over outcome. In interviews for this, and earlier papers in *Re:State's* 'Re:Imagining Whitehall' programme, current and former civil servants have summed it up as a "can't do" culture – a source of deep frustration for the many talented, committed civil servants who do indeed want to "move fast and fix things".[2]

Reforming civil service culture will require root-and-branch changes, but as newly appointed Cabinet Secretary Antonia Romeo has realised, the Civil Service Code is a key building block. Culture stems from purpose and values, embedded via leadership and accountability. One of Romeo's published objectives is: "Leading an impartial, curious and engaged Civil Service, with a culture of pride that comes from high performance", and to help achieve this she has committed to "[r]efresh the Civil Service Code to ensure it is up to date, well understood, and adhered to across the Civil Service".[3]

The Code is the document that sets out the core values by which civil servants should operate, but in its current form, it offers little more than generic ethical and legal advice that fails to set outcome-oriented expectations and make clear what specific values will shape a modern, high-performing Civil Service. In this way it is highly unusual compared to high-performing organisations in the private sector, which actively seek to shape their culture through values which articulate the kind of organisation they want to be. A Code which focuses only on the basic professional requirements for the permanent Civil Service sends the message that those are the only values that the Civil Service privileges.

A revised Civil Service Code would outline a set of values and behaviours necessary for a dynamic, accountable, talented, adaptable, and delivery-driven Civil Service capable of executing the wishes of the government of the day.

This paper summarises the current Code and its origins, points to international examples which show different approaches, and then provides a full, new draft Code to replace the existing one.

[1] The Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, *Speech: Move Fast. Fix Things.*, 20 January 2026, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/move-fast-fix-things.
[2] Jones MP, *Speech: Move Fast. Fix Things.*
[3] Tevye Markson, 'Cabinet Secretary Objectives Published for First Time in a Decade', *Civil Service World*, 8 April 2026, https://www.civilserviceworld.com/professions/article/cabinet-secretary-antonia-romeo-publishes-objectives-for-year-ahead.

1.1 A short history

In 1985, in the wake of the Ponting leak scandal, then Cabinet Secretary Robert Armstrong issued what is now known as the Armstrong Memorandum.[4] The Memorandum sought "to restate the general duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers" – in effect, articulating a code of conduct for all those serving the Crown.

Armstrong was unequivocal: "The civil service as such has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly elected Government of the day." In practice, that meant that "the civil service serves the Government of the day […] It is the duty of civil servants to serve their Ministers with integrity and to the best of their ability…[and] to give to the Minister honest and impartial advice, without fear or favour".[5] This foundational purpose remains true today. The first version of the Civil Service Code superseded the Armstrong Memorandum and came into force on 1 January 1996 – the Memorandum was also updated.[6] The Code was only a few pages long and included the four pillars that are still part of the Code today: integrity, objectivity, impartiality and honesty.

The modern Code was published in 2006 by then Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell.[7] This code retained, in a notably less forceful articulation, the core objective of the civil service as "support[ing] the Government of the day in developing and implementing its policies, and in delivering public services".

It reiterates the four "core values" and added two important clauses. Firstly, it established that the Independent Civil Service Commissioners could consider complaints directly from civil servants, and secondly, it made it clear that the Code was part of the terms and conditions of Civil Service employment:

> "This Code is part of the contractual relationship between you and your employer. It sets out the high standards of behaviour expected of you which follow from your position in public and national life as a civil servant."[8]

Yet in launching the new Code, O'Donnell stated that, while everyone must "live up to" the four core values, "I want all civil servants to reflect some additional qualities in everything we do. These bring the dynamism needed to deliver 21st century public services. So as well as these traditional values, we need pace, pride, passion and professionalism."[9] O'Donnell similarly argued that the Service should be more outward looking.

These "qualities" do not, however, form part of the code of conduct. They are *hopes* for a different behaviour, but not *requirements*. The "high standards of behaviour" expected of civil servants, and which now formed part of their contractual obligations, were not sufficient to underpin a high-performing institution. In fact, as is discussed below, in numerous

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[4] Robert Armstrong, *The Duties and Responsibilities of Civil Servants in Relation to Ministers*, HC Deb 26 February 1985 vol 74 cc128-30W (Hansard, 1985).
[5] Armstrong, *The Duties and Responsibilities of Civil Servants in Relation to Ministers*, HC Deb 26 February 1985 vol 74 cc128-30W.
[6] Michael Duggett, *The Evolution of the United Kingdom Civil Service 1848-1997* (International Institute of Administrative Sciences, 1997), https://civilservant.org.uk/library/1997_evolution_1848-1997.pdf.
[7] Michael Millar, 'New Civil Service Code Launched', *Personnel Today*, 7 June 2006, https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/new-civil-service-code-launched/.
[8] 'Civil Service Code', UK Government, 6 June 2006.
[9] Millar, 'New Civil Service Code Launched'.

conversations with civil servants and experts, it has been suggested that the values as they stand are now driving behaviours that are actively impeding high performance.

The final stage in the development of the current Code came in 2010 when the Brown Government passed the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRAG). CRAG requires a civil service code of conduct that "forms part of the terms and conditions of service of any civil servant covered by the code",[10] and stipulates that "The code must require civil servants to carry out their duties (a) with integrity and honesty, and (b) with objectivity and impartiality".[11] A Civil Service Code with those important, but limited, core values became mandated by law.

1.2 Doing it differently

The UK is not unique in having statute mandate a civil service code. Indeed, some of the UK's closest allies require a civil service code.[12]

The UK Civil Service Code remains just a few pages long and offers little in the way of detail. It is much shorter than, for example, the Canadian (14 pages) and New Zealand (19 pages) equivalents. The Irish civil code is not just longer at 28 pages, but actually requires that every civil servant certify in writing that they have received and read it.[13] Some civil servants spoken to for this paper said they couldn't recall even seeing the Code.

All six of the values required for the Australian civil service (Australian Public Service) are written into legislation. This legislation outlines clear behavioural expectations such as commitment to service and stewardship that require civil servants to "collaborat[e] to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the Government" and work within an institution that "builds its capability and institutional knowledge".[14]

That so many countries which have inherited important features of our constitutional system have embraced longer civil service codes and have implemented the codes in different ways offers lessons for any government considering revising the Civil Service Code.

For instance, the Civil Service code need not be the short or perfunctory document that it currently is. The Australian code's comparatively long list of values and the Irish requirement that civil servants attest that they have read the code shows how a revised Civil Service Code could comprehensively establish clear and ambitious cultural expectations and become a bedrock of the Civil Service onboarding and performance assessment culture.

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[10] Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, § Part 1, Section 7 (2010), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/25/introduction/2015-01-01.
[11] CRAG.
[12] Australian Public Service Act 1999, §§ 10 (1999), https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00538/latest/text; Canadian Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, Pub. L. No. S.C. 2005, c. 46 (2005), https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/p-31.9/page-1.html#h-402961; Irish Standards in Public Office Act, 2001 (2001), https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2001/act/31/enacted/en/print.html; New Zealand Public Service Act 2020, § Section 17 (2020), https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/40/en/latest/#LMS106159.
[13] 'Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour', Standards in Public Office Commission, n.d., https://prod-g2g-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Civil-Service-Code-of-Standards-and-Behaviour_1.pdf.
[14] Australian Public Service Act 1999.

A revised Code is long overdue, and the Government should implement such a revision in a way that clearly outlines what a reformed Civil Service will look like, without compromising the existing ethical and legal protections.

1.3 The need to reset

There is a growing view, as evidenced by the Cabinet Secretary's commitment to review it, that the current Civil Service Code is not fit for purpose.

In discussing the Code, numerous current and former civil servants have emphasised the need for a refresh. While they recognise the vital importance of acting with "integrity and honesty", and with "objectivity and impartiality", there is a strong view that in only including these values, the importance of achieving public good through high-performance, pace, innovation and agility are not just lost, but in some sense counteracted.

Impartiality can, as one former permanent secretary argued in an interview for a previous paper, be misapplied to mean non-political rather than apolitical, misunderstanding the fact that, in many roles and particularly those in the policy profession, civil servants are working in an inherently political environment. As one current civil servant put it in an interview for this paper: "politics is an evidence point in advice", and serving the government of the day requires an appreciation of their political outlook. Failing to understand this means a less effective machine, less capable of undertaking their primary purpose of serving the government. This was a fairly consistent view among those consulted.

Another common complaint from those with Whitehall experience was that the four values can engender passivity in the Civil Service. Senior civil servant Janet Hughes, in a 2016 blog, expressed it brilliantly:

> "The limitation of these four values is that they allow too much room for passivity, timidity and inertia. A person could make a reasonable claim to have lived all those values without ever *doing* anything at all. In fact, you could be forgiven for thinking that the safest thing, if you want to be sure of sticking to all those values all the time and never have any of them stretched or challenged, is to do as little as possible in the way of real, messy, difficult, challenging work."[15]

The absence of other values that drive more dynamic behaviours has meant an over-indexing on process and caution. The distinction between risk awareness and risk aversion is lost; there is little incentive to proactively seek out new ideas, propose new ways of working or test new innovations; and individual accountability is missing. As one former permanent secretary pointed out for previous research, there is a prevailing view that "time is a free good", meaning the cost of inaction or slow processes are never factored in. Baroness Louise Casey has said that "the sense that you can't get anything done seems to be the pervading culture and attitude

[15] Janet Hughes, 'What If Boldness Were an Explicit Value of the Civil Service?', *Medium*, 26 January 2016, https://medium.com/public-innovators-network/what-if-boldness-were-an-explicit-value-of-the-civil-service-3df6a3d2d008.

right across the system".[16] The result is a system lacking the "dynamism" O'Donnell knew was needed.

It is telling that Romeo's objectives stipulate that the Civil Service should be impartial, but also "curious and engaged" – values that are not captured in the current code, but that would certainly demand a different set of behaviours to those displayed by the Civil Service.

Individual departments also have organisational values, many of which would drive the behaviours that underpin a high-performing institution – for example, the Department for Work and Pensions has "adaptation", the Home Office has "courage", the Department for Transport uses "Excellence".[17] This further demonstrates that, despite the GOV.UK landing page for the Code stating that "The 'Civil Service code' outlines the Civil Service's core values, and the standards of behaviour expected of all civil servants in upholding these values", the Code does not in fact sufficiently fulfil this role. The new draft Code below seeks to address this.

[16] Tevye Markson, 'Baroness Casey Warns of "learned Helplessness" in Civil Service', *Civil Service World*, 14 January 2026, https://www.civilserviceworld.com/news/article/baroness-casey-warns-of-learned-helplessness-in-civil-service.

[17] 'Department for Transport Central', Career Page, Department for Transport, accessed 23 April 2026, https://careers.dft.gov.uk/dftc/; 'DWP: Our Culture', DWP Career Site, DWP: Our Culture, accessed 23 April 2026, https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/dwp-our-culture/; 'How We Work', Home Office Career Page, Home Office, accessed 23 April 2026, https://careers.homeoffice.gov.uk/how-we-work.

2. A code to drive high performance

The proposed new Code retains many of the current Code's important ethical and legal requirements while also mandating new behaviours and attitudes that would, if embraced across the whole Civil Service, set the standard for a dynamic, bold, agile, resilient, curious, capable, and innovative institution prepared not only for day-to-day public service delivery but also for unexpected shocks and technological change.

The new Code combines the current four pillars (Integrity, Honesty, Objectivity, and Impartiality) into a single pillar: Integrity. New pillars are added: Excellence, Ownership, Courage, and Openness. Collectively these five pillars establish a set of core values that every single civil servant will be expected to embody and which can act as a building block for embedding a new culture – a 'can do' culture.

The foundational Armstrong principle (updated in 1996) that "The civil service…has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly constituted Government of the day"[18] remains paramount. The new Code adds to this a clear, overarching requirement on civil servants to deliver public good, in line with the priorities and ambitions of the government of the day.

Public good

It is striking in the current Code that there is no reference to a general duty to deliver for the public. The Integrity pillar requires civil servants to use public money efficiently, and to "deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively", but this does not adequately capture the need for proactivity in identifying ways to improve the functioning of the State and outcomes for the public. While the current Code demands civil servants demonstrate good behaviours within current processes and policies, this new duty demands civil servants critically evaluate those ways of working to *improve* process and policies with the goal of maximising public benefit.

The new Code is clear that this must happen within the parameters of serving the government of the day. In practice it makes clear that in doing so, civil servants should be outcomes-obsessed, always seeking ways to deliver greater value, improve citizen experience and results, and remove obstacles.

Integrity, *in serving the government of the day and the public with honesty and impartiality*

Much of what is currently in the Code's Integrity pillar remains in our revised code. It is important that the Civil Service Code sets clear legal and ethical standards and expectations. The Integrity pillar also incorporates much of the current Code's Honesty, Objectivity and Impartiality imperatives. These include the requirement that civil servants serve the government of the day, regardless of personal political views, give honest, accurate and frank advice to ministers, and do not knowingly mislead Parliament or others.

Excellence, *in performing to the highest standards and expecting the same of others*

The first of the new pillars, Excellence, affirms the Civil Service's commitment to outstanding service, continuous improvement, and high standards. It is also designed to impose

[18] Armstrong, *The Duties and Responsibilities of Civil Servants in Relation to Ministers*, HC Deb 26 February 1985 vol 74 cc128-30W.

obligations on civil servants to be reliable and knowledgeable experts and to proactively seek new knowledge and methods from across a wide variety of sources.

This new pillar requires civil servants to be professionally curious, expert in their roles, and driven to deliver. It requires that all civil servants continuously strive for new ways to perform their duties better. Excellence means that civil servants should expect and demand a high standard from their colleagues, managers, and those who report to them.

Ownership, *of driving change and accountability for individual contributions to delivery*

The second new pillar, Ownership, places an expectation of personal accountability on all civil servants. It places an onus on individuals to ensure they have clarity on their responsibilities and the expectations associated with their positions, and prizes delivery within their remit. It demands that civil servants take ownership for delivering against ministerial priorities, successfully implementing programmes, and problem-solving where obstructions are identified. While a civil servant's remit may be narrow, they are expected to build relationships system-wide to drive the necessary reform. Senior civil servants in particular should be exercising leadership to make a tangible difference both within and beyond their immediate area of responsibility.

We have heard too often from current and former civil servants that process stands in the way of timely delivery. The Ownership pillar obliges all civil servants to actively seek to address barriers – either by amending processes and ways of working, or by informing managers of barriers to delivery so action can be taken.

Courage, *to innovate, be bold and ambitious, and to question the status quo*

The third pillar, Courage, is the product of many conversations and discussions with current and former civil servants who independently shared frustration that the Civil Service is too risk averse and can appear timid or unprepared in the face of new and emerging challenges. Including a Courage pillar in the new Code not only signals to civil servants that they have permission to be bold and to embrace innovation, but creates a bias towards action.

The new Code is explicit that Courage is not permission for 'recklessness'. It requires civil servants to recognise and understand, rather than be afraid of, risk, to question the status quo and be comfortable proposing bold ideas. It is demanding creativity and challenge, rather than simply accepting norms and consensus. All of this should be achieved within the ethical and legal guidelines outlined in the rest of the code.

Openness, *to new people, new ideas and working across teams, departments, and sectors*

The final new pillar, Openness, addresses the common criticism that the Civil Service is too insular and closed. It imposes obligations on civil servants to engage and collaborate with a diverse range of external organisations and individuals to stimulate new thinking, learn about new technologies and trends, test ideas and ensure cognitive diversity. It means adopting a presumption of openness and transparency unless there are good reasons against it. It also means embracing open collaboration within and across departments.

In addition, it requires civil servants to embrace a more permeable model, recognising that the interchange of personnel between the civil service, other parts of the public sector, and civic and private sector institutions contributes to achieving a high-performing, self-reforming Civil Service.

3. A new Civil Service Code

Below is a redrafted Civil Service Code to replace the existing one.

The Civil Service is an integral and key part of the government of the United Kingdom.[19] *Civil servants are servants of the Crown. For all practical purposes the Crown in this context means and is represented by the government of the day. The Civil Service serves the government of the day in developing and implementing its policies, and in delivering public services. Civil servants are accountable to Ministers,*[20] *who in turn are accountable to Parliament.*[21] *It is the duty of civil servants to serve their Ministers and perform their roles with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.*

In serving the government of the day, you must always seek to deliver maximum public good. That means critically evaluating how you do your job to improve process and policies with the goal of maximising the benefit to the public. Your purpose is to support the government in delivering the most efficient and effective version of the State, based on their priorities and preferences. This requires you to look beyond your department, working collaboratively with other parts of government, to ensure maximum benefit is achieved across the system.

As a civil servant, you are appointed on merit on the basis of fair and open competition and are expected to carry out your role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values.

The Civil Service Code outlines these core values: Integrity, Excellence, Ownership, Courage, and Openness.[22] *In this Code:*

- *Integrity is serving the government of the day and the public with honesty and impartiality.*
- *Excellence is performing to the highest standards and expecting the same of others.*
- *Ownership is taking responsibility for driving changes that lead to public good, and demonstrating accountability for your individual contributions to delivery.*
- *Courage is embracing the need to innovate, be bold, ambitious, and question the status quo.*
- *Openness is embracing new people, new ideas and working across teams, departments and sectors.*

[19] Civil servants working for the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and their agencies, have their own versions of the code. Similar codes apply to the Northern Ireland civil service and the Diplomatic Service. Civil servants working in non-ministerial departments in England, Scotland and Wales are covered by this code.
[20] Some civil servants are accountable to the office holder in charge of their organisation. This is made clear in terms and conditions of employment.
[21] Civil servants advising ministers should be aware of the constitutional significance of Parliament, and of the conventions governing the relationship between Parliament and the government.
[22] The respective responsibilities placed on ministers and special advisers in relation to the civil service are set out in their codes of conduct. Special advisers are also covered by this Civil Service code except, in recognition of their specific role, the requirements for objectivity and impartiality.

These core values support good government and ensure the achievement of the highest possible standards in all that the Civil Service does. This in turn helps the Civil Service to gain and retain the confidence of ministers, Parliament and the public. Your role as a civil servant requires you to embody these values. Adherence to the code is required by legislation and you will be assessed against these values.

The code outlines what behaviours are consistent with these values and are expected from you as you perform your duties.

1 Values:

The values underpinning the Civil Service are as follows:

1.1 Integrity

1.1.1: You must serve the government, whatever its political persuasion, to the best of your ability in a way which maintains political impartiality and is in line with the requirements of this code, regardless of your own political beliefs.

1.1.2: You understand that the Civil Service operates in a political environment, and that maintaining impartiality does not impede you in providing advice and delivering policies that account for the political context. You are expected to understand trade-offs and accept that making such trade-offs is sometimes a political judgement. You must provide information and advice on the basis of the evidence and accurately present the options and facts. You must not ignore inconvenient facts or considerations when providing advice or making decisions.

1.1.3 You recognise that once a decision is taken by ministers, it is your role to execute that decision. You must not frustrate the implementation of policies by declining to take, deprioritising or abstaining from, actions which flow from those decisions.

1.1.4: You must act in a way which deserves and retains the confidence of ministers while at the same time ensuring that you will be able to establish the same relationship with those whom you may be required to serve in some future government.[23]

1.1.5: You must comply with any restrictions that have been laid down on your political activities. This includes but is not limited to attending political party conferences and standing for Parliament.

1.1.6: You must always obey the law and conduct yourself in an ethical and professional manner.[24]

[23] Including a particular recognition of the importance of co-operation and mutual respect between civil servants working for the UK government and the devolved administrations and vice-versa
[24] Including taking account of ethical standards governing particular professions.

1.1.7: You must make sure public money and other resources are used properly and efficiently.

1.1.8: You must use resources only for the authorised public purposes for which they are provided.

1.1.9: You must deal with the public and their affairs fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively, and sensitively to the best of your ability.

1.1.10: You must set out the facts and relevant issues truthfully and correct any errors as soon as possible.

1.1.11: You must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests.

1.1.12: You must report unethical or illegal behaviour you witness promptly.

1.1.13: You or your legal representative must inform your manager if you are arrested, are charged and released, refused bail, or convicted of any criminal offence.

1.2 Excellence

1.2.1: You are always focused on how you can deliver the greatest public benefit. That means you must always seek to perform at the highest standards and should expect and demand a high standard from your colleagues, leaders, and those who report to you.

1.2.2: You have an obligation to be a reliable and knowledgeable source of expertise. Ministers, your Civil Service colleagues, and members of the public expect you to have a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of your work, including knowledge of any key current political and technical debates, datasets, emerging research and practices.

1.2.3: You are professionally curious and driven to continuously improve your performance and that of your colleagues, as well as that of public services more broadly. That means you have a responsibility to seek new knowledge and insights from a variety of sources to maintain up-to-date expertise. This includes understanding new technologies and how they may be applied to improve your work.

1.2.4: You must be prepared for unexpected economic and geopolitical events that will require you to be dynamic, flexible, and to continue delivering to a high standard in challenging conditions. Being flexible also means being prepared, in line with your contractual arrangement, to work on new priorities as required by the government of the day.

1.3 Openness

1.3.1: You understand that the Civil Service cannot perform at its best without seeking outside perspectives, ideas and experience. Your professional curiosity drives you to, where appropriate, seek out ideas and experience from other sectors and outside your domain of expertise. You are open to considering new ideas, even if they are a radical departure from the status quo.

1.3.2: You understand that the Civil Service is an institution that benefits from civil servants with a wide variety of professional backgrounds and experiences, and the movement of staff between public and private sectors to develop different skills over the course of their careers.

1.3.3: You understand that you should share knowledge freely and widely with few exceptions and that you are required to support your colleagues seeking to use you as a source of expertise.

1.3.4: You recognise the importance of working collaboratively across teams within your organisation, and between different government departments and organisations, and are proactive in sharing information and ideas with your colleagues.

1.3.5: You must contribute to the Civil Service being a transparent and accountable institution that is responsive to the public's queries and requests for information. You must be transparent with the public where practical and permitted by law.

1.4 Ownership

1.4.1: You take ownership of your personal contribution to delivering the outcomes and objectives set by the Government and expected by the public.

1.4.2: You seek to build relationships beyond your immediate remit in order to drive change system-wide.

1.4.3: You are personally accountable for delivering your objectives and performing to a high standard. You understand the roles, responsibilities, and expectations associated with your position.

1.4.4: You understand that processes and systems are in place to enable the delivery of outcomes, and where these become a barrier to delivery you must seek to address this, either by amending processes and ways of working, or by informing your manager of the barrier so action can be taken. Where barriers prove to be insurmountable, it is because an active decision has been taken not to amend the processes and ways of working in order to achieve or protect a more important outcome.

1.4.5: It is understood that at times sudden and extreme circumstances and political decisions which are beyond your remit and responsibility may impact your work. It is also understood that sometimes plans and projects do not work and this is an inherent risk in trying new methods and policies. In these circumstances you are expected to respond appropriately in order to mitigate any disruption and adjust plans.

1.5 Courage

1.5.1: You should have the courage to be ambitious in order to maximise the public good. In the service of delivering for the Government and achieving public good you must be bold in identifying opportunities to innovate. Where you see problems, impediments or outdated methods you must be proactive in trying to find solutions, and you should do so with creativity and an open mind.

1.5.2: You should be comfortable questioning current ways of working where you think long-standing or established processes are no longer the best way of operating. You will be aware of any status-quo bias. You should be forthcoming with your manager about barriers to innovating and improving in your work.

1.5.3: You recognise that constructive debate and disagreement are vital for delivering a good service for ministers and the public. You are prepared to offer unwelcome and unexpected advice, and to challenge received wisdom among your colleagues, in pursuit of the right answer.

1.5.4: You must not be reckless, and all of your actions must be consistent with this Code's other values. You will be intentional about the level of risk you take in a given context and understand that inaction can also carry risk.

2.1 Conflicts of interest

2.1.1: You must not pursue, engage in, or be connected to employment in any business, enterprise, or other organisation that would conflict with the Government's policies or goals or bring the Government into disrepute.

2.1.2: You must seek approval from your manager before agreeing to any part time or volunteer work.

3.1 Gifts and hospitality

3.1.1: You must not accept any goods, gifts, or services from third parties that could be reasonably interpreted as compromising your integrity or the integrity of the Government.

3.1.2: You must report any attempts from a third party to offer you any goods, gifts, or services.

4.1 Rights and responsibilities

4.1.1: Your department or agency has a duty to make you aware of this Code and its values. If you believe that you are being required to act in a way which conflicts with this Code, your department or agency must consider your concern, and make sure that you are not penalised for raising it.

4.1.2: If you have a concern, you should start by talking to your line manager or someone else in your line management chain. If for any reason you would find this difficult, you should raise the matter with your department's nominated officers who have been appointed to advise staff on the code.

4.1.3: If you become aware of actions by others which you believe conflict with this code you should report this to your line manager or someone else in your line management chain; alternatively you may wish to seek advice from your nominated officer.

4.1.4: If you have raised a matter in accordance with the relevant procedures,[25] *and do not receive what you consider to be a reasonable response, you may report the matter to the Civil Service Commission. The Commission will also consider taking a complaint direct. Its address is:*

Civil Service Commission
G/8
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Tel: 020 7271 0831

Email: info@csc.gov.uk

[25] The whistleblowing legislation (the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) may also apply in some circumstances. The 'Directory of Civil Service guidance' and the 'Civil Service management code' give more information.

If the matter cannot be resolved using the procedures set out above, and you feel you cannot carry out the instructions you have been given, you will have to resign from the Civil Service.

4.1.5: This Code is part of the contractual relationship between you and your employer. It sets out the high standards of behaviour expected of you which follow from your position in public and national life as a civil servant. You can take pride in living up to these values.

4. Living the code

Revising the Code is only the first step in ensuring that the values it contains are practiced throughout the Civil Service. To embed the Code and its values deeply in civil service culture, the Government must embed it in policies and practices which will reinforce its importance.

Implementing the new Code

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010) (CRAG) mandates that the Civil Service Code require civil servants to carry out their duties with integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality for the assistance of the administration "whatever its political complexion".[26] CRAG also requires that the Government lay "any civil service code" before Parliament, although this requirement is not associated with any mandated Parliamentary procedure such as a vote.[27] Past revisions to the Code, such as the 2015 inclusion of ministerial approval being required ahead of media contact in an official capacity, have not required Parliamentary approval. The revised code retains the values laid out in CRAG – civil servants must still act with integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality – and so no new legislation is required.

The Civil Service Management Code requires departments and agencies to define the conduct expected of staff, with specific mention of rules having to reflect the Civil Service Code. But there is nothing in the Management Code that would have to be revised in the wake of a significant update to the Civil Service Code. The Management Code does not require that trade unions or other external bodies be consulted ahead of Civil Service Code revisions, although a government would be free to launch such a consultation if it wished.

Legislation that requires consultation for changes to pension rights and pension schemes, such as the Superannuation Act 1972, would not mandate that a revised Civil Service Code undergo consultation as the revised code does not imply a change in pension or compensation.

Embedding the Code in performance

Civil servants, both existing and future entrants, should be required to sign a copy of the amended Code:

- For new joiners this should form a part of the contracting and induction process. Comprehensive onboarding and other opportunities (e.g. annual performance reviews) should allow civil servants to ask questions about the Code and their responsibilities under it.
- For current civil servants, the Cabinet Office should lead a Code Implementation Programme to inform officials of their responsibilities and sign them up to the Code. This should include team level discussion and a formal recording of officials signing the new Code, which should also be countersigned by their line manager.

The Code should also play a vital role in civil servants' professional development and performance management by making promotion and satisfactory job performance conditional on adherence to the Code, while making it clear to civil servants that departing from the Code's

[26] CRAG.
[27] Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, Explanatory Notes, para. 87, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/25/notes/division/6/5.

values is inconsistent with good performance in their roles. The Cabinet Office should ensure that the Code is sufficiently visible on their staff intranet, alongside a webpage dedicated to the Code that includes not only the Code's text but also clear examples of behaviours that exemplify the Code's values. Examples of such behaviours are included in the Appendix.

Appendix

The portraits below are intended to showcase how civil servants across all levels of the Civil Service in a variety of positions could embody the values outlined in the new Code. They not only provide civil servants with examples of appropriate actions and cultural attitudes but also provide line managers with examples of the kinds of behaviours that ought to be considered when carrying out performance reviews.

Prison Officer (Administrative Officer), HM Prison & Probation Service

Integrity: You obey the law and treat your colleagues, prisoners, and prison visitors with respect and courtesy. You are mindful of what the public expect from prisons and the ethical boundaries necessary for a respected and functional criminal justice system.

Excellence: You are aware of the challenges facing HM Prisons related to new and emerging technologies (e.g. drug drone deliveries, synthetic narcotics). Your colleagues across HMPPS and the Ministry of Justice, the police and other public services can rely on you to be a source of knowledge related to the prison, its population, its unique challenges, and developing offence, wellbeing, and behavioural trends. You are curious about prison policy and are keen to learn more about how your work supports the rest of the criminal justice system.

Ownership: You are fully aware of what your position requires and what your colleagues expect. You are responsible for prisoners under your supervision and care and you ensure you execute every aspect of your role to a high standard.

Courage: You report prison mismanagement, abuse of prisoners, and unsafe conditions swiftly.

Openness: You are aware that people from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds work in prisons. You are open to your colleagues making changes to the technologies and methods you use in your day to day work together.

Customer Services Advisor (Administrative Officer), HMRC

Integrity: You always treat members of the public with respect and dignity. Your position will often involve discussing personal and stressful situations with strangers and you do so with sensitivity. You understand that your handling of queries from the public will leave members of the public with a lasting impression of HMRC. You are honest in all your dealings with the public and colleagues.

Excellence: You maintain an up to date understanding of HMRC policies, and how to apply those to customer issues. You view gaps in your knowledge as opportunities to learn and are curious about how policy and technology will change the nature of your position and the queries you receive. You hold yourself to a high standard of performance.

Ownership: You are aware of what the public expects from you and the scope of your responsibilities. You take seriously inputting data with accuracy, escalating issues promptly and following up those issues to ensure resolution.

Courage: You tell your manager when you have identified pinch points in your ways of working or technologies that would make you more productive and knowledgeable.

Openness: You welcome opportunities to collaborate and learn from your colleagues, including those who work in different areas. You are aware that no one has a monopoly on best practices and that people arrive in your position from a variety of backgrounds.

Permanent Secretary

Integrity: You embrace impartiality and honesty. Your personal political views do not inform the content of your advice to ministers. You are comfortable 'speaking truth to power'. You understand that you are responsible for the conduct of your department in living up to the standards of objectivity in policy advice and delivering for ministers.

Excellence: You are consistently seeking ways to make your department a world-leading source of policy expertise and knowledge, and delivery excellence. You encourage those working in the department to seek out new sources of knowledge and reward those who show initiative and curiosity alongside those who develop specialist expertise. You ensure that your department does not confuse activity for productivity and are persistently on the lookout for barriers to delivery which can save staff time and taxpayers' money. You understand that adherence to conventions and processes are not the same as delivering the Government's objectives.

Ownership: You hold yourself to account and expect high performance from yourself and your colleagues, to both ministers and Parliament. You critically evaluate the work of your department, and challenge your teams to perform to a high standard. You take seriously your responsibility to build high-performing teams by nurturing talent and removing persistent poor performers.

Courage: You deliver unpopular advice when necessary. You think creatively about innovative ways your department could work to overcome obstacles and deliver for the public. You are proactive in driving performance at a system level, and ensuring effective stewardship of the Civil Service itself.

Openness: You welcome collaboration across departments and with external organisations, including valuing them as sources of knowledge and expertise. You do everything you can to ensure that your department uses the best hiring processes for attracting and retaining the best talent possible, including from outside the civil service.

Transport Policy Advisor (Grade 7), Department for Transport

Integrity: You are always frank and honest with your colleagues and provide impartial policy analysis to ministers, taking into account the political context. Your recommendations and research are informed by the facts and evidence.

Excellence: You are curious about transport policy and are proactive when seeking out new sources of knowledge from the private sector, industry groups and researchers. You are aware that there is a wide and growing body of research on transport policy and that your ability to familiarise yourself with this research will make you a better advisor. You are aware of gaps in your own knowledge and seek to fill these. Ministers, your manager, and colleagues across Government can rely on you to be an expert source of knowledge on the issues related to your position.

Ownership: You take responsibility for not just providing reactive briefing and advice to ministers, but proactively identifying ways to deliver their policy objectives and overcome challenges which hold the Government back. You understand that you do not have exclusive ownership of your policy area and that engaging with people holding different views and with

different experience can help ensure a robust understanding of policy. You swiftly report process barriers that prevent you from prompt delivery.

Courage: You are confident offering policy advice that you believe to be best for the Government even if that advice includes unorthodox or unpopular recommendations. You are quick to identify ways to change how you work, including new technologies and tools, in order to maximise the value you can add to the organisation. To see risk as something to understand and manage, not a barrier to reform.

Openness: You are not shy about contacting your peers in other departments when necessary, and working collaboratively with them including sharing data as appropriate. You embrace opportunities to use new and emerging technologies that can aid your research and productivity.

Product Manager, Digital, Data and Technology (Grade 6), Home Office

Integrity: You do not hesitate to notify your colleagues when you discover that you have made a mistake or an error. You consider the ethical and legal implications of your work, and how to maintain the confidence of ministers particularly when developing complex new systems.

Excellence: You embrace a multidisciplinary approach to your role and are aware of the specific technology and security challenges associated with working for the Home Office. You are a quick learner and are able to swiftly identify your own areas of expertise as well as gaps in your own knowledge, and are curious about insights from other technologies and industries which could support you in your role.

Ownership: You hold yourself responsible for delivering new products and services in a timely way and identifying and overcoming risks which could impede that.

Courage: You come up with ideas and solutions to improve the products you deliver, including those which are novel and would require new ways of working.

Openness: You value collaboration and are on the lookout for opportunities to collaborate within and among departments on common technology challenges.

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