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**GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATION
SERVICE
STRATEGY**

The Government Communication Service Strategy 2022-2025

Introduction to GCS and the case for change

The Government Communication Service (GCS) is the professional body for more than 7,000 public service communicators working in government departments, agencies and arm's length bodies.

Our membership includes marketing, stakeholder engagement, internal comms, media, digital and social, and operational communications professionals. We work across 25 ministerial departments, 21 non-ministerial departments and more than 300 agencies and other public bodies. We serve the public across the United Kingdom and promote our interests overseas through the network of communicators based at embassies and posts around the world.
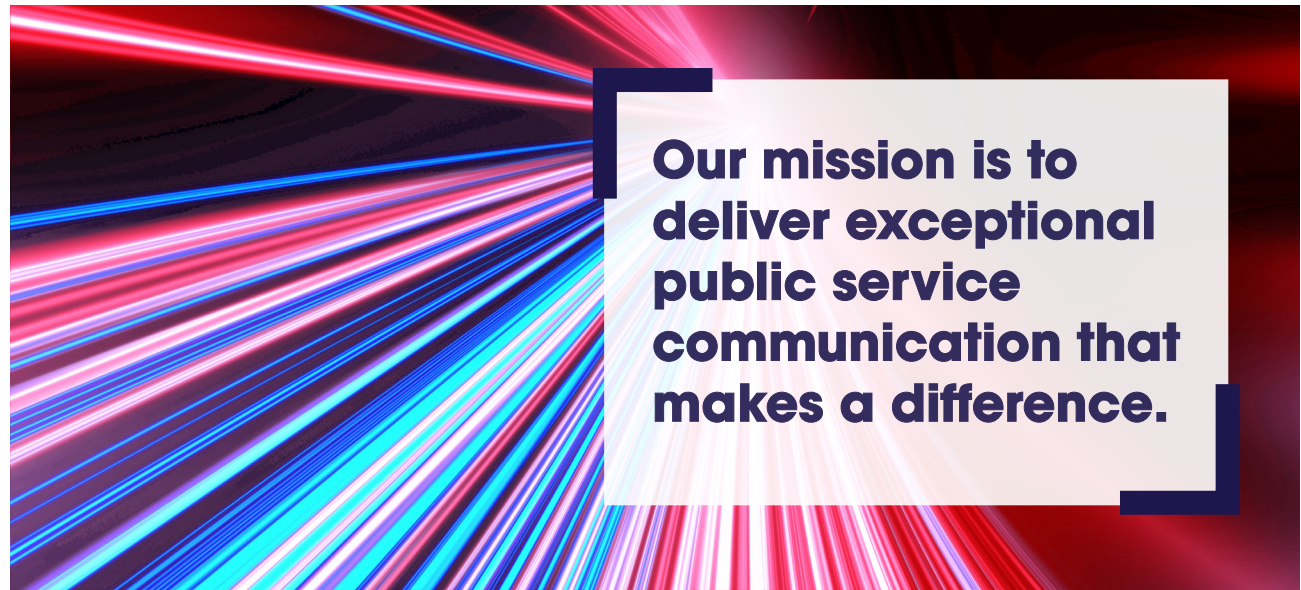
Our mission is to deliver exceptional public service communication that makes a difference.

What we do matters

Communication is one of the four main levers government has to affect change, alongside legislation, regulation and taxation. People work in government communications because what we do matters. We explain the objectives and policies of the government of the day. We provide clarity and reassurance to the public at times of crisis. We support businesses to grow. We protect our environment. We help those in need to access support.

The case for change

Our mission is as relevant as ever. But if we are to continue to deliver for the public, whilst continually striving to be better, we need to change. Communications itself - how we communicate and where - is changing fast. The transformative power of technology is creating new opportunities, challenges, and ethical questions.

Exponential growth of data and harnessing the power of technology. The volume of data created in every area of life is increasing exponentially. As more data is collected and processed by increasingly sophisticated algorithms, data will become more predictive and allow for greater understanding of people's behaviour. This is an opportunity for GCS to provide increasingly personalised communications to help us target the right message, to the right audience at the right time.

Rapid transformations in media consumption. Increasing fragmentation of the media landscape means the end of shared national conversations. Social media echo chambers are reinforcing beliefs and judgements. Different groups with their own opinions are accessing information they want, and are less likely to hear opposing views. There is a need for GCS to create content that cuts across silos and through the noise.

Fragile trust and false content. Public confidence and trust in government communications is critical to our security and well-being. Misinformation and disinformation are a threat to our democracy. The ability to successfully change minds by supplying evidence, facts and statistics is becoming increasingly difficult as emotion beats evidence as a source of truth. Our Civil Service values are as important as ever. We need to apply them to a modern setting by creating emotionally resonant and factually accurate content.

New skills for data and new technology. The central challenge for GCS is how to harness technological changes for the public good. We need a revolution in our own skills and capability, especially in data, insight, and digital communications. We need communicators who combine the data analysis, numeracy and software savvy of an engineer with the story-telling, creativity and empathy of an artist. We continue to require colleagues with specialist expertise and fresh ways of thinking. That means a re-evaluation of our approach to learning and development, career progression and professional accreditation.

The need for greater efficiency. Continuous improvement is not just about adding new skills or people or equipment, but also looking at how to reprioritise and reduce work that is less relevant. We have a duty to continuously strive to deliver better value for money and demonstrate impact through advanced evaluation. Increasing demand for communications in part reflects a greater understanding of the value of communications in helping to achieve policy outcomes. But the answer to every problem cannot be to do more comms or recruit more people. Efficiency forces us to choose priorities. It drives innovation and it challenges us to think about how to deliver differently.

Changing expectations of the profession. People entering our profession today want to learn and be stretched, progress quickly, and be given opportunities that match their talents, not the time they have served. They want to work in an environment where they can be themselves and work in a way which suits their lifestyle. This is an opportunity for government communications to develop a different offer: the ability to do interesting, meaningful and purposeful work; a strong learning and development offer; greater workplace flexibility; and a diverse and inclusive culture where everyone can flourish.

To cut through information overload, we must be more collaborative. To harness new technology, we must be more skilled. To deliver value for taxpayers, we must be more efficient. To attract and retain talent, we must be more diverse and inclusive. To build trust, we must maintain the highest ethical standards.

The goals of this strategy

- Improve the ability of government communications to work together to tackle the biggest challenges the country faces
- Harness rapid technological changes in communications for the public good
- Deliver a more efficient and effective GCS
- Build public trust in government communications
- Retain, attract and develop the best communications talent

Collaboration

Pillar 1 of our strategy is about how to foster better collaboration. The big challenges facing the country – levelling up, building our international reputation, meeting our net-zero targets – can only be tackled successfully together. GCS plays an important role in supporting other organisations across government to collaborate better.

To foster and support collaboration GCS requires a clear, shared plan, an ability to overcome institutional barriers to join up campaigns, with a central team designed to support joint working. Collaboration can be achieved by:

- Focussing on audiences, shared outcomes and the benefits we can achieve working together

- Openly sharing audience data and insight so everyone is working with the same information

- Valuing different perspectives and listening to organisational expertise rather than pursuing a top-down approach

- Recognising the need to deliver individual organisational priorities as part of a wider plan

- Creating opportunities for people to connect on a personal level to build trust and joint working

This pillar covers four key areas for action:

1. A stronger cross-Government communications strategy

2. Designing a new central GCS operating model

3. Building stronger networks and improving governance

4. Improving crisis planning and response

Delivering the Government's priorities

To be able to collaborate people need shared objectives, a shared understanding of research insight and delivery progress, and policies and processes that support joint working.

Developing the Annual Government Communications Strategy

The annual Government Communications Strategy sets priorities for government communications. Those priorities should be the areas where communications are most able to achieve policy or operational outcomes by changing attitudes or behaviour. Once priorities are agreed, GCS should work to deliver them together.

The strategy will be developed with No10, Permanent Secretaries, and Directors of

Communication. It will be agreed by the Prime Minister, which will give Directors of Communication a clear mandate to prioritise work within their team.

We will establish a central strategy and planning function within GCS to help develop and support delivery of that plan. It will be responsible for a planning cycle that gives clarity on what to expect over the year and allows time for collaboration, input and approvals.

The strategy will set clear KPIs with delivery milestones and outcome performance metrics. The strategy and planning function will surface and resolve tensions between different priorities, balancing ambition and feasibility, and fostering collaboration.

The strategy and planning function should develop a common framework and process for delivering campaigns, including standardised approaches to data collection and consistent measurement. This process should give Ministers clear visibility of our confidence in delivery and impact through regular reporting. The function will ensure there is a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for each campaign who has clear responsibilities and is actively supported by Directors of Communication to achieve campaign objectives.

The central strategy and planning function will coordinate and drive the agenda for cross-departmental campaign meetings. These should be focussed on continuous improvement, learning, and collaborative problem solving.

Insight and evaluation

The GCS communications strategy needs to be grounded in and supported by shared audience insights, data analysis, and effective evaluation.

The central GCS function will provide the data, advice and recommendations to facilitate this process; actively listening to citizens as they interact with Government and seeking to understand their views and perspectives as well as the factors influencing their behaviour. Central to the function is a comprehensive research programme, supported by other sources of information including digital data and citizen feedback.

During the pandemic, the behavioural science and data teams played a vital role in informing policy making and communication campaigns across Government. It rapidly shared data, analysis and recommendations across departments helping to set the agenda for debate and decision-making. We are planning to introduce a similar approach for core government priorities, drawing on research and other sources of data to ensure citizens' voices are heard at every level across Government.

Evaluating the impact of communication activity is as important as providing the insight to inform better policy and communication planning. Central to showcasing impact and learning from what works and what doesn't, is ensuring that accurate and relevant data is systematically collected from the start and is not considered as an afterthought.

We build on existing standards for best practice communication evaluation across Government, including setting targets and KPIs and calculating return on investment on paid-for campaigns. From 2022/23, this will include revised evaluation standards, improved benchmarking capability and greater clarity on demonstrating value for money, and by March 2024 a GCS data strategy to support best practice measurement, evaluation and adoption of advanced analytical techniques to support the delivery of our shared objectives.

Paid for marketing and spending controls

Funding for communications campaigns generally sits with departmental policy or operations teams. This can make it difficult to reallocate money to new priorities from old. Behavioural change campaigns that are critical to cross-government priorities but which do not fit neatly into an individual departmental programme struggle to secure the funding needed to deliver long-term behavioural change.

We will work with Departments as part of the annual strategy and planning cycle to identify priority campaigns and where we can streamline our messaging. We will be more assertive in using spending controls to improve the quality of campaigns and join up with other departments. We expect collaboration with other departments where appropriate, and will seek assurances that low cost routes are always fully explored.

We will reform the professional assurance process to make it less cumbersome for Departments. This will include digitising the process. We will seek to enforce the use of fewer, trusted government brands, following the model of 'Skills for Life' which brings all government training and skills advice under a single brand.

The annual GCS planning cycle can cause campaigns to be concentrated in the last quarter of the financial year. This means we compete with ourselves for the same media space and reduce value for money for taxpayers. Collaboration with external partners in areas such as inbound tourism can be difficult because we have not been able to commit to multi-year funding. From the start of the 2022/23 financial year we will give professional assurance approval for campaigns which run across more than one financial year. The responsibility for ensuring there is funding available to meet commitments entered into for future years will rest with the accounting officer responsible for the campaign expenditure.

Maintaining operational independence

Some Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) are set up to be operationally independent of the government. Sensible collaboration doesn't mean an end to operational independence. It means coming together where there are shared interests without limiting the ability to pursue individual responsibilities.

The focus of GCS will be on cross-government priorities and objectives which cannot be achieved by any organisation working alone. That partnership should also stretch to partners in the private and third sectors who share our goals, ambitions and values.

Commitments

We will:

- Clearly articulate the remit and responsibility of the campaign SRO role **by June 2022**

- Raise the bar on spending controls to be more assertive in using spending controls to improve the quality of campaigns and join up with other departments **from May 2022**

- Consider professional assurance approval for campaigns which run across more than one financial year **from April 2022**

- Develop a monthly research and insight report for the key planks of the annual Government Communication Strategy **by June 2022**

- Reform, simplify and digitise the PASS process **by March 2023**

- Establish a central Strategy and Planning function within GCS, **by October 2022:**

- Develop a planning cycle that gives all stakeholders clarity on what to expect over the year and allows time for collaboration, strategic input and approvals

- Develop one systematic process for monitoring and reporting on campaigns, including standardised approaches to data collection and consistent measurement, which gives Ministers clear visibility and confidence in delivery and impact

Designing a new central GCS operating model

The central GCS team is critical to fostering and supporting collaboration. There are certain things that the central team alone can do. These are the areas where it should focus resources and where it can add the most value to the profession, departments, No10 and the Cabinet Office.

Strategy and coordination. The GCS fulfils a core coordination role - supporting No10 and the Cabinet Office to ensure the Government is speaking with one voice. It sets the cross-government communications priorities that departments and ALBs are expected to deliver. It is responsible for monitoring and driving the delivery of these priorities by other departments and ALBs, centrally overseeing implementation, measuring impact, and holding departments to account.

Standards and assurance. Central GCS drives continuous improvement, promoting the efficiency, effectiveness and reform of government communication. It sets the standards for communications practice across government and its ALBs. It assesses the skills and capabilities of communications professionals across government and provides learning and development to drive improvement. It sets measurable expectations for the management and practice of government communication. The GCS Chief Executive and leadership team advise on appointments to the most senior communications posts in government. Central GCS runs programmes to attract, retain and manage talent. It assures the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing and communications activity, through our professional standards process and spending controls.

Expert and shared services. Central GCS provides services in areas where we can either achieve economies of scale or deliver rare expertise that would otherwise be unavailable to departments individually. It provides shared services in areas such as procuring commercial contracts or delivering apprenticeships. It runs major cross-government campaigns involving many Whitehall departments, such as Covid-19,

Get Ready for Brexit and GREAT. We provide expert support in specialist areas such as applying behavioural science to change campaigns.

Funding central GCS activities

There are three current sources of funding for central GCS:

Core funding. This covers Cabinet Office core responsibilities and comes directly from the Cabinet Office's budget. It funds communications staff in No10, the Cabinet Office, and GCS teams responsible for the strategy and co-ordination of government communications activity.

A levy on marketing activity to pay for professional development. There is a levy of 1% on all marketing expenditure above £100,000 spent by Departments and ALBs. This funds activity which is available to all GCS members and benefits the whole profession. It includes work on professional standards, learning and development, and membership of professional organisations for GCS members. In future years, levy expenditure is expected to decrease as we better consolidate and coordinate marketing spending, but the amount we plan to invest in learning and development and professional accreditation is expected to increase. We will consider a new charging mechanism for those who choose to be part of the new professional accreditation system. This could be funded per FTE, which would help to address

the imbalance that sees central government departments account for 30% of GCS' membership but contribute 60% of levy funding.

Charging for shared or expert services. This covers chargeable activity for discretionary services made available by GCS for departments and ALBs to take advantage of, if they choose. It currently includes charging for shared services such as talent schemes and the apprenticeship programme, and also includes charging for expert services.

Commitments

We will:

- Restructure and reduce the size of the central GCS team at the Cabinet Office with a focus on strategy and coordination, standards and capability, and expert and shared services **by October 2022**

- Introduce a new funding model based on the principle that core No10 and Cabinet Office activity should come from core funding, mandatory professional development activity should be funded by the marketing levy or a per FTE charge, and GCS should charge for discretionary expert or shared services **by April 2023**

Building stronger networks and improving governance

Building stronger networks

GCS is a network of incredible communicators. We have some of the best communicators in the UK, including people who have led communications at major companies including Google, Heathrow, the Premier League, and EDF Energy as well as some of the UK's top communications agencies. One of the greatest opportunities for GCS is harnessing the power of this network.

We will develop a stronger member offer and create more opportunities for GCS members to collaborate on shared challenges. We will upgrade the GCS website to include a searchable directory. We will create more GCS content for platforms like LinkedIn. We will continue to deliver innovative programmes like Connecting Diverse Voices which puts colleagues from different backgrounds into mutual mentoring relationships.

Collaboration is not limited to within government or the public sector. We already work with a range of commercial suppliers and private and third sector organisations who share our goals and values. We will build further alliances with the private sector and harness its expertise to help us to achieve our goals, quicker.

We will increase dialogue with communications leaders from all sectors to make sure we are

spotting and tackling problems together, and exploring new forms of collaboration across campaigns.

Through stronger strategic supplier relationships, we will work to maximise the value, unlock opportunities, and share learnings to support us to thrive. External partners have a mass of training and development programmes that could be made available to GCS members and built into contracts.

We will use 'red teams' made up of internal experts, external advisors and secondees to challenge conventional thinking, requiring that major communications campaigns include options showing that alternatives have been evaluated and considered.

Governance

GCS Ministerial Board. Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments and agencies. It is right that our governance includes Ministers and other primary users of the function across government, such as Permanent Secretaries and Chief Operating Officers. They have a role in endorsing functional plans and standards and will be empowered to scrutinise our work and programmes for reform.

External Advisory Board. We will build on the existing GCS Strategy and Evaluation Council to establish a new GCS External Advisory Board. This will make recommendations to GCS senior leadership on strategy, and scrutinise value for money in programmes and effectiveness against published ambitions. External Advisory Board members will be asked to take on discrete projects to help improve GCS. These could include taking part in capability reviews or reviews of functional standards, assessing proposals for major communications campaigns, and reviewing learning and development standards.

Directors of Communication. Directors of Communication for Whitehall Departments will meet weekly to discuss the main cross-government communications issues of the day and to agree proposals for improving the profession. Senior Directors of Communication from ALBs will meet on a monthly basis to discuss how the profession can work together more effectively. This group of experienced communications directors is the key leadership group for the Government Communication Service.

GCS People Board. The GCS People Board is chaired by a Director of Communications and will meet monthly to take forward programmes relating to people, talent, leadership, the curriculum, and learning and development.

GCS Strategy Programme Board. Our programme Board will be made up of GCS leaders, programme directors, and Non-Exec Directors. Its role is to ensure the delivery of the GCS strategy to quality, time and budget.

Improving our crisis planning and response

Collaboration is most important during a crisis. Government needs to work together, speaking with one voice and working to one plan, to maintain public confidence during moments of national stress.

Communicating effectively during a crisis rests on the following capabilities:

- Mature crisis plans, coordination structures, and testing capability
- The ability to horizon scan for potential incidents and mobilise a response, including early mitigating action and testing of plans
- Crisis plan implementation, with well-understood structures, processes, and roles and responsibilities
- Crisis review, with the ability to incorporate learning into plans

GCS has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to quickly stand up resources to respond to a national

emergency. We will maintain the best of our GCS Covid-19 response by bringing crisis comms capability into the central strategy and planning function, so that we can ensure lessons learned from Covid-19, Ukraine and other crises are not lost. There is an opportunity to consider what permanent architecture and processes are needed to most effectively plan, implement and learn from a crisis response. We will bring crisis communications capabilities into a central strategy and planning function, responsible for crisis plans, horizon scanning, cross-government crisis coordination, and crisis reviews.

Placing experienced crisis comms professionals within this function will place them at the heart of planning, so they can horizon scan and inject crisis comms thinking into plans. It will build capability in existing teams allowing a flexible approach, with the ability to switch focus as a crisis arises. In crisis response situations, we will have subject matter experts in the team who are able to help, moving into comms delivery roles where needed.

Commitments

We will:

- Draft a Crisis Communications improvement plan including the development of a toolkit to include consideration of crisis contracts and playbook **by March 2023.**

Innovation and Improvement

The fast pace of technological innovation is profoundly changing our world and opening up new opportunities for how we can deliver world-leading public communications.

This rapid evolution within communications calls on us to adopt a culture of continuous improvement, embrace innovation and experimentation, and learn from best practice.

The greatest advances will not be made by large change programmes driven by the centre of government, but by each GCS member feeling empowered to make small improvements each day. Hundreds of small incremental improvements drive big change. We want to create a culture where each GCS member is encouraged to take regular steps to improve communications practices, lower costs, and increase quality in service to the public. Each member of GCS should see it as part of their role to upskill non-communicators within government to be better customers of the communications function.

Knowing what works well and improving our effectiveness in delivering outcomes are essential ingredients of a modern communications campaign. Digital campaigns give us new opportunities to implement increasingly rapid cycles of listening, measuring, evaluating, and

quickly adapting to what works best. There are many examples of inspirational work like this being delivered by teams across GCS, where data-driven insights and experimentation have driven better outcomes.

As well as small steps there are some areas where we need bigger leaps. GCS needs to value - and be seen to value - innovation, experimentation and creativity. We need a revolution in our digital, data, and content creation skills. We need to drive better value for money for taxpayers, working out how to reallocate resources to changing priorities. And we need updated professional standards that apply our enduring civil service values to a modern setting.

This pillar covers four key areas for action:

1. Improving digital, data and content. We will improve our broadcast and digital content creation capabilities.

2. Harnessing technology to improve impact. We will develop our ability to use new technology and data to improve our effectiveness, and efficiency and meet the demands of increasing personalisation. We will create a GCS data strategy and a virtual innovation hub to lead thinking within GCS on the use of data and technology in communications.

3. Improving efficiency throughout GCS. We will challenge ourselves on how we can deliver better value for taxpayers, including

by prioritising activity, reducing headcount, delivering services more efficiently and improving value in commercial contracts.

4. Maintaining public trust through the highest standards of propriety and ethics. We will make sure GCS members understand how our core values and ethical principles should be applied to modern communications.

Improving digital content

Even combining use of print newspapers and newspaper websites and apps, fewer than half (49%) of UK adults get their news from newspapers. TV (79%) and the internet (73%) are the most used platforms for news. BBC One remains the most-used news source across any platform (62%), followed by ITV (46%) and Facebook (36%).

This does not mean that the government should abandon its focus on the print media, which is still read by millions and shapes much of our politics. However, we must do more to increase broadcast and digital expertise to reach new audiences.

Broadcast media

Despite 24 hour broadcast news and the transformative effect of social media, government communications is still disproportionately focussed on print media and twice daily lobby briefings.

There are pockets of exceptional broadcast and digital capability within GCS but these skills overall are in short supply. GCS professionals should be thinking about visuals at the start of planning for announcements, with greater consideration shown in the construction of media plans.

Being able to plan the visuals, talking heads and story-development for a compelling broadcast package is a specialist skill. Alongside general broadcast training, every department should have broadcast expertise able to build relationships with broadcasters and achieve broadcast coverage. We will seek to attract experienced broadcast professionals into GCS to increase this skill.

Digital capability and an enhanced No10 digital hub

Digital content creation is a specialist practice. The skills needed to develop great content include content creation, story planning, editing and post-production, search engine optimisation, content promotion and data analytics. Despite some criticism of GCS employing photographers and videographers, an arresting image is critical for 'stopping the scroll' and cutting through with the public on social media.

Data analysis and visualisation are becoming core skills for future communicators. The mass availability of data released via an API is creating data journalists with the ability to query statistics

and turn them into visuals almost as soon as they are released. Tools are available which allow anyone to scrape data from multiple sources and present them in compelling visual formats.

Data analysis and presentation needs to be a core competency for government communicators. We need our own expert data hubs and the data savvy to be able to tell a compelling and accurate story through data visualisation and infographics.

Our ambition is for a world-leading digital and content capability that can support two-way communication with the public. We will develop a central strategy and model of best-practice for digital, led by an enhanced digital communications team based in No10. This digital hub will provide strategic direction to the digital communication profession across the GCS. It will have responsibility for No10 digital channels and develop and drive the digital communications strategy across government. It will help to join up digital channels, so that when different government departments are speaking on the same issue they do so with one voice and a coherent digital tone, style and message.

As we move to use social media in a bolder and more decisive fashion, it is imperative that we drive up the quality and consistency of digital products across government. The effectiveness of content should be properly monitored and evaluated, with high-performing teams and content celebrated with a view to replicating success. We will update the GCS evaluation framework to include stronger standards for evaluating digital content. We will ensure the role of digital content teams is properly reflected in the Modern Communications Operating Model and GCS functional standard.

Commitments

We will:

- Create an enhanced No10 digital communications hub to provide strategic direction **by June 2022** and set best-practice for GCS digital communications **by December 2022**

- Update the GCS evaluation framework to include stronger standards for evaluating digital content **by April 2023**

- Update the Modern Communications Operating Model and Government Communications Service Functional Model **by March 2023** so that it includes design principles for digital content teams.

Harnessing technology to improve impact

The world is in the midst of an unprecedented technological revolution that is transforming economies, societies and governments in complex and unpredictable ways. From applied artifical intelligence (AI) and automation, to next-generation computing, technological progress is accelerating faster than ever.

Our vision is a GCS seizing the opportunities of the revolution in technology, analysis, research and data to dramatically improve the impact of government communications and the lives of citizens.

Data and innovation

Data science, engineering and AI are increasingly important for the future of communication and marketing. Their application is focussed in marketing today, but it is something every communications discipline should be thinking about, from internal communications to stakeholder engagement.

The volume of data created in every area of life is increasing exponentially. As more behavioural signals are collected and processed by AI and machine-learning algorithms, we will be able to massively improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our communications.

Today, we spend millions of pounds on advertising that is seen by many for whom it is irrelevant. In future, the effective use of data will help us to target and segment the audience more effectively. It can help us to personalise messages. It can help us to test and iterate content. Most importantly, it can help us to deliver relevant, interesting and engaging content that matters to the public.

Communications campaigns will become increasingly focused on techniques which use data to deliver an individual experience, with less use of mass communications. If we get this right, then we will be able to use our insights and rich data to start to transform government communications from mass market to personalised, predictive, one-to-one conversations with individuals.

Imagine how our public sector recruitment campaigns could be transformed by better reaching those considering a change of career. Or how a business owner could be helped through the entire process of exporting overseas for the first time by a virtual assistant. Or health outcomes transformed by being able to provide a personalised programme of health improvement with messages delivered in a way that is most likely to encourage a change of behaviour for a particular individual.

The change is so fundamental that it can feel fantastical. But the future is not far away, and will be realised in a series of small steps. It is deliverable, in parts, during the lifetime of this strategy and it is happening already. During the Covid-19 pandemic we developed a vaccinations chatbot to provide personalised conversations about the Covid-19 booster, and we developed a WhatsApp tool which used AI-automated responses for inquiries on Covid-19.

Harnessing the potential relies on getting four things right: people, partnerships, policy and practises. We need the skills and capability to leverage data to identify audiences, enhance service, and interpret, analyse and act upon insight. That means people who can find, manage, and convert data into a meaningful strategy. We need partnerships with key platform providers such as Facebook and Google, as well as with key internal partners such as GDS. We need policies that allow us to collect and use data fairly and transparently. And we need practises that ensure that standardised data collection and consistent measurement are incorporated early in campaign planning.

Collaborating and organising for innovation

We will begin with the assumption that we do not have all the answers, focusing on collaboration across GCS with other functions such as with GDS and with external partners to test and scale the most promising ideas.

Smart collaboration with partners will go beyond merely sourcing ideas to explore the most efficient and effective routes to scale and systematise change. We will follow the lead of high-performing innovators, developing and maintaining critical innovation networks.

Innovation involves an investment in the future which can be difficult to achieve given day-to-day demands. The UK Government has built dedicated innovation labs, such as the Policy Lab,

to design and scale new tools and techniques. We will establish a virtual 'GCS Innovation Lab' to create the capability required to identify, develop, test, execute and scale system changing innovation for Government Communications.

Innovation Strategy

By October 2023, we will publish a GCS Innovation Strategy that will review and outline the external societal and technological trends shaping the environment for Government Communications, identifying the key issues for us to solve and how we can harness the opportunities of the revolution in technology and data to build a culture of innovation in GCS.

The Strategy will outline how we can streamline routine tasks and transform operational efficiency through automation. It will consider how we can leverage applied AI in line with the UK National AI Strategy, from natural language processing to speech technology to help us listen, understand and interact with our audiences in new ways. It will look at how we can better utilise cloud computing capabilities and leverage the data opportunity as per the UK National Data Strategy, and how we can prepare for the future of connectivity and next generation computing over the next decade.

The GCS Innovation Strategy will also identify the current opportunities and challenges of the GCS innovation ecosystem building on the important findings of the 'The Mackintosh report' as a strategy for developing and scaling innovation in Government.

Building a sustainable pipeline of innovative ideas

Innovation depends on our ability to get the best ideas into the GCS innovation pipeline. We will build a repeatable process for idea generation to enable breakthrough innovation. In addition, we will develop an 'open innovation' capability supported by the Open Innovation Team, positioning GCS to look beyond our own boundaries and gain access to ideas, knowledge, and technology from across government, civil society, academia and the private sector to add significant value to our pipeline of ideas.

Data Strategy

Technology and data are intrinsically linked in today's online world. Fundamental to the successful delivery of more effective and efficient communications will be seizing the opportunities of technology in leveraging data and advanced analytical techniques.

Much of data in government, however, exists in organisational silos and in hard-to-use legacy technology platforms. Data and technology is organised around departmental and organisational uses, hampering efforts to speak with a single voice and delivering citizen-first communication.

To deliver on our joint objectives with an audience-first focus we need to develop new ways of sharing, measuring and leveraging our combined data – overcoming silos and joining up to deliver the type of seamless and personalised experiences that citizens expect now.

By March 2024 we will develop and publish a GCS Data Strategy, collaborating with government and external partners, following the direction set by the National Data Strategy.

The strategy will set out how GCS will better collect, pool and share our data so we can activate and analyse in depth the impact of communications and drive effectiveness and efficiency. It will also address how GCS will keep its data safe, and ensure it is used ethically and in a fully compliant manner - importantly, bolstering GCS's ability to address the challenges posed by the growth of AI and machine learning for government communication, and support the GCS Innovation Strategy.

Commitments

We will:

- Establish a virtual 'GCS Innovation Lab' **by October 2022**
- Publish a GCS Innovation Strategy **by October 2023**

- Develop a sprint based approach to launching new products and services **by January 2024**
- Publish a GCS Data Strategy **by March 2024**

Driving efficiency throughout GCS

The Reshaping GCS Programme

The Reshaping GCS programme was launched in Summer 2020 with a view to delivering a smaller, more joined-up Government Communication Service.

The aim of modernising GCS and making it more efficient and effective was the right one.

However, we have learned from that programme that any reductions in headcount or resource need to be achievable and sustainable. While the centre can help develop design principles, provide challenge, and give practical support for implementing change, decisions on staffing sit with Departments and ALBs.

Reducing headcount

While we only have validated data on headcount for the last two years, we know that the size of GCS has grown. GCS played a critical role in responding to the twin challenges of Brexit and Covid-19,

and it is no surprise that departments invested in communications during this period.

According to the latest GCS Data Audit, there were 7,200 FTE performing communications activities across government and ALBs in August 2021. FTE remained broadly flat over the year. Core departments decreased in size by 8% since the 2020 audit while ALBs increased by 3%. ALBs make up approximately 70% of GCS FTE comms resources.

The median size of a communications teams in an ALB is 8.9 FTE, whereas the median size of a communications team in a Government Department is 89.7 FTE. 47 ALBs reported no communications resource whatsoever, while the largest, NHS England, has 273 FTE (and has understandably increased resources during the pandemic).

After such a demanding few years, it is the right time to challenge ourselves to reduce resources. We will establish regular data reporting and a new comms business planning cycle to challenge departments on how they are driving efficiency and reducing headcount.

Decisions for headcount remain with departments. We are not enforcing an across the board percentage reduction. This would penalise Departments who have already reduced headcount while rewarding those with over-inflated headcount. Instead we will exercise professional judgement about where activity could be delivered more efficiently or work prioritised more effectively.

Some Departments and ALBs have made considerable progress already. In 2021, the Home Office reduced comms FTE by 39% (217 to 133). At the same time, staff engagement scores increased by 7 percentage points. Ofsted reduced its comms team by 32% (38 to 26) and the Insolvency Service by 42% (26 to 15).

We will use our data to target and support departments and ALBs to drive efficiencies through functional standards. The central GCS team will lead by example. We have already started work to design and consult on a new smaller but stronger central GCS structure with a view to delivering this by October 2022.

Driving efficiency in paid for campaigns

Using our learning and innovations from the past we propose to deliver further substantial improvements in efficiency across paid for campaigns.

Outcome-focused campaigns. Smart targets and measurement are critical to the success of every campaign and a demonstration of the value that marketing investment can deliver for the taxpayer. Our evaluation framework already provides clear guidance to those designing campaigns and will be updated further for digital metrics. Supported by behavioural insight and econometric modelling, we will ensure every campaign has clear citizen-focused outcomes and performance metrics that are continuously monitored.

Harnessing data. Access to richer, real-time data will enable government marketeers to deliver more audience-focused, agile and high-performing campaigns than ever before. By consolidating relevant citizen data sources and enriching these with actionable insight, we will be able to develop more sophisticated audience segmentation that ensures campaigns are more compelling, personally relevant and effective.

Focusing on owned and earned platforms first. The government is a powerful communications platform in its own right, with Ministerial interviews and social media feeds reaching millions of people every day. Assessing and quantifying the impact of these channels and co-ordinating messages more effectively across them, will enable us to reduce costs associated with paid for campaigns. Our campaigns will in the future be planned around a total, multi-disciplined view of impact from across owned and earned channels, with paid-for investment targeted to accelerate, deepen or amplify policy outcomes.

Leveraging the power of partnership. Central government has a unique role in convening and coordinating the public, private and third sectors. Our 'You Are Not Alone' domestic abuse campaign demonstrated how a compelling purpose-driven proposition can attract support from influencers and businesses. We will seek to build more strategic partnerships with businesses, local authorities and community organisations across the UK to engage citizens directly and via trusted

voices at lower cost than paid-for channels.

Fewer, bigger, better campaigns. In a cluttered communications environment, it is vital that government marketing reduces the quantity of messages it delivers to similar audiences and focuses on the quality of communication. Greater collaboration across government will ensure that we focus on fewer, essential campaigns that leverage stronger brands to build greater attention and engagement over the long term as well as increasing public trust in government communications.

Continuous campaign improvement. Technology offers us the opportunity to test and learn throughout the campaign lifecycle, optimising performance on a weekly – or even daily basis if needed, rather than evaluating at set points during the campaign. Test and learn will become the cornerstone of our future approach.

Developing in-house skills. We will have a renewed focus on developing high quality skills in-house, so that we only procure the most specialist services externally. We have already demonstrated how high-quality content creation, partnership development, video production and multi-variant testing can be delivered by talented civil servants.

A stronger commercial strategy

We will invest in specialist contract management resource to make sure people managing contracts have the capability to negotiate contracts and

manage contracted suppliers effectively. We will find ways to buy smarter across GCS and maximise our buying power in the marketplace to drive even more value for the public purse and influence supplier and market-level behaviour.

The GCS central team will continue to partner with Crown Commercial Service on behalf of all government departments and ALBs to ensure greater value for money, more agility and a wider range of specialist services available to deliver communication services. We will develop category plans to ensure that we are meeting the needs of today and the future, developing new markets where they do not exist and unlocking benefits from innovation.

We will collaborate and work with Commercial colleagues to simplify and speed up procurement processes, removing unnecessary bureaucracy and embedding consistent application of commercial standards to allow us to deliver at pace and with agility.

Commitments

We will:

- As part of wider business planning rounds, we will conduct an **annual** data collection across GCS community to include:
  - FTE/role data
  - Location

- Use our data to support departments and ALBs to drive efficiencies through functional standards starting in 2022/23, and completing **by March 2025**

Maintaining public trust in communication

Public confidence and trust in government communications is critical to our national security and well-being.

Misinformation, disinformation and malinformation

Misinformation and disinformation are a genuine threat to our democracy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology and social media have been used to keep people safe, informed, productive and connected. However, this same technology is also enabling misinformation and disinformation to spread. The proliferation of false information severely undermines trust in democratic institutions, processes and cohesive societies.

GCS has been working and learning alongside international partners to take action against mis- and disinformation as well as supporting the new Government Information Cell established to counter Russian information operations. Through partnerships with government, multilateral

organisations and civil society communicators, our 'RESIST 2' counter disinformation toolkit has been used to ensure we uphold the democratic values we hold dear.

As well as challenging others, we have to take responsibility for our own content and behaviour. Building and maintaining public confidence in government communications starts with us.

GCS Propriety and Values

The core values and behaviours required of all civil servants - integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality - are of enduring relevance and value. Citizens should be able to trust what they see and hear from official government channels. Any statement that comes from official government channels should be justified by the facts. It should be objective and explanatory, and not biased or polemical.

GCS members should feel confident in being able to push back if they are asked to do something in contravention of the Civil Service Code or the GCS Propriety Guidance. The guidance applies to all civil servants, and Ministers and Special Advisers have a duty under their codes of conduct to uphold the impartiality of civil servants. Directors of Communication are responsible to their Permanent Secretary and the Chief Executive of the Government Communication Service for ensuring their team is upholding the Code and Propriety Guidance.

New ethical challenges

AI has huge potential benefits in terms of being able to better target messages and personalising messaging to persuade people to take action. The question for GCS is not whether or not we should use AI. We will have no choice other than to do so if we wish to use paid communications to provide public information, or encourage positive behaviours in future.

However, the use of AI in communication raises ethical questions about privacy, non-discrimination, self-determination, and fairness. The GCS approach to the application of AI in marketing to date has been guided by strict adherence to the latest data protection guidance and measured against the Government's Data Ethics Framework. In order to maintain public trust, we will need to make sure that our use of AI continues to be transparent and open to scrutiny. Data must only be used with consent. We must comply with the latest advice from the Information Commissioner's Office, our public sector equality duty, and other relevant legislation.

We will review and revise GCS Propriety Guidance to include guidance on the application of AI and make sure this is reflected in GCS training. We will continue to develop our AI capability in-house to build more sophisticated solutions that can genuinely provide social and environmental benefit while adhering to the highest standards of data protection, ethics and transparency

Commitments

We will:

- Review and refresh propriety guidance, to include:

  - Clarification on how to raise a concern by **October 22**

  - Annual mandatory training by **April 23**

  - Updating of guidance to incorporate ethical use of new technology by **October 24**
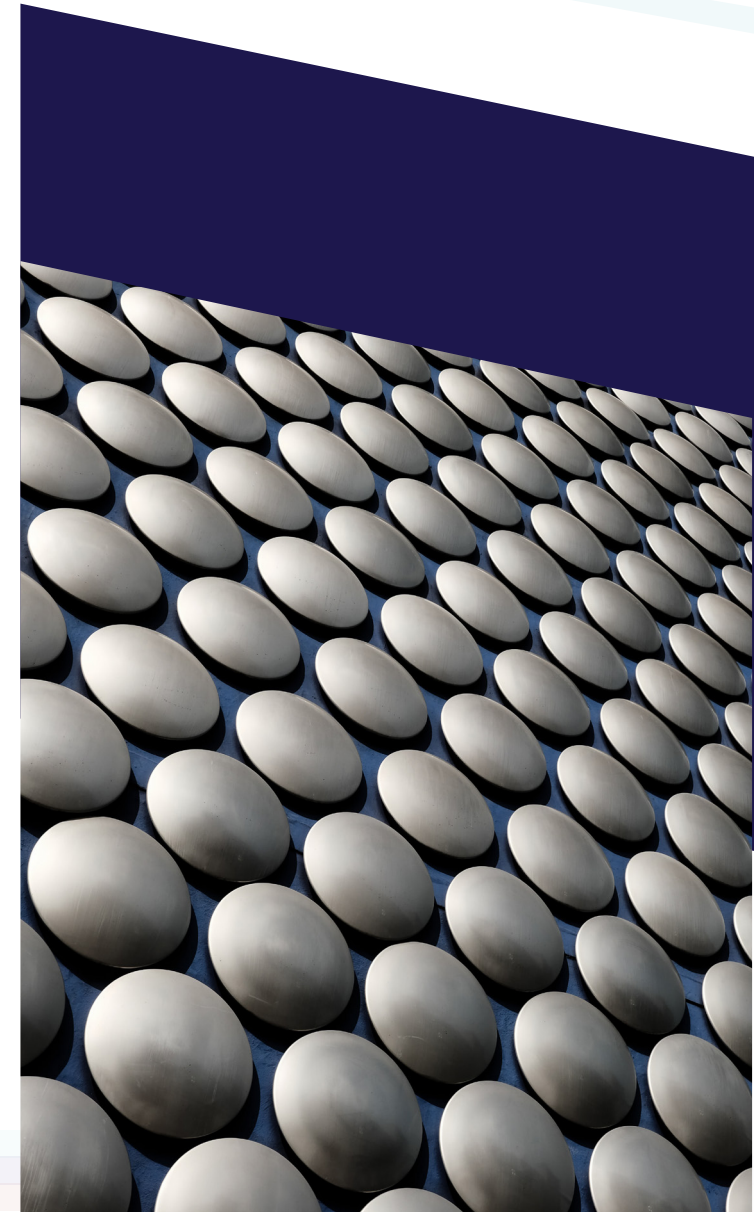
Great People

Our people are at the heart of GCS and central to achieving the aspirations set out in this strategy.

The world of work has been transforming, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This has led to shifting expectations from employees, from more flexibility in the way people work to increasingly flexible career paths and less of an expectation of 'a job for life'. People are rightly demanding more in terms of sustainability and diversity and inclusion, and as a profession we must respond. Whilst we will always need people with generalist communications skills, we increasingly need people to complement their breadth of knowledge with deep and specialist expertise in one or more areas. That means a re-evaluation of our approach to learning and development, career progression and professional accreditation.

We need brilliant leaders who are collaborative and innovative and able to operate in an increasingly complex and ambiguous world. We need new ways of attracting the best communications talent. A stronger brand and offer will promote GCS as a place that supports innovation and delivers purposeful work that transforms lives. We should also focus on how we recognise and retain talented individuals within the profession, celebrating success and providing opportunity.

Finally, we must challenge ourselves on diversity and inclusion. Increasing diversity is critical to our operational success. We cannot communicate effectively with people across the UK unless we draw our talent from every section of society. We want GCS to be an open and inclusive environment where people know that different views, backgrounds and experiences are welcome. That includes creating more opportunities for people to develop their careers outside London if they choose.

This pillar covers four key areas for action:

1. Developing our people and raising professional standards: we will transform our approach to skills, capabilities and accreditation, enabling our people to achieve their full potential. Our ambition is to set the highest professional standards, to hold ourselves to account for delivering these and for GCS to have the best comms L&D offer in the world.

2. Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented communicators: our vision is for GCS to be recognised as a destination of choice for comms professionals and a place where people want to work.

3. Building brilliant functional leaders: we will focus action on building a strong collective leadership community with the capability to inspire others, lead their teams and be champions for the GCS profession.

4. Creating a diverse and inclusive GCS: Putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. We will set out a clear action plan to achieve our ambition for GCS to be the global leader for D&I across our profession.

5. Creating careers across all four corners of the UK: we will set out plans to develop an ambitious location strategy which will help people to build careers and progress to senior positions in regions across the UK.

Developing our people and raising professional standards

We must be confident in applying our training in the latest communications practices and techniques, together with demonstrating the deep, specialist expertise and knowledge we need to deliver exceptional communications. We must challenge ourselves to assess both individual ability and team performance with rigour and consistency to create a culture of continuous improvement.

If we want the communications profession to be respected and taken seriously, we need to take our own standards and accreditation more seriously. It is time to move beyond a voluntary approach to improving our skills.

Over the lifetime of this strategy we aim to move from a situation where we have no formal assessment requirements, to having the best professional accreditation of any communications employer in the world. We will create a professional accreditation and qualifications model, working with internal and external partners, to ensure that all communicators are operating at the expected standard and to the benefit of those who are accredited.

The steps to achieving this goal are challenging but identifiable. We will need to develop:

- An understanding of global best practice

- A catalogue of the modern skills and knowledge we need to assess and accredit against

- A funding model to support the programme

- A core curriculum, setting entry and expert level requirements

- An online learning platform that allows people to access learning where and when they need it

- A management information system that tells us who holds what skills and qualifications

- Evaluation and success measures

We will work in partnership with the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit (GCSU) to help drive performance and be a trailblazer for wider reform. General skills required across the civil service, such as understanding Parliament, leadership and management, or project delivery skills, could be provided by the GSCU, with specialist functional communications skills provided by the GCS curriculum.

We will update the existing Modern Communications Operating Model to detail the knowledge, skills and attributes we require of government communicators, ensuring that we capture all the disciplines which are needed across the profession. Alongside this work we will develop a revised and updated Communication Functional Standard to provide rigorous and robust professional standards at all levels so that people know what is expected of them.

We will undertake a GCS wide skills audit to understand where we are now and where we need

to get to. We will use the outputs from the recent "Future Communicator" project to articulate the skills that we need and provide clarity for people of what is expected of them at different levels. We will use the data from the skills audit and Future Communicator project to develop new and exciting L&D offerings through our curriculum, working closely with internal and external partners.

We will focus on enhancing our digital and data skills and capabilities, working in partnership with other government professions, GDS and external tech firms to develop a digital learning offer which evolves with the pace of change of technology developments.

Commitments

We will:

- Review and consolidate core professional frameworks and guidance by **March 2023**, including:
  - all leadership and capability frameworks for GCS SCS Leaders
  - the Modern Comms Operating Model, competency framework and Functional standard
- Enhance the GCS curriculum in line with outputs from the Future Communicator project, wider skills data, create an accreditation model, establish the feasibility of delivering an online learning management system **by December 2023, with the model fully implemented by March 2025**

Attracting, recruiting and retaining talent

Our aspiration is for GCS to be a destination of choice for communications professionals. We are operating in a competitive environment where it is difficult to attract and retain talent. We must get better at highlighting the exceptional and unique roles and opportunities for Government communicators and be clear about how roles in government can meet the changing expectations of employees.

We need to build a more inspiring and motivating GCS brand to increase our profile and dispel the misconceptions around the profession. We will create a brand strategy to attract more people who have built skills in the private and third sector to government communications. GCS should be something that every credible communicator in the UK wants on their CV. GCS combines purpose led work with an innovative culture. It is a place where people can do the most important work of their career and where there is a genuine opportunity to change our world and people's lives for the better.

We will also articulate a strong internal 'GCS People Offer' so that GCS members know and understand the benefits available to them from being part of the profession. We will aim to increase pride in being part of the profession and in our abilities, having individuals being ambassadors for GCS. We will increase our visibility within the communications industry, and the Civil Service, by active participation and nominations for industry awards and sharing of success stories. We will seek to participate in professional networks, conferences and events where there is a clear opportunity to attract people to work in government communications.

We must also refocus our talent and succession strategy, ensuring that we have the right plans and talent programmes in place to identify future leaders and support people to progress their careers. This will include building a better understanding of our ALB talent pipelines and working collectively to grow and nurture our talent.

To do this we will review our existing talent strategy and programmes to ensure that they meet GCS objectives. We will continue to focus on our early talent strategy. Our flagship apprenticeship and internship programmes are key elements in attracting a diverse external early talent pipeline. Our award-winning apprenticeship attracts 35-40 apprentices each year, with a current retention rate of 97%.

It should be natural for people with careers and skills built in business or the third sector 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. We will develop new entry routes from industry, academia, and the third 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 promote secondments to and from private and third sector organisations to learn from each other, build networks and relationships and harness innovative practices. We will ensure there are transparent and consistent processes, effective management of any potential conflicts of interest, and induction which firmly instils the Civil Service Code and its values.

We will support improved recruitment and talent acquisition practices across GCS. This will include:

- Developing a suite of standard job profiles, aligned with the career framework and technical competency framework

- Considering opportunities to increase the centralisation of recruitment for roles in addition to the GCS Faststream and apprenticeship programmes

- Developing relationships with executive search firms for our most senior roles

- Creating a virtual outreach programme 'Discover GCS' using communications ambassadors across GCS to build networks and increase awareness of GCS careers

We will develop a consistent GCS induction approach for those new to the profession and a returners' pack to assist line managers with professionals joining or returning after a secondment, career break, or role outside of GCS.

Commitments

We will:

- Develop a new GCS people brand and articulate the GCS people offer to include a new outreach programme **by October 2023**

- Review existing talent programmes (including diversity programmes) and develop a new talent and succession planning strategy **during FY 23/24**

- Develop a new GCS induction approach **by March 2023**

- Develop a secondments action plan **by March 2024**

Building brilliant GCS leaders

Brilliant leadership is crucial to meeting the aspirations of this strategy. We increasingly need leaders that are not only brilliant at communications but are also comfortable working through complexity and ambiguity and that have the ability to inspire and motivate teams.

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GCS 2022 Apprenticeship programme!

Government Communication Service

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We will establish a stronger GCS leadership community to grow and learn from each other. This will include dedicated GCS leadership events to enable horizon scanning, thought leadership and leadership development. We will create a leadership community space on the GCS website with updates, blogs, events and networks available to join.

We will identify and invest in skills development for our leaders, through targeted support to ensure we stay up to date as technology and expectations change. We will promote the take up of the Civil Service SCS Leadership Development offer, including talent programmes, the Leadership Academy and Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG) to capitalise on the excellent provision in this space and to foster greater links with other leaders across the Civil Service. We will develop a bespoke GCS leadership induction approach (programme, mentors, buddy) to ensure that our leaders are equipped to flourish in their new role.

We will set clear expectations of our senior leaders so that people know what is required of them and the standards which are expected. We will pull together existing frameworks and standards so that it is clear what they are being assessed against. This will include launching a new leadership capability framework. We will standardise Director of Communications job specifications and technical interviews. We will create a new standard objective for GCS leaders to be included into their performance objectives. We will also focus on identifying and nurturing future leaders,

preparing them to be capable of meeting our future challenges and our vision for GCS. We will create an active talent management approach for people identified as being future Directors of Communications.

We will refresh the Heads of Discipline roles, which are responsible for leading the continuous improvement and professional development within individual communications discipline. Heads of Discipline will be recruited on a rolling two year basis, and will be expected to dedicate at least 20% of their time to building capability and providing leadership in their discipline. We will publish an updated description for heads of discipline roles clearly setting out the expected contribution and responsibilities.

Commitments

We will:

- Develop a model leadership objective for GCS leaders aligned with their role in delivering this strategy **by April 2022** (for use in **Performance year 22/23**)

- Develop a bi-annual SCS leadership event - with the first event **from May 2022** focussing on the delivery of this strategy

- Create a new SCS induction programme **by March 2023**

- Review and consolidate core professional frameworks and guidance **by March 2023**, including all leadership and capability frameworks for GCS SCS Leaders to align with L&D expectations

Creating a more diverse and inclusive GCS

We cannot communicate effectively with people across the UK if we do not draw on a wide range of experiences and perspectives. This is about increasing diversity of thought as well as representation, but we know there is progress to be made in increasing the proportion of people from under-represented groups in GCS – for example people from ethnic minorities and people with a disability in our senior ranks.

We take collective responsibility across our organisations for creating a culture where people's differences are valued and individuals can build a successful career regardless of background. Creating a diverse and inclusive profession is a responsibility that each of us should make a priority, regardless of grade, background, or organisation.

The GCS has in place a comprehensive programme that drives our Diversity and Inclusion work. We are driving change and tangible actions through our professional standards, D&I groups and talent and development activities.

Examples of change being delivered include our D&I in Practice group that drives diversity in our communication practice, targeted positive action through our Internship and Apprenticeship schemes, and our Power of Choice accelerated development programme for Grade 6s. We have a GCS Shadow Board who help challenge thinking and bring diversity of thought to leadership discussions, and we have a mutual mentoring programme 'Connecting Diverse Voices'.

We will increase the ambition of our diversity and inclusion action plan, and will set out clear measures of progress. It will be updated in line with the newly launched Civil Service D&I strategy. It will include a focus on how we collect and use data to provide benchmarks; how we take targeted action on representation; and how we build an inclusive culture.

Today the latest data we have suggests that just under 14% of GCS members are from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, but only 9% of our senior leaders are. We need broader, and more robust data on the diversity of our profession, and on the teams within GCS, that we can then use to set ambitious goals for representation and inclusion. We will also use the data to provide targeted support for individuals to enter and flourish within the Communications profession, recruiting from a wider pool of talent, as well as working on promotion and progression.

To do this we will work across GCS to collect and analyse data to establish the current landscape, drawing on data in GCS staff surveys as well as wider civil service data.

We will celebrate and share successes across the profession from a wide range of projects, disciplines and teams, ensuring that authenticity comes through across our content. We will set out guidance and best practice for departments on diversity and inclusion, with a checklist of steps that each communications team should consider taking. We will make sure government communications campaigns take into account the need to reflect and reach a diverse range of audiences.

We will evaluate our diversity focused talent programmes to ensure they are increasing representation, inclusion and diversity of thought, and are focused on the right areas.

We will use our GCS shadow board, affinity groups on specific aspects of diversity, and working groups on diversity and inclusion more widely, to keep improving how we include a range of diverse voices in the governance and programme delivery.

Commitments

We will:

- Review and publish a new D&I action plan **by March 2023**

Creating careers across all four corners of the UK

49% of GCS roles are based in London, with 41% across the rest of the UK and 2% based internationally (we do not have a recorded location for the remainder). However, in central government departments 81% of roles are based in London. Furthermore, the vast majority of our senior civil service posts are based in London.

We will create more opportunities for people to develop their careers outside of London. The business case for doing this is clear. It will enable us to better reflect the views of citizens in all parts of the country and allow us to draw on a wider pool of talent. We want GCS to be an exemplar function across the Civil Service in driving this change. This will require collaboration and buy-in from senior leaders in Departments across the Civil Service to drive a step change in our location footprint.

We will create the first GCS location strategy in collaboration with Places for Growth and Directors of Communication across the Civil Service. The strategy will include a target for the number of GCS roles in Whitehall Departments to be based outside of London by 2025. We will develop regional networks of communications professionals and we will set up hubs for communicators in different departments to work together.

Directors of Communication across GCS will commit that all SCS comms roles will, by default,

be advertised in at least one location outside of London. We must focus on how we build sustainable career pathways outside London, with an emphasis on promoting pathways to the Senior Civil Service without having to work in Whitehall.

Commitments

We will:

- Create and publish a GCS location strategy **by March 2023** with a target for the number of GCS roles to be based outside of London **by 2025**

Table of commitments with delivery timescales

COLLABORATION	
S001	Consider professional assurance approval for campaigns which run across more than one financial year **from April 2022.**
S002	Re-establish GCS Board **by June 22**
S003	Raise the bar on spending controls to be more assertive in using spending controls to improve the quality of campaigns and join up with other departments **from May 2022**
S004	Articulate the remit and responsibility of the campaign SRO role **by June 2022**
S005	Develop a monthly research and insight report for the key planks of the annual Government Communication Strategy **by June 2022**
S006	Establish a central Strategy and Planning function within GCS, this function will **by October 2022:** o Develop one systematic process for monitoring and reporting on campaigns, including standardised approaches to data collection and consistent measurement, which gives Ministers confidence in delivery and impact
S007	Restructure and reduce the size of the central GCS team at the Cabinet Office with a focus on strategy and coordination, standards and capability, and expert and shared services **by October 2022**
S008	Establish a new GCS External Advisory Board **by October 2022**
S009	Draft a Crisis Communications improvement plan including the development of a toolkit to include consideration of crisis contracts and playbook **by March 2023**

S010	Introduce a new funding model based on the principle that core No10/Cabinet Office activity should come from core funding, mandatory professional development activity should be funded by the marketing levy/a per FTE charge, and GCS should charge for discretionary expert/ shared services **by April 2023**
	INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT
S011	As part of wider business planning rounds, we will conduct an **annual** data collection across GCS community to include: o FTE/role data o Location
S012	Review propriety guidance, to include: o Clarification on how to raise a concern **by October 22** o Annual mandatory training **by April 23** o Updating of guidance to incorporate ethical use of new technology **by October 24**
S013	Reform, simplify and fully digitise the PASS process **by March 2023**
S014	Use our data to support departments and ALBs to drive efficiencies through functional standards starting in 2022/23, and completing **by March 2025**
S015	Develop a secondments action plan **by March 2024**
S016	Establish a virtual 'GCS Innovation Lab' **by October 2022**
S017	Publish a GCS Innovation Strategy **by October 2023**

So18	Create an enhanced No10 digital communications hub to provide strategic direction **by June 2022** and set best-practice for GCS digital communications **by December 2022**
So19	Update the GCS evaluation framework to include stronger standards for evaluating digital content **by April 2023**
So20	Update the Modern Communications Operating Model and Government Communications Service Functional Model **by March 2023** so that it includes design principles for digital content teams
So21	Publish a GCS Data Strategy **by March 2024**
GREAT PEOPLE	
So22	Develop a new GCS and SCS induction approach **by March 2023**
So23	Review and consolidate core professional frameworks and guidance **by March 2023**, including: o all leadership and capability frameworks for GCS SCS Leaders to align with L&D expectations; o the Modern Comms Operating model, competency framework and Functional standard
So24	Review and publish a new D&I action plan **by March 2023**
So25	Create and publish a GCS location strategy with a target for one-third of GCS roles to be based outside of London **by March 2023** (strategy to be published **by Mar 2023**, one third target **by end of 2025**)
So26	Enhance the GCS curriculum in line with outputs from the Future Communicator project, wider skills data, create an accreditation model, establish the feasibility of putting in place an online learning management system **by December 2023, with the model fully implemented by March 2025**

So27	Develop a model leadership objective for GCS leaders aligned with their role in delivering this strategy (for use in performance yr 22/23) **by April 2022**
So28	Develop a bi-annual SCS leadership event - with the first event focussing on the delivery of this strategy **from May 2022**
So29	Following work on skills under commitment So27, commence the development of a new GCS people brand and a new GCS people offer including a new outreach programme is in place **by March 2025**
So30	Review existing talent programmes (including diversity programmes) and develop a new talent and succession planning strategy **to be in place by March 2024**