

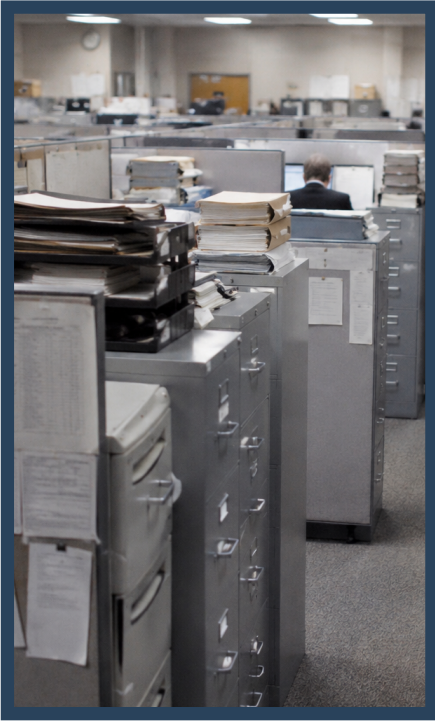
POLICY
THUMBNAIL

Repairing The Rolls Royce

Restoring the UK Civil Service's battered reputation



APRIL
2026



THE PROBLEM

The UK Civil Service is increasingly criticised as no longer providing a top-quality 'Rolls Royce' service for delivering the policy agenda of whichever political party is in Government.

THE SOLUTION

We will upgrade & improve the Civil Service by:

1. Refocusing all Government Departments and quangos on delivering outcomes & results rather than following processes, by:
 - a) Requiring prompt, independent, public post-completion evaluation of every public grant, subsidy and procurement contract to check whether it delivered the intended outcomes. Any public body wanting to renew or extend a contract that hadn't delivered would have to explain why publicly in advance (there is more detail on this in [A New Public Productivity Act](#)).
 - b) Resetting the outcomes which every Regulator, Quango & Arms Length Body must achieve so each has no more than four, in priority order, with a regular, independent, public evaluation of how well they have delivered

them & a duty on sponsoring Ministers to publish prompt turnaround plans for any that don't (there is more detail on this in [A New Public Productivity Act](#)).

- c) Issuing a 'Mandate Letter' to each Cabinet Minister & their Department's top official (Permanent Secretary) within the first days of a new Government, listing specific outcomes which they must deliver with deadlines for each one. These letters may be updated as needed.
 - d) Ending process-based judicial reviews of how Government decisions are taken, so Courts will still decide if a Government or other public bodies have exceeded their powers or not ('Illegality'), while elected representatives hold them to account for whether they have delivered their required outcomes & results. All other requirements for Ministers, public bodies and officials to obey the law will remain unchanged.
2. Updating civil service talent management & leadership. This will involve:
 - a) introducing more rigorous & demanding performance assessments for all officials at every level, based on their achievements & track record in previous roles, so high performers are systematically identified & rewarded while weaker ones are developed or removed.
 - b) amending Civil Service talent & career progression pathways to ensure staff develop the skills & experience required to deliver the new focus on outcomes & results instead of following processes. This will include a requirement for all senior Mandarins to have successfully led large operational organisations, as well as provided excellent policy advice.
 - c) stronger comparison & moderation of performance standards for all senior officials, to ensure all Government Departments & quangos are equally strongly-led.
 - d) appointing a new Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the Civil Service, with responsibility for introducing these changes & improving performance. The role will be appointed by & report to the Cabinet Secretary, with regular progress updates for the Civil Service Commissioners and Parliamentary Select Committees.
 3. Accepting & embracing the importance of politics in Government. This means:
 - a) ensuring official policy and communications advice for elected leaders includes expert but non-partisan political analysis & recommendations, as well as high-quality technocratic proposals.
 - b) introducing regular, rigorous performance assessments of each Minister's



ability to lead officials effectively, run by political parties but with 360 degree feedback from external stakeholders including officials, to inform Prime Ministerial decisions in Government reshuffles (there is more detail on this in [Conservative MP Culture Reset](#)).

- c) requiring junior & mid-level Ministers & Mandarins to possess high-quality political analysis & judgement themselves, rather than covering weaknesses by delegating responsibility to Special Political Advisors (SPAds). This will mean fewer SPAds will be needed so their numbers will be cut. There is more detail on this in [Conservative MP Culture Reset](#).



THE BENEFITS

These changes will restore the Civil Service's 'Rolls Royce' reputation in several steps:

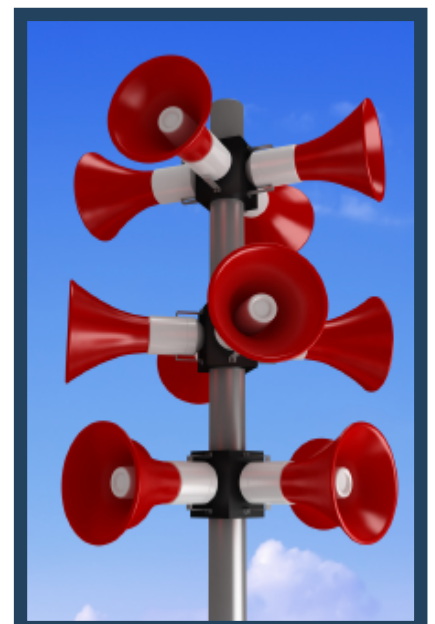
1. Refocusing all Government Departments and quangos on delivering outcomes rather than following processes, while improving civil service talent management & leadership, will:
 - a) systematically identify & reward people & teams that deliver results, meet deadlines & manage budgets well, while ensuring those that don't are developed or removed.
 - b) encourage creative new approaches to getting things done, so public service efficiency & productivity improve faster & more strongly.
 - c) reduce the number of Government projects running late or going over budget.
2. Appointing a Civil Service COO will ensure performance improvements are successfully introduced & permanently embedded in the organisation's culture, so old habits can't return over time.
3. Narrowing Judicial Review will still ensure Governments can't exceed their powers or disobey laws, while returning responsibility for holding their performance to account to democratically elected representatives instead.
4. Ensuring civil service advice includes both high-quality political as well as technocratic analysis will significantly increase its value & usefulness for elected leaders, restoring capabilities and skills which have been taken over by SpAds & re-establishing the service's reputation as the best long-term reservoir of professional administrative excellence for delivering the agenda of all democratically-elected Governments.
5. Assessing & developing every Minister's ability to lead officials effectively, & informing Prime Ministers so they can remove poor performers if they wish, will help more officials deliver their best possible work in all parts of Government.
6. Requiring junior & mid-level Ministers & Mandarins to demonstrate high-quality political analysis & judgement will expand & improve the pipeline of talented future senior Mandarins & Ministers significantly.

THE SOUNDBITES

'The West Wing' may be fiction, but too often British Governments look like 'The Thick Of It' or 'Yes Minister' instead. The country deserves better..

For Whitehall to work the way it could & should, we need better leadership from both Ministers & Mandarins alike.

Good Government ought to be about delivering great results & good value for voters & taxpayers, not being so scared of judicial review that you daren't try anything creative or new.



THE REBUTTALS



1. Why aren't you restructuring Whitehall to merge [Department X] with [Department Y]?

Any good leader will tell you that changing an organisation's structure should be the last step of a change programme, not the first. Expecting a new organogram to magically alter staff behaviours, culture & processes on its own simply doesn't work.

2. Why aren't you banning home working?

Lots of well-run & successful companies & charities use a mix of home & office working to get the best from their staff, but the amount varies for different types of jobs & situations. There's no one-size-fits-every-job rule, & assuming there should be is silly.

3. Why aren't you dealing with all the woke DEI & equality nonsense?

Any organisation that wants to attract, develop & promote top quality staff needs the widest and deepest possible pool of talent, so we won't apologise for recruiting the best people from every background & walk of life, no matter where they started from. But nor will we compromise on quality or look the other way if performance isn't good enough, just to tick boxes or fill quotas. These reforms will build the most capable Civil Service we've ever had, where the only common factors are hard work & talent.

4. Isn't the old Northcote-Trevelyan idea of a professional, impartial Civil Service too old-fashioned to cope with modern Government? Shouldn't we switch to a West Wing style USA model of replacing Mandarins with lots of politically-appointed officials instead?

Don't forget 'The West Wing' is fiction, & political appointments can go badly wrong in real life! A genuinely expert & politically-impartial Civil Service should make it easier for any Government to deliver its manifesto quickly & well, not harder. These reforms will mean that theory is more likely to be delivered in practice.

5. Won't cutting judicial reviews just leave citizens defenceless against the state?

Hardly! UK Governments will still have to obey UK laws just as they always have, but campaigners won't be able to use the courts for endless legal process challenges & delays anymore. Instead there will be regular, independent, public evaluations of how well or badly public bodies & services are delivering results, which democratically elected representatives can use to hold their performance to account.

