



Government
Communication
Service

Government Communication Service (GCS) Handbook

This handbook has been produced for members of the Government Communication Service (GCS), and other interested stakeholders, to act as a source of reference and guidance for all relevant aspects of the GCS.



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Foreword from Alex Aiken Executive Director of Government Communication



Alongside legislation, regulation and taxation, communication is one of the four main levers of government. When done well, its contribution to delivering government policies is profound. It should be no surprise that communication is regarded as one of the major professions within the Civil Service.

Skilled, passionate, talented government communicators don't just inform the public: their work helps build the economy, save lives, protect the vulnerable, and promote Britain in the world. The work we do is rarely easy, constantly challenging, and always rewarding.

The Government Communication Service Handbook sets out:

- How our profession is led
- What is expected of government communicators
- The tools and training on offer to build successful careers and deliver an exceptional public service
- Links to further information and advice.

Whether you work in government communications, work with government communicators or are simply interested in the work we do on behalf of government and the public, I hope you find this handbook a helpful source of support, guidance and advice.

Alex Aiken
@AlexanderAiken

Introducing the Government Communication Service



Government communicators work hard each day to provide information to help everyone make choices about their lives. They also have a key role in communicating the government's priorities.

The Government Communication Service (GCS) launched on 1 January 2014 as the professional body for colleagues working in communication roles across government.

The GCS is responsible for building a government communications profession that, in line with the principles of Civil Service Reform, is better skilled, less bureaucratic and more unified. It aims to create a communications community that helps central government achieve its policy objectives by:

- Pioneering and sharing best practice
- Increasing collaboration and co-ordination
- Eradicating inefficient and unnecessary spend.

It will do this by delivering, across departmental boundaries, effective communication in the most transparent, accountable and responsible way.

The GCS replaced the former Government Communication Network (GCN).

The GCS is not an employing organisation. Government departments, executive agencies and a wide range of other organisations employ government communicators directly.

Why was the GCS created?

The GCS was created to support government communicators to deliver exceptional public communications.

In June 2012, the [Civil Service Reform Plan](#) acknowledged that the Civil Service doesn't always have the right capabilities in the right place to do what is needed.

The report concluded that, with 17 main departments varying greatly in size, the Civil Service needs a stronger leadership model and more sharing of services and expertise in order to deliver the step change in efficiency required.

The subsequent [Civil Service Capabilities Plan](#) set out to strengthen the authority and influence of professions within the Civil Service. It confirmed that Heads of Profession need to operate as cross-government leaders, and that they have an essential role in improving skills and maintaining professional standards.

There have been other relevant reviews into government communications, including:

- [The 2010 Review of Government Direct Communication and the Role of COI Communications](#)
- [A 2011 report of the Public Expenditure \(Efficiency and Reform\) sub-committee.](#)



These highlighted the need for:

- Government communicators to be highly skilled across a range of communication disciplines, including internal communications, digital, marketing and press and media handling
- Greater efficiency, value for money and strengthened central co-ordination
- A smaller service, which is less hierarchical and more innovative.

A series of communication capability reviews in 2012 and 2013 concluded that despite many examples of excellent government communications, the profession as a whole was tactically strong but strategically weak, with poor links between policy and communications. The reviews also determined that digital skills were falling behind private sector; too much activity went unevaluated; and that there were inconsistent and variable standards and approaches.

Summaries of each capability review can be found here: <https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/capability-reviews/>

What does the GCS do?

Video: [The Government Communication Service](#)

Communications professionals across government play a key role in successfully communicating government policies and public services. Their responsibilities include:

- Informing people about specific legal or statutory requirements, such as submitting annual tax returns
- Helping the public understand the government's priorities, such as changes to the benefits system and welfare reform
- Encouraging people to behave in a healthier way, such as by discouraging drink driving and encouraging healthy eating
- Letting people know about public services, such as the reform of electoral registration
- Informing the public in times of crisis, including pandemics or widespread flooding (such as those seen in early 2014)
- Enhancing the reputation of the country by promoting the UK to people overseas to help boost investment from tourists and businesses.

As the membership body for government communications professionals, the GCS plays an important role in developing a capable, unified profession. It aims to bring all communications up to the standard of the best.

Specifically, the GCS is responsible for:

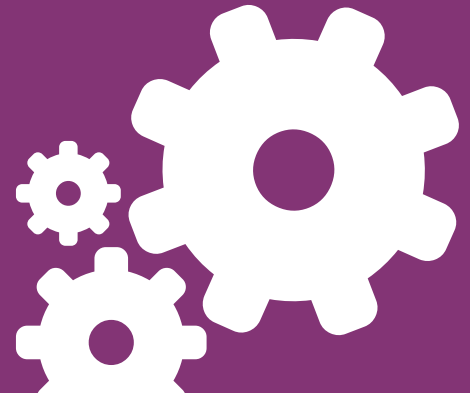
- Providing leadership for all government communicators



- Setting membership criteria and assessing professional skills
- Providing support for Continuing Professional Development through learning and development opportunities
- Establishing talent management programmes and loan / secondment opportunities
- Setting out career pathways to help members plan and develop their careers
- Publishing professional reports and best practice, together with running the profession's website
- Providing networks for government communication professionals to collaborate across the profession, thus enabling increased expertise and innovation
- Guiding professional behaviour
- Enabling fairer access to the profession, so that people from all backgrounds can become government communication professionals, for example through openly advertised recruitment and selection exercises
- Providing career support and opportunities for students, graduates and people already working.

To help co-ordinate government communications and support departments and executive agencies to deliver, a central GCS support service is based in the Cabinet Office.

Working in the GCS



The GCS is the professional body for all government communicators. We expect government communicators to demonstrate capability in more than one communication specialism. Relevant skills and experience includes but is not limited to:

- Media relations
- Public relations/campaigning
- Employee engagement
- Internal communications
- Stakeholder and Partner relations
- Marketing
- Communications planning
- Digital communication
- Journalism
- Market Research
- Corporate Strategy
- Sponsorship
- Investor Relations.

Government communicators who have skills in one discipline only, will be given support to broaden their capability. Initially this will be addressed via normal performance and development discussions with line managers and may include action including formal training, personal research, job shadowing, and attachments and mentoring.

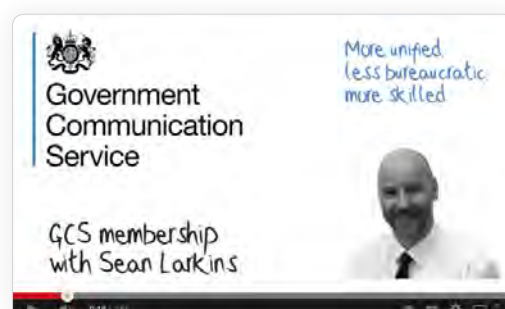
GCS membership

There are three levels of membership in the GCS:

- **Core** – if you work in government and have a specialist communications role, such as internal communications, press and media handling, marketing or digital communication. All professional communicators are automatically members of GCS, with no opt out
- **Associate** – if you work in an area where communications forms just one part of your role, or if you plan to work in communications for part of your career. For example, associate members include Armed Forces personnel working in military communications and diplomats working as press attachés
- **Affiliate** – this is open to anyone working in the communications profession elsewhere in the public sector. This could include people working in local government and the emergency services.

This short animated video describes the types of GCS membership, the benefits of membership, and what is expected of members.

[Sean Larkins YouTube video](#)



Core and Associate members of the GCS are offered an extensive range of support to help them deliver exceptional government communications. In return, government communicators are expected to meet appropriate professional development standards.

What is on offer, and what is asked, varies according to the level of membership:

Core Membership

We ask members to:

- Develop skill and ability in more than one of the core communications roles. These include press and media relations, journalism, internal communications, campaigns and marketing and digital communications. If you currently specialise in one professional discipline only, you will be given support to broaden your skill base
- Demonstrate ability in digital communications. Everyone has a mandatory key work objective for digital, and learning and development opportunities will be available to help people gain the required skills
- Build evaluation skills (learning and development opportunities are available)
- Take part in a formal induction process when joining the profession
- Complete a minimum of four development activities for continuing professional development per year
- Undergo procurement training if working with people in the private sector who supply services and goods to the government

- Network with colleagues, learn and share best practice.

We offer:

- Defined career pathways to help you plan your career and develop your expertise
- Opportunities for professional development including learning and development, networking opportunities, events, conferences and even a book club
- Online guides and tools to help government communicators do their job
- Opportunities to go on loan to other government departments to broaden skills
- Mentoring – this involves working with an experienced colleague to develop specific skills and knowledge that will help career development. The mentor is usually outside the normal management chain, to help build up wider knowledge and experience
- Clear professional competencies to help government communicators demonstrate their abilities and develop their career. You can read about the four key competencies of Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact in the [Government Communication Professional Competency Framework](#) on the GCS website.

The framework should be used alongside the [Civil Service Competency Framework](#), which sets out competencies for all civil servants.

Please note – you will need to be logged onto the Civil Service Learning website before clicking on this link.

- Clear information about how your role fits in with broader government communication priorities. To find out more, go to Chapter 11 of the [Government Communications Plan 2013/14](#).

Associate Membership

We ask:

- Associate members to develop skill and ability in one of the core communications roles. These include press and media relations, journalism, internal communications, campaigns and marketing and digital communications

We offer:

- The same benefits for learning and development opportunities and clear professional competencies to help you develop your career as for core members.

Affiliate Membership:

We ask:

- Affiliate members to network and share best practice.

We offer:

- Free training support and information about the communications competencies. This can be used to help you develop your career or to recruit other communications specialists.

You can read about these in the [Government Communication Professional Competency Framework](#) on the GCS website.

- Networking opportunities.

Recruitment

Government communicators are selected on the basis of fair and open competition. Promotion is based on merit, taking into account people's performance.

[Information on vacancies and career opportunities](#), as well as details about government communications is available on the GCS website.

More information about jobs across the Civil Service can be found on the [Civil Service Jobs website](#).

GCS runs centralised assessment and selection centres for new recruitment at Assistant Information Officer (AIO) and Information Officer (IO) grades. The assessment centres generate a long list of candidates suitable to be offered jobs across the GCS. The purpose of this is to minimise the need for Departments / ALBs to carry out external recruitment for these grades, as they have this long list from which to select new recruits. This has many advantages, such as:

- Providing a consistent level of capability of new recruits across the GCS
- Shortening the time taken to fill vacancies

- Providing a single channel for candidates to pursue if they wish to gain entry to the government communications profession
- Raising the profile of GCS as a prestigious employer in the communications marketplace.

The GCS corporate support service organises this recruitment process, drawing on existing GCS members across the profession to contribute to the sifting and assessment process.

The GCS does not employ unpaid interns.

Code of Conduct



Government departments, executive agencies and other organisations are responsible for the behaviour of their own staff.

However, government communications and the Government Communication Service operate within a professional context that is set by existing formal and informal codes of conduct, including:

- The Civil Service Code
- Vision statement for government communications
- Purpose of government communications
- PEX(ER) delivery principles
- Propriety guidance
- Queen's Regulations for Armed Forces personnel.

Civil Service Code

As Civil Servants, all GCS members must follow the Civil Service Code, which sets out the Civil Service values of:

- **Integrity** – putting the obligations of public service above personal interests
- **Honesty** – being truthful and open
- **Objectivity** – basing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence
- **Impartiality** – serving governments of different political parties equally well.

A copy of the Civil Service Code can be downloaded here:

<http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/values>

<http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/civil-service-code-2010.pdf>

Vision statement for government communications

Members of the Government Communication Service represent a communications community that help central government achieve its policy objectives through effective and efficient communication by pioneering and sharing best practice; increasing collaboration and co-ordination; and eradicating inefficient and unnecessary spend.

GCS members will deliver, across departmental boundaries, effective communication in the most transparent, accountable and responsible way.

Purpose of government communications

Government – including its departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies – may legitimately communicate where the activity:

- Fulfils a specific legal or statutory requirement, for example, the need to submit tax returns to an annual deadline
- Helps the public understand the government's programme, for example, changes to entitlements and welfare reform



- Influences attitudes and behaviours for the benefit of individuals or the wider public, for example, discouraging drink driving and encouraging healthy eating
- Enables the effective operation of services to the citizen, for example, the reform of electoral registration
- Informs the public in times for crisis, for example, a terrorist attack, pandemic or widespread flooding
- Enhances the reputation of the UK, for example, promoting the UK overseas to attract inward investment.

PEX(ER) delivery principles

GCS will work with departments and their agencies to ensure that government communications are delivered in line with the delivery principles identified by PEX(ER) in 2011, that government communicators should:

- Deliver, not just procure
- Focus on behavioural insights
- Use digital by default
- Use owned and earned before paid-for media
- Work in partnership
- Ensure value for money through effective evaluation
- Adhere to propriety guidance.

Propriety

GCS will operate at all times within the framework of propriety set for government communications. This framework mandates that government communication:

- Must be:
 - Relevant to government responsibilities
 - Objective and explanatory
 - Undertaken in an economic and appropriate way
- Must not be party political.

The framework also mandates that Civil Servants may not:

- Justify or defend policies in political terms
- Advance any policy as belonging to a particular party
- Directly attack the policies and opinions of opposition parties and groups
- Oversell policies, re-announce achievements or investments, or mislead the public.

Further information on propriety for government communicators can be found here: <https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/guidance/propriety-and-standards/>

In addition to the areas above, government communicators are bound by any existing departmental standards as set out by their employing organisation. Armed Services personnel working in government communications additionally remain bound by Queen's Regulations, a collection of orders and regulations in force in the **Royal Navy**, **British Army**, and **Royal Air Force**, forming guidance for officers of these armed services in all matters of discipline and personal conduct. **Queen's Regulations**.

Governance of GCS



The GCS is led by Alex Aiken, Executive Director of Government Communication (EDGC). He is based in the Cabinet Office and is the Head of Profession for government communications.

The Head of Profession operates under the ‘co-ordinator’ model of ‘functional leadership’. Under this model, government departments decide their communications priorities and have their own Directors of Communication. However, Directors of Communication also have dotted line accountability to the Head of Profession: by negotiation, the Head of Profession sets cross-government key work objectives and contributes to their performance appraisal.

The same principle applies across a range of government professions including Human Resources and Legal.

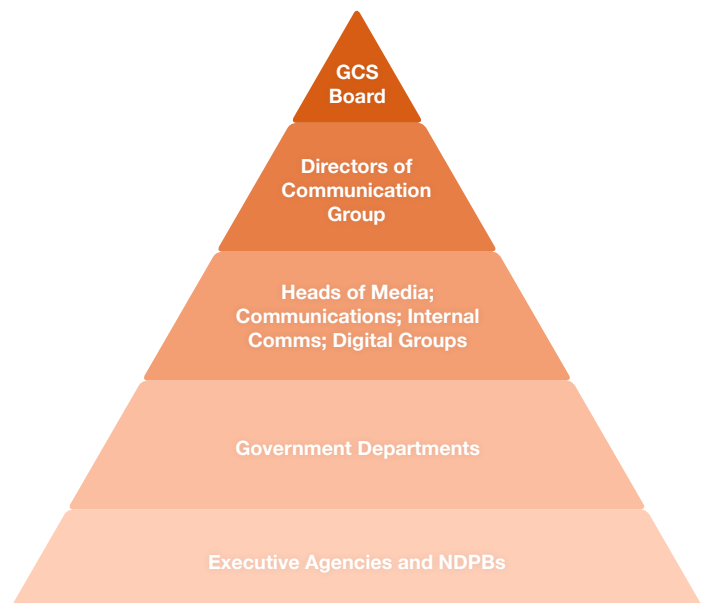
The Head of Profession is also responsible for:

- Overseeing funding for communications activity across government
- Influencing or vetoing spending on advertising, marketing and communications as part of the Cabinet Office’s Efficiency and Reform Group
- Agreeing the recruitment process for senior leaders. This involves drawing up a ‘long list’ of candidates to be interviewed for communications roles as senior civil servants. Where possible, the Head of Profession also sits on the recruitment panels for all Director of Communication posts
- Providing advice and guidance on promotion.

Governance

Governance of the GCS takes place at three main levels:

- Government Communication Service Board
- Directors of Communication Group
- ‘Heads of’ Groups.





GCS Board

The Government Communication Service Board is the most important decision-making body in the GCS. It is chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

Board membership includes two further Ministers, representatives from the senior GCS community, and a non-executive director with private-sector experience of communications.

The Board meets quarterly and governs the activity of the GCS. It works to deliver government policy priorities through the development, delivery and evaluation of progress against the annual Government Communications Plan.

The GCS Board ensures that:

- The Government Communication Service develops and delivers an appropriate annual government communication plan
- The plan contributes to the delivery of government policy priorities
- Government communications are delivered in an effective and efficient way
- The GCS can respond appropriately to risks and crises
- The GCS operates within the Civil Service Professions Best Practice Framework.

The Board collectively:

- Identifies and agrees high-level objectives;
- Approves the annual government communication plan
- Challenges performance and activity against the plan and government narrative
- Advises departments and the wider government communication community, including ALBs and agencies
- Mediates, where necessary, on cross-government communication issues
- Provides assurance to Cabinet that the GCS is delivering against all objectives and targets set.

In order for the governance of the profession to be transparent, a summary of issues discussed and actions agreed is published after each GCS Board.

Directors of Communication Group

A further forum for governance and decision making is the Directors of Communication (DoCs) Group, which is responsible for:

- Setting the overall direction of government communications
- Providing visible leadership of the government communications profession and communicating key decisions
- Contributing to and finalising the draft annual government communication plan
- Ensuring effective use of communications resources across government



- Ensuring departmental, group and hub communications operate in an integrated and effective way, delivering cross-government priorities and the annual government communication plan
- Capturing and considering ideas from government communicators and other stakeholders
- Agreeing and building professional skills in the GCS; championing professional development; and cultivating talent management
- Making recommendations to GCS Board
- Providing feedback and direction to the Heads Of groups and other parts of the GCS as required
- Use intelligence and analysis to horizon scan.

It meets every four weeks and decisions made there are cascaded to the 'Heads of' specialism groups for action and delivery. These groups are:

- Heads Of Media
- Heads of Internal Communications
- Heads of Digital
- Heads of Communications.

Each group is responsible for:

- Ensuring that each specialism contributes to the development and delivery of the annual government communication plan
- Ensuring that each specialism operates in an effective, efficient and educated way

- Working with GCS professional development team to identify future professional development activity within each specialism
- Capturing and considering ideas from government communicators and other stakeholders
- Collating and disseminating learning and best practice across the GCS.

Senior leadership expectations

The GCS aims to help every government communicator perform to the best of their potential. Senior leaders have a critical role in inspiring great performance, providing visible leadership and direction, and nurturing talent and creativity.

Directors of Communication work together to:

- Provide visible leadership of the government communications profession and their organisation
- Direct business delivery. This includes setting the directorate's objectives to support the government's business strategy
- Build partnerships and set standards across government
- Contribute to the annual government communications plan to set communications priorities for each of their departments
- Make sure all communications work provides value for money and meets business requirements
- Make recommendations to Ministers on the GCS Board on top communications priorities.



Every six months, Directors of Communication provide management information to the Head of Profession so that an assessment of the profession's performance can be made. Management information includes:

- A summary of each department's reputation, as measured by recognised evaluation techniques
- Effectiveness of media and press relations
- Effectiveness of paid for marketing and campaign activity
- Engagement levels for colleagues in the department.

Annually, Directors of Communication must also provide information on:

- Planning – information about communication priorities, whether departments met their business objectives, and the number of people working in communications roles in their department and the department's executive agencies
- The progress of people taking part in the GCS talent management programme, and any departmental talent management initiatives
- The percentage of communications colleagues who have taken part in at least four continuing professional development activities in a 12-month period.

Senior leaders within the GCS are expected to:

- Set communications objectives that support the government's priorities. This involves working with colleagues across government as well as with their teams in individual departments
- Manage performance to ensure standards remain high and that their team members take part in at least four continuous professional development activities every year
- Manage budgets as appropriate within their departments and in line with overall GCS funding streams
- Champion personal development and promote and support career pathway opportunities for their people
- Mentor candidates taking part in talent management programmes and promote mentoring at different leadership levels throughout their teams.



GCS group model for the alignment of the communication functions of arm’s length bodies and Whitehall departments

The introduction of a model for the alignment of the communications function of arm’s length bodies ALB’s and Whitehall Departments is one of eleven government communication reform projects undertaken under the Civil Service Functional Leadership Programme that established the new Government Communication Service (GCS).

The objective of the alignment project is to create a robust, yet flexible operating model for the professional communication function across a number of aligned organisations (most typically a central government department and its ALBs such as executive agencies).

The operating model aims to achieve:

Efficiency:

- by identifying opportunities to reduce operating costs; and
- reduce waste and avoid duplication of effort across the organisation.

Effectiveness:

- by improving the quality and consistency of communications for the organisation, including ministers, chief executives, external audiences and stakeholders;
- delivering better communications outcomes in support of policy objectives; and

- creating a flexible structure that is more capable of responding to changing or competing communications pressures.

Education:

- by facilitating the consistent implementation of best practice and GCS standards; and
- building capability, encouraging the pooling of knowledge, resources, expertise and greater networking across the organisation.

The model for alignment

The alignment model proposed is based upon a set of core principles. If fully adopted, the principles would create increased alignment and a framework to explore reduced duplication and increase consistency, with the corresponding benefits to operating efficiency.

Core principles

1. The core principles for the model use the authority of the GCS to set some clear and consistent goals in three key areas: strong financial controls, better co-ordination of communications to achieve value for money and building the professional capability of communications staff in ALBs. The principles include:
2. Department Directors of Communications shall **agree the scope of the Group** with the Permanent Secretary and agency heads of communication i.e. agree which ALBs/ agencies fall within the Group or out of scope. Some independent bodies such as regulatory



- bodies and government companies will be out of scope, however, a memorandum of understanding may be agreed in order for out-of-scope agencies to benefit from some of the model's elements for the benefit of staff (e.g. professional development opportunities) and professional communication standards. A rule of thumb is how the ALB receives its annual financial settlement. If this is via the central department, it is likely to be within scope of the Group.
3. Directors of Communications take the lead as **group head of profession / group head of communications**. Under the model ALB/ agency heads of communication have 'dotted line' responsibility to the departmental Director of Communications. This might involve setting one or more performance objectives and a role in recruitment of staff at Grade 6 level and above in Agencies/ALBs. This reflects the dotted line responsibility that Directors of Communications have to the Executive Director of Government Communications and the subsequent responsibility Directors of Communications hold for ensuring communications to the standard expected in the GCS.
 4. Directors of Communications and agency heads of communication should establish a **group communications board** and a governance structure that sets clear objectives and underpins the new way of working.
 5. The group should implement an agreed **standard operating model** for communications where detailed models are not currently in place this should be based on the agreed GCS campaign framework.
 - a. The group should identify **functional leads** where appropriate. The functional leads (in most, but not all cases) would sit in the central department but report into the group communications board, chaired by the Director of Communications. Each functional lead would:
 - b. be the recognised subject matter expert in that function (e.g. digital) for the Group;
 - c. be the link between central government (Cabinet Office and GDS) and the Group (so driving reform, sharing messages etc.);
 - d. promote the professional development of those working in that function in the Group;
 - e. recommend the best deployment of resource across the Group for that function to meet Group business priorities
 - f. promote best practice and maintain standards and consistency across the Group; and
 - g. escalate resource pinch-points or quality issues relating to that function through the group communications board.



6. Directors of Communications are **accountable for all advertising, marketing and communications expenditure** subject to ERG (Cabinet Office) spending controls. Directors of Communications will be expected to scrutinise and approve ALBs' bids above a threshold of £100,000 prior to submission to the ERG (Cabinet Office) for approval.
7. Directors of Communications are responsible for developing a **group communications plan** (as currently required for the annual government communications plan), and **a common planning or grid**, in order to help identify group communications priorities, resourcing priorities, areas to share expertise and provide mutual support etc.
8. ALBs are required to contribute data to their 'home' central department for the **annual departmental business planning process** (as requested by the Cabinet Office/ No10 Communications through Directors of Communications) in order to ensure value for money, underpin accountability and transparency of communications and identify opportunities for working together on communications projects across organisations.
9. The Director of Communications and Group Board are responsible for ensuring **GCS core competences are embedded** within ALBs. This involves identifying all communications professionals in the Group and ensuring staff have access to GCS professional development and follow the GCS performance management protocols integrated with their parent organisation's process.
10. Directors of Communications are responsible for ensuring that the group delivers excellent communications **consistent with GCS professional standards**.

Performance management



Government departments, executive agencies and other organisations are responsible for the performance and appraisal of their own staff.

However, all government communicators must be able to demonstrate the relevant skills for their role and grade as set out in the Government Communication Professional Competency Framework. The framework is used in various circumstances, including:

- Recruitment and selection
- Performance management
- Personal development planning to help you plan your learning opportunities
- Career development.

The framework is based around a model of communication called the Four 'I' s

By clicking on the links below you can view learning and development opportunities relevant to each topic.

- **Insight** – to help identify target audiences to help you make your communications more relevant
- **Ideas** – to help you develop messages and decide the best ways to reach your audience
- **Implementation** – to help deliver your expertise to the relevant people and audiences
- **Impact** – to help review whether what you are aiming to achieve has been achieved.

You can read more about the [Government Communication Professional Competency Framework](#) on the GCS website.

The Civil Service Leadership Statement: Inspiring; Confident; Empowering

Staff are also encouraged to develop and practice leadership skills which reflect the behaviours in the Civil Service Leadership Statement.

This **statement** of intent takes as its starting point the responsibility of the Civil Service for the effective delivery of the Government's programme and Ministers' priorities, living its values and serving the public. It highlights the 3 key characteristics that staff across the Civil Service have indicated they expect from effective leaders, and that Civil Service leaders promise to live up to:

- inspiring – about their work and its future
- confident – in their engagement
- empowering – their teams to deliver

The headline themes will be embedded in the performance agreements and objectives of all leaders, and the Statement will be supported by a new 360-degree reporting mechanism. Staff have the opportunity to assess their leaders and measure their performance against the values set out in the Leadership Statement.

The impact of the statement will also be continuously monitored, including through hard data – how it is reflected in recruitment, promotion and talent management practices, for example – and feedback from civil servants through our regular surveys and communications channels.

You can read [the statement and find further information here](#).



Professional development



Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Taking responsibility for your career is one of the most significant things you can do at work. That's why performance appraisal – with a focus on continuous improvement and managing poor performance – is so important.

Everyone working in the Government Communication Service must maintain a strong focus on career development. All government communicators must complete at least four pieces of continuing professional development (CPD) each year. Your line manager will work with you to ensure that any CPD undertaken helps address your development needs.

From 1 April 2015, sideways moves and promotion within the GCS will be unavailable to government communicators who do not complete sufficient CPD without a valid reason.

Continuing professional development can be achieved in many ways, including:

- Formal online learning
- Attending a face to face training course
- Coaching from a colleague, peer or manager
- Mentoring from a senior colleague
- Job shadowing a colleague to gain new experience
- Attachments / loans / secondments
- Reading relevant books, journals and blogs
- Carrying out personal online research
- Using digital and social media to build knowledge and exchange views with peers
- Attending conferences, networking meetings, and events
- Developing working relationships with new stakeholders.

As well as being important for your GCS membership, CPD you complete will be relevant for any membership you may hold of professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) or the Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC).

Demonstrating CPD

You must provide evidence that you have completed all CPD activities agreed by you and your line manager. As a rule the evidence should be formal, third party and include dates and details of the activity.

Formal training course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of participation from the event organiser • Copy of the delegate list evidenced by the event organiser • Attendance or completion certificate
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed mentoring log detailing meetings undertaken and development areas covered • Mentoring scheme certificate
E-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email or letter from the event organiser confirming participation • Confirmation of course booking or registration • Confirmation of completion
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of participation from the event organiser • Copy of the delegate list
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written summary of at least 200 words on the top and what was learned

Further information on CPD in the GCS is available [here](#).

Learning and development

The GCS operates a wide range of learning and development opportunities including:

- *Aspire* – an annual programme of free training places designed to help make government communications exceptional. *Aspire* is a companion to the current GCS core curriculum of paid-for courses and is designed for staff at all grades for central government departments and other selected government organisations
- A core curriculum of paid-for courses developed by the GCS but accessed through Civil Service Learning
- GCS mentoring programme. Two intakes each year are run to support and encourage government communicators to manage their own learning; maximise their potential; develop new skills; and improve their performance
- Free speakers events featuring some of the UK's brightest communication minds. These evening events feature speakers from the private sector, third sector and from across government.

Further information on GCS professional development opportunities can be found here: <https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/professional-development-2/>. All GCS activity contributes to your annual CPD target.

Professional reports and best practice

The Government Communication Service promotes new developments and emerging and best practice in both government communications and communications in general. This includes but is not limited to:

- Producing and publicising the annual plan for government communications
- Publicising individual departmental communication strategies
- Producing guidance and codes of conduct, 'how to' guides and other reference documents
- Running the profession's website as a central hub for engagement and information
- Producing reading lists (as recommended by DOCs and senior staff); reviews of communications-related books; and a monthly book club
- Publishing articles of interest and new academic communications research
- Commissioning and publishing case studies and examples of emerging best practice
- Publishing and acting upon the communication profession's results in the annual Civil Service staff survey.

Information on latest reports and best practice can be found on the [GCS website](#).

Departments, executive agencies and NDPBs are expected to also contribute to the sharing of emerging and best practice.

Networking

The GCS provides a range of opportunities for formal and informal networking. However, departments, executive agencies and NDPBs are expected to contribute by arranging activities within their organisation, group and geographic region.

The GCS members are encouraged to network at work and in their own time, and build their own business relationships both on and off line with fellow members.

Activities organised by GCS include but are not limited to:

- Speakers events
- Mentoring opportunities
- Partnership activities with the private sector and with relevant professional bodies
- An annual conference programme in London
- Regional conferences
- Partnership conferences with LGComms and other partner organisations
- Providing keynote speakers at other appropriate events.

A calendar of current activity is available on the GCS website. <https://gcn.civilservice.gov.uk/professional-development-2/upcoming-courses/>

Professional Membership of PRCA

The PRCA (Public Relations Consultants Association) is the largest PR association in Europe, representing over 12,000 people in agencies, communications teams, and individuals. The goal of the PRCA is to raise standards in PR and communications by providing members with industry data, facilitating the sharing of communications best practice, and creating networking opportunities.

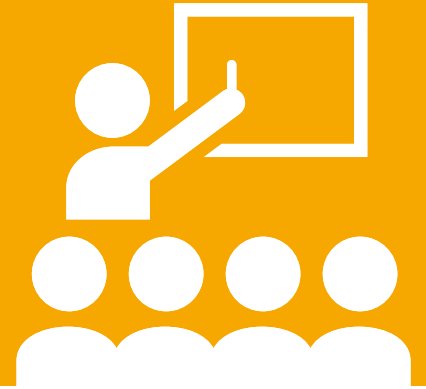
GCS has worked with the PRCA to agree that all our [core and associate members](#) are now members of the PRCA. If you work in a communications role within a government department or one of their associated arms length bodies you are automatically a member.

Benefits of PRCA membership for GCS members:

- Unlimited use of PRCA's extensive live and interactive webinars
- Unlimited access to all PRCA's masterclasses and expert briefings
- Free access to the PRCA's insight library
- Free access to the PRCA's regional and sectoral groups
- Member discount on all PRCA face to face training
- Free access to a global network of professionals

For more information, visit the GCS/PRCA portal: <http://prca.org.uk/GCSportal>

Talent management



Inspire: Talent management

The GCS recognises the talents of all its members, and provides opportunities for all government communicators to develop professional capability and undertake professional development in a structured and measured way.

The GCS helps develop senior leaders of tomorrow from the ranks of people already within the profession through its talent management programme – Inspire – for people with the aptitude and potential to become senior leaders.

Inspire is a year-long competitive programme open to people in G6, G7 and SCS1 grades. Successful applicants must demonstrate strong existing performance and considerable potential for future leadership.

The programme features structured placements into challenging job roles, peer networking, short attachments to external organisations such as Google and WPP, formal mentoring from existing senior leaders, and access to high quality academic expertise.

Departments and executive agencies are also expected to develop and use their own in-house talent management programmes as appropriate.

Early Talent Programme

The Cross Government Early Talent Programme is a two year development opportunity designed to support a cohort of high potential AIO to SIO to develop their skills and behaviours to reach Grade 7 in the Communications profession.

In year one participants will identify their current skills and investigate areas they need to develop by attending six specialist face-to-face learning events and eight master classes, supported by a professional coach and specially selected mentor. Participants are encouraged to learn by experience and use regular Action Learning Sets to consolidate what they learn.

In year two this insight and knowledge is applied to a loan to another government department or secondment to a professional body that fits the individual learning needs.

For more information, please contact your line manager or Director of Communications.

Managed moves, loans and secondments

We will make use of managed moves, loans and secondments in order to

- develop our people in their careers
- offer stretching and rewarding opportunities and
- meet the current and future needs of the GCS.

Managed moves are being trialled at SCS level to begin with. They will be used to offer talented individuals permanent moves to a role which will challenge them and also support the delivery of government communications priorities.

Loans are used to fill roles across the GCS on a temporary basis. Again to stretch and accelerate development. They also give GCS people exposure to different organisations and/ or communications disciplines.





Secondments both into and outside of the GCS from other sectors will be used. Outward secondments give GCS people experience of working in demanding roles outside government. They enhance skills and help to broaden knowledge and networks.

If you would like to benefit from one of these opportunities you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. They should then speak to your Director of Communications who will then make contact with the GCS Professional Development Team to explore available roles.

GCS Fast Stream

The Government Communications Service Fast Stream will be launched in September 2015. The purpose of the programme is to provide a new route is to attract and develop the next generation of Communications Leaders. Through a range of communications and leadership focussed roles and learning opportunities we will stretch and accelerate the development of the cohort to help them get there.

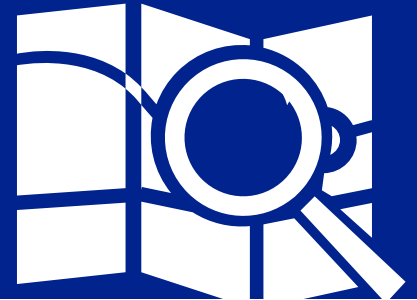
GCS Fast Streamers will primarily learn on the job, rotating into new roles and Departments every 6 months for the first two years, before settling down to two one-year placements. At least one of these will be outside London and potentially outside government, for example a regional newsroom.

The successful Fast Streamers have been through a rigorous assessment process. They have been tested via the normal Fast Stream route and, in addition, we have also assessed their motivation

for working for the GCS, their ability to innovate, as well as their communications skills against the GCS competency framework. The objective is for them to reach senior management positions in the future. Their performance will be closely monitored and evaluated and they will be given the support needed to achieve that aim.

The GCS is deeply committed to the development of everyone in the profession. Being a member of the Fast Stream is not the only route to GCS Leadership. However, GCS members who meet the requirements of the Fast Stream scheme and who wish to apply and benefit from this intensive programme will eligible to do so.

Guidance



The GCS provides information and guidance to help government communicators deliver exceptional public communications that change and improve lives.

Guidance includes but is not limited to;

Digital and Social Media

Digital and social media are vital communication tools. Government communicators must use social media to explain government policies to the public and keep up-to-date with new development, technologies and trends.

Most government communicators will already be using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube, to consult and engage with people before publishing new legislation, or letting people comment on proposed government policies. Specific guidance on [using Twitter](#) is available on the GCS website.

Follow the GCS on Twitter at [@UKgovcomms](#)

Other helpful advice and guidance includes:

- An Introductory Guide to Open Internet Tools for Civil Servants <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-skills-in-the-civil-service/an-introductory-guide-to-open-internet-tools-for-civil-servants>
- Government Communication Service propriety guidance for digital channels and social media on the GCS website

- [Home Office and Cabinet Office social media guidance for civil servants](#) can also be found on the GCS website.

Internal Communications

Internal communicators help leaders inform and engage employees in a way that motivates staff to maximise their performance and deliver departmental business strategies more effectively.

To enable and promote internal communications, the GCS has developed a multi-media toolkit for practitioners called [The IC Space](#).

Evaluation

Government communicators need to demonstrate the impact of everything they do by evaluating their work and ensuring that their campaigns, media relations and other activity are as effective as possible.

The GCS performance measurement framework ensures that communications objectives are aligned to strategic priorities, contain a mix of input, output, out-take and outcome metrics, and comprise a mix of both financial and non-financial data.

More information is available via the [Evaluation page](#) on the GCS website.

Working with Ministers and Special Advisers

Communication plays a major part in the role of government. Elected government has both a duty to inform and a right to be heard.

Working with Ministers and dealing with government policies is exciting and rewarding; being where it's happening is motivating and attracts a high level of commitment. The key to an effective relationship is to maintain professional integrity, with commitment to the task of giving professional advice based on communications expertise and a good understanding of propriety.

Read about [how to work with Ministers and Special Advisers](#).

Working with Parliament

Government communicators deal frequently with both Houses of Parliament as well as devolved governments and assemblies. Working successfully in a parliamentary environment – where specific rules, traditions and customs apply – depends on the extent of your knowledge and an awareness of specific sensitivities.

[Working with Parliament](#) sets out the key areas that touch on government communicators' work. It provides guidance so that your experience in dealing with Parliament brings results.

Working with Policy

Policy delivery is not a linear process that starts with policy development and ends with its communication to the target audience. The reality is that policy and communications are mutually dependent – they should work together from the start and be developed in tandem.

The processes that departments use to integrate policy and communications differ across government, but close partnership is essential to any model. [Working with policy](#) provides prompts that you can use on a day-to-day basis to get the most from working with your policy teams.

Working with Stakeholders

Communications professionals work with a range of stakeholders such as other government departments and agencies; HM Treasury and budget holders; delivery partners; pressure groups and lobbyists; regulators; and the public. [Working with Stakeholders](#) provides insight into best practice.

Behaviour Change

Behaviour change is one of the primary functions of government communications; helping change and save lives, as well as helping the government run more effectively and save taxpayer's money. Our approach is to use a mix of awareness raising, persuasion, practical help and behavioural theory, to demonstrate why changes in behaviour are important and to make these changes easy for the public to adopt.

The GCS guide to behaviour change and communications provides a common framework for all government communicators wishing to apply behavioural approaches to their work. It is a straightforward, actionable guide with the academia stripped back. The guide is aimed at all members of the GCS, whether in marketing, press office, internal communications or any other discipline, providing practical advice and examples of behaviour change communications in action.

Campaigning

The GCS campaign framework helps marketers, public relations staff and press officers develop and deliver effective, efficient and evaluated government communications. It can be used by all government communications professionals regardless of discipline or department.

For more information and links to free resources, read the [campaign framework](#).

Customer Journey Mapping

A customer journey map is a way to describe all the experiences a customer has with your organisation and the emotional responses they provoke – from their first impression of your building, to speaking to staff or receiving a service.

In government, the process of providing a service is complex: multiple interactions take place over long timeframes with little by way of tangible outputs. This [customer journey mapping](#) tool helps identify a customer's interaction with an organisation, their thought processes and reactions, which can reveal opportunities for improvement and innovation in the customer's experience.

Writing a Communication Strategy

A communication strategy is a single, coherent narrative that describes a communications solution to a problem or bundle of problems. It sets out the nature of the problem or challenge; key considerations; communication choices; key drivers of decisions; and evaluation criteria. More details can be found here [writing a communication strategy](#).

Diversity and Equality



The GCS is not an employing organisation. However, in all its activities it will work to support Civil Service and departmental policies and guidance on diversity and equality. These include but are not limited to:

- Childcare
- Religion or belief
- Sexuality and sexual orientation
- Age
- Bullying and harassment
- Caring and carer responsibilities
- Disability
- Gender equality
- Gender identity
- Race and ethnicity
- Work / life balance.