



HM Government

**UK Government  
Communication  
Plan 2021/2022**

**BUILD  
BACK  
BETTER.**







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was approved by cross-government Directors of Communication in March 2021. The following people have been involved in the creation of the Government Communication Plan 2021/2022. They might have contributed to its content or designed the document.

Alice Preedy, Charley Green, Victoria Fell, Joseph Palasz, Peter Heneghan, Amanda Svensson, Frances Smithson, Robin Attwood, Bethany West, Noel McGarrell, Henry Jamieson, Jo Pennington, Kohinoor Meghji, Elisabeth Vanderstock, Claire Pimm, Gemmaine Walsh, Anna Milne, Sian Hibbert, Georgina Day, Ushma Mistry, Abigail Emery, Eleanor Prince, Ben Wilkinson, Alasdair Crews, Dominique Lemon, Emma Turner, Valentina Bollenback, Ashley Winter, Amal Haouet, Nathan Birac, Victoria Maskell, Paula Edwards, Amy Clark, Tom Carney, Will Harvey-Powell, Philippa Hutchins, Julianah Owusu, Sharon Sawers, Craig Woodhouse, Jenny Sheen, Nelly Lawrie, Jo Gok, José Riera, Verity Hambrook-Skinner, Flavia Piggins,

Toby Nation, Sam Di Talamo, James Cox, Russell Neilson, Suzanne Edmond, Sarah Horn, Dawn Lauder, Wendy Fielder, Chloe Nuttall-Musson, Dan Ramsay, Louise Kennedy, Jen Wood, Kate Wratten, Helen Bower-Easton, Kate Taylor Tett, Poli Stuart-Lacey, Kat Cox, Olaf Henricson-Bell, Megan Poole, Emily Johnson, Simon Baugh, Laura Jones, Phoebe Gardner, David Holdstock, Maria Croppi, Simon Wren, Jennie Blake, Victoria Gradden, Emily Tofield, Katherine Pateman, Alastair C, Andy Pike, Darragh McElroy, Anna Macmillan, Clark Dunn, Chris Herdman, Dafydd Jones, Charlotte Bartrop, Zach Quirk, Hannah Spearman-Oxx, Lauren Howard, Leonora Chan, Caelin Robinson, Matthew Walmsley, Catherine Hunt, Carl Newns, Helen Card,

Alex Oakes, Elspeth Groundwater, Dan Allen, Bethany Teo.







# CONTENTS

- 3 Acknowledgements
- 5 Ministerial Foreword
- 6 Achievements in 2020/2021

## **OUR PURPOSE AND VISION**

- 11 Introduction from HMG Directors of Communication
- 12 About the Government Communication Service (GCS)
- 13 Our Future: Reshaping GCS

## **OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2021/2022**

- 15 Prime Minister's Priorities for 2021/2022: Build Back Better
- 16 Beating COVID-19 and Backing the NHS
- 17 Build Back Better
- 18 Build Back Fairer
- 19 Build Back Safer
- 20 Build Back Stronger
- 22 Build Back Greener
- 23 Delivering for the UK

## **OUR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

- 25 Modern Communication Operating Model (MCOM)
- 27 Functional Standard: Upholding Excellent Communication
- 29 GCS Curriculum
- 30 Harnessing the Power of Behavioural Science
- 32 Digital Innovation
- 32 Driven by Data
- 33 Delivering Locally
- 34 Working Globally
- 36 Final Word from Alex Chisholm
- 37 Campaigns for 2021/2022

Some photographs in this document were taken before the COVID-19 pandemic. All photoshoots that took place during the pandemic followed appropriate government guidance, including social distancing measures.

# MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

I am delighted to present this year's Government Communication Plan.

This has been an unprecedented year for our nation in which the need for a united voice to communicate our priorities clearly to citizens and – in some cases – effect behavioural change, has never been greater.

Emerging from the pandemic, the public will rightly demand that the money, powers and trust vested in the government are used ever more effectively to improve their lives and prospects. Our collective communication will help drive the pace and scale of our recovery by articulating how we intend to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build back better.

Our priorities for the year ahead are clear:

- **Beat COVID-19 and Back the NHS** – we will encourage people to take better care of their health, change the way they access NHS services and build trust and confidence in the health system.
- **Build Back Better** – we will support economic recovery, increase job opportunities and level up across all four corners of the UK.

- **Build Back Fairer** – we will work to level up opportunities across the country, as well as supporting the disadvantaged and protecting the most vulnerable.
- **Build Back Safer** – we will make our neighbourhoods safer, improve national security and create more secure borders.
- **Build Back Stronger** – we will capitalise on post-Brexit opportunities, strengthen the Union and send a clear message to our international partners about what Global Britain stands for.
- **Build Back Greener** – we will help to build a greener, cleaner UK, achieving Net Zero by 2050.
- **Delivering for the UK** – we will keep our citizens informed about critical legislation and help them to access vital public services.

Government communicators will also be supporting and promoting major events this year, using the UK's role as hosts of the G7 Summit in Cornwall's Carbis Bay and the upcoming COP26 conference in Glasgow to advocate for shared solutions to global challenges and showcase our nation's strengths on the international stage.

The work set out in this year's plan, particularly the further detail on Reshaping

the Government Communication Service, represents a step change on this journey to more effective government communications. We believe our messages to citizens will have greater impact, and cost the taxpayer much less, if departments work together on a smaller number of cross-cutting campaigns.

I would like to thank the Government Communication Service for all they have done to respond quickly and flexibly to the difficult, dynamic situation of the pandemic, and for demonstrating the importance of clear messaging in the relationship between government and those we serve. I look forward to working together as we continue to harness the creativity and ingenuity of our communicators to the benefit of the country.

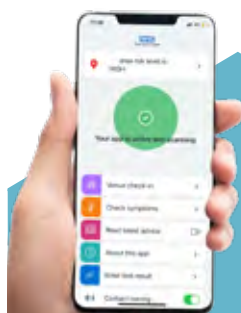
**Julia Lopez MP, Parliamentary Secretary,  
Cabinet Office**



# ACHIEVEMENTS



Our COVID-19 campaigns are estimated to have contributed to saving between 22,629 and 27,658 lives, and prevented between 1.5 and 1.8 million infections between April and December 2020.\*



**21m**

The COVID-19 campaigns helped deliver over 21 million downloads of the NHS Covid App.



At its peak, almost all employers were aware of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (99%).



Over 80,000 businesses registered to take part in Eat Out to Help Out.

\* Figures calculated using Wavemaker econometric modelling on social distancing / HFS campaigns that ran between Apr-Dec 2020, based on YouGov polling data for Cabinet Office, ONS and MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis assumptions on infection and transmission rates. Range of infections prevented and lives saved based on average R rate range in this period.



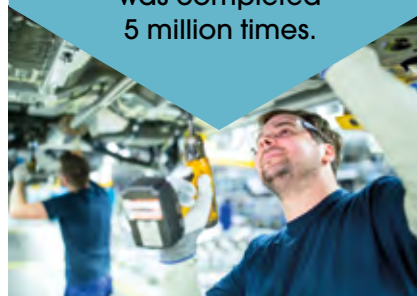
Four in five (81%) UK SMEs, as well as 71% of the general public, recognised our Check Change Go campaign.

**55m**

There were 55 million visits to Transition content on GOV.UK from July 2020 to January 2021.

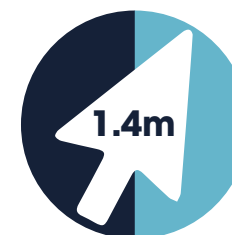


The Brexit Checker Tool was completed 5 million times.



**6,000**

The police recruitment campaign exceeded its first target of recruiting 6,000 new police officers over a month ahead of its March 2021 deadline.



The Jobhelp campaign site was visited by over 1.4 million individuals: around half of them took immediate action to look for vacancies.

**Teaching** Every Lesson Shapes a Life.

41,472 people entered teacher training this year, an increase of 23% on 2019.

**+25,000**

The Our NHS Allied Health and Nursing recruitment campaign led to almost 25,000 more applicants to relevant subjects on UCAS.



# 4.5m



Since the relaunch of the Cyber Aware campaign, 4.5 million reports have been made and over 30,000 scams have been taken down as a result.



## +1,000%

The #YouAreNotAlone campaign increased visits to the GOV.UK support page for domestic abuse by over 1,000% during the first two weeks.

**£1** = 1,000 PEOPLE



For every £1 of HMG spend on the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign, over 1,000 people were reached through pro-bono advertising.

## +922%

Visits to the Let's Talk Loneliness website increased by 922% during Loneliness Awareness Week.



The Everyone In scheme likely avoided over 21,000 infections and 260 deaths among the homeless population.

## 6,000

The probation officer recruitment campaign delivered over 6,000 applicants – meeting its target ahead of time as well as targets set for male and BAME applications.

**LEGAL SERVICES ARE GREAT**

## £650,000



The Legal Services are GREAT campaign recorded around £650,000 in export wins, with a further £4m forecast over the next four years.

## 32,000

Over 32,000 businesses have registered for the Northern Ireland Trader Support service – double the target number.

## CAMPAIGNS

### COVID-19

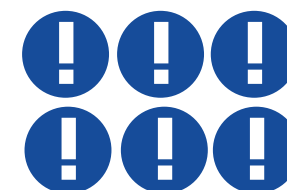
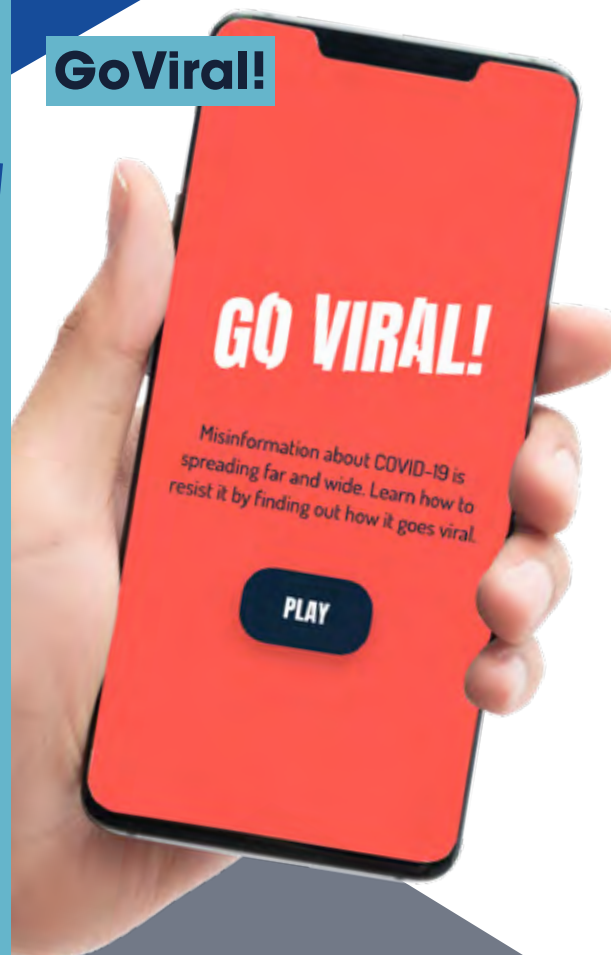


Our COVID-19 campaigns have reached **95%** of adults an average of **17** times.



For example, teaching seven in eight people vital preventative behaviours with Hands, Face, Space.

### GoViral!



**59,800**

**GCS International worked with the University of Cambridge to build the GoViral! game, and 'inoculated' almost 59,800 people against COVID-19 misinformation.\*\***

\*\*GoViral! works on inoculation theory, which means exposing people to safe 'doses' of COVID-19 misinformation so when they see it in their social media feeds they can recognise it and therefore ignore and report it.



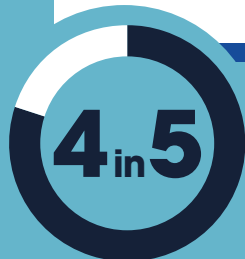
## Check Change Go



**NEW RULES FOR BUSINESS  
WITH EUROPE ARE HERE**

USE THE BREXIT CHECKER  
TOOL FOR BUSINESS ACTIONS

ACT NOW AT  
**GOV.UK/TRANSITION**



Four in five UK  
SMEs recognised  
the Check Change  
Go campaign



.....50%

and half of all SMEs  
reported taking action  
as a direct result of  
the campaign.

## Food is GREAT



**£430m**

The Food is GREAT showcase at  
the China International Import  
Expo 2020 led to trade deals  
worth over £430 million.



# OUR PURPOSE AND VISION

Through the Reshaping GCS programme, we will help to deliver the Prime Minister's agenda as a stronger and more unified organisation – using our world-class communication to improve the lives of citizens in all four corners of the UK, as well as internationally, and build back better than ever before.

## INTRODUCTION FROM HMG DIRECTORS OF COMMUNICATION



We are extremely proud of the work that government communicators have carried out over the past year during an unprecedented time of national crisis. Our efforts to communicate clearly and effectively have been fundamental to the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to save both lives and livelihoods. Thank you to colleagues across the Government Communication Service who have contributed to this collective effort and who continue to do so.

As we look ahead to the next year, it is vital that we do not overlook the many lessons we can learn from the pandemic and its profound impact on our profession, our practices and our audiences. The next year brings with it the opportunity for us as communicators to focus on the skills and ways of working which we developed at pace over the course of the pandemic.

We will harness these skills to support the Prime Minister's plan to build back better – using communication to relay life-saving public health messaging, back businesses to recover, maximise the new horizons that our successful EU deal has unlocked, and to build a greener, cleaner world for future generations.

This plan sets out these new priorities and the world-class communication and campaigns that will support them.

In 2021, we will also continue to drive forward progress with our Reshaping GCS programme, playing our part in the modernisation of the Civil Service.

We will work together to further unify our profession and our communication across government, to improve our impact across all communication disciplines, and to deliver fewer, bigger, better campaigns.

To our fellow communicators, thank you once again for your hard work and dedication through one of the most difficult periods in our country's recent history.

### **Alex Aiken, Executive Director, Government Communication and HMG Directors of Communication:**

**Andy Pike  
Anna Macmillan  
Conrad Bird  
Craig Woodhouse  
Dafydd Jones  
Dan Ramsay  
David Holdstock  
Emily Tofield  
Gerald Mullally  
Helen Bower-Easton  
James Cox**

**Jen Wood  
José Riera  
Olaf Henricson-Bell  
Poli Stuart-Lacey  
Sharon Sawers  
Shiona Adamson  
Simon Baugh  
Simon Wren  
Suzanne Edmond  
Toby Nation  
Wendy Fielder**



# ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION SERVICE (GCS)

## Who we are

The Government Communication Service (GCS) is the professional body for public service communicators working in government departments, agencies and arm's length bodies. Led by Executive Director of Government Communication Alex Aiken, we are a community of communication professionals, serving the public across the United Kingdom and around the world. From Whitehall to Whitehaven, Inverness to Cardiff and Belfast – we work across all four corners of the United Kingdom to make it a better place for all who live here.



### Did you know?

At the end of 2020, GCS collaborated with industry bodies and experts to develop a report on the impact of COVID-19 on the work of professional communications. [Read the full report](#) on the GCS website.

## What we do

We deliver world-class public service communication that supports ministers' priorities, enables the efficient and effective operation of public services, and improves people's lives. Our audiences are local, national and international and we work with them to ensure our communication is relevant and meaningful – whether in our media work or internal and stakeholder communications. We also work with the best industry talent from professional bodies, public sector organisations and external communication agencies who help us to deliver effective and impactful campaigns.

## How we work

GCS is one of 14 functions that operate across the Civil Service. GCS is governed through departmental Directors of Communication and the GCS Board, which is chaired by Minister Lopez. The board makes recommendations on the direction, operation and development of the profession and holds us to account for the implementation of our major campaigns.

## Where are we going next?

In July 2020, GCS announced 'Reshaping' plans to form a more united, modern profession running fewer, bigger and better campaigns. In 2021/22, GCS will build on the impactful communication and many lessons of the pandemic – with leaner, more effective campaigns that will improve people's lives.

## Our culture

GCS is proudly committed to attracting, supporting and developing a diverse workforce, and fostering a culture of inclusion. In October 2020, we launched an updated **Diversity and Inclusion in Practice Action Plan**. This action plan supports teams in continuing to build an inclusive environment and ensures that everyone in the GCS has the tools they need to deliver diversity in practice.



## OUR FUTURE: RESHAPING GCS

Reshaping GCS is a modernisation programme that will enable us to build the best profession possible. The programme forms part of the wider Civil Service reform and will modify, unify and simplify our approach, enabling us to speak to the public with one voice.

The programme will improve the experience of everyone in GCS. By adopting this unified approach, we will break down departmental silos and harness our shared expertise. As with all areas of the public sector, we must be as efficient as possible with our resources. It is right we consider the size of our communication functions, looking at ways to be more effective and making the best use of the taxpayers' money.

Ultimately, Reshaping GCS will provide a host of benefits to all communicators – from an improved training offer to better career opportunities. It will enable us to deliver fewer, bigger and better campaigns that improve the lives of citizens across all four corners of the United Kingdom.

The programme comprises eight themes, which you can read more about [here](#).



### We will:

1. Raise our standards, developing excellence in communication across all disciplines.
2. Revolutionise our campaigns, running fewer, that are bigger, better and driven by data.
3. Create enhanced career opportunities with a clear pathway of progression, as part of a single GCS profession.
4. Weave diversity and inclusion into the design and implementation of the programme at every stage.
5. Reach our audiences more directly with our digital capability and rapid response teams.
6. Deliver a new central leadership team and structure.
7. Drive efficiency through our campaign single budget, ensuring the best possible value for money.
8. Optimise our employment approach, while continuing to recruit the brightest and best and better develop our people.

### How can I stay up to date?

This year, we will focus on confirming future plans for the broad structure, teams and roles. You can read all the latest updates on Reshaping GCS at [gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/reshaping-gcs](https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/reshaping-gcs).

**Gem Walsh**  
Transformation Director, Reshaping GCS





# OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2021/2022

“...this moment also gives us a much greater chance to be radical  
and to do things differently... to build back better”

—Prime Minister Boris Johnson, 30 June 2020





## PRIME MINISTER'S PRIORITIES FOR 2021 / 2022: BUILD BACK BETTER

The Prime Minister has set out a clear roadmap for how the government will build back better – not only beating COVID-19, but coming back stronger than ever before.

In 2021 we will run fewer, bigger and better campaigns that support the following priorities:

1. **Beating COVID-19 and Backing the NHS:** saving lives and protecting the NHS by encouraging people to take better care of their health.
2. **Build Back Better:** a focus on economic recovery, supporting employment through the Plan for Jobs and ensuring investment levels up opportunity.

3. **Build Back Fairer:** increasing opportunities across the country, with better education, housing, skills and infrastructure.
4. **Build Back Safer:** upholding law and order, improving national security and strengthening our borders.
5. **Build Back Stronger:** capitalising on post-Brexit opportunities, promoting our global interests and building the strength of the Union.
6. **Build Back Greener:** making green industries fit for the future, hosting a successful COP26 and leading the way globally to reach Net Zero by 2050.
7. **Delivering for the UK:** promoting essential and statutory government activity and informing the public of critical information.

The next pages show some of the communication activity planned for the coming year that will help to deliver these key priorities, as well as recent successes that we will build on.



# BEATING COVID-19 AND BACKING THE NHS

We will continue to drive changes in public behaviours to help beat COVID-19, protect the NHS and save lives.

Our public health campaigns throughout the pandemic have been consistently effective. Our COVID-19 communications are estimated to have saved between 22,629 and 27,658 lives and prevented between 1.5 and 1.8 million infections between April and December 2020.\* The NHS Covid App was downloaded over 13 million times in the first seven days – more downloads than any other country in the world.

\* Figures calculated using Wavemaker econometric modelling on social distancing / HFS campaigns that ran between Apr–Dec 2020, based on YouGov polling data for Cabinet Office, ONS and MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis assumptions on infection and transmission rates. Range of infections prevented and lives saved based on average R rate range in this period.

This year, the UK-wide **vaccination programme** is at the heart of the government's strategy to manage COVID-19. The UK government has secured over 400 million doses of vaccines and we will continue to drive vaccine confidence and uptake.

Our communication will also support the NHS to have the workforce it needs through the **We Are The NHS** recruitment campaign. Last year, the campaign helped 34,190 people onto nursing degree courses, a 20% increase on the previous year. Additionally, over 900,000 new people accessed the adult social care microsite, with 10% going on to search for a job on the page. This year, our health recruitment campaigns will expand to help recruit 26,000 primary care staff and fill 87,000 other vacancies across the NHS.



We help to mitigate pressures on the NHS through our **Help Us Help You** campaign, which continues this year. Last year's flu vaccine campaign contributed to over 80% of over 65s taking up the vaccine – the highest proportion ever. Our **Better Health** campaign will also build on its success in 2021 by encouraging people to take care of their own health. Since launching in July 2020, there have been 750,000 downloads of the 12 Week Weight Loss Plan app and 1.47 million Every Mind Matters mental health action plans completed. What's more, over 700,000 people reported making an attempt to quit smoking as a result of our communication.

# BUILD BACK BETTER



In 2021, we will continue to support the economy and drive recovery as we emerge from the pandemic. Last year, the government spent £280 billion on an unprecedented package of economic support to protect people's jobs and livelihoods, while supporting businesses and public services across the UK.

The COVID-19 **Business Support** campaign reached 94% of all SMEs last year and the **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** has supported 10 million jobs to date. On top of this, over 1.4 million people visited our **Jobhelp** advice website and, since applications opened in November, our **Kickstart** campaign has led to over 700 firms offering job placements to 120,000 young people at risk of long-term unemployment.

In 2021, our communication will support the government's continued commitment to businesses and the employment of individuals across the entire country. At the centre of this is our **Plan for Jobs** campaign, which reached over 26 million people (leading to almost 185 million impressions) in just two months at the start of this year. The campaign helps all sectors and regions to support, protect and create jobs – whether that's through promoting T Levels to improve skills, recruiting for the Armed Forces or access to Universal Credit.

This year, we will also continue to back businesses across the United Kingdom, increasing business confidence to invest, innovate and export. We will ensure that companies can seize new global trading opportunities and that the United Kingdom

remains one of the best places in the world to live, invest and do business with.

At the heart of Build Back Better is supporting and spreading opportunity across the country. Our communication will demonstrate how the government is delivering for every part of the UK – from investing in new hospitals, schools and infrastructure, to ensuring everyone can get the skills they need to access opportunities wherever they live. Our **Young People's Futures** campaign will bring together products, policies and campaigns aimed at the education and employment of young people for the first time, to make sure that every young person – wherever they are in the UK – can access opportunities more easily.



# BUILD BACK FAIRER



2021 brings a unique opportunity to build back fairer, levelling up opportunities for all citizens through better education, housing, skills and infrastructure.

Our campaigns this year will work to build a fairer society for all, spreading opportunity to support social mobility, improving financial awareness, championing fair treatment of disabled people and ensuring equal rights at work.

This begins with securing the right start in life for children: last year, over 41,400 people entered initial teacher training, and this year we will continue to motivate talented people to join. Our inspirational **Get Into Teaching** campaign will build on the 23% increase in initial teacher training applicants achieved last year, and we

will continue to support existing teachers to thrive.

Our **Frontline** recruitment campaign will also continue to attract graduates and career changers to social work, helping to improve the life chances of children and families facing challenges. 2021 applications closed in November 2020 – the earliest date in the organisation's history and at 115% of their overall recruitment target.

Everyone should be able to access services to improve their family's financial, housing and employment prospects. Through increasing uptake of digital skills training, early years support, debt advice, and help to buy a home, we will make this a reality for every citizen.

Building back fairer means equality for all: last year, our Black History Month digital campaign, **#OurHistoryOurHeroes**, reached almost 8 million people, highlighting the achievements of Black public servants throughout history. Furthermore, publishing the National Strategy for Disabled People and our Health and Benefits Green Paper this spring will put the needs of disabled people at the forefront of the country's recovery.

Our communication will highlight the benefits and protections afforded to workers. We will promote the increases in the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage, as well as the rights of all workers to have access to entitlements such as holiday pay, shared parental leave and safer working practices.

# BUILD BACK SAFER



Our communication will help make the United Kingdom a safer, more secure place to live and work. Last year, the **police recruitment** campaign achieved its first target of 6,000 additional officers across England and Wales one month ahead of schedule. This year, we will continue to support the recruitment of 20,000 total additional frontline police officers by 2023. Our campaigns also help to strengthen our prison and probation services. Last year, the **probation officer** campaign achieved its application target within two weeks of launching, and 2,000 jobs were filled via the **prison officer recruitment** campaign.

Now that we have left the European Union and secured a deal, our **points-based immigration system** campaign will continue raising awareness of the UK's new fairer

immigration system, which last year led to 85% of targeted employers reporting they had taken action to prepare.

Internationally, we will continue to promote stability alongside groups such as the UN, and as hosts of the **G7 Summit**, we will encourage leaders to build back better from COVID-19. Additionally, our campaigns will continue to recruit entrants into the Armed Forces, as they keep the peace around the world, tackling terrorism and keeping Britain safe.

We will also help to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Last year, the **#YouAreNotAlone** campaign increased visits to the GOV.UK support page for domestic abuse by over 1,000% during the first two weeks. This year, following the release of the **Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy**, we will work across

government and with stakeholders to protect people from abuse in all its forms. Our new communication approach, **Stopping Abuse Together**, looks to increase disclosure and the number of reports by providing support and advice all in one place, as well as preventing offenders committing abuse in the first place.

Finally, the threat from online harms cannot be ignored. Last year, the **Cyber Aware** campaign helped to achieve 4.5 million reports of cyber scams, and **Don't Feed The Beast** led to a 19% increase in confidence among campaign recognisers in their ability to spot fake social media profiles. This year, we will continue our work increasing resilience to cyber attacks and helping the public protect themselves against hostile state activity.

# BUILD BACK STRONGER



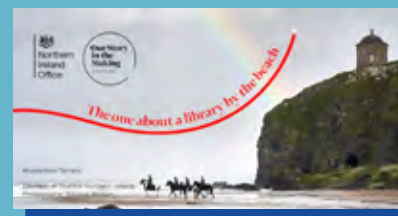
2021 is a seminal year for the UK. It is the first time in over 40 years that we are an independent trading nation, and it is the year that we take on the G7 Presidency and the 26th COP Summit in Glasgow. We will mark the UN's 75th anniversary and chair the UN Security Council; bring together the Global Partnership for Education to finance girls' education; participate in the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting; and mark the maiden deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth.

Our communication will help to deliver vital international priorities, whether through our **COVID-19 vaccines** campaign to promote equitable access to vaccines in 92 developing countries, or our **Girls' Education** campaign, that will build on this government's manifesto commitment of



getting 40 million more girls into school. We will showcase the UK's role as a force for good in the world by seizing the opportunities of Britain's presidency of the **G7** and the UN climate change conference, **COP26**, which we will host in Glasgow.

We will also support our economic recovery from the pandemic by persuading



individuals and businesses overseas to trade, invest, visit, study, and work in the UK. Last year, our **GREAT Ready to Trade** marketing campaigns secured millions of pounds' worth of expenditure, across over 50 inward investment projects, and created demand that led to over 11,000 queries – 143% of the target. We must also continue to secure our influence and attractiveness to younger







generations: when the time is right, we will continue promoting **Study UK**, which last year targeted students in 16 key markets and reached over 12 million people.

March 2021 saw the publication of the **Integrated Review**, which articulates the government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for our national security and foreign policy. Building back stronger also means ensuring that people overseas perceive the UK as a Union of four nations which work together as a credible, problem-solving partner in the international arena and a science superpower.

Finally, we must **strengthen the Union** through highlighting the fact that action taken by the UK government helps to solve local problems, that we are better as a whole than the sum of our parts, and through building pride in the work done collectively as a Union of nations to help others around the world. We are stronger together, and our campaigns will clearly communicate the practical, economic and emotional ties that make us a truly United Kingdom. For example, this year, we will mark the **Centenary of Northern Ireland** and showcase the stories of the nation's people and places.



# BUILD BACK GREENER



Last year, the Prime Minister outlined his 10 Point Plan to work with communities and businesses to achieve a greener, more prosperous UK. Through ambitious activity such as investing in carbon capture usage and advancing offshore wind, the UK will lead the way in starting a Green Industrial Revolution, supporting hundreds of thousands of green jobs.

A key milestone in our journey will be the **COP26** conference in Glasgow, where we will bring together world leaders to accelerate climate action. We will use this platform to demonstrate the UK's commitment to going green – for example, our aim to become the world's number one centre for green technology and finance, and planting 30,000 hectares of trees a year by 2025. We will lead this work through partnerships with civil

society, business, communities and leaders across the globe to drive progress and ultimately, reach Net Zero by 2050.

Throughout 2021 and beyond, we will use communication to drive both citizen and business engagement in beating climate change. We will increase the momentum of the **Together for Our Planet** campaign, partnering with businesses and driving at least 100,000 pledges to take action ahead of the conference in November. We will drive awareness and understanding of COP26, build trust and credibility in the actions we're taking to combat climate change, and start to lay the foundations for the collective long-term behaviour change needed to tackle the issue.

In its first three months, Together for Our Planet reached over 4 million people and generated over 1,200 pieces of international coverage in the run up to the UK-hosted Climate Ambition Summit in December. The summit ultimately delivered 24 new commitments from countries to eliminate their own contribution to climate change.

We will also highlight how making small changes can make a world of difference – whether that's motivating the public to increase their uptake of walking and cycling through the **Active Travel** campaign, using less plastic, or raising awareness of the new **E10** fuel, resulting in lower emissions and cleaner air for all.



# DELIVERING FOR THE UK



We will promote essential government activity, ensuring our citizens have access to vital services and keeping them informed about critical legislation. From guidance on health and safety at work to information on NHS screening, our campaigns are essential to the smooth running of the country.

Our Check Change Go campaign helped to drive 55 million visits to the GOV.UK Transition site last year. In the final phase of the **Transition** campaign, we will continue to support businesses and citizens to trade with and travel to the EU and will ensure that businesses and citizens are aware of new arrangements, as well as highlighting the new opportunities that lie ahead.

The **DVLA Online** campaign will help drivers to access critical services more easily and quickly – from getting a replacement vehicle log book, to updating the address on your driving licence – while the **DVLA Vehicle**

**Excise Duty** campaign will reduce the number of untaxed vehicles on the road, helping to fund essential public services.



Our **Self Assessment** campaign will drive 12 million customers to submit their tax return on time, leading to billions of pounds for public services as well as helping customers to avoid penalties. We will also raise the profile of support available to customers who are worried about payment.

The **THINK!** campaign will continue to reduce the behaviours that lead to road casualties, challenging the social norms behind drink driving and tackling critical issues such as speeding and mobile phone use among young men. The campaign will also ensure that any greater uptake of cycling and walking happens safely, encouraging behaviours that protect those most vulnerable on the road.



A photograph of three people in an office setting, overlaid with a large blue geometric graphic. The graphic consists of several overlapping triangles and polygons in shades of blue and teal. In the background, a woman with blonde hair is smiling, and two men are looking towards her. The overall scene is professional and collaborative.

# OUR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

GCS continuously focuses on raising standards to ensure we remain a world-class profession. We aim to lead the way in developing innovative practices, adapting to the fast-paced, dynamic communication landscape and consistently delivering high-quality results.



## MODERN COMMUNICATION OPERATING MODEL (MCOM)

Our operating model, **MCOM2.0**, provides government departments with the proposed structures, skills and capabilities that a high-performing communications directorate or team must have and puts audience understanding at the heart of policy and service design. Here, colleagues from across GCS share their experiences of working in the various disciplines:



### INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

**Helen Card**

**Deputy Head of Civil Service  
Communication, Cabinet Office**

"In the last 12 months, we have had to completely change the way we communicate: our preference of face-to-face communication is no longer an option. It has been challenging, however new initiatives such as online conferences and live Q&As have paid off: the 2020 People Survey saw an increase across all engagement indicators."

### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**Alex Oakes**

**Head of External Affairs, Department for  
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

"Over the last year, our team has focused on building relationships with influential partners, such as UK Hospitality, to increase our reach when communicating COVID restrictions, support and guidance to businesses. We worked with policy officials to set up roundtables and a consultation as part of developing the COVID-secure guidance, and secured 25 supportive quotes to publish alongside its launch."

## MARKETING

### Elspeth Groundwater

#### Campaign Lead, Department for Education

“Working on the Back to School campaign was incredibly challenging but equally rewarding, and showcased the importance of collaborative working across departments. Campaign activity used low-cost and no-cost methods, social media and paid-for and influencer advertising. By focusing our messaging to achieve positive shifts in attitude, around 25% of parents and young people who saw the campaign said it influenced their decision to go back.”

## MEDIA

### Dan Allen

#### Senior Press Officer, HMRC

“This year, our role has focused on getting vital information on COVID support schemes to a wide audience, with emphasis on clarifying what is available when, as circumstances of the pandemic change. We have used a variety of approaches for this: from working with TV presenters such as Martin Lewis, to briefing regional journalists on statistics showing how the government has supported their communities.”

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

### Bethany Teo

#### Senior Strategic Communication Manager, Department for International Trade

“Helping UK and EU businesses get to grips with new post-Brexit rules and harness the opportunities of the new global trading environment has been hugely important. Driven by insight, we’ve delivered UK and EU business-facing campaigns to help traders understand new tariffs and trade agreements, supported by a huge range of broad reach and targeted communication, such as live webinars with nearly 10,000 attendees and case studies with our export champions.”

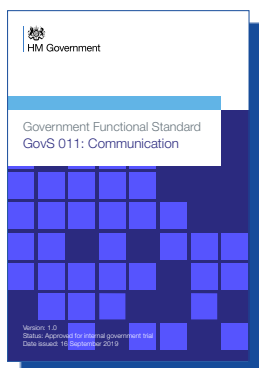
### Did you know?

There are 12 essential practices where all government communicators must build capability and skills, whether you’re working in Marketing or External Affairs. Make sure you know them by revisiting **MCOM2.0**.



## FUNCTIONAL STANDARD: UPHOLDING EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION

In August 2019, the **Government Communication Functional Standard** was published to set clear, measurable expectations for the management and practice of government communication.



Within the standard, we can learn about the principles at the heart of all government communication, ranging from the campaign life cycle to the principles of all MCOM communication functions.



## How should I use the Functional Standard?

The standard contains 12 communication practice principles, which are the basis for all our work. These are:

1. **Strategic communication** – setting, co-ordinating and guiding the development and implementation of an activity in the right time frame.
2. **Marketing** – using cross-channel communication activity to influence behaviour change.
3. **Media relations** – explaining governmental activity to media partners to create public understanding and build trust.
4. **External affairs** – building and maintaining relationships with external stakeholders.
5. **Internal communication** – informing and engaging employees in a way that maximises their performance.
6. **Behaviour change** – identifying barriers to desired behaviours and how to address them.
7. **Communication in an emergency or crisis** – ensuring the timely flow of reliable, accurate and relevant information during a crisis situation.
8. **Partnership marketing** – providing a cost-effective way to reach audiences and increase our impact.
9. **Capability and capacity** – balancing the supply and demand for communication resources, including people and facilities.
10. **Brand** – complying with HM Government identity guidelines safely and professionally.
11. **Writing style** – making sure our communication is clear, concise and consistent.
12. **Learning from experience** – evaluating our work to avoid repeating mistakes and develop improved practice.

To read the Functional Standard in full and learn more about all our communication practices, visit the [GCS website](#).

## Do you know your Functional Standard principles?

### Test yourself!

- Who is responsible for all commercial activity for government communication?
- What does CORE stand for?
- What are the four elements of a crisis communication plan?



# GCS CURRICULUM

Alex Aiken, Executive Director,  
Government Communication:

“The skills we need as public sector communicators are rapidly changing... To future-proof our expertise, we need to constantly reinvent and upskill ourselves to use emerging technologies and adapt our practice.”

In April, we are extremely pleased to be launching the **GCS Curriculum**, which will provide training for each MCOM discipline and contain options for communicators at all levels. This brand-new training and development offer will include recorded masterclasses from Directors of Communication, recommended reading lists and end of unit assessments. Each completed course will give you a certain number of ‘points’, which will go towards the total points you should aim to reach each year.

## What sort of training will be on offer?

In 2020, GCS ran 106 courses with 3,000 training places. The GCS Curriculum will go much further, aligning with the newly-established Government Curriculum and Skills Unit, providing:

- training in all communication disciplines to suit all levels, with learning journeys and subject matter differentiated by grade
- new courses within existing disciplines, including ‘Storytelling’, ‘Understanding and Presenting Data’, ‘The Anatomy of an Ad’ and many more
- a brand new Learning Management Platform which will be hosted on the GCS website
- a dedicated online space to record progress, assess standards (through everything from draft OASIS plans to multiple-choice quizzes), and deliver accreditation
- a new Curriculum and Standards Board which will uphold excellence and hold GCS to account to make sure that everyone is learning and developing



## How can I get involved?

Visit the GCS website to start planning **your learning and development journey** and **set personal development goals** for 2021.



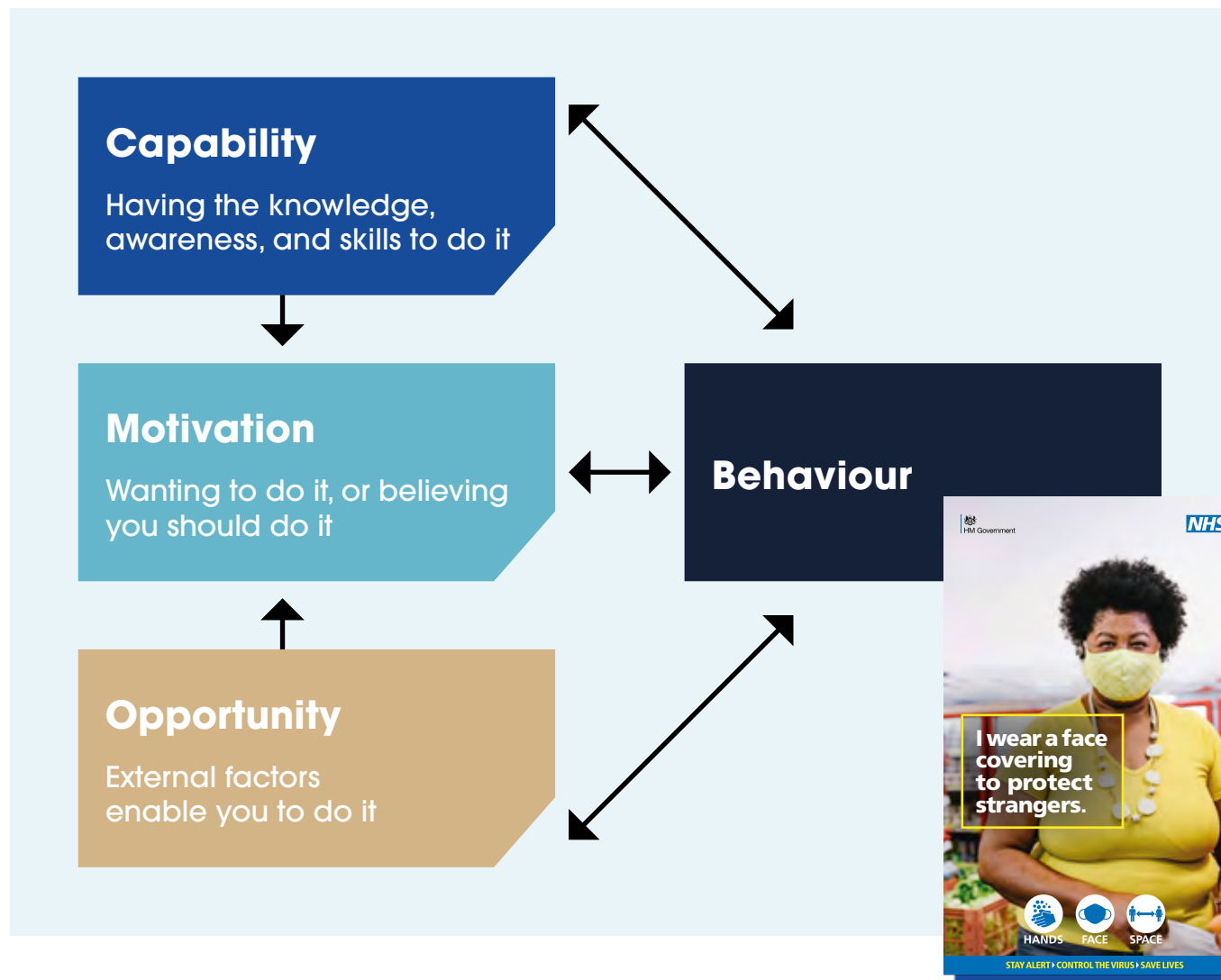


## HARNESSING THE POWER OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE

We apply a **behavioural approach** to all our communication strategies and campaign planning, using analytical techniques and frameworks such as the **COM-B** (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, Behaviour) model and Theories of Change.

The GCS Behavioural Science Team formally launched in 2019 to better support teams to harness the power of behavioural science. The team provides bespoke advice to communicators on campaigns across government, helping to approach problems with a behavioural lens.

As part of this, the team published a new behavioural science guide, **The Principles of Behaviour Change Communication**, at the start of 2021. This new approach brings together rigorous academic research and existing best practice, as well as providing detailed case studies and a worked example to illustrate how to apply behavioural principles throughout the **OASIS campaign planning process**.



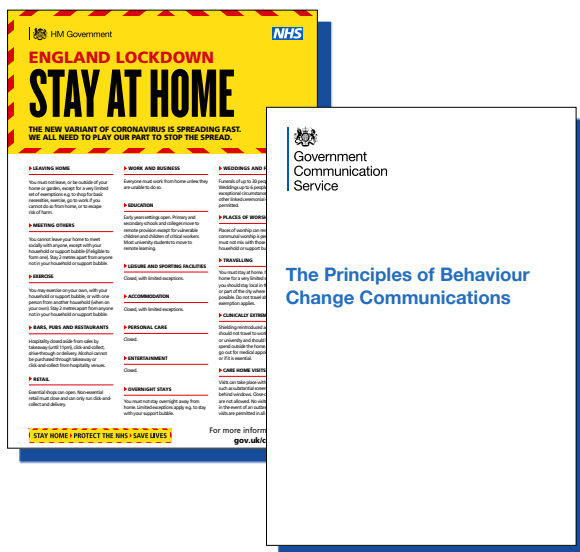


Last year, the team also produced over 70 original papers on almost all behavioural aspects of COVID-19, with particular focus on identifying barriers to compliance, and understanding how people behave when

faced with danger and risk. This gave communicators a simple and intuitive theoretical basis for understanding how the public respond to 'threat' messages, which has been applied across national and local campaign assets.

For example, it helped to put an understanding of human behaviour at the heart of the **Stay At Home** campaign and contributed to its success: messaging in January 2021 reached 91% of all UK adults, with 87% of adults supporting rules for keeping socially distanced from one another.

This year, the team will continue to lend their expertise to a range of priority campaigns – from countering child sexual abuse and exploitation, to public sector recruitment – to ensure that we achieve the best possible results across government communication.



## Did you know?

The team's new **Principles of Behaviour Change Communication** offers a handy checklist for each stage of the campaign planning process to use when planning any communication, big or small. Find all their advice on the [GCS website](#).



## DIGITAL INNOVATION

The COVID-19 crisis has meant that digital media has become more important than ever. In an age of disinformation, it is vital that we can reach our audiences directly. Over the past year:

- GCS has built a WhatsApp Chatbot tool to minimise opportunities for COVID-19 messages to become diluted or distorted. The service was accessed by more than 375,000 unique users, with more than 3 million messages sent and received on the platform.



Launched in September 2020, the **GCS SAFE framework** sets out standards and core principles for digital brand safety to ensure government advertising appears online in safe, credible and reputable environments. This will protect the HM Government brand and make sure that government messages continue to be trusted by the public.

- The new **GOV.UK/ask** service has offered an unprecedented opportunity for citizens to engage directly with ministers at daily press conferences. This service was created in just five days, has facilitated over 560,000 questions from the public since its launch and has been used to inform a wide range of policy areas.
- Government advertising has returned to YouTube after a three-year hiatus, resulting in increased reach for government campaigns, from NHS organ donation to teacher recruitment, while remaining 100% brand safe – helped by the new **GCS SAFE Framework**.

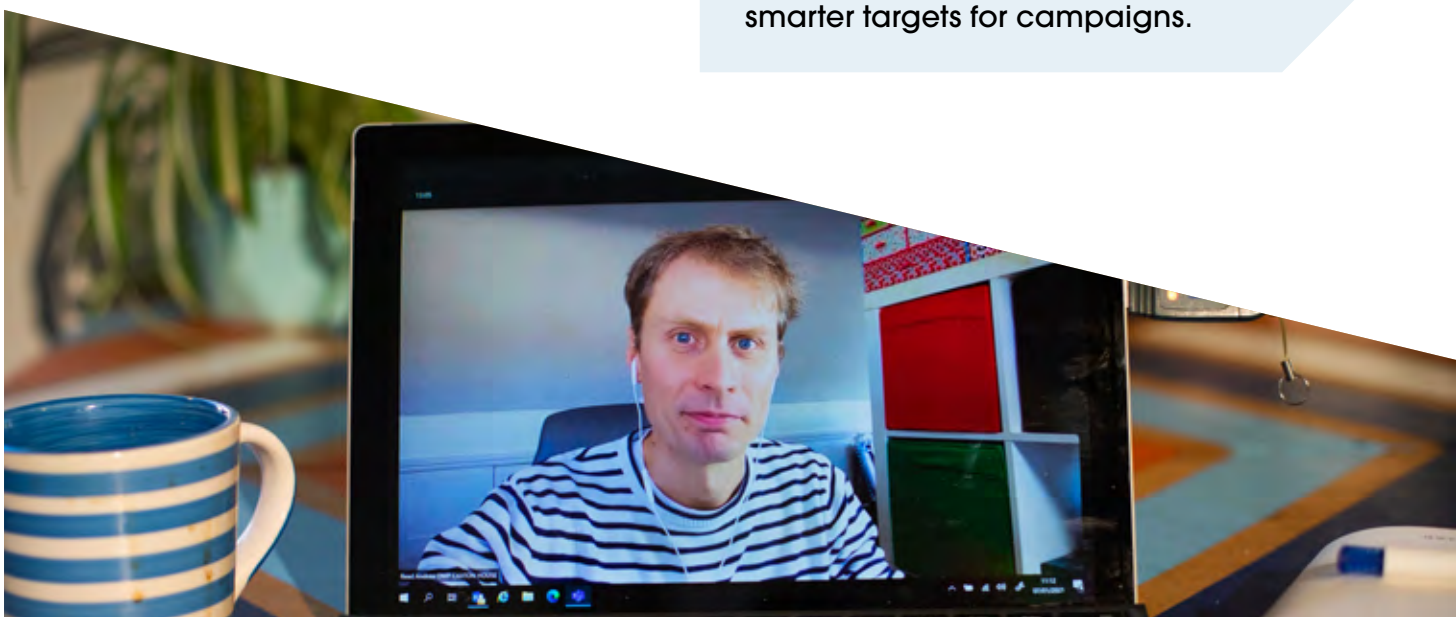
## DRIVEN BY DATA

GCS has always put data and evaluation at the heart of communication planning. The GCS Benchmarking Database, a post-campaign library created by our media buying partner OmniGOV, supports analysis across the entire media buying framework. We now hold data on some 250 government campaigns since 2017: insight that is integral for delivering successful campaigns and continuing to ensure public money is spent wisely.



### Test yourself...

The **GCS Smart Targets tool** gives you access to information from the GCS Benchmarking Database to set smarter targets for campaigns.





## DELIVERING LOCALLY

GCS Local is a regionally-based team which specialises in recruiting and account managing local partners and stakeholders. Last year, the team's work to engage all 343 local authorities across England was crucial in providing communication to tackle COVID-19 and to promote Transition changes. The team also produced over 100 pieces of high-quality content to help SMEs understand rules and access COVID-19 business support schemes. These featured a range of employers: from Belfast Zoo, to a leisure centre in Wigan, to a restaurant in Glasgow, to Wales' oldest LGBT pub.

This year, GCS Local will continue to forge closer relationships with local and regional partners. It will develop a more formal account management system to build on lessons learnt throughout the COVID-19 period, and create new relationships with regional employers.



**David Holdstock, Director of Communication at MHCLG**, is seconded from his post at the Local Government Association. He reflects on his experience and suggests three lessons that can be applied to our work.

### 1. Effective, joined-up communication

"By working consistently and closely across the public sector, whether with councils, government departments or arm's length bodies, we can continue to improve our communication. I am struck by the high-quality communication work that has been delivered across the public sector during the pandemic, but there is always more that can be done. An example of this in practice is the work councils have done to encourage vaccine take-up in particular communities to support wider government messaging."

### 2. Making national priorities local priorities

"COVID-19 has highlighted the wealth of connections that councils have with their local area and people, for example through the use of community champions. Government communicators should ensure that these resources are used to their full extent to translate national priorities into local ones."

### 3. Learning from one another

"Finally, we can all learn from other parts of our industry. I've already learnt a lot from my time in central government, and would recommend that GCS colleagues spend time in a council communication team and vice versa, to truly understand the differences between Whitehall and local government."





## WORKING GLOBALLY

### World-leading expertise

Working to priorities set by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, GCS International (GCSI) uses communication to help solve problems facing our international partners and developing nations. Communication professionals from across UK government departments and our network of embassies and high commissions provide strategic advice on how communication interventions can help international governments better communicate with their citizens – dealing with issues ranging from girls' education to COVID-19 to attracting foreign investment to grow nations' economies.

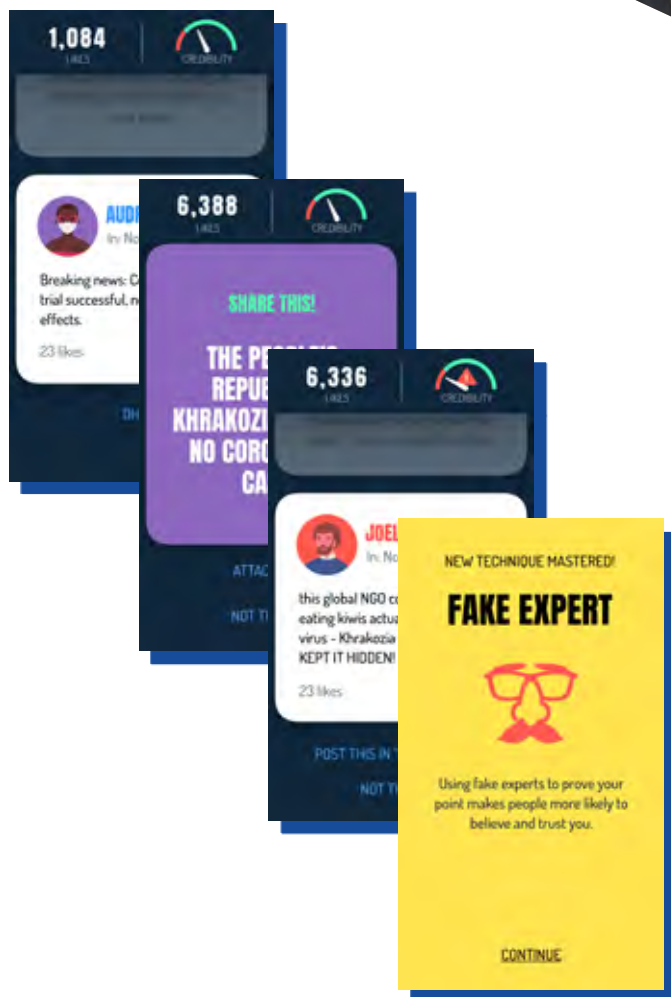
### Setting global standards for best practice

We are working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on a communications project to set global standards for government communication. By surveying over 60 countries across the world, we are building a comprehensive database of evidence, good practices and lessons learned. In the near future, this global evidence base will be a valuable resource to help countries across the globe tackle international challenges, such as COVID-19.

### Tackling global issues

We will continue to lead international campaigns which tackle global issues. Last year, our successes included:

- **Building public resilience against misinformation.** Our **Stop the Spread** campaign, in partnership with the World Health Organization and BBC World Service, enabled 75 million people to be better protected against misinformation. We also partnered with the University of Cambridge to build the **GoViral!** game, 'inoculating' 59,800 people against misinformation with a further 270,000 website visits.



- **Mobilising for equitable access to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics.**

We led the **One19** campaign for equitable access, building a coalition of eight strategic campaign partners – WHO, CEPI, GAVI, FIND, Global Fund, Unitaaid, WellcomeTrust, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

- **Raising state-led climate ambition.**

Our **One Year To Go** campaign encouraged an increase in state-led climate ambition ahead of the Climate Ambition Summit in December 2020. The summit saw 45 countries speak about more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions.



## Did you know?

GCSI shared lessons learned from the COVID-19 response with government communicators from 15 countries through a series of webinars – how do you share lessons learned within your team? Find out more about **GCSI's work** on the GCS website.





## FINAL WORD FROM ALEX CHISHOLM

I am immensely proud of the work that the Government Communication Service (GCS) undertakes to help improve the lives of people across all four nations and internationally.

GCS continues to demonstrate its commitment to world-class professional standards as it supports ministerial priorities across government and the efficient delivery of our public services.

This has rarely been more apparent than over the last year, when we have faced some of the greatest challenges in a generation. During this time, communication has helped to save both lives and livelihoods. Colleagues up and down the country – at the centre, across departments

and in agencies – have worked tirelessly to ensure the public had the information they needed to stay informed and safe, all while dealing with the effects of the pandemic on their own lives.

This dedication is one of the many reasons that GCS remains one of the shining lights of the UK Civil Service and why our public service often tops global rankings and remains an exemplar for public service across the world.

Looking to the future, the 'Reshaping' programme will allow GCS to build on its successes and become a more united, efficient and focused profession. This programme is taking place in the context of the wider Civil Service Reform programme,

which will ensure we deliver the best and most efficient service possible for the public, and guarantee that all colleagues are rewarded for their successes and fulfil their potential.

I am proud to call the members of the GCS professional community my colleagues. With the development of the Civil Service Reform and the lessons learned this year, I look forward to working together to explore the ways in which we can become an even more modern and ambitious Civil Service.

**Alex Chisholm**

**Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office**

## CAMPAIGNS FOR 2021 / 2022



### BEATING COVID-19 AND BACKING THE NHS

#### Controlling the Virus and Preventing Transmission

- Hands, Face, Space
- Symptom Recognition
- Let the Fresh Air In

#### Route Back to Normality

- Test and Trace
- Vaccine Uptake

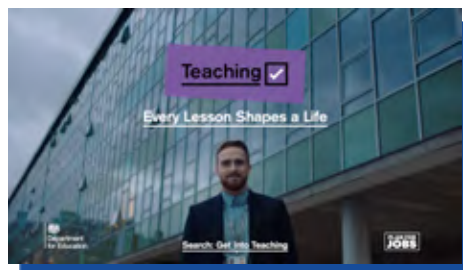
#### Backing the NHS

- Better Health
- Help Us Help You



### PUBLIC SECTOR RECRUITMENT

- Frontline
- Teacher Recruitment and Retention
- NHS and Health Recruitment
- Police Recruitment
- HMPPS Recruitment
- Armed Forces Recruitment
- Digital Recruitment



### BUILD BACK BETTER

#### Plan For Jobs/Backing British Business

- Business Support
- A Good Place to Start
- Employer Engagement: Skills
- Adult Skills and Retraining
- FTA Exports
- Supporting Arts and Culture Recovery

#### Levelling Up

- Broadband
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Young People's Futures
- HS2



## BUILD BACK FAIRER

- Support for Me and My Family
- A Good Start in Life
- Opportunities to Improve My Situation
- Enabling a Safe, Fair and Supportive Society



## BUILD BACK SAFER

### Strong on Law and Order

- Stopping Abuse Together
- Support for Victims
- Cyber Aware
- Tackling Fraud
- Preventing Drugs Misuse
- Supporting ex-Offenders

### Controlling Immigration and Increasing Border Security

- Points-Based Immigration System
- Preventing Organised Immigration Crime



## BUILD BACK STRONGER

### Strengthening the Union

- Stronger Union

### Perceptions of the UK

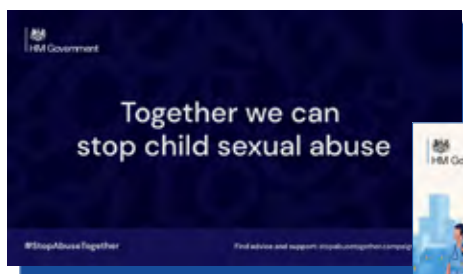
- Global Britain

### Economic Recovery

- Driving UK Jobs via Trade and Foreign Investment
- Studying in the UK
- Tourism Recovery

### Force for Good

- COVID-19 Vaccines
- COP26: Together for Our Planet
- Media Freedom
- Democratic Societies







## BUILD BACK GREENER

- COP26: Together for Our Planet
- E10 Fuel
- Clean Air Zones
- Active Travel



## DELIVERING FOR THE UK

### Access to Services

- Student Loans
- DVLA Online Services
- Tax Credits
- National Savings and Investments
- Pensions Regulator Automatic Enrolment

### Enforcement and Compliance

- Fishing Licences
- THINK!
- DVLA
- Self Assessment
- Tax Avoidance
- Hidden Economy

### Statutory Duty to Inform

- NHS Blood and Transplant
- NHS Screening Programme Leaflets
- EU Settlement Scheme
- Health and Safety Executive 'Work Right'
- Building Safety Regulator
- Radioactive Waste Management
- Travel Aware
- Transition Communication

### Cultural Events

- Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022
- Festival UK 2022

**The Government Communication Service (GCS) is the professional body for people working in communication roles across government. Our aim is to deliver world-class communications that support ministers' priorities, enable the efficient and effective operation of public service, and improve people's lives.**

**[gcs.civilservice.gov.uk](https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk)**

**@ukgovcomms**



© Crown copyright 2021

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit **[nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-governmentlicence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-governmentlicence/version/3)**

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to **[gcs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:gcs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)**

Designed by Design102.