Civil Service
Learning

The UK Experience

retaining corporate knowledge in the UK civil service

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What we'll cover:

- Context - the UK Civil Service
- Techniques for retaining knowledge
- Stories
- Key learning points
- Discussion and questions

The UK Civil Service

- 400,000 people
- 25 Ministerial Departments
- 21 non-Ministerial Departments
- 300+ Agencies and other bodies
- Some responsibilities UK-wide, some devolved in part…

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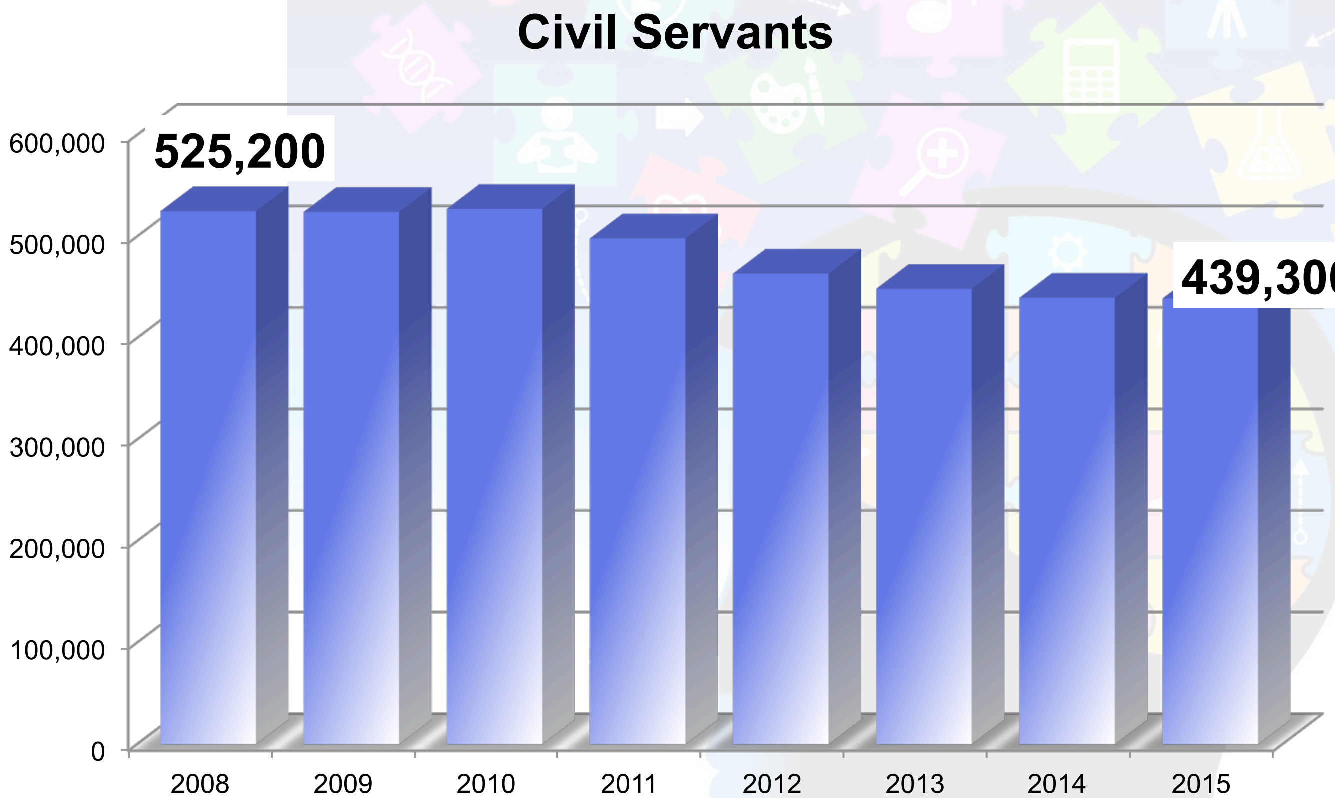
The civil service is getting smaller…



Source: UK Office for National Statistics, April 2016

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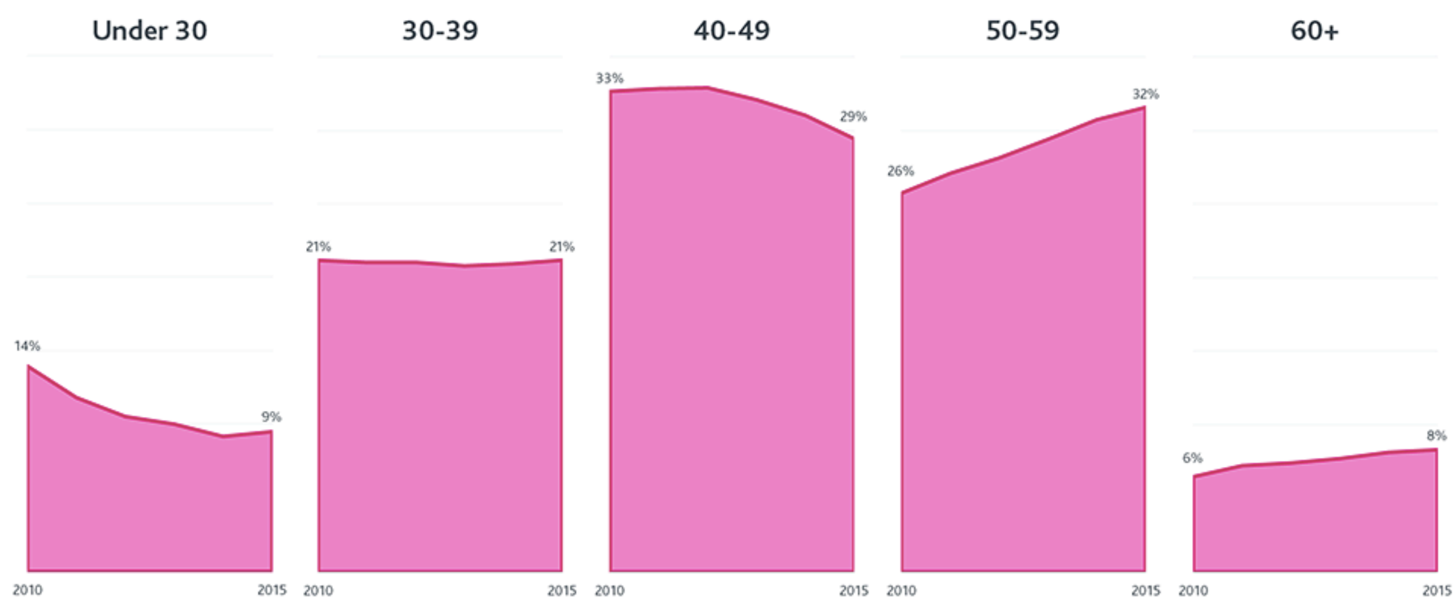
…and it's getting older:

Percentage of civil servants in each age group, 2010 to 2015 (headcount)



Source: IfG analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2010 to 2015. SCS figures also include civil servants at equivalent SCS level.

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So what are we doing about it?

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Different approaches across UK Government

- Handover reports
- Handover interviews
- ‘Audience with…’
- Work shadowing/parallel running

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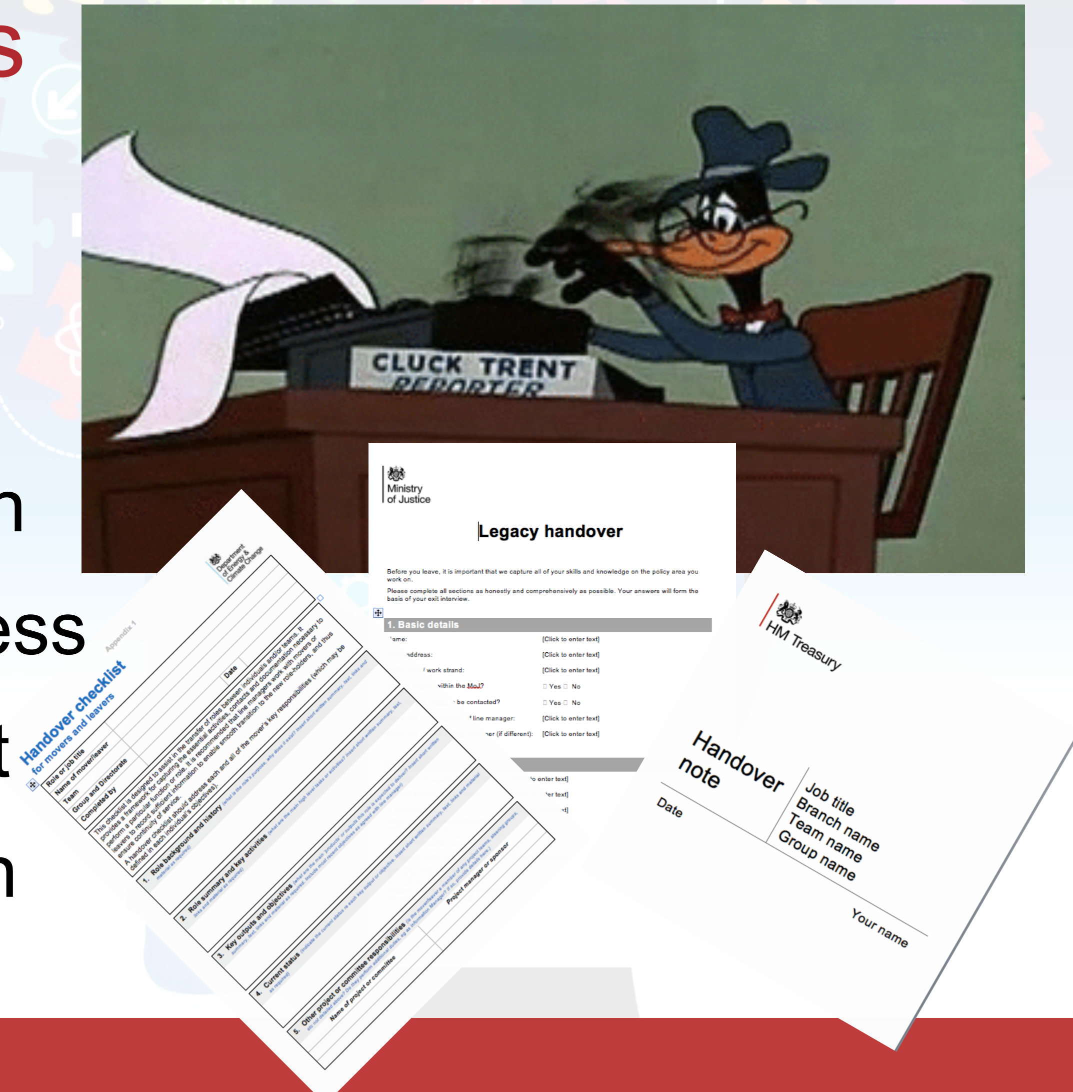
Handover reports

- Used by most Departments
- But! – irregular
- Manager discretion
- Limited effectiveness
- Culture-dependent
- Explicit information mainly



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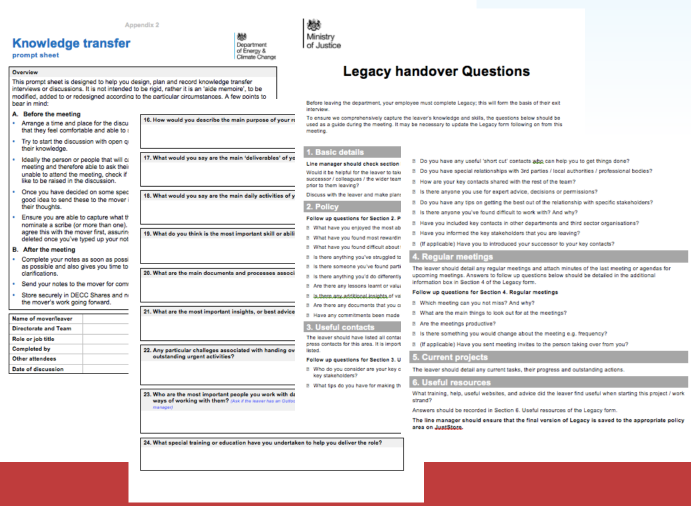
Handover interviews

- Used by some teams
- Good for tacit transfer
- Irregular
- Manager discretion
- Selective – key individuals



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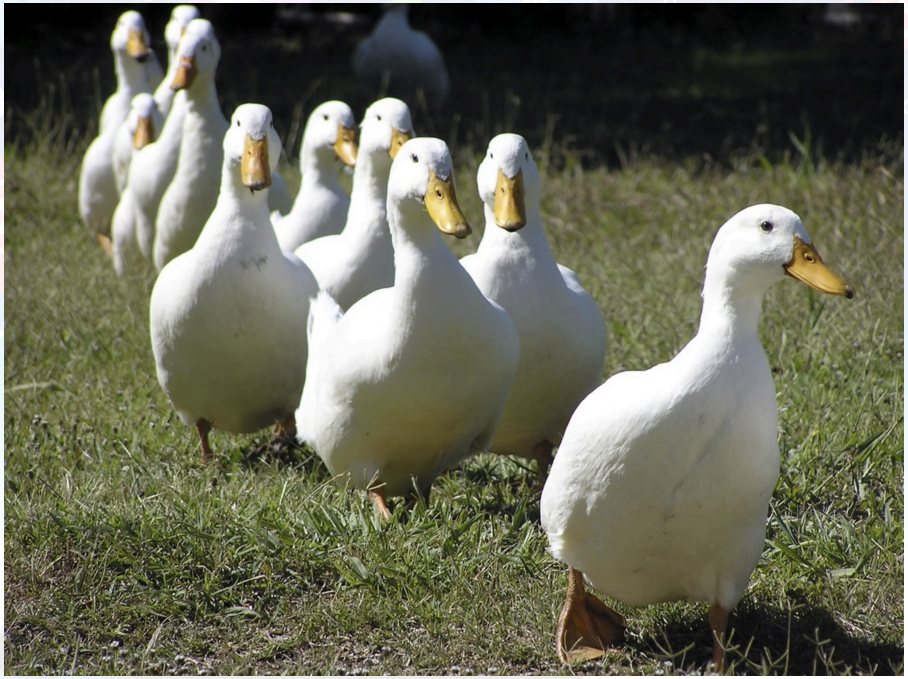
‘Audience with…’ group interviews

- Used by some Departments & teams
- Can be very useful – for both knowledge transfer and morale
- Need planning and time
- Good for all levels of seniority

Work shadowing (‘parallel running’)

- Most effective technique
- Requires time
- Can be expensive
- Often not practical or even possible



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Case studies

- Training & Development Agency for Schools
- Department of Energy & Climate Change
- Welsh Government
- HM Treasury

tda
developing people, improving young lives

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Training & Development Agency for Schools

- 17 years old agency
- Leaders in at beginning
- Relocating 320 km
- 350 staff, 95% **not** going
- One year to plan, one year to complete move

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Training & Development Agency for Schools

- Job shadowing
- Handover reports
- Handover interviews
- ‘Audience with…’ sessions

Job shadowing

- In many cases could ‘shadow’ for 3-6 months
- Results very good – joiners up to speed quickly, few issues afterwards
- But – in many cases no leaver/joiner overlap, so no opportunity for shadowing

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Handover reports

- High adoption – 80% of leavers
- Where leaver/joiner overlap – effective
- But where no leaver/joiner overlap far less effective
- Joiner needs opportunity to talk to leaver

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DECC - Voluntary Exit Scheme

- 200 staff leaving 31 March 2016, out of 1,500
- Mixed skills, seniority and experience – mostly 15 years+
- Approach was to go through managers
- Provided guidance plus tools – templates, etc
- Key was to act early

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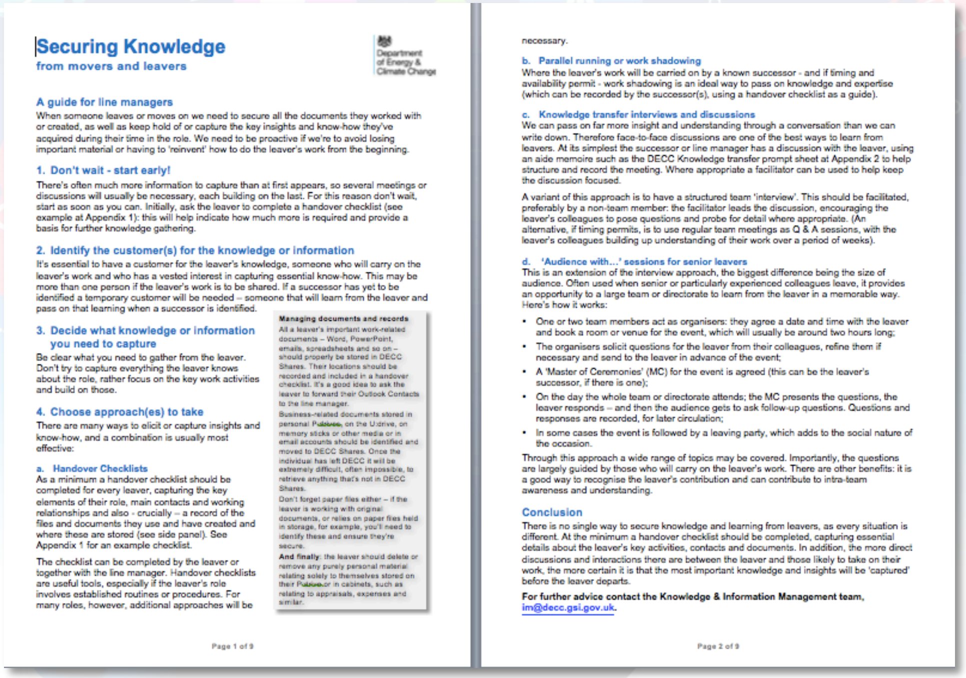
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE

DECC - Voluntary Exit Scheme

- Detailed guidance
- For managers
- Copied to leavers
- Handover reports used
- But – in many cases left too late



Securing Knowledge

from movers and leavers

Department of Energy & Climate Change

A guide for line managers

When someone leaves or moves on we need to secure all the documents they worked with or created, as well as keep hold of or capture the key insights and know-how they've acquired during their time in the role. We need to be proactive if we're to avoid losing important material or having to 'reinvent' how to do the leaver's work from the beginning.

1. Don't wait - start early!

There's often much more information to capture than at first appears, so several meetings or discussions will usually be necessary, each building on the last. For this reason don't wait, start as soon as you can. Initially, ask the leaver to complete a handover checklist (see example at Appendix 1): this will help indicate how much more is required and provide a basis for further knowledge gathering.

2. Identify the customer(s) for the knowledge or information

It's essential to have a customer for the leaver's knowledge, someone who will carry on the leaver's work and who has a vested interest in capturing essential know-how. This may be more than one person if the leaver's work is to be shared. If a successor has yet to be identified a temporary customer will be needed – someone that will learn from the leaver and pass on that learning when a successor is identified.

3. Decide what knowledge or information you need to capture

Be clear what you need to gather from the leaver. Don't try to capture everything the leaver knows about the role, rather focus on the key work activities and build on those.

4. Choose approach(es) to take

There are many ways to elicit or capture insights and know-how, and a combination is usually most effective:

a. Handover Checklists

As a minimum a handover checklist should be completed for every leaver, capturing the key elements of their role, main contacts and working relationships and also - crucially – a record of the files and documents they use and have created and where these are stored (see side panel). See Appendix 1 for an example checklist.

The checklist can be completed by the leaver or together with the line manager. Handover checklists are useful tools, especially if the leaver's role involves established routines or procedures. For many roles, however, additional approaches will be necessary.

Managing documents and records

All a leaver's important work-related documents – Word, PowerPoint, emails, spreadsheets and so on – should properly be stored in DECC Shares. Their locations should be recorded and included in a handover checklist. It's a good idea to ask the leaver to forward their Outlook Contacts to the line manager.

Business-related documents stored in personal Pdrives, on the Udrive, on memory sticks or other media or in email accounts should be identified and moved to DECC Shares. Once the individual has left DECC it will be extremely difficult, often impossible, to retrieve anything that's not in DECC Shares.

Don't forget paper files either – if the leaver is working with original documents, or relies on paper files held in storage, for example, you'll need to identify these and ensure they're secure.

And finally: the leaver should delete or remove any purely personal material relating solely to themselves stored on their Pdrive or in cabinets, such as relating to appraisals, expenses and similar.

Page 1 of 9

b. Parallel running or work shadowing

Where the leaver's work will be carried on by a known successor - and if timing and availability permit - work shadowing is an ideal way to pass on knowledge and expertise (which can be recorded by the successor(s), using a handover checklist as a guide).

c. Knowledge transfer interviews and discussions

We can pass on far more insight and understanding through a conversation than we can write down. Therefore face-to-face discussions are one of the best ways to learn from leavers. At its simplest the successor or line manager has a discussion with the leaver, using an aide memoire such as the DECC Knowledge transfer prompt sheet at Appendix 2 to help structure and record the meeting. Where appropriate a facilitator can be used to help keep the discussion focused.

A variant of this approach is to have a structured team 'interview'. This should be facilitated, preferably by a non-team member: the facilitator leads the discussion, encouraging the leaver's colleagues to pose questions and probe for detail where appropriate. (An alternative, if timing permits, is to use regular team meetings as Q & A sessions, with the leaver's colleagues building up understanding of their work over a period of weeks).

d. 'Audience with…' sessions for senior leavers

This is an extension of the interview approach, the biggest difference being the size of audience. Often used when senior or particularly experienced colleagues leave, it provides an opportunity to a large team or directorate to learn from the leaver in a memorable way. Here's how it works:

- One or two team members act as organisers: they agree a date and time with the leaver and book a room or venue for the event, which will usually be around two hours long;
- The organisers solicit questions for the leaver from their colleagues, refine them if necessary and send to the leaver in advance of the event;
- A 'Master of Ceremonies' (MC) for the event is agreed (this can be the leaver's successor, if there is one);
- On the day the whole team or directorate attends; the MC presents the questions, the leaver responds – and then the audience gets to ask follow-up questions. Questions and responses are recorded, for later circulation;
- In some cases the event is followed by a leaving party, which adds to the social nature of the occasion.

Through this approach a wide range of topics may be covered. Importantly, the questions are largely guided by those who will carry on the leaver's work. There are other benefits: it is a good way to recognise the leaver's contribution and can contribute to intra-team awareness and understanding.

Conclusion

There is no single way to secure knowledge and learning from leavers, as every situation is different. At the minimum a handover checklist should be completed, capturing essential details about the leaver's key activities, contacts and documents. In addition, the more direct discussions and interactions there are between the leaver and those likely to take on their work, the more certain it is that the most important knowledge and insights will be 'captured' before the leaver departs.

For further advice contact the Knowledge & Information Management team, im@decc.gsi.gov.uk.

Page 2 of 9

‘Audience with…’ senior Director

- Planned well ahead
- Gathered questions from team members
- Successor facilitated
- Posed questions to leaver
- Audience then responds to leaver’s answers

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Welsh Government

Welsh Government

- Lost many staff in 2008, following financial crisis
- Planned handovers, but little happened in practice
- Action was voluntary, managers waited until staff due to leave
- Found it was too late – staff not engaged
- So made permanent changes

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Welsh Government

Welsh Government – 'Headstart'

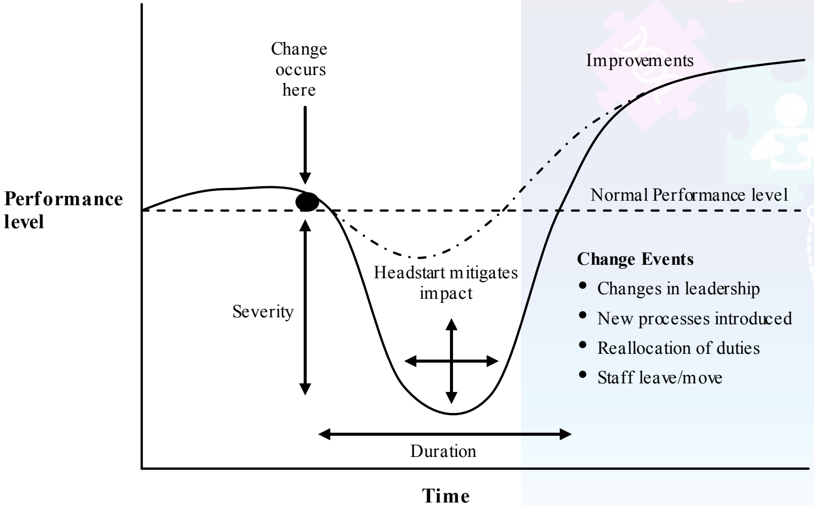

Fig 1. : Headstart mitigates the impact of change on an organisation

- Provides rationale and timelines

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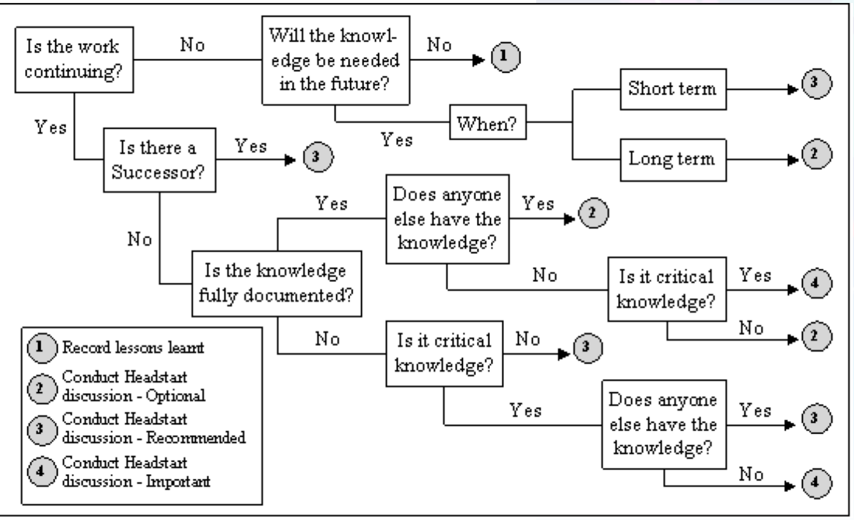
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

Welsh Government – 'Headstart'



- Provides rationale and timelines
- Tools to prioritise – ie who to focus on

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government – ‘Headstart’

Annex A

Headstart
Retaining Knowledge
Suggested Questions

Valuing People

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Please use this form as a template for your Headstart discussion with your moving/leaving staff member. This list of questions isn't exhaustive, therefore if you can think of any questions that you believe apply to your team locally, a space has been provided at the bottom of the form for you to records these.

Name (of staff member moving/leaving):	
DG Area & Division:	
Location:	
Discussion conducted by:	
Discussion conducted on:	

Key events and activities

Can you describe the cycle of activities to your job?

Prompts:
Regular meetings / events (including key dates)
Peak and trough times during the year

Contacts and Relationships

Who do you consider are your key contacts/relationships, both internal and external?

Prompts:
How are your key contacts shared with the rest of the team?
Do you have any useful "short cut" contacts who can help you to get things done?
Do you have special relationships with 3rd parties/local authorities/professional bodies?
Is there anyone you use for "expert advise", decisions or permissions?
Was anyone particularly helpful / difficult?

Knowledge required for role

What do you consider to be the most valuable and/or unique knowledge that you hold in your current role, and how did you acquire it?

Prompts:
What specialist knowledge/information do you solely own/have?
What knowledge/information do you have that you consider would be hard to replace?
What skills or knowledge do you have that no one else in your DG / division / team has?
Have you received any specific training that helped you in your role, if so where from?
Are you a member of a profession and if so, which one?

Key Information Sources

Is there any key documentation (or other source) that you find really useful in your current role?

Prompts:
How is this made available to others?
Is there anything you feel was missing and would have made your life easier?
Think about manuals, software, reference materials, newsletters and subscriptions, websites and social media accounts that you may have.

- Provides rationale and timelines
- Tools to prioritise – ie who to focus on
- Handover reports
- Interview guides
- Shared ‘living library’

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Welsh Government – job shadowing

- Senior people – paired with successors for months
- Retiring – handovers can start 2-4 years before, included in annual appraisals
- Supported and expected by leaders
- Can be very effective

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HM Treasury

- Use fixed-term assignments, 18-24 months
- High turnover – 30% leave or move out each quarter
- High risk of knowledge loss
- Strong investment in routine handover processes

HM Treasury – handover process

- Driven by leadership
- Emphasis on leaver and manager
- Assessed by joiners after 3 months
- Monitored, measured, reported to leadership
- Culture – seen as 'bad thing' if not done
- 80%+ compliance

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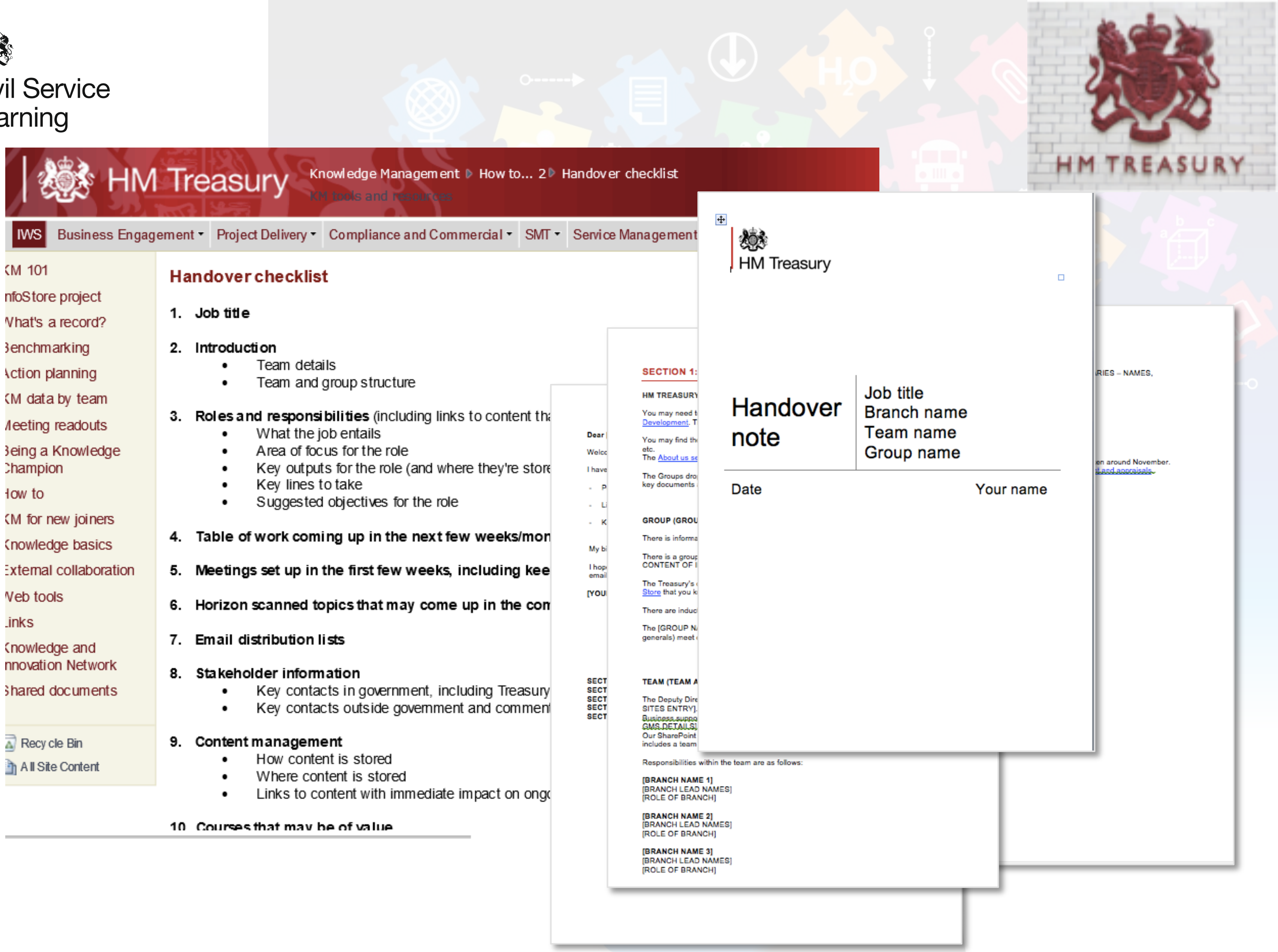

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➢ Assessed by joiners after 3 months

HM TREASURY

- Excellent - comprehensive and detailed - it gave me a good understanding of the role
- Quite good - it contained useful information but there were some gaps

3. Which statement best describes the team or group induction you received (e.g. induction pack, induction session, meetings with branch h

- Business and International Tax
- Corporate Centre
- Economics
- Enterprise and Growth
- Financial Services
- Financial Stability
- Fiscal
- International and EU
- Ministerial and Communications
- Personal Tax, Welfare and Pensions
- Public Services
- Public Spending
- Strategy, Planning and Budget
- Treasury Legal Advisors

6. What team are you in?

Done

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HM TREASURY

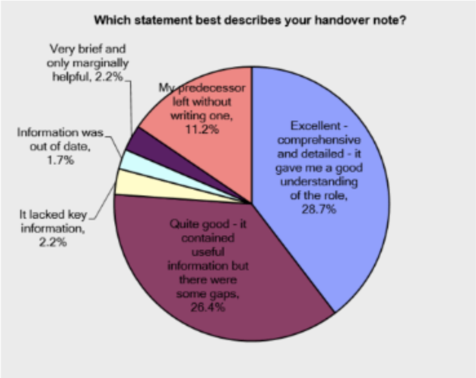
➢ Monitored, measured, reported to leadership – and on Intranet

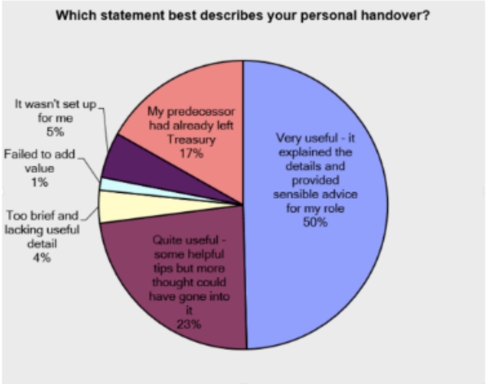
Resources

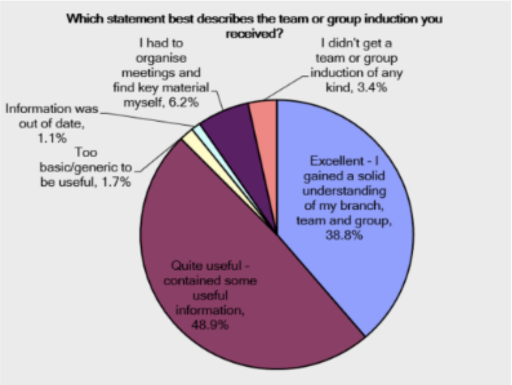
- Knowledge handover – a list of questions to help you share hard won expertise

Reporting

- Handover and induction survey 2015 - results of the quarterly survey sent to all new joiners. Take a look to see what staff think about the quality of the handover and induction they received when they joined your team
- We use the **Staff Change Request site** to identify the new joiners and leavers. This is where requests for staff to join, move to a new role or to leave Treasury are submitted.
- These are the **survey questions** we use (in SurveyMonkey)







Would have been useful to have some introductory calls set up already for me on arrival to ensure that I had links to the right contacts.

The main problem is huge amount of new info to take in, opposed to any issues with the level of information provided.

Predecessor had already left post, but has been great in still finding time to have handover chats, and been very helpful when I've referred to them for help / advice on particular problems.

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Key learning points

- Act as soon as possible – don’t wait
- Get leadership commitment
- Focus on the recipient
- Support managers – give them the tools
- Use a range of approaches
- Measure effectiveness – and use findings
- Act as soon as possible – don’t wait!

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Eskerrik asko!
¡Gracias!
Thank you!