

## Executive summary

**Modernising government** is central to the Government's programme of renewal and reform.

In line with the Government's overall programme of modernisation, Modernising Government is **modernisation for a purpose to make life better for people** and businesses.

Modernising Government is a **long-term programme of improvement**.

But the Government is putting forward a **new package of reforms** now:

- A commitment to ensure that public services are available **24 hours a day, seven days a week** where there is a demand, for example **by the end of 2000** everyone being able to phone **NHS Direct at any time** for healthcare advice.
- **Joined-up government in action** including a clear commitment for people to be able to notify different parts of government of details such as a change of address **simply and electronically in one transaction**.
- **A new drive to remove unnecessary regulation**, and a requirement on Departments preparing policies which impose new regulatory burdens to submit high quality **Regulatory Impact Assessments** and to consult the Cabinet Office in advance.
- A **new target** of all dealings with government being **deliverable electronically by 2008**.
- New **'Learning Labs'** to encourage new ways of front-line working **by suspending rules that stifle innovation**.
- Taking a more creative approach to financial and other **incentives** for public service staff, including a commitment to explore the scope for **financial reward** for staff who identify financial savings or service improvements.
- Within Whitehall, **a new focus on delivery** - asking every Permanent Secretary to ensure that their Department has the capacity to drive through achievement of the key government targets and to take a personal responsibility for ensuring that this happens. Bringing more **people in from outside** and bringing able, younger people up the ladder more quickly.

To ensure that government is both inclusive and integrated, we have **three aims in modernising government**:

- Ensuring that policy making is more **joined up and strategic**.
- Making sure that **public service users**, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to people's lives.
- Delivering public services that are **high quality and efficient**.

We are centring our programme on **five key commitments**:

- **Policy making**: we will be **forward looking** in developing policies to deliver outcomes that matter, not simply reacting to short-term pressures. We will:
  - identify and spread best practice through the new Centre for Management and Policy Studies.

- bring in joint training of Ministers and civil servants.
- introduce peer review of Departments.
- **Responsive public services:** we will deliver public services to **meet the needs of citizens**, not the convenience of service providers. We will:
  - deliver a big push on obstacles to joined-up working, through local partnerships, one-stop shops, and other means.
  - involve and meet the needs of all different groups in society.
- **Quality public services:** we will deliver efficient, high quality public services and **will not tolerate mediocrity**. We will:
  - review all central and local government department services and activities over the next five years to identify the best supplier in each case.
  - set new targets for all public bodies, focusing on real improvements in the quality and effectiveness of public services.
  - monitor performance closely so that we strike the right balance between intervening where services are failing and giving successful organisations the freedom to manage.
- **Information age government:** we will use **new technology** to meet the needs of citizens and business, and not trail behind technological developments. We will:
  - develop an IT strategy for Government which will establish cross-government co-ordination machinery and frameworks on such issues as use of digital signatures and smart cards, websites and call centres.
  - benchmark progress against targets for electronic services.
- **Public service:** we will **value public service**, not denigrate it. We will:
  - modernise the civil service, revise performance management arrangements, tackle under-representation of women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities and build the capability for innovation.
  - establish a public sector employment forum to bring together and develop key players across the public sector.

This long-term programme of **modernisation for a purpose** will move us towards our central objective in modernising government:

**Better government to make life better for people.**