

CHANGING TO DELIVER EVALUATION: DETAILED FINDINGS

**Office of Chief Researcher
Scottish Executive**

CHANGING TO DELIVER EVALUATION: DETAILED FINDINGS**CONTENTS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides additional detail to the published Changing to Deliver Evaluation Report, separately outlining the views of staff, stakeholders and Ministers on each of the four areas of the Changing to Deliver programme:

- Policy making
- Outward focus
- Culture and behaviours
- Corporate processes

This report and the published Evaluation Report draw on findings from Phase 2 of the Changing to Deliver evaluation conducted in late 2004, involving staff, stakeholders and Ministers. Comparisons have been made with findings from the previous phases of the evaluation, the Baseline and Phase 1 studies. In addition, the findings have supplemented with results from the 2004 Staff and Stakeholder surveys.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This report draws on the findings from Phase 2 of the CtD evaluation conducted in late 2004, involving staff, stakeholders and Ministers (see section 5.1 below). Comparisons have been made with findings from previous phases of the evaluation, the Baseline and Phase 1 studies (see section 5.2). In addition, the Phase 2 evaluation findings have been supplemented with results from the 2004 staff and stakeholder surveys (see section 5.3).

1.1.1 Phase 2 Evaluation (Sep – Nov 2004)

Research with Staff

Nine focus groups were held with 47 members of staff over one week in September 2004. Focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes. The staff groups were separated by Band, and three group discussions were held for each Band (A, B and C).

Staff participants were chosen according to their prior involvement in the staff feedback sessions in phase 1 of the CtD evaluation. Staff were randomly selected from HR lists in the earlier stage of the evaluation to ensure broad coverage of Band and department. The same staff were involved in phase 2 so that comparison could be made between phase 2 and phase 1, and for this reason, although fewer staff were able to make the phase 2 sessions due to staff turnover, annual leave and timing, numbers were not made up with new recruits. Staff unable to make the sessions were given the opportunity to provide their views in a feedback form. Eight responses were received and these were fed into the analysis of the group discussions.

Analysis of the focus groups was conducted according to the impact of CtD on the four themes: culture and behaviour; outward focus; policy making; and corporate systems. Typically conclusions could be drawn across all Bands, but where relevant, differences between Bands have been indicated.

Research with Stakeholders

All of the 17 external stakeholders who participated in phase 1 of the evaluation were invited to participate in a focus group discussion as part of the phase 2 discussion, to allow comparisons to be made between the current situation and the previous phase. Eight stakeholders attended the focus group. Seven stakeholders were unable to attend, but they were given the opportunity to

provide feedback on open questions in an e-mail or to have an individual interview over the telephone, and two stakeholders responded.

The aim of the stakeholder feedback work was to elicit stakeholders' views on the current situation in the Scottish Executive in terms of its culture and behaviour, policy making, outward focus and corporate processes, indicating how things have changed over recent years and whether CtD has impacted upon the changes.

Research with Ministers

In November 2004 individual interviews were conducted with 6 ministers and deputy ministers from a range of portfolios, to discuss their views of the current situation in the organisation in terms of culture and behaviour, outward focus, policy making and corporate processes.

1.1.2 Previous Evaluation Phases

Baseline Study

The studies which established the SE baseline were carried out between January 2002 and March 2003 and varied in method, approach and focus. They included a number of CtD reviews involving face-to-face research with Ministers, officials and external stakeholders. In addition, the findings from research studies relevant to CtD were reviewed which provided complementary and additional data.

Phase One

Research involving interviews and focus groups with external partners and SE staff was conducted between October and December 2003. This was carried out by researchers from OCR in conjunction with Sue Charteris (Shared Intelligence) who acted as critical friend to the management board overseeing the CtD programme. In total, 96 people took part in the research (79 officials and 17 external stakeholders).

1.1.3 Staff And Stakeholder Surveys

Staff Survey 2004

The 2004 Staff Survey was the fifth in a series of staff surveys which are designed to elicit staff views on a range of issues including working patterns, training and development, communications and policy making. The questionnaire was distributed in June 2004 to all 7,336 staff who work in the SE and its associated agencies. As with previous years, the questionnaire was administered mainly by an on-screen questionnaire accessed by staff through the Scottish Executive intranet. The response rate for the survey was 51%.

Stakeholder Survey 2004

Between 9 September and 8 October 2004, MORI conducted on-line and telephone surveys with stakeholders¹ across all sectors, based on lists provided by Executive departments. Attempts were made to contact 1,293 stakeholders and responses were received from a total of 824. The response rate of 64% was high for a survey of this kind. The stakeholders surveyed included a broad range of organisations including non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), local government, voluntary groups, registered charities, private sector, central government departments and academic institutions.

¹ Stakeholders were defined as individuals working for organisations which were involved in joint-working with the SE on a regular basis. Individual members of the public and people who have experienced very limited or one-off communication were not included.

2. POLICY MAKING

2.1 STAFF VIEWS

2.1.1 Staff Views on Policy Making

According to staff, CtD has had the greatest impact on policy making, in terms of providing a uniform approach and practical tools for improving policy making. However, when discussing specific aspects of the policy process (such as the use of evidence and policy evaluation, joined-up working, and implementation), staff felt there were still some improvements to be made. Participants also reported a positive influence of CtD on engagement with stakeholders (discussed in more detail in Part 2)

CtD work on policy making was reported to have had tangible implications for staff's day-to-day work. Training courses and networking initiatives were said to provide practical tools for helping staff to improve policy making.

"I've been on the [better] policy making course and it was really good and gave CtD a practical focus. I can see how the ideology is put into practice."(Official)

"I think CtD has improved general awareness of a consistent policy cycle and process; and the policy makers' network and some of the events in policy week help to show a consistent approach." (Official)

Although not all staff saw a clear link between CtD and these courses and events, most, nonetheless, attributed the consistency of approach and the tools they now have for policy making as a direct consequence of the change programme. Staff felt this promoted a good practice approach. However, some staff were concerned that this potentially discourages innovation and risk taking.

"Our whole culture is not about taking risks, being innovative etc. Instead, it's about crafting, playing safe...We do a lot of 'tartanization'. It would be nice to have scope for original thinking. Senior managers need to be freed up to think strategically."(Official)

Another concern for some staff was that Ministers are no longer placed at the centre of the policy-making process and should be central to the way civil servants work.

"One of the things that has been devalued with CtD has been the devaluing of other mainstream policy skills such as serving the Minister. Part of the job is working to Ministers, not just stakeholders and we need to reassess and revalue these policy skills."(Official)

However, a more common view was that Ministers can act as a constraint to improving policy making, for example, by not giving weight to evidence or discouraging civil servants from seeking out stakeholder expertise. Consequently, some staff suggested that Ministers needed to be reminded that the primary task is ultimately to serve the people of Scotland and to use the best practice principles as advocated by CtD.

2.1.2 Staff Views on Evidence and Evaluation

Although staff talked about the uniform 'policy cycle' approach inspired by CtD, they believed that the use of evidence and evaluation are not yet mainstream practice. Staff felt that policy development does not draw enough on evidence.

"I don't think policy making is evidence based - we still do what the Minister says. For example, the Partnership Agreement was written over 2 nights with no evidence." (Official)

The staff survey also supports the view that a significant proportion (34%) think the SE does not make good use of evidence.

In addition, staff focus group participants felt there is a lack of evaluation of policy. They generally perceived that it is difficult to evaluate policy.

"[We should] involve analysts to think about evaluation early on." (Official)

"There's still a lot of work to be done at the monitoring end of the process. For example, how do we set indicators or targets to evaluate?" (Official)

2.1.3 Staff Views on Joined-Up Working

The Staff Survey found that 39% do not believe SE policy making is joined-up. Focus group participants generally believed that there needs to be further promotion of joined-up working.

Staff suggested that the size of the Executive and the segmenting of business into discreet areas has contributed to a strong 'silo mentality'. Nonetheless, there was recognition that eRDM and briX notes help make information available across the SE, which should encourage more joined-up work.

Some staff questioned whether CtD had been too centred on outward focus at the expense of working to improve internal communication and collaborative ways of working. Staff suggested that CtD could encourage more joined-up work by establishing a forum for sharing good practice.

One participant also argued for greater join up at Ministerial level and felt that more face-to-face communication is needed among Ministers on cross-cutting issues. This would enable agreements to be reached on policy which otherwise can take too long because of the political negotiations that are part of the 'paper chain'.

"We have cross-cutting policy, but it's very difficult to get several ministers together. Nobody is willing to take decisions. They want more information and check detail, so there's a process quagmire. They need to get together to move things forward, not to fight a corner." (Official)

2.1.4 Staff Views on Policy Implementation

The staff survey found that 36% feel that SE policy making is unrealistic about implementation. Several focus group participants commented on the lack of focus on implementation in the SE. C-Band staff were particularly critical and highlighted this as further illustration of the Executive failing to translate the corporate vision into practice. Participants acknowledged the difficulties of considering implementation during policy formulation, but argued that it is important, since a failure to consider delivery could result in poor roll-out:

"Sometimes lack of implementation can result in sub-optimal policy and less sexy policy by bringing in practical constraints, but you need a pragmatic position then change and tune it with delivery. We try to gold plate stuff and all that means is we don't deliver in practice." (Official)

In considering implementation, staff also recognised an important role for stakeholders in bringing frontline knowledge to the process.

"Implementation isn't linked to the policy cycle properly. This is why you need stakeholder trust and their input on how it's going to work. You need more of a partnership." (Official)

2.2 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS OF POLICY MAKING

2.2.1 Stakeholder Views on Policy Making

Amongst some stakeholders, there was a view that there have been significant improvements to policy making in the SE with the development of a unified approach, which one stakeholder expressed as a 'corporate culture' of policy making. There was also recognition that the Executive is developing its own 'brand' of policy for Scotland, which is very different from Whitehall – the recent smoking bill was highlighted as an example.

The Stakeholder Survey reveals mixed views about the Executive's policy making, with only 57% stating that the SE makes sensible policies. More than half (57%) of the stakeholders rated the SE performance on being innovative and willing to take risks as average or poor. However, when identifying issues of importance to stakeholders, innovation and risk taking was ranked low and is therefore not considered as a critical area for improvement.

One of the criticisms of policy making in the Executive, made by the focus group participants, is the short time frame within which decisions are taken and policies delivered. It was felt this undermines the good work done to create the ideas. The political cycle is, according to one stakeholder, detrimental to the sustainability of policies being made.

"There is a feel that civil servants are just running to ministerial ideas and requirements within 3-4 year cycles which is about securing votes rather than the needs of the country... Ministers need to find a way of working cross-party to ensure that sustainability exists rather than the transient culture that is felt to be the case currently." (External Stakeholder)

2.2.2 Stakeholder Views on Evidence

As in phase 1, stakeholders discussed the need for strong evidence and for promoting greater use of evidence in decision making which would help ministers differentiate between 'noise' and 'sound advice'. When stakeholders discussed evidence they tended to refer to their professional experience and knowledge, rather than evidence which is based on systematic data collection. As noted in section 2.2 stakeholders' have concerns about the use of expertise and the influences upon ministers.

Stakeholders felt they had a role to play in gaining greater credibility by delivering reliable and timely evidence and lobbying ministers and back benchers. One approach that was recommended was to develop a forum for chief executives to talk together on key issues facing them in their work with the SE. It was noted that the CtD Division had provided similar opportunities in the past, and it was suggested that it would be beneficial to recreate such forums on a regular basis. It was felt that this would improve the outward focus of the SE and also help stakeholders have a more effective collective voice in the policy-making process, rooted in their professional experience.

2.2.3 Stakeholder Views on Joined-Up Working

Only 25% of respondents to the Stakeholder Survey believed the SE is joined-up and all those participating in the focus group commented that the SE lacks join-up. Comparing participants' views with those in earlier phases of the evaluation of CtD, it seems that stakeholders do not believe that joined-up working has improved since the introduction of CtD.

By maintaining a focus on departments at the expense of issue working, stakeholders argued, staff are prevented from seeing linkages between departments where knowledge and expertise might be shared. However, they also suggested that the lack of joined-up working also relates to civil servants' attitudes towards work as well as the organisational structure. They suggested that officials need to make efforts to link with other departments and be prepared to work on issues that would not ordinarily lie within their departmental portfolio. Participants identified the need for strong leadership to encourage shared ownership across departments and displace the current emphasis on unrealistic compartmentalized portfolios.

"People need to be accountable from the start for a shared sense of purpose and what 'good' looks like so that they can all work towards it." (External Stakeholder)

One stakeholder had seen improvement in more consolidated approaches to Children's Services planning, which had drawn together the work of several departments across the Executive working on overlapping issues.

2.2.4 Stakeholder Views on Implementation

The Stakeholder Survey found that 62% believe the SE is focused on delivery. Focus group participants although recognising civil servants' strong performance in developing policy ideas, questioned officials' capacity to think about implementation. According to stakeholders, this manifests itself in a lack of clarity in policy documents about how a policy might be put in practice or, at worst, in contradictory policies that are undeliverable.

"I'm not sure the civil service does take account of the sharp end. I don't think it's thought through to implementation. I'm not seeing any change in listening to key people about this." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders stated, as in the baseline study and phase one that the SE does not engage effectively with stakeholders in discussions about implementation. They believe they have expertise in delivery and could contribute to the policy-making early on so that policies are developed with a view to implementation. Stakeholders felt that they need to be engaged earlier in the discussions to determine whether and how implementation is practicable. The Stakeholder Survey, found that 8% believe that involving organisations at an earlier stage would be the most important way to improve the work of the SE.

Stakeholders recommend employing civil servants who will focus on implementation and be accountable for this, or at least, changing the Executive's appraisal system to recognise delivery as much as policy formulation. They believed that the current appraisal system does not support civil servants who might want to focus on, or specialise in, implementation.

"The civil servants are assessed on their ability to deliver to the Minister (briefings and so on), but not on implementation." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders recognized the Executive's attempts to acquire expertise in implementation through supporting agencies and NDPBs. However, while this may have helped the SE overcome some of

its delivery problems, stakeholders were not convinced that the Executive supports their delivery partners. Instead, they saw this as the Executive administering programmes rather than managing implementation; giving responsibility to others to implement and checking that they are performing the task, without taking responsibility themselves and getting involved in managing and supporting the process. Furthermore, agency and service delivery stakeholders criticized the bureaucracy imposed on them by the SE in terms of audits. They argued, while intended to improve services, audits in reality create an additional burden of bureaucracy and imply distrust.

Some stakeholders also believed the Executive's acquisition of agencies had been debilitating for the agencies concerned, forcing them into the 'straightjacket' of SE recruitment processes and employment terms and conditions. These stakeholders questioned whether the agencies needed to be brought into the SE to ensure delivery. Indeed, one stakeholder felt that the Executive should attempt to get rid of some agency relationships where possible and, instead, fund and manage implementation by developing greater trust with stakeholders as delivery partners.

"We're not trusted by politicians as being able to deliver. So we need to recreate relationships to recreate trust." (External Stakeholder)

2.3 MINISTERS' VIEWS

2.3.1 Ministers' Views on Evidence and Evaluation

Generally Ministers believed that evidence is informing policy development, but some commented that evidence could be used differently, for example, to help look at the bigger picture or help inform policy direction (rather than the other way round). Ministers were less confident about policy evaluation and tended to think that more needs to be done to monitor outcomes and to see what is working. One Minister stressed that evaluation needs to be considered earlier on in the policy process when thinking about legislation and implementation. Only one Minister stated that policy evaluation is done well in the SE. These findings reflect those from previous research conducted in early 2003, which found that Ministers believed evidence is being used in policy, but that it could be more influential, and that there was limited awareness of whether or not policies were being evaluated.

Ministers were typically aware of research evidence being used and some made suggestions about how they believed the use of research could be improved:

- research which takes a longer term look
- better co-ordination of publishing of research reports with department announcements
- making better use of research and seeing links with how it effects subsequent policy
- maintaining some flexibility for 'short and sharp' research studies, rather than being committed to a programme which is not always in sync with the legislative programme and policy making process
- more working with universities and encouraging a think tank approach

Only a few Ministers commented on the use of statistics, mainly referring to the difficulties of having appropriate statistical evidence to provide baseline data and to answer PQs. One Minister believed too many statistics are 'churned out' without consideration as to whether they are helpful for the policy process. None of the Ministers interviewed discussed economic advice, even when asked specifically.

When asked about any sensitivities of using evidence in policy making, one Minister stated that if a Minister chooses to proceed with a decision which goes against the evidence, then the Minister should be absolutely clear that it is a political decision and must not blame civil servants if held to

account. Another Minister reported some difficulties trying to engage civil servants in creative thinking:

"It is hard to explore a couple of ideas or a direction of travel, without the official machine thinking this is what the Minister wants, when really it is case of exploring some ideas."
(Minister)

This reflects a finding from previous SE research where Ministers expressed a desire to have more opportunities for creative thinking or blue skies thinking with officials.

2.3.2 Ministers' Views on Joined-Up Working

It was widely acknowledged by Ministers that joined-up working has improved in recent years, but that more effort is required to further improve join-up both within and between departments. Although, some Ministers did acknowledge the difficulty of join-up within such a large organisation and that inevitably when under pressure, it is likely that joining-up will be the 'first bit to go'. It seems that from this phase of the evaluation, Ministers still hold the view expressed in previous phases of research that joined-up working is not sufficiently effective.

One Minister cited an example of good join-up, where several different funds used by external organisations have been rolled into one, which helps the 'external world know that the SE is not in silos'. Generally, Ministers believed there is still some way to go because briefing on cross-cutting issues is typically focused on the department that issued the briefing and does not sufficiently reflect the work of the other relevant department(s). One Minister also commented that good practice is not shared sufficiently across the SE. Ministers' suggestions for how to improve joined-up working included:

- more face-to-face or telephone communication and less reliance on email
- translating communication/meetings into working together
- having flexibility to set up short-life teams bringing people together from different areas

2.3.3 Ministers' Views on Implementation

Ministers reported big improvements in this area, noting that implementation is now being considered earlier along with legislation; and that there is greater understanding amongst officials who now place more emphasis on implementation than in previous years.

One Minister expressed some concerns that the SE can become too focused on process issues of money/resources and lose sight of the bigger picture of what the Minister ultimately wants to achieve. Another Minister suggested that more thought should be given to the use of pilot schemes due to the difficulties of creating external expectations.

2.4 SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON POLICY MAKING

2.4.1 Staff Views

According to staff, CtD has had the greatest impact on policy making. Training courses and network initiatives were said to have provided practical tools for helping staff to improve policy making. Some were concerned that the approach advocated by CtD discourages innovation and no longer places Ministers at the centre of the process. However, a more common view from staff

was that Ministers can act as a constraint to improving policy making, for example, by not giving weight to evidence or discouraging using stakeholder expertise.

When discussing specific aspects of the policy process, staff felt there were still improvements to be made. Staff believed the use of evidence and policy evaluation are not yet mainstream practice and that there needs to be further promotion of joined-up working and consideration of implementation. Staff survey results show that over a third of those involved in policy-making do not feel the SE makes good use of evidence (34%), do not feel policy-making is joined-up (39%) and feel the SE is unrealistic about implementation (36%).

2.4.2 Stakeholders' Views

The Stakeholder Survey reveals mixed views about the Executive's policy making, with only 57% stating that the SE makes sensible policies. More than half (57%) of the stakeholders rated the SE performance on being innovative and willing to take risks as average or poor. However, when identifying issues of importance to stakeholders, innovation and risk taking was ranked low and is therefore not considered as a critical area for improvement.

Amongst some evaluation participants there was a view that there have been significant improvements to policy making in the SE with the development of a unified approach and new 'brand' of policy for Scotland. However, one of the criticisms of SE policy making is the short time frame within which decisions are taken and policies delivered. As in the baseline study, stakeholders raised the need for greater use of evidence in decision making. Stakeholders perceived that greater use of evidence would involve the SE making more use of stakeholders' professional knowledge and experiences. Participants also believed that more efforts are required to improve join-up and delivery planning in the SE. The Stakeholder Survey found that only 25% agree that the SE is joined up, but more believe the SE is focused on delivery (62%). Evaluation participants raised some specific concerns about civil service skills in implementation planning, the under utilisation of stakeholders' expertise in delivery, and the Executive's relationship with agencies and delivery partners.

2.4.3 Ministers' Views

Reflecting findings from previous research, Ministers believed that evidence is informing policy development, but were less confident that policy evaluation is taking place. Ministers made suggestions for enhancing the use of evidence, for example, to help look at the bigger picture or help inform policy direction.

Ministers felt that joined-up working has improved in recent years, but believed that more effort is required to further improve the join-up within and between departments. Ministers believed, as in previous research, that joined-up working is not sufficiently effective. Ministers, did however, report improvements with implementation, noting that implementation is now considered earlier along with legislation and that there is greater understanding amongst officials.

3. OUTWARD FOCUS

3.1 STAFF VIEWS

3.1.1 Staff Views on Outward Focus

According to staff, CtD has had more impact on outward focus than both culture and behaviours and corporate processes, but less than policy making. Staff felt that CtD had reinforced good practice and endorsed this commitment to outward focus in the SE.

Findings from the Staff Surveys also support the view that staff perceived that the Executive's outward focus has improved. Between 2000 and 2004, there has been a steady, marginal increase in agreement with the statements about how well the SE operates. The most significant increase is the proportion (74%) who agree that the SE works with and learns from others. There is also an increasing perception that the SE is 'open and in touch' (66%). In addition, the Staff Survey data shows a high level of agreement with the statement that 'the SE works in a customer-focused way' (92%).

Evaluation participants believed that CtD had promoted site visits, secondments, consultation and external communication, which had all improved the Executive's outward focus. However, one of the weaknesses reported by staff was the lack of emphasis in CtD on making the public aware of what we do.

3.1.2 Staff Views on External Communication

Staff highlighted examples of good practice of working with the public and stakeholders. A dominant view among staff was that CtD had encouraged greater external communication, for example, by simplifying communication.

"I feel we've made a big effort to try to refine our processes so they're less bureaucratic. I think people appreciate that." (Official)

Staff reported that some divisions had institutionalised the practice of presenting information about the Executive, the department and the division at all their events where they engage with the public and stakeholders, before moving onto the business of the day. Many more staff than previous phases of the evaluation highlighted the use of technology in improving external communication, examples provided included:

- the development of the SE website improving delivery of information
- establishment of an electronic forum to bring together 'hard-to-reach' people to contribute to policy ideas
- electronic forums enabling SE departments to communicate across departmental boundaries

However, as in previous phases of the evaluation, staff were almost unanimous in their belief that a weakness of the Executive's outward focus is the way the work of the SE is communicated to the public, not least because of the large amount of negative media attention that needs to be countered. The staff survey also registers some concern about communication with the public, as only just over half (57%) agree that the SE communicates effectively with the Scottish public.

3.1.3 Staff Views on Stakeholder Engagement

The dominant view among staff was that CtD had encouraged greater communication with stakeholders. More staff than in previous phases of the evaluation reported examples of good practice in this area, such as where departments had focussed on relations with stakeholders by stakeholder mapping, going on site visits, and drawing on their expertise. Although some staff felt that they were already improving stakeholder engagement prior to CtD, many felt that stakeholder engagement was now much more comprehensive and more pronounced in the business of the Executive.

"We're encouraged to get out more and meet people to get a flavour of what's on the ground. Whether that's due to CtD or being in a larger team allowing for more time, I don't know. Getting on-the-ground experience is better for briefing Ministers. There's ongoing discussion about this in my division, though it's a slow process."(Official)

"Just getting out of the office, when CtD came in it made it OK to get out to speak to people. Because it came through Heads of Division, it gave us justification to engage in these without having to explain yourself."(Official)

Staff Survey findings also show strong positive statements about stakeholder engagement. For example, 87% register that they know who their internal and external stakeholders are and 85% agree that they maintain an effective relationship with their internal and external stakeholders.

In several cases, focus group participants suggested stakeholder engagement is now also more strategic than in the past. One respondent noted that engagement with stakeholders had become such a feature of everyday working life, that she was unable to determine whether it was CtD or just mainstream practice: "but maybe that's the goal, it becomes mainstreamed and isn't seen as CtD".

However, as in earlier phases of the evaluation, there was some level of concern that the commitment to stakeholder engagement was patchy across the SE. Several staff questioned the impact of stakeholder engagement and to what extent the views of stakeholders are taken on board.

"Outward focus has definitely improved in terms of focus, how often etc. but do we actually listen? Or are we willing to take on board their ideas, share priorities?"(Official)

To remedy this situation, staff talked about the need to create even more innovative ways of engaging with stakeholders. For example, conducting small-scale consultations that might add greater value (see section 2.1.4 below) and using stakeholders more effectively to feed into strategic thinking, while being honest about the influence they can have in shaping policy development. As found in previous research, it was thought that providing feedback on how stakeholders' opinions have or have not been taken on board would improve the way we work with stakeholders.

"I'd like to be able to share with our stakeholders our assessment of the challenges we face – we need to find a way around the secrecy thing. Having an open and frank discussion about what's needed to spend money on."(Official)

3.1.4 Staff Views on Consultation

Staff felt that greater outward focus was also demonstrated through the Executive's use of consultations. Indeed, all staff felt that the SE is good at consulting widely, regularly and, to a

lesser extent, early on in the policy-making process, though there was still some concern about engaging 'hard-to-reach' individuals. In comparison with earlier phases of the evaluation, more staff were considering the quality of consultation and discussing examples of good practice, such as one team's success at providing feedback on the consultation exercise via the website prior to the publication of the report. In addition, some staff felt they had improved consultation by using more innovative methods than paper-based exercises, such as focus groups or e-forums.

Another idea to emerge, particularly among C-Band staff, was the view that the SE should make more use of what one participant called 'smart' consultation, that is, rather than aiming at sending out documents to a wide range of people, beyond the 'usual suspects', consultation could be made more effective by taking the opposite approach, as explained below:

"The 'usual suspects' are usual for a very good reason – I'd be happy to say to some stakeholders you don't have anything to add [to a particular discussion], instead of using a 'blanket stakeholder list' just to save face. There's a time and place for a chat with half a dozen organisations who can help us, but you get criticised for this."(Official)

3.2 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

3.2.1 Stakeholder Views on Engagement and Consultation

The Stakeholder Survey found that 64% feel the Executive's approach to working with and involving other organisations has improved since devolution, but 15% believe there has been no change in engagement since devolution and 8% feel things have got worse. Stakeholders participating in the focus group noted that the SE has become more open, not just through formal consultations, but also with informal contact.

"The Executive is undoubtedly more outward facing. It appears to see itself increasingly as part of a broader 'civic Scotland' rather than simply being at the apex of a hierarchical system."(External Stakeholder)

"The Scottish Executive are certainly trying to widen access and participation from a range of communities, stakeholders etc., and this has to be commended."(External Stakeholder)

One stakeholder believed that external pressure has played a part in the increasing outward focus of SE officials and that, as a result, there is less of a need to exert pressure now, as described below:

"Civil servants are aware of the fact that people have access to Ministers. So if they don't get their act together they have to answer PQs. They're now more willing to engage. We used to plant PQs, but that was some time ago. We don't have any need to do that now."(External Stakeholder)

Despite these acknowledged improvements in external engagement, the participants raised a number of concerns regarding organisational inconsistencies and civil service expertise (see sections 3.2.1 and 4.2.2). Stakeholders also raised concerns about: the extent of engagement; the use of expertise; and transparency of decision-making, as discussed below.

Extent of Engagement

Stakeholders reported instances when they had not been involved in policy decision-making as much as they felt they should be. Some reported less involvement with the decision-making process where political priorities are highest. Although some recognized this as part of the political

process, it remained a concern to some stakeholders who felt under suspicion by Ministers through their exclusion from key discussions.

Some stakeholders also noted occasions where the SE had not engaged with them regularly enough to keep in touch with what is happening in their fields. This was seen as a weakness that leaves the Executive out of touch.

"It's not good enough. These people need to know what's keeping me awake at night."
(External Stakeholder)

The Stakeholder Survey found that most rated SE performance as good to excellent on understanding what stakeholders are trying to achieve (68%) and on promoting regular dialogue with organisations (63%). In addition, only a minority (18%) agree that the SE is out of touch. Although largely positive, these findings indicate that there is still room for improvement.

Use of Expertise

Some stakeholder participants, as in phase one of the evaluation, expressed concerns about how the SE uses the expertise of stakeholders. For example, voluntary sector participants were concerned about the Executive's involvement of umbrella organisation representatives at the expense of involving those with more relevant expertise. One stakeholder believed that when civil servants are selecting representatives to involve, they give more weight to turn-taking, rather than what specific stakeholder expertise is most needed:

"The way that works is you wait your turn to come up and once you've been on one [committee] you have to wait again. I was on one [committee] but my experience was better on the next one, I had so much more to contribute to that, but the civil servant said I had not been put on it because I had already been on one. The whole process is not open and transparent and seems completely arbitrary."(External Stakeholder)

In previous stages of the evaluation, stakeholders have expressed the need for the SE to involve the 'ordinary public'. However, some of the participants at this stage stated that involving the general public in decision-making is sometimes unwarranted. For example, one stakeholder referred to the SE consultation on single agencies and questioned whether the public was qualified to make a judgement alongside experts in this field. Another participant noted that a Minister's 'chance' discussion with an individual in a public place had had a profound impact on the decision taken by the minister. Stakeholders believed that measures should be taken to ensure that reliable information is provided to Ministers.

"As a Minister, I'd be concerned about vested interests and about whether I can trust what people say. I would focus change on this. At the moment Ministers get noise. We need to focus on what advice they get in order to achieve better outcomes."(External Stakeholder)

Several stakeholder participants also raised a concern about the fact that the views of special advisers are prioritised over those of civil servants and stakeholders, yet special advisers are not held accountable to professional standards or the people of Scotland.

"There's some evidence of individual tough decisions now being taken based on what special advisers say. I saw examples where civil servants were not involved at all. If that's a reality then there's a lot of issues for us [as stakeholders] in terms of how we operate."(External Stakeholder)

While stakeholders recognised that this might be a feature of the political context of policy making, they felt that the Executive should be more explicit about this so that stakeholders can have a better understanding of the 'playing field'.

Transparency of Decision Making

Although stakeholders saw a commitment to increasing and widening participation and partnership working, the engagement between civil servants and stakeholders was sometimes criticized as 'going through the motions', rather than listening to what stakeholders have to say to bring about change.

"The Executive may recognise stakeholder expertise but they don't do anything about it."
(External Stakeholder)

Some stakeholders referred to a recent consultation exercise, which sought the responses of many people over one year, but with an apparent unwillingness to take decisions based on the advice provided. As in Phase one consultation was resulting in initiative overload for some stakeholders and in Phase 2 consultation exercises were also criticised for lacking depth.

The Stakeholder Survey revealed that most (69%) agree that the SE listens to stakeholders, but highlighted concerns about transparency, with similar proportions rating SE performance as average or poor on openly sharing information (40%) and being clear about how much is open for change (43%).

Stakeholder focus group participants criticised the SE for so far failing to fully realise a culture of transparency. Some stakeholder participants provided examples where they had not been kept informed about decisions that had been taken. This was of particular concern to one, a voluntary-sector representative, who noted that, while local government receive frequent letters informing them of the implications for their work, the voluntary sector seldom receives such correspondence. This issue of keeping stakeholders informed was also raised in phase one of the study and the Stakeholder Survey similarly found that the Executive's practice of keeping stakeholders informed about how its thinking is developing is average – with only just over half (52%) rating this good to excellent, and 44% rated it average or poor.

3.3 MINISTERS' VIEWS

3.3.1 Ministers' Views on External Communication

Overall Ministers felt that external perceptions of the Executive have been improving since it was established and that there is an increasing understanding that the Executive is the devolved government. However, one Minister stated that there is still confusion amongst the public about the distinction between the Parliament and the SE. Another Minister commented that the 'scandal' of the Parliament Building had done 'incalculable damage to public perceptions' of the Scottish government. However, this Minister believed that those who have been involved with policy development and who have a better understanding of what the Executive does have been impressed and perceive the Scottish civil service to be competent and courteous.

Generally Ministers believed that in some instances there is good communication with the public, but that, overall, there is a need for an improved media and communications approach in the SE. One Minister believed that Ministers themselves need to do a better job of 'managing expectations' amongst the media about what can be delivered in the short-term. However, other Ministers

mostly emphasised the improvements that officials could make with the way the Executive communicates externally, their suggestions included:

- using more targeted communication rather than reliance on press releases
- using more PR rather than just advertising campaigns
- 'badging' more of the work funded by SE (e.g. flood prevention work or repairing lights on roads)
- improve SE logo and branding, rather than having an old fashioned logo which could be a 'turn off'
- making more use of local papers, rather than focus on nationals

3.3.2 Ministers' Views on Engagement

Ministers were generally pleased with the amount and type of external engagement. They all acknowledged that in recent years there have been large improvements in the way that officials engage and share information with stakeholders. At the outset of CtD, research revealed that Ministers were concerned about the lack of stakeholder engagement and wanted a customer focused approach to be embedded in the organisation and from this phase of research it seems that Ministers now believe this has happened.

One Minister believed that improvements in external engagement had been helped by the large number of officials with experience of other sectors joining the SE in the last 5 years, while CtD has further helped by encouraging more informal communications and trusting relationships. Another Minister believed that some officials are better than others at building relationships and making stakeholders feel valued, and that these officials should be rewarded for that.

Some Ministers acknowledged the sensitivities around external engagement, such as concerns about confidentiality and trust, but stated that it is important for good engagement work to continue and that Ministers need to accept this risk and officials have to use their judgement about timing. One Minister suggested that it would be helpful if officials could inform Ministers when they have met stakeholders to avoid instances when stakeholders refer to meetings with officials that the Minister knows nothing about. Overall, however, Ministers generally reported that they were not aware of any problems with engagement activities going on and some expanded on the benefits of external engagement such as:

- solving problems at an early stage
- achieving policy change
- passing legislation through Parliament
- encouraging ownership
- enabling successful delivery

One Minister cited positive examples of external engagement, but felt that some officials still believe the SE owns the policy, when in reality the aim is to get ownership from stakeholders. In contrast, another Minister expressed concern about encouraging ownership and 'abdicating responsibility' to stakeholder groups. This Minister believed that in some cases officials have gone too far with involving stakeholders in policy thinking and that there needs to be more emphasis on boundaries with partnership working.

3.3.3 Ministers' Views on Consultation

Although one Minister expressed concerns that we are doing too many consultations in the SE, Ministers consistently stated they were content with consultation processes in the Executive. One

Minister mainly believed this was due to the fact that consultation was embedded as a core part of the system when the Executive and new Parliament were established, rather than due to the CtD programme. However, this Minister did acknowledge that there have been improvements in how stakeholders are consulted in recent years with a move away from 'just informing' people what we are doing.

Another Minister noted that going beyond the 'usual suspects' and having an interactive part of the consultation, such as focus groups, is now expected, rather than just putting a document out. It was felt that this type of 'proactive' consultation works best as it involves people and 'raises the debate'. However, this Minister believed that discussion from meetings and focus groups should be incorporated into the consultation analysis, rather than just a focus on the formal written responses.

3.4 SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON OUTWARD FOCUS

3.4.1 Staff Views

Staff felt that CtD had reinforced good practice and endorsed the commitment to outward focus in the SE. Staff Survey findings also support the view that staff perceive improvements in outward focus - between 2000 and 2004 there have been increases in the proportion believing that the SE works with and learns from others and it is open and in touch. There is less agreement, however, that the SE communicates effectively with the Scottish public. Evaluation participants held particularly negative views of the Executive's communication with the public and felt this area of outward focus requires further attention.

Participants believed that CtD had had an impact on engagement and consultation by encouraging greater communication with stakeholders. Staff survey findings also show strong positive statements about stakeholder engagement – 87% register that they know who their stakeholders are, and 85% agree they maintain effective relationships with their stakeholders. However, as in earlier phases of the evaluation participants were concerned that the commitment to stakeholder engagement is patchy across the SE. Some suggested that there might be a need for more innovative ways of engaging, such as conducting smaller-scale consultations or using stakeholders to feed into strategic thinking.

3.4.2 Stakeholder Views

The Stakeholder Survey found that 64% feel the Executive's approach to working with and involving other organisations has improved since devolution, but 15% believe there has been no change in engagement since devolution and 8% feel things have got worse. Evaluation participants noted that the SE has become more open, not just through formal consultations, but also with informal contact.

However, stakeholders raised some key concerns about SE external engagement. The first of these was about the extent of engagement and concerns about exclusion from discussions or lack of regular contact. The Stakeholder Survey found that most, but not a large majority (68%), positively rate the SE for understanding what stakeholders are trying to achieve. The second concern of evaluation participants was about how the SE utilises different expertise and who influences Ministers. Thirdly, participants questioned the transparency of decision making within the SE and not keeping stakeholders informed. The stakeholder survey found that only just over half (52%) positively rated the SE on keeping stakeholders informed about how its thinking is developing.

3.4.3 Ministers' Views

Previous research at the outset of CtD showed that Ministers were concerned about the need to embed a customer focused approach in the organisation - this concern is now no longer apparent, as Ministers were generally pleased with the amount and type of external engagement and consultation. Ministers acknowledged that there have been large improvements in recent years with the way that officials engage and share information with stakeholders, but the changes were not necessarily related to the impact of CtD. Ministers mostly highlighted positive examples of engagement practices, but there were differences in opinion about the extent to which officials should give ownership to stakeholders.

Similar to staff, Ministers believed that SE communication with the public is an area of outward focus which needs further improvement. Overall they believed that there is a need for an improved media and communications approach.

4. CULTURE AND BEHAVIOURS

4.1 STAFF VIEWS

4.1.1. Staff Views on Culture and Behaviours

Participants appeared to have greater awareness and be more knowledgeable about the aims of CtD, than in previous phases of the evaluation. This is supported by the 2004 Staff Survey results which show that 72% of staff agree that they are aware of the overall aims and aspirations of CtD. Participants expressed less cynicism than in previous phases of the evaluation, with fewer dismissive comments being made about CtD. In comparison to earlier phases, few staff attributed change to devolution and instead discussions centred on the CtD programme (though in some cases references were made to eRDM or FOI also driving change).

Staff believed that CtD had had a positive impact in terms of 'endorsing change' or 'giving permission to improve'. The view that change and improvement was being embedded in the Executive was strongest amongst C-Band participants, less so for B Band, and not at all for almost all A-Band participants.

However, for staff across all the Bands, improving inconsistency in culture and behaviours across the SE was still seen as a significant challenge, as in previous phases of the evaluation. Despite 'pockets of change' staff noted that 'traditional' behaviours are still in operation, such as being task-oriented, being risk-averse, or having a 'silo' mentality; described by one participant as a 'that's not my job' attitude.

"My own experience is that there is still the "we've done it like this for a long time and don't need to change" attitude. Suggestions made to improve things have fallen on deaf and uninterested ears, although not within my Branch who embrace change and accept suggestions to improve." (Official)

Inconsistent practices across the SE were perceived to be related to the extent to which staff embrace change.

"In our part of X department we have a change agenda that hasn't started yet. They're very resistant to change. Some people do display the cultures we're looking for, but we have a hard core of staff not up for it."(Official)

Staff were generally less convinced about the impact of CtD on culture and behaviours than they were on other areas, such as stakeholder engagement and policy making.

"There is a general perception that CtD is about delivery and services to stakeholders, rather than inward focus and internal change."(Official)

4.1.2 A Band Views on 'Bandism'

"CtD is supposed to equalize and make people feel fairer treatment, but I can't see it." (A-Band Official)

There was a near universal view amongst A-Band participants that CtD has done little or nothing to eliminate a culture of 'bandism' in the SE, particularly at branch level. A-Band staff reported that they are often excluded from discussions about the CtD programme. This is consistent with the staff survey finding that more A-Band staff (42%) feel they have not been involved in

discussion about changes and improvement in their area, compared to other Bands (33% Band B and 15% Band C). Similarly 56% of Band-A staff do not feel involved in formulating the objectives of their section/team/unit, compared to Band B (31%) and Band C (9%).

This is especially significant, given that 72% of Band-A staff agreed that it was important to them personally to find out what is going on in the wider Executive. Many Band-A focus group participants reported instances where they felt they had been excluded in some way, despite their willingness to be involved. Examples cited included:

- not being considered by colleagues to be part of the team
- not being given information (Band-A staff reported learning what is going on from filing documents, and several were concerned that the introduction of eRDM will cut off this source of information)
- not being allowed to attend training courses.

For one participant, in a unique position to compare working in Band A and Band B, the issue was about not being listened to:

"Because I'm a TRS B1 at the moment, I'm involved, I get asked my opinion – this is excellent. But I'm the manager of X at A2, but my opinion isn't sought. I'm not even copied in. When I'm a B1 they want my opinion, but as an A2, I'm not asked."(A-Band Official)

As a consequence, A-Band participants argued for greater involvement in discussions about CtD ideas and, more generally, in the work of branches.

4.1.3 Staff Views on Leadership

Staff stressed the importance of leadership in promoting CtD and shaping a new culture within the SE. Some staff gave examples where they felt CtD had made a positive impact on managerial culture. One commented:

"Our line manager has changed a lot since CtD came in. He's engaging more with staff. If managers are changing then it filters down to staff. When he's been to a CtD event, he's all fired up and enthusiastic. It's definitely due to CtD."(Official)

At the same time, many staff members commented that change and improvement were hampered by a lack of translation of the CtD vision by managers into tangible action for staff.

"Initially I connected with [CtD], but not now. Something's got lost because nobody else bought into it. People say, "what does it mean?". I don't see it turning into anything practical. I thought it would be the team going away and seeing how it all will be put into something practical."(Official)

Staff Survey results show that a significant proportion of staff (51%) do not believe the SCS effectively communicates key priorities to staff, while a similar proportion (53%) do not feel in touch with wider organisational developments. There was some confusion amongst focus group participants about how different aspects of SE business fitted together, such as CtD, the Aims Visions and Values statement, and Partnership Agreements.

Staff survey findings also highlight that staff lack awareness of how CtD fits with their jobs. When asked to comment on whether CtD behaviours are relevant to their jobs, only 58% of staff overall agreed. The percentage who agree also increases significantly through the Bands (A-Band 44%, B-Band 57% and C-Band 77%). One participant believed that CtD should be pitched less as a 'big

culture change programme' and more as a 'continuous improvement programme', thereby providing greater emphasis on building on good practice, which would encourage and motivate staff.

As well as managers shaping culture and behaviours, participants also highlighted that Ministers share a similar role in demonstrating and enabling a new culture to emerge in the civil service. Though some staff reported examples of positive behaviours from Ministers, a considerable number felt that change was also being constrained at Ministerial level, as was found in previous phases of the evaluation. Staff noted that different Ministers varied in their approach.

"The focus on Ministers is important. In X department [change] isn't endorsed by the Minister. Y department is very different. I sense a real benefit where the Minister is driving change because that's what they want."(Official)

Several examples were given by staff to illustrate where Ministers were not displaying CtD behaviours, for example:

- not buying into the change agenda
- still acting cautiously
- putting the emphasis on doing briefings
- having a culture of blaming the civil service

Some staff commented that the need for Ministers to respond to political pressures was often contradictory to the spirit of CtD. For example, when policy was driven by the Partnership Agreement or made in response to public pressure, rather than being based on evidence. Staff advised targeting CtD at Ministers to ensure they support the changes being made by civil servants.

4.2 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

4.2.1 Stakeholder Views on Culture and Behaviour

A clear difference from the views expressed in phase 1 of the CtD evaluation is that stakeholders no longer feel there is a problem with the overall direction of change and the areas being targeted for attention. However, they believed that CtD has had a patchy impact on culture and behaviour within the SE, as there are still inconsistencies in behaviour. Overall stakeholders noted that there is good practice by officials, which existed prior to CtD, but there are also officials who lack commitment, which they suggest is because CtD has not yet filtered throughout the organisation.

In terms of good practice, stakeholders identified where civil servants had consulted them on key issues, had contacted them early on in the policy-making process and had treated them with respect and courtesy. Stakeholders also noted that some staff had demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm, and had taken personal responsibility for the success of policy initiatives.

"In my experience, the senior administrator viewed it as a personal responsibility, they were committed and enthusiastic, and they were absolutely outstanding."(External Stakeholder)

The 2004 Stakeholder Survey supports this finding as 77% agreed that the SE is committed to achieving its objectives. Furthermore, 91% of stakeholders rated Executive staff as good to excellent in treating stakeholders with courtesy and respect. The survey also found that 83% rated the SE good to excellent at having staff who are easy to contact.

The survey found some level of concern about inconsistencies across the organisation, with a third (34%) rating the SE performance on promoting a consistent approach to dealing with organisations as average to poor. Inconsistencies in practices across the SE were highlighted by the focus group participants. They suggested different reasons for this, such as having different departmental cultures, varied levels of motivation about particular policy areas or too much staff movement resulting in poor understanding of policy areas. Some stakeholders perceived that the patchy impact was due to the location of the CtD Division within a department. It was thought this might perpetuate the 'silo' mentality, with change being seen as 'somebody else's field'. It was strongly suggested that 'champions of change' are required within departments to now deliver change across all parts of the Scottish Executive.

"You've got to get to grips with CtD. You've got to deliver that now through implementation. I can't see how keeping a separate division called CtD can do that. It can be best delivered within departments." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders in both phase one and two of the evaluation believed that lack of motivation and poor attitude should be tackled by CtD by challenging inappropriate behaviours. However, some stakeholders in phase two went even further and suggested that SE employment policies should be reformed to enable dismissal of those staff who lack a willingness to adapt to a modernising civil service.

"If people are not prepared to change they need to go. This is a significant issue of realism. If you don't do that, you won't get the change you're looking for." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders felt that the change agenda needs to be properly resourced in terms of expertise and funding. One stakeholder stated that people leading the programme need skills and experience in leading change in order to improve the culture and behaviour of the organisation. Stakeholders also stressed the importance of providing adequate funding for the change programme as it continues into the future.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Views on Leadership

Stakeholders commented on the role of leadership in driving positive cultures and behaviours throughout the SE. Some stakeholders believed that Ministers and senior civil servants are having a positive impact on the culture and behaviour of staff. Ministers, for example, had begun to engage more with stakeholders and, according to one stakeholder; this had encouraged civil servants to do the same. Senior civil servants were also praised by another stakeholder for helping to share the vision of the Executive.

"There definitely seems to be a much greater clarity of overall vision. This seems to be accompanied by a less hierarchical style of working with greater delegation to heads of section. I assume these developments have been made possible by a greater sense of common purpose among the 'Top Forty' and better communication down through the organisation." (External Stakeholder)

However, as in phase one, the quality of leadership was believed to be patchy across the SE. Some managers and Ministers were said to be encouraging change, but stakeholders perceived weak leadership in other cases. The stakeholder survey found that 20% of stakeholders felt that SE departments with which they work lack strong leadership.

Some stakeholders were more critical of the middle tier of management where, they felt, the impact of CtD had stagnated.

"CtD hasn't actually delivered anything.... It is not changing the middle tier people and that would considerably affect our day-to-day relationships." (External Stakeholder)

The implications for poor leadership, according to stakeholders, are staff who are not motivated and lack commitment to their work, preventing the best policies from being delivered. In terms of addressing this problem, stakeholders suggested leaders ought to demonstrate their commitment to the change programme, as suggested below:

"The Scottish Executive need to put more into it. It should not just be a mantra from the top, but a passion from the top, with buy-in from below. But realistically, it will be a difficult task" (External Stakeholder)

Furthermore, stakeholders felt greater focus is needed on middle managers because they help to translate the ideas of change into practice and enable it to filter through the organisation, by enthusing staff and encouraging CtD behaviours.

4.3 MINISTERS' VIEWS

4.3.1 Ministers' Views on Culture and Behaviour

There was some agreement amongst Ministers that there has been an improvement with the culture and behaviours in the SE which has translated into improved working relationships between officials and Ministers (discussed in more detail in section 3.3.2) and an improved outward focus (see section 2.3). However, Ministers generally felt that it is difficult to distinguish the impact of CtD from more general changes as a result of devolution.

"Things were improving since devolution, but have been further improved and 'finessed' by CtD. The civil service is crisper, sharper and more focused... There has been a culture change because of access to Ministers in a new way. CtD may have helped give people confidence and permission not to go through the older channel. So it's difficult to say what the impact [of CtD] has been, but there's definitely been improvement." (Minister)

One Minister was less enthusiastic about CtD, saying that the dialogue about change had been useful for allowing Ministers to 'get off their chests' how they felt about the organisation of the civil service and how the Executive was managed. However, this Minister felt that not enough attention had been paid to the core purpose of the civil service which, he felt, was to serve the public, not Ministers. Another Minister felt there were still elements within the 'ancient' civil service who have an attitude of 'putting things off until mañana', but he felt that this attitude is disappearing and that on the whole there is a civil service that serves Scotland well.

Some Ministers were not aware of the aims of CtD, and others who were aware, felt that there is a need for more communication about the focus of CtD and what is being achieved. One Minister also felt that CtD is too 'elitist' and does not have a lot of relevance for junior staff.

Another Minister emphasised that CtD has focused on officials, but has not fully taken account of the fact that Ministers are the other part of the 'team'. This Minister stated that a 'team spirit' with officials and Ministers together is required to make it work.

"Ministers need to be told how they can work better too – otherwise there is a bit missing, as Ministers may need to change too. There is a need for a joint understanding between Ministers and officials about what CtD aims to achieve" (Minister)

Another Minister suggested that CtD or the Permanent Secretary need to outline the 'top 5' improvements to be made in 2005 and to provide a follow-up in 6 months, with any changes reported back.

4.3.2 Ministers' Experiences of Working with SE Staff

As was found in previous research in the SE, Ministers in this phase of the evaluation reported problems with inconsistencies in behaviours and practices.

"In my department there are a number of extremely able people ... that are flexible within the system. I'm mostly well served especially by senior staff who are very capable. I can't say the same for other departments. I've had experience in other departments where officials were economical with the truth."(Minister)

One Minister felt that some parts of the civil service still have a culture of 'superiority' where they think they know better than the Minister, which can cause problems in getting Ministerial decisions implemented. However, this Minister also felt that officials are too timid and need to be more confident in presenting professional advice.

Though there were some criticisms of the performance of the civil service, almost all also recognised that Ministers, themselves, have a role to play in improving working relationships. Most of the suggestions made to improve working together centred on communicating clearly with officials. For example, one Minister asserted that Ministers need to make time to meet officials in order to build better business relationships. More than one Minister stressed the importance of giving feedback on performance, such as praise for a job well done or letting officials know when briefing was not useful.

When discussing their experiences of working with officials, Ministers focused on three main areas: briefing; speechwriting; and ministerial correspondence (discussed in more detail below). Overall Ministers felt that these services provided by officials are not valued as professional skills by the 'official machine' and individuals who excel in these services should be recognised for this by the organisation.

Briefing

Ministers spoke of improvement in working with officials on briefing, in particular having more of a 'team' approach with greater honesty between officials and Ministers. However, similar to previous research in the SE, the most predominant view among Ministers was that there was too much reliance on written briefing, rather than having face-to-face contact. One Minister acknowledged the importance of communicating with officials about briefing practices.

"Officials need to ask whether they really need to write it down or will 5 minutes talking to the Minister solve the problem. This is down to Ministers also giving civil servants the confidence that this is ok and we can have these kinds of discussions."(Minister)

Some Ministers noted that they had worked with their officials to increase the amount of face-to-face contact, such as holding surgeries for officials to discuss ideas before writing minutes.

There were differences in opinion about the preferred minute length, several Ministers commented on the importance of having a 1-page minute, which provides a succinct outline of what is being communicated. Some also noted inconsistencies in practice:

"Some can get it on 1 page others can't and write pages and pages. It's important to get it right." (Minister)

However, one Minister had a strong dislike of 1-page minutes and asked officials to make their own judgement on the length of the minute and to avoid using numerous annexes. This suggests that different approaches may need to be used to suit different Ministers, rather than having one uniform approach.

Ministers did comment on poor briefing practices that sometimes occurred, these included:

- receiving the same set of briefing papers 3 or 4 times for different events
- hurried briefing that is not fully thought through
- briefing not provided early enough
- tendency to send the previous last briefing note done, rather than what is needed
- briefing opening up new areas of debate without previously alerting the Minister

Speechwriting

Consistently Ministers stated that speechwriting practices are very variable and that they regularly experience problems with the quality of speeches provided. This echoes findings from research at the outset of CtD when Ministers complained about the quality of speech writing, but at that time they were hopeful that the speechwriting initiative would improve practices. However, it appears that Ministers do not feel that sufficient improvements have taken place because of the inconsistencies in the quality of speechwriting.

Some of the problems with poorer quality speeches described by Ministers included:

- lack of 'homework' on the event e.g. producing speeches that are too long or not in keeping with the audience
- not differentiating between bullet points for a short speech and full written text for a longer speech
- using language that is not appropriate for spoken text
- lack of ability or unwillingness to draft speeches with PowerPoint slides
- not taking account of Minister's preferences or style

"I come across as having multiple personalities, the speeches are so different." (Minister)

Several Ministers perceived speechwriting to be undervalued by the civil service, for example, that it is a task given to junior or inexperienced staff who are not given support by managers. One Minister stated that speech writing should not be regarded as a 'dead-end job' as it is a very important and valuable service for Ministers.

Ministerial Correspondence

Though one Minister reported correspondence to be generally of an adequate standard, consistently Ministers expressed concerns about the writing style, particularly about bad grammar and spelling. One Minister commented on the number of letters written by civil servants which did not answer the question asked or offer an adequate explanation for action taken.

One Minister believed that the lack of care taken to draft responses and meet deadlines, reflects a culture of not caring about being professional or motivated. This affects Ministers' confidence in

what can be delivered and leads to 'watered down' decisions as there is a lack of faith that the organisation can cope.

4.4 SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON CULTURE AND BEHAVIOURS

4.4.1 Staff Views

Cynicism of CtD appears to have decreased amongst staff and there is an increased knowledge of the aims of the change programme. In June 2004 the Staff Survey found that 72% are aware of the overall aims and aspirations of CtD. Furthermore, in comparison to earlier phases of the evaluation, change is less attributed to devolution and more to CtD itself. C-Band staff expressed the most positive views about change and improvement being embedded in the organisation, whilst A-Band staff felt the most excluded from this and believed that a culture of 'bandism' remains.

Staff across all bands felt that the impact of CtD on culture and behaviours is patchy and that there are still inconsistencies in behaviour. Some perceived that CtD has focused less attention on internal culture and more on external engagement and policy making. Staff believed that leadership from managers plays an important role in shaping a new culture within the SE and the staff survey results reveal that there is a need for clearer direction and communication across the organisation. Staff also believed that Ministers need to share a similar role in demonstrating and enabling a new culture to emerge.

4.4.2 Stakeholder Views

Stakeholders no longer feel there is a problem with the overall direction of change in the SE and the areas being targeted for attention. However, similar to staff, they did believe that CtD has had a patchy impact on culture and behaviours, as there are still inconsistencies in behaviour. Stakeholders noted that there are good practices where officials demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm. Indeed, the Stakeholder Survey found that a high proportion rate SE staff as being good to excellent in treating stakeholders with courtesy and respect (91%) and being easy to contact (83%). However, the stakeholder group participants also noted examples of less good practices where officials lacked commitment.

Participants suggested varied reasons for inconsistencies in behaviour, including: different departmental cultures; varied levels of motivation about particular policy areas; too much staff movement resulting in poor understanding of policy areas; or the location of the CtD Division within a department structure. As noted previously in the evaluation, stakeholders believed that CtD should challenge inappropriate behaviours. Stakeholders also believed in the role of Ministers and managers as leaders. Some managers and Ministers were said to be encouraging change, but stakeholders perceived weak leadership in other cases, particularly among middle managers. However, the Stakeholder Survey found that only 20% believe the SE lacks strong leadership.

4.4.3 Ministers' Views

There was some agreement amongst Ministers that there have been improvements with the culture and behaviours in the SE which has translated into improved working relationships between officials and Ministers and an improved outward focus. However, Ministers generally felt that it is difficult to distinguish the impact of CtD from more general changes as a result of devolution. Some Ministers felt that further cultural shifts are still required in the Scottish civil

service. Generally, Ministers felt there needs to be improved communication about the focus of CtD and what it is achieving.

Ministers reported problems with inconsistencies in behaviours and practices, but also acknowledged their own role in communicating with officials about how they can best work together. The predominant view amongst Ministers, as in previous research, is that there is too much reliance on written briefing, rather than face-to-face contact. Ministers discussed some problems with the quality and timing of briefing received in some instances. Similarly they noted that whilst some individuals write good speeches, the overall quality of speechwriting tends to be poor and it is not given enough importance within the organisation. Ministers also expressed concerns about the quality of ministerial correspondence, particularly the spelling and grammar.

5. CORPORATE PROCESSES

5.1 STAFF VIEWS ON PROCESSES

5.1.1 Staff Views on Recruitment

Consistently throughout the evaluation phases, staff have raised concerns about two key recruitment issues, firstly delays in getting staff into post; and secondly, the lack of flexible solutions to recruitment, such as being able to develop a new system to recruit temporary staff into permanent posts. While these continue to be a concern, staff in this phase were also concerned about staff shortages, several spoke of a chronic shortage of B1s, B2s and C1s.

It was suggested that the SE needs a system to work out the number of staff needed at different grades. One participant suggested that entry into the SE was poorly organised, for example, in terms of relocation procedures and assistance. One staff member was concerned about a lack of consistency in recruitment practice, where jobs were sometimes not advertised and people were just 'slotted' into posts. Others felt that not enough attention is paid to discrimination in recruitment and, where this happened; there was a lack of confidence in the reporting system.

In addition, some questioned the use of rigid pay scales, which offered little room for manoeuvre in external recruitment. As in earlier phases of the evaluation, secondments were considered a good way to exchange information, knowledge and understanding. Staff felt that secondments should continue to be encouraged and made more flexible to enable short-term placements.

5.1.2 Staff Views on Performance Appraisal and Reward

Staff commented positively on the new performance appraisal (PA) system, as they felt that making CtD behaviours part of the staff assessment process will help link CtD to individual jobs and increase the relevance of CtD to staff members. However, staff stressed that the success of the new system will depend on managers monitoring and challenging unacceptable behaviours. As in earlier phases of the evaluation, staff continued to show concern about inconsistency in managers carrying out performance management tasks and some staff felt that managers did not allow staff the time they needed to do their performance appraisal.

Although the link to CtD was approved by many, the PA system was criticised by the majority of staff. For example, as in earlier phases of the evaluation, a significant number of staff were concerned about performance marking, particularly the large number being marked 'effective', which, one suggested, rendered it 'meaningless'. Others felt the PA system did not capture real work achieved or recognise when staff had put in long hours, sometimes at the request of a Minister.

"I was working on X, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week for 6 weeks, but [by the time the next appraisal came around] they said it was not above and beyond the call of duty. It was expected of you."(Official)

The Staff Survey reveals that a significant proportion (42%) do not feel appropriately rewarded for their work, with the highest proportion among A-Band staff. As in earlier phases of the evaluation, staff, especially managers, suggested that there are insufficient and inflexible systems in place for rewarding and valuing staff at a local level. Staff could not see direct links between good performance and the reward systems offered within the SE, such as: promotion; pay increases; bonuses; being awarded a permanent job; or receiving an Excellence Award.

Several staff members commented on the introduction of the Excellence Awards as part of the CtD programme as a good example of recognizing staff performance and celebrating excellence. While some staff felt the awards had promoted the sharing of good practice throughout the SE, others felt the awards had been under-exploited. For example, one staff member suggested that projects given awards could be used as models for good practice and showcased in lunchtime seminars. Some staff also felt that winners of Excellence Awards should be rewarded with promotion.

There were also conflicting views among staff as to whether the awards are a successful means of recognising staff achievement, or whether they had only created tensions within the workforce, such as resentment felt by those who had performed very well but had not been nominated. One staff member also argued that 'bad habits', such as crafting a minute, were rewarded, rather than CtD behaviours, such as innovative thinking or outward focus.

5.1.3 Staff Views on Competency System and Promotion

Many staff, particularly in Bands B and C, approved of the move to competency-based interviewing and behavioural indicators, especially from the point of view of creating a system that was consistent and open. However, there were concerns about the clash between having a centralised standardised system and the need to ask questions relevant to the post being applied for. Likewise, staff felt there was a lack of emphasis on achieving/performance in their current job.

Some staff were concerned about the number and nature of changes being made to HR systems and the number of mixed messages being given to staff. For example, referring to the change in the system for assessing individual competencies, one staff member commented:

"It's gone from one extreme to the other, from being part of a team to being the big 'I'."
(Official)

Some staff questioned whether the perceived highly complex system is necessary to carry out basic business functions such as recruitment, performance appraisal and promotion. There was also a significant level of scepticism about whether the new system was meeting business needs, or whether it recruited people who are good at passing boards.

As in previous phases of the evaluation, promotion was a particularly contentious issue for A Band staff. Almost all participants in this Band complained about the difficulties they faced in passing boards. Some Bands B and C participants also expressed this concern for Band A staff. Some suggested that, though it was relatively easy to move up grades, a 'ceiling' existed between one Band and the next, making it very difficult for many to get promoted.

"It's hard to get through the Board, but I was made a TRS anyway. So they think I'm good enough to do the job, but they won't let me through." (A Band Official)

Generally A Band staff felt that to enable their advancement it would be necessary to base promotion on local decisions, looking at how well a person did their job and met their competencies, especially 'achieving', rather than promotion being tied to a central decision-making process and a board interview. In addition, some felt that A1s should be able to go for B1 posts, instead of giving priority to A3s.

Although less frequently mentioned, staff commented on other problems hindering promotion, including:

- difficulties for civil servants used to getting promoted by delivering on their objectives to move to a culture of 'having to sell yourself'

- lack of opportunities outside of the main Edinburgh offices
- the necessity for some C-Band staff to move to agencies to get promotion in specialist areas

Staff Survey findings also show concerns about future career development, with less than half (44%) agreeing that career prospects are good. The most concerned were those at A4 and C3 grades.

5.1.4 Staff Views on Training and Development

The Staff Survey registered a large majority, 89%, who feel that they have the knowledge and skills to do their current job satisfactorily. Focus group participants overall were similarly satisfied that training is adequate for their job.

However, as in previous phases of the evaluation, the link between training and development was of concern, particularly to A Band staff. As discussed in Part 3, 'bandism' in training and development opportunities represented for Band A an important factor in their sense of exclusion from change and improvement initiatives within the Executive. B and C Band participants also expressed concern about this issue for A Band staff.

Staff in all Bands asked for more of the popular training courses to be run because high demand meant it was often difficult to get on these. Staff also requested more detail about courses to help them choose the most appropriate training.

5.1.5 Staff Views on Finance, Business Planning and IT

Although staff generally focussed on HR issues in their discussions of corporate systems, some staff, largely from Band C, commented on other systems, such as finance and business planning and I.T.

Improvements in business planning were noted, as senior managers are perceived to be more focussed on planning and strategic thinking. One staff member pointed to improvements in financial accountability. Among the negative comments made by staff, one suggested that finance was 'mysterious', even for people involved in it. Another was concerned about difficulties in managing budgets for staff expenditure due to a delay in updating staff on payroll lists.

Some participants felt I.T. support offered a very poor service in terms of availability and turnaround and was not a '24/7 service' one would find in other organisations.

5.2 STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS ON CORPORATE PROCESSES

5.2.1 Stakeholders Views on Recruitment and Performance

Stakeholders highlighted the particular political context of Scotland, where policy needs to be made according to Parliament more so than in Whitehall departments. They, therefore, emphasised that a particular kind of candidate is needed for the Scottish civil service. Stakeholders felt that SE staff need to be able to work with Ministers, but also stand up to Ministers when the party line needs to be challenged in light of evidence and public opinion. Stakeholders, however, believed this kind of candidate is not being recruited.

"The quality of people coming into these posts is not high. [And, as a consequence] weaker staff are now running the public sector and it's getting weaker." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders condemned the slow SE recruitment process, which they felt deters some of the better candidates who are attracted to other jobs while waiting for the recruitment process to run its course. Another felt that the image of the public sector did not attract potential private sector candidates. One stakeholder felt that the inflexible pay scales did not help the SE recruit the best candidates because they prevent the Executive offering more money to an individual based on their experience and expertise.

Stakeholders highlighted how the SE performance appraisal system shapes some staff skills at the expense of others. As highlighted in section 1.2, stakeholders feel that staff demonstrate good policy making skills but are weak on policy delivery, because implementation skills are not rewarded in the appraisal system.

As noted in section 3.2.1 some stakeholders suggested that that SE employment policies should be reformed to enable dismissal of those staff who are unwilling to change with the modern civil service.

"You have to change some of the people. There is no credibility in the outside world for keeping dead wood." (External Stakeholder)

5.2.2 Stakeholders Views on Staff Movement

Stakeholders were also concerned about the rapid turnover of staff in the SE. They believed that this has an impact on the knowledge base, with staff being less informed about a subject. It was felt that this affects officials' relationships with stakeholders, as stakeholders feel that officials can be ill-informed and 'out of their depth' on particular issues. One stakeholder commented that lack of expertise in the SE civil service should be addressed as an HR issue in terms of recruitment and skills appraisal.

"The problem is that established sectors like Education need staff who know the sector and can work with the issues the sector is grappling with at present rather than having new staff who have no idea what is happening and have to hit the tarmac running and, I am sad to say, often on the wrong runway." (External Stakeholder)

Staff turnover was also highlighted in the 2004 Stakeholder Survey, with 43% rating SE performance on staff not moving around too much as average or poor. However, this issue is not perceived to be an area of concern to stakeholders. In a list of seventeen qualities describing effective organisations, staff movement was considered least important. The issue of staff movement was raised as a concern by stakeholders in the baseline study, but it was discussed much more as a cultural problem, whereas the discussion at phase 2 was triggered by some stakeholders' irritation with the fact that a Minister had recently moved a whole private office team to the new portfolio.

5.2.3 Stakeholder Views on SE Reception Procedures

Stakeholders noted a change from the use of 'friendly' receptionists to the use of security guards, which they felt had changed the atmosphere upon first arrival to the SE. The layout of the reception area, especially in St. Andrews House, was also said to contribute to the unwelcoming ambience. Stakeholders noted a lack of professionalism when welcoming guests and the fact that procedures seemed to vary. Interestingly, one stakeholder equated this change with the introduction of CtD:

"Since CtD, I've noticed the people receiving you at reception have different instructions for you, sometimes you have to sign in, sometimes you don't; sometimes you need a pass, sometimes you don't, and it varies between buildings and between departments. Sort out the problem of lack of uniformity...." (External Stakeholder)

Stakeholders recommended offering a more professional and welcoming approach, which might involve having badges ready for named visitors. These small things, they commented, are important for improving the image of an organisation and showing that it values its customers.

5.2.4 Stakeholders' Views on Procurement

One stakeholder referred to the process of procurement in the Executive, criticising the process as 'draconian'. This stakeholder claimed that there are internal tensions between the emphasis on risk by SE procurement, and what officials require to get out of their work. It was also thought this had caused tensions between the SE and service providers, in particular that smaller companies are unable to comply with the auditing rules. Although this stakeholder recognised the necessity for the process and rigour of procurement, it was felt that a better balance is needed between bureaucracy and output.

5.3 MINISTERS' VIEWS ON PROCESSES

5.3.1 Ministers' Views on Staff Movement

During the initial review at the outset of CtD Ministers raised 'staff churn' as a significant concern, which was still found to be a significant concern for Ministers. All the Ministers interviewed in phase two highlighted 'staff churn' as a continued hindrance to delivery and a source of personal frustration. Each Minister cited examples where, in their view, staff movement had disrupted work at critical stages, sometimes without warning or having a replacement. For example, one Minister described a situation when an official was moved just after a Bill went through Parliament, and as there was no replacement, implementation was disrupted.

Ministers highlighted their dependence on knowledgeable civil servants to advise them. They stressed that managers should look at the stages of work and avoid moving key officials at points which affect delivery and that this should not affect that individuals' promotion or long-term career prospects. One Minister commented 'managers should manage services'. Another Minister noted that sometimes a 'fresh eye' can be helpful, but that needs to be at the right time when it is helpful to the work, rather than a 'block' to progress.

Ministers stated that, despite the CtD programme, officials are still being moved too quickly before they can make most effective use of the contacts and experience gained in a post. Ministers were concerned that officials develop an interest and strengths in a particular area, but feel forced to move for the sake of their career. Ministers believed that officials should be able to stay in a post if they are effective and interested in the work. One Minister believed the '3 year rule' was not helpful, as very good staff should be encouraged to stay a lot longer and, on the other hand, those not coping in a post should be 'spotted' sooner and moved more quickly.

5.3.2 Ministers' Views on Other HR Issues

Other HR issues raised by one Minister included: the need for flexibility to set up short term teams for special projects; and the need for more inward secondment of people with frontline experience for an appropriate period of policy development. This Minister also expressed concern that

officials have a huge amount of knowledge and skills from other work they have done before, which does not seem to be effectively utilised in their current posts.

Another Minister was surprised by the significant number of officials who fail promotion boards despite being very good in their jobs. This Minister believed this happened much more in the SE than other organisations and found it inexplicable.

One Minister commented on the difficulties of finding 'decent B2s' to fill the private secretary posts. Another Minister noted that despite the fact that Private Office staff are 'hugely important' and 'crucial' to the success of the office, the roles are graded lower than they should be, for example, diary decisions are 'delegated down' to junior staff who are unable to make key decisions on priorities.

5.3.3 Ministers' Views on Finance and Business Planning

Those Ministers who discussed finance and business planning complained that officials do not keep them informed about budgets. In some cases, it was believed that officials deliberately withheld financial information from Ministers, despite frequent requests to see financial reports. One Minister suggested that routine monthly financial statements would be helpful and could not see why this should not be possible.

Some Ministers were concerned that the understanding of financial management in the SE is not as good as it should be and that there is a need to employ finance experts, such as accountants, to manage SE finances, as other organisations do. One Minister also expressed concern about procurement practices, stating that there is inconsistent practice and no clear guidance. It was suggested that for large multi-million pound contracts there should be involvement of professionals, such as contract lawyers, both to ensure it is properly handled and to protect people.

5.3.4 Ministers' Views on IT Support

Although not specifically covered in the interviews, some Ministers expressed concerns about IT support in the SE and suggested ways in which systems could be 'smarter'. For example, one Minister stated that it would be helpful to use in software in private offices for tracking pieces of work. This Minister noted that private office staff had tried to create such a system, but that it would be much easier to have caseload management software, such as that used in some constituency offices.

Some Ministers expressed frustration with not being able to access SCOTS and not being able to read their emails electronically, but rather having to have them all printed out on paper. One Minister was frustrated that the two electronic diaries on the SE and Parliament system are incompatible, and leads to double bookings. Another Minister felt that it would be better to be able to access SE paperwork electronically, rather than having to collect it or wait for it to be delivered in the evenings or at the weekend. This Minister believed it would enable speedier handling of information (e.g. being able track change in Word) at convenient times, rather than waiting for the delivery.

5.4 SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON CORPORATE PROCESSES

5.4.1 Staff Views

As in previous phases of the evaluation, staff pressed home the need to bring HR processes more into line with business needs by speeding up recruitment and enabling more flexible solutions to recruitment. There was some concern about staff shortages and how recruitment is planned and organised. As in earlier phases of the evaluation, staff believed that secondments should be encouraged as a good way to exchange knowledge and understanding.

Staff felt that making CtD behaviours part of the performance appraisal system will help link CtD to individual jobs. However, as in previous phases of the evaluation there was concern about the performance-marking system, and the fact that so many receive the 'effective' marking renders it 'meaningless'. Staff believed that there are insufficient and inflexible systems in place for rewarding and valuing staff. There were mixed views about the competency-based interviewing system. It was clear, however, that promotion was a contentious issue for A-Band staff who reported difficulties in passing promotion boards. They also noted that they are excluded from many SE training courses.

5.4.2 Stakeholder Views

Stakeholders believed that suitable candidates, who are able to challenge Ministers with relevant evidence and public opinion, should be recruited to the SE. Evaluation participants suggested some revisions to the SE performance appraisal system, for example, including emphasis on policy delivery skills. The slow SE recruitment process and rapid movement of staff within the SE was criticised by stakeholders. Staff turnover was also highlighted in the stakeholder survey, with 43% rating SE performance as average or poor on staff not moving around too much. However, respondents did not rate staff movement as a priority for change in the SE.

Evaluation participants noted that the welcome provided at building receptions in the SE should be improved. One stakeholder also expressed concern about procurement processes in the SE being too bureaucratic and not meeting needs.

5.4.3 Ministers' Views

As with previous phases of research, 'staff churn' was highlighted as a significant concern for Ministers. All the Ministers interviewed highlighted 'staff churn' as a continued hindrance to delivery and a source of personal frustration. Ministers stressed that managers should assess the stages of work and avoid moving key officials which affect delivery, without this negatively affecting individuals' career prospects. Some other HR concerns were raised by a few Ministers, such as having the flexibility to set up short life teams, using individuals' previous expertise in their role, the promotion board process, and staffing of private offices.

Some Ministers expressed concern about the lack of financial information provided to Ministers and requested more routine financial statements. Some Ministers also believed that professionals should be appointed to handle financial management and large procurement processes. Some Ministers also suggested how IT could be better used, particularly if Ministers were able to access their emails and documents electronically.