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LSE Public Policy Group

Report on Seven Focus Groups conducted for the *Achieving innovation in central government organisations* report

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The purpose of this report

1. During September and October 2005, a team from the LSE Public Policy Group carried out seven focus groups as part of the *Achieving Innovation in central government organisations* (London: The Stationary Office, 2006) HC 1447 Session 2005-2006, published 25 July 2006. All the focus groups took place at the London School of Economics in Central London. The seven groups were made up of: project manager level civil servants; mid-level civil servants; and senior civil servants. We also ran four comparative focus groups with: management consultants and IT practitioners, both groups had some experience of working with government; a general business group; and local authority chief executives or senior staff.

2. These focus groups were undertaken in order to feedback some early results from a survey we had sent out to 126 central government organisations. The survey asked central government organisations to nominate an innovation and then provide details about its origins, triggers, costs, barriers and impacts. More details on this, and the full report, can be downloaded free from the Publications pages of www.nao.gov.uk or from the site at www.GovernmentOnTheWeb.org.

How the focus group discussions were conducted

3. Focus groups offer a way of systematically acquiring qualitative data on specific topics. Each group included between 6 and 12 people. For the three civil servants focus groups, participants were taken from those who had completed a survey that was undertaken as part of the study earlier in the year. The management consultants and the IT practitioners group were sourced from government or public sector sections within the individual organisations. For the local authority group, we only asked Chief Executives or senior staff from those authorities rated Excellent by the Audit

Commission. The general business group were taken from companies that had the reputation of being innovative.

4. We recorded each group using audio and video recorders and additional members of staff sat in on the discussions in the background and made detailed notes of what was said and of how discussions developed. All quotes from participants given below are verbatim.

5. We used the same approach across all seven of the groups. We began by giving a short presentation around the data that we collected from the survey we had undertaken. These data were broken down into five main areas: general characteristics of innovation; timescales and costs; origins and triggers on innovations; barriers to innovations; and impacts of innovations. We used these same categories to focus the following discussion. Each groups lasted about one and a half hours in total.

General characteristics of innovation

6. We began each discussion by listing the main characteristics of the innovations that had been submitted. This section covered the number of submissions that had been requested, received and which sections of central government has replied. We also categorised the innovations submitted into broad sweep clusters in order to ease analysis.

7. We asked the focus group participants whether these categorisations seemed right to them, were they what was expected. Most felt that they were right, and that it showed that government priorities over the last few years, such as around the Modernising Government agenda, had translated into innovations around performance management or joining-up. We then asked whether there seemed to be any omissions. One mid-level civil servant thought that newer government priorities had not been yet picked up in the sample:
   o "I would have expected some environmental innovations. If we are supposed to be improving sustainability, we have targets, we should need to do something about it."

8. We then discussed whether the innovations involved technology in any way, for example, were web based, IT based or mainly administrative. Our participants were quite surprised that so many of the innovations that had been submitted were administrative, rather than policy, innovations. However, they were less surprised that IT and web based projects were submitted. They felt it may be to do with those projects being more strictly costed than other projects:
   o " . . . that is a distinct project, you can put costs to it" (Senior civil servants group)

9. Within the civil servants groups, there was some discussion here about the difficulties of deciding which innovations to submit to our survey. Rather than necessarily choosing the innovation of which an organisation felt most proud, for example, respondents said they choose:

- o " . . . something that was completed so we could look back over it. There are lots of things in train that we could have submitted which we on purpose decided to ignore." (Senior civil servants group)
- o " . . . where we could answer the survey most accurately" (Senior civil servants group)
- o " . . . innovations that had gone well or been well received. We definitely didn't think to submit innovations that had gone badly wrong." (Mid-level civil servants group)

10. Another person from the mid-level civil servants group summed up the thinking within his/her organisation:
- o "We questioned whether we had innovations, we change things obviously. We asked how big is an innovation, can it be a little bit of something or is it only a very big parcel of work? It may have depended on where your request hit an organisation. In a big department, I doubt every member of staff had a chance to submit their thoughts."

11. Some within the senior civil servants group felt that the information we had asked for should not then be used to present a picture of innovation across government:
- o "This sort of analysis is practically meaningless if you are trying to get a feel for government as a whole and what the innovations are."

Definitions of innovation

12. We tried to keep an open definition of innovation throughout the report. This applied especially to the survey, where we wanted to give organisations as many options for flexibility in their choices. Although there had been considerable discussion within the civil servants groups about what to submit, there was less discussion about the definition of innovation:
- o "My first reaction . . . is the same as when I got the survey, which is what on earth do you mean by innovation?" (Senior civil servants group)

13. However, this was something that the comparative focus groups were keen to discuss:
- o " . . . in my work we generally tend to look at innovations as process of improving something" (IT Practitioners group)
- o "Innovation is just a fashionable word, it doesn't even exist. There is just doing what you do better and delivering more value in an ongoing process. So if you can create that culture of improvement, renewal and replacement and make it part of everything you do, every day from the macro level of the organisation down to team structures. Then you have become innovative." (IT Practitioners group)
- o " . . . you actually . . .find very little innovation in large companies. You find most of the innovation in small companies which the large companies buy to gain the innovation." (Business group)

14. They also discussed the differences between theirs and public sector ideas around innovation:
- o " . . . certainly if you look at the government website on innovation, the DTI [Department for Trade and Industry] in particular, it doesn't really gel with my definition of innovation, so yes it is possible that they don't really understand what innovation is anyway." (IT Practitioners group)
- o "Clearly this particular group of organisations felt that innovation was a new system or a programme, which is not what mature innovators in the commercial sector think of innovation. They concentrate on the output." (IT Practitioners group)
- o "Well, one example I found very amusing. I won't say which company it was . . .They made a big fuss when we took over some of their IT systems, that we weren't providing enough innovation. So we interviewed them very deeply about innovation and we found that the way they defined it was 'having a special lab'. That is so different to the way innovation pervades an innovative company, that it immediately indicates that they're not going to innovate anything." (IT Practitioners group)

Costs and timescales

15. We then moved on to discuss the costs and timescales of the innovations that had been submitted to us. The civil servants groups admitted that it can be difficult to cost projects, or innovations, as the practice of providing business cases or full economic costing of projects is not widespread. However, they felt that the wide spread of costs seemed right across such a wide range of bodies as central government. The area of costs was one that the comparative focus groups felt was very different in their own organisations:
- o "I am absolutely blown away by the costs of some these. I can only assume that this is the function of the number of people who have become involved and therefore the number of opinions that you have to incorporate into your final contract and the number of revisions." (Business group)
- o " . . . almost anything involved with IT in the public sector is not budgeted properly." (Business group)
- o " . . . try and get them [the Treasury] to acknowledge that if you don't start by budgeting properly then you are never going to get to a viable outcome. So for example, people and process change probably should take at least 65% of the budget whereas typically it might have 5%." (Business group)

16. One person from the Business group felt strongly that, as a citizen, s/he had not seen results from the money that had been spent on these innovations:
- o "Let's just say this is a true sample, that what they are doing is absolutely spot on and they have been honest, then this is just a slice of an enormous amount of money that as a service user, member of

the public, I have not seen manifested in the kind of products and services available . . . "

17. The theme of projects not being properly planned also extended to timescales. We asked organisations to estimate how long their particular innovation had taken in each stage of its development. Focus group participants again felt that the wide variation in time scales was perhaps unsurprising when the range of sizes of project was considered. They also felt that long time to market results may have different reasons:
   o "I think you may have a problem here defining when an innovation begins." (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o " . . . quite a lot of innovations are driven by financial years. So your timescale involves setting up a system and bidding for funds for the next financial year. . . So you can't do it this financial year, you have to do it the next one." (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o " . . . I have found with a lot of innovations that there is a lot of discussion before hand before signing off and agreeing to deliver it. So that might make some [timescales] look quite long." (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o "If ministers have made their mind up, and they are determined that they want it driven forward, then I think the civil service can do it very quickly. It's the kind of innovations that are created internally that are driven by discussions about whether what you are doing is right that can drift on for quite a long time when they don't have that firm push behind them. " (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o " . . . bear in mind some of the more major innovations would actually require legislation." (Business group)
   o " . . . there is almost an expectation that it's OK to rightside a project, you know, to extend the deadlines, come on 'let's just extend it' . . . certainly that's my experience." (Project manager level civil servants group)

18. Others however felt that the average time to market of 30 months seemed long, especially when it related to IT:
   o " . . . an average of 30 months to market seems long especially as with technology, by 30 months it can be virtually obsolescent by the time it arrives." (Senior civil servants group)
   o " . . if you're going to run a project for a period that actually proves the benefits are going to be x, by the time you get to the end of it and approve it, the technology has moved on. In actual fact, there's probably a better one, and you can test that one instead, and you never actually progress quickly enough to the stage at which you can actually bring it in." (Project manager level civil servants group)

19. The groups related this problem to the complexities of the public sector procurement process:
   o " . . . I think the IT figures were so horrendously long and that is because the public sector procurement process, so for example when I set up a joint venture for my IT function, I had to do . . . an object European wide procurement and it is horrendously complex and long

and generally if you had done it once you would do almost anything to avoid doing it again. And it purely a public sector issue you wouldn't spend 10 seconds worrying about that in the private sector. (Business group)
- o " . . . innovation through procurement is often an over prescriptive specification and assuming that every action of the provider has to be tied down rather than specify for outcomes and incentivising the private sector partner to innovate and to gain efficiency to allow them to effectively manage it to an end." (Business group)

20. Whereas in the private sector:
- o " . . . very often people try to create environments in which it is possible to bring on new services and processes on-line in weeks, sometimes every week, and that would be seen as innovative in the private sector." (IT Practitioners group)
- o " . . . what is truly innovative [in particular companies] is the speed in which they can innovate in their processes." (IT Practitioners group)
- o "A genuinely truly first market . . .product will never take you longer than 60 months and that really is starting from absolutely nothing at all and doing the market research and doing the R&D and then building a factory. Those are all of the tasks that would have to take place for it to get anywhere close. Typically, there is nothing really that takes longer than 24 months and the cost of a . . . product from scratch unless of course you decide to build a factory to manufacture it, it is obviously driven by the equipment you will need to pull it together." (Business group)

21. Some members of the civil servants focus groups though discussed whether the civil service should not necessarily be focusing on speed at the possible cost of comprehensiveness:
- o "I like the gateway process but it is not there to speed things through. It is there to ensure you get the right result. This may sometimes take longer." (Senior civil servants group)
- o " . . . some projects have long roll out times so that to work through all stages it might take eight years but to get your first pay-back from making a change, that might take six months." (Senior civil servants group)

Origins of innovation

22. The discussion then moved on to origins of innovation. Our survey results found that the primary origins for the innovations submitted to us was from senior and middle managers. Some thoughts about this were related to where our survey hit organisations:
- o "I am cautious about senior and middle management having all the ideas and front line staff not. I suspect there is an element of self-selectiveness and the people who filled in the form are more likely to be senior staff or have that perspective." (Senior civil servants group)

It was thought that, given the relative lack of policy related innovations in our dataset, it was not surprising that less origins came from Ministers.

23. However, many focus group participants were concerned that front line or junior staff members did not seem to be a source of innovative ideas:
   o " . . . if you look, front line staff and users of services are almost absent. Whereas I would think that most innovations come from users of services and public, that somehow doesn't seem right." (Senior civil servants group)
   o "Certainly front line staff have ideas that are taken forward but have not shown up here." (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o "I would say that it is disappointing that the end user is so low." (Management consultants group)
   o " . . . therefore that lack of focus on the end user is very difficult. That needs to be flagged up. That's where the innovation should focus . . . " (Management consultants group)

24. The participants felt that the results may not show lack of innovative ideas from front line staff or from end users, but may be due to other factors:
   o " . . . the low figures on end-users or customer experience perhaps may flow from the fact that civil servants don't view themselves as having customers." (Management consultants group)
   o "I wonder if the end user or customer experience is so low as that is where the most political risks are for a lot of these departments. I mean if you get the way some of the internal management works wrong, then you don't necessarily get hauled in front of the PAC for it." (Management consultants group)
   o In relation to employee suggestion schemes: " . . . the problem is that in the public sector there isn't the confidence that many suggestions are implemented or acted upon." (Business group)

Triggers for innovative ideas

25. The participants then discussed triggers to innovations. Here, the idea for an innovation has already been had, but the idea needs to be pushed to the next stage. Following on from the point above, it was thought that ideas from front line staff needed senior input in order to move an innovation forward:
   o "I think the junior staff are very prepared to put forward ideas . . . but there is the thing that an idea from a director is more likely to be implemented than one that is not." (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o " . . . [our nominated innovation] it did come from the staff, but in actually developing it, it needed the people with more seniority to give it the wings it needed . . . " (Project manager level civil servants group)
   o "Front line staff feel empowered to make suggestions to improve the particular job that they are working on. But more senior managers would have both the power and the responsibility to be looking at a bigger picture. . . The people who would have the time and the

experience to make those kind of judgements, would be fairly senior managers." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- o "Driving an innovation often comes from someone at the top picking up an idea that is in the ether whether it is coming from junior staff, or from best practice elsewhere." (Senior civil servants group)
- o "My perception is there is far more willingness to seek improvements through innovation throughout the middle to senior managers than there would have been 10 to15 years ago." (Senior civil servants group)
- o "Senior managers get their way more often, that is about resources. They can turn half the team towards a new task, they have that power." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- o "Senior managers have more flexibility about how they use their own staff time, they have responsibility and are able to think more outside the job." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- o "I think you have to have strong middle managers who can lead because if you haven't got that the junior staff won't engage and drift away. But with that, its a good way of going forward. (Mid-level civil servants group)

26. This has been recognised by senior central government organisations as one Business group participant commented:
- o " . . . much of the innovation that occurs in the public sector is by parachuting in senior private sector people and they may or may not be successful in their negotiations to what extent they can drive that change through."

27. A variety of other triggers to innovation were mentioned:
- o " . . . cooperation is the largest factor and getting departments talking to each other is an extremely good way, effective way of getting innovations and new ways of doing things into other departments." (Senior civil servants group)
- o "I think one of the best ways to innovate is having rival teams to come with ideas. Competition." (Management consultants group)
- o " . . . all the best innovations come from operations staff working closely with their managers to actually deliver a product quickly." (Project manager level civil servants group)

Developers and barriers

28. The focus groups then moved on to consider aspects that develop innovations and act as barriers to innovation. These are obviously closely related. It created a lot of discussion within all seven groups, most chose to concentrate their comments on barriers to innovation. Some major themes emerged from the discussions about what barriers exist. The first, and most overarching barrier was one of culture within central government organisations which constrain innovations:
- o "In the civil service, I need to convince my boss, who has to convince her boss, who has to convince her boss and so on." (Mid-level civil servants group)

- "We don't have a big culture of break out time, ideas always being listened to, welcomed, etc." (Senior civil servants group)
- "There are some organisations where innovation itself is shunned." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- " . . . it may not be any problem with their intellect - it may not be that at all - they just think that the way they have done it for years is the way that it should be done and that it simply can't be done any better." (Project manager level civil servants group)
- "Take someone like Microsoft. It's an innovative company, with ideas bouncing round it, coming in from all areas of the organisation. It values learning and innovation but that is its set up. That is not our set up." (Senior civil servants group)

28. The comparative focus groups also saw civil service culture as a problem:
- "Changing cultures in the public sector might be more valuable than identifying a system which has a great impact . . . " (IT Practitioners group)
- "Projects easily get squeezed out, the ones that are going to be prioritised are the ones that are safer." (IT Practitioners group)
- "I think you'll find there is a very considerable preoccupation with process rather than outcome." (Business group)
- "Therefore they are entirely preoccupied with showing they follow process to the letter." (Business group)
- "If you turn over the stones in almost any public sector organisation, you will find the way staff are currently paid and measured is directly antipathetic to business trends you want to achieve and that's a huge problem." (Business group)
- "There seems to be a strong reluctance to take forward a new idea that your team didn't come up with in the first place." (Management consultants group)
- "I think they're being quite honest and putting reluctance to new ways of working up there because I think that is right, I think the culture is still working against them and I think that is quite a fair reflection." (Management consultants group)

29. Culture problems can be put down to leadership:
- " . . . leadership talent in the government is rare." (IT Practitioners group)
- "I think that would inhibit more people if they don't get the public support from their Ministers to engage in innovative thinking." (Management consultants group)
- " . . . management and leadership skills has been something that's quite severely lacking." (Project manager level civil servants group)

30. Or from pressures within organisations around sectors of staff:
- "Technical things can be seen as the remit of specialists. My department actually runs a staff suggestion scheme and my experience in the past has been that it has been very difficult to break down the barriers that most specialists have and get them to

listen to people outside their own area." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- o "Often there are constraints from the service part of our own organisation. 'Yes, you should go and do this, but you will have to do a very lengthy procurement process. And you will have to deal with the IT services that we've already got and no, you can't have a new PC because we have to wait 18 months for a new one of those and when it comes, it won't be right.' There are various constraints like that that I feel probably in the private sector someone would sort out." (Mid-level civil servants group)

31. From the experience of some of our focus group participants, this culture is changing:
- o " . . . in fact our new Chief Information Officer went into [a section] and was given a thirty page list of why things couldn't be done, and he said 'Tear it up, I want a list of what can be done, and how you're going to do it and when you're going to do it', and that is the cultural shift, and of course it takes time for that to happen." (Project manager level civil servants group)
- o "Get rid of that culture and allow [innovation] to happen. I have only been in the civil service a year and I can see pockets of that good culture within departments and some small agencies who are particularly good at it. But some big departments are absolutely appalling at it and until you get that balance right it is going to be very difficult to get the consistency of innovative thinking through government." (Senior civil servants group)
- o " . . . at the moment, at the very top echelons of the senior civil service . . . there are some very scared people, because of the fact that there are all these new people coming in with all these new ideas, and expecting such a lot from them, and actually setting them some very hard tasks, and sort of deliverables within 100 day periods and things which is what you'd expect with the private sector and they're just not used to it." (Project manager level civil servants group)

32. One mid-level civil servant felt this was all rather unfair:
- o "I am a bit worried about your view of civil servants."

33. Another theme that developed, which is related to cultural barriers, is that of fear of failure or fear of risk:
- o "my experience, across my career, has been that the civil service has a very low appetite for risk." (Project manager level civil servants group)
- o "When you are being an innovator you cannot be afraid of failure and you should welcome it and even go back to things that have failed because they might succeed in another." (Business group)
- o "One of the things that I think is a barrier is a fear of failure. It is fine if an innovation works, but is it something like only 7 out of 10 work. And there is an endemic fear of failure and the 'who's fault was it'

blame culture is a real barrier. You can't innovate if you are not prepared to fail." (Senior civil servants group)

- "... nobody will admit that the project wasn't successful, so all the projects were successful. So the results of the small pilots, or the projects or whatever they are, are going to be showing success, and of course when you try to roll it out on a wider basis, well that doesn't follow does it?" (Project manager level civil servants group)
- "... nobody wants to say we spent 5 years on it, 400 people worked on it, we spent £400 million, and actually we haven't got anything." (Project manager level civil servants group)
- "This culture is not related to project management so much as to money. Failure is a good thing, accept that it will happen. But in the civil service, if it happens you are *persona non grata* ... That is an awful culture." (Senior civil servants group)
- "... courage to get rid of it and try something else." (Senior civil servants group)
- "The best way to be innovative ... are people who can smell when someone is going to die." (Business group)

34. An key internal driver to innovation was seen to be making funds available for innovation. This elicited the following comments:
- "... unless you actually show that that it's going to cost less than you will bring in by a huge margin, then you're actually stymied at the first hurdle." (Project manager level civil servants group)

35. In comparison:
- "From where I'm sitting, if anybody comes with an idea, money is not the first thing we think about. It's not the driving factor as to whether an idea is accepted. Good ideas will be funded, because they're logical and sensible and will benefit business. It's interesting, if there is a pot of money, then we'll innovate, it's reverse logic. (Business group)
- "It doesn't work like that for us. In fact, we are almost told you've got to make things happen with no money. But actually, the extra challenge means that things you do come up with, are considerably more robust." (Business group)
- "Another internal factor for me, in terms of innovation, is complete financial transparency. Everybody in my business knows whether my team is profitable or not. And you know if someone is not making money, you take them out. It's very aggressive financial transparency, I think is a driver." (Business group)

36. Another aspect was that of rewards, or the lack of them, for civil servants:
- "... you have to ask 'are people rewarded for it?'. Are they rewarded for coming up with good ideas; taking a risk. Most innovations need someone to really stick their neck out." (IT Practitioners group)
- "The rewards aren't big enough. The absence of rewards. What is the reward if a civil servant comes up with a challenging innovation

in their organisation? Even if they manage to implement it their careers aren't rewarded." (Management consultants group)

37. In comparison with the private sector:
- o "Good staff get looked after more in the private sector." (Management consultants group)
- o "And the lack of personal reward. In the private sector, people who drive through these projects are rewarded; they get bonuses. Individuals are recognised." (Business group)
- o "I think the idea that innovation is good for the individual is missing here." (Management consultants group)

38. In our survey, the primary barrier was reported to be reluctance to embrace new ways of working. However, the next most reported barrier was working with stakeholders or private contractors. Comments on this included:
- o "I can only think on that, . . . it is people who have entered into contracts with the private sector and they now feel are limiting their ability to innovate, as they are bound to long-term contracts which they can't change." (Management consultants group)
- o "I suppose the interesting thing about that is, if the reason is because of the contract specifications they have with private contractors. That's an interesting finding in terms of Gershon because there is a feeling that it's going to go more in that direction. If civil servants are feeling that they're not able to innovate because they're constrained by those contacts, then that's got some quite worrying implications for the future." (Management consultants group)

Impacts of our nominated innovations

39. When looking at reported impacts in our survey, improving service delivery and improving responsiveness were the most likely to be reported as having high or very high impacts. This seemed right to our participants:
- o "For government these days, delivery is obviously the big thing so its not at all surprising that you have got innovations to do with better delivery of public service." (Mid-level civil servants group)
- o "Senior managers are incentivised because that is part of their job and at the end of the year they are appraised to the extent they have achieved innovation . . ." (Mid-level civil servants group)

40. Towards the other end of the scale, reducing core costs and improving the work life of staff were more likely to be reported as having low or very low impacts. Impacts around the customer or end user did not appear:
- o "One glaring thing about this is 'customer satisfaction'. Where is the data that shows that these innovations led to an improved experience of customer service? I suspect that data is not there. For many departments of course the customer varies. . . . 'improving services delivery' it's good that it's at the top, but 'reducing core costs' ought to be the part of the same equation. Because it implies that you can

improve services delivery, it actually has an effect on costs."
(Business group)

Comparisons with the private sector

41. In the four comparison groups that we ran, we asked participants their views on what government could to do enable itself to become more comparative:
- o Proper financial planning using business cases: " . . . most public sector organisations haven't bench-marked where they are now. Therefore, they cannot show that they have benefited from change. They have no base line. Whereas that is second nature in retail or a law firm." (Business group)
- o More staff involvement in innovative projects: "We've implemented a new system, we've got store staff buy-in. We've spent a significant amount of time and money actually engaging them and it works. It is all about everyone sharing ownership." (Business group)
- o More end user or customer involvement in innovative projects: "You could adapt [collecting customer opinions] to the public sector. You have to be more aggressive about measuring customer satisfaction. You could generate, I mean the profit/loss [driver] isn't going to work, but there ways of generating similar pressures." (Business group)
- o " . . . innovation in the market place is created . . . out of ruthless eye for standardisation. Take an example from government, which goes to the heart of how government funding decisions are made. Because if you ask how can you distribute your budget . . . on things that are essentially to do with delivering the government agenda policy versus fixing up the fabric of the department, the ability of the department to respond to change over time, then my guess is that they will be won-over. The problem with that is that every time you need to deliver policy you can only deliver it using components that are incremental, because the fabric of the department is never fixed up. . . Tax Credits for example, every aspect of this project was hand-crafted from the ground-up. New call centres, brand new this, that and the other." (IT Practitioners group)

Conclusions

42. Overall in all seven groups, the discussion was wide ranging. The civil service groups seemed anxious to dispel some of the myths of civil service personnel being risk averse and slow to innovate. All three groups felt that the service was changing in this regard, that examples of good practice were becoming more widespread. This was also backed up by the four comparative groups. This is changing the focus of innovation in government organisations:
- o "That is certainly what we have been focused on and we are entirely driven by, in terms of innovation, what our customers want from us and how we can improve our services with their needs." (Senior civil servants group)

43. This is changing the cultural within organisations:
   o ″I think there is a lot of experimentation in government. They are much more ready to experiment.″ (IT Practitioners group)
   o ″I am given a lot of room to be creative, and put in my own ideas.″ (Project manager level civil servants group)
   o ″Where I work we have a good mix of private sector and public sector and elsewhere. It makes a much more refreshing approach to [innovative] areas of work.″ (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o ″There are more people now in the civil service who are able to step into a position and take over a particular innovation.″ (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o ″There is much more talk and thought about looking for new ways to deliver public services. How successful is it, well that is another issue. The mentality, the mind set is there and there is a new breed of people at that sort of level across the centre who are much more turned on to it.″ (Senior civil servants group)

44. This is changing working practices within central government organisations:
   o Before, the people in head office, the people in policy - were so divorced from operations, that there were decisions and they don't work. And the reason they don't work is that they don't talk to operations. Now there has been a shift - and I think it's a very healthy shift - that people in operations are now starting to get consulted properly, so all those systems that are put in place that don't work, you know, they are actually asking us why they don't work.″ (Project manager level civil servants group)
   o ″You need a small team to innovate, with the right skills, commitment, enthusiasm. As soon as you get someone who wants to take six months to think about it, get them off the team.″ (Mid-level civil servants group)
   o ″ . . . in our example of an innovative project, I was asked to lead on this piece of work, and involved four other people from the organisation in a working group to kind of thrash out some principles of what we wanted to do.″ (Project manager level civil servants group)
   o ″We did one of these solution events as they are called and we had everyone there from the Chief Executive to the guy who answered the phone. Spent two days doing exercises and it was fantastic and we are sitting round in shirt sleeves and we probably got more ideas in that two days than we have had in the last ten years.″ (Senior civil servants group)