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The Whitehall & Industry Group's

Society Series:

Six months in review

April-September 2020





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Society Series: Six months in review

With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, challenges for health and social care, skills and education, and crime and justice policy have been brought into sharp relief. Funding and finance for social policy and initiatives are critical issues for discussion between the public, private and not for profit sector throughout the COVID-19 recovery period.

WIG aims to ensure that the UK government's social policies are not developed in siloes, by engaging key stakeholders across departments, arm's length bodies, the private sector and not for profits. The aim is to create an environment for peer learning, to support improvements to public services, and engender positive societal impacts.

With reference to COVID-19 throughout, the core events within the Society theme have looked at:

- Health & Social Care
- Skills & Education
- Crime & Justice
- Political & Economic Outlook

The following reports are insights into webinars from WIG's Society series that took place in April - September 2020. This document will give you an overview of the content covered, unique polling data from our members, and themes that emerged from questions that were raised throughout the presentations.

Best wishes,
Tom Sapsted

Head of Content & Events





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Society Series

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COVID-19 Case Study: Taiwan's Response

29 April, 2020

We were joined by Steve Tsang, Director of the SOAS China Institute to discuss the response to the coronavirus in Taiwan and the lessons we can learn from the Taiwanese experience. The key reasons why the Taiwanese have been able to keep their number of cases to a minimum are:



- The Taiwanese government has been critical of Chinese statements and has made its own judgements from the beginning, particularly due to their sense of isolation and Taiwan's experience with SARS in 2003.
- The government took the virus very seriously from the beginning, already taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus in December 2019.
- Decisive leadership by Vice President Chen, who has both political authority and expertise in epidemiology, allowed the government to act very quickly and plan their response to focus on the core issues, for example by immediately working with industry to increase the production of PPE.
- The government used technology for testing and tracking from very early on, for example by using an app to track the availability of face masks.
- The credibility that the Taiwanese government is currently enjoying and the fairness of its response inspired trust in its actions and compliance with its measures.



We must work with the Chinese government and take the information coming out of China seriously, whilst remaining critical of it

If we have to confront a second wave, decisive leadership and careful prior planning will be crucial to allow us to respond proactively and effectively

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- How to tackle a potential second wave of infections
- Taiwan's digital response and privacy concerns over tracking and use of data
- Taiwan's capabilities to respond in comparison to Western countries
- The economic impact of COVID-19 in Taiwan
- The impact of Taiwan's coronavirus response being globally perceived as succesful on its diplomatic relations and its position on the world stage

WIG members can listen to Steve's presentation [here](#)

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'Society' Series

Tackling Structural Inequalities in the UK

18 May, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Siobhan Morris, Coordinator of the UCL Grand Challenge of Justice and Equality and Matthew Whittaker, CEO at Pro Bono Economics to discuss how to tackle structural inequalities in the UK. They touched upon points including:

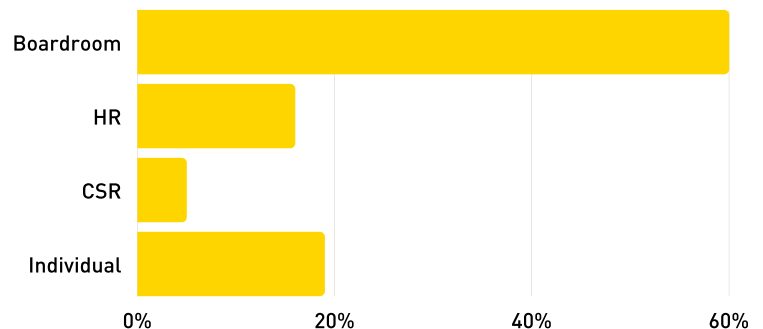
- Psychological safety is a workplace culture without fear, where people aren't trying to cover their tracks to avoid being punished or embarrassed.
- Workplaces with psychological safety allow people to be more curious, open-minded, self-motivated, innovative and resilient. It allows for greater trust and collaboration, increased learning behaviour, higher performance and a greater likelihood of partaking in knowledge-sharing activities.
- Building psychological safety on an organisational level can be achieved through: behavioural expectations, channels for speaking up, and culture measurement.
- On an individual level, psychological safety can be created by re-framing conversations to encourage seeing failure as a way to learn, inviting participation, and responding productively when people do speak up.
- The 2019 UCL and Resolution Foundation report 'Structurally unsound' found five key principles for how to approach equity: recognise that language matters, shift the focus onto equity, ensure diversity of evidence in decision-making, alter the structure of society by changing who designs it, and adopt a place-based approach.



Cross-sector Opinion

Over 100 attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

"Where do you feel responsibility for tackling inequalities lies in a business?"



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- The risk of equalities legislation hindering organisations' ability to shift the focus to equity due to accusations of positive discrimination.
- Finding and making use of robust data, particularly on intersectionality.
- The role of the capitalist system driving structural inequalities when we continue to use GDP as a measure for growth.
- The impact of the legacy 'class' system in the UK and approaches to lessening its effects.
- How to overcome the regional divide between London and the rest of the country and devolving decision-making to outside of London.

WIG members can listen to Siobhan's and Matthew's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

COVID-19 Sector Updates: Telecoms

27 May, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Simon Miller, Head of UK Public Policy at O2 Telefonica to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the telecoms sector. He touched upon points including:

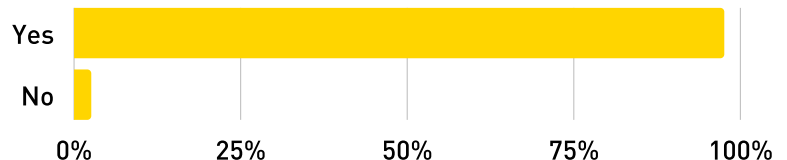
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand on networks has not only surged but also changed shape in terms of its location and peak times. Nevertheless, networks are holding up well.
- Fake news, mast attacks, and access to sites have presented further challenges to the industry.
- The industry has been working productively with government through regular and structured communications and by supporting public policy priorities. More work between the industry and government is to come and should remain collaborative even after the crisis is over.
- For effective policy-making post-pandemic, planning policy needs to be built to support the provision of digital connectivity for everyone, and the system of regulation should focus on driving investment up rather than tariffs down. It would also be time to consider a separate department for infrastructure.



Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

As a result of COVID-19, would you want to see public policy give greater priority to supporting digital infrastructure as an element of national infrastructure?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- The impact of COVID-19 on backhaul and fixed networks.
- The impact of increasing and changing demand for digital connectivity on planning policy, demand for new infrastructure to facilitate this and concerns for network capacity.
- Challenges for supporting business and communities with their reliance on digital connectivity.
- Government proposals for Smart Data in telecoms.
- Prioritisation of network traffic.
- The implementation of a permanent emergency crisis text message system.

WIG members can listen to Simon's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

COVID-19 Sector Updates: Local Government 29 May, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Martin Esom, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Waltham Forest to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on local government. He touched upon points including:

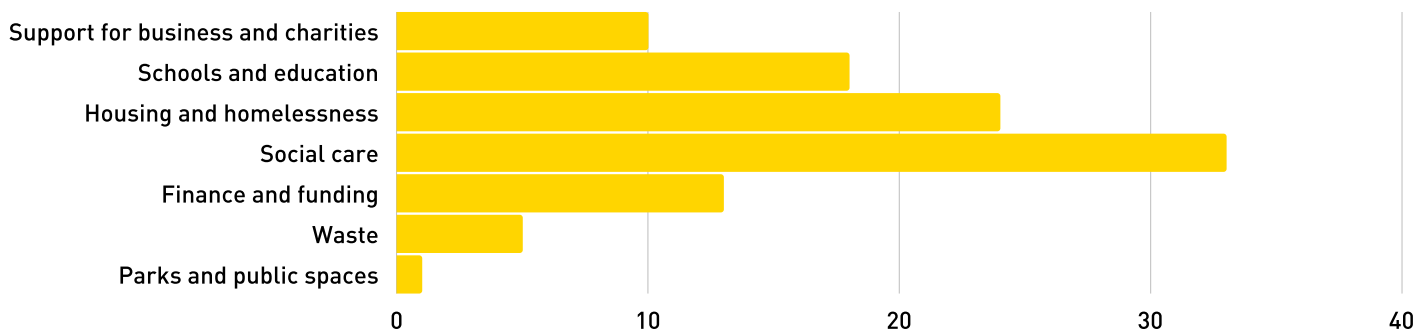


- Local authorities have had to transform how they are run through changes in the process of governance, new communication structures, remote working and reallocation of roles across all levels. In London, a strategic coordination group has been set up to oversee coordination of all 32 boroughs.
- Local government has experienced a major hit to their income. For Waltham Forest, the main losses have been through parking, highways, leisure, and business rates.
- The most important priority for local government is to keep critical services such as adult social care, protection of vulnerable children, refuse collection, and the planning system running.
- Other services have had to be either altered or stopped, and new services have been introduced, including PPE distribution, delivering business grants, and a shielding and food distribution service.
- The next big challenge for local government will be to move out of lockdown by opening up services again, and the enforcement measures that will need to be taken.

Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them:

Apart from public health, what should the main priorities for local government be in their response to COVID-19?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- Prioritisation in divesting less important services in the context of already tight local council budgets
- Restoring public confidence to use public places
- Plans for managing a potential second wave
- Benefits and challenges of national and local government working on similar offerings
- Opportunities for local government operations moving forward

WIG members can listen to Martin's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

Insights into Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

8 July, 2020

Expert Insight

We were delighted to host Jo Farrar, Chief Executive of Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service for a WIG webinar to share some insights into her team's key challenges and priorities through 2020 and beyond.

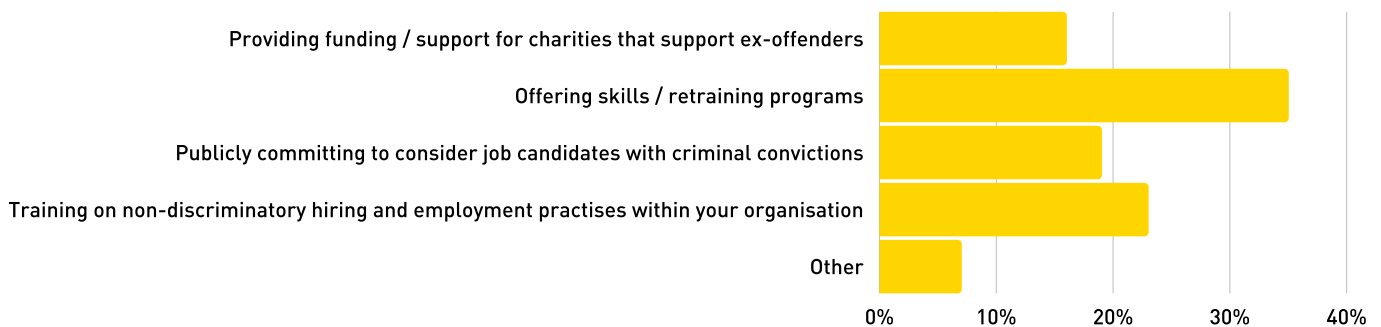
Jo touched upon points including:

- Despite a number of challenges around prison estate management, capacity, security and drug use, both rates of assault and the number of deaths in custody have fallen, after several years of consistent increases.
- Prison communities have been particularly high risk in the COVID-19 pandemic, with closed settings holding many vulnerable people. HMPPS avoided a worst-case scenario by quickly adapting delivery models, bolstering front-line staffing, and implementing a compartmentalisation strategy.
- While acknowledging that progress towards recovery and a 'new normal' will be incremental, HMPSS is keen to build back better and continue to work more closely with partners especially those in the healthcare sector.



Cross-sector Opinion

Over 90 attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in, we asked them: as leaders, what do you think you could all do to help give ex-offenders another chance?



Other suggestions included: linking with other agencies to ensure service users are supported and enabled to find work and accommodation, and employing ex-offenders in either service-user advocate roles, or as workshop leaders/educators in prisons.

Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- How the private sector can work more effectively with HMPPS, to address the barriers prison leavers face when trying to find and hold down a job
- Expanding or improving the role universities play in providing opportunities for learning and rehabilitation
- Investment in digital capabilities in prisons; building on the rapid deployment of technologies such as video calls within prisons in response to the COVID-19

WIG members can listen to Jo's presentation [here](#)

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'Society' Series

Digital transformation in the
Crown Prosecution Service

22 July, 2020

Expert Insight

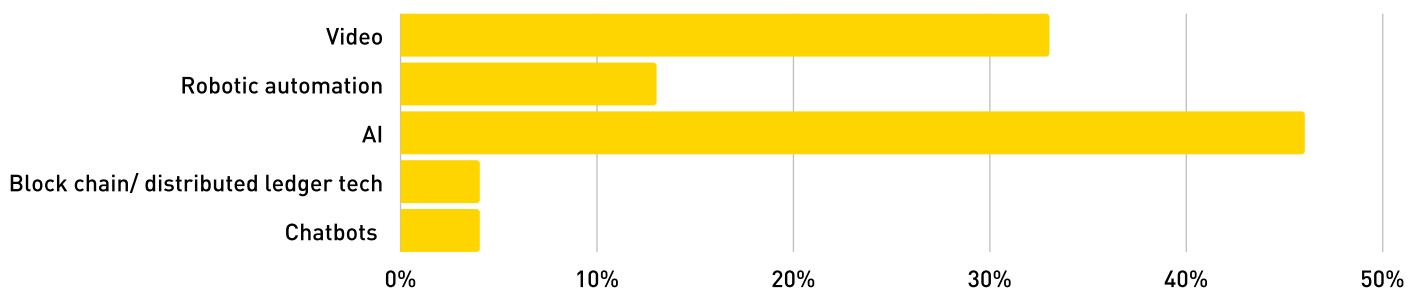
We were delighted to be joined by Mark Gray, Director of Operations, Digital & Commercial, at CPS for a webinar discussing the organisation's digital transformation. He covered a wide range of topics, with some of the key points including:



- Digital transformation is first and foremost a cultural transformation.
- In 2015 CPS printed over 200 million pages, but is now believed to be the most digitally-advanced prosecution service in the world.
- The increase in data handling has been exponential, in line with the rise in multimedia evidence, largely from mobile phones and social media.
- Having adopted cloud systems, which are scalable and adaptable, the CPS was in a good position to react quickly to new realities of COVID-19, such as increased remote system access.
- 15,000 video court hearings have now been carried out, alongside other rapid tech deployment in response to the pandemic, such as a chatbot to support staff in navigating government guidance.
- CPS is investing in innovation to future-proof the organisation and benefit the wider criminal justice system.
- Initiatives include trials of AI tech for sorting through text, audio and video data and building the 'common platform', a shared digital infrastructure system with Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service.

Cross-sector Opinion

50+ WIG members from across the sectors joined us live, and we asked them: which 'disruptive' tech do you think will have the biggest impact on the UK criminal justice system over the next 5 years?



Our members' questions

Our members posed a number of interesting questions on both the people and operational sides of digital transformation. Some of the issues raised included:

- Balancing the need to move quickly on digital transformation against both security risks such as hacking, and implementation risks.
- How the CPS is developing AI capability; the benefits of developing capability internally and working with the private sector, and practical approaches to integrating potential AI models into digital systems.
- Measuring the impact of digital transformation.

WIG members can listen to Mark's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

Challenges of COVID-19 recovery in the youth justice system

4 August, 2020

Expert Insight

We were joined by Keith Fraser, Chair of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to discuss the role of YJB, and in particular how they are working to overcome the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable young people in the UK. He touched upon points including:

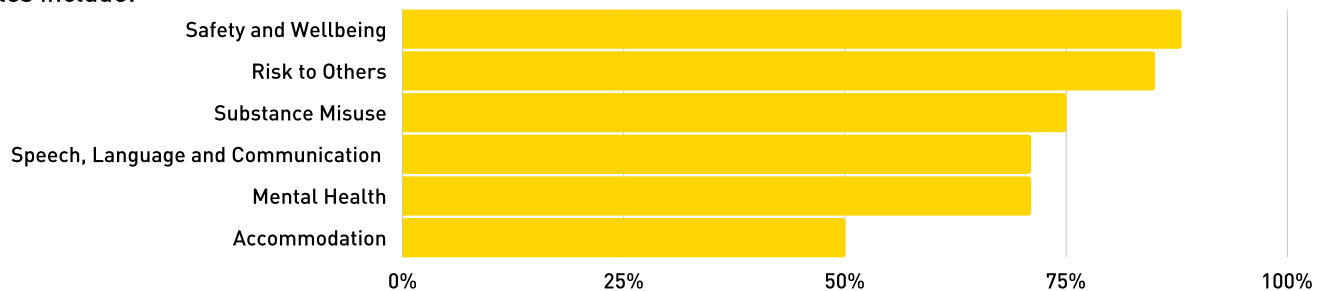


- The majority of children who are either in the youth justice system, or are at risk of entering, have multiple, complex needs.
- Challenges faced by YJB during the pandemic have included: court delays and virtual hearings, less access to education and exercise for children in detention, no visits, and reduced face to face time with youth offending teams.
- One of Keith's key areas of focus as chair is reducing the over-representation of children from specific groups, and ensuring their fair treatment within the youth justice system.
- The YJB aims to take a 'child first' approach, involving holistic consideration of children's needs.
- Meeting the YJB's aims requires collaboration with key stakeholders in the system, as well as wider partners. Many of the barriers to increased collaboration have been overcome during the COVID-19 response.

Presentation Spotlight

There are a total of 19 concern types and 70% of children were found to have at least 5 of 19 concerns.

Examples include:



Our members' questions

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in. They posed some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- Working effectively with both local authorities and non-statutory partners to divert disadvantaged children and young people away from crime into positive programs, particularly in areas that have been impacted by austerity.
- How the private sector can support better outcomes for young people, for example through targeted interventions around digital poverty and training provision.
- How the YJB is working with HMPPS and MoJ to reduce the amount of time children spend in cells during the ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery period.

WIG members can listen to Keith's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

Integrating health and social care across
the sectors

11 August, 2020

Expert Insight

We were delighted to host Dr Vivienne McVey, CEO of Virgin Care, for a webinar at this pivotal moment for health and social care provision in the UK. She discussed the challenges around increasing integration between these services, and the crucial role that collaboration, with both private companies and the not-for-profit sector, has to play in supporting the NHS and local authorities.

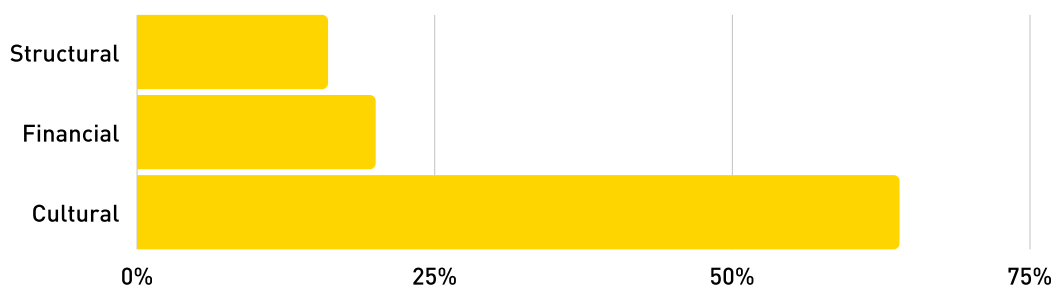


Vivienne touched upon points including:

- In order to deliver a world class National Health Service with state of the art hospital care, as well as managing health inequalities and the wider determinants of public health, the health service has to work together with other organisations in integrated care systems.
- Challenges include accountability for system decisions, driving up standards, questions around procurement and competition, different funding models, and different criteria for access to services.
- The NHS and local authorities speak different languages, but the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has helped build these relationships and overcome some barriers to greater collaboration.
- Clarity is key to success; in the commissioning process, when agreeing responsibilities, and in terms of accountability for both delivery and finance.
- Integration means having a shared goal for the people that we serve, and delivering a seamless service.
- Any redesign of service post COVID-19 needs to take into account the most vulnerable and those that may struggle to access digital services.

Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in live, we asked them: which do you perceive to be the greatest barriers to increased integration between health & social care?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- The challenges that increased integration across health & social care poses for leaders operating in this space.
- Why Virgin Care has been successful and continued delivering community services for the NHS, when other organisations have left the market in recent years.
- What makes a successful partnership in this context, and the value that NfP and private companies bring when working together collaboratively.

WIG members can listen to Vivienne's presentation [here](#)
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'Society' Series

Putting individuals at the heart of
developing the National Skills Fund

16 September, 2020

Expert Insight

We were delighted to be joined by Matt Hassan, Deputy Director for the National Skills Fund and National Retraining Scheme for a webinar discussing the development of the National Skills Fund.

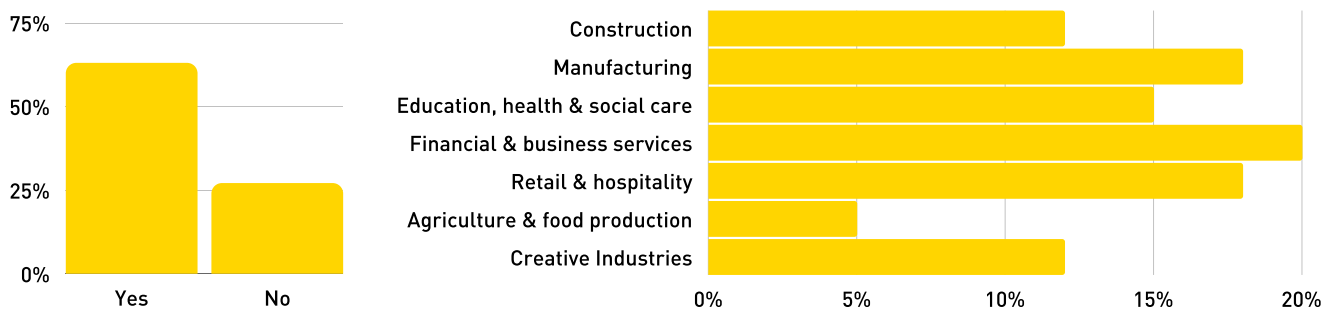
Matt touched upon points including:

- The importance of adult skills provision as a crucial contribution to the levelling-up agenda throughout the UK, to drive productivity and support economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Over the course of this Parliament, the Government is investing £2.5 billion for the National Skills Fund
- There are a number of barriers to retraining, which disproportionately impact those who will be most affected by changes in the jobs market, for example due to automation.
- The National Retraining Scheme is being developed through an evidence based approach, utilising research carried out with employees, employers, careers advisers, training providers, unions, think tanks and other stakeholders to build on what works.
- There is appetite from employers for a more flexible approach with modular learning enabling the training offer to be tailored to the role and delivered in a shorter timeframe, particularly when it comes to digital skills.



Cross-sector Opinion

Attendees from the breadth of our cross-sector membership listened in live, we asked them: in your sectors and areas have you seen any examples of innovative practice in the delivery of adult skills provision and retraining, in response to recent circumstances? We also asked what sectors could benefit from a short, flexible approach to training?



Our members' questions

Our members raised some challenging questions to be answered, some of the big issues raised included:

- Exploring models or policies from other countries which have been successfully implemented to upskill their populations, such as e.g. Singapore's Skills Credits
- How all levels of apprenticeships fit within the National Skills Fund and National Retraining Scheme
- The need to develop a learning mindset in the UK population, as longer working lives will require the workforce to engage with learning throughout their careers

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