This report describes examples of Modernising Government in action. A more detailed account of the progress and processes of the Modernising Government programme is published on the website at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/moderngov
I am passionate about public service. A central task of this Government is to make the argument for public services, to move beyond the false choice between big and small government to a constructive debate about how we make government as effective as possible.

Investment is the first step. That’s why in July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the biggest investment in public services of modern times. This is a huge opportunity for everyone who works in public services.

But with that opportunity comes a real responsibility — a responsibility to use those resources effectively, efficiently and imaginatively.

That is why our investment is tied to clear targets. By being specific about what outcomes we want but flexible about how they should be achieved, we can free up public services to innovate. In particular we can give power to those at the front line who know best how to improve services and meet the needs of their users.

I greatly welcome the evidence in the annual report of the progress being made. Too often the changes that have brought about real improvements for users remain too little known and celebrated. By celebrating these successes, we can encourage them to be more widely adopted and encourage those with new ideas to put them into practice.

There are hugely impressive examples here. Trade Partners UK using the Internet to send sales leads directly to businesses. Tenants auditing Sandwell Council’s housing policies. NHS Walk-in Centres offering healthcare advice without the patient having to take time off work to make an appointment.

Of course, there’s always more to do. The report points the way ahead. But it also shows what modernising government is all about. Empowering workers. Improving services for users. Restoring confidence in public services and public service.

I thank everyone involved in this programme and public services generally and hope this report will provide encouragement and inspiration.
The term ‘Modernising Government’ has a bit of a dry ring to it. But when you see what it means in human terms, it comes to life. I am passionately committed to the public sector and believe that it is right to encourage new ways of working. This will enable us to give a better service to the citizen and to get more job satisfaction.

Last year we published a White Paper* setting out the Government’s programme of public sector reform. It covers the main aspects of public sector work — how we make policy, the delivery of services, making good use of new technologies and managing staff to feel valued and to give of their best. Our vision for modernisation applies to all parts of the public sector — the NHS, schools, prisons, the Forces, local authorities, agencies and central government departments. In July’s Spending Review, public services were given the investment they need to deliver these reforms as well as tough new targets to meet in the highest priority areas, published openly in new Public Service Agreements.

Some of the features of our approach that I would pick out are:

- a clear framework developed around the Government’s policy goals;
- a focus on the user of government services;
- targets to drive forward change and delivery;
- the right delivery mechanisms. We work nationally and locally to bring together those who can most efficiently deliver the best results;
- becoming an e-government — not for its own sake but to improve and transform services;
- building on innovation;
- tracking progress across the board. Of course problems will occur. When they do, we need to intervene quickly and firmly. People depend on public services. We can’t let them down;
- communications. We need to tell people what we are trying to do and report on progress. We need to listen to what service users are saying, to their priorities, their fears and their ambitions. And we have to ensure that their views make a difference, feeding into the whole process from beginning to end;
- modernisation with a purpose, to deliver the results that matter and that will make a difference.

Good government need not be big government. Rather, it is about working together in ways that haven’t happened before. Central government working in partnership

* Modernising Government Cm 4310
with town halls, unions and the private and voluntary sectors to deliver the best possible services. It is not about dogma, it’s about what works. This applies to joined-up government too.

As the White Paper said, the Government will continue to work closely with the unions to achieve our shared goals of committed, fair and efficient public services. We recognise the contribution the unions make, working in partnership. For example, the Cabinet Office and the Council of Civil Service Unions have signed a national partnership agreement on matters that require corporate leadership. An early example is work on developing marketable qualifications and lifelong learning opportunities within the Civil Service.

We promised to report annually — not to blow our own trumpet, but to show the progress being made and to let public sector workers know that Ministers notice what they are doing. To highlight some of the good things that are happening in order to motivate us all.

Don’t be disappointed if your work is not featured — we can’t cover everything. But let us know about what you are doing as public servants, the things you are proud of and the problems you are tackling, whether you are winning or getting frustrated — we can all learn from each other.

So what has been happening? Let’s take a quick look at just a few examples. Modern policy means that homelessness is being tackled in a new way; modern service delivery finds an estate agent-style shop to help you pick out the right council house; latest technology helps parents select a school for their children from the comfort of their own home; modern management has given local government staff new ways of working. Read on — and visit our website (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/moderngov) — if you would like to find out more. The website is where you will also find a formal account of progress against the Modernising Government action plan.

Most, though not all, of the stories in the report relate to England or to services provided by the UK Government. The UK Government and the devolved administrations are committed to working together on Modernising Government. The administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are, of course, taking forward improvements in their services in ways that best suit their responsibilities.

What is driving the current urge to modernise?

- The need for every organisation to improve continuously.
- Greater demand from citizens to be treated as customers and to get the results they need.
- A recognition that we need to embrace ever greater diversity in our society.
- New opportunities to transform services because of the spread of new technologies.
- Increased globalisation — enabling us to compare our performance with others, showing that bureaucracies can change.
- A realisation by politicians that showing the public sector that it is valued — and giving it the resources it needs to do the job effectively — will lead to better public services for all.

We have made a good start. And I thank public servants for working together to deliver so much. But we have always recognised that modernising government is a long-term programme over many years. There is still a lot more to do and we will report again on progress next year.

Ian McCartney

Let us know what you think about the Modernising Government agenda.
Do you have any examples which people should hear about?
E-mail us at moderngov@gtnet.gov.uk
Developments in electronic communications are increasingly enabling interactive links between the Government and its customers. This shows a genuine commitment by Government to providing easy-to-access information and looking for feedback to improve its services.

Fast track to hotel room

Stuck for a room, in a strange town, at a strange time of night? You’d do a lot worse than be caught out in Poole in Dorset. The council there is using the web to promote vacancies in its local hotels and B&Bs.

It’s part of a pilot project to bring all council information services online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Accommodation Availability Service has been running in local tourist offices for some time during office hours but the new website allows hotel owners to update vacancy information every 15 minutes. So potential customers can tap into the system at any time, day or night.

For those without up-to-the-minute technology such as a home PC, laptop or WAP mobile phone, a voice activated phone link bridges the gap. Any public phone will do. Web address: www.poole.gov.uk/tourism

Cutting through red tape online

Two new online services are cutting through red tape to help small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

The Small Business Service Gateway pilot, launched in April, consists of a website and a call handling service providing information for small businesses in the ways that most suit them via the Internet, telephone, fax or face to face.

Work is ongoing to link the website www.businessadviceonline.org with other sites to increase the range of advice available.

In April, David Blunkett launched a pilot e-mail forum, Small Business Online. The forum allows businesses to find out about developments and news from DfEE which are relevant to them, and then gives them the chance to tell Government what they think.

“It is a two-way forum where small business can respond by e-mail to ideas and give the Government vital feedback on what is important to them and what help they need,” says David Jennings of DJ Alchemi Ltd, who designed and manage the site for the Department.

The aim is to get 1,000 firms with up to 250 employees to join the forum through its website www.business.dfee.gov.uk. So far, more than 70 SMEs have signed up.

Forum operator Ian Haigh of Siga Services is convinced that this is the way forward for Government and small businesses. “Government must interact with the population and electronic networking is the way to do it.”

“Government must interact with the population and electronic networking is the way to do it.”

Ian Haigh
All aboard the e-business express

The e-business train is gathering speed. Jump on board or risk getting left behind in the competitiveness stakes.

HM Customs and Excise (HMC&E) has long recognised the need to use new technology to ease the flow of information—the majority of data on goods imported from outside the European Community has been captured electronically for some time.

Now, making the most of the ever-growing popularity of the Internet, the Tariff and Statistical Office (TSO) of HMC&E has introduced a new e-form that allows traders to use the web to send information on goods moving within the European Community itself.

The ‘Intrastat E-form’ is Customs’ first truly interactive means of communicating with traders. And according to Bill Barker of HMC&E, it is believed to be the first of its kind in the European Community.

“Submitting data electronically is quicker and more efficient than sending it by post,” explains Bill Barker.

Looking to the future, he adds: “The Intrastat E-form has paved the way for all VAT returns to be made online. Our IT Division is already working on a live pilot, which we are due to complete by the end of 2000 with the online VAT system going on stream in early 2001.”

SMEs and bees

If you’re a small or medium sized business (SME) thinking about exporting, look for the sign of the bee.

Behind it, you’ll find a hive of information and support from newly launched Trade Partners UK.

It’s part of British Trade International, the lead Government organisation for international trade support to SMEs.

The new branding highlights the networking nature of the service and its role in co-ordinating partners across worldwide markets.

British Trade International’s co-chairs are John Battle, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Richard Caborn, Minister for Trade. Speaking at the launch, Mr Battle said: “If SMEs don’t know that there is money and advice available, how can we expect them to take a leap into the unknown? This new brand will make clear what support is available and how to find it.”

An Internet-based gateway, www.tradepartners.gov.uk, has also been launched to provide easy access to overseas market information and export opportunities as well as advice for those new to exporting.
A wizard way to get answers

Suffolk folk are telling their local police a few home truths.

Thanks to a high-tech, anonymous voting system, people can let them know what they think about their policing methods and projects — even where the police stations should be.

The police are welcoming the input and want to know even more.

Chris Banthorpe, Suffolk Constabulary’s Performance Review Officer, says the Question Wizard, developed by IML, is ideal for gathering individual opinions in focus groups.

The system consists of 75 handsets, which send messages to a computer via five receivers. The computer sorts the information and displays it on a screen.

“The Wizard is a slick way of collecting people’s views. We can ask questions about policing priorities and projects and we get the opinion of the whole group, not just from those who are not afraid to speak up. “The system is anonymous. Everyone votes at the same time and they are not influenced by others,” adds Chris.

Suffolk Constabulary won the Charter Mark for the third time in 1999 and received Beacon Funding from the Home Office for the Question Wizard. Other forces are showing interest in the system and Wiltshire and Norfolk forces have already bought it.

“The system is anonymous. Everyone votes at the same time and they are not influenced by others.”

Chris Banthorpe
The eyes have it

By the age of 75, around a quarter of people develop cataracts on their eyes. They’re not painful but they do restrict sight and can make daily life difficult and frustrating.

Surgery is a quick and easy way of restoring both sight and independence. And the £20 million project for better cataract services, launched in February, will fund 60 schemes around England to speed things up.

It’s already on the move in Gloucestershire where the Ophthalmology Service’s Action on Cataracts scheme has won this year’s regional Nye Bevan modernisation award. A one-stop assessment appointment checks that patients are ready for the operation and they now get better information about their condition and treatment.

There were 170,000 NHS cataract operations in 1998—99. The new schemes will increase that by almost half to 250,000 operations each year by 2003.

Prisoners’ passports to a new life

Prisoners leaving jail in Teesside are getting passports to a fresh start in life. Literally.

The new passports are cutting through the red tape, helping newly released prisoners to find jobs and homes and sort out benefits.

They are less likely to return to a life of crime and less likely to end up back in jail.

The challenges of leaving jail and making a new start can be overwhelming. Ex-prisoners can’t get jobs without a P45, they can’t find housing without a job and they can’t find a job without a home. All too often they resort to crime – often within weeks of release.

At Kirklevington Grange and Holme House prisons, prisoners make their own passports, which they can use to get help in agencies across Teesside. Before they’re released, they can receive one-to-one advice from Benefits Agency Staff on what they are entitled to, which services they need to go to and what to take with them.

Ian Bradley was recently released from Kirklevington Grange. He feels the passport will make his new life easier. “It gives you time in prison to fill in the forms and it saves you being messed about after you’ve been discharged and when you go to the Benefits Agency.”

‘Passports for prisoners’ was developed through the Government’s Learning Labs programme, which encourages front-line staff to come up with ideas to improve customer services.

A load of old rubbish?

Any old junk? Try swapping it with your neighbours. Someone else’s rubbish might be just what you’re looking for.

That’s what villagers in Timsbury found when they took part in a grand Clear Out Day last year as part of a pioneering Community Waste Action project in Bath and North East Somerset.

The council realised that the people know best when it comes to their rubbish. The trouble is, they don’t always know what to do with it. So Action on Waste groups get locals to come up with creative solutions and the council and the Recycling Consortium help to put them into action.

The council got Beacon Status in 1999 for its partnership approach to sustainable waste management.

Key points

- Excellent public services maintain high standards which are open, monitored and reported on.
- They respond to and learn from complaints.
- They are innovative and react quickly.
- They work together to deliver cross-cutting services to customers.
The Department for Education and Employment is working with others in Government and beyond to give everyone the chance to realise their full potential, and thus build an inclusive and fair society.

A sparkle in the classroom

New ideas are bringing a sparkle to the primary school classroom.

For the first time in a while, it seems, both teachers and pupils are enjoying maths lessons.

And the results in both numbers and reading skills are getting better all the time.

Behind the dry exterior of a new educational framework introduced to improve numeracy and literacy skills for 8 to 11-year-olds, is a ray of light.

And it’s brightening up the classroom, according to Kaushi Silva, head teacher of Primrose Hill Primary School in London.

"It has made an enormous difference to both teachers and children," she says. "There is now a challenge in the classroom and the pace of lessons has increased.

The new framework provides a more structured approach in the teaching of both maths and English.

"There is now a much greater emphasis on mental calculation and you find the children discussing their lessons outside the classroom. I have known a generation of teachers who did not enjoy teaching maths. This has all changed," adds Kaushi Silva.

"I am convinced that we will be seeing better results from our 11 year olds." - Kaushi Silva

Primrose Hill Primary School introduced the new framework last September. The school, based in the heart of London’s Camden Town, teaches 3-11 year olds and caters for children from many different ethnic origins.

Another school, Calverton Primary in Newham in London, helped to pilot the new framework – so they’ve been at it longer than others.

Says deputy head Andrea Choppy: "I can truly say that our results have improved. Teachers and children alike are benefiting from these reforms."
Changing the face of childcare

That's the view of Annette Walker who manages the Children's Information Service in the Cambridge area.

And she's talking about the ChildcareLink website www.childcarelink.gov.uk launched by the DfEE, DSS and the Scottish Executive and designed by the Information Technology Services Agency.

It's a national childcare information service, offering parents local and reliable childcare information at the click of a mouse button.

"By co-ordinating information on one website, updating the data daily and making it available at a local level, we are offering a faster and more accessible service than ever before," says Annette Walker.

"I know of one mother who, while running her own business, entered her children into a summer play scheme. The scheme was closed at the last minute but after looking at the net she found a childminder who actually lived a couple of doors away from her. As she said to me, 'this scheme saved my life and my business'. Before trying the net she had no idea that she had a reliable childminder living so close."

The project is run through 147 local Children's Information Services (CIS) in England and 30 in Scotland.

It's a two-way street

It would be hard to say who gets the most out of this scheme — the staff from the Government Office in the West Midlands (GOWM) or the children they volunteer to help with their reading.

Around 20 staff go into primary schools in the local Education Action Zone regularly every fortnight.

They were trained for this special work by an experienced organisation called Birmingham Reading Volunteers.

Many of them hear children read, others support the literacy hour or work alongside children using literacy programmes on the schools' computers.

The volunteers are enthusiastic and have stayed committed. One of the biggest rewards has come from building relationships with the children. "I believe it makes a lot of difference to the children I've been teaching," says volunteer Mohammed Shaikh. "Some of the children who were having problems before are doing well with their reading today."

Old age is a new age

At 107 years old, artist Fred Moore has been awarded the title of England's Oldest Learner.

At the age of 94, Emily May Butterfield's new-found computer skills made her England's Most Inspiring Older Learner. Fred and Emily received their awards from Lifelong Learning Minister Malcolm Wicks at the Learning in Later Life competition in London last May.

Fred and Emily demonstrate that it is never too late to learn, to make new friends and take up new challenges in life.

The Government’s Learning in Later Life competition has inspired older people throughout England to take up new skills and develop those they already have.

The competition for learners over 85 is part of the Government's commitment to give everyone the opportunity to learn, no matter what their age or background.

Key points

- We must ensure that all young people reach 16 with the skills, attitudes and personal qualities that will give them a secure foundation for lifelong learning, work and citizenship in a rapidly changing world.
- We must develop in everyone a commitment to lifelong learning, to enhance their lives, improve their employability in a changing labour market and create the skills that our economy and employers need.
Helping directly

The 21st century health service is now available in the comfort of many homes, thanks to NHS Direct. It will soon cover the whole of England and Wales and a service for Scotland will be available later this year.

The nurse-led telephone advice line together with NHS Direct online, means people can get hold of health information quickly and easily.

Launched in March 1998 and covering over 65 per cent of the country, it now boasts over a million callers. It aims to provide for the whole country by the end of the year.

Denice Wray, Nurse Director of NHS Direct in Hampshire, works with more than 35 nurses providing a 24-hour service. She believes it saves lives.

“We are building a service which uses all of a nurse’s professional skills... we are not just a referral service to the general practitioner. Figures show that around 43 per cent of our callers are helped directly by us and do not have to leave their own homes,” said Denice Wray.

“For instance, a new mum at home may be doing all the right things but the advice and reassurance that we provide can make an enormous difference to her peace of mind.”

Saving time — and lives

It’s well proven that many common types of cancer are more likely to be treated successfully if they’re caught early.

Now a new scheme aims to cut drastically the time between a GP’s suspicions, referring the patient to a consultant, getting test results and getting treatment.

Saving time also means patients and their families don’t have to go through weeks, possibly months of anxious waiting.

Nine cancer networks across the country covering 14 million people are participating in the Cancer Services Collaborative. It brings together all the different agencies involved in diagnosis, treatment and care, reducing delays at every stage of the process. Teams have introduced on-the-spot booking systems and one-stop clinics, where tests and results can be completed on the same day rather than over weeks. Early results are impressive.

Pre-booking for breast cancer patients in Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire has cut waiting times from an average of 15 days to six. Prostate cancer patients in the West London cancer network typically used to wait six months between referral to specialist and receiving the diagnosis. That’s now reduced to 14 days average.
Dropping in to good health

There are times when busy lifestyles or practical circumstances and particular needs make flexible and accessible services, available at times which suit you, particularly important.

NHS Walk-in Centres are a new breed of ‘no appointment necessary’ service, staffed by experienced NHS nurses, offering healthcare advice and treatment without you having to take time off work or rearrange your day.

More than 20 are already open and a total of 36 will be running by the end of the year.

You can get treatment quickly for minor injuries and illnesses as well as advice on treating yourself. There’s no need to register and opening hours fit in with modern lifestyles.

Feedback so far shows that these centres are popular with patients and nurses alike. As Vicki Stubbs, a Nurse Practitioner at Wakefield Walk-in Centre stresses, “Encountering a wide range of ailments and illnesses in the Walk-in Centre has helped me to develop professionally in new ways.”

Spreading the word about staying well

A new Special Health Authority, the Health Development Agency (HDA), has been set up to help improve our health, particularly tackling inequalities and ill health due to poverty and other avoidable causes. This will support the Government’s aim to improve the health of all and to reduce the gap between the best and worst off in society.

The HDA will provide professionals with the latest information on what works to improve health in areas such as diet and the prevention of cancer, heart disease and strokes. It will also give advice to those working in the public health field to help them target their efforts to deliver the best health outcomes — by evaluating and providing information on what works in a variety of settings.

The world’s best examples of health care will be available on the HDA’s website, Evidence Base 2000. The database is the first of its kind, and will play a key role in disseminating evidence to those in the field. Data will be provided on a range of measures from the most successful techniques for improving the diet of children and young people, to effective measures for tackling men’s health problems.

Taking care

Caring for someone over a long time is not a service you can provide ‘off the peg’ – it has to be tailor-made to match the needs of the individual.

And getting it right means involving people from a lot of different areas - health, housing, voluntary groups, carers and social services - all talking and working together.

Now a new initiative - Better Care, Higher Standards - aims to make that happen and to set charter standards across the board.

“We recognised that good long-term care must mean each agency working as real partners to meet the needs of each individual,” says Crispin Acton at the Department of Health.

Some local authorities are already working to create the framework for charter standards. Jonathon Cope of Cheshire County Council Social Services is among the leaders.

He is clear that wherever people enter the care system they will be put through to where they need to be. “That’s the first hurdle. The second is to cut down on the repetitious form filling and questioning by sharing information between departments. And thirdly we have to deliver to meet that person’s need.”

Key points

- NHS Direct will provide 24-hour access by phone to expert health advice across England and Wales by the end of 2000.
- NHS Walk-in Centres provide ‘no appointment necessary’ health care at times and places that suit busy, modern lifestyles.
- Pilot schemes show drastic reductions in waiting times for suspected cancer patients.
- A new NHS agency is spreading the latest information on what can help you to stay healthy.
Our aim is a justice system which promotes a society well informed about the rights and responsibilities of the individual; and which offers accessible, responsive legal and court services. The Government’s Crime Reduction Programme encourages imaginative, high-tech crime fighting methods, to make life harder for the criminal and better for the law-abiding.

Rights and responsibilities

“...We started the Fordbridge Focus Group in 1998 so that the police, local authority and community representatives could work together to turn the area around.”

Superintendent Paul Scarrott

Partners in crime-busting

Groups of people all over the country are working hard to make their areas burglary-free zones.

Police, local councils and voluntary organisations are getting together in Crime and Disorder Partnerships, tailoring their crime-busting ideas to the needs of their own communities.

They’re part of the Reducing Burglary Initiative, which is investing £60 million over three years. By 2002 it aims to cover two million households and prevent 15,000 burglaries.

As Steve Wilkes, head of the initiative, explains, “We want the funding to be used strategically. So the proposals we get from the partnerships have to look at their local crime problems, plan a targeted approach and explain how their idea will work. Then we watch and evaluate the projects and make sure that any lessons learned are spread to other partnerships.”

Superintendent Paul Scarrott has been involved in a scheme in Solihull. It focuses on the Fordbridge estate, an area with high unemployment and above average burglary rates.

A £60,000 grant from the Reducing Burglary Initiative has helped them to carry on their good work. That includes fitting electronic entry systems to blocks of flats, installing lighting and alley gates, and providing activities and meeting places for young people.

There’s no doubt of the success of the project. Burglary and disorder rates in the area have now dropped by an astonishing 60 per cent.

Says Paul Scarrott: “The grant meant we could work faster and it allowed us to come at the problem from every angle at the same time. For the future, we are handing over the maintenance of the project to the parish council. This means that ownership of the scheme passes back to local people and police officers. The enthusiasm of local residents to carry on the work has been incredible. We are now looking to apply the lessons of this scheme to other areas in Solihull.”
Need legal help fast?
Just ask

Having problems with your housing? Difficulties at work?
Is someone hassling you about money?
Don’t get pushed around – find out what your rights are.
If you need legal advice fast but can’t afford to pay a lot for it, check out the new Community Legal Service (CLS).
Some help and advice is free or at low cost.
If you do have to pay, you’ll always be told about costs up front so there are no nasty surprises later.

Launched in April by the Lord Chancellor, the CLS is made up of local networks like lawyers, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centres and local councils.

So far, there are 124 CLS Partnerships involving 217 local authorities and covering 58 per cent of the population of England and Wales.

They are working to ensure that local people get the help they need and to make sure the right services are in the right places.

These range from high street Information Points in libraries, which can provide leaflets and a Directory of Services, through basic advice – maybe help to write an important letter – to long-term, specialist help.

David Harker, Chief Executive of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) says they see about 5.2 million people a year. “Under the new scheme, everyone will know which agency is best able to advise them on what subject.”

Two other core features of the scheme are the Quality Mark and the CLS website, www.justask.org.uk.

About 5,500 advice providers are already quality marked and carry the new CLS logo to show they meet the right standards.

Stopping crime before it starts

There are pros and cons of course but among the residents of the London Borough of Newham CCTV seems to be pretty popular.

No wonder. When the first cameras were set up, street crime in those areas was reduced by up to 70 per cent.

The burglary rate also dropped, falling to below the national average for the first time in 15 years.

In the last four years, Newham has spent £2.75 million on state-of-the-art equipment funded by the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme in partnership with the borough.

Bob Lack, Operations Manager at Newham Emergency and Security Services, explains that the focus is firmly on crime prevention.

He adds: “Newham is leading the way in using facial recognition technology with CCTV. This means, for example, that known criminals can be identified entering an area even before a crime has been committed. It also means that the technology now does much of the work that witnesses have had to do in the past, with far less chance of human error.”

Newham Council holds annual ‘listening days’ to find out what people think of its policies. In 1998 there was a 67 per cent approval rate for the use of CCTV.

By 1999 that figure had increased to 92 per cent.

The CCTV initiative is just one part of the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme. So far over £60 million of capital funding has been allocated to 345 CCTV schemes around the country.

Unlocking doors

It’s a sad fact but right up there at the top of the stress list, along with divorce and bereavement, is moving house.

And a big part of the cost, worry and delay is in the buying and selling process.

All three will be reduced by Government proposals for electronic conveyancing in England and Wales.

A new online service – Land Registry Direct, launched by the Lord Chancellor in June – will speed up the process.

Steve Kelway, Electronic Services Programme Manager at HM Land Registry, is confident that many professionals will be using it soon.

“The new service is set up as a dedicated phone line and uses web browser technology. It is so much better than anything that has gone before and should, in the long term, bring down costs all round,” Steve says.

Keith Taylor, a Legal Executive and Licensed Conveyancer with Bristol solicitors Burges Salmon, took part in the pilot. He adds: “This service saves vital time. Deeds can be seen online and you can also check if the property is registered and to whom. Likewise you can look at all of the property title, submit land searches electronically and apply for office copies.”

Key points

- Tackling crime and the fear of crime to make our communities safer.
- Better access to good quality legal advice to help people resolve potential or actual disputes and enforce their rights effectively.
- Working in partnership to deliver local services based on local needs, concerns and priorities.
- Harnessing the latest technology in the fight against crime.
Getting the full picture

New technologies are helping deaf people in ways that could not be imagined a few years ago.

About 16 per cent of the population are deaf or hard of hearing.

If you are deaf and you’re thinking of applying to a college or university, for example - how do you quiz a tutor about the fine points of a course?

Videotelephones are the answer. Deaf people can now dial up and communicate in sign language. In an exciting project in Bristol, deaf people who can get to a videophone can contact the Central Library’s new public videophone for information on education, employment, council and library services. Or they can go in and make a free call either to an organisation with a videophone or to an operator with sign language skills.

Now Bristol Council is expanding the network through the use of a remote interpreter. It’s linked up with the University of the West of England (UWE). The project officer there, Donna West, explains: “Prospective UWE students who are deaf can use sign language to ask questions about the admissions process and issues such as accommodation and finance.”

A former teacher in a school for deaf children, Donna is also on call at the University Library and Bristol Central Library to use her signing skills to answer queries.

“Videotelephony is an exciting area to be working in. The enthusiasm with which the project has been met by local deaf people has helped us develop the network successfully.”

Donna West

Listen, then acting

Hearing voices

About 30,000 women throughout the UK talked to Government during 1999. Listening to Women consisted of focus groups, postcard questionnaires and a series of regional roadshows.

It was the biggest consultation exercise of its kind. The findings helped to set the priorities of the work of the Women’s Unit.

A magazine called Voices was published in October 1999 which provided feedback to all the women who participated in the Listening to Women exercise.

To take forward the priorities identified in Voices, the Women’s Unit set up seminars to look at financial issues affecting women, to encourage women entrepreneurs and to help women return to the employment market. The Women’s Unit also published Women’s Incomes over the Lifetime which estimated the cost over a lifetime of being a woman (the “female forfeit”).

The Women’s Unit also held a number of workshops around the country to encourage more women to take up public appointments, for example as magistrates, school governors or members of NHS boards.

Beverley Britt, a deaf member of staff at UWE, gets the full picture with the videotelephone.
The letter and the spirit

It’s not enough to work just to the letter of the law when it comes to services for disabled people.

That’s the view anyway of the Inland Revenue (IR) who were compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by the end of last year.

But, according to Jim Hunt, DDA project manager at IR, that was just the beginning. “Having complied with the letter of the law, we wanted to go further, to comply with the spirit of the Act.”

So they started talking to other people in government departments and disability groups like RNIB, RNID and SCOPE about what more they could do.

That’s where they got the idea to look at a wider range of disabilities — dyslexia and learning difficulties, for example. They produce key leaflets in Braille, large print and audio and they’re launching a system later this year so that once a customer tells them that they need a certain format, this can be set up automatically for the future.

IR also offers home visits, a form-filling service, type talk, text phones and interpreters. And they recently won an Accessibility Award from the RNIB for their website, designed to work with special Braille and synthesised speech software used by visually impaired people.

The project ends in October 2000 but Jim Hunt hopes that it will have promoted a culture of excellent service to customers with disabilities which will continue to develop long after the project closes.

I don’t believe it!

You don’t have to be Victor Meldrew to feel grumpy about your lot in later life.

Many older people have long felt that once they reach a certain age they are, at best, ignored by society and politicians.

A scheme started a year ago has brought together older people, care and support organisations and national and regional government departments.

The aim — to help older people tell politicians what they want in areas like health, benefits, social services, transport, education and employment. And at ten ‘listening events’ held around the country that’s exactly what they did. This has informed the ‘Life begins at 50’ programme of action for Government.

There are no quick fixes,” says Mike Le Brun, head of the cross-government older people team. “It’s all about changing attitudes and promoting positive images of older people and what they can contribute, as well as overcoming the barriers to ensuring they receive the services and benefits they need.”

Some local ideas are already showing results. Benefits Agency staff in Wolverhampton have set up shop in Age Concern’s pop-in restaurant in the town centre to provide on-the-spot information about benefits.

“Some people prefer to make appointments,” says Shirley Tilston of Age Concern, “but others are happy just to go and have a chat if someone is free.

“Bringing it all together in an easygoing atmosphere has undoubtedly meant more people getting their proper entitlements.”

Key points

- Public service providers are now expected to include regular customer consultation exercises as a key feature of business planning.
- Responding to what customers say is as important as asking them for their views.
- The ‘difficult to reach’ customers — people who cannot complete written customer surveys because of language barriers or physical handicaps, the elderly and young mothers who cannot easily get to a customer service centre — have just as much to say as others and should be consulted in some way.

Valuing the difference

What would you do if your first language was Lithuanian and you needed advice on a complicated tax problem that you weren’t confident discussing in English?

If you live in South Yorkshire, you can visit one of five local tax inquiry centres piloting the scheme and someone there will translate for you on the spot.

The service, which offers 128 languages, provides on-site translation for some of the most widely used languages locally and can arrange simultaneous translation by phone for the rest.

This is just one of a range of new services being developed for Inland Revenue customers, which focus on the different needs of different people. They’ve done so well that the organisation has won eight awards for its work on diversity.

As Hilary Ward, Customer Services Adviser, explains, “We need to be aware of the different needs of our customers and do everything we can to meet them.”
Welcome to the 21st century

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council is making it possible for people to get in touch with local services at the touch of a button — or rather, at the push of a door.

Step inside one of East Riding of Yorkshire Council’s videolink kiosks and a welcoming face will appear immediately on a screen in front of you, ready to help. Wherever you are in the 1,000 square mile area and whatever service you want, the link can patch you through to council departments, police, local Law Centres, the Benefits Agency or NHS Direct.

These marvels of modern technology are part of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) network which includes 11 customer service centres and a call centre, providing help and advice to larger urban populations.

Over one million people have used this service since 1997 and there’s been an average 30 per cent increase in customers year on year.

Neil Bravey, Head of Support and Customer Services, describes how the kiosks work:

“They are designed to replicate a face-to-face enquiry as closely as possible. If you have a query with your council tax bill, the council will have your data on line. You will be able to feed your suspect bill into a scanner so that both ends of the enquiry know what they’re dealing with.”

A passport to brighter days

This time last year holidaymakers faced a difficult time if they needed a new passport to travel. It was also a difficult time for the UK Passport Agency (UKPA).

Since then, the UKPA has been working hard to make sure lengthy queues and large backlogs of applications are a thing of the past. A 24-hour call centre, better website services with four-hour response time, fax-back and longer office opening hours are just some of the initiatives the Agency has introduced. All passport offices now provide a Saturday morning appointment service.

Customers seem to be particularly happy with the longer opening hours.

Ken Everett, Customer Services Manager of the London Passport Office, explains: “There is still room to improve our service to the public, but people now have more choice as to when they come in.”
A life less taxing

You know your road tax is due but you can’t find your insurance certificate. You’re not sure you can get to the Post Office before it closes.

Perhaps you end up having to get another certificate sent from your insurance company or spend your lunch break queuing in the Post Office. Sound familiar?

Now that’s all set to change, according to Noel Brock, Customer Services Manager at the DVLA. He’s in charge of a pilot scheme, set up in 1999, which allows customers to renew their vehicle licence (road tax) without leaving home. You won’t even need to dig out that insurance certificate.

DVLA has teamed up with insurance company Norwich Union to pilot the system. Using the Norwich Union’s Internet database to check that vehicles are insured, the DVLA’s new call centre can process straightforward relicensing requests from the company’s customers over the phone.

Noel explains: “At the moment we are able to retax only a limited group of vehicles because we can’t get instant access to MOT information or insurance details from companies other than Norwich Union.”

But that will change as more organisations see the benefits of keeping central computerised databases and sharing that information with others.

So far they have issued 3,000 licences. The phone lines are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays, and the licensing disc is sent out by first class post the same day.

Feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive. Hardly surprising since 65 per cent of customers received their new disc within 24 hours of calling.

A licence to serve - DVLA call centre’s Carl Bale.

Help — not just cash

Child support is about more than just money, as Child Support Agency (CSA) staff quickly found out.

Although they are there mainly to make sure non-resident parents pay a fair level of financial support for their children, many of the staff find they are caught up in other emotional and financial issues that arise on family breakdown. The CSA decided to see what they could do to ‘signpost’ people to the appropriate sources of help.

“In addition to signposting, we realised that we could do our job better for customers,” says David Barkes, an operational strategy manager. “First, by changing our working hours to suit customers and then by using IT to help front-line staff answer queries quicker.

“Around 30 per cent of staff now work ‘alternative hours’. The CSA is now available to the public from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the week and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays to cover the times when people are more likely to be home from work.”

Key points

- Making services available at more convenient times helps customers and public service staff to balance better their work and home lives. Research links a better work-life balance with higher productivity and reduced costs.
- One-stop shops bring a range of services together in a single, customer-convenient location.
- There are many ways of delivering a service. For example, more people are using the Internet. Meanwhile phone centres, backed by an electronic database, offer a relatively inexpensive way of delivering some services into the home. Savings may mean more funds to resource priority services.

Walk in, walk out with a new home

If you live in Oldham, a great new scheme has made Instant Homes a reality.

Oldham Council had a lot of empty properties going to waste because it was thought there was no demand for council housing. But research showed that ‘quality’ and ‘easy access to services’ would make a big difference to the number of people applying for its housing. So it launched Oldham Instant Homes in April to match tenants to its empty houses.

An estate agent-style shop in the town centre is open on Saturday mornings and late on Thursdays. One of the first people to try the service was Karen Dyson. By the afternoon she had signed up for a maisonette for herself and her daughter Michelle.

“I was amazed how quickly it went through,” says Karen. “After weeks of looking, I suddenly had a home to move into. I’ve now settled in and I’m very happy with it.”

Rob Grigorjevs is the project officer who helped launch Oldham Instant Homes. “Subject to the usual rigorous checks, people can be registered, view a property and sign up all on the same day.”

Helen Crossley of Oldham Instant Homes (right) with potential customers Darren Lees and Susan Slater.
Social exclusion can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. It needs ‘joined-up’ solutions.

Big vision, small plans

It’s a big vision — kick starting some of the run-down areas of inner city Manchester.

Behind it are some small — but significant — plans aimed at rebuilding and strengthening communities.

Alongside Manchester City Council’s campaign to attract new tenants to unpopular areas, a number of low-cost projects are helping the people who already live there.

As Fionnuala Stringer of Manchester Housing explains, “What we are doing is teasing out the needs of individual communities and trying to meet them by working, as economically as possible, with a variety of partners.”

For example, a project in Ardwick saw Manchester Housing working with the Early Years and Play Division to convert a block of six flats into a creche, play facilities and a training flat for basic parenting skills.

The scheme is now full of children every day, and one dad, Eddie Norton, has become so involved that he runs the kitchen as well as working in the play scheme.

“It’s good for the community,” says Eddie, “and it gives the children something they need before they go on to nursery and school. It’s good for me too, giving me valuable experience and maybe it could lead to qualifications.”

Fionnuala adds: “Our plan has always been to withdraw gradually over three years, to help people to get further funding and run the scheme independently.”

All wired up

Who says the Information Society is an exclusive club?

Not any more. Adults with learning difficulties attending Knowsley Council’s Westvale Resource Centre on Merseyside have even found themselves tutoring the Centre’s staff in how to get the best out of their computers.

Client Vivienne Castell says: “Using computers has made a big difference to my life and I’m now thinking of looking for a job using IT.”

This pilot Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) project is part of the council’s ambitious Community Information Programme (CIP). It has been so successful that it has won national recognition and is now being reproduced at Knowsley Council’s 18 other resource centres.

“It is so important that these projects are sustainable. There is more value in the long term in building on local skills and setting up strong partnerships in the community.”

Fionnuala Stringer

Client Vivienne Castell at the computer with staff from the Westvale Resource Centre.

Client Vivienne Castell at the computer with staff from the Westvale Resource Centre.
From laptops to libraries

Cyberspace. Cybercafes.
And now there are ‘cyber drop-ins’.

That’s the name given to the activities of a team of trained volunteers, all over 50, who take laptop computers into residential nursing homes and day centres for older people.

It’s just one of 20 or so projects funded by the Active Community Unit (ACU) under the Home Office Older Volunteers Initiative (HOOVI), targeted at the over-50 age group. Each project is run by a different voluntary organisation, such as Arthritis Care, the Somali Women’s Association or the National Trust.

Age Concern ran the cyber drop-ins as part of the ACU’s wider aim of getting more people involved in their local communities. At the moment, 29 per cent of the adult population volunteer on a regular basis.

Head of ACU Georgina Fletcher-Cooke explains that they distribute funds for a wide range of projects: “The Community Resource Fund, for example, gives small grants of £500 or less to help local voluntary community groups extend their membership.”

A toy library in Telford, Shropshire with a large Bangladeshi community nearby received a grant from the Fund to write a leaflet that they then translated into Urdu and printed. The leaflets publicised the library and drew in more visitors.

Sleeping rough, facing reality

It’s a disgrace in our modern society — around 1,600 people sleep rough on the streets of England every night.

Now a special team – the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) – has the job of coming up with a way to slash this figure by at least two-thirds by 2002.

And from the start, that meant going out on the streets to talk with homeless people and learn from others working with them in the hostels and the soup kitchens.

That touch of reality is already paying off, with the number of people sleeping rough coming down. And while much of the work is focused, not surprisingly, on London, the unit is also active across England. In Blackpool, for example, the last count showed the number of people sleeping rough was down – from 15 to zero.

As the RSU director Louise Casey explains, “Our outreach workers have all the tools they need, from hostels to detox beds, but they must also tackle the issues at root level, otherwise the chances are the person will be back on the streets within a few days.”

Their strategy aims to help people currently sleeping rough to rebuild their lives once they are off the streets, and to prevent people sleeping rough in the future.

Another key to their success is their joined-up approach. Set up in April 1999 as part of the DETR, the unit’s members come from many different backgrounds including the voluntary sector, DSS, DfEE, DoH and local government. Jessica Bowles, an RSU team leader, explains: “We need to take a co-ordinated approach with a clear strategy that cuts across departmental barriers and includes the voluntary sector and local authorities.”

Getting young people on the right track

Private, public and voluntary organisations are joining forces to help young people stay out of trouble.

On Track and the Youth Inclusion project are working with 4 to 12 and 13 to 16 year olds respectively.

They are spending £43 million between them over two years as part of the Crime Reduction Programme.

The Family Policy Unit’s On Track initiative aims to prevent children from getting into trouble from an early age. It is based on evidence that shows that:

• the main risk factors which place children at an increased likelihood of future offending can be identified at an early stage; and
• getting involved in the right way at the right time can make a difference.

Jo Church of the On Track team says there are 24 pilot projects. “Each one will be managed by a local partnership of health, education and social service providers, youth offending teams, the police and voluntary bodies. They will also link together other initiatives such as Sure Start and Pupil Support Schemes. This kind of joined-up working is essential for effective crime prevention.”

The Youth Inclusion project run by the Youth Justice Board has similar aims but targets disaffected older children on deprived estates. It aims to reduce arrest rates and crime levels as well as the numbers of children being excluded or playing truant from school.

Key points

• It is vital to build up a community’s own capacity to deal with problems.
• Partnership arrangements across sectors play a vital role in problem solving.
• Joining up services to tackle linked problems requires long-term vision and commitment.
Helping people move from welfare into work is a priority for the Government and is at the core of its wider agenda on regeneration, combating social exclusion and the fight against poverty.

Action pays off for Donald

Kilbrannock man Donald Martin is the first person in the UK to get a job through an Action Team Pathfinder.

The East Ayrshire Action Team began tackling one of the UK’s highest rates of unemployment in June this year, bringing in an extra £1.5 million to boost local jobs.

The Action Team, led by the Employment Service, brings employers and jobseekers together to overcome obstacles to work such as transport or childcare problems.

Donald Martin, 25, now has a job with Initial Security Ltd as a security guard. “The job with Initial was exactly what I was looking for and without the help of the Action Team I wouldn’t have been able to get it.”

Donald was given financial assistance to cover the costs of travelling to interview and for his travel costs to where his induction training took place.

Working Well

Helping pensioners stake their claim

Pensioners are being encouraged to claim all the cash they are entitled to with the help of a pioneering form.

Earlier this year, two of Britain’s favourite stars launched the biggest-ever television campaign to encourage pensioners to put in their claims for the Minimum Income Guarantee (paid through income support).

Award-winning Dame Thora Hird and Last of the Summer Wine star Peter Sallis asked in peak-time ads: “Are you just getting by when you could be getting more?”

The ads support a Department of Social Security mailing to more than two million pensioners to encourage them to claim the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG).

The aim of the campaign is to reach the estimated half-million pensioners who could be missing out on the MIG.

The MIG campaign takes government services into a new era with the introduction of a modern way of claiming benefits. A pioneering electronic claim form means that pensioners can phone a special line from the privacy of their homes and someone will complete the form for them over the phone. The new phone line means that it’s never been easier to get the MIG.

The special free phone line number, available between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. from Monday to Friday is: 0800 028 11 11. A MIG claim service is available for textphone users on 0800 028 35 93.

Information on MIG is also available on the DSS website at www.dss.gov.uk/mig

“Are you just getting by when you could be getting more?”

Dame Thora Hird

Donald Martin (centre) with Initial’s Support Services Manager Bob Laurie (right) and Training Officer Alan Stewart.
Travelling hopefully into the future

“I was itching to get off benefits and get back into a job,” says Claire Cowlishaw from Leamington Spa.

As a single parent, she had been on income support since her daughter was born two years ago.

In the past Claire had worked as an overseas holiday rep and she was keen to move back into the travel business.

“Without a qualification though, I knew I wouldn’t stand a chance of getting a worthwhile job,” she adds.

That’s where Russell Kilminster, the Lone Parent Adviser at Leamington Job Centre, stepped in. Through him, Claire discovered that her local college offered a one-year travel consultant’s course that would fit the bill perfectly.

But how to pay for the childcare she would need while attending college, let alone the course registration fees? Thanks to the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) which assists single parents on income support to develop the skills to find work, help was at hand. With Russell’s backing, Claire successfully applied to the scheme to pay both her fees and her childcare costs.

“People in my situation often don’t realise what Lone Parent Advisers can do for them — they will open up so many doors. I’m living proof of that.”

More good news — her tutors were so impressed with her progress that they came up with a lecturing job for her in the Travel and Tourism Training Department.

Key points

Helping those without a job into work. In particular:

- by helping young people, the long-term unemployed and others at a disadvantage in the labour market including lone parents, to move into sustainable jobs within a fair and diverse employment market.

Helping pensioners. In particular:

- direct mailing, TV campaign and a teleclaims service to encourage those pensioners not claiming to get their full MIG entitlement.

ONE for all

Since June 1999, ONE has been trying out major changes to the Welfare State in 12 pilot areas. Personal advisers offer jobseekers and benefit clients individual advice and help them to find the best way into work where possible.

ONE is a true partnership, not just between government departments, but also involving the private and voluntary sector.

Linda Phillips from Greenock now works for Northern Recruitment Group handling customer service calls.

She came to ONE when she was made redundant: “I wanted to work at a call centre but had no experience or skills. My personal adviser arranged IT training and three weeks later I successfully applied for my job.”

Visit www.one.gov.uk
With the UK’s position in the world comes responsibilities. The public sector is meeting these challenges by working more closely together to achieve common goals.

Responsive Services save lives

The vision in the Strategic Defence Review of a pool of forces that could be deployed rapidly to resolve a crisis is becoming a reality.

As the crisis in Sierra Leone worsened, elements of the Joint Rapid Reaction Forces were sent there to help evacuate UK and other entitled citizens and bring stability to the area.

Britain is now helping to re-build the country. As part of an inter-departmental programme of assistance to help Sierra Leone overcome eight years of brutal civil war, the MOD has contributed personnel and funding to help establish effective, democratically accountable Armed Forces and a Ministry of Defence within Sierra Leone.

In a different type of operation, the British Armed Forces provided vital assistance to the people of Mozambique following the flooding of their country. Our servicemen and women were the first from outside the region to arrive and provide help. Within six days of being put on standby they had commenced operations in Mozambique. In total, almost 1,000 tonnes of badly needed supplies; food, tents, fuel and portable kitchen units were distributed, and hundreds of people were airlifted to safety.

A Royal Marine in Sierra Leone.

Conflict prevention

Spotting crises before they happen is a tricky business. But often speedy, early steps are the best way of ensuring that a small crisis doesn’t become a big one.

In a groundbreaking agreement the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development and Ministry of Defence have agreed to pool money into a joint conflict prevention budget to maximise effect.

Although FCO will manage the budget, commonly agreed goals will be pursued. By joining forces we will be able to make the money go further and achieve more.

“Everyone here is very committed to their work and I think there is a great deal of personal satisfaction.”

Wing Commander Martin Sharp of Operation Palliser in Sierra Leone.

A Puma helicopter in Mozambique.
The youth of tomorrow

Soldiers and schoolchildren – unlikely double act or perfect partnership?

Through the Armed Forces Youth Initiative in Schools, it’s certainly proving to be a winning combination. It has nothing to do with uniforms or weapons, but it has everything to do with helping young people to make the most of their lives.

Teams of serving and recently retired Services instructors are going into six secondary schools in Newcastle and Norfolk to train up to 25 children in each school. These are young people who are not achieving all they could and who may even be in danger of dropping out. The aim is to help them get motivated and qualified.

The main focus will be Key Skills training. There will be a chance to develop employability skills, go for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and a St John’s First Aid certificate. There’s also the opportunity to work towards an ASDAN award, a vocational qualification that covers a number of skills-related challenges, like problem solving, working with others and improving learning and performance.

By presenting positive role models and something to aim for, this collaboration between the MOD and the education sector should have a positive effect.

Taking a rain check

It’s well-known that the British are obsessed with the weather. Now, weather forecasters from the Met Office (which is part of the MOD) are working with the Environment Agency to improve its service throughout England and Wales.

The aim is to turn weather forecasts into information that the Environment Agency can act on, so that timely flood warnings are issued to the public.

Weather forecasters will be able to call up an extensive network of unmanned rain gauges across the country at any time. This data, combined with information from the UK’s rainfall radar network, will improve estimates of accumulated rainfall. Better forecasts are a vital source for the Environment Agency, when considering whether a flood warning should be issued.

Modern battle-winning Forces

Ultimately our Armed Forces’ effectiveness depends on their ability to fight and win.

Major investment is making our Forces more flexible, deployable and capable. We are buying battle-winning equipment such as the Apache attack helicopter, Type 45 destroyers, submarine launched cruise missiles, Challenger 2 tanks, Brimstone anti-armour missiles and the Eurofighter aircraft – so that our Forces are able to respond to crises and conflict at every level.

Hi-Tech battlefield builds business

Research in defence can often lead the way for new technology. That is why a new Defence Diversification Agency has been launched.

The DDA provides SMEs with access to the knowledge base of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) and the wider defence sector. It encourages the widest possible exploitation of defence technology, informs industry’s diversification planning and facilitates ‘spin in’ of civil technology to defence programmes.

Significant successes include:
• DERA world-class expertise in voice recognition systems used to revolutionise car security
• MOD scientists realised that helicopter materials would make revolutionary loud speakers no more than 3mm thick
• Re-engineering existing software to develop a ‘pay-as-you-surf’ Internet kiosk, for pubs and clubs
• Helping a Hampshire SME develop a water filtration system which can be transported by vehicle

A Challenger 2 tank.

Key points

• A common budget for conflict prevention has been set up.
• The Strategic Defence Review is modernising the Forces and providing them with modern battle-winning equipment.
• The Armed Forces Youth Initiative pilots have been set up.
• The crisis in Sierra Leone has been stabilised through UK assistance.
• The flood and severe weather service is being improved.
• The Defence Diversification Agency has been established.
A final tail...

Listening, then acting can change even a dog’s life! Ximo has been part of the Whitehouse family living in western Europe, for years. But until now, he’s never been able to join them at home in the UK.

That’s because Ximo is a dog and his owner, Bill Whitehouse, couldn’t face putting his friend through the stress of six months’ quarantine.

But this year, there were scenes of joyful reunion as Ximo finally came home under the Pet Travel Scheme (PETS).

He’s just one of more than 6,000 cats and dogs that have entered the UK since the scheme was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in February.

Says Bill Whitehouse, a telecommunications consultant from Solihull: “I planned well ahead to make sure that Ximo complied with the rules. Everything went very smoothly on the day and he went through the checks without any problem.”

PETS has modernised the British quarantine rules so that cats and dogs can enter the UK having been in Western European countries, without being separated from their owners for six months. It is to be extended to rabies-free islands next year.

The animals must have been microchipped, vaccinated against rabies, blood tested and treated against parasites.

All the details are on the PETS website on www.maff.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine or on the special PETS helpline on 0870 241 1710.