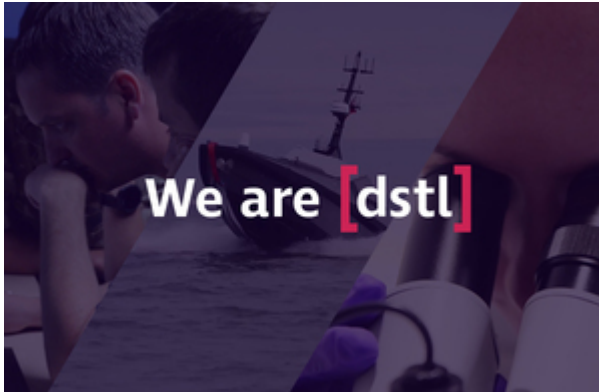


[Behind the scenes at Dstl: video](#)

News story

Watch the incredible range of work we do, from robots to wargaming, in just over a minute.



The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is the science inside UK defence and security.

But what does that mean?

If you've ever wondered what happens behind the scenes at Dstl, this video takes you through some of the highlights of our life-saving work, carried out by our world-class technology experts and scientists.

[We are Dstl](#)

[Find out more about Dstl.](#)

Published 3 December 2020

[Towards a data quality culture – launching a framework for government](#)

Today we are launching a new [framework for data quality management in government](#): Towards a data quality culture. We have developed it in collaboration with the Government Digital Service, using best practice drawn from organisations across government.

Getting data quality right means a lot more than data cleansing. It means knowing the quality of data, sharing that information with others and taking

the right action to address problems. The framework contains principles and approaches that can help people to better manage data quality in their organisations. They are designed to help people to establish better data quality management through evidence-based, proactive assessments and effective, targeted improvements.

Why it matters

Data has never been more important. It underpins everything government does – our services, our decisions and our policies. It is vitally important that we have data we can trust, and trust starts with good quality data.

We are working with other government initiatives, such as the [Data Standards Authority](#), to improve the way government stores, manages and processes its data. Our remit crosses all of government in the UK.

What will change

We are asking organisations to put their data on a path towards better quality. We want them to:

- Commit to data quality
- Know their users and their users needs
- Assess quality throughout the data lifecycle
- Communicate data quality clearly and effectively
- Anticipate changes affecting data quality

We know that change takes time but, by making incremental changes to the way they manage their data quality, organisations can strengthen their data and their decisions.

Next steps

This is the start of our journey. The framework will grow and iterate over the next two years. We are currently working on training and guidance to support data practitioners in embedding the framework in their organisation.

A thank you

This framework would not exist without the support and contributions of organisations including the [Home Office](#), the [Office for National Statistics](#), [NHS Digital](#), the [Environment Agency](#), the [Data Standards Authority](#), the [Cabinet Office](#) and [Government Digital Service](#). We are extremely grateful for their work in bringing existing best practice together.

Help us support you

We have an ambitious plan to support the public sector to understand, assess, and improve data quality, but we need your help to achieve this. If you want

to talk to us about the framework or want to know more about our work, email us at DQHub@ons.gov.uk or tweet us at [@DQHubUKGov](https://twitter.com/DQHubUKGov).

[UK statement on Afghan peace talks](#)

Press release

The UK welcomes progress in peace talks. The two sides have reached an agreement which will allow the start of more substantive negotiations to take place.



Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the Commonwealth and South Asia, said:

I commend the perseverance and effort of the two negotiating sides in reaching common ground after decades of conflict. This is an important step in the Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace talks.

I hope this development leads to a political settlement and a comprehensive ceasefire that the Afghan people want and deserve. For talks to stand a real chance of success, there is a pressing need for a significant reduction in violence: the people of Afghanistan have suffered for too long.

While there is still a long way to go, this agreement shows both sides are able to work together in the pursuit of lasting peace. Only an inclusive political settlement negotiated between Afghans will end this conflict. The UK will continue to support Afghanistan on this journey towards stability and security.

Published 3 December 2020

North Macedonia and UK sign Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement

The Agreement strengthens the trading relationship between the UK and North Macedonia, worth £1.8bn in 2019, by securing continued preferential access and paving the way for increased trade in future.

The UK has today (3 December) signed a Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement with North Macedonia, the UK's largest trading partner in the Western Balkans.

The preferential terms secured by this Agreement will enable British business to continue to trade as they do today after the Transition Period and in turn will help protect North Macedonia's economic stability and prosperity.

The Agreement also sets out the UK and North Macedonia's ambitions for our future relationship including the strengthening of our political, economic, security and cultural ties.

FCDO Minister for the European Neighborhood and the Americas Wendy Morton said:

I welcome the signing of the UK-North Macedonia Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement which sets the foundations for an even more ambitious relationship between our countries. This includes future cooperation in tackling climate change, improving education, and standing up for human rights.

The Agreement will also strengthen our already substantial ties in trade and investment. North Macedonia is the UK's largest trading partner in the Western Balkans and the UK is North Macedonia's second largest import market. The signing of this Agreement gives exporters and consumers the certainty they need to continue trading freely and with confidence as the Transition Period ends.

International Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena said:

Free and fair trade is vital as we work to recover from the economic impact of coronavirus, and so I am delighted that today we've secured our trading relationship with North Macedonia.

Today's agreement gives certainty for business in both countries and demonstrates our commitment to building on our strong trade

ties with North Macedonia and the Western Balkans region.

Her Majesty's Ambassador to North Macedonia Rachel Galloway signed the Agreement with Minister of Foreign Affairs Bujar Osmani in Skopje.

Her Majesty's Ambassador to North Macedonia, Rachel Galloway said:

Following North Macedonia's accession to NATO, this Agreement is another positive step in strengthening UK-North Macedonia relations. North Macedonia offers great opportunities for UK companies and investors across a variety of industries and the signing of the Agreement marks a new era of increased investment in both our economies. The UK remains committed to North Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic path and we will continue to stand together as NATO Allies.

The Agreement provides a framework for closer political dialogue and increased cooperation on important issues such as the environment, education, and human rights. By signing the Agreement, the UK has reaffirmed its commitment to a close relationship with North Macedonia and to playing a continued positive role in the region.

When the Agreement enters into effect at the end of the Transition Period, British businesses and consumers will continue to benefit from existing trading terms with North Macedonia, including the tariff-free trade of industrial products.

Trade between the UK and North Macedonia was worth £1.8 billion in 2019. Top UK exports to North Macedonia last year were non-ferrous metals (£1.1 billion), inorganic chemicals (£77 million) and textiles (£4 million). Meanwhile top imports to the UK from North Macedonia were metal ores & scrap (£49m), clothing (£16m) and furniture (£13 million).

Background

- Statistical sources: ONS, UK trade release (non-seasonally adjusted)
 - This Agreement will now be subject to domestic parliamentary procedures in both the UK and North Macedonia.
 - In under two years, the UK Government has signed or agreed in principle trade agreements with 54 countries. Total UK trade with these countries was worth £166 billion in 2019.
 - This accounts for 90% of the value of trade with non-EU countries that we set out to secure agreements with at the start of the trade continuity programme.
 - Source of trade statistics: UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted April to June 2020
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Who wants to be typical? Be Yourself!

The most recent event in the packed Operational Delivery Profession schedule explored career progression strategies for female leaders.

Recognising that women are under-represented in senior strategic and management roles across the Operational Delivery Profession, Power to Progress took steps to address this and provide game changing insights in a fraction of the time that it would take to experience the same. Delving into conversations around the application process, ambition and being the only female in the room, the event aimed to tackle some of the big issues.

“We are not superhuman. It is important as a leader to really bring your whole self and be honest with your team. We are not going to know everything. Being yourself takes the pressure off, and I am not afraid to ask questions.”
[Bernadette Thompson]

Rebekah Warburton (Deputy Director Universal Credit Service Planning and Delivery DWP) took up the role as host for this wholly virtual event, setting the scene, introducing our high-profile speakers and taking part in an interesting panel discussion with Angela MacDonald, (CEO and 2nd Permanent Secretary for HMRC), Bernadette Thompson (Deputy Director at MHCLG) Liza Berresford (Facilitator and General Manager Thresholds) and some very popular speakers from our recent ODP Engage virtual event, Paul Morrison (Director Strategy, Legal and Governance, FSA), Derek Thomas (Chief Operating Officer, VOA) and Shaun McNally (SR0 Covid-19 Response and EU Transition, MOJ).

Angela MacDonald also gave us a fascinating insight into her career story and how she became the highest-ranking female leader in operational delivery, prompting one delegate to comment:

“Extremely inspirational, massively relatable and a HUGE relief to hear everything Angela talked about. Thank the lord for people like you, Angela MacDonald.”

Our keynote speaker, Penny Mallory wowed attendees with her amazing account of overcoming adversity to realise her dreams. Talking about personal strength, Penny draws on her experiences as a homeless teenager who fulfilled her impossible dream of becoming a Champion Rally Driver. The message that underpinned was simple but powerful. As she put it:

“It doesn't matter what word you throw at it – grit, perseverance, resilience, passion, control, determination: mental toughness will always play a more important role than anything else in you achieving your goals.”

Penny's session included four excellent practical tips for building mental toughness that anyone can benefit from. These, and the advice she gave really resonated with the audience, sparking a flood of comments such as:

“Thank you Penny for sharing your amazing story. I have taken on board all the suggestions and advice for building resilience and feel excited about

trying these out. Really great stuff!”

Truly inspirational.

The day ended with a powerful panel discussion, providing attendees with the opportunity for reflection and questions to be answered. The session proved extremely insightful and informative and pointed towards the huge range of resources available on the event website. Take a look at our event website to find out more [ODP Power to Progress website](#).

The day provided inspiration for all and a fascinating insight into career progression in general.

You can also recap on the event and join in the conversation on our social media pages, using the hashtag #P2PODP on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).