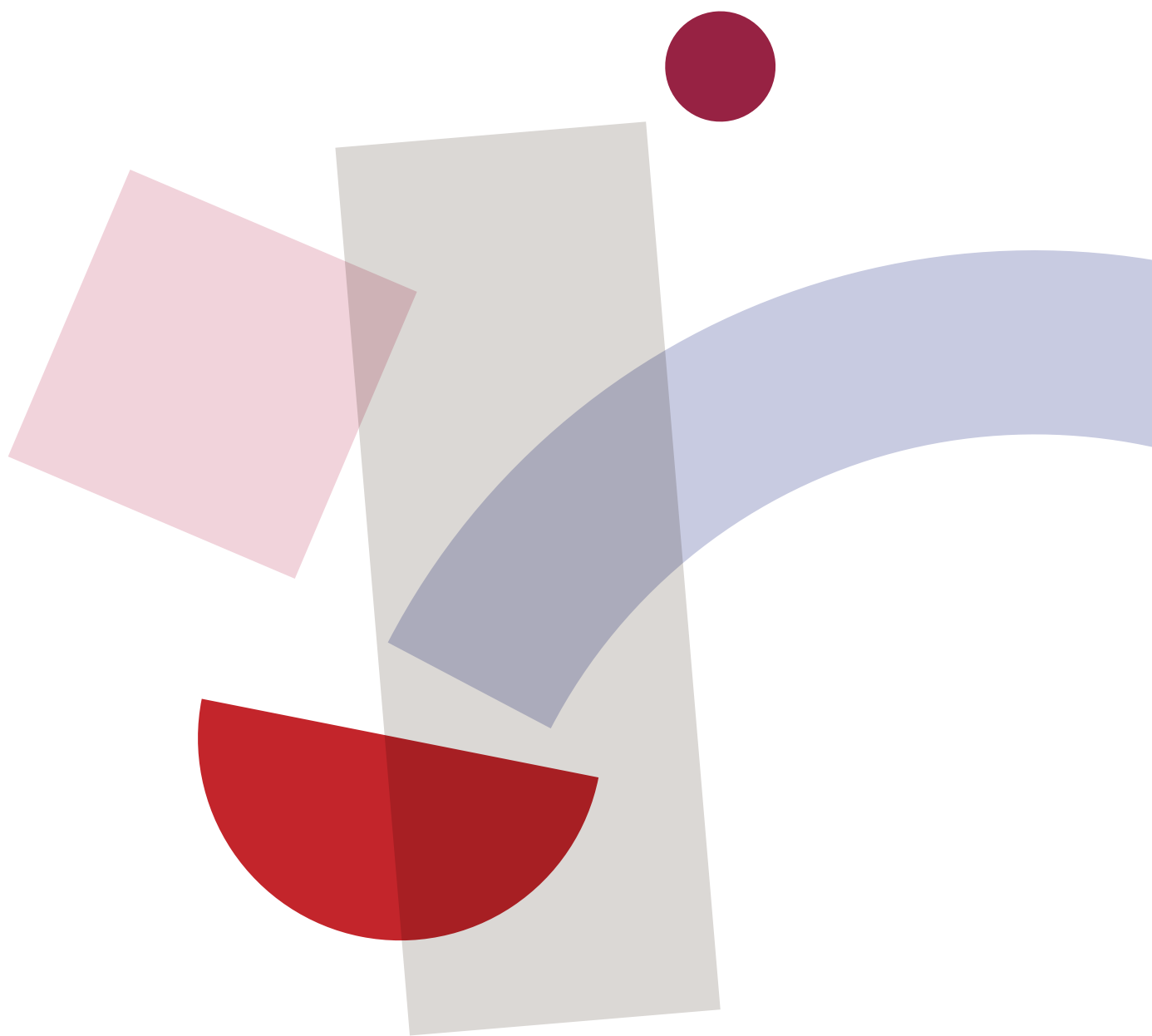
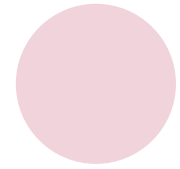


# Leadership Insights for the Central Government sector





Research recently conducted by GS highlights that the most significant people issue facing Central Government is the development of senior leaders, emphasised further from the impact of the pandemic on working practices and expectations.

Gartner research confirms this, with 'current and future leadership bench strength' as a top five people priority in 2021.

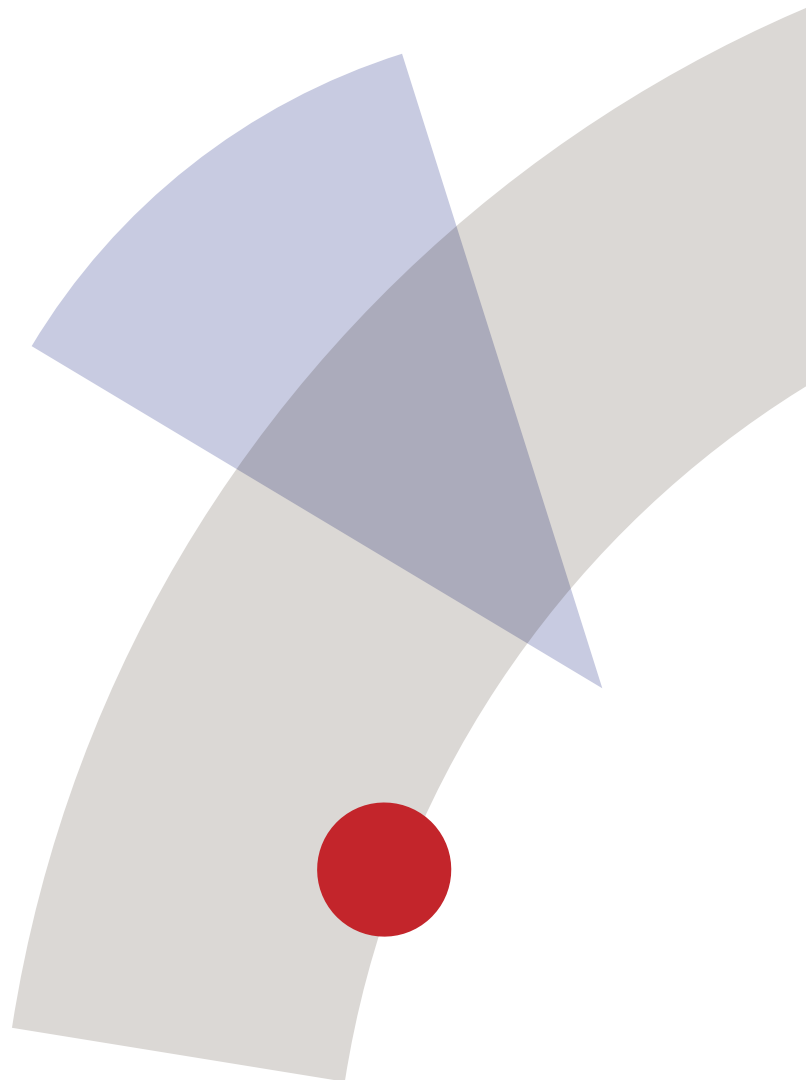
44% of HR professionals reporting that they are struggling to develop their senior leaders.

### **The key challenges leaders are facing in the Central Government sector**

Our discussions with leaders highlight five challenges that consistently come up in conversations with Chief Executives and Board members:

- Rebuilding the economy and public finances; sustaining growth and lowering debt
- Rethinking the future of work in a post Covid-19 context
- Protecting national safety and physical/digital security
- Eliminating discrimination, reducing inequality and promoting shared prosperity
- Can green and growth go hand-in-hand?

For each, we identify the critical leadership behaviours needed to support successful delivery, benchmarked against leadership profiling data from our unique leadership model, Altitude, to determine the likely capability of sector leaders to deliver on these challenges.



## Defining behavioural excellence

Altitude identifies behavioural excellence for leaders working across the Public and Central Government sectors. 12 behaviours fall into three clusters: focus on Self, People and Outcomes.

We have mapped assessment data on 4,000+ leaders to these behaviours allowing us to benchmark and compare leader capability in different sectors across the broader public sector. We have data for over 1300 leaders from across Central Government. With this data, we express the variance from the benchmark as a Net Leadership Capability score that can then be reported as a 'strength' or a 'risk'.



# Altitude



### Focus on Self

**Engage and Inspire**  
Confident and visible, is an inspiring ambassador

**Courage and Tenacity**  
Optimistic, resilient and persevering

**Engender Trust**  
Authentic, shows integrity and true to oneself

**Be Curious and Agile**  
Adaptable, responsive, flexible and hungry to learn



### Focus on People

**Make Relationships Count**  
Builds positive, meaningful and sustainable relationships

**Influence and Impact**  
Achieves outcomes by winning hearts and minds

**Build Team Unity**  
Brings teams together through common goals

**Promote Collaboration**  
Achieves better service by working with others



### Focus on Outcomes

**Social Heart, Commercial Head**  
Balances quality service with financial considerations

**Drive Strategic Clarity**  
Navigates ambiguity to create a clear way forward

**Tackle Tomorrow**  
Delivers transformation, balancing risk and innovation

**Futureproof Talent**  
Harnesses the value of diversity and inclusion

While all 12 behaviours are key to leadership success, some are particularly relevant to the immediate challenges identified for Central Government. These insights are outlined below.

## Rebuilding the economy and public finances; sustaining growth and lowering debt

The UK's public finances have been hugely affected by the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic. The Government's budget deficit reached a peacetime record in 2020/21, as tax revenues fell, and government spending increased. The measures the Government has taken to support businesses and households are costing around £340 billion across 2020/21 and 2021/22. The pandemic is likely to have a lasting impact on the economy, with official forecasts suggesting that UK economic output will be lower than previously expected, even in five years' time.

Given the financial challenges leaders in Central Government face, the Altitude behaviour 'Social Heart, Commercial Head' is of particular relevance. Our scores flag a risk within Central Government leader capability where, on average, leaders benchmark significantly lower than other public sector leaders. This raises two areas of development; how should Central Government leaders be supported to build their financial acumen, and how they balance commercial awareness with the drive to maintain the quality of services.

The current context puts greater pressure on Central Government leaders, with a need for them to demonstrate resilience and perseverance in the face of these challenges. This speaks to the Altitude behaviour 'Courage and Tenacity', where we find a more solid bench strength within Central Government, with a similar level of predicted capability to remain optimistic and bounce back from setbacks, when compared to other public sector leaders. Leader well-being should still be a consideration and support provided to help leaders build personal resilience in the face of continued disruption.



**The measures the Government has taken to support businesses and households are costing around £340 billion across 2020/21 and 2021/22.**



## Reducing inequality and promoting shared prosperity

There are five key reasons for reducing inequality:

1.

Health – life expectancy is shorter and mortality rates are higher in unequal societies

---

2.

Social relationships – levels of social cohesion including trust and social capital are lower in more unequal societies

---

3.

Human Capital development – Scores on the UNICEF index of child well-being are significantly worse in unequal countries

---

4.

Economic progress and stability – Poverty reduction is compromised by income inequality

---

5.

Sustainable economies – inequality drives status competition which drives personal debt and consumerism

---

Ingrained inequalities are still evident in society and UK workplaces. High-profile government-initiated work has encouraged action on racial diversity and inclusion, but more recent studies, such as the Parker review update on UK FTSE Board composition and research by Cranfield School of Management included in the Parker update report, show that inertia remains and there is more to be done.

In its June 2021 **Declaration on Government Reform**, published on 15 June 2021, the Government sets its intention to be a 'model employer' and 'will set a new standard for diversity and inclusion, challenging tired prejudices and championing a diversity of backgrounds and opinions, with the merit principle front and centre'. And it goes on to say that it 'will guarantee fairness at work, take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination and harassment, and grow a culture that welcomes challenge and demands rigour in how we assess delivery for citizens.

The key Altitude behaviour leaders need to address this challenge is 'Futureproof Talent' which speaks of leaders being able to harness the value of a diverse workforce and ensure that their organisation has the people and talent it needs, both now and in the future. Central Government leaders demonstrate a risk on this behaviour, suggesting there is work to be done to ensure the right people, skills and capabilities are in place to deliver the strategy and to set the new standard for diversity and inclusion.

## Rethinking the future of work in a post Covid-19 future

As the lines between work and life blurred even further during the pandemic, leaders have moved from prioritising work-life balance to designing well-being into work. Organisations that integrate well-being into the design of work at the individual team, and organisational levels will build a sustainable future where workers can feel and perform at their best. Senior leaders now have the chance to reinvent the workplace and embody their organisation's purpose and values - supporting economic, social, and human interests, to introduce real meaning into work that mobilises employees around common goals.

Leaders should use this time as an opportunity to reinvent fairer, more inclusive, more equitable places to work, ensuring the technological infrastructure, connectivity and digital tools are in place to safeguard workers and avoid society segmentation into the 'have' and 'have-nots'.

A number of leadership behaviours are key to supporting this challenge; 'Curious & Agile' is about adaptability, flexibility and agility and our data shows that this is a significant strength for Central Government leaders when compared to other leaders across the public sector. Leaders are more likely to cope with changing priorities, cultures and demands, keeping up with technology and changing gears when needed. They should continue to capitalise upon this strength.

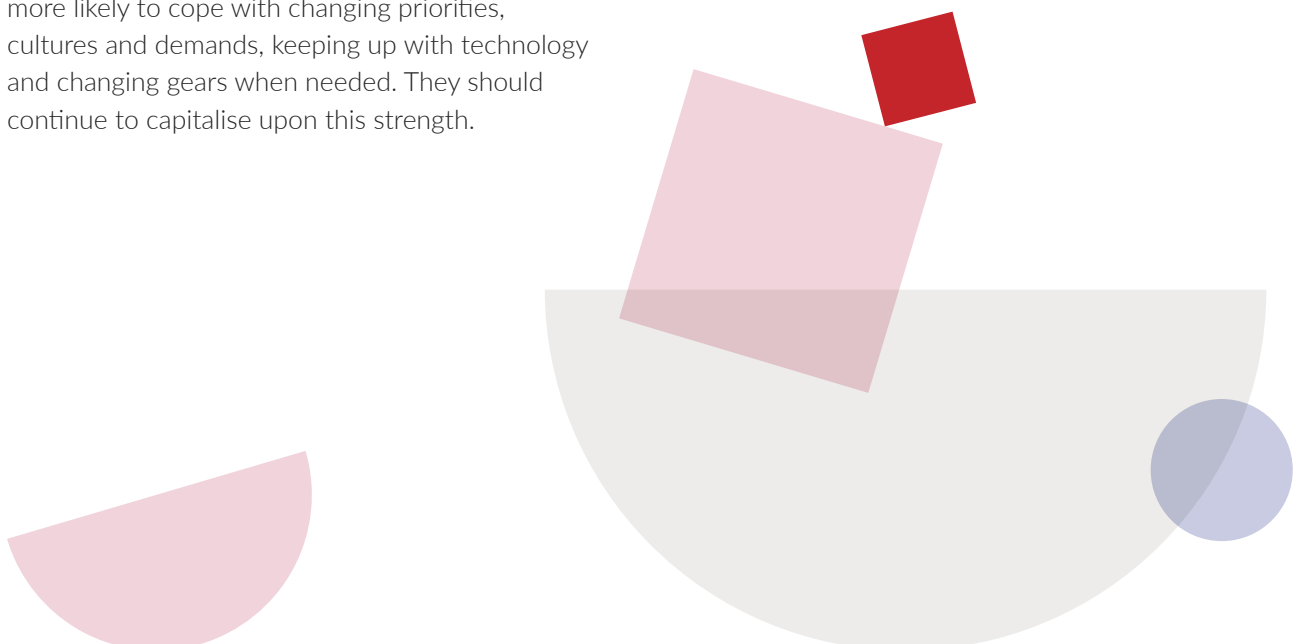
## Senior leaders now have the chance to reinvent the workplace and embody their organisation's purpose and values.

---

'Engage and Inspire' is also key to reinventing the workplace and re-engaging staff.

This GatenbySanderson insight suggests that Central Government leaders have significantly greater potential, than other public sector leaders, to positively impact and inspire their staff through their behaviour.

Taken together, these strengths should be leveraged; the key will be the system in which leaders operate and the level of control they have to re-imagine working practices.



## Protecting national safety and physical/digital security

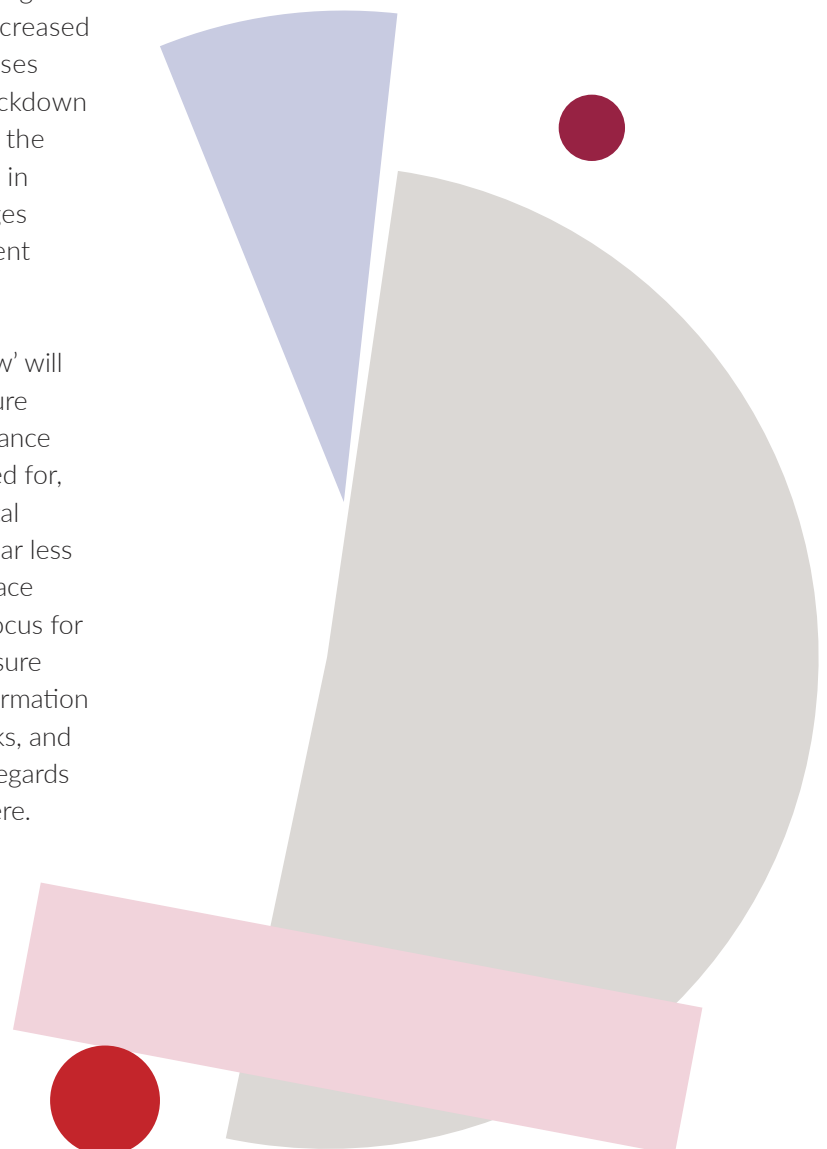
During 2020/21, the mandate of defence and security forces has broadened and will continue to be critical. More than 91% of the world's population has been under some form of lockdown and border restriction since the onset of the pandemic. In addition, border management policies continue to shift, based on new data on the virus and vaccines.

Crime, including domestic violence, robberies and looting, has increased in many countries during the pandemic. So have political events, including rallies and protests. Digital security has also emerged as a real risk equal to or greater than physical security. Cybercrime has increased dramatically as governments and businesses race to become more digital. In a post-lockdown environment, governments must address the risks associated with their digital agenda, in addition to security and stability challenges related to immigration, border management and political events.

The leadership behaviour 'Tackle Tomorrow' will be key in addressing this challenge to ensure leaders can deliver transformation and balance innovation, ensuring that risks are mitigated for, particularly those associated with the digital agenda. Central Government leaders appear less likely than others to be well equipped to face this challenge. This should be an area of focus for leaders across Central Government, to ensure that they are driving evolution and transformation in the way the organisation operates, thinks, and delivers services. Particular support with regards ideation and disruptive thinking are key here.

**More than 91% of the world's population has been under some form of lockdown and border restriction since the onset of the pandemic.**

---



## Can green and growth go hand-in-hand?

While the UK has spent much of the past four years wrestling Brexit implementation as well as battling COVID-19 with the rest of the world in the last 18 months, the war against protecting our environment and climate change has continued.

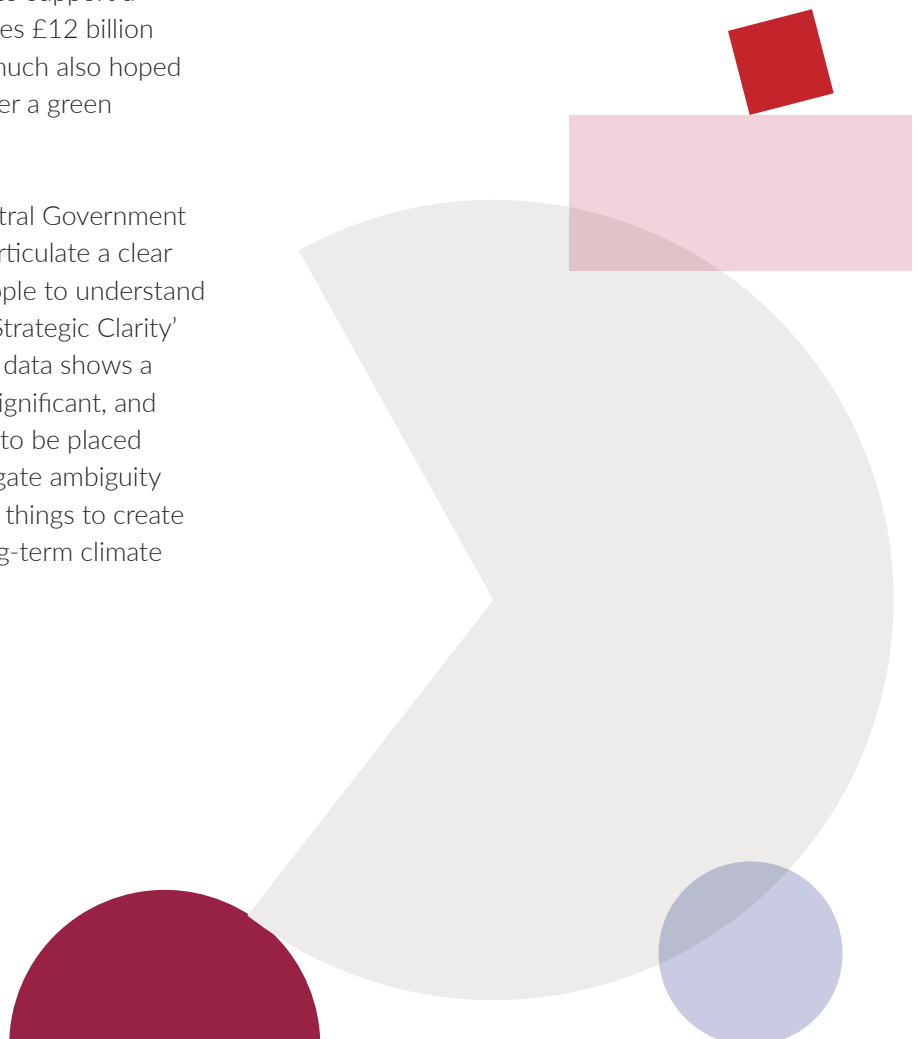
Governments have set ambitious climate agendas, with commitments to create policies, regulations and incentives to accelerate decarbonisation. But only two nations are currently meeting their Paris Agreement targets.

The current government remains committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, outlining its '10-point plan' in March 2021 to 'build back better', support green jobs, and accelerate the path to net zero, pledging £5bn to support a green recovery. This plan mobilises £12 billion investment with three times as much also hoped for from private sector – to trigger a green economic revival.

With this challenge in mind, Central Government leaders will need to create and articulate a clear vision of the future and help people to understand the way forward, making 'Drive Strategic Clarity' a key behaviour for success. The data shows a slight risk here, though it is not significant, and therefore focus should continue to be placed on developing the ability to navigate ambiguity and complexity; making sense of things to create a meaningful short-term and long-term climate change strategy.

**Central Government leaders will need to create and articulate a clear vision of the future and help people to understand the way forward, making 'Drive Strategic Clarity' a key behaviour for success.**

---





## Working in partnership with you

Our Leadership & Talent Consultancy is a team of talent, leadership and organisational development specialists helping our clients tackle the leadership challenges that matter most and the communities they represent.

### We find and develop leaders to shape a better society

Our solutions include board evaluation, top team development, leadership development programmes, organisational development, succession planning and coaching.

Current engagements include:

**Leadership Development:** working with a group of leaders to explore individual strengths, followed by development workshops at three levels – the individual, the organisation and the system.

**Top Team Development:** supporting a newly formed team, helping them to accelerate their performance by exploring team dynamics, high performing team characteristics and creating clear ways of working.

**Civil Service Learning (CSL):** The Leadership and Talent Consultancy practice at GatenbySanderson is part of KPMG's consortium of suppliers, creating and providing a range of high-quality learning solutions, for Civil Servants across the country.

We have extensive experience supporting organisations and individuals understand their leadership capability and developing their top teams to be future ready.

If you'd like to discuss how we can support you with your leadership challenges, please contact: [simon.clements@gatenbysanderson.com](mailto:simon.clements@gatenbysanderson.com)

