



Career Guide - Public Sector and Government

A Senior-Level Interview Guide for
UK Public Sector and Government



2026



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Kent Business College



Greetings and a warm welcome to Kent Business College, the epitome of excellence in professional and academic management training and consultancy services.

Our core mission is to seamlessly integrate academic research with practical, real-world applications, establishing productive partnerships with employers.

Our vision is to be a globally recognised centre of excellence in Project Control, Project Management, Project Science, and Strategic Project Leadership, renowned for translating cutting-edge research into pioneering solutions that drive organisational transformation and sustainable growth. We strive to build a distinguished educational ecosystem, where rigorous apprenticeships, world-class mentoring, and evidence-based practices empower individuals and organisations to master complexity and deliver exceptional outcomes. At the heart of this ambitious vision lies our unwavering commitment to cultivating elite talent, fostering professional excellence, and shaping the future leaders of project-driven industries worldwide.

At Kent Business College, we provide an exemplary education that embodies British values and prepares individuals for professional success. Our diverse offerings include apprenticeships, vocational training, Category C, and middle-level management training programs. Each program is designed to develop the next generation of leaders and innovators, empowering them to excel in their respective industries.

**PREPARED BY
Kent Business
College**

**PREPARED FOR
Employers**



Why Us?

Expertise And Experience

Established in 2016, IBIS Consultancy has successfully trained over 1,200 learners by 2025 across the UK, USA, and Europe. Our programmes serve a diverse range of industries, including business consultancy, engineering and manufacturing, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, media, software and IT, and the government sector.

Industry-Led Teaching

Our teaching team includes professors from the University of Kent, the University of Manchester, and Nottingham Trent University. Many are published authors and actively contribute to the development of professional standards with APM, PMI, Ofqual, and APMG, ensuring our programme reflects the latest industry and academic excellence.

Tutoring is central to our programme's success. One-to-one and small-group support ensures learners receive tailored guidance, helping them apply knowledge in real-world settings. It's a key reason behind our 100% pass and retention rates.

Consultants as Coaches

Our tutors are not just educators, they are seasoned consultants who have built Transformation and Project Management Offices and deliver expert services to major organisations. Through the apprenticeship programme, this wealth of expertise is now available directly to you. This isn't simply a teaching relationship, it's about embedding real-world knowledge and building long-term capability within your workplace



1,200+

Qualified Learners

4.8/5

Customer Satisfaction Rate

53

PMO & TMO Offices Established



Our Educational Values

The Five Pillars of Empowered Learning: Flexibility, Calm, Application, Support, and Steady Growth for Success.

Our secret lies in five simple values: learning without pressure, growing without limits, and applying knowledge through action. With flexible, stress-free support, one-to-one tutoring, and steady weekly habits, we turn small steps into lasting transformation, empowering you to succeed at your own pace, in your own way.

01 Knowledge is a seed; action makes it bloom.

We turn learning into real-world results. Through expert teaching and weekly reflections, you'll challenge your current thinking and unlock your true potential.

02 Learning without pressure. Growth without limits.

Life happens, we offer total flexibility. Need time off? Just let us know. We'll reschedule, and your tutor will personally help you catch up.

03 In a calm mind, knowledge sticks.

Stress-free study leads to lifelong success. Our relaxed, supportive environment ensures learning fits your life, not the other way around.

04 Your goals, your pace, your tutor, your success.

With one-to-one tutoring, you'll gain confidence, apply your learning in practice, and get the personal support to thrive, even if group settings aren't your style.

05 Small steps, every day, the real way to mastery.

Just two hours of study and two hours of reading a week adds up to 400 pages and 200 hours of learning a year. The result? A transformed professional—ready for anything.





Our Five Secrets to Learning That Works

All of our learners complete the programme and achieve success. With a 100% pass rate and a 100% retention rate, our track record speaks for itself.

At Kent Business College, we believe that education should do more than fill a head with facts. It should change lives, build confidence, and deliver real, lasting impact in the workplace. Our educational values are simple, powerful, and built around real-life needs. These are the five guiding principles that define how we support learners and deliver value to employers.

1. Knowledge is a seed; action makes it bloom.

Knowledge has no power unless it's put into practice. That's why we don't stop at classroom learning, we challenge our learners to reflect and act. Every week, learners are encouraged to write a short reflective piece on how their learning connects to their work. It's not about ticking boxes; it's about thinking critically, identifying opportunities for improvement, and applying learning in the real world.

This helps employers too, because when staff think deeply about their roles and how to improve them, businesses grow stronger, more agile, and more innovative.

2. In a calm mind, knowledge sticks.

When learners feel safe, supported, and calm, they learn better. It's a simple truth backed by educational research. Our stress-free approach encourages curiosity, conversation, and creativity. We focus on creating a space where people can ask questions, make mistakes, and grow without fear or pressure.

This environment supports deep learning, which doesn't just help learners pass assessments, it builds long-term capabilities that serve individuals and employers for years to come.

3. Learning without pressure. Growth without limits.

We know the pressures of modern life. Tight deadlines, busy home lives, and unexpected challenges. That's why we've built a flexible learning system that supports, rather than stresses.

If learners are unwell, need a break, or are travelling, all they have to do is let us know. We'll happily reschedule missed sessions and provide one-to-one tutor support so no one falls behind. Our priority is keeping learners engaged and progressing at a pace that suits them.

The result? People stay committed, confident, and motivated throughout the programme, without the burnout.

4. Your goals, your pace, your tutor, your success.

Not everyone learns the same way. Some people thrive in group discussions, while others need space and time to reflect. That's why we offer free, personalised one-to-one tutoring to all our learners.

This isn't just about extra help, it's about maximising potential. Whether someone struggles with a concept, prefers private discussion, or simply learns best one-to-one, we meet them where they are. And for employers, that means staff who are truly learning, not just attending.

5. Small steps, every day, the real way to mastery.

Two hours of class. Two hours of reading. That's all we ask each week. It might not sound like much, but over 100 weeks, it adds up to something powerful.

That's around 400 pages of reading, 200 hours of guided learning, and countless opportunities to apply new ideas to real work. These small, consistent efforts compound over time, leading to real mastery. Our learners don't just pass; they transform.

Employers will see the difference too: more confident team members, better decisions, clearer communication, and measurable improvements in performance.

Guide for UK public sector and government





SECTOR OVERVIEW STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THE UK ECONOMY AND EXPORTS

(GMPP): 227 PROJECTS
• £834BN

Infrastructure and Projects Authority oversees the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) , 2023-24:

227 projects • £834bn whole-life cost across 21 departments, covering infrastructure, digital transformation, defence, and ICT programmes.

Project controls are essential for accountable, value-for-money decisions, aligned with GovS 002 Project Delivery standards.

Government delivery often relies on multi-supplier ecosystems via Crown Commercial Service frameworks (e.g., RM6263 for digital specialists, DOS7 for service lifecycle delivery, G-Cloud for cloud services).

Controls must manage regulatory, data protection, and security requirements; UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 are enforced through the Information Commissioner's Office.

Critical services and digital programmes also follow the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018, requiring incident notifications for significant service-impact events.



Key Employers Public and Private Sector

WHERE PROGRAMME CONTROLS TALENT IS HIRED (PUBLIC +
SUPPLIER ECOSYSTEMS)

International Police Association

Founded in 1950 by Arthur Troop (Lincolnshire Police), motto: "Service Through Friendship". Politically neutral, promotes international cooperation, understanding, and professional exchange among police officers



Gov.uk



UK government's main website for public info and services (launched 2012). Offers services, guidance, payments, and messaging (One Login, Pay, Notify). Provides standards, accessibility support, and ensures privacy and security.

Department for Business & Trade

The Department for Business & Trade (DBT) drives UK economic growth by supporting businesses, trade, and investment, while overseeing policies, programmes, and international partnerships to promote commerce and innovation.



HM Government



HM Government

HM Government is the UK's central authority delivering national policy and public services through departments and agencies, with information and services accessed mainly via GOV.UK

SALARY LEVELS FOR PROJECT CONTROLS



Public sector project controls pay mainly depends on the employer pay structure (central government grades, NHS bands, or local government frameworks), location uplifts (especially in London), and whether the role is permanent or contract-based (often inside IR35 under HM Revenue & Customs rules).

Role / Level	Permanent Salary (annual)	Contract Rate (daily)
Entry-level: junior project support/controls (0–2 yrs).	UK median ~£32k ; London/SE ~£35k ; MoD/NHS/NJC examples £26–38k.	UK contract: £225/day ; London/SE: £250/day ; cleared: ~£300/day.
Mid-level (2–5 yrs): PMO/Planner/Controls Analyst.	Median: UK ~£48k London ~£55k ; MoD/NHS/NJC bands comparable.	£475–£525/day typical ; PMO Analyst ~£400/day ; Project Manager £525–
Senior (5–9 yrs) – Project Controls or PMO Lead/Manager.	Median UK: ~£66k London: ~£72k.	Median UK: ~£575–£600/day London/SE: ~£625/day.
Management & portfolio control (8–12 years) PMO manager	Median UK: ~£97k London/SE: ~£105k ; MoD/NHS/SCS bands vary £73–£162.5k.	UK public sector/government rates: £650–£900/day.
Executive leadership (12+ years) PMO/controls director	Median: UK ~£140k London/SE ~£145k ; SCS Band 2–3 £100k–£208k.	Median (public sector, IR35/consultancy): ~£850–£950/day ; top specialist rates >£900/day.

NOTES

Medians shown are constructed benchmarks designed for briefing/positioning, not a statistically representative survey of all project controls staff; they are anchored to official pay scales and to large-sample advertised contract rate medians up to 24 February 2026.

Contract rates are presented as public sector funded “typical” day rates, most commonly inside IR35 for large public sector clients; clearance requirements (BPSS/SC/DV) and on-site constraints are treated as rate pressure factors rather than guaranteed uplifts, because frameworks and departmental caps can limit pass-through.

OVERALL

A UK public-sector Project Controls salary guide should define roles clearly, link pay to official frameworks (e.g., Ministry of Defence, NHS), and compare contract rates while noting vetting and IR35 rules via HM Revenue & Customs.

Nature of Project Control Jobs

What do project controllers do?

Manage multiple programmes, suppliers, and workstreams. Provide decision-ready reports for governance and assurance. Maintain baselines, forecast performance, and plan scenarios. Ensure compliance with UK government standards and data protection.

Project controls in the public sector focus on providing reliable data and analysis so leaders can make accountable decisions on scope, schedule, cost, and risk within strict governance and value-for-money requirements. The discipline operates with strong emphasis on transparency, auditability, formal baselines, and controlled change compared with many private-sector environments.

Roles typically centre around four core control areas: planning and scheduling, cost and estimating, risk and issue management, and governance/reporting (PMO). Public sector project controls professionals also work across complex stakeholder environments, including sponsors, assurance bodies, and delivery partners, while demonstrating compliance with government delivery standards and frameworks.



Key Responsibilities

In UK public sector digital programmes, controls roles ensure visibility and rigor across the entire service lifecycle, from early discovery through the alpha, beta, live, and retirement phases. These roles balance early-phase uncertainty with tighter controls in later phases, ensuring that each stage of the project is closely monitored and coordinated across various suppliers and teams. For example, the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework, such as the "Digital Specialists & Programmes" agreement, offers a structured route to source Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT) specialists for transformation projects, providing government departments with access to the necessary skills and expertise.



Planning & Scheduling

Public sector planning blends a high-level roadmap with agile iteration. GOV.UK notes that "in agile, you change your plans as you learn more about your users." Projects follow discovery, alpha, beta, live, and retirement phases. Best practice is a unified schedule (e.g., Gantt chart) updated regularly, with short-term sprint plans to capture reviews and deadlines as requirements evolve.

Government programmes follow strict budgeting rules, with HM Treasury setting DEL and AME limits. Programme controls track spend, commitments, and forecasts to provide accurate estimates. This includes using earned-value techniques for larger projects and tools like Power BI to report spend vs. budget, monthly forecasts, and variances.

Cost Control & Budgeting

Risk & Change Management

In UK government programmes, risk and change control links issues to operational and regulatory impact. Controls staff track risks and ensure compliance with UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and NIS Regulations. Incident plans and continuity strategies are in place, and major changes undergo governance assessments.



Performance Reporting

UK public sector controls use dual reporting, combining sprint metrics with stage-gate deliverables, and measure progress against baselines tracked in tools like Oracle Primavera or Microsoft Project. Departments publish progress through spending reviews and parliamentary accounts to ensure accountability. Controls teams prepare highlight reports and dashboards, combining early-phase assumptions with performance data to manage uncertainty, spending, and scope changes effectively throughout the project lifecycle.

Controls roles ensure transparency in costs and risks, maintaining audit-ready logs. UK public bodies are accountable to Parliament for spending. Tools like Power BI track spend and benefits, while compliance ensures project plans and logs meet governance standards and audit queries are addressed.

Ensuring Compliance & Governance



Work Environment

These roles are mainly office-based or hybrid knowledge-work positions, not field jobs. Staff typically work standard business hours with some flexibility, as UK civil service pages highlight hybrid and flexible working. Most tasks are computer-based using online tools like dashboards and planning software. Collaboration is constant, with programme leads working closely with diverse teams, stakeholders, and third parties. Large-scale government programmes, sometimes funded by billions, require structured coordination.

Daily work involves meetings, governance events, and team updates. Roles attend stand-ups, steering-board meetings, and workshops, prepare reports for Programme Boards, and ensure consistent governance standards. Travel is occasional, usually for milestones, supplier workshops, or go-live support, while most work is remote or in government offices.

Work-Life Balance and Career Stability

Work-life balance is generally stable, with most roles following a 9–5 schedule and hybrid options. Pressure can increase around key delivery milestones, requiring occasional extended hours or evening meetings.

The main challenge is managing high collaboration and coordination loads rather than physical demands.

Career prospects are strong and future-focused. UK government strategy emphasises digital and AI-driven transformation, signalling long-term demand for programme management skills. Structured delivery expertise gained in these roles is transferable across the public sector. Industry reports predict strong growth in advanced digital roles through 2030, ensuring these skills remain highly valued.





5. Career Path and Progression

The public sector in the UK offers a clear career path with opportunities to specialise or progress into areas like design, production, quality control, or project management. As you gain experience, responsibilities and strategic contributions grow.

At the entry level, roles such as Project Support Officer involve supporting project delivery, maintaining schedules, and managing documentation.

Mid-level roles like Project Manager or Business Analyst focus on managing projects, developing plans, and overseeing budgets.

Senior roles such as Senior Project Manager or Programme Manager involve leading larger projects, managing risks, and engaging senior stakeholders.

Management positions like Programme Director oversee multiple projects, prioritising and managing large budgets.

At leadership level, roles like Project Director or Chief Transformation Officer set strategy, manage major budgets, and ensure governance at the enterprise level.

1) Entry-Level Roles:

Examples: Administrative Assistant/Officer

3) Senior Level:

Examples: Grade 7 Manager, Grade 6 Senior Manager, Head of Service

2) Mid-Level Roles:

Examples: Senior Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer...

5) Leadership:

Examples: Director General (SCS3), Permanent Secretary

4) Management (Executive):

Examples: Assistant Director, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer (CFO)



1: Entry-Level Roles: Project Controls Assistant / Junior Planner

Titles:



Project Controls Assistant (Government PMO)
Junior Planner/Scheduler (Government Digital Programme)
Junior PMO Analyst (Controls)
Project Support Officer (Programme Delivery)

Job Description:

Entry-level project controls roles in the UK public sector manage plans, schedules, and governance logs, using tools like Oracle Primavera and Jira. They track milestones, actions, and costs, while ensuring compliance with UK GDPR/Data Protection Act regulations. These roles also support reporting and help integrate agile tools for seamless project tracking.

Key Competencies:

Attention to detail, organisation, and time management are key in entry-level project controls roles. Technical skills in project software (e.g., MS Project, Jira) and clear communication with teams are essential. Problem-solving and data governance awareness, particularly with UK GDPR, ensure compliance and accuracy.

Qualifications:



Formal qualifications like APM PMQ, AgilePM, and Prince2 are helpful, but practical experience with tools like Primavera, MS Project, and Power BI is more important. In-house training and professional memberships, such as with APM, further support development.

Career Considerations and Salary:

An entry-level controls role offers insight into project governance and progression to roles like PMO Analyst or Project Planner. Salaries range from £23,000 to £32,000, with higher pay for digital or London-based roles. Progression follows Civil Service pay bands, with opportunities for chartership and leadership in public sector projects.



2: Mid-Level Roles: Project Planner / Cost Engineer / Project Controls Engineer

Titles:



Project Planner/Scheduler (Government Delivery); Cost Engineer (Government Programmes); Project Controls Engineer (Public Sector); PMO Analyst (Controls); Programme Controller (Government).

Job Description:

Mid-level public sector project controls roles ensure an integrated view of project progress by maintaining schedules, translating sprint data into governance milestones, and managing baselines and variances. They produce status reports, health packs, and dashboards, and oversee cross-departmental dependencies. These roles help coordinate project milestones and ensure that public programmes, such as infrastructure, health, or transport projects, stay on track.

Key Competencies:

Mid-level roles require strong baseline and variance management, proficiency with project tracking tools and dashboards, and clear communication with teams and suppliers. Familiarity with UK GDPR and public sector governance is crucial. Problem-solving and adaptability are key to success.

Qualifications:



Mid-level public sector employers value practical experience over certifications, with pathways including APM PMQ, AgilePM, and PMP. Familiarity with tools like Microsoft Project and Oracle Primavera is beneficial, and ongoing professional development through training or memberships (e.g., APM) is encouraged.

Career Considerations and Salary:

Mid-level controls roles oversee project controls and supplier management in public-sector programmes, with salaries ranging from £40,000 to £60,000. Progression leads to senior roles, offering a foundation for chartership and leadership in public sector project delivery.



3: Senior Roles: Lead Planner / Senior Project Controls / Risk Manager

Titles:



In UK public sector and government, these senior roles sit across planning, PMO, controls and risk, commonly titled Lead or Project Planner (Grade 7–6), PMO Manager or Director, Programme Controls Lead, Risk Manager, or Head of PMO or Risk.

Job Description:

Senior professionals in these roles enable the delivery of complex, high-risk public sector programmes—such as policy implementation, service redesign and organisational transformation, by providing robust planning, performance control and strategic risk oversight to strengthen governance, improve delivery confidence and ensure value for money in a highly scrutinised environment.

Key Competencies:

Strategic leadership, governance and assurance, value-for-money awareness, risk management, senior stakeholder engagement, executive reporting, and the ability to operate effectively within politically and publicly scrutinised environments.

Qualifications :



Senior public sector employers expect extensive experience leading complex programmes with strong governance and stakeholder management, supported by recognised qualifications such as PRINCE2, MSP, MoR, P3O, APMG or APM credentials, alongside continued professional development and membership to demonstrate commitment to standards and ethics.

Career Considerations and Salary:

UK public sector pay follows formal frameworks, with senior roles often exceeding £100,000 and interim rates averaging around £700 per day under IR35, while progression typically leads to Programme Director or Senior Civil Service executive posts.





4: Management Roles: Project Controls Manager / Programme Controls Manager

Titles:



Deputy Director (SCS1), Director (SCS2) in central government; Assistant Director, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer (CFO) in local councils.

Responsibilities:

Senior managers set service strategy, lead organisational change, and deliver high-profile programmes. They manage cross-departmental teams, multi-million-pound budgets, complex projects, and collaborate with ministers, councillors, and stakeholders while ensuring statutory duties are met.

Key Competencies:

Senior officials combine strategic thinking, financial expertise, and leadership. They turn policy into action, use data-driven decisions, maintain governance (risk management, audits), and communicate effectively with politicians and community leaders. All civil servants uphold the Civil Service Code, while local government finance leaders follow CIPFA principles, with programs like LEAD enhancing strategic finance and leadership skills.

Qualifications



Senior roles require extensive management experience, professional qualifications (CIPFA, CIMA, ACCA), and leadership training. Progression often involves mentorship and specialist programs like CIPFA's LEAD.

Career Considerations and Salary:

Senior managers advance from other leadership roles, gaining broad experience across functions and departments. Salaries are competitive, ranging from £73,000 for Deputy Directors to over £200,000 for top central or local government positions.



5:Leadership: Head of Project Controls / Director-Level

Titles:



Director General (SCS3), Permanent Secretary (SCS4) in Whitehall; Council Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer (Section 151) in local government

Responsibilities:

Setting vision and priorities for entire departments or authorities, managing cross-government programmes and budgets (often multi-year), and guiding long-term policy. They provide counsel to ministers or elected leaders and represent their organisation at the highest levels. Senior leaders must manage multi-disciplinary divisions, large workforces and ensure performance against statutory obligations.

Key Competencies:

Exceptional leadership and political acumen. Top civil servants demonstrate the core Civil Service values at the highest standard. They form alliances across Whitehall and with external partners, drive cultural transformation, and maintain public trust. Chief Executives of councils emphasise motivating large teams through change and balancing diverse stakeholder interests

Qualifications :



Permanent Secretaries and Council CEOs typically have 20–30 years in the public sector, with broad departmental experience, master's degrees or professional qualifications (CIPFA,CIM), and completion of elite leadership programmes or fellowships.

Career Considerations and Salary:

Senior roles follow multiple grades and may involve moving between central and local government. Pay ranges from £95,000–£208,000, depending on position and responsibility.





Introduction: Stepping into Senior Project Controls in the UK

Moving into Senior Project Controls in the UK public sector means shifting from maintaining plans to providing an integrated, decision-ready view of delivery health across milestones, resources, cost, risk and change, enabling senior leaders to govern effectively and intervene early. The role is closely tied to public accountability, operating within government functional standards that promote consistent practice, assurance and value for money. Risk management, as set out in the Orange Book, is embedded in governance and decision-making, while Managing Public Money reinforces probity, regularity and financial discipline. Ultimately, success is judged not only by time and cost but by deliverability, affordability and demonstrable public value, aligned to Green Book appraisal and evaluation principles.

What Does the Job Entail?

Senior Project Controls professionals in the UK public sector oversee governance, performance reporting and risk management to support delivery confidence and informed decision-making. They provide structured assurance, contribute to Red/Amber/Green assessments, and advise on corrective action or formal reset where programmes cannot meet agreed objectives within approved constraints.

In UK government, delivery is guided by formal standards such as the Project Delivery Functional Standard, alongside the Green Book and Five Case Model for appraisal and business cases. The Orange Book and Managing Public Money embed structured risk management, financial discipline and value for money, supported by cost estimating guidance to strengthen affordability and decision-making.





Under UK Public Sector Governance Frameworks:

In UK public sector programmes, the agreed business case and approved baseline act as the formal reference point for delivery and funding. Any material changes to scope, cost or timetable must be managed through established change control and governance approval routes, with clear documentation of time, cost and risk impacts. Risks are expected to be identified early, escalated in line with risk appetite, and reviewed through structured governance forums to enable proactive mitigation. Senior controls professionals must ensure that planning, reporting and assurance processes remain aligned to statutory duties, funding approvals and public accountability requirements.

Key Tools and Methodologies

Senior roles require strong command of government standards and appraisal frameworks rather than technical systems. This includes applying the Project Delivery Functional Standard, aligning plans to the Green Book and Five Case Model, and embedding Orange Book risk principles and Managing Public Money requirements into routine reporting. Senior professionals should be confident interpreting performance trends, forecast variance, affordability pressures and delivery confidence assessments, using structured analysis to provide early warning of emerging issues and reduce the risk of cost overruns or failure to achieve public value.



Planning and Scheduling Interview Questions

Planning and scheduling are central to senior project controls roles. Interviewers will assess your ability to build and maintain robust baseline schedules, monitor progress accurately, and anticipate delays before they impact delivery. Strong knowledge of scheduling techniques, hands-on experience with tools like Primavera P6, and a practical approach to managing schedule changes in complex project environments are essential. Candidates should demonstrate how planning is used as an ongoing control tool, not just a one-off activity, to support informed decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.





1. How do you set capability standards for delivery professions (project delivery, digital, commercial) and assess staff against them? (HR leads; PMO/project controls leads; Technical/digital leads)

- We use competency frameworks and role profiles with consistent assessment methods. Development plans and training target capability gaps and delivery needs, supporting workforce growth, succession planning, and organisational resilience.

2. How do you manage employee relations (including union engagement) during major change programmes? (HR leads; Senior civil servants; NHS leaders; Local authority leads)

- We engage stakeholders early, providing clear, consistent, and accessible information about objectives, plans, and decisions. Structured consultation processes are used where required, including surveys, workshops, and public forums. Feedback is recorded, tracked, and responded to transparently, ensuring that concerns are addressed, questions answered, and expectations managed. Engagement outcomes are documented and feed into planning and delivery decisions, reducing uncertainty, building trust, and promoting accountability. This approach ensures that all relevant stakeholders, internal teams, external partners, and the public, are informed, involved, and confident in programme and service delivery across public sector and government initiatives

3. How do you support wellbeing and sustainable pace in teams facing persistent demand and scrutiny? (HR leads; Programme/project managers; Senior civil servants)

- We monitor workload and capacity, intervene early, and set realistic priorities. Sustainable delivery is treated as a performance enabler, with visible leadership support and practical safeguards.

4. How do you ensure recruitment processes minimise bias and widen access, while still selecting for the capabilities needed? (HR leads; Senior civil servants; Local authority leads; NHS leaders)

- We use structured criteria, diverse panels, consistent scoring, and accessible processes. We monitor outcomes and iterate processes based on evidence of fairness and effectiveness.



5. How do you develop and apply inclusive leadership expectations across delivery leaders? (HR leads; Senior civil servants; Programme/project managers)

- Inclusive leadership behaviours are defined, assessed, and supported through development and accountability mechanisms. Leaders foster environments where concerns can be raised early, and diverse perspectives inform decisions, reinforcing equity, psychological safety, and organisational effectiveness.

6. How do you ensure digital services remain accessible and inclusive for users with varying needs and digital confidence? (Technical/digital leads; NHS leaders; Local authority leads)

- We design services for accessibility and usability from the start, testing with representative users and providing assisted channels where needed. Inclusion is measured through user research, performance metrics, and accessibility audits, with insights used to drive continuous improvement.

7. How do you govern the use of automation or AI-enabled tools to ensure transparency, fairness, and accountability? (Senior civil servants; Technical/digital leads; Security leads)

- We define acceptable use of models, maintain detailed documentation, and implement oversight and monitoring. For material impacts, structured risk and fairness assessments are conducted, with humans accountable for outcomes. Audit trails, periodic reviews, and controls ensure ethical, transparent, and responsible use, supported by training and governance aligned with public sector standards.

8. How do you prepare for and respond to cyber incidents or major service outages, including coordination across partners? (Security leads; Technical/digital leads; Programme/project managers)

- We maintain incident response plans, rehearse scenarios, and define roles and communications pathways. Partners are included in exercises, and lessons feed into resilience improvements.



9. How do you manage identity and access in complex environments (multiple systems, multiple organisations, multiple clearance levels)? (Security leads; Technical/digital leads)

- We apply least-privilege principles, strong authentication, and consistent access governance with periodic reviews and timely removal of unnecessary access. Decisions are documented and auditable, aligned to role requirements and clearance levels. We also monitor for anomalies, enforce separation of duties where needed, and provide user guidance to reduce security risks.

10. In NHS contexts, how do you ensure information governance and data sharing support care and planning while maintaining confidentiality? (NHS leaders; Security leads; Technical/digital leads)

- We use clear data-sharing agreements with defined purposes, legal bases, retention rules, and access controls proportionate to data sensitivity. Usage is monitored through logs and audits, with named owners responsible for compliance. We maintain escalation routes for breaches or misuse, alongside incident response procedures, training, and periodic reviews to ensure controls remain effective

11. In local authority contexts, how do you manage service integration across social care, housing, and commissioned providers with fragmented systems? (Local authority leads; Programme/project managers; Technical/digital leads)

- We map end-to-end user journeys, define pain points, and agree shared outcomes, data definitions, and information flows across organisations. Integration is supported by pragmatic standards, clear governance, and named owners for interfaces, with prioritisation driven by user impact, risk, and operational feasibility. Continuous feedback and performance measures are used to refine the approach over time.

12. How do you embed social value and sustainability into procurement so it is measurable and enforceable? (Procurement officers; Senior civil servants; Local authority leads)

- We set measurable commitments, clear evaluation criteria, and reporting requirements, with remedies where delivery falls short. Social value and sustainability are managed throughout the full contract lifecycle, not just at award, to ensure outcomes are achieved and sustained.



13. How do you approach contingent labour engagement and IR35 compliance without undermining delivery capacity? (Procurement officers; HR leads; Finance leads; Programme/project managers)

- We define role expectations, deliverables, and working practices clearly, apply consistent status determinations, and maintain an auditable record of decisions. We plan for onboarding lead times, cost implications (including taxes and compliance overhead), and permissible engagement models, with regular reviews to ensure arrangements remain compliant and aligned to delivery needs .

14. How do you ensure knowledge transfer and reduce long-term dependency on suppliers or consultants? (Programme/project managers; HR leads; Technical/digital leads; Procurement officers)

- We require documentation, training, and handover as contractual deliverables with clear acceptance criteria. Supplier roles are paired with internal counterparts to build capability and reduce dependency. Transition into BAU is planned early, and key-person risks are managed through knowledge capture and continuity planning, with governance checks before supplier exit.

15. How do you manage supplier performance and disputes while protecting continuity of public services? (Procurement officers; Programme/project managers; Senior civil servants)

- We apply structured contract management practices, defining clear KPIs and SLAs to measure supplier performance against agreed expectations. Escalation routes and early warning mechanisms are in place to address issues promptly and prevent delivery disruption. Continuity plans, contingency arrangements, and exit strategies are maintained throughout the contract lifecycle to safeguard service delivery and minimise operational risk. Supplier performance is regularly reviewed through governance forums and reporting mechanisms, with lessons learned captured to inform future procurement and contract design. This approach ensures accountability, transparency, and alignment with public sector and government standards for effective, risk-aware delivery.

16. How do you define requirements to avoid over-specification while ensuring accountability, quality, and service continuity? (Procurement officers; Technical/digital leads; Programme/project managers)

- We focus on outcomes, constraints, and acceptance criteria, specifying critical non-functional requirements where needed. Requirements are validated with users and operational teams for feasibility.



17. How do you choose your route to market and commercial strategy so it aligns with delivery risk and timetable? (Procurement officers; Programme/project managers; Senior civil servants)

- We select options and approaches based on factors such as complexity, urgency, market competition, risk allocation, and internal capability. The rationale for each choice is fully documented, including assumptions, trade-offs, and potential consequences, and is linked to key delivery milestones and governance approvals. This ensures decisions are transparent, auditable, and aligned with organisational objectives, supporting effective oversight, accountability, and timely delivery in public sector and government programmes.

18. How do you manage change control to remain responsive while preserving auditability and financial control? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Finance leads)

- We distinguish operational adjustments from baseline changes, with defined approval routes. Material changes record rationale, impacts, and decisions, updating baselines and forecasts to maintain transparency, accountability, and alignment with public sector governance standards.

19. How do you integrate risk management into plans and forecasts rather than treating it as a separate activity? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Finance leads)

- Risks are linked to specific activities and cost drivers, with mitigations assigned, scheduled, and tracked. Risk exposure informs forecast ranges, contingency, and prioritisation, with escalation routes and governance reviews ensuring proactive, accountable, and transparent management in public sector and government programmes.

20. How do you assure the quality and provenance of the data used for delivery reporting and governance decisions? (PMO/project controls leads; Technical/digital leads; Programme/project managers)

- We define data owners, source systems, and validation checks, backed by regular reconciliations and sampling. Where data quality issues exist, they are tracked as risks with mitigation actions.



21. How do you run reporting so it supports action rather than producing volume, and how do you tailor it for different audiences? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Senior civil servants)

- We maintain standardised reporting with a clear focus on exceptions, key decisions, and actionable items. Reports are tailored to different audiences—executives, project teams, and stakeholders—while ensuring underlying facts, metrics, and data remain consistent. Dashboards, summaries, and visualisations highlight trends, risks, and opportunities, supporting timely, evidence-based decision-making. All reporting aligns with governance frameworks, audit requirements, and public sector accountability standards, ensuring transparency, comparability, and reliability across programmes.

22. Which performance measures do you use beyond milestones, and how do you ensure they represent real delivery health? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Technical/digital leads)

- We use a balanced set: schedule, cost, risk exposure, quality, throughput, benefits progress, and service readiness. Measures are reviewed to ensure they drive appropriate behaviours and remain decision-useful.

23. How do you forecast delivery performance, and how do you communicate uncertainty to decision-makers? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Senior civil servants)

- Forecasts integrate schedule, cost, risk, and capacity drivers, showing ranges where uncertainty is significant. Drivers, confidence levels, and decisions that could reduce uncertainty are clearly explained, supporting informed decision-making and effective resource allocation in public sector and government programmes.

24. How do you set and maintain a credible baseline for scope, schedule, and cost, including tolerances and approval points? (PMO/project controls leads; Programme/project managers; Finance leads)

- Baselines are approved once assumptions, dependencies, and resources are validated, with defined tolerances and control points. Changes follow formal change control with versioning, impact assessments, and sign-offs to ensure auditability, transparency, and alignment with project objectives.



25. What is the GOV.UK roadmap to 2030, and why does it matter to someone interviewing for programme controls?

- It's a published government roadmap ("A roadmap for modern digital government 2025–2030") that sets out priorities and initiatives across the public sector, described as an iterative action plan updated over time. It matters because it signals multi-year demand and the kinds of programmes that need strong controls (joined-up services, digital credentials and identity, AI adoption, legacy remediation, commercial reform). A controls professional can show alignment by explaining how they enable delivery outcomes through governance, baselining, risk escalation, and decision support.

26. What is the NHS Federated Data Platform, and what delivery risks would you expect around it?

- NHS England describes the Federated Data Platform as connecting vital health information across the NHS to help staff deliver better care and work more efficiently. Delivery risks typically include: privacy and lawful data use, stakeholder trust, supplier integration, data quality, and operational adoption. I would expect strong governance around security and privacy, careful control of environment access, and staged rollout with measurable operational use-cases, so benefits are real, not just architectural.

27. For local government delivery, how do you coordinate across place-based partnerships and devolved arrangements where accountability is shared? (Local Authority Lead; Programme/Project Manager; Senior Civil Servant)

- We use shared outcomes, joint governance, and clear interface agreements for funding, decision rights, and risk. Regular integration forums and escalation routes ensure accountability, prevent gaps in ownership, and support coordinated delivery across public sector and government programmes.

28. For NHS programmes, how do you manage clinical safety, service continuity, and workforce impacts alongside delivery milestones? (NHS Leader; Programme/Project Manager; Technical/Digital Lead; Security Lead)

- We set clinical safety and operational readiness criteria with clear sign-offs and staged deployment plans. Post-go-live, adoption, performance, and impacts are monitored to ensure continuity, safety, and compliance, with lessons captured for ongoing improvement.



29. How do you ensure data quality and effective information sharing when services span multiple organisations and systems? (Technical/Digital Lead; PMO/Project Controls Lead; NHS Leader; Local Authority Lead)

- We define shared data standards, ownership, and validation controls, with agreed reconciliation processes. End-to-end integration is tested, and responsibilities for data stewardship are clearly assigned and monitored to ensure accuracy, consistency, and accountability in public sector and government projects.

30. How do clearance and secure-environment requirements affect delivery planning, team design, and supplier engagement? (Security Lead; Programme/Project Manager; Procurement/Commercial Officer)

- We incorporate vetting lead times, security clearance, and access constraints into schedules and resourcing to ensure realistic delivery planning. Roles follow least-privilege access principles, with clearly defined security responsibilities. Hybrid and on-site expectations are set based on operational needs and compliance requirements. Access, permissions, and responsibilities are regularly reviewed, and adjustments are made as organisational priorities, regulatory standards, or threat landscapes evolve. This approach safeguards sensitive information, ensures continuity, supports staff productivity, and aligns with public sector and government security and governance standards

31. How do you manage cyber security, data protection, and resilience risks throughout delivery rather than treating them as end-stage checks? (Security Lead; Technical/Digital Lead; Programme/Project Manager)

- We embed security, resilience, and compliance requirements into design, testing, and operational readiness, tracking risks with clear ownership and documented mitigation plans. Iterative assurance, including vulnerability testing, contingency planning, and audits, ensures systems remain robust, reliable, and aligned with public sector and government standards, safeguarding continuity of service and sensitive data.

32. How do you make technology decisions to balance pace of delivery with long-term maintainability and interoperability? (Technical/Digital Lead; Programme/Project Manager; Senior Civil Servant)

- We use architectural principles and design reviews to ensure decisions align with long-term service strategy. Where short-term compromises are necessary, we document them and create time-bound remediation plans.



33. How do you set hybrid and on-site working expectations in a way that balances service needs, security, and inclusion? (HR Lead; Security Lead; Programme/Project Manager)

- We define clear role-based principles and minimum on-site presence requirements, ensuring consistency, transparency, and alignment with operational needs. These principles consider factors such as service delivery, team collaboration, security, and regulatory compliance. Exceptions are managed through formally documented processes, with rationale, approvals, and supporting evidence recorded to ensure fairness, accountability, and operational resilience. Monitoring and review mechanisms track adherence and effectiveness, while feedback from teams is incorporated to refine on-site requirements over time. This approach balances organisational efficiency, staff well-being, and continuity of public sector and government operations.

34. How do you measure and improve diversity, inclusion, and fairness in recruitment and progression? (HR Lead; Senior Civil Servant; Local Authority Lead; NHS Leader)

- We track representation, recruitment, retention, and progression metrics across all levels of the organisation, ensuring transparency and accountability. Processes are regularly reviewed for bias or unintended barriers, and interventions—such as mentoring schemes, targeted development programmes, or inclusive recruitment practices—are tested and evaluated using evidence-based approaches. Inclusion and diversity objectives are embedded into leadership performance frameworks, with outcomes monitored alongside other strategic priorities. Regular reporting, benchmarking against sector standards, and stakeholder engagement support continuous improvement, ensuring that public sector and government workforces are representative, equitable, and effective in delivering services to all communities.



35. How do you manage performance and culture in delivery teams under sustained scrutiny and pressure? (Senior Civil Servant; HR Lead; Programme/Project Manager)

- We set clear expectations and apply fair performance management, maintaining psychological safety so issues are raised early. Targeted support and monitoring sustain delivery while preventing overwork, burnout, or unmanaged risk, promoting a resilient and effective workforce.

36. How do you develop leadership and succession for critical roles (SROs, programme directors, heads of function)? (Senior Civil Servant; HR Lead)

- We identify critical roles and potential successors early, providing structured development, mentoring, and targeted training. Succession plans are regularly reviewed alongside portfolio risks and organisational changes, with readiness assessments and documentation supporting governance, continuity, and organisational resilience.

37. How do you recruit and retain scarce skills within public sector constraints (pay bands, hiring timelines, and compliance requirements)? (HR Lead; Senior Civil Servant; Technical/Digital Lead; Security Lead)

- We strengthen the workforce value proposition through clear career progression, targeted training, and meaningful work, while streamlining recruitment to reduce friction. Retention is supported via development pathways, mentoring, workload management, and monitoring engagement to maintain a skilled and motivated workforce.

38. How do you forecast delivery capability needs over the next 12-24 months and identify the biggest gaps? (HR Lead; Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager)

- We forecast demand by role and seniority, identify capacity shortfalls, and maintain plans covering recruitment, development, and contingent resources where justified. Progress is tracked with workforce metrics, scenario planning, and updates to ensure delivery continuity, skills coverage, and alignment with strategic objectives.



39. How do you align national objectives with regional and local realities (needs, capacity, and operational constraints)? (Senior Civil Servant; Local Authority Lead; NHS Leader; Policy Lead)

- We set shared outcomes and minimum standards while allowing local flexibility in delivery. Governance includes local representation, and plans consider workforce, infrastructure, service context, and regulatory requirements, supported by central oversight to ensure accountability, risk management, and effective resource use.

40. How do you ensure equality, inclusion, and sustainability considerations are embedded in strategy and major decisions? (Senior Civil Servant; HR Lead; Sustainability Lead; Policy Lead)

- We embed considerations such as risk, impact, and governance into decision templates and business cases, with measurable commitments and accountable owners. Delivery progress is monitored through structured reporting, reviews, and post-implementation checks to validate outcomes, capture lessons, and ensure transparency and public accountability.

41. How do you handle policy change during delivery without losing control of scope, cost, and delivery commitments? (Policy Lead; Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager; PMO/Project Controls Lead)

- Material changes are managed through formal change requests, including impact assessments on scope, schedule, cost, and risk, with clearly defined approval routes. Baselines are updated, and stakeholders are informed of the implications for time, budget, and outcomes. Lessons learned are captured to improve future project delivery and support governance and transparency.

42. How do you incorporate evaluation and evidence into decisions while still acting at pace? (Policy Lead; Programme/Project Manager; Finance Lead)

- We define learning questions early in a programme or project, ensuring clarity on what we need to understand to improve delivery and achieve intended outcomes. Interim evidence is systematically collected and analysed to enable timely course corrections, with a clear distinction maintained between knowns, assumptions, and uncertainties. Evaluation effort is proportionate to the risk, scale, and materiality of the programme, ensuring that resources are focused where they add most value. We use structured frameworks and methodologies to assess progress, capture lessons learned, and adjust plans as required, embedding continuous learning into decision-making. Findings are documented and shared with stakeholders to improve transparency, inform future planning, and strengthen governance, accountability, and public trust.



43. How do you prioritise when policy ambitions exceed funding, workforce capacity, or delivery timelines? (Senior Civil Servant; Finance Lead; HR Lead; Programme/Project Manager)

- We apply transparent prioritisation criteria—including statutory duty, organisational impact, urgency, risk exposure, resource availability, and deliverability—ensuring that decisions are defensible and aligned with strategic objectives. Trade-offs between competing priorities are explicitly documented, with rationale and supporting evidence recorded, and are regularly revisited as conditions, risks, or new evidence emerge. This approach supports effective governance, enables informed resource allocation, and provides a clear audit trail for internal and external oversight. Additionally, we engage stakeholders where appropriate to ensure that prioritisation reflects wider organisational and public value considerations.

44. How do you translate policy intent into measurable outcomes and service standards that can be tracked over time? (Senior Civil Servant; Policy Lead; Programme/Project Manager)

- We define outcomes with clear indicators, baselines, and data sources, distinguishing outputs from real impact. Measures are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect user benefits, align with strategic goals, and avoid perverse incentives, supported by robust data governance and benchmarking for accountability and continuous improvement.

45. How do you use internal audit, assurance, or independent review feedback to improve delivery practices rather than treating them as compliance events? (Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager; PMO/Project Controls Lead; Finance Lead)

- Findings are turned into prioritised actions with clear owners, deadlines, and measurable outcomes. Progress is tracked in a central register, and effectiveness is validated through follow-up checks and post-implementation reviews, ensuring risks are mitigated, lessons are learned, and governance and delivery quality improve.

46. How do you balance transparency obligations with confidentiality and sensitivity (commercial, personal, or security-related)? (Senior Civil Servant; Security Lead; Procurement/Commercial Officer)

- We prioritise transparency while applying consistent information classification and justified redactions. Decisions and supporting evidence are recorded to ensure disclosures are accurate, defensible, and auditable, without exposing sensitive or personal data. Access is controlled based on role and clearance, redactions are risk-based, and standards follow recognised government classification frameworks. Staff are trained and monitored to maintain compliance and public trust.



47. How do you manage shared accountability across organisational boundaries where outcomes depend on partners you do not control? (Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager; NHS Leader; Local Authority Lead)

- We agree a joint operating model with explicit interfaces, shared outcomes, named owners for dependencies, and escalation routes. We manage cross-partner risks in a single register and track commitments with agreed timescales.

48. How do you ensure senior forums receive decision-ready information rather than large volumes of narrative reporting? (Programme/Project Manager; PMO/Project Controls Lead)

- We use standardised packs with a short narrative, clear recommendations, and quantified impacts. Anything that does not support a decision, assurance, or statutory requirement is reduced or removed.

49. What does “good governance” look like in practice for you—beyond meeting cadence and papers? (Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager)

- Good governance produces timely, evidence-based decisions and clear actions, with accountability and follow-through. It focuses discussion on exceptions, trade-offs, and risks, rather than reporting volume.

50. How are accountability and decision rights structured across the programme, and how do you keep them current as the programme evolves? (Senior Civil Servant; Programme/Project Manager; PMO/Project Controls Lead)

- Accountability is documented through role descriptions, governance terms of reference, and a clear delegations schedule. We review these when scope, funding, delivery partners, or risk exposure changes, and we maintain an auditable decision log.



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