<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/events/data-bites-16>

**Written by James Kuht, Cabinet Office**

### 1. There is a Data Science Team in 10 Downing Street, working on a number of projects, one of which is the Data Masterclass for Senior Leaders

Hello and welcome to another one of the ‘Five things’ blog series! I’m James Kuht, an Royal Air Force doctor on secondment to 10 Downing Street’s Data Science Team, ‘10DS’. And with that statement, I suspect we hit our first thing you perhaps didn’t know - that 10DS exists! We are a small team, based behind the famous black door, with the role of elevating the data and evidence agenda in the heart of government.

Our work mainly fits into two categories:

* firstly providing the Prime Minister and other Senior decision-makers with better data and evidence to inform their decisions
* secondly taking a more outward-looking approach to improve the use of data and evidence across government.

I work in the ‘Special Projects’ part of the team with the wonderful Jen Gold, which largely supports the second of these two aims, and one of my main projects has been the ‘Data masterclass for senior leaders’.

### 2. The ‘Data masterclass for senior leaders’ aims to equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to put data at the heart of their work

For those of you who haven’t heard of the data masterclass, let me give you a whistle-stop tour. It’s an unusually-accessible, exceptionally-engaging and deeply-vocational online course to help equip non-analyst senior leaders across government with the knowledge and skills they need to put data and evidence at the heart of their work.

Why? Well, it is no secret that central government wants to drive the data and evidence agenda, just take a look at the [Rt Hon Michael Gove’s (CDL) Ditchley lecture](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-privilege-of-public-service-given-as-the-ditchley-annual-lecture) - which includes quotes such as “Government needs to evaluate data more rigorously” and follows this section by asking “Government must also ask itself if its people have the skills necessary for the challenges that I have set out”.

Our hypothesis is that by centrally driving the data upskilling agenda at the most senior levels through building a data masterclass we can improve the use of data and evidence within government, and thereby deliver more effective public service.

### 3. We built the data masterclass in 64 days

Having proposed the idea to create a data masterclass for senior leaders to CDL and gained his endorsement late in September, I set about building a ‘dream-team’ of stakeholders from across Government - including the Analysis Function, the Behavioural Insight Team, Cabinet Office Visualisation team, the Data Science Campus, Government Digital Services and Government Statistical Services (GSS). We set-out a high-level vision, and defined the three main topic areas we wanted to cover:

* data-driven decision-making and policy-making
* communicating compelling narratives through data
* data science and new frontiers

We then set out assembling a world-class cast of speakers to deliver TED-style talks on these topics (such as Sir Ian Diamond, Dr Hannah Fry, Sir David Spiegelhalter and many more) and solicited ten brilliant case studies of exemplary use of data and evidence within Government that really brought these topics to life within the context of Government (our sincere thanks to the Analysis Function and DDAN network for help in sourcing these).

Then, 64 days (and a few late nights, admittedly!) later we had met our deadline with barely a moment to spare, and launched a pilot study of the data masterclass with Senior Civil Servants in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

### 4. The results of the Data Masterclass pilot were highly promising

All 200 spaces for the Data Masterclass were gone within a flash when we opened it up - so quickly in fact, that we had to buy more licenses immediately! Over the next 7 weeks, we were delighted to see 38% of those who enrolled complete the course - an outstanding completion rate when you consider that online learning course completion rates are usually in the region of 5-15%, and we were asking SCS to complete this over a period which included Christmas, the beginning of another lockdown, and Brexit!

The average rating of the Masterclass was 9.5/10, and we were delighted to receive such kind quotes as “leaps ahead of any other HMG online training I’ve done” (Sian MacLeod, HM Ambassador to Serbia) and “A really fabulous course […] you managed to bring what could have been quite a dry issue to life, and make it not too complicated for the data challenged” (Corin Robertson, HM Ambassador to Mexico)…. Though we’re sure some of you are reeling from the fact that someone could possibly have suggested that the subject matter could be dry though…!

But what of the impact? To refer back to my first paragraph, can we robustly say that we have ‘improved the use of data in government’? Not categorically, yet. But we are seeing some promising signs in the comments we’ve received so far. Take Sarah Redwood (Director Renewable Energy Deployment, BEIS) who said “I’ve already started using the learnings in my job - including rehauling some maps we are using in a presentation for the PM and asking lots of questions of the analysts I work with”. Or Harriet Cross (High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago) who, inspired by the Masterclass, organised a well-received 90-minute session on data-driven diplomacy at the Heads of Mission conference for the Americas last month. Or this quote, from an anonymous participant of the masterclass: “It sparked thinking on a host of new potential applications of data science […], and signposted the range of resources and teams across government that can help”.

### 5. We are now seeking to scale the data masterclass across government, we would love analysts across government to help facilitate this!

‘So what next?’ I hear you ask. Well, the wonderful team at the Data Science Campus (part of ONS) have now taken on the data masterclass, actioned a number of improvements from the pilot, and are seeking to scale the course across government later this year. All being well, it should be available to SCS (Senior Civil Servant) and potentially even Grade 6’s and 7’s in most departments and some parts of local government later in the year.

But to do this - we need your help!

In the pilot, SCS were extremely engaged in the course materials and left 8 comments each on average - many of which were absolutely fascinating. Analysts from the pilot departments benefited greatly from linking in with their SCS who were doing the course, both helping to develop their SCS’ ideas and learning, but also to build connections. If this sounds like you - and you could spare a couple of hours a week for 2 months to facilitate the Masterclass in your department, please do send an email to Data.Masterclass@ons.gov.uk who will log your interest!

If you’d like to learn more about the data masterclass you can watch James’s talk at the [Institute for Government’s ‘Data Bites’ series, at 1:00:28](https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/events/data-bites-16). You can also follow James on Twitter [@KuhtJames](https://twitter.com/KuhtJames) or on his blog; [www.DrJK.co.uk](https://drjk.co.uk/).

























