

Preparing for a New Government and Meeting New Ministers

*I prepared these notes when briefing colleagues before a previous
General Election:-*

It is an exciting time ... and an opportunity to make a big difference by helping a new set of Ministers settle in, and start achieving their objectives. Enjoy the challenge!

What do you want to achieve in the first few days?

- A good relationship with new Ministers
 - Mutual respect
 - You need to be seen as non-political but committed to achieving their objectives
 - Understand individual Ministers' characters, styles, needs
 - They will be a mixture of excited, knackered, terrified, suspicious.
- Get to understand Minister(s)' long term aims
- Well-briefed, knowledgeable Ministers
- Ministers who [are beginning to] understand how to work within government, and in particular with civil servants
 - Particularly important in GEO in view of need to 'punch above weight' in influencing other departments' policies.
 - Need to avoid 'departmentalitis'

Personal chemistry very important.

- First impressions very important
- [Transactional analysis](#)
 - Aim for mutual respect if Ministers signal they want to work effectively with officials
- Initial Ministerial meetings need to be with impressive staff. Do not field inexperienced, nervous or loquacious colleagues.

Passion is good – but it needs to be directed towards implementing new policies. It is important not to appear negative when new

Ministers suggest change, and important to avoid appearing to be committed to predecessors' policies.

- Avoid “this department’s policies”
- Beware of appearing too well connected with pressure groups – and Europeans!
- Make sure your assertions are evidence-based – particularly when repeating assumptions of previous Ministers
- Discontinue use of previous Ministers’ language (e.g. Tories do not like New Labour’s ‘stakeholders’)

Offer frequent briefings to staff colleagues

- Oral briefings best
- Emails good as long as carefully drafted – positive tone
- Pass information around between teams – inc. to/from other departments.
- Keep close to Private Office and SpAds

Be mentally prepared for turmoil.

If it happens then react positively. Do not show you are upset. The system will support you.

Enjoy being part of exciting change.

Links to other useful advice:-

[Working with Ministers](#)

[Giving Advice to Ministers](#)

[Speaking Truth to Power](#)

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Editor – [Understanding Government](#)