

Digital: Vision to Value

Embracing locally designed, digital public services

This briefing is addressed to politicians and senior policy/decision-makers. It sets out what will be required to deliver locally designed, digital public services.

The scope of digital ...



Digital is more than just a bolt on

The big move towards digital public services provision requires a fundamental shift in the way that these services, and associated democratic engagement, are designed, developed and operated; a way that starts first and foremost with people, their needs and better outcomes at lower overall cost to the public purse. Adapting to digital requires change on many levels – people, processes, technology and organisation.

“The word ‘digital’-as in ‘digital age’ and ‘digital government’-has become a widely used shorthand description to summarise the improved use of technology, digital resources and better information management. The potential benefits for local government of greater use of technology and digital information are enormously persuasive. They have the potential to reduce costs, increase efficiency and deliver better outcomes. They can also stimulate innovation, enable new ways of working, and help to re-shape relationships between citizens, communities and local government.”¹

Adapting to digital in local public service design and delivery will be inevitable. Best, if it is done willingly and well. Adapting to digital presents opportunities way beyond mere ICT-enablement of existing ways of working². Adapting to digital is about taking the opportunity to open up and redesign services to achieve different and better outcomes in ways that were previously unimaginable.

Digital: Vision to Value informs the debate in the lead up to the General Election about achieving modern, digital, transformed and improved local public services. It draws upon and resets the principles and issues that we first set out in *Planting the Flag: a strategy for ICT-enabled local public services reform*³.

In this *Briefing*, we set out a vision for local digital public services, three key principles that will need to be acted upon, capabilities that will be required, issues that will need to be addressed and ‘digital by design’ principles.

¹ Local Government Knowledge Navigator (2014) *Local government in the digital age*

² See, for example: Local Government Association (2013) *Transforming local public services- using technology and digital tools and approaches*

³ Published by Socitm and the Local CIO Council in 2011, *Planting the Flag* was the first strategy of its kind to address the deployment of IT in the modernisation of the delivery of local public services.

A vision for local digital public services

1. Digital represents an exciting **paradigm shift**
2. Digital puts **people at the centre**
3. Digital is **more than just a last minute bolt on**
4. Digital offers the opportunity to **unlock cost savings and increase productivity**

1. Digital represents an exciting **paradigm shift**

The vision is that politicians and citizens demand and get excellent digital services and interaction. We move from change that is driven top-down and which assumes there is a clear (and perfect) end-state that we can reach. We move to a process in which service users co-create solutions with providers, mostly bottom-up, and can change and adapt those solutions along the way to make them better. Existing legacy, outsourced and previously standardised ‘off the shelf’ products *will* need to be adapted, data and analytics *will* need to be opened up and shared, and open standards/open APIs *will* need to be embraced to facilitate co-creation of the changes required.

- Connecting Cambridgeshire is explicitly building ‘smart places’ and unlocking capacity in their community.
- Lambeth Cooperative Council is shifting to a new operating model: outcome-based budgeting; transfer of assets (e.g. parks) to residents; more direct investment in communities and infrastructure; fostering cooperative clusters; tiered call handling (local for health and social care – call centre for non-local); digital single sign-on.

2. Digital puts **people at the centre**

Digital service delivery initiatives put residents, volunteers and businesses at the centre of the design of local public services. Being digital means engaging them at the heart of service re-imagination and transformation. Being digital gives everyone, especially employed staff, new ways of looking at their services, new skills and new found enthusiasm for, and commitment to, what they do.

- East Riding of Yorkshire is aiming to save £149m (50% of the councils net budget) over seven years, with a core focus on digital redesign of services and associated business processes, putting people at the heart of digital development. £95m has been saved in the last five years, through reducing costs, increasing income and delivering services in a different way, with a further £54m target by 2018/19.
- By following the digital way, the Living Well Project in Cornwall and Neighbourhood Networks in Leeds are transforming the quality of life for lonely, older adults, dramatically reducing hospital admissions, supporting discharged patients and better enabling safeguarding referrals.

3. Digital is **more than just a last minute bolt on**

Being digital in local public service goes to the heart of what we do and how we go about it. It involves everyone. It starts with a focus upon real outcomes that make a difference to people's lives and the quality of the environment in which we live, work and play. It starts with user-centric design. It embraces the art of the possible. It considers the social, economic and environmental implications of proposals and cuts across silo-based structures and thinking. It leverages political backing and executive sponsorship.

- Handheld digital devices are transforming access to information and leading to improvements in literacy at Casllwchwr Primary School in Swansea.
- Glasgow's £24m Smart City demonstrator programme addresses pressing issues in health, safety and sustainability by digital means - e.g. via open data, smartphone apps and web portals to engage citizens and other stakeholders.

4. Digital offers the opportunity to **unlock cost savings and increase productivity**

Cost reduction and productivity enhancement will continue to be major drivers for digital service redesign. Ideally but not necessarily, these will go hand in hand with improving service standards or maintaining them in the face of other challenges and/or simultaneously supporting the reinvestment of scarce budget in other priority areas.

- Bristol is migrating its ICT infrastructure to the cloud (CW report 01/09/14).
- Kent CC reduced its £800K budget for child minder approvals by 90% (to just £78K) by working with the local professional association for childcare and making a website and email interface.

Three core principles

We set out three core principles for local digital public services - essentially to **innovate**, **redesign** and **collaborate**:

Innovate to empower citizens and communities:

Adaptive innovation⁴ - create, learn, repeat - *should* be built into the culture of digital public service redesign wherever feasible. Service users and relevant representatives of the supply-side - public service employees/organisations, SMEs and the ICT sector - *must* be engaged in service design and delivery in order to explore the widest possible range of possibilities⁵. Digital capability, resources, information and skills *should* be engaged and used in the communities to build local systems and services. Ownership and use of data, information and technology *should* be shifted towards the service user. This *requires* local public service organisations that are commissioners of such activity to be able to act quickly and flexibly within a framework of pragmatic risk and opportunity assessment; excessive risk aversion kills innovation potential.

Redesign services to simplify, standardise and automate:

Local public services *should* be 'digital by design' where this is sensible and practical. Purely digital or not, they *should* be co-designed with the service user around priority local public service outcomes and, wherever possible, be digitally-enabled, using open and reusable standards to meet aspirations for access anytime, anywhere from any digital device. The outcomes that service users value *should* be delivered by people, performing processes with information underpinned and enabled through digital technology.

Collaborate, share and re-use resources and assets:

Local public service organisations *must* join up service delivery strategies and support them (where appropriate) with collaboratively developed, open, digital delivery processes and services. They *should* jointly commission digital and related IT infrastructure and services, pool budgets, share staff and skills, and measure, capture and share benefits and savings.

⁴ See adaptive innovation scenario presented in: Grant Thornton Publications (2014) *2020 Vision: Exploring finance and policy futures for English local government* as a starting point for discussion.

⁵ See, for example: NESTA (2014) *People helping people: future public services*

Six strategic capabilities

Our research identifies six strategic capabilities that need to be in place to deliver local digital public services in any given locality:

Leadership: Effective collective digital leadership⁶ is vital. It comes from connecting politicians, managers, staff, citizens and businesses and getting them engaged and energised in a ‘network of leadership’ to create and champion the new digital approaches. Digital service champions should be nurtured and encouraged at all levels, from in the community to the service frontline to strategic oversight.

Governance: Provisioning of technology to support locally designed, digital public service should be governed and managed at a local level to address both national policy priorities (e.g. health and social care reform) and locally determined, priority public service outcomes. Networked and flexible governance processes will be required to design joined-up information and technology architectures, openly shared provisioning and development, and plans for digital delivery.

Organisational change: Many public services continue to be duplicated, misaligned, and configured around the convenience of historical organisational structures. Adaptive process and service redesign capability is essential to designing and implementing digitally-enabled, service-led operating models that cross traditional boundaries and are focused on the needs of service users and their communities first.

Procurement: Public service organisations should positively seek to work together on open requirements specifications, procurement and contracts, so that they can all get more value per £ by aggregation and rationalisation, with a focus on outcomes. Managing risk and innovation can then be balanced against the needs of the citizen. Reuse of existing contracts can be maximized and the prevalence of input-based specifications and single organisation tenders reduced.

⁶ See, for example: Public-I (2014) *Digital Leadership*

Managing and sharing resources: We should widely expose good practice in managing and sharing of resources, including skills, infrastructure and other assets and capabilities. Opportunities should be sought for digital services of various kinds to be aggregated and thus procured, operated and managed more effectively. A 'local government digital service' (LGDS) should be established to share skills in creating 'develop once, use many' digital assets (e.g. software components, common APIs and other openly shared assets/common infrastructures). Similarly, senior professionals managing and running IT infrastructure and support, and technical and digital specialists may be shared. High quality staff should be in place to facilitate business processes and service redesign, information sharing and integration, and the joint communications and systems required for shared local public services delivery.

Professionalism: Professional capability for systematically leading, managing and co-creating digitally enabled public services needs to be further developed. Business process and service redesign, information, technology and digital professionals should be working under the same sort of accreditation schemes as legal and finance professionals do, so that hiring/service consuming organisations can be confident their skills and capabilities are fit for purpose.

Information and technology issues

Information governance: Efficient, effective local digital public services depend on fast, secure access by authorised personnel to ‘a single version of the truth’ about people, assets, finance, service usage and performance. This requires changes to current practice in information governance, architecture and responsibilities that span local public services.

Information management, assurance and transparency:

We need to recognise the value of information and appreciate the importance of its quality. Failure to share and a tendency to duplicate information across local public services are endemic. There is no common, local public services security framework. Release of ‘public’ information (i.e. information without privacy or state security issues) is far from routine. All of these issues need to be addressed with systems adhering to open standards, and shared information management policy and practice across local public services.

Data sharing: Current silo-based approaches to data protection and ownership are no longer fit for purpose in a digital age. People expect personal data to be shared by public services where it is in their personal interest to do so, e.g. where personal safety may be threatened if it is not shared. Personalisation of services such as adult health and social care requires sharing personal data across diverse groups of practitioners with appropriate safeguards and standards in place.

Shared platforms: Common technology platforms, built to open standards, should be developed and shared preferentially, and could be cost-effectively facilitated through a properly funded local government digital service.

Flexible and mobile working: Technologies can be implemented to allow staff to work “anytime, anyplace, anywhere” and from most digital devices - including personally owned consumer devices in some circumstances. This would enable substantial reductions in property costs, support more localised and community-based working, and improve productivity and work-life balance for employees.

Digital access and inclusion: Processes and information systems should be designed assuming digital access ‘by design’ for citizens and employees. Local public service organisations should publish data to open standards to allow third parties, including local technology companies and community groups, to use it to deliver their own software applications and commercial/non-commercial services. Strategies and policies for exploiting social media and networking tools should be developed to support citizen engagement and service delivery. Digital literacy programmes and peer-to-peer learning and support should be joined up across localities and offered to employees and citizens as well as local businesses and other organisations.

Business Change: Information and technology are necessary but not sufficient for the scale of change required of local public service. Organisational change will need to be systemic, addressing people, process, information and technology dimensions and often be delivered across organisational boundaries. Strategies and policies should be developed for designing and implementing new operating models that are sensitive to local circumstance and co-produced with partners and service users. New approaches to risk and value management and to governance of multi-partner change programmes should be explored and shared widely.

Digital policies of central government departments: Efficiency of local public services is impacted by digital policy, decision-making and practice by central government departments that are part of the ‘system as a whole’. In the spirit of one system servicing the end user citizen or business, barring exceptional circumstances there must be common information assurance approaches and standards between central and local.

Do you do digital?

This is a short and highly visual guide for top management teams in local public services.

In 16 pages, *Do you do digital?*⁷ outlines the scope, reach and progress of digital adoption by local public services, highlighting best practice and areas requiring improvement or a faster pace of change.

⁷ Socitm (2014) *Do you do digital?*

Digital by design

Here we set out principles⁸ to follow in co-creating services that are 'digital by design':

	Topic	Principle
1	User experience	Focus on the user and savings will follow.
2	Engagement	Design and deploy digital engagement with citizens and service users.
3	Ways of working	Adopt digital techniques for internal working practices.
4	Service redesign	Redesign services from first principles taking advantage of digital technologies.
5	Demand management	Analyse and manage demand for services.
6	Leadership	Improve digital leadership and governance.
7	Capability	Build appropriate levels of digital capability in-house and in the community.
8	Sharing	Share as much content, applications, skills and resources as possible, whether locally, regionally or nationally.
9	Agile working	Develop digital services using the agile methodology.
10	Transparency	Make the organisation 'open by default'.
11	Usability	Develop standards to ensure that the user experience is easy, intuitive and consistent.
12	System selection	Choose systems for public and internal use on the basis of their usability.
13	Take-up	Increase the number of people who use digital services.
14	Assisted digital	Develop local policies and programmes for supporting people who have rarely or never been online.
15	Performance	Evaluate the success of your digital strategy.

⁸ The first version of these principles, based on those developed by the Government Digital Service, was published by Socitm in *Digital Insights* (2013)

About Socitm

Socitm is the professional body for people involved in the leadership and management of IT and digitally enabled services delivered for public benefit. It offers networking and peer support, professional development, and access to research and consultancy on a wide range of policy and technology issues to its c. 1400 members and their employing organisations.

Socitm works with the Local Government Association and the Local e-Government Standards Body (LeGSB) in areas such as data quality, interoperability standards, transparency and open data; with Central Government, including Cabinet Office, CESG, HM Treasury, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Department of Work and Pensions, and the Department of Health; with other professional associations and groups, such as SOLACE, CIPFA and ADASS – IMG; and with the Local Digital Campaign and Local GovDigital. The Local Public Services Chief Information Officer (CIO) Council is made up of Socitm members. Socitm also has strong links to its partner associations in Europe and around the world.

Local Public Services CIO Council (LCIOC)

The Council is an independent group supported by Socitm. Representatives on the Council cover all geographic areas of the country, along with differing sizes of Local Authority, and other public and third sector bodies such as Education, Police, Health, etc.

The purposes of the LCIOC include:

- To set and lead the vision and strategic direction for ICT and digital policy for local public services.
- To facilitate local commissioning and implementation of strategies and initiatives for digitally-enabled local public services reform.

Socitm resources and services

Membership

Socitm offers corporate and individual membership for the public and third sectors and a range of partnership options for the private sector. Our members receive the best prices for our services.

www.socitm.net/membership

Advisory and consultancy

- Website and mobile apps performance monitoring and optimisation.
- Interim placement.
- Specialist practice areas e.g. support with health and social care reform.
- 'Digital Toolkit' (e.g. Digital Strategy; Digital Mapping and Maturity; Senior Digital Advisors).

www.socitm.net/services

Performance and improvement

Socitm performance and improvement services provide the essential performance and quality data that you need to improve and transform service delivery. Organisations can participate through groups that form each year (e.g. regionally based) but can also participate in individual customised activities.

www.socitm.net/services

Insight

The Socitm *Insight* subscription service provides publications, briefings and events, all aiming to provide up-to-date guidance and help in planning for the future. The digital agenda and emerging digital practice has been a feature of this programme in recent years.

www.socitm.net/research/socitm-insight

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