Home Office digital strategy

December 2012

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Executive summary

This document outlines how the Home Office will respond to the challenge set out in the government's digital strategy and become a digital department by 2015.

We want the Home Office to be a department where policy will be created through ongoing engagement with citizens, and our published information will be organised around the needs of the user. All of our transactions will be transformed to meet the highest standards for digital services. This process will begin with the development of three 'exemplars' – high profile, high volume public services which will be designed to meet a new digital service standard currently being developed by the Government Digital Service (GDS). These three exemplar services will be:

• Applications for visit visas (UK Border Agency)
• The Disclosure and Barring Service – criminal record checks (DBS)
• e-Gates at UK borders (Border Force)

All of this will change the way the Home Office works, the way we interact with the public and our customers, and the systems upon which we all depend.

Introduction

The Civil Service Reform Plan, published in June 2012, placed the digital agenda at the heart of the process of modernising government, to create a civil service that is more adaptable and more in tune with the needs and priorities of citizens.

This strategy details the approach we will take to evolve our service provision, engagement activities and online publishing whilst remaining focused on delivering against our departmental objectives.

Digital by Default

Digital technology has the potential to substantially improve the quality and efficiency of the ways government delivers services, shares information and engages with citizens. It has become a fundamental part of day to day life for most of the UK population. 82% of adults are online, with 77% of the population using the internet daily. For many people it is their preferred means of banking and shopping, and a key part of their social and professional life.

In 2010, Martha Lane Fox's report, DirectGov 2010 and Beyond: Revolution not Evolution, began the work to change the provision of government digital services. In November 2012 the government's digital strategy committed departments to the development and delivery of world-class online services. It set out how the government needs to work in the way our service users and partners increasingly expect, providing high quality information and services via digital channels designed around their needs.

Digital Government

The Civil Service Reform Plan states:

"Central Government where possible must become a digital organisation. These days the best service organisations deliver online everything that can be delivered online. This cuts their costs dramatically and allows access to information and services at times and in ways convenient to the users rather than the providers".[1]

Digital services across government tend to be poorly designed and difficult to navigate, the consequence of simply mirroring paper processes online. GDS estimate that with improved online service provision up to 82% of government interactions with customers would be carried out online, at lower cost and providing an improved customer experience. Making transactions digital will also improve the way we collect, store and share data between departments.

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1   http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Civil-Service-Reform-Plan-acc-final.pdf Civil Service Reform Plan, Cabinet Office, June 2012. Foreword by the Rt Hon Francis Maude.
2   http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/efficiency/ Digital Efficiency Report, GDS, November 2012

Home Office delivery agencies have already committed to plans that will drive their businesses increasingly online, deliver cost-savings and improve user-experience. The cross-government digital agenda challenges us to ensure that we do so in a consistent way, evolving in line with the needs and expectations of our users.

Scope

This document outlines the overall vision and direction for the adoption of digital by default across the Home Office family; this includes all agencies and arms length bodies (ALBs). All Home Office digital activity will align with this strategy and the standards emerging from GDS, as the centre of excellence for digital in government.

We will aim to respond quickly to change and engage widely through digital channels. We will aim to transform our relationships with citizens and businesses, through digital services and engagement channels that meet the highest standards.

A digital Home Office

The Civil Service Reform Plan challenges departments to change the way they approach their work, stating "Cultures and behaviours must be pacier, more flexible, focussed on outcomes". With a focus on citizens, we are seeking to change our culture, our processes and our approach to project and service planning.

We want to be able to respond quickly and effectively to change and meet the needs of an increasingly digital population.

In order to deliver quickly we will need to change established processes and procedures, the way we procure, and the behaviours of staff. We must develop an attitude to risk that enables swift decision-making where it is appropriate, and supports different approaches to delivery, where a more 'agile' approach could realise benefits quickly.

Example: Police 'Compare Your Area' tool
The 'Compare Your Area'[3] tool was added to the Police.uk website in early October. It enables the public to compare crime rates in their area with other areas with similar demographic characteristics, and uses data which was previously only available to forces. Home Office Crime and Policing Group used the Police.uk contractor/developer to design the new tool which was delivered in around eight weeks, with light touch project management.

The Home Office will transform its relationships with citizens and other service users, moving towards far more open communication and engagement. Users will inform the ways we develop our services and produce our online content. Engagement will take place early in the policy-making process and we will seek continuous feedback.

We have already made significant progress towards greater transparency, however, there remains substantial work to be done to embed this into Home Office culture. Where viable, we will adopt processes that support sharing our information, trial prototype services and engage in policy-thinking at an early stage. As part of this, we will explore the potential of social media and other digital tools to support the development of a new, more open Home Office.

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3   http://www.police.uk/

The digital agenda is a catalyst to modernise the department. This will be characterised by:

Publishing and communications

- All online information and tools aimed at citizens and businesses (and in some-cases, wider audiences) will be published through the GOV.UK shared platform, enabling the user to find all government information and services in one place.

Services

- Services will be monitored to drive continuous improvement and development;
- The vast majority of interactions with customers will be carried out online and we will ensure that there is 'assisted digital' provision to cater for those groups unable to transact online;
- Processes will be in place to enable us to easily understand changing user needs and to respond quickly.

IT

- Our IT will be flexible and easy to change, supporting the smooth flow of information and data across teams and business areas;
- We will seek out and exploit opportunities to use technology to improve the customer experience throughout our transactional services.

Benefits

The benefits from digital by default are:

- A better relationship with citizens who can freely contribute to policy making and influence service-design;
- Well designed services that are quicker and more convenient for users – GDS research shows redesigned services are 18% easier and one third quicker to use than previous versions;
- High quality published information that evolves in response to citizen feedback;
- Cost savings and increased efficiencies generated over time as the shift to digital channels enables us to scale back face-to-face services, eliminate paper-based services and reduce the cost of mistakes.

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4   http://www.trackmycrime.police.uk/
5   https://twitter.com/SurreyPolice

Culture change

There will need to be widespread culture change to enable the Home Office to work effectively as a digital department. We will drive this through:

- Building a virtual network of Home Office 'digital professionals' who will share information and knowledge;
- Bringing together senior leaders and Home Office digital stakeholders in a forum to update on progress and provide challenge;
- Modelling best practice through the work to deliver the exemplar services and sharing this internally;
- Identifying best practice case studies within the publishing and policy-making arena (both internally and externally to the Home Office) and sharing these.

Where are we today and what needs to change?

The Home Office is not digital by default; delivery of this strategic direction will require substantial changes, particularly across communications, service delivery, policy-making and engagement, and IT.

There is widespread recognition of the opportunities presented by developing digital approaches to services, publishing and engagement, and a will to deliver solutions more quickly. Plans to expand and improve our user-facing digital services are already in place for all the department's high volume services – visas, passports, criminal record checks and e-Gates at the border.

Applying for a passport: the new online channel

2013 will bring the launch of a new online passport application channel, allowing the submission of a customer's application, payment and tracking of progress online. Metrics and customer feedback will be continuously assessed and used to inform future iterations of the service to ensure we deliver ongoing improvements to the customer experience. There will also be a shift in the way we communicate to passport customers, making better use of digital channels to suit changing customer preferences. For example, in booking appointments or following up queries on an application.

Publishing

The GOV.UK platform is the single domain for government online information and services and was launched on 17 October 2012. Mainstream, public-facing information about Home Office services is now available on the site, the content from the Home Office website will be transferred by the end of March 2013 and the migration of remaining content from agency and ALBs' corporate websites will be complete by March 2014.

Transparency and open data

Publishing data and information through a digital by default approach is central to our strategy. It:

- Drives citizen choice and improvements in public services;
- Inspires innovation and enterprise that spurs social and economic growth;
- Enables citizens to hold the public sector to account.

Example: Police.uk – making data about crime available

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, Police.uk shows the police actions and court outcomes relating to crimes, giving the public a clearer picture of how we are tackling crime in their area.
- The 'Compare My Area' tool enables people to compare crime rates in their local area with other areas with similar socio-economic and demographic variables.
- We are bringing the data to life by piloting West Yorkshire's 'In the Dock' tool on Police.uk, displaying photos of recently convicted criminals along with a short summary of their crime and sentence.

This approach supports our drive to engage more effectively and openly with the public.

Services

The Home Office directly provides a range of transactional services, the most significant in terms of volume being:

Business area	Service	Summary	Annual transactions
Border Force	Border checks	Processing people entering the UK at the border	106 million
Identity and Passport Service (IPS)	Passport applications	Applying for a new, renewed, replacement, updated or extended passport	5.8 million
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	Criminal records check	Allowing organisations to check the suitability of employees/job candidates who will be working in positions of trust, primarily with children or vulnerable adults	4 million
UK Border Agency (UKBA)	Visa, immigration and nationality applications	Processing applications by foreign nationals for permission to enter or stay in the UK on a temporary or permanent basis	3.3 million
IPS	Civil registration certificate ordering	Ordering an official copy of a birth, marriage or death certificate, used mainly by family history researchers	1.4 million
UKBA	Investigating allegations of immigration abuse and commodity crime	Investigating allegations of immigration abuse and commodity crime	0.1 million

Our ambition is to drive more customers online and close down other channels. Over the next seven years, all Home Office transactional services will be redesigned with a focus on user-need. We will begin the transformation with three exemplar services:

a. Visas for visitors to the UK, which will be the first step towards delivering a streamlined, intelligent online service for all visa applicants;
b. The new Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be based on a digital business model for providing criminal records checks and will provide a more streamlined experience for users;
c. The e-Gates at our borders enable passengers to quickly and easily enter the UK. Plans are being developed to improve the system and expand the number of eligible passengers.

A key challenge: Transforming the visa application process

In 2011/12 the UK Border Agency took decisions on 3.3 million applications.

Currently, applicants for UKBA's range of different visa and migration products have to choose from over 90 different application forms. Some of these have online variants (in most cases supplemented with paper appendices which must also be completed). For many immigration and nationality applications we do not currently provide a digital channel at all.

As part of our transformation programme UKBA will be developing a single application process for all its products and building an online channel for applications, which customers use to apply for any type of visa or permission to enter or stay in the UK.

Creating the visit visa exemplar service will enhance the Home Office's ability to deliver digital customer centric services. It will trial both the approach and the governance, leadership and skills needed to deliver quickly and iteratively, responding to customer feedback within one month time-frames. This will inform the delivery of an entirely digital visa application process.

In order to design services that are user-friendly and can evolve according to changing needs, we will need to address the internal processes that support service delivery. Our services were designed to meet policy needs with back office processes designed around legacy IT systems or the entrenched working practices of established teams rather than those of service users.

In parts of the Home Office work is already progressing to transform cumbersome business processes, and to develop new models that use digital technologies and are focused on the experience of the user.

Transforming our business models: The Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) provides around 4 million criminal record checks per annum, supporting employers and voluntary organisations in the safe recruitment and retention of staff and volunteers.

The DBS will be introducing a range of digital enhancements, both to reduce the overall number of checks and to transform to digital transactions wherever possible.

The changes include:

- An update service to remove the requirement for multiple disclosure certificates for an individual
- Digital certificates – replacing the current paper-based certificates
- Digital application forms
- Digital verification of an applicant's identity
- Greater use of mobile and social media to engage employers and applicants.

Consultation, engagement, making policy

To date the Home Office has largely followed a traditional model for policy development and engagement and the highly sensitive nature of some of the department's policy areas has served to reinforce this. Consultation papers are generally published on the Home Office website, and views are sought via email or an online form.

Example: Same-sex civil marriage consultation

The same-sex civil marriage consultation, which ran from 15 March 2012 to 14 June 2012, set out the government's proposals to allow same-sex couples to have a civil marriage. It invited comments via an online form and email (as well as through standard postal channels).

Over 150,000 comments were received via the online form alone demonstrating the capacity of digital channels to dramatically increase the level of input we receive when developing policy. It also highlighted the challenges for policy teams in dealing with substantially increased volumes of comment, and the need for new approaches to ensure we are equipped to respond effectively.

Both the Civil Service Reform Plan and the Government Digital Strategy challenge departments to develop policy in a more open and inclusive way, adopting new ways of engaging with the public and assessing their views and concerns. This calls for a fundamental shift in perspective, which places the engagement and 'outreach' aspect of policy-creation at the heart of our work, and moves away from the focus being on the departmental 'policy expert'.

Our goal in open policy-making is to be as inclusive, transparent, accessible and responsive to as wide a range of citizens as possible by developing new consultation processes and opening up the data and information on which decisions are taken. Given the department's public protection agenda, there will be aspects of Home Office policy on which it will not be possible to engage in open consultation. However, an increased level of engagement is something towards which we will strive, in line with both the digital and the transparency agendas.

Wider engagement will also inform the development of our services and our publishing activity. As well as encouraging participation in the policy-making process, digital engagement channels will also enable citizens to influence implementation, by feeding back on new services.

IT

The Home Office's IT provision is siloed and hard to change. Systems need to work better together, there is duplication across systems, we operate environments which are difficult to manage, and procurement lead-times are long. Established processes mean it can take-up to six months for changes to systems to be delivered – by which times user needs may have changed.

A digital Home Office will be supported by a modern infrastructure that enables the free flow of data and the quick testing and uptake of new technologies, whilst not compromising on security. We will adopt working practices that support faster delivery and an approach to service development that allows for change as user needs change. We will make changes to the way in which we specify, buy and run our IT. We will design for transparency from the start, with open data the default option for our IT systems.

Faster, easier, better: Improving the border experience with e-Gates

Between 2008 and 2011, 63 e-Gates were installed at 15 UK airport terminals.

E-passport gates are a secure and convenient self-service alternative to the conventional border control process. The system uses facial recognition technology to compare your face to the photograph recorded on the 'chip' in your passport. Once the checks are made, the gates will open automatically. Border Force staff are on hand to support passengers using the gates for the first time, providing hands-on "assisted digital" support.

A quick and easy way of crossing the border, e-Gates have proved popular with the travelling public, with transactions steadily rising – over the last year 7.8 million people used the gates, with over 900,000 choosing them in September 2012 alone.

There are ambitious plans in place for expansion of and improvements to the e-Gates between now and 2016. More users will automatically become eligible – with all EEA passport holders having passports with chips by 2017 – and we intend to enable holders of other ID documents to use the gates. We are developing a simpler and easier one-step process, making the gates faster, and ensuring the design is intuitive and based on best practice from the UK and overseas.

As opportunities arise to revisit and renegotiate relationships with suppliers, these will be adapted to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness to user need. Contracts will permit a greater degree of 'in-flight change', and be based around faster outcomes and repeated iterations, as opposed to a single, large-scale delivery.

However, there are circumstances in which the facility for frequent iteration may not be required; similarly, there are circumstances in which the added assurance that underpins less pacy, more traditional development approaches is required. Consequently we must establish a portfolio of approaches to delivery. Our supplier relationships need to reflect the unique needs of each service/project, and move away from a 'one size fits all' approach.

People and capability

There is existing digital capability across the Home Office, and this has proved sufficient to deliver against our aspirations to date. However, in order to deliver the necessary transformation of our business processes, we will need to expand by developing our existing staff (both centrally and within our delivery agencies), and bringing in new, specialist resource where required.

Our current digital capability is based within the following professions:

- Communications and publishing: digital publishing, consultation, marketing, engagement;
- Operational service delivery: strategy, business analysis, product management (embedded in key Home Office delivery agencies);
- Policy-making: consultation;
- IT: strategy, development, project and process management, architecture.

Digital skills, and an understanding of the principles underpinning the drive to create a digital Home Office will be essential to all staff in these professions, as working practices evolve to ensure that a best-practice 'digital approach' rapidly becomes embedded as business as usual. We will build digital capability across the entire organisation, evolving our standard working practices to support the creation of a flexible Home Office with the ability and appetite to listen and respond to the needs of citizens.

Challenges

There are a range of legislative/practical barriers currently preventing the Home Office from implementing fully end-to-end digital delivery systems. These include:

- Digital certificates where current legislation requires orders for civil registration certificates (births, marriages, deaths) to be provided in paper format. This is a key barrier to maximising the benefits from digitised records and online access to records. IPS customer insight reveals that the majority of customers ordering certificates for family history purposes would prefer to receive electronic versions.
- Paper-based reporting systems where legislation requires certain correspondence with the public to be done via paper-based systems.

We will be seeking to work with GDS to identify where legislation could remove these barriers and enable the Home Office to provide intuitive and user-friendly end-to-end digital services.

The Home Office's services are supported by controls which provide robust assurance and guarantees of security to the public. Some of these controls are not compatible with the delivery of end-to-end digital services. We need to be able to provide the same high level of assurance within digital services. For instance:

- Wet signatures are a long established form of authentication in some parts of our processes and provide evidence where fraud is identified. We are keen to work with GDS and across government to identify alternative solutions that will both support the development of end-to-end digital services whilst maintaining security and control.
- We will seek to identify a mechanism for enabling the use of digital photographs on passports, ensuring robust data security and high quality images, as well as making best use of validation services for corroboration.

Where there are compelling reasons for parts of a digital transaction to remain offline (eg. to provide the required level of security) we will continue to consider opportunities to move these aspects of the process online as new digital solutions are developed.

High level plan

Leadership and culture change

The Home Office digital leader will be a board-level advocate/champion and will have an overview of all Home Office digital activity, representing the Home Office with GDS and cross-government peers. Accountability for delivery of work to support the strategy will sit with the board members overseeing transactional services, communications, policy creation, and IT.

The Digital Leader will be empowered to challenge other board members and transactional service owners in order to drive forward digital by default across the Home Office.

GDS Action 1: Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active Digital Leader

The Home Office digital leader will be the Director General – Finance and Corporate Services. Empowered Digital Champions will sit on the Boards of IPS, UKBA and DBS, and will – with the Chief Information Officer and Head of the Policy Profession – form the leadership group for digital within the Home Office.

The digital leader will be accountable to the board for the digital transformation of the Home Office.

Coordination and cross-departmental support

Overall coordination of delivery of this strategy will be led by the CIO, on behalf of the Digital Leader. The CIO and Home Office IT will:

- Promote and enforce standards;
- Monitor and grow capability;
- Gather and share examples of best practice;
- Provide challenge and advice;
- Respond to reporting and data collection requests from GDS.

Capability

The development of digital capability will be one of the benchmarks against which the department's progress towards adoption of a digital by default model will be assessed.

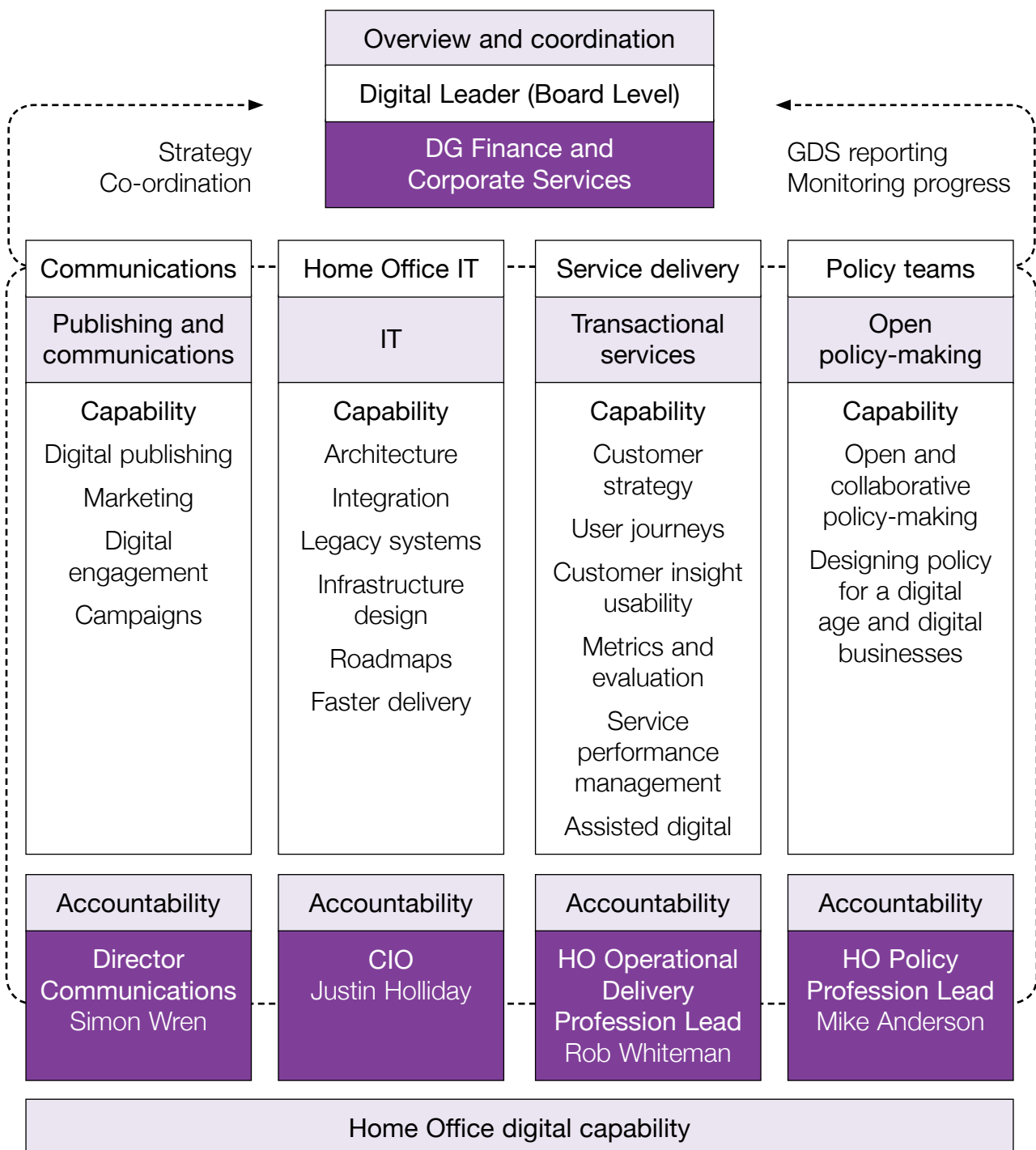The Home Office will undertake a full review to establish levels of capability across the organisation. It is likely that a subsequent process of external recruitment will be required to fill gaps and strengthen areas where additional resource is required. Our initial focus will be on ensuring we have sufficient capability in the core digital skills, establishing a multi-disciplinary Home Office virtual 'digital profession'.

GDS Action 3: All departments will ensure they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills

A full capability review will map the full range of skills and identify gaps. There may be a subsequent need to undertake external recruitment to strengthen our existing levels of resource.

The Digital Leader will oversee a programme of targeted activities to build digital capability throughout the Home Office, in particular across the four critical professions. This will feed into and will be driven by a government-wide drive to increase digital capability as outlined in the Government Capability plan, published in October 2012.

There will be a particular focus on staff within four critical cross-government professions: communications, IT, policy and operational delivery. Responsibility for ensuring that our professions evolve in line with our changing approach and that digital capability is embedded across the department will sit with the respective heads of profession.

Overview and coordination			
Digital Leader (Board Level)			
DG Finance and Corporate Services			

Strategy Co-ordination

GDS reporting Monitoring progress

Communications	Home Office IT	Service delivery	Policy teams
Publishing and communications	IT	Transactional services	Open policy-making
Capability	Capability	Capability	Capability
Digital publishing	Architecture	Customer strategy	Open and collaborative policy-making
Marketing	Integration	User journeys	
Digital engagement	Legacy systems	Customer insight usability	Designing policy for a digital age and digital businesses
Campaigns	Infrastructure design	Metrics and evaluation	
	Roadmaps	Service performance management	
	Faster delivery	Assisted digital	
Accountability	Accountability	Accountability	Accountability
Director Communications Simon Wren	CIO Justin Holliday	HO Operational Delivery Profession Lead Rob Whiteman	HO Policy Profession Lead Mike Anderson

Home Office digital capability

The Home Office digital community

The Home Office will develop a cadre of staff well-versed in the requirements essential to delivering successful digital services. They will work from within their specialist teams to ensure that digital principles are embedded into 'business as usual'. They will be part of a virtual network that is supported to share skills and experience, and develop best practice.

Getting better at establishing user need is essential. We will improve our use of focus groups, surveys, usability tests, pilot programs, and real-time online prototyping. This will help drive take up of our online services.

> **GDS Action 4: Cabinet Office will support the development of digital capability across all departments**
>
> The Home Office will seek to work with GDS on the development of our own capability, and the wider creation of a cross-government pool of digital expertise.

Corporacy, governance and internal controls

The drive to create a digital Home Office will be reflected in our corporate governance and controls. Business plans will reflect the drive to become a digital department, and digital will form a thread running through directorate and agency strategies and plans.

The digital leader will have an overview of all digital service development, and will review all plans prior to any engagement with GDS. All planned service development will be reflected on the Home Office digital roadmap and reviewed by the digital leader (in conjunction with the delivery agency digital champions). Our processes for project initiation, funds allocation and internal review will be amended.

Publishing

Home Office digital content will be published via the single government domain, GOV.UK. Work is underway to transfer all corporate and agency sites onto the shared platform: the work will conclude in March 2014. All Home Office content will be published on GOV.UK unless there is a clear exemption.

The Digital team will ensure that content published on the GOV.UK platform is of the highest quality, and evolves in response to user needs.

> **GDS Action 7: Corporate publishing activities of all 24 central government departments will move onto GOV.UK by March 2013, with agency and arms length bodies' online publishing to follow by March 2014**
>
> This work is in hand, led by the Home Office Digital team, who are responsible for online publishing and engagement for the Home Office. The corporate Home Office website will move to the GOV.UK platform by March 2013, with sites owned by agencies and arms length bodies to follow by March 2014.

Services

Digital service management

Clear end-to-end ownership of the digital channel will be established and reinforced – by establishing 'process managers'[6] for each key transaction who will have accountability for user adoption rates and costs. Process managers will be empowered to make changes to services as user needs change or metrics indicate where improvements can be made.

> **GDS Action 2: Services handling over 100,000 transactions per year will be redesigned, operated and improved by a suitably skilled, experienced and empowered Service Manager. Service Managers will be in place for new and redesigned transactions from April 2013.**

Within the Home Office all such transactions will be 'owned' by a senior civil servant transaction process owner. This owner will have full responsibility for the end-to-end transaction. These owners have been identified and will be leading the transformation of our services.

There are broadly equivalent roles in place within all Home Office delivery agencies. The accountable process owners for key Home Office transactions are:

Business area	Service	Process owner
Border Force	e-Gates Border checks	Haroona Franklin Director of Border Technology Strategy and Capability
DBS	Criminal records checks	DBS became an operational agency on 1 December. We will shortly identify an empowered digital champion.
IPS	Passport Applications	Susan Caldwell Executive Director – Corporate Strategy
IPS	Civil registration certificate ordering	Susan Caldwell Executive Director – Corporate Strategy
UKBA	Visa applications (overseas)	Jonathan Sedgwick Director of International Operations & Visas
UKBA	Visa applications (to remain in the UK)	Jeremy Oppenheim Director of Immigration and Settlement Group

Redesign of existing services

Existing digital services will be redesigned to ensure the starting point for design is the need of the user, and they will be built to ensure the service can be easily adapted as user needs change, or as we develop a fuller understanding of existing needs. The Home Office will redesign all transactional services where there is clear user-benefit to be gained, and where a business case can be made for change.

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6   This role would map broadly against Product and Channel Manager roles currently in place in IPS.

Three exemplar services have been identified which will act as the Home Office trailblazers to be delivered by 2015. During the course of work to develop these services we will develop models for best practice, build capability and promote the digital vision across the Home Office group. These exemplar services will be:

• Visit visa applications (UKBA): a first step towards an entirely digital model for visa applications and processing/case-working.
• The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS): a new – entirely digital – agency delivering dramatic improvements to the criminal records checking process.
• e-Gates (Border Force): the use of technology to improve the experience of citizens crossing our borders.

We need to maintain quality and continuity of service during the transition to digital by default. All changes will need to secure and deliver:

• Improvements to our current service;
• No degradation in the security of service.

GDS Action 5: For "transactional departments" three exemplar services will be selected for redesign starting April 2013, implemented March 2015 (to be included in relevant business plans). Following this, departments will redesign all services handling over 100k transactions a year.

The Home Office is one of the government's seven major transactional departments. Our proposed exemplar services are:

• Visit visa applications
• The Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record checking service
• e-Gates at the Border.

We will seek to work with GDS on redesign of these major transactional services. However, our ability to deliver fully end-to-end digital services will be contingent on solutions to the legislative barriers listed within this strategy being identified, and on secure digital systems for verifying identity.

A plan will be developed for the redesign of all Home Office major transactions, based on the learning from the transformation of these three services.

Development of new services

Our presumption is that all new services and significant service enhancements will be digital. Where new online channels are being established, development will take place according to best practice in digital service delivery from the outset.

GDS Action 6: From April 2014 all new or redesigned services will meet the Digital by Default service standard

From January 2013 (following publication of this strategy) digital services must be approved by the Digital Leader, who will ensure engagement with GDS at the earliest phase in the service design process.

Awareness of digital services

Re-designed services will be supported by communications designed to raise awareness and encourage engagement. Levels of engagement will be regularly monitored.

GDS Action 8: Departments will raise awareness of their digital services so that more people know about them and use them

All proposals for new digital services will include plans for promotion and awareness raising; levels of awareness and take-up will be regularly monitored as part of performance evaluation. Where appropriate we will seek to collaborate with other departments/services who are marketing linked services to similar audiences.

Assisted Digital

Making digital services available to the 18% of the population who may not be able to use them will be an integral part of the digital by default process within the Home Office. As central government moves to a digital by default service delivery model, we still have a responsibility to deliver services to everyone in the population. We recognise that some customers will not have the skills, ability or access to equipment to be able to transact with us or find our information resources online. People who cannot use government digital services independently will be supported through an assisted digital programme.

Support could range from Post Office or library staff providing hands-on help to users as they complete the detailed online application forms, to features such as real-time support to guide people through the task in their own homes. Good assisted digital will build the confidence of users to enable them to self-serve digitally in future; hence we anticipate that our assisted digital requirements will diminish over time.

GDS Action 9: We will take a cross-government approach to assisted digital. This means that people who have rarely or never been online will be able to access services offline, and we will provide additional ways for them to use digital services

The Home Office will work in line with the government strategy for assisted digital, seeking to ensure that no user will be 'left behind' in the drive towards the development of digital services. We will be seeking opportunities to work in a collaborative way across government wherever possible, and will be engaging with GDS on the development of a single approach for all departments.

Identity Assurance

The Home Office will adopt the approach to ID Assurance being developed by the GDS ID Assurance Programme for providing secure access to sites and services. As a key stakeholder in identity security, we will continue to support this programme.

The GDS programme will not entirely replace the thorough verification and eligibility checks which are core to certain of our activities. Where specific transactions require a higher level of identity assurance than the highest level provided via the ID Assurance platform, this will be an integral part of the business process.

As the only government body holding biometric identity data on visa nationals in the UK, UKBA have the potential to act as an identity services provider within the GDS ID assurance framework. Opportunities to build this service will be explored with GDS.

Legislative barriers

The Home Office will identify and address the key legislative (and operational/security-based) barriers to the delivery of end-to-end digital services, working with GDS and other departments as appropriate.

Where there are compelling reasons for parts of a digital transaction to remain offline (eg. to provide the required level of security) we will develop integrated solutions to support this.

GDS Action 12: Cabinet Office will continue to work with departments to remove legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services

Work is underway to identify the key legislative barriers to digital service development at the Home Office – the key barriers are identified in this strategy, and are barriers that are also faced by other departments.

The speed at which these legislative blockers can be addressed will influence the speed at which we are able to achieve truly digital by default services.

Management information

Metrics for all Home Office digital services will be developed as part of the service design process. Reporting dashboards will be developed to ensure management boards have visibility of data relating to service usage and user feedback; this information will inform the ongoing development of our services as well as forming the basis of management information reporting to GDS.

GDS Action 13: Departments will supply a consistent set of management information (as defined by the Cabinet Office) for their transactional services

Plans for monitoring service quality and user satisfaction (according to the GDS performance framework) will be incorporated into the design of all digital services. This data will inform ongoing service development, and will also form the basis of feedback to Cabinet Office via mechanisms such as the Quarterly Data Summary (QDS).

Wherever possible we will adopt a transparent approach to service data.

Engagement and open policy-making

We will use digital media to enhance policy-development, facilitating dialogue and two-way communication between policy-makers and the public, and providing mechanisms by which citizens can influence, comment on and contribute to the policy-making process.

A greater degree of openness and more user-friendly channels for engagement will result in a higher volume of input from the public; inevitably this will be of varying value, which will present challenges. Policy teams will need to develop the skills to work with an increased level of citizen input, and the tools to effectively evaluate data from a range of sources. There are examples of good practice emerging overseas, and across the UK government, and the Home Office will seek to learn from these in order to achieve the goal of becoming a more consultative, participatory and transparent department.

GDS Action 9: Policy teams will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public

The Home Office will apply digital tools and techniques as a means to support the wider goal of open policy making. The Home Office will seek to learn from best practice within the department and across government, and to support development of the necessary skills to implement digital engagement.

IT

Processes and standard working practice will be reviewed, and opportunities identified to break down silos and move to an operating model which will enable us to deliver better IT solutions, faster. We will use the digital exemplar projects to raise awareness of the processes by which we can swiftly identify and understand our user needs and move quickly from a concept to delivering measurable user-benefit.

Where viable, digital services will be developed using prototyping, with public versions of new services released (where the associated risks can be effectively managed) as early as possible in the build process we can tailor our services based on feedback.

We will review our procurement processes in line with the work being led at the Cabinet Office, identifying the capability and supplier relationships that will enable faster, more flexible procurement.

GDS Action 10: Cabinet Office will offer leaner and more lightweight tendering processes, as close to the best practice in industry as our regulatory requirements allow.

The Home Office will continue to work closely with the Cabinet Office and the Government Procurement Service, will seek to adopt leaner procurement processes for tendering for digital service development, and procure more widely.

The Home Office already plays a leadership role in the cross-government G-Cloud programme and envisages increased procurement through this channel.

We will exploit common cross-government platforms where they are available, working closely with GDS to ensure our services are designed to work effectively across these systems.

GDS Action 11: Cabinet Office will lead on the definition and delivery of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of Digital by Default services

Wherever possible Home Office transactional services will be designed to work effectively on these platforms, generating efficiencies and building a consistent user experience across all government services.

The Home Office will engage with GDS on development of these platforms and will work closely with Cabinet Office as we develop our technology roadmaps for the next five years.

Funding

There will be no additional funds available for the delivery of digital strategies; it is expected any costs for departments arising as a result of the implementation of the digital by default agenda will be met from our settlement set out in the Spending Review. Given the pressures on the Home Office capital budget, it is unlikely substantial funds will be available during 2013/14.

Annex 1: Actions and themes

The Government Digital Strategy sets out 14 action areas. The Home Office response is documented in this annex.

1. Leadership
Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active Digital Leader

The Home Office Digital Leader will be the Director General – Finance and Corporate Services. Empowered Digital Champions will sit on the Boards of IPS, UKBA and DBS, and will – with the Chief Information Officer and Head of the Policy Profession – form the leadership group for digital within the Home Office.

The digital leader will be more than a 'champion' of digital at board level, but will be accountable to the board for the digital transformation of the Home Office.

2. Management of digital services
Services handling over 100,000 transactions per year will be redesigned, operated and improved by a suitably skilled, experienced and empowered Service Manager. Service Managers will be in place for new and redesigned transactions from April 2013.

Within the Home Office, all such transactions will be 'owned' by a senior civil servant transaction process owner. This owner will have full responsibility for the end-to-end transaction. These owners have been identified and will be leading the transformation of our services.

3. and 4. Digital capability
All Departments will ensure that they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills

A full digital capability review will map the full range of skills and identify gaps. There may be a need to undertake external recruitment to strengthen to our existing levels of resource.

The Digital Leader will oversee a programme of targeted activities to build digital capability throughout the Home Office, in particular across the four critical professions. This will feed into and will be driven by a government-wide drive to increase digital capability as outlined in the Government Capability plan, published in October 2012.

Cabinet Office will support the development of digital capability across all departments

The Home Office will seek to work with GDS on the development of our own capability, and the wider creation of a cross-government pool of digital expertise.

5. Redesign of existing services

For "transactional departments" three exemplar services will be selected. Redesign starting April 2013, implemented March 2015 (to be included in relevant business plans). Following this, departments will redesign all services handling over 100k transactions a year.

The Home Office is one of the government's seven major transactional departments. Our proposed exemplar services are:

- Visit visa applications
- The Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record checking service
- e-Gates at the Border.

We will seek to work with GDS on redesign of these major transactional services, however, our ability to deliver fully end-to-end digital services will be contingent on solutions to the legislative barriers listed within this strategy being identified and on digital systems for verifying identity that are as secure as current practice.

A plan will be developed for the redesign of all Home Office major transactions, based on the learning from the transformation of these three key services.

6. Compliance of new services

From April 2014, all new or redesigned transactional services will meet the Digital by Default service standard.

From January 2013 (following publication of this strategy) digital services must be approved by the digital leader, who will ensure engagement with GDS at the earliest phase in the service design process.

7. Publishing

Corporate publishing activities of all 24 central government departments will move onto GOV. UK by March 2013, with agency and arms length bodies' online publishing to follow by March 2014.

This work is in hand, led by the Home Office Digital team, who are responsible for online publishing and engagement for the Home Office. The corporate Home Office website will move to the GOV.UK platform by March 2013, with sites owned by agencies and ALBs to follow by March 2014.

8. Raising awareness of digital services

Departments will raise awareness of their digital services so that more people know about them and use them.

All proposals for new digital services will include plans for promotion and awareness raising; levels of awareness and take-up will be regularly monitored as part of the performance monitoring activity that will surround each service and support its development. Where appropriate we will seek to collaborate with other departments/services who are marketing linked services to similar audiences.

9. Assisted digital

We will take a cross-government approach to assisted digital. This means that people who are have rarely or never been online will be able to access services offline, and we will provide additional ways for them to use the digital services.

The Home Office will work in line with the government strategy for assisted digital, seeking to ensure that no user will be 'left behind' in the drive towards the development of digital services. We will be seeking opportunities to work in a collaborative way across government wherever possible, and will be engaging with GDS on the development of a single approach for all departments.

10. Procurement

Cabinet Office will offer leaner and more lightweight tendering processes, as close to the best practice in industry as our regulatory requirements allow.

The Home Office will continue to work closely with the Cabinet Office and the Government Procurement Service, will be seeking to adopt leaner procurement processes for when tendering for digital service development, and procure more widely.

We already play a leadership role in the cross-government G-Cloud programme and envisage increased procurement through this channel.

11. Common technology platforms

Cabinet Office will lead on the definition and delivery of a of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of Digital by Default services

Wherever possible Home Office transactional services will be designed to work effectively on these platforms, generating efficiencies and building a consistent user experience across all government services.

The Home Office will engage with GDS on development of these platforms and will work closely with Cabinet Office as we develop our technology roadmaps for the next five years.

12. Legislative barriers

Cabinet Office will continue to work with departments to remove legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services

Work is underway to identify the key legislative barriers to digital service development at the Home Office – the key barriers are identified in this strategy, and they are barriers that are also faced by other departments.

The speed at which these legislative blockers can be addressed will influence the speed at which we are able to achieve truly digital by default services.

13. Management information

Departments will supply a consistent set of management information (as defined by the Cabinet Office) for their transactional services

Plans for monitoring service quality and user satisfaction (according to the GDS performance framework) will be incorporated into the design of all digital services. This data will inform ongoing service development, and will also form the basis of feedback to Cabinet Office via mechanisms such as the Quarterly Data Summary (QDS).

Wherever possible we will adopt a transparent approach to service data.

14. Consultation, engagement and policy development

Policy teams will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public

The Home Office will apply digital tools and techniques as a means to support the wider goal of open policy making. The Home Office will seek to learn from best practice within the department and across government, and to support development of the necessary skills to implement digital engagement.

Annex 2: Home Office transaction roadmaps

Transaction 1: Visit visa applications (UK Border Agency)

The user need / benefits to be delivered

Non-EEA nationals need permission to enter the UK. Some nationalities (known as visa nationals), have to apply to UKBA for permission in advance of travel to the UK. Those coming to the UK for six months or less require a visit visa. Each year UKBA considers 2 million such applications from out of a total of 12.5 million journeys by non-EEA nationals to the UK.

Currently, 90% of overseas applications are submitted online; the delivery of a truly digital by default application process will build on this. We are now seeking to build a single intelligent interface which adapts the questions it asks the user based on business rules: avoiding unnecessary questions and providing a dynamic, streamlined process that users (many of whom are not native English speakers) find simple and accessible. This focus on excellent customer service and essential security checks will support the growth of the UK economy.

Iterative delivery

The initial focus for our alpha release will be on the simpler end of the system (such as straightforward visit visas). Ultimately an intelligent, user driven questionnaire will replace a suite of over 90 different paper application forms used for different UKBA products.

The project will commence end-to-end digital service redesign from the GOV.UK landing page, to the creation of a valid application and identity. This will create a paperless application channel based upon the UK Border Agency's single case-work process for overseas customers wishing to come to the UK and a core data set for UKBA case-working decisions.

Benefits

The development of this service will contribute to growth and enhance our service with the latest thinking on policy, application design and customer journey to create a truly joined up and modern gateway to the UK. We will explore the use of Customer Query tools, mobile application platforms, geo-location and progress checking requirements, all of which have the potential to improve the customer experience.

The key gain for UKBA and the wider Home Office will be in the provision of verified data, linked to biometrics and travel documentation supplied by the applicant, to its central data management and checking capabilities. The customer journey will be enhanced by differentiation of offerings based upon risk profiles and new customer services and offerings based upon segmentation knowledge of customer and market needs.

Actual/likely volumes of transactions

UKBA currently handle around 3.3 million applications per year. 2.5 million of these applications are made overseas; of these, 2 million are visit visas.

As part of our transformation programme we will be developing a single application process for all our products. Key to the delivery of digital by default across UKBA will be the build of an online interface which customers use to apply for any type of visa or permission to enter or stay in the UK; the delivery of the visit visa exemplar will be the foundation for this overarching transformation. We will engage GDS in this work as an immediate priority.

Predicted financial savings over existing service(s)

Gains will not be realised through digitising per se as existing on-line channels exist. They will be measured in terms of improvements to customer service and – ultimately – the number of visitors to the UK.

UKBA will not withdraw from its Biometric Identity Standard; internationally the requirement for a network to collect biometrics and conduct interviews remains. Outsourced and technology enabled solutions can help reduce costs, however, this will not be a substantial saving until we are in a position to deliver significant business change.

It has been agreed through discussion with the Identity Assurance Programme within GDS that UKBA will continue its identity operations overseas, including on-line, and act as an attribute provider for the wider government IDA programme. Consequently, there will be no reduction in UKBA's costs associated with identity management.

Indicative dates for alpha release, beta release and operational release

Note: dependent on available resource in both UKBA and GDS, agreed scope of alpha and timeline for other policy changes such as amendments to visitor rules.

- Alpha: Summer 2013.
- Beta: Winter 2013
- Operational: Spring 2014

Description of how the work to develop the exemplar will embed and enhance digital capability in the Home Office

Creating the visit visa exemplar will enhance the Home Office's ability to deliver digital customer-centric services and trial both the alpha/beta approach and the governance, leadership and skills needed to deliver quickly and iteratively, and successfully respond to customer feedback within one month time frames.

Beyond the initial application, the design of a customer-centric, low contact visit visa application process could ultimately result in the provision of a digital fulfilment process that could replace:

- Vignettes (secure, printed stickers in passports for visa nationals);
- Queuing at the border to see an immigration official rather than using automated e-gates;
- Paper based landing cards which all non-EEA nationals have to fill out on arrival in the UK.

Whilst this is not part of the initial project delivery it provides a helpfully ambitious end user journey across Home Office systems for non-EEA nationals travelling to the UK. It also creates a strategic link between the development of this service and the third Home Office exemplar, e-Gates.

Transaction 2: Criminal record checks (Disclosure and Barring Service)

The user need/benefits to be delivered

The Disclosure and Barring Programme was established to deliver the government's vision for disclosure and barring services. The government has reviewed vetting and barring and criminal record checking in order to "scale it back to common-sense levels". The changes required have been implemented in the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Programme is responsible for modernising and transforming the disclosure and barring services currently provided by the CRB and ISA. The key Programme priority is the early introduction of a new portable disclosure **"Update Service"** which will eliminate the need for individuals to apply for unnecessary repeat disclosures. Most people will only ever need to get one check and will be able to take it from role to role without needing to apply for a new one. Rather than submit a new paper application, employers will be able to conduct a simple, instant on-line check on the status of an application.

The programme is replacing the current IT and Business Process Outsourcing contract with a new contract which will deliver additional digital services delivered via a new Digital Portal. Some of the key capabilities will be:

- Digital Certificates – the contractor will deliver the capability for Digital Disclosure Certificates by March 2014 – the approach will require extensive testing and accreditation to ensure that the solution meets government requirements for the security and integrity of information, so implementation is likely to be phased in over time, and after appropriate piloting.
- Digital Applications – the increase in the proportion of Digital Applications means that less power is required for handling, scanning, indexing and storing paper documents and the volume of data stored will be reduced significantly – as scanned documents take up a significant amount of storage compared to an electronic application.
- Social Media – As part of the Home Office's social media strategy, the DBS portal will provide social media features such as sharing of information with social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, etc.), within the policy and safeguards of the security solution. A web-chat interface will be available on the portal to support users during their online journey. Users will be able to request a web-chat session (during the service window time); and the Contractor will discuss with the Authority the opportunity to start web-chat sessions based on user behaviour analysis (e.g. a user is stuck on an application process step for a certain duration).
- Mobile – A special version of the user interface will be developed for small screens such as smart phones.

Actual/likely volumes of transactions

Currently, approximately 4 million criminal record checks are carried out each year. Approximately 70% of these are submitted as paper applications. We will be looking to continue the move away from paper applications, so that by 2015 the majority of applications are digital.

In addition to increasing the proportion of digital applications, our reforms will be reducing the overall number of applications for new criminal record checks by eliminating the need for applicants to make unnecessary repeat applications. As noted above, currently the DBS processes around 4m criminal records checks per annum. The new Update Service will allow applicants to reuse their existing check, taking it from role to role. We forecast that approximately 5m individuals will have joined the new service by 2017. At the same time, the number of applications for new checks will have fallen to 1.9m.

Predicted financial savings over existing service(s)

The Update Service will reduce the cost and burden of the current service and ultimately contribute to savings of over £40m each year.

Indicative dates for alpha release, beta release and operational release

- Alpha: Interim Update Service – Spring 2013
- Beta: Full Update Service, with Digital Applications and DBS Portal – March 2014
- Operational: Implementation of Digital Disclosure Certificate and Digital Identity Validation – Late 2014.

Description of how the work to develop the exemplar will embed and enhance digital capability in the Home Office

The programme is committed to the development of a new online identity verification service. It will be aligned with the Cabinet Office Identity Assurance Programme and will provide the required level of confidence for the DBS, in line with the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. It is expected that this capability can be reused for other citizen-focused services across the Home Office landscape.

The Digital Portal will be accessible via fixed or mobile internet-enabled devices (computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) and will provide a consistent experience across these devices. The Portal will deliver a consistent user experience from users of GOV.UK, with digital transactions incorporated within GOV.UK where possible. Key information is being migrated to GOV.UK as part of the setup of the new Disclosure and Barring organisation

Transaction 3: Second generation e-Gates (Border Force)

The user need/benefits to be delivered

Passengers do not want to wait any longer than necessary to clear Border Control; e-Gates provide a self-service border clearance option and today, between 800k and 900k people choose to use e-Gates at the UK border every month. Available at 10 UK airports (15 terminals), they provide a faster, easier route for customers clearing passport control (as long as they have a UK or EEA biometric passport). Demand is increasing – we recorded a record high level of transactions in September 2012 when over 934k passengers used e-Gates to enter the UK.

This programme of expansion and improvement will enable e-Gates to meet exponentially increasing demand, dramatically reducing queuing times for people entering the UK with eligible identity documents and providing a much improved customer experience.

Actual/likely volumes of transactions

There are currently estimated to be around 190 million people with passports eligible to use the current e-Gates (people from within the UK and European Economic Area with chip-enabled passports). We estimate that by the end of 2012/13 e-Gates will have processed over 8.5 million transactions. The number of eligible passengers entering the UK will increase dramatically between now and 2016/17, as all UK and EEA passports become chip enabled and e-Gate technology evolves to enable the use by holders of other types of secure identity documents. By the end of 2016/17 there will potentially be over 63 million eligible users entering the UK.

Predicted financial savings over existing service(s)

Existing e-Gates have demonstrated that, as a minimum, they are capable of replicating the manual process performed by a Border Force Officer (BFO) with fewer resources. A bank of 5 e-Gates only requires a single BFO to act as a monitoring officer, and 20% of the time of a manual BFO to handle referrals, i.e. to process passengers who attempt to use the e-Gates and are unsuccessful.

There are significant financial benefits of implementing e-Gates as opposed to recruiting additional staff. As an indication, over a 5 year period it is estimated that there would be a £3m saving by processing 7 million passengers through e-Gates compared to the manual control.

e-Gates have proved very popular with the travelling public and we are now seeing Port Operators approaching Border Force requesting the service and in some cases, offering funding.

Indicative dates for alpha release, beta release and operational release

e-Gates were first introduced to the UK as a pilot in late 2008 at Manchester and Stansted Airports. Following the success of the pilot and receipt of a ministerial mandate, a roll-out programme commenced in January 2009, which resulted in the installation of e-Gates at a further 8 ports by that summer (making 10 in total). A further 5 terminals were added to the e-Gate portfolio by July 2011, this included all Heathrow terminals and Gatwick South.

From 2013, we will seek to put in place a single contract which will provide a call-off arrangement to deliver the 2nd generation of e-Gates. Our aim is to establish automation as the primary clearance route for low risk passengers. This single contract arrangement will provide a streamlined route for the purchase of new or replacement e-Gates (and support and maintenance) by Border Force, Port Operators or other relevant parties. Future e-Gate installations will be prioritised, based on clear business need and expected benefits.

There are ambitious plans in place for expansion of and improvements to the e-Gates between now and 2016. More users will automatically become eligible – with all EEA passport holders having passports with chips by 2017 – and we also intend to enable holders of other ID documents to use the gates. We are developing a simpler and easier one-step process, making the gates faster, and ensuring the design is intuitive and based on best practice from the UK and overseas.

Description of how the work to develop the exemplar will embed and enhance digital capability in the Home Office

e-Gates are a powerful example of how technology can deliver real improvements to the customer experience whilst significantly increasing operational efficiency (by reducing queues at immigration and enabling immigration officials to focus on passengers arriving in the UK from higher-risk territories).

The Border Technology Programme (BTP) is establishing a model for Fast Delivery and innovation that will serve as an example of best practice for the whole Home Office family.

Technologies being explored and developed as part of the BTP – such as the facial recognition software – will inform the development of solutions across other Home Office programmes and services.