



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Digital Strategy

December 2012

Executive summary

Digital by default: high quality digital services, focused on users, and clear support for those who are not yet online

Our department serves a vital purpose: helping people to lift themselves out of poverty, and stay out of poverty. At the same time, we are delivering a huge programme of reforms, in a world where we need to spend less.

To meet these challenges, we need to change what we do. This strategy sets out how the Department will become digital by default: providing high quality digital services people prefer to use.

Technology is transforming the way people interact with each other and the world around them. People increasingly expect to be able to access services digitally at a time which suits them – and expect those services to be easier to use than the non-digital equivalent.

While some DWP users are not yet online, nearly four-fifths of future Universal Credit claimants use the internet, and digital usage is increasing generally. Some of our services are already available online, but many of these digital services are not intuitive or responsive enough to user needs. This can drive unnecessary contact through other, more expensive channels if people are unable to complete a process online.

Increasing the scope and usage of digital services offers huge potential benefits for users, for our staff and for the taxpayer. But these benefits will only be realised if more people choose digital, and they will only do so if we offer high quality services. This means services that:

- are built around the needs of users;
- are improved continually on the basis of user feedback and analytics, so that they meet clear service standards;
- work across different benefits and integrate smoothly with non-digital channels;
- are engineered to work across a range of devices;
- keep personal data secure and protect taxpayers' money from fraud; and

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- are quick and easy to access.

The strategy sets out sixteen actions to achieve this under four themes:

Delivering high quality digital services

1. Adopt a new approach to designing services, focusing on increased agility in development and continuous improvement of services on the basis of user feedback
2. Deliver three exemplar digital services, starting from 2013: Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance
3. Redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions a year, and look for opportunities to improve user and staff experience by digitalising other areas of the Department
4. Work with Government Digital Service to develop a digital by default standard for all new and redesigned services
5. Produce a consistent set of management information to ensure we are able to meet this standard or identify improvements we need to make

Supporting people to use our services

6. Use our existing phone and face-to-face channels to signpost people to digital options and help people to use digital services where they are having difficulties
7. Ensure that digital skills are a key part of the support offered to jobseekers to help them back to work
8. Work in partnership with other government departments and organisations to increase digital skills among disadvantaged groups
9. As use of digital channels increases over time, consider how best to deliver assisted digital support

Changing the way we make policy

10. Ensure that policymakers and delivery experts work closely together to design digital services built around user insight
11. Use digital channels to engage with a wider range of views and expertise, integrating online tools with non-digital channels

Transforming how we work

12. Appoint a board level digital champion to co-ordinate and direct the digital agenda across the Department

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13. Ensure skilled and experienced managers are in place with clear accountability for the quality and take up of digital services
14. Identify any gaps in the Department's technical capabilities around digital and address these through external recruitment and internal development
15. Ensure that all staff, particularly on the frontline, have the digital skills and knowledge needed to undertake changing job roles
16. Change legislation or internal processes which prevent services from being delivered online, and build in flexibility to allow for continuous improvement

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1 Our purpose

Our purpose is vital: to help people lift themselves out of poverty and stay out of poverty

Through our own staff or through partners, we deliver crucial services to millions of people, ranging from paying pensions to helping people find work to supporting parents to make child maintenance arrangements.



As well as delivering these complex day-to-day operations, we are undertaking a series of once-in-a-generation reforms. The current welfare system has developed in a piecemeal fashion over decades. This has left us with a system which is overly complex and has not tackled poverty effectively, leading to spiralling costs and entrenched areas of deprivation. Our reforms will:

- ensure that work pays;
- build a fairer and more sustainable pension system; and
- support the most disadvantaged by tackling the root causes of poverty.

These reforms affect nearly every area of the Department, and most of our 20 million claimants and customers. To ensure that these changes are delivered successfully and on time, they will be introduced gradually over the course of the next decade.

At the same time, we need to reduce our costs and deliver greater value for the taxpayer, ensuring that we avoid mistakes and protect the system from fraud. We will only be able to achieve our policy objectives effectively by delivering our services in a more efficient way: predominantly through digital channels.

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Doing so will involve tackling particular problems which in the past have proved too challenging and have prevented us from implementing change rapidly: the huge scale and complexity of DWP's business; the reliance on outdated legacy systems; and the need to ensure that the most vulnerable claimants are not left behind.

We also need to consider the vital importance of keeping millions of people's details secure and protecting taxpayers' money from the risk of fraud. Because many of our services involve paying out money, our business is substantially different from other government departments who predominantly collect money. The level of assurance needed around identity and security is much greater to minimise the risk of fraudulent activity.

This strategy sets out how, by working differently and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by our programme of welfare reform, we can overcome these problems and transform the Department into a digital business fit for the 21st century.

2 Our users

Most of our customers and claimants are already online – and more are moving online all the time

The world around us is changing. For most people in the UK, the internet is now an integral part of everyday life. The [Digital Landscape Research](#) published alongside the [Government Digital Strategy](#) showed that 82 per cent of people are online, with 77 per cent of adults using the internet everyday. This revolution is transforming every part of society, changing the way people shop, interact with companies and service providers, and communicate with each other.

Digital offers huge opportunities for government too. Millions of transactions between government and citizens are already carried out online. But government has so far not kept up with the pace of social change: only 46 per cent of people have used government information or services online, compared to 52 per cent who have used internet banking or 57 per cent who have shopped for goods or services.

While the wider population is largely online, DWP's customers and claimants are in general less likely use the internet. The Digital Landscape Research shows that:

- 72 per cent of disabled people are online (compared to 85 per cent of non-disabled people); and
- only 59 per cent of people aged 65 and over are online.

Many users of DWP services are drawn from these demographic groups. However, the landscape of digital usage among DWP customers and claimants is complex. The introduction of Universal Credit will bring the Department into contact with a whole new section of society: people who are in work and would currently receive tax credits. [Nearly 80 per cent](#) of future Universal Credit claimants are already online, a similar proportion to the national average. These claimants use the internet for a variety of purposes, although a much lower proportion have made a claim for benefits online compared to other transactions such as online shopping or banking.

Table 2.1: Use of technology in everyday life

Percentage of main claimants (4,280)				
Use of technology in everyday life				
All main claimants	Already do it/done it and would like to do more	I have done this but am not interested in doing it again	I have never done this but would like to do it	Never done and not interested/ doesn't apply to me/never use service
Communicate with friends or family through social network site like Twitter, Facebook or Bebo	50	4	3	43
Internet or online shopping (for example, grocery shopping, travel tickets)	48	4	5	43
Use a self-service till in a supermarket or shop	61	8	3	28
Use online banking	41	2	6	49
Find out about government services online (e.g. which benefits you might be entitled to)	40	3	16	40
Put in a new claim for any benefits online	12	2	29	56
Search for a new job online	51	2	10	36

Generally, levels of internet usage are increasing rapidly. [One in ten](#) people have come online for the first time over the last two years. For older people there is an upward trend in usage which is likely to accelerate in the future. Of people aged between 55 and 64, who will become eligible for their State Pension within the next decade, seven in ten use the internet. Although in the wider population levels of non-usage are higher among disabled people, around three quarters of people receiving DLA are online.

3 Our existing digital services

Some of our services are available online, but there is a long way to go

People can currently make a claim for [Jobseeker's Allowance](#) or their [State Pension](#) online, and can make a claim or report a change of circumstances for [Carer's Allowance](#). A number of DWP informational services are also available digitally, such as the [Benefit Adviser](#) service which allows people to calculate their potential entitlement and how much better off they could be in work.

We are also launching two new digital services: My Benefits Online and [Universal Jobmatch](#). My Benefits Online enables claimants to check details about claims, awards and payments for JSA, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS), DLA and Attendance Allowance (AA). Universal Jobmatch, which launched in November, and is covered in more detail below, is a new online jobsearch service for jobseekers and employers.

Nearly 40 per cent of people now claim JSA online, and this proportion is increasing rapidly. Only around 15 per cent of claims for State Pension are made online, although this is at least in part because the digital service was not actively promoted until recently – since when take up has begun increase.

However, these services are often not as simple or intuitive as the best digital services across government and other sectors. In part, this is because many of the Department's digital services are adaptations of non-digital processes, many of which were designed before digital was even an option.

But, equally, the way in which services have been designed in the past did not always place enough emphasis on the needs of the user. To drive take up digital channels will need to be more attractive and more operationally efficient than the non-digital alternative.

Our current digital services also only cover a small proportion of the Department's transactions, focusing mainly on new claims. While the Department takes around five million claims for benefit every year, we handle around 90 million interactions through phone or face-to-face channels for other reasons, such as reporting changes of circumstance.

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This patchy coverage means that the Department does not have a clear ‘digital proposition’ for users: people can carry out some of their interactions with the Department through digital channels but for others need to resort back to non-digital alternatives, reducing the overall attractiveness of digital.

In many cases, even where a service has a digital front-end for users, the back-office processes underpinning this are still non-digital. For example, although Carer’s Allowance currently has a digital claim form for users to complete, claims are then printed off and processed manually by DWP staff. As the [Digital Efficiency Report](#) recognises, the potential savings to be achieved from shifting to digital channels can only be fully realised by transforming the complete end-to-end business process.

Transforming the Department’s major transactional services – that is, the main benefits and payments the Department delivers – could radically alter user experience for customers, claimants and employers. But we also need to look at how digital can transform other areas of our work, outside of these core services, such as how we work with partners and providers. These sorts of changes could potentially have the largest impact for our own staff, in terms of making a difference on a day-to-day basis.

4 How our new services will look

User focused, secure, easy to use and engineered to work across a range of devices

Digital technology offers us the opportunity to transform our business, benefiting the millions of people we serve, our staff and taxpayers who fund the system. There is a clear demand for digital services from DWP: many of the most viewed and searched-for pages on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) are DWP content.

Well-designed digital services are more efficient for users than their non-digital equivalents. But there are other considerable benefits of helping more people online. Our working-age users in particular need to be confident online to compete in the modern labour market. Many jobs are now only advertised online and most vacancies require digital skills, putting those who are digitally excluded at a disadvantage.

Confidence in using digital services can offer access to new opportunities and greater independence for people who might otherwise be isolated socially. And internet users have access to cheaper goods and services.

Supporting more people to get online can therefore contribute to our departmental objectives around supporting people into work and tackling poverty, as well as offering advantages for the Department and our staff.

By driving take up of digital services we can reduce how much it costs to serve customers and claimants, freeing up time for our staff to give more intensive support to those who need it. Evidence from the [Digital Efficiency Report](#) suggests that for some government transactions the average cost of a digital transaction can be almost 20 times lower than the cost of a telephone transaction, about 30 times lower than the cost of a postal transaction and about 50 times lower than a face-to-face transaction.

But to realise these kinds of savings we need to offer high quality digital services which people prefer to other channels. This means designing services centred on users, which are intuitive to use, feel secure without the need for onerous processes and reflect the different ways which people access the internet.

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These services need to be a joined up digital proposition, rather than a patchwork of digital services which only cover a small proportion of a person's interactions with the Department – whether this means making an initial claim, reporting changes of circumstance, interacting around appeals or managing overpayments.

Focused on the needs of users. Even recognising the complexity of some of the transactions which DWP delivers, services should be designed with usability as a key consideration. They should be intuitive enough for most people to use without any further intervention, utilising tools such as validation to ensure that users know what information is required at what time.

Where people do become stuck during the process, they should as far as possible be able to solve this through online help and support such as FAQs or other online solutions – for example, co-browsing, where a DWP adviser is able to see the same screens as the user and guide them through the process. And as far as possible different services should be integrated and avoid duplicating processes or requests for information.

To ensure that this is the case, systems need to be tested extensively and continually with users and responsive enough that improvements can be made quickly and regularly.

Secure but simple to access. Trust is a key issue surrounding the use of digital services. Nearly [one in five](#) people identify fears about data security as a reason they would not make an application for benefits online.

Identity assurance – confirming that someone is who they say they are – and data security are also vitally important to protect the welfare system from fraud. Because of the high level of detailed personal data the Department holds, many services could not be delivered digitally until a robust infrastructure to support this is in place.

However, we need to strike the right balance between usability and security: processes which are too onerous can drive people towards other channels. We will develop an approach across our digital services which balances these considerations.

Engineered to work across a range of devices. The device landscape is constantly changing – for example, the use of tablets has increased rapidly over recent years. Different people use different devices for different purposes at different times of the day. Rather than developing expensive standalone apps for particular

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devices, systems and platforms should be flexible and responsive enough to adapt to a range of devices through smarter engineering.

In five years time, our digital services will:

- be simple to understand and use, with complexity hidden away from the user;
- be rapidly iterated so that we can innovate and improve services quickly;
- avoid duplication, with users wherever possible only asked for information once;
- enable better conversations between users and the Department;
- integrate seamlessly with other channels;
- actively support people to find work rather than simply checking on compliance with requirements;
- be secure, so that people can be confident in using the service;
- be quicker and more convenient, saving people time and enabling them to access services at any time of day;
- make it clear how to find information and help; and
- offer a joined-up proposition, so that a wider range of their interactions with the Department can be carried out through digital channels.

To support the delivery of new services which meet these standards, we will explore a number of potential new departures. Social media is an increasingly important part of how people interact online, not just with friends and relations but with organisations. We will pilot the use of social media to support service delivery as part of our major programme of welfare reform. This will include:

- directly engaging with claimants on their experience of DWP to enable us to continuously improve our services;
- supporting people to stay in digital channels by directly answering queries through social media (where private information does not need to be revealed), as a less expensive alternative to telephony; and
- proactively publishing information about our digital services, including at times when there may be a particularly high number of enquiries – for example, around changes to benefit conditions or annual uprating.

The 2010 strategic review, [Directgov 2010 and Beyond](#), also highlighted how opening up data and digital services to public, private and third sector organisations could offer opportunities to deliver services more effectively. The review suggested that increasing the availability of APIs might be one way of doing this.

What is an API?

Almost all software has to interact with other software to carry out basic functions (for example, copying text from a Microsoft Word document to an email requires the two programmes to 'talk to each other'). Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) enable this communication to happen. An API is like a gateway built into a program: it specifies the password or set of actions needed to access certain parts of the program. APIs can therefore be used to open software and enable third parties to access a program's data or services in a controlled way.

DWP already uses more than 200 APIs, and is continuously developing more. Examples include the Blue Badge scheme, where an API allows software to match a customer's name and National Insurance number to DWP data. However, most are used internally. Other government departments are already using APIs with external partners to provide a simpler and more integrated user experience. For example, tax self-assessment forms are built into many accountancy software packages using an API, with data feeding directly into HMRC's systems.

There are two broad areas of opportunity for DWP to potentially improve the user experience: allowing third parties to access DWP data or allowing third parties to add to DWP databases, subject to legal considerations. Two examples of how this might be used could be:

Allowing third parties to access DWP data

Some charities are frequently asked for advice about why DWP has responded to a benefit claim in particular way. Currently, charities have to request the information they need on a case-by-case basis. Sharing this kind of data via an API would automate this process, potentially saving time and money for the charity and DWP, and offering a quicker service to the claimant.

Allowing third parties to add to DWP databases

GPs regularly need to send medical information to DWP. Using an API to enable doctors to send information automatically to DWP systems could make this process more efficient, speeding up the receipt of information, and reducing costs for both the NHS and DWP.

We will carry out a scoping exercise to see where there may be opportunities offered by APIs, and what demand there would be from third parties.

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We will also look to provide content where users are, where this is the most effective way of delivering. For example, we have recently launched the [Sorting Out Separation web app](#) which aims to help separated parents work together to achieve the best outcomes for their children. This will enable the service to be embedded in other websites to ensure that advice and guidance, such as maintenance calculators and tips on co-parenting, are available to people through sites they use regularly.

5 Delivering high quality digital services

We need to design high quality services people prefer, starting with three exemplars: UC, PIP and Carer's Allowance

Action 1

Adopt a new approach to designing services, focusing on increased agility in development and continuous improvement of services on the basis of user feedback

Action 2

Deliver three exemplar digital services, starting from 2013: Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance

Action 3

Redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions a year, and look for opportunities to improve user and staff experience by digitalising other areas of the Department

Action 4

Work with Government Digital Service to develop a digital by default standard for all new and redesigned services

Action 5

Produce a consistent set of management information to ensure we are able to meet this standard or identify improvements we need to make

To ensure that we deliver high quality digital services, we need to work differently. The introduction of Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and a new prototype e-service for Carer's Allowance will be the first exemplars of this new approach.

One of the major barriers to moving services online in the past has been the time it took and amount it cost to develop new services. New ways of working, as set out in the Government ICT and Digital Strategies, are now enabling increasingly rapid development of new systems, rather than the frustratingly slow progress of the past.

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This approach involves breaking systems down into component parts and building simple working models which we can then trial with users and scale up incrementally. To support this process, we need to ensure we have the in-house expertise to assess the complexity of future developments, and in some cases to develop and manage systems.

When buying in expertise from the market we will work with a wide range of suppliers including more small and medium-sized companies. We will contract for flexible services that can be implemented, scaled and changed quickly, and we will focus our providers on delivering better value, higher quality services focused on the needs of users. Wherever possible, we will look to use common technology platforms and work with other departments to develop joint services.

After this initial build we need to make sure that we are able to continuously improve services. We will work with the Government Digital Service to develop a clear Digital by Default service standard, which will define what is considered high quality for new or redesigned services. This standard will cover factors such as:

- uptake;
- cost per transaction;
- transaction success rates;
- user satisfaction;
- operational capability;
- design;
- development and technology; and
- legality, security and resilience.

To ensure we are able to meet this standard, or identify improvements we need to make to do so, we will produce a consistent set of management information wherever systems allow, and ensure that new systems are built with the ability to produce this information in mind. Section 9 sets out the need for experienced and skilled managers to have the power to improve services on the basis of this management information and feedback from users.

Learning from these three initial exemplar projects will be carried forward into future programmes, such as our State Pension reforms which will begin during the next Parliament. As part of the Spending Review process we will look at our other major transactional services – those with more than 100,000 transactions a year, such as bereavement benefits or Attendance Allowance – and establish a roadmap for further digitalisation.

We will also look at what part digital can play in other areas such as the Department's interactions with its delivery partners, supporting functions like debt

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management, and new areas like work-related requirements for people in work under Universal Credit.

6 Supporting people to use our services

We will support people to get online and to use our services – making sure that everyone can access what they're entitled to

Action 6

Use our existing phone and face-to-face channels to signpost people to digital options and help people to use digital services where they are having difficulties

Action 7

Ensure that digital skills are a key part of the support offered to jobseekers to help them back to work

Action 8

Work in partnership with other government departments and organisations to increase digital skills among disadvantaged groups

Action 9

As use of digital channels increases over time, look at how best to deliver assisted digital support

Around a quarter of people who are already online do not use digital services. In addition, a significant proportion of people are not online at all – and this is particularly true of our customers and claimants. And of these, a small number may never be.

For the group of people who currently *could* interact with DWP online but choose not to, we will drive take up by providing higher quality services and explaining clearly the benefits of these services. Our telephony and face-to-face services will signpost people to the digital service wherever one is available and increasingly help people to use the digital service where they are having difficulties. These channels will also provide a safety net for those who cannot use digital services, even with support.

Increased support for people using JSA Online

Since May 2012, we have been offering increased support through telephony and jobcentres to help people to use JSA Online. Staff are helping claimants to find free

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internet access in their local area, supporting people to use the site and explaining the benefits of using the online channel. Take up of JSA Online has increased rapidly over this period.

Insert graph showing increasing take up.

The Government Assisted Digital paper, published alongside departmental digital strategies, sets out a consistent approach to providing services to people who have rarely or never been online. Anyone who really needs support through other channels will be able to access a service face-to-face, by phone or in another appropriate non-digital way.

Initially, for many of DWP's services the requirement for assisted digital services will be particularly high, as digital exclusion is higher among our customers and claimants. This assisted digital support will be delivered in-house by frontline staff when Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment launch in 2013.

However, over time we expect that the need for other channels will generally diminish as the demand for digital services increases. We will look to close existing channels as demand decreases, since we will need resources for other work, including helping those in low paid work increase their earnings, and decrease their dependence on Universal Credit.

Where residual non-digital services are needed for a small number of people who cannot interact online, we will look with other Government Departments who will have the same business need, at the best way to supply this support. This may well require us to work through others, better placed to engage with those who need this support. To ensure that assisted digital provision is of a consistent standard across government, we will work with the Government Digital Service to deliver a service standard, and a common model for procurement, if external provision offers the best value for money.

While we anticipate that the demand for other channels will decrease naturally over time and as services improve, it is important that wherever possible we tackle digital exclusion by supporting people who currently do not use the internet to get online.

For most people, we believe that delivering our services through digital channels is more effective and efficient, and that helping people to use government services can be a gateway to much wider benefits, particularly for our customers and claimants.

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And we will only be able realise savings fully if the need for the safety net diminishes to the extent that other channels can be reduced or shut down.

“For the most disadvantaged people in the country, government digital services is such a massive lever (to help them get online).” **Martha Lane Fox**

Our jobcentres have a vital role in supporting people to use our digital services. The face-to-face contact we have with jobseekers at least fortnightly gives us a unique opportunity to upskill people and provide hands-on support. Over the last year we have introduced computers into local offices for claimants to use with support from advisers; more than 2,000 devices have now been installed.

We are carrying out a ‘proof of concept’ for a model office of the future to demonstrate how a truly digital-based jobcentre might look. The aim of this pilot is to create an interactive environment where claimants are helped to access services themselves digitally and where the labour market is wrapped around the claimant. We will look to see whether we can improve user experience and increase digital skills through proposals such as open-access WiFi, touchscreen self-service terminals for claimants and the use of videos and wall-mounted display monitors. We will also look to streamline the experience for staff through improved staff desktops, self check-in for appointments and improved display of information and data. As part of this pilot, claimants without an email address will be referred within the first week of their claim to basic IT skills training; those with an email address will be supported to build an electronic CV and set up jobsearches on Universal Jobmatch.

The introduction of Universal Jobmatch, which will become the key engagement tool between advisers and claimants, will also allow us to more easily identify jobseekers who are lacking digital skills. Where gaps are identified, claimants will be expected to take up help to address these as part of the package of back-to-work support they receive. As part of the process of introducing Universal Credit, we are running pilots with 12 local authorities to explore how they can support claimants in a number of ways, including by helping to develop skills.

‘Jobsearch Goes Digital’ sessions

Since January, Cwmbran Jobcentre has run regular group sessions for claimants offering help to develop the digital skills they need to look for work in the modern labour market. Anyone who needs further help is offered a one-to-one appointment with their Personal Adviser or with a careers adviser.

For jobseekers, this kind of approach is possible because of the requirement for at least fortnightly face-to-face contact. We will need to give particular consideration to

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how to support other groups of our customers and claimants, such as disabled people and older people, who we may not see as regularly, particularly if we currently deal with them mainly by post or phone. To make sure that as many as people as possible can use them we will ensure that our digital services meet all the necessary accessibility standards.

We will also work in partnership with other government departments and organisations such as Digital Unite, Go ON and UK Online Centres to increase people's basic digital skills. And we will consider how best to support people who might need help in their own homes, if they are unable to access libraries or UK Online Centres.

Age Action Alliance

The Age Action Alliance digital inclusion group was set up with the aim of supporting older people to access and use digital technology. The group brings together a wide range of influential organisations including Digital Unite, Microsoft, Which and Ofcom. Projects include looking to establish a framework of Digital Champions in every community, establishing a nationally-recognised 'digital mentor' qualification, and sharing free resources for digital learning.

7 Changing the way we make policy

Digital means policymakers can engage more and earlier with a wider range of voices

Action 10

Ensure that policymakers and delivery experts work closely together to design digital services built around user insight

Action 11

Use digital channels to engage with a wider range of views and expertise, integrating online tools with non-digital channels

The Government has recognised that high quality policymaking means engaging early with the public and other organisations. The increasing prevalence of digital technology and new ways of designing services present particular challenges and opportunities for policymakers.

Policymaking has traditionally followed a linear process with policy often developed and passed into legislation before service design begins. Consultation with the public and outside organisations has tended to follow a similar pattern; the Government publishes a paper setting out options which it seeks views on within a set period, before publishing a formal response. Digital channels offer the opportunity to adopt new approaches to policy development and consultation.

In developing exemplar services such as Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment, policymakers and delivery experts are working in an integrated way to design a service built around user needs, rather than a policy in isolation. We will embed this approach in future changes and ensure that policymakers have the digital skills necessary to understand how new services are developed. As well as ensuring an intuitive user experience, this will also allow us to make sure that the policy aims can be delivered effectively in practice.

The [Civil Service Reform Plan](#) highlighted the need for a more open approach to policymaking, drawing on a wider range of views and expertise. Government departments are already using digital channels for engagement in a range of ways – such as engaging with the wider public through social media like Twitter, publishing commentable versions of policy publications and Bills, and setting up conversation platforms to engage with special interest groups.

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DWP has already used commentable documents and interactive consultations in a [number of cases](#). We will build on this experience to ensure we use a wide range of engagement tools as part of upcoming consultations, drawing on the toolkit developed by the Government Digital Service. We will integrate online policy-making tools with non-digital channels to ensure that no-one is excluded from inputting into the consultation process. As well as using digital channels for formal engagement we will look to embed these in the everyday policymaking process so that policies can be developed taking into account the widest range of views possible.

8 Transforming how we work

We need to change to become a digital business – from the frontline up to senior leaders

Action 12

Appoint a board level digital champion to co-ordinate and direct the digital agenda across the Department

Action 13

Ensure skilled and experienced managers are in place with clear accountability for the quality and take up of digital services

Action 14

Identify any gaps in the Department's technical capabilities around digital and address these through external recruitment and internal development

Action 15

Ensure that all staff, particularly on the frontline, have the digital skills and knowledge needed to undertake changing job roles

Action 16

Change legislation or internal processes which prevent services from being delivered online, and build in flexibility to allow for continuous improvement

To function effectively we need to ensure that we have the right culture and capabilities in place across the organisation. The Department has made some progress along this road but there is more to do.

We will ensure that we have an effective board-level champion for digital by appointing a Digital Leader to co-ordinate and direct the digital agenda across the Department, and oversee delivery of the roadmap for moving DWP services online over the course of the next Spending Review.

Aside from the formal Digital Leader role, we are working more widely with leaders across the Department to ensure that they have the capabilities to drive digital innovation and improve the quality of delivery.

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We will ensure that the structure of the Department supports the development of high quality services. For new and redesigned services, we need to ensure that skilled and experienced managers are in place with clear accountability for the quality and take up of digital services. These managers will need to be empowered to continuously improve those services on the basis of user feedback and analytics, to ensure that their service meets the Digital by Default Service Standard.

For services which are delivered across a variety of different channels, such as Universal Credit, we will consider how best to allocate accountabilities to ensure clear 'lines of sight' and ownership of digital channels.

And we need to ensure we have the technical skills in place to be able to develop services effectively in-house – or to commission effectively from outside the Department, with a focus on users and the ability to improve continuously built into contracts. We will carry out a detailed assessment of our digital capabilities at all levels, looking at areas such as product management and procurement, to identify where gaps exist currently. We will then look to procure and hire effectively to fill these gaps.

As well as technical skills, a seachange in the Department's culture is needed to ensure that staff, particularly on the frontline, are equipped properly with the digital skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be able to undertake changing job roles. Communications, learning and development, and leadership are key to meeting this challenge. We will ensure that these plans align with the broader Civil Service capability plans set out by the Cabinet Office.

Staff at all levels need to be able to explain and advocate for our services effectively. We know that some of our people have much stronger digital skills than others. We will ensure that throughout the Department all staff develop a core digital literacy, and improve their digital confidence. The importance of digital will need to be recognised in objectives and appraisals. Through our community volunteering programme, Community 10,000, we will support to get involved in tackling digital exclusion at a local level.

Community 10,000

As part of the BBC's First Click campaign members of staff from DWP volunteered to act as coaches for beginners computer courses targeted at the over-55s. Coaches helped people with varying levels of digital skills to build their confidence and knowledge.

Digital Strategy

We will also need to increase engagement with and enthusiasm for digital services across the Department. DWP already has a network of nearly 700 digital champions across the business to promote the use of digital services. However, the digital champion role is still a largely informal one, with volunteers taking on the role alongside other responsibilities. We will review the role of these digital champions to ensure they are empowered to drive change at a local level, guided by clear leadership from senior levels. As part of this review, we will consider the objectives of the digital champion network and how we gauge the effectiveness of champions.

Legislation and governance can also be barriers to moving services online. We are exploring whether there are particular blocks in existing legislation which would prevent digital delivery. Where these are identified, we will work with Cabinet Office to remove them, where possible. We will also look to make new legislation more flexible to allow for new ways of working. The legislation for Universal Credit attempted to allow for constant evolution of the service by including a general power to test new approaches with small groups of users. Wherever possible we will look to repeat this approach when bringing in new legislation.

Universal Credit piloting powers

Section 41 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 allows for controlled pilots to test changes to the structure, design and delivery of Universal Credit. Pilots could be to test ways to make Universal Credit simpler to understand or administer; to more effectively help people obtain or remain in work; or to effect behavioural change amongst users. This power will ensure that we are able to continuously improve and evolve the system in response to user needs after Universal Credit is introduced.

Similarly, internal governance processes do not always allow for quick development or continuing iteration. In adopting a new approach to designing services, 'speed to market' is vitally important. We will adapt our processes to allow for the risks inherent in this kind of experimentation, and to enable us to stop development quickly when things do not work.

Internal rules can also discourage the use of digital technology to engage within the organisation and outside. We will ensure that there are clear guidelines on what is and is not acceptable, particularly around the use of social media, and then allow as much flexibility as possible around use.

9 Exemplar service 1: Universal Credit

9.1 Description of the new service

Universal Credit will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working age benefits into a single streamlined payment, affecting more than 12 million existing awards. As well as being easier for people to understand, the new Universal Credit system will improve work incentives and smooth the transition into work.

We are building Universal Credit to be the first truly digital welfare service. Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, users will be able to make a claim, check details of payments, notify changes of circumstance and search for a job through a single account, making digital the primary channel for most working-age people to interact with the Department: we expect that at least 80 per cent of claimants will choose to do so by 2017.

9.2 What digital services are available currently?

Digital services for the benefits and tax credits replaced by Universal Credit are limited. As well as online claims for JSA, users can see information about their JSA, ESA or IS award through their personal benefit account at My Benefits Online. Housing Benefit is administered by individual local authorities, some of whom offer digital services, although coverage is patchy. No digital services are available for tax credits.

9.3 When will it be introduced?

We will begin to introduce Universal Credit over the next year. To ensure that we are able to deliver this enormous package of reform safely we are live-testing Universal Credit extensively with users. From April 2013 a pathfinder will run with around 9,000 households in Greater Manchester and Cheshire to test the end-to-end system. We will continue to improve the system in response to user feedback. Once the rollout of Universal Credit is complete more than nine million households will have moved from existing benefits and tax credits.

Digital Strategy

We will ensure that lessons learnt from the introduction of Universal Credit are embedded into future projects, including the development of DWP's next two exemplar digital services.

10 Exemplar service 2: Personal Independence Payment

10.1 Description of the new service

From 2013, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will replace Disability Living Allowance for new claims from people aged between 16 and 64. PIP will be payable to people in or out of work to help towards some of the extra costs of ill health or disability. Most people will be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation with a health professional to assess the particular challenges they face.

The introduction of PIP offers an opportunity to work with disability organisations to redesign business processes and facilitate a move to digital. The service from day one will be predominantly telephony but we will be working closely with the Government Digital Service to develop an online service, learning the lessons from a controlled launch, with the intention of bringing this in as soon as possible after the launch of PIP.

10.2 What digital services are available currently?

DLA currently has a very limited online service for new claims but this is not widely used; the vast majority of claims are currently taken by paper with occasional support over the phone.

10.3 When will it be introduced?

From April 2013 the service will be introduced in a controlled start area and we will be using this period to test the robustness of the business processes before national roll out in June. From October 2013 around two millions existing recipients of DLA will start to move across to PIP.

11 Exemplar service 3: Carer's Allowance

11.1 Description of the new service

Carer's Allowance is a benefit paid to people who care for a severely disabled person for at least 35 hours a week. Working with the Government Digital Service, we are developing a prototype new digital service for Carer's Allowance with the aim of increasing take up of digital channels.

The new service is being developed with the needs of carers at its heart, looking to remove complexity from the current user journey. There are clear benefits for people who are caring full-time of being able to interact with the Department at a time and in a way that suits them.

11.2 What digital services are available currently?

An online service was developed in 2007 which allows users to make a claim or update their details. Once received by the Department the claim or change is treated the same as if submitted by post or over the phone: it is printed off and dealt with as paper. Take up of the current e-service is only around 25 per cent.

11.3 When will it be introduced?

An 'Alpha' version of a new front-end service, built in conjunction with experienced processing staff, has been designed and is being tested with users.