Digital strategy

Leading the culture change in health and care

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Contents

Foreword

More of us bank, shop and talk online than ever before and at work the internet has fuelled a new industrial revolution of productivity and efficiency. Consumers have benefitted from more choice and far greater convenience while businesses have benefitted from lower costs and a wealth of data that can be used to continuously improve their products and services.

Going digital means that public services can be more efficient, more transparent and more effective. The Government's Digital Strategy has a bold and simple ambition: to redesign government services, to place them online and to make them straightforward and convenient.

There are many advantages to going digital, both for users and for taxpayers. The most obvious improvement will be making public services easier to use, giving people access to services online, reducing the number of forms they need to fill in, giving people the information they need to help them in their everyday lives.

It will also mean that government can engage more effectively with the public and with different organisations. This in turn will lead to better, more informed policy making by ministers. And at a time of tightening budgets it is a powerful way to improve services while significantly reducing costs – by as much as £1.8 billion every year.

This public service revolution is happening at every level of government and across all of the NHS and social care, putting patients in control. It is also happening here within the Department of Health. This Digital Strategy will change the way we work inside the department, how we connect with the world outside and the way we work with our partners across the wider health and social care community. It will make everything we do simpler, clearer and faster.

Dr Dan Poulter
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health

Executive summary

Technology and the internet are transforming society. They are changing the way we talk to each other, work with one another and organise our lives.

The impact technology can have in healthcare is profound and transformative. More open access to quality data increases our understanding of how diseases develop and spread. Linking data – to industry and research as well as to patients, service users and the public – gives us insight into the whole patient journey, not just isolated episodes of care. Sharing experiences through social channels equips people with information to help them to get the right support or care. Remote diagnosis and surgery are no longer the stuff of science fiction.

In any sector, advances in technology help people to do things quicker, more efficiently and with better results. And launching a health information revolution that puts patients in control of their health and care information, and makes services convenient, accessible and efficient, is now a major priority for the Department of Health.

This step change means everyone will benefit from more joined-up care, better services, and more transparent sharing of information. Patients and the public will access information or services in ways designed for them, not for the system. And health and care professionals will spend more time caring for the people most in need, and less time serving inefficient information systems.

In May 2102 the Department of Health published a 10-year [Information Strategy](#) for the health and care system. This Digital Strategy focuses instead on the department itself as a strategic department of state, and on both its policymaking role and its role as steward of the new health and care system.

The responsibilities of the department, and the wider health and care system, will change during 2013. These changes provide huge opportunities to review and redesign the ways the department works in line with the [Civil Service Reform Plan.](#) The department is already changing in response to an increasingly digital world. But technology alone cannot bring about that change.

This strategy sets out the Department of Health's aim to become a digital exemplar in Whitehall, giving its staff the knowledge, skills, permission and confidence to embrace digital opportunities to deliver better health, better care and better value for all.

In this strategy, the Department of Health specifically commits to:

1. **Improve the development and impact of its open policymaking by:**

   - training policymakers consistently to use digital techniques to inform policy development, engage different audiences and evaluate effectiveness

- creating a new minimum digital standard for all formal consultations, including developing new methods for analysing, not just collecting, responses digitally
- developing a toolkit to help policymakers identify the most appropriate digital tools and techniques for each stage of the policy cycle.

2. **Increase the effectiveness of its communications to, and engagement with, audiences and stakeholders by**:

- adopting a digital first approach to all communications activity and evaluation, starting with a formal pilot in early 2013
- developing virtual networks for internal teams and key stakeholders to discuss and share information and ideas openly and transparently
- embedding a more distributed model of digital communication by encouraging staff across the department to use social channels for communication, staff engagement and relationship-building, in line with the Government's social media guidance and the department's own policies.

3. **Develop the digital skills it needs across the organisation by:**

- working with heads of profession and Civil Service Learning to ensure that the department's 2013 Learning and Development strategy reflects the needs of staff and the digital ambitions in the Civil Service Capabilities Plan
- developing an internal programme of digital masterclasses to share experiences, knowledge and best practice
- reviewing in-house capability to develop and manage new digital products, revising existing and creating new roles as required, working closely with the Government Digital Service and suppliers

4. **Improve its day-to-day efficiency by:**

- Adopting a new, transparent, 'open by default' principle for information and delivering new ICT and knowledge management systems in early 2013
- developing and delivering the right digital products and services by bringing together staff with skills in a range of disciplines from the outset to ensure the design meets the needs of users
- introducing a new fast-track approvals route for procuring external digital products and services for business use, using small and medium-sized enterprises and the CloudStore wherever possible.

5. **Steward the health and care system towards a health information revolution by:**

- implementing the Digital First channel strategy for health and care to deliver a consistent approach to digital across the system, including bringing together the best information and services from across the NHS, public health and social care into a single integrated customer service platform for citizens

- developing an active community of digital professionals within the health and care system and providing a digital workspace to share best practice, case studies and digital knowledge
- developing the information policies and improving the data quality to ensure that Digital First and the health information revolution become a reality across the health and care system for the benefit of all.

This is an ambitious programme of work. Transforming the future Department of Health by applying digital tools and techniques to everything it does, from the prosaic to the truly transformative, requires real internal commitment and culture change.

This strategy sets the direction for that programme of change, and demonstrates how the future Department of Health can lead the way as a digital department of state, and provide policy leadership for a digitally enabled and technologically ambitious health and care system.

Introduction

The role of the Department of Health is to enable people to live better for longer by providing better health, better care and better value. Its vision is to ensure that:

- people have the best possible start to life
- health is protected, wellbeing is promoted, and avoidable deaths and diseases are prevented
- people are enabled to live independent and fulfilling lives, and take control of the care they need
- people who are ill or need support receive safe and effective care and are treated with dignity, including at the end of life
- health and care inequalities become a thing of the past

The health and social care system is going through a massive period of reform. As a result of the Health and Social Act 2012, responsibilities, functions and organisations across the system will change by April 2013.

At the same time, the Department of Health itself is going through major change. From April 2013, it will shape the new health and care system, but will no longer be the headquarters of the NHS, nor will it directly manage any NHS organisations. The department will become a smaller, more strategic policymaking department of state. It will be responsible for improving people's health and wellbeing through its stewardship of adult social care, public health and the NHS. It will set objectives and budgets, and ensure that all parts of the system work together and that each is successful in delivering its own priorities. The Secretary of State for Health will remain ultimately accountable for the whole system.

'Digital First' for health and care

In May 2012, the department published its Information Strategy for health and care, The Power of Information, setting out a 10-year vision for transforming how information is used across the new health and care system. It shows how information and technology has the potential to transform people's health and care.

The Information Strategy also describes how health and care information and services will be provided 'Digital First' in future. 'Digital First' is the health and care equivalent of digital by default, and makes a firm commitment to adopting digital methods to deliver healthcare, but makes clear that face-to-face contact with health and care professionals will always remain an essential, and appropriate, part of care.

Creating a more technologically focussed health and care system is a major priority for the Department of Health. The Information Strategy is departmental policy for that system, but is not a strategy for the department itself. For the department itself to

steward the system towards this end, it too needs to become much more digitally enabled.

Why does the department need a digital strategy?

Digital is now central to the government's plans to reform public services. The commitment to digital by default services was made in the March 2012 Budget, and reaffirmed in the June 2012 Civil Service Reform Plan.

In his Foreword to the Plan, Francis Maude said:

> 'Central Government wherever 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. Government has lagged far behind; and the pace of change needed to catch up will place major demands on the Civil Service. We need better skills, better technology and a mindset that revolves around the user, not the producer.'

The Government Digital Strategy published on 6 November sets out 14 specific actions for government. All government departments are publishing departmental digital strategies responding to the government strategy and its 14 actions in December 2012.

The Department of Health digital strategy

The actions in the Government Digital Strategy focus mainly on transactional services for the public, such as applications, tax, licensing and payments. But the strategy also explains how the civil service must develop new skills and approaches and improve the way it makes policy and communicates with people.

The Department of Health does not directly deliver transactions or services for the public. These are delivered by the NHS and the broader health and care sector. This digital strategy therefore does not cover transactions or services. Should the department deliver any transactions in the future, it is committed to following the digital by default standard as set out in the Government Digital Strategy.[1]

The department's digital strategy sets out its ambition to become a Digital First department of state, with digital tools and techniques embedded throughout its work. It is not an IT or technology strategy, but builds on existing strategies including the Government Digital Strategy, the Government ICT Strategy, the Information strategy for health and care, the DH corporate plan, the DH social marketing strategy, and internal

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[1] At the time of publishing, the Healthy Start scheme had just been confirmed as being delivered by the Department of Health in future, not by Public Health England. This scheme will be reviewed for compliance with the digital by default standard in due course.

strategies such as the DH knowledge management strategy and the DH communications strategy.

The department has already delivered much digitally in the last two years, and this strategy includes examples and case studies. The commitments in this strategy will help the department to build on this foundation, and to apply what it has learned systematically across everything that it does.

To demonstrate the importance of Digital First for the new Department of Health, and the very real opportunities this strategy represents, implementation of the digital strategy will become a central plank of the Future DH Programme, set up to help the department shape and transform the way it works in order to maximise its effectiveness in the new system.

A formal Digital Strategy action plan and timetable will be developed as part of that wider programme in early 2013.

Case study: Department of Health Corporate Plan

The Department of Health Corporate Plan sets out the department's policy priorities for the coming year. It is an essential document for staff, and for those externally with an interest in the department's work.

In 2012, the Plan was published for the first time as a living, interactive web document. Publishing it in this way turned what used to be a one-off PDF publication into a fully searchable digital product. People can navigate by priority and topic, and link to individual pages and sections. And it provides links to further information published on the department's digital channels, which in turn provide updates on delivery of the policy objectives in the Plan.

Publishing policy documents and corporate publications in an interactive way that anticipates how people are likely to use the content makes that content more accessible and useful for our users for longer.

The department will continue to use this Digital First format for all its major policies and corporate products.

Link: Corporate plan

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1. Digital and policy

The Department of Health is committed to using digital tools and techniques to improve its policymaking process.

The context: Open policymaking

In future, government policymaking will be more open, allowing people to interact with officials and offer their views. The Civil Service Reform Plan summarised this shift:

> 'Open policy making will become the default. Whitehall does not have a monopoly on policy making expertise. We will establish a clear model of open policy making.'

How digital can help: Digital tools and techniques can be applied at each stage of the policymaking process (see Figure 1), to gather insight and ideas, to collaborate with partners, to ask for feedback, to explain policy and to evaluate effectiveness.

Figure 1: The policymaking process

Source: DH internal document: How to make good policy

What the department will do: The department will create a new digital open policymaking network for all its policymakers.

Case study: Draft Care and Support Bill

The 2012 draft Care and Support Bill represents the largest overhaul of the adult care and support law in 60 years. In order to create the best possible draft, the department needed people from outside Whitehall to contribute directly to the drafting process, alongside the process of parliamentary scrutiny.

The draft Bill was published online, inviting public comments. Users were encouraged to leave a

comment against each clause, against areas of particular interest to them, about the drafting, or about how they felt the legislation would work in practice.

Comments were published on the site alongside the clauses, which in turn triggered threads of discussion. 600 useful comments were posted on the site. Some were complimentary, some were challenging, but all were insightful.

All these online comments have been analysed by the Bill team and are now being used to help create better care and support law.

> 'This is a most useful way of allowing people to comment on the draft bill.' **User from Portsmouth City Council**

Link: Draft Care and Support Bill

Stage 1: Shaping the policy product

At this stage of the policy process, policymakers decide what to tackle. They define the issue, construct the policy development task and design the work.

Gathering evidence

Policymakers in the department gather evidence from multiple sources to support their work. They might do this by listening to stakeholders, looking at international examples, or gathering research from academia.

How digital can help: Digital techniques, such as influencer mapping, data mining, and social media monitoring, are particularly useful at this stage. And these techniques can make the policy process more efficient by providing ways to sort and filter information.

What the department will do: The department will use specialist digital techniques to gather evidence and insight, and give all policy staff the skills to do this for themselves.

Case study: Influencer mapping and social media monitoring

To understand how its work is perceived and to help it target its activity most effectively, the department needs to know who is discussing its work and policy priorities, and who the most influential voices are.

The department filters social media conversations using keywords relevant to each policy area. The most shared content, and content from stakeholders and other influential individuals, is used to build a picture of the impact of the department's work in social channels, and our audiences' views towards specific subjects.

The digital team shares an overview of stories of interest to the department and its work with officials and ministers each week, alongside more traditional media monitoring such as press clippings. This at-a-glance briefing helps ministers and officials to get an immediate sense of the

impact of their work, but also allows for systematic and longer-term tracking of key issues over time.

Alongside this, influencer mapping helps the department to understand who the most credible voices are for each subject, which channels they use and how they are influencing opinion. For example, by analysing the relative influence of individuals and organisations on Twitter, rather than simply looking at volumes of followers or numbers of retweets, the department builds a clearer picture of which commentators on any specific subject have the most impact.

Influencer mapping helps officials in the department to plan and target their policy and stakeholder engagement work to ensure it has greatest impact. The department is now committed to helping policymakers across the department gather this level of digital evidence themselves.

> 'This makes for really interesting reading – it will really help teams make better use of social media to interact with stakeholders' **DH official**

Link: Using Pinterest to share evaluation

Collecting ideas

As well as gathering insight, policymakers may need to stimulate and take part in discussion with different audiences to inform the policy at a very early stage.

How digital can help: Digital and social channels lend themselves well to techniques such as crowd-sourcing ideas that help policymakers benefit from the combined expertise of communities of people online.

What the department will do: The department will provide a toolkit of methodologies, case studies and testimonials to help policymakers identify the most appropriate digital tools and techniques for each stage of the policy cycle.

Case study: Maps and Apps

In 2011, the department ran a crowd-sourcing exercise over six weeks to identify the best existing health and social care mobile apps and online tools and the best ideas for new apps and tools. Nearly 500 ideas were submitted, stimulating tens of thousands of votes and other interactions from the public, health and care professionals, and the developer community.

The results fed directly into the Information Strategy for health and care, and the active community of developers and entrepreneurs this exercise identified continues to influence the development of policy and health channels.

The integrated customer service platform being delivered by the NHS Commissioning Board on behalf of the department, the NHS, public health and adult social care will now include a directory of online tools and applications, building on the success of Maps and Apps.

Link: Maps and Apps blog

Stage 2: Engaging stakeholders

At this stage, policymakers build relationships with partners affected by or involved with a policy. The department may draw on their combined expertise to co-produce policies and seek their commitment to policy solutions.

Talking to people

Dialogue with stakeholders and other experts helps policymakers to make better decisions. Ongoing, informal conversations can be as valuable as more formal consultations. And people involved in policymaking meet and interact with one another in multiple ways, and through multiple different networks, groups and forums.

How digital can help: Social media can help to extend the reach and diversity of these conversations. Policymakers can actively participate in open digital networks in an official capacity, under their own name.

What the department will do: The department will run digital policy engagement programmes for each of the Secretary of State's priorities. And it will encourage more staff to talk openly about their work in social media on the department's behalf, in line with the appropriate social media guidance and the department's own policies.

Working with others

Good policy often depends on involving diverse groups of people in the process. To do this, policymakers reach out to groups of people with a contribution to make wherever they are, rather than making policy behind closed doors in Whitehall.

How digital can help: Digital policy engagement uses a combination of departmental channels, social media, third party channels and partnerships to reach groups of people that the department might otherwise find it difficult to engage.

What the department will do: The department will use digital techniques to identify and target diverse groups of people with a useful contribution to make using those channels and media that they themselves choose to use.

Case study: Caring for our future

In September 2011, the department ran an 11-week engagement exercise targeted at the people and organisations involved in care and support. The aim was to understand people's concerns and priorities in this area and feed these into a Care and Support White Paper.

The department invited comments on six issues around social care reform, and ran 260 linked engagement events. As part of this exercise, hundreds of comments were posted online. The feedback from the engagement events and the comments posted in digital channels were used to develop the White Paper and progress report on funding which was published in July 2012.

> 'A great example of how engagement can work well' **Jeremy Hughes, CEO, Alzheimer's UK**

Link: Caring for our future

Asking questions

The department actively encourages feedback, or formally seeks the views of experts and partners, as it develops policy.

How digital can help: Digital tools and techniques provide excellent ways to engage in dialogue and gather feedback, whether informally or through formal consultation.

What the department will do: The department will create a new minimum digital standard for all formal consultations.

Case study: Viv Bennett

Viv Bennett, Director of Nursing at the Department of Health and Acting Lead Nurse for Public Health England, has developed a new three year vision and strategy for nursing, midwifery and care giving. Viv started blogging and using Twitter to engage directly with nurses and care-givers, who were already talking about the issues of concern to her.

> 'I began to use Twitter knowing simply that it enabled online conversation: I have found it does so much more! From getting up-to-date news, to joining up nursing and midwifery communications through blogs and tweets and to organised 'nurse chats', it has proved a valuable communication tool that I wouldn't want to be without.' **Viv Bennett**

Viv worked with the #WeNurses community to host a series of conversations to help develop her vision and strategy, ['Compassion in Practice'](Compassion in Practice), that launched on 4 December 2012.

> 'This is the first time that social media has been used to actively engage the nursing population, enabling nurses to discuss their thoughts and ideas around such an important national vision. It has been an amazing and energising experience hosting the Twitter chats ... Being able to bring nurses from all over the UK ... and from wide and diverse nursing backgrounds to provide valuable feedback has been truly humbling.' **#WeNurses website**

Stage 3: Building robust analysis and evaluation

At this stage of the process, policymakers look at the existing evidence, and develop hypotheses about what might work. They consider the impact of policy, and what data

might be needed to monitor its implementation. They build and refine a compelling analytical narrative, and construct an approach to evaluating the impact of the policy.

Analysing responses

Evidence, consultation responses and feedback are only useful to policymakers if they can extract real meaning and value from those comments.

How digital can help: By using digital techniques to filter, sort and manage feedback, policymakers can understand and analyse evidence more quickly and efficiently.

What the department will do: The department will provide end-to-end digital methods and products to help policymakers to sort and analyse, as well as gather, comments.

Evaluating what works and measuring success

The department needs to measure the success of open policymaking and other policymaking techniques, by how far they result in better policy.

How digital can help: Digital tools can generate data to measure reach, engagement and the views and reactions of different audiences.

What the department will do: The department will use digital techniques to evaluate the success of policymaking..

Stage 4: Finding practical solutions and enabling delivery

At this stage of the process, policymakers establish how the policy will work in practice, and whether it represents value for money. They work with colleagues on a communications plan and consider how audiences and stakeholders will respond.

Explaining policy

Clearly explaining the department's work to all its audiences is a prerequisite for open policymaking. The department can only have useful conversations if it can first articulate its intentions in a straightforward and unambiguous way.

How digital can help: The department can explain and comment on its work through multiple digital channels, including its website, blogs, bulletins, commentable documents, campaign sites, and its presence on partner and third party websites.

What the department will do: The department will further develop the range of digital channels it uses to explain its policy work to different audiences.

2. Digital first communications

Digital is now integral to the ways in which the department communicates with its external audiences. Digital provides a real opportunity for the department to engage with its staff and partners in ways that mirror how people engage outside work.

The changing communications environment

The communications environment is constantly changing. There is a wider and more diverse range of influential voices, and it is no longer possible to control messages from the centre in the way that it once was.

How digital can help: Extending the use of digital to reflect this new reality changes the dynamic of the department's communication work. Social media and other channels provide people with platforms to discuss the department's work, including influential people who might not be on corporate lists of stakeholders or correspondents.

What the department will do: The department will adopt a Digital First approach to all areas of communication, starting with a formal pilot in early 2013:

- **Policy communications staff** will develop a Digital First approach for communicating the department's policy priorities.
- **Publishing staff** will use digital channels as the primary means of publishing, making official publications and guidance available in digital formats, as well as news and corporate information.
- **Public relations staff** will integrate Digital First approaches with media and events functions to promote the work of the department and its ministers online.
- **Social marketing staff** will use digital techniques to engage, influence and change behaviour in line with the Social Marketing Strategy.
- **Customer service and correspondence staff** will gather and respond to feedback through official social media, as well as more traditional, channels.
- **Stakeholder engagement staff** will use dedicated digital networks in their work with organisations and individuals, and contribute to existing digital networks.
- **Internal communications staff** will identify the most suitable digital tools and techniques for staff engagement within the department.
- **Public information and emergency preparedness staff** will integrate digital methods for developing and distributing public information at scale online.

Case study: Role-playing a crisis response using social media

Providing information and services via digital channels is a core part of the department's emergency response plans. But social media has changed the ways in which people get and share information, adding a new dynamic to crisis planning. To test new approaches to communicating in an emergency, the department ran a social media crisis simulation exercise

with a virtual working group including press, private office, customer service, policy communications and digital staff. The simulated crisis broke within a private, safe online environment and the team were asked to respond as they would in a real situation, using the web, mobile and Twitter.

The simulation exercise was very positively received, and the lessons learnt are now being applied to the department's crisis planning. As a result of the exercise, those who took part felt more confident about handling a crisis and about the crucial role of digital media within it.

> 'This exercise highlighted how important it is to have consistent messaging across all channels, including press, digital and our spokespeople. It highlighted the pressures of responding to events in real-time, and the value of doing it well.' **DH participant**

Link: Social simulator

Publishing digital content

People that have an interest in health policy or that work with the department expect to get information about its work easily and in ways that are convenient for them. The department therefore needs to distribute its information as effectively as possible, using cost-efficient channels that reflect the behaviour and expectations of its audiences.

How digital can help: Digital channels enable the department to present information in ways that make sense to the people who need it. People can get top-line information, and drill down for further detail or follow links to external material of interest.

What the department will do: The department will move its corporate website to GOV.UK in March 2013, continue the shift from print to digital for its publications, and publish its major policies and corporate documents as Digital First products.

Case study: Digital First publications

The department has made huge efficiency savings by shifting to a Digital First publications process, and an improved online service. In the past few years, the department has saved:

- £3 million on print expenditure, by producing digital-only publications and reducing the size of print runs
- £750,000 on storage and packing by reducing the stocks of printed material from 50 million pieces in 2010, to 150,000 today
- £200,000 in call-centre staff costs by shifting to online ordering of publications, which accounts for 50% of all orders today compared to around 25% in 2010

Targeting digital communication

It is important for the department to identify and engage with people who have credibility with their peers, and who influence debate around health policy. Social media and the

culture of the internet help the department to build direct relationships with people, rather than just delivering messages to them. Traditional communication techniques help the department to reach mass audiences, but indiscriminate reach is rarely an objective of the department's communication work.

How digital can help: Targeted digital communications might reach fewer people than mass broadcast, but it has much greater impact. Digital communication should then not just be the preserve of communications staff. Officials outside the communications division should also use external digital channels confidently as part of their work.

What the department will do: The department will embed a more distributed model of digital communication by encouraging all staff to use social channels for staff and partner engagement and communication, with appropriate guidance and support.

Case study: Stoptober

The 2012 Stoptober campaign encouraged people to stop smoking for 28 days during October. People who manage not to smoke for 28 days are five times more likely to stay smoke free.

The campaign included digital forums to encourage peer support, outreach to bloggers, and the use of Twitter and Facebook to help raise awareness and support people throughout their quit journey. And people who signed up were also encouraged to use a smartphone app that provided targeted tips and advice throughout the month.

The campaign generated 209,131 web and app downloads, over 125,000 Stoptober-related tweets and 60,729 Facebook likes. In October 2012, more people tried to stop smoking than at the same time in any of the previous five years.

> 'Keep coming back here, the forum really helps. We are all trying to quit and the support here has got me through some tough days. All in this together and it's nice to talk to people going through the same' **Smokefree Facebook page**

Link: Stoptober

Measuring impact

The department also needs to understand the impact of its communication work, and to adapt future communications approaches based on what works.

How digital can help: Digital techniques can provide the department with metrics that help to demonstrate the impact of its work, often in close-to-real time.

What the department will do: The department will use research and insight to drive its communications strategy, including that gained through digital techniques.

3. A digital department

For staff to deliver better health, better care and better value for all, the way the Department of Health works and engages internally must be as effective as possible.

Getting the right skills

Understanding how to use digital techniques to be more efficient is an essential skill for a modern workforce. And understanding the impact the internet and social channels have on public policy is essential knowledge for policymakers today.

How digital can help:

- **Staff in policy roles** should have the skills to be able to gather and interpret insight from digital sources to inform their work
- **Staff in communications roles** should have the skills to use digital techniques to communicate effectively and to evaluate the reach and impact of their work
- **Staff in engagement or stakeholder roles** should have the skills and confidence to participate in and monitor conversations using social media
- **Staff in the Customer Service Centre** should have the skills to monitor customer satisfaction through the data they receive from the public
- **Staff in internal or health and care workforce-facing roles** should have the skills to gather and track digital insight into employee engagement
- **Staff designing services for external audiences or internal staff** should have the skills to quickly develop, test and iterate prototypes
- **Staff in leadership roles** should have the skills to champion and articulate what Digital First means for the department as steward of the health and care system.

What the department will do: The department will work with heads of profession and Civil Service Learning to ensure that 2013 Learning and Development strategy reflects the digital ambitions in the Civil Service Capabilities Plan.

Working transparently

The department is committed to the Open Data agenda and to meeting its cross-Whitehall transparency commitments. By also being transparent in the way it works internally, the department becomes more accountable to ministers and the public, increases the public's trust and encourages greater participation in policymaking.

How digital can help: Digital techniques help the department to release information and data in ways that enable people to reuse and extract value from that data.

What the department will do: The department will conduct its work so that transparency and open policymaking become the norm rather than the exception.

Staff working with staff

Providing simpler, clearer, faster services for the public must be matched by developing simpler, clearer, faster services for staff. Staff joining the department today expect to use digital tools to interact and collaborate with each other in the same ways that they do to conduct their lives outside the department.

How digital can help: Internal digital tools help staff to do their jobs more efficiently. Improved desktops, better remote working, and up-to-date tools to collaborate on documents, find information and manage records will help staff work more effectively.

What the department will do: The department will provide new ICT across the organisation during the first quarter of 2013, and a new single information workspace for its knowledge management and business systems.

Developing digital products

Adopting a Digital First approach brings with it an increasing demand to develop, manage and improve new digital tools and products based on user need.

What the department will do: The department will review its in-house capability, revising existing and creating new roles as required, to develop user-centred products.

Case study: Public Health Responsibility Deal

The department provides a dedicated Responsibility Deal website for this project, including a tool to manage and publish responsibility deal pledges. The department is procuring the development and hosting for this work via the G-Cloud framework, and will be working with two small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to develop, manage and support the site. As a result, the department is delivering this work at a fraction of the cost of previous procurement methods, and far more quickly.

Link: Public Health Responsibility Deal

Buying technology differently

The department has typically outsourced the development and management of digital technology, often via long-term managed service contracts with large suppliers. To reflect the commitments in the Government ICT strategy and the Government Digital Strategy, the department will now need to buy technology differently.

What the department will do: The department will introduce a new fast track approvals route for procuring external digital products and services for business use, using small and medium-sized enterprises and the G-Cloud and CloudStore wherever possible.

4. A digital health and care system

Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt, has singled out a health information revolution as one of his major priorities. This section outlines some of the digital initiatives being taken forward in the health and care system.

Channel strategy for health and care

Public-sector health and care bodies do not currently provide information and services in a consistent way via their digital channels. And users often need to understand the complexities of the health system to navigate its information and services online. In addition, there are big potential savings to be made from providing a simpler, more coherent channel strategy.

How digital can help: The benefits of bringing greater coherence to digital channels include 'simpler, clearer and faster' access to information and services, greater transparency and the ability for people to participate digitally in their health and care.

What the department will do: The department will implement the Digital First channel strategy for health and care, and develop an active community of digital professionals working within the system to share best practice, case studies and digital knowledge.

Information and services for citizens

Good quality information is a critical health and care service in its own right. Useful, accurate information based on real evidence is essential for citizens to make effective choices about their care, and hold services to account.

How digital can help: When the contract for NHS Choices, the existing NHS website, ends in 2013, it will be replaced by a new customer service platform for health and care. This platform will integrate telephone, the internet, email, texts and online tools to transform the way people interact with health and care services helping them to take greater responsibility for their own health. Insight from research, engagement and customer feedback will be used to design what citizens really want.

This platform will be a clear sign of how the NHS, Public Health England, adult social care and the Department of Health are building the services people want around the people that use them.

What the department will do: The department will work with the health and care system to bring together the best information and services from across the NHS, public health and adult social care into a single customer service platform for citizens.

23

Case study: NHS Choices

NHS Choices was established in 2007 to help patients to make more informed choices about their health and lifestyle, and to find and use the appropriate NHS services for their needs. The site provides an official home for information about conditions and treatments, self-help tools, mobile applications enabling people to manage their own health, spaces for patients to provide feedback on their care, and information to help patients make choices about their own care.

The site contains more than 20,000 regularly updated articles, and about 60 directories that patients can use to find and choose health services in England. Content from NHS Choices is syndicated to more than 700 other websites, and the site itself was visited 100 million times last year. Evidence shows that the service is helping the NHS to become more efficient. Patients are better informed after using NHS Choices, and are therefore better able to make use of the health and care system. For example, 27% of those who used the site reported that they went to the GP less often, freeing up GP time for more urgent cases.

Link: NHS Choices Annual Report

Digital First in the NHS

Digital First is being rolled out across the NHS as part of the Innovation Health and Wealth programme.

How digital can help: Digital First for the health and care system can:
- Fit in with people's busy lives and deliver faster and more convenient services.
- Improve patient choice and satisfaction levels and enhance quality of care.
- Help to deliver efficiency gains by reducing face-to-face interaction.
- Empower patients to take control of their own health and promote self-care.
- Improve collaboration across healthcare, social care and industry.
- Help to cut carbon emissions by reducing unnecessary travel to appointments.

What the department will do: The department will continue to support the NHS to become Digital First through its stewardship of the system.

Case study: Taking the hassle out of healthcare

The department produced a visual guide to taking the hassle out of healthcare as part of the Information Strategy. This guide demonstrates at a glance how better use of information and technology can help people take greater responsibility and control of their health and care.

Taking the hassle out of healthcare

Access to good information is an important part of making sure people stay healthy and get the best care. By making it easier for you to look at and share your health and care records, you will be able to take more control of your own care, and work with professionals to make sure that there is 'no decision about me without me'.

1. Accessing your **GP records online** will give you more control over your care

2. **Booking appointments** will be quicker and easier when you can do it online

3. You'll need **fewer phone calls** when you can communicate with professional teams electronically

4. You'll have **less paperwork** in your life when your healthcare letters are available online

5. You'll know where to go for health and care information when there is **one trusted website**

6. Services will do more to **offer you support** to use and understand information if and when you need it

7. You won't have to repeat yourself when your **information is shared** between health and care professionals

8. You'll be confident that your **feedback is being listened to** and helping to improve services

9. You will have more information to help you **choose the best services** and treatments for you

To find out more go to **www.dh.gov.uk/informationstrategy**

Link: Taking the hassle out of healthcare

Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention

Digital plays a key role in the quality, innovation, productivity and prevention (QIPP) challenge to make £20 billion of efficiency savings in the NHS by 2015. To achieve this

level of service transformation, the system must adopt agile and LEAN digital approaches to help design and implement more effective services.

How digital can help: Effective sharing of data and information is essential to the service change needed to support QIPP. Using clear and consistent standards will help reduce silos of information, as well as helping the wider market create additional services using this information.

What the department will do: The department will encourage the use of Digital First to support QIPP across the health and care system.

Tackling inequalities

Older people and those with complex health needs are less likely to use the internet than other groups. The Department of Health, the NHS and the other bodies in the new health and care system are committed to ensuring that Digital First does not disadvantage those who cannot or will not use digital channels, nor for whom certain interactions with the health and care service make digital an inappropriate option.

What the department will do: The department will support the NHS to partner with organisations that help those that are unable to use digital channels to manage their health to do so in line with the cross-government approach to assisted digital.

Case study: Norah

Since getting online at her local UK online centre, 78 year-old Norah Hanley has lost nearly four stone using an online forum and downloading diet recipes. After taking classes at her local UK online centre and eventually buying her own computer, Norah increased her skills and made a huge change in her life. Her weight loss has led to dramatic health improvements with her diabetes, cholesterol, arthritis and high blood pressure greatly reduced. She says:
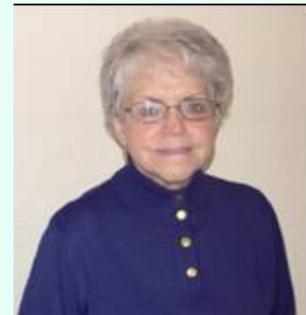
> 'Like many people my age, I had a lot of ailments and a lot of these are now disappearing. My cholesterol's gone down, my diabetes is less severe and my mobility has increased a huge amount. I never knew I could get around so quickly. My arthritis has improved so much that I've even started learning how to play the ukulele.'

According to Diabetes UK, the average person with diabetes costs the NHS £5,000 a year. By getting online and reducing her symptoms, Norah will be saving the NHS money for the rest of her life. There are 2.9 million diabetes sufferers in the UK. If just 1% of diabetes sufferers used online tools and information and saw improvements similar to Norah's, the NHS could save millions of pounds a year.

Source of case study: UK Online Centres

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5. Next steps

This strategy has set out the Department of Health's ambition to become a Digital First department of state in order to help it to better steward a Digital First health and care system. The formal action plan and detailed timetable for implementing the commitments set out in the strategy will be developed as part of the Future DH Programme in early 2013.

In January 2013, the Department will benchmark itself against the European Digital Capability Framework. And it will continue to use this Framework to assess its progress towards becoming a Digital First department of state.

Figure 2: European Digital Capability Framework

Maturity	Description
5	Digital is at the heart of policy and strategy. Services are digital by default. Digital culture is strong: agile, user-centred, innovative, responsive.
4	Senior management have made significant progress in delivering the vision and plan, implementing new capability and trialling it successfully by re-engineering a range of services to be digital by default.
3	Senior management in place with a remit to set targets, develop over-arching vision and plan, and develop necessary capability and culture. Digital is seen as a key transformation and advocacy is strong at key parts of the organisation.
2	Some digital services, but often of limited quality. Digital teams in place but tend to be siloed in business units or service/programme teams and have limited budget and remit. Senior (board level) digital management not in place.
1	No awareness of digital capability, no resources allocated, no digital strategy, plan or metrics, no understanding of best practice, no digital services.

Many of the commitments in the Department of Health's digital strategy require no additional budget or funding, but are achievable within existing resources.

They do, however, require better skills, better technology and the concerted change of mindset Francis Maude set out in his Foreword to the Civil Service Reform Plan.

And with those better skills, better technology and change of mind-set, the department can continue to transform itself as it takes the health and care system through the health information revolution to deliver better health, better care and better value for all.

Annex A: Cross government actions

The Government Digital Strategy sets out 11 themes and 14 actions for government. The Department of Health's responses to those actions are set out below.[2]

1. **Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active digital leader**

The Department of Health is committed to stewarding a Digital First health and care system and to becoming itself a Digital First department of state. The departmental Digital Leader works directly on this agenda with two Director General Board members.

2. **Services handling over 100,000 transactions each year will be re-designed, operated and improved by a skilled, experienced and empowered Service Manager**

The Department of Health does not currently directly deliver services handling over 100,000 transactions to the public. Should this change in future, it will put in place the necessary Service Managers to design and operate them.

3. **All departments will ensure that they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills**

To help staff get the digital skills they need, the Department of Health will work with heads of profession and Civil Service Learning to ensure that the 2013 Learning and Development strategy reflects the digital ambitions in the Civil Service Capabilities Plan. The department will develop a programme of internal digital masterclasses to share experiences, knowledge and best practice, and review its in-house capability to develop and manage digital products, revising existing and creating new roles as required.

4. **Cabinet Office will support improved digital capability across departments**

5. **All departments will redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions each year**

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[2] From April 2013 the Department of Health will become a smaller policymaking department and will not directly manage transactional services to the public. However, at time of writing, the Healthy Start scheme was confirmed as being delivered in future by the Department of Health, not by Public Health England as originally planned. This scheme will be reviewed for compliance with the digital by default standard in due course.

The Department of Health does not currently directly deliver services handling over 100,000 transactions to the public. Should this change in future, it will ensure these services are designed to meet the digital by default standard.

6. **From April 2014, all new or redesigned transactional services will meet the digital by default service standard**

The Department of Health does not currently directly transactional services to the public. Should this change in future, it will ensure these services are designed to meet the digital by default standard.

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

The Department of Health will move its corporate publishing activities to GOV.UK in March 2013. Those of its arm's length bodies that are scheduled to move to GOV.UK will do so at the same time.

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

The Department of Health does not currently directly deliver transactional services to the public. However the department will work with the health and care system to raise awareness of Digital First across the NHS and the creation of the new integrated customer service platform for citizens.

9. **There will be 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 the digital services**

The Department of Health is committed to ensuring the accessibility of all its digital channels and where necessary produces alternative formats of policy and corporate material for those unable to access them online. The department will also support the NHS to partner with organisations that help those that are unable to use digital channels to manage their health to do so in line with the cross-government approach to assisted digital.

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 Department of Health will actively seek opportunities to make use of small and medium-sized enterprises and the CloudStore when procuring digital products and services wherever possible.

11. **Cabinet Office will lead in the definition and delivery of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of digital services**

The Department of Health will ensure that the need to consider Open Source is embedded in its procedures and processes, achieving level 4 in Open Source Maturity by April 2014. It will reuse existing solutions before building tailored solutions, and ensure that commissioning processes enable the use of open source and common platform solutions.

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

The Department of Health does not currently directly deliver transactional services to the public. Should it do so in future, it will work with Cabinet Office to remove any legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services.

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

The Department of Health will report against all relevant data sets from April 2013. It will also systematically use digital data and insight to inform policymaking by using specialist techniques such as influencer mapping, and by developing the capability of its staff to do this for themselves.

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

The Department of Health will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public by:

- creating a new minimum digital standard for all formal consultations, including developing new methods for analysing responses digitally, not just collecting them
- consistently using techniques such as stakeholder and influencer mapping, social media monitoring, crowd-sourcing ideas and opinion, and online metrics to inform policy development, engage different audiences and evaluate effectiveness
- developing a toolkit to help policymakers identify the most appropriate digital tools and techniques for each stage of the policy cycle, from research to engagement and evaluation

Annex B: Glossary

Term	Definition
Agile	Agile software development is a group of software development methodologies based on iterative and incremental development
CloudStore	The CloudStore is an online catalogue of over 1,700 information and communications services available to the UK public sector. All the services listed on the CloudStore are part of the G-Cloud framework so are immediately available for the public sector to procure and use (subject to their accreditation where appropriate).
Commentable document	A document published in a way that enables readers to post comments alongside the text.
Crowd-sourcing	A technique to encourage large groups of people to help solve problems or develop ideas, often using digital tools to enable people to comment, discuss, and vote.
Data mining	The automatic or semi-automatic analysis of large quantities of data to extract previously unknown patterns
Digital engagement	Using digital tools and channels to find, listen to and mobilise a community around an issue, maybe getting them to talk about it, give their views or take action
Digital metrics	A set of measurements that help analyse digital activities to gain insight and improve performance
G-Cloud	The G-Cloud Programme is a cross government programme to introduce cloud ICT services into government departments and change the way the public sector procures and operates ICT
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
Influencer mapping	A technique to identify those stakeholders or commentators that have the most influence in specific channels on a particular issue.
LEAN	LEAN is a management philosophy that aims to eliminates waste in order to increase value for the customer
Personal engagement	Making use of digital engagement techniques in a named capacity
Policy engagement	Making use of digital engagement techniques to develop,

	communicate and explain policy
QIPP	The Quality, innovation, productivity and prevention programme aims to improve the quality and delivery of NHS care while reducing costs to make £20bn efficiency savings by 2014-15. These savings will be reinvested to support the front line.
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
Social channels	Digital channels such as blogs, forums and wikis that enable users to interact with one another.
Social media monitoring	A technique to systematically observe and analyse conversations in social media to determine the volume and sentiment of online conversations about a subject and identify trends.
Social simulator	A training exercise using role play, and a private environment that replicates commonly used social media, to practice using the language, tools and norms of social media in a realistic, real-time scenario.