

The Foreign and
Commonwealth Office

Digital Strategy



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Executive Summary

We want to see digital embedded in every element of foreign policy work, leading to a more effective, more open Foreign and Commonwealth Office that can take full advantage of the networked world

The Arab Spring provided perhaps the starkest example yet of how digital media is changing the world and transforming diplomacy. Protestors charging their mobile phones in Tahrir Square provided an iconic image illustrating the shift to a world that is more networked and in which power is more dispersed.

Foreign Secretary William Hague described that trend in his speech on Britain's Foreign Policy in a Networked World in July 2010. He described a world in which, "There is now a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, businesses, pressure groups and charitable organisations which are also part of the relations between nations and which are being rapidly accelerated by the internet." He set out Britain's intention to pursue a Foreign Policy that "makes the most of the abundant opportunities of the 21st century".

We have already used digital media to transform how we communicate and engage on UK foreign policy. And we have started to use it to transform how we deliver foreign policy and how we deliver services to British nationals. This strategy is about completing that journey.

Its vision is twofold.

First, a Foreign and Commonwealth Office that embeds the use of digital across every element of foreign policy work. Digital tools have already helped every part of Foreign Policy formulation - from predicting developments, to formulating and implementing policy, to influencing and identifying people to influence. We want to spread the use of those tools much more consistently and comprehensively. We also want to make particular use of digital to deliver more open policy and increased transparency.

Second, a Foreign and Commonwealth Office that provides its services digitally by default, allowing us to deliver more effective and responsive services. Face-to-face assistance to vulnerable British nationals will remain a mainstay of our work - this agenda is in part about maximising the resource available for those needing individual assistance.

Embedding digital in this way will require sustained effort, similar to the challenge many other organisations have navigated in recent years.

To achieve it, we will:

- **ensure effective leadership** of the digital agenda - the FCO will provide sustained high-level leadership through a Board-level champion and a Digital Transition Leader, championing increased use of digital and overseeing progress with implementation.
- **ensure the capability needed** to deliver this digital agenda - the FCO will obtain the additional expertise needed to deliver digital by default and embed digital in policy, including through the establishment of an expert digital transformation unit. The FCO will update its guidance and training to reflect the wider role of digital in today's diplomatic service and to give staff a clear and relevant framework they can use. The FCO will also make use of internal and external talent – putting in place a network of internal digital champions and working with industry on solutions to ongoing diplomatic challenges.
- provide staff with **access to digital media and tools** - the FCO will provide staff with the access to social media they need, along with more enabling guidelines around social media use. The

digital transformation unit will sit on the FCO's new IT customer committee to ensure our IT vision fulfils our digital strategy.

- take **full advantage of digital diplomacy** – as well as embedding digital in every element of policy formulation, the FCO will enhance open policy formulation and transparency. The Foreign Office will appoint a lead official to promote more open policy formulation and investigate the release of more material online.
- **continue to produce high-quality, integrated communications** - the FCO will continue to encourage its staff to make full use of digital as part of an integrated communications approach. We will take full advantage of the move to gov.uk to improve web content and further integrate our press and digital operation.
- **deliver digital by default for our services** - that work will start with the digitisation of key standard elements around our transactions and efforts to enhance our online customer service. The FCO will also work to reduce international barriers to digitisation, developing an international model for assisted digital and improving its digital management information.

This strategy is about taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digital to enhance every element of our work. It will be essential in this more networked world to have the fullest possible picture of developments, to choose the right policy approaches, to influence those important to our getting our way, to communicate our policy most effectively and to deliver the most effective services for British nationals. It will also ensure we remain among the leading foreign ministries internationally in using digital.

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Introduction

This strategy covers the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It covers the implications of digital for our overall diplomatic work, as well as for our services to the British public.

The FCO engages in a wide range of diplomatic activity to help deliver our priorities – keeping Britain safe; making Britain prosperous; and supporting British nationals overseas. This strategy covers how we will use digital to enhance that work, delivering a Foreign Office that is more effective, open and better able to deliver in today's networked world.

The FCO also offers a variety of services to British nationals abroad. These range from advice on travel to foreign countries, to assistance to British nationals in trouble or in a crisis, to the provision of emergency travel documents, to specialised documentary and legalisation services. This strategy covers how we will deliver more of those services – or elements of those services – digitally.

The strategy responds to the Government Digital Strategy published on 6 November 2012. It is one of a number of change programmes underway in the Foreign Office. Other relevant programmes include Diplomatic Excellence, about equipping the FCO to be the most effective diplomatic service in the world, and Knowledge Excellence, about streamlining processes and giving our diplomats the internal information systems that they need for the future. The FCO will also shortly produce its Consular Strategy for 2013-16. The actions included in this strategy – particularly changes to our service delivery and structures - will be reflected where appropriate in the FCO business plan.

Digital diplomacy

Where are we now?

A comms-led revolution

As with many institutions, the use of digital in the Foreign Office originated primarily as a communications and information tool. From the FCO's first website in 1995, digital today has transformed how we engage with people at home and overseas. For many, our digital presence is a defining part of how people perceive and experience the Foreign Office.

The extent of the FCO's use of digital for communications today is seen in our extensive worldwide presence: over 250 country websites, including 93 in foreign languages, soon to be on gov.uk; over 120 twitter channels; over 120 Facebook pages; and numerous local or regional digital channels (for example, Sina Weibo in China). Six Foreign Office Ministers are currently on twitter, while over 20 Ambassadors tweet personally. Our website received over 10 million page views in 2012-13, while over 100,000 people follow the Foreign Secretary on twitter.

The FCO also has a strong history of innovation in digital communications, from using digital to communicate with the Somali diaspora in the run up to the Somalia conference, to audioboo interviews with participants at the London Conference on Cyberspace, to hosting posts by other Ministers on the Foreign Secretary's Facebook page.

Communicating and engaging on foreign policy: London Conference on Somalia

At the London Conference on Somalia in February 2012 senior representatives from over 50 governments and multilateral organisations came together with the aim of delivering a new international approach to Somalia. Digital channels were used to:

- provide comprehensive digital coverage in the run-up to, during and after the Conference, particularly aimed at Somalis within Somalia and members of the Somali Diaspora
- actively show the UK's commitment to supporting the development of a more stable Somalia
- encourage online debate, and enable people who were not attending the conference to voice their opinions
- demonstrate transparency around the conference
- demonstrate a commitment to listening to the voices of the people of Somalia
- manage expectations around what the conference was going to achieve

The combination of an educated Somali diaspora, widely dispersed around the world, with a strong tradition of community activism meant that digital communication was one of the most effective ways of reaching them as an audience, and an efficient way of enabling wide engagement. Digital enabled us to reach people where we did not have a diplomatic presence, and increased our influence where we did. Making use of our communications staff in the region was also essential to effective messaging.

Digital evolving into policy

As the global use and importance of digital media has changed, the FCO has also increased and evolved its use of digital. Two trends are evident.

First, what started as a communications tool is now playing a more important part in achieving key foreign policy outcomes.

Second, the use of digital has expanded from a communications team activity to increasingly involving policy teams directly. A number of policy teams have taken direct charge of using digital to achieve policy outcomes, while others maintain digital channels themselves.

Concrete examples illustrate how digital has enhanced delivery across different areas of foreign policy work (some are shown in more detail in the case studies throughout this chapter):

- following and predicting developments – the FCO used social media to listen to and identify key voices during the Libya crisis and Arab spring, giving early warning of developments and identifying key influencers.
- formulating foreign policy – the FCO consulted online on the Overseas Territories White Paper in 2011 with key issues arising from that consultation – like corruption and government transparency – feeding into the White Paper itself.
- implementing foreign policy – following the closure of our Embassy in Tehran, the FCO has used the “UK for Iranians” website and social media to continue deploying key messages to Iranian audiences and to circumvent local media censorship.
- influencing and identifying who to influence – Ambassador Tom Fletcher in Lebanon has used social media to reach wider audiences than would previously been possible, while also timing his tweets to have maximum impact on the influencers who follow him.
- communicating and engaging on foreign policy – the Foreign Secretary regularly hosts Q&As on topical foreign policy issues, for example recently hosting an hour-long Q&A on Syria.

Given foreign policy is often about persuasion, influence and soft power, it is no surprise that in today’s networked world digital and policy implementation are intertwined.

Following and predicting developments: Libya and the Arab Spring

In early 2011 it quickly became clear that the FCO needed to understand how Libyans were using social media, and what different groups and individuals were saying as the Arab Spring developed. We used social media to listen to and identify key voices, and to report on how the NATO intervention was perceived by Libyans. We identified the most important platforms, identified influencers and credible, relevant accounts, and drew up lists to monitor. Monitoring Arabic discussion was key, and we mobilised Arabic speakers at posts to help analyse sentiment. Our team in London produced a daily report that was sent to all major stakeholders across Whitehall.

This regular and detailed monitoring gave us early warning of developments and helped us identify influencers previously unknown to diplomats – some of whom are now in the Libyan government. We monitored how people were reacting to our messages, and used our knowledge to increase UK credibility and build trust. We got to know online multipliers, and in some cases invited them to meet with us in person. Listening influenced our ability to engage effectively – we were able to encourage others to follow our list of influential profiles, and we responded through Facebook and Twitter to positive and negative comments (including rebutting inaccuracies).

A comms-led organisation

As with the evolution of digital, the staffing of digital in the FCO has also been largely comms led. The FCO has a small central team overseeing digital content and campaigns (9 people), and a small team overseeing its web platform and overseas digital operations (3 people).

More broadly across the FCO’s international network, there are 4 digital hubs in India, Singapore, Washington and Madrid (12 people) which oversee digital content production by our Posts. Across Posts there is usually one person whose role, among other things, includes updating Post digital channels.

There is less central resource when it comes to broadening digital work into mainstream policy. One officer looks at digital policy issues, among other things. And one officer has been temporarily providing oversight of work on digital across policy, services and communications for the purposes of this strategy and the gov.uk transition.

The FCO has significant training, guidance and sharing of best practice in place for staff. That training and guidance has tended also to be focussed on digital as a comms tool.

Formulating policy: Overseas territories consultation

In September 2011, the FCO launched a consultation with all the Overseas Territories in preparation for the publication of a White Paper on the Territories in 2011. The aim was to gather and analyse views from a variety of people (including UK citizens, inhabitants of the Overseas Territories and NGOs) to assist the development of relations between each Territory and the UK.

We created a dedicated consultation website which allowed interested parties to post their comments on the six topic areas of the consultation. In addition, the public could submit comments by post or email. The consultation website was widely publicised in the Overseas Territories via local media and through various websites. The consultation website included a tool for creating a web 'widget' linking to the consultation.

30% of the 517 responses to the consultation came via the website (compared with 56% by email). All responses were analysed, with the results published and shared with the FCO network and key external stakeholders in the UK and OTs. Issues highlighted by the consultation – in particular corruption and government transparency - were subsequently addressed by the 2012 Overseas Territories White Paper, with officials drawing directly on feedback from the consultation when drafting the White Paper.

Where do we want to get to?

The use of digital in enhancing policy outcomes has developed generically, rather than systematically. We see the challenge now as threefold.

First, maintaining and enhancing where we've come from – continuing to develop innovative digital communications and spreading their use more widely across the organisation.

Second, spreading the use of digital in enhancing foreign policy objectives consistently and comprehensively across the Foreign Office.

Third, making particular use of digital to deliver more open policy formulation and increase transparency.

We want to see a Foreign Office where it is second nature to use digital when it can enhance the achievement of UK objectives. There are significant potential benefits - getting access to a wider range of inputs for policy decisions, making better policy because it is more rooted in real issues, making policy more quickly and interactively and saving money as a result of policies that are more responsive and better suited to actual needs.

Influencing and identifying who to influence: Ambassador Tom Fletcher

Ambassador to Lebanon Tom Fletcher has one of our largest twitter followings. Here he talks about using social media to identify influencers and engage:

"Our core diplomatic tasks require social media: information harvesting; analysis; to influence; to promote English as the language that unlocks cyberspace; for crisis management (the consular response to the volcanic ash cloud relied on social media more than ever before); and to transform our commercial work.

For the first time ever, diplomats now have the ability to engage directly on a meaningful scale with the countries we live in. Sure, in the past we could meet people, do traditional media, map influence, engage civil society. But social media changes the context completely – we no longer have to focus solely on the elites to make our case, or to influence policy. This is exciting, challenging and subversive. Getting it wrong could start a war: imagine if a diplomat misguidedly tweeted a link to that offensive anti-Islam film. Getting it right has the potential to rewrite the diplomatic rulebook. A digital demarche, involving tens of thousands, could be more effective than the traditional demarche. An Avaaz campaign has more impact than a note verbale (many of which, we still receive – 'the embassy of x presents its compliments to the embassy of y, and has the honour to convey its distinguished views on the subject of zzzzz'). We can't put the genie back in the bottle – once

non-state actors are part of the conversation, they must not be ignored. Increasingly, the reaction I get from colleagues not yet entering this space is no longer derision, denial or dismissal, but fear of the unknown. In this new terrain, we have to be even more confident about what we stand for.

There are lots of tools that can help identify who to talk to and when to make the most impact. I learnt that I have most impact (measured by RTs and replies) in Lebanon early evening and in UK over the weekend. So I tailored output on key messages accordingly. It is also possible to see dead times, when fewer are online. Klout also tells you which subjects you are most influential on. Tweetdeck helps you stagger messages, so that you pace your impact but I am careful not to schedule tweets because of the fast moving situation meaning I don't want to inadvertently tweet trivia during a crisis. To build networks, I found that tweet ups with big local figures – the Lebanese PM and Haifa Wehbe (Arab Madonna) generated more interest and engagement. But you always have to remember the bottom line – we're on it to promote the UK interest, not to be popular."

Achieving this vision

Achieving this will require changing how the day-to-day work of diplomacy is done in many parts of the FCO. It is a shift in the use of digital similar to that which has taken place in recent years in industries like journalism and advertising.

Implementation will in particular require:

- clear and continued leadership over what will need to be a sustained process of change;
- clear guidelines for staff to tackle uncertainty and the fear of "getting it wrong" on social media;
- revised training and guidance that reflects the wider application of digital to policy delivery and crucially is accessible to staff who are not digitally expert;
- celebrating and sharing best practice to demonstrate to staff what can be achieved by taking the time to invest in digital;
- utilising those who are already doing digital well to champion its use elsewhere; and
- IT that allows convenient access to social media alongside day-to-day responsibilities.

Perhaps the most resource intensive element of all of this will be the upskilling of staff across the FCO and its network of posts. However, this will also be crucial to delivering this vision in practice.

Implementing policy: Engaging with Iranians

In Iran, following the closure of our embassy we developed a new website. The aim was initially to demonstrate our intent to continue to engage with Iranians even in the absence of our embassy, and then to provide an authoritative source of information about British government policy in Farsi for Iranians. Following the blocking of the website by the Iranian authorities, we switched to using social media (often blocked, but still widely accessed by Iranians) to communicate our policy. For example, we use these channels to explain why we're so concerned about Iran's nuclear programme, deconstruct Iranian myths about western intentions towards Iran, and demonstrate our concern about the human rights situation in Iran.

We have also used our UK for Iranians website and social media channels to publicise details of new EU sanctions on Iranian human rights abusers. We used our networks to promote the names and deeds of the individuals concerned within Iran, getting around censorship in the Iranian media to ensure sanctions had an impact within Iran itself. The result was a huge spike in visits to our website, which became the primary source for information about the sanctions, leading to increased awareness in Iran, and complaints about the website from some of those featured. To follow up, we did presentations on our digital diplomacy work with EU colleagues in Brussels and Iran, urging them to do similar coverage of further rounds of sanctions. This resulted in other embassies in Tehran also publicising details of human rights offenders.

Service delivery

Where are we now?

An FCO that provides transactional services and assistance

The Foreign Office provides a diverse range of services, from advice to British nationals before they travel overseas, to helping British nationals in trouble, to providing various notarial or documentary services.

As with other Foreign Office work, the use of digital to improve the FCO's services began with communications. Around 95% of our travel advice – soon to be 100% - is delivered online, by far our highest volume interaction with the public, receiving 8.9 million website visits in 2011/12. Around 95% of survey feedback on our consular services is also delivered online.

The services provided by the FCO can be divided into two broad categories. Some are “transactional services” as defined by the Government Digital Service, for example providing travel advice, providing Emergency Travel Documents, providing notarial services, or registering marriages, births and deaths. Others might be more accurately termed “assistance services”, for example the support given to British nationals who have been the victims of crime, or help to British nationals to leave a country in a crisis situation. The line between the two is not always a clear one – for example, a British national may need an Emergency Travel Document exactly because they have been a victim of crime - but it is important: “assistance services” to vulnerable British nationals is an area where we want to maintain and enhance face-to-face support, and in which digitisation is likely to be less appropriate.

In terms of the scale of services, the FCO received 1.2 million consular enquiries in 2011/12, provided assistance to British nationals needing help in just under 20,000 cases, issued around 31,000 emergency travel documents and registered over 6000 births and deaths.

With scope to digitise more services

Only a few of our services are currently provided digitally, most notably the registration of citizens going overseas in case of a crisis (Locate) and the registration of overseas students wanting to study technology courses in the UK (ATAS). In addition, we have piloted the use of other digital tools, for example online appointment booking and an SMS travel alerts service.

The table below shows an estimate of the relative digitisation of our services, in most cases between 10 and 25% (see Annex B for the breakdown in more detail).

Transactional Services (with est. percentage of service delivered online)

Consular Assistance Services

Emergency Travel Documents	10%
Transferring funds for prisoners / others	5%

Consular Crisis Services

Public Registration service	100%
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Consular Documentary Services

Marriage or civil partnership registrations	5%
Births / deaths registration service	10%
Service of process service	25%
Notarial services	20%
Other documentary services	5%

Consular Legalisation Service

Legalisation or Apostilles	40%
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Consular Travel Advice Service

Travel Advice	95%
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Consular Overseas Passport Service	
Overseas Passports	75%
Consular Customer Feedback Services	
Customer feedback survey service	95%
Correspondence service for feedback or complaints	55%
Consular Communications and Campaigns Services	
Specific campaigns	95%
General travel information	95%
Assistance Services (with the est. percentage of service delivered online)	
Consular Assistance Services	
Assistance for vulnerable BNs	10%
Specialist assistance for BNs	5%
Consular Crisis Services	
Information and support provided in the UK during a crisis	65%
Crisis services provided in host country	10%
Consular Documentary Services	
Marriage or civil partnership ceremony service	0%
Citizenship Ceremony service	0%
Maritime services	0%

But limited central expertise in digital service transformation

Service delivery departments within the FCO, mostly in the FCO’s Consular Directorate, are responsible for managing individual services, including the transition of those services to digital. Those departments are currently supported by two officers playing a cross cutting role in driving the digitisation of service delivery.

At present these roles are generally filled by FCO staff expert in consular delivery. This means there is a lot of expertise in how services operate and in the needs of British nationals who use them. But it also means there is a shortage of expertise in digital service transformation. Addressing that shortage will be crucial to delivering the digital by default agenda and ensuring the FCO secures digital services that are the most cost-effective and user-focused.

Where do we want to get to?

Our aim is a Foreign and Commonwealth Office that provides its services digitally by default, allowing more effective and responsive services, while also allowing us to dedicate more face-to-face time to those most in need.

Face-to-face assistance to vulnerable British nationals – for example the victims of crime, or those caught up in crisis situations – will remain a mainstay of our work. The digitisation agenda is in part about maximising the resource available for those needing individual assistance.

This means we will focus our efforts on digitising “transactional services” and those processes related to “assistance services” that reduce time for face-to-face support (for example, time spent manually booking appointments).

Innovating service delivery: welcome SMS messaging and SMS registration pilot

A number of our overseas Posts have worked with local mobile network providers to send welcome SMS messages to all +44 mobile phones entering their country. The message provides details of the British Embassy phone number and website in the event of a problem. Staff have found registrations by British Nationals have increased in countries using this

message and it also gives our consular offices an idea of the number of visitors arriving in the country, useful in a crisis.

In addition, the British High Commission in Nairobi is currently running a pilot using mobile phones to register British nationals and communicate with them directly in times of crisis or heightened tension. The High Commission has also used this service to register members of staff and their families to help with staff security in the event of a serious incident. The technology is simple to use and provides an effective database that can be used to target messages (eg by region of the country). British nationals can register with the High Commission quickly and easily and we have had very positive feedback on the user friendliness and flexibility of the system.

Achieving this vision

Achieving this vision will require changing how the FCO delivers its services on an end-to-end basis, using digital to streamline both internal and external processes. As in the chapter on Digital Diplomacy above, it will also require amending guidance, training and structures, alongside sustained leadership.

Implementation will in particular require:

- additional expertise in digital service transformation, so that the FCO draws on best practice from around Whitehall and the private sector;
- increased training and guidance around the delivery of effective user-focused digital services and agile procurement;
- concerted efforts to reduce barriers to the digital provision of services, some of which come from the FCO operating on an international basis; and
- the availability of common GDS platforms which, given the relatively small scale of the services we provide, will be key to cost-effective delivery.

There are also a number of key barriers to digitising our transactions.

First, UK legislation. In some cases, UK legislation appears to require us to hold physical – rather than digital – records. For example, 1906 legislation on Certificates of Non-Impediment requires applications for such certificates to be held in a “book” and posted on a “noticeboard”.

Second, international legislation and foreign country requirements. In some cases the services we provide are dictated by international legislation, for example our Legalisation Service is set out in the Hague Convention for the Abolition of Legalisation 1961. In other cases, overseas governments set specific requirements, for example insisting on stamped documents.

Third, identity verification. Many of our processes currently require the use of original documents to verify identity or prevent fraud. This is an area where a common platform for ID verification, if it worked internationally, could be very beneficial.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the extent to which we are able to provide digital services in different countries will depend on the adoption of digital in those countries. Given some of our services are also provided in crisis situations, it will be important to ensure that we are confident in the resilience of our services in those situations.

Consular crisis monitoring and customer service: Costa Concordia cruise ship incident

When the Costa Concordia cruise ship incident occurred in January 2012, Ministers were keen to know how the FCO's response had been perceived - how the FCO had dealt with the crisis, how well our messages had been amplified, and

about the outstanding practical needs of British Nationals. We looked at commentary about the FCO's response to the incident, how well our key lines and travel advice had been picked up, and at direct consular enquiries from the general public. We tracked how social media commentary changed over the weekend, and looked at which of our own tweets got the most coverage. We also looked for examples of where our content had been shared online – for example, on the Costa Concordia and Mission to Seafarers Facebook pages amongst others. Through this exercise, we identified members of the public still needing assistance, as well as praise for FCO's consular team on the ground in Italy.

Making the change

The previous two chapters set out a direction for the FCO in terms of digital in policy and digital in service delivery. This chapter sets out the next steps to deliver that vision.

It covers:

- Ensuring effective leadership of the digital agenda
- Ensuring the capability needed to deliver this digital agenda
- Providing staff with the access they need to digital media and tools
- Taking full advantage of the possibilities for digital diplomacy
- Continuing to produce excellent and integrated communications
- Delivering digital by default for our services

Ensuring effective leadership of the digital agenda

The FCO will provide sustained high level leadership to deliver the vision in this strategy, including through a Board-level champion and Digital Transition Leader

There has already been strong Board-level interest in using digital to enhance the FCO's work. Prior to this strategy, there had been internal reviews on increasing the use of digital in foreign policy and in service delivery. The Board has endorsed the increased use of digital and made clear its expectation that Posts should increase their use of digital media. The Board has also, leading by example, had several teach-ins on the importance of social media.

FCO responsibilities for overseeing the increased use of digital currently rest in a number of different departments – communications department oversees digital in comms; policy unit oversees digital in policy; and consular directorate as the principle service delivery department have overseen the digital by default agenda. A temporary Digital Transition Leader has pulled the different strands of this work together for the purpose of producing the digital strategy and overseeing the transition to gov.uk.

What is clear from this strategy is that the high level of ambition it sets out for digital in policy delivery and in transforming services will require sustained top-level encouragement, monitoring and coordination.

That is why:

- **the Board will accompany publication of this strategy with a message to all staff endorsing its vision of an FCO which makes full use of digital in policy and service delivery;**
- **the Board has asked Chief Operating Officer Matthew Rycroft to monitor the implementation of this strategy and act as a Board-level champion for the increased use of digital among staff;**
- **the Board will review implementation of this strategy in June 2013 and December 2013 and every six months thereafter; and**
- **the FCO will maintain a Digital Transition Leader role overseeing progress in implementation of this strategy across the range of policy, services and communications activities.**

Ensuring the capability needed to deliver this digital agenda

The FCO will obtain the additional expertise needed to deliver digital by default and embed digital in policy, including through the establishment of an expert digital transformation unit and the development of relevant training, guidance and best practice.

Resourcing

The current resourcing of digital activity in the FCO reflects its origin as a communications tool. The process of preparing this strategy has identified some key areas in which the FCO will need to increase its capability to achieve a broader digital agenda.

One key area is expertise in digital service transformation. Increased capability in this area will be needed to help service owners deliver digital by default and to embed these skills in the FCO over the longer term.

Another area where additional capability is likely to be needed – on a temporary basis - is in the upskilling of policy staff. Implementing the agenda in this strategy of digital being fully embedded into policy making will require revised training, revised guidance and a major agenda of upskilling and outreach.

That is why:

- **the FCO will establish a digital transformation unit which will help service owners move their transactions to digital by default and oversee digital training for service delivery staff;**
- **the FCO will establish a digital innovation fund under that unit to encourage improvements in internal processes and service delivery. The aim of the fund will be to unlock improvements in services and overall savings in the FCO budget; and**
- **the FCO will establish a digital training officer to lead the reformulation of training and guidance around digital, and push a concerted campaign of upskilling policy staff in the use of digital.**

Recruitment

Past recruitment of specialist digital staff has been a slow process, largely because each recruitment has taken place on an individual basis, going through internal recruitment, then Whitehall-wide recruitment and only being exceptionally approved for external recruitment if the skills are found not to be available in Whitehall. There has also traditionally been a model of permanent specialist recruitment, when recruiting staff for individual short-term projects could arguably increase flexibility and the ability to inject the latest tools, techniques and thinking into the FCO.

Implementing this strategy fully is likely to require the FCO to draw on specialist capabilities it does not currently have in-house. The Government Digital Strategy makes clear the need to adapt approaches to recruitment to attract staff with appropriate skills from outside government.

That is why:

- **the FCO will look to streamline and speed-up the process for digital specialist recruitment. It will do this while ensuring that external recruitment is only used exceptionally in line with the current recruitment freeze;**

- **the FCO will consider innovative approaches to recruitment, for example filling more digital posts on a short-term basis where they relate to specific projects, thus helping inject the latest tools, techniques and thinking into the FCO.**

Training, development and best practice

The current training package, guidance and best practice available to staff largely reflects the origins of digital as a communications tool.

Implementing this strategy in practice will mean training, guidance and best practice being updated to reflect the wider remit for digital in today's diplomatic service and give staff the framework they need to make more use of digital tools.

It will also mean making use of the skills and interest in digital that already exists throughout the department, and celebrating examples of excellence.

The FCO has traditionally run an annual audit of Post digital efforts which in the past focused largely on website management. That process will also need to be updated in line with this strategy.

That is why:

- **the FCO will include digital diplomacy training in core policy training for senior management and policy officers, alongside a new dedicated "Policy Skills – Digital Diplomacy" training module for policy officers;**
- **the digital transformation unit, once established, will produce a revised training offer for service delivery staff;**
- **the FCO will organise a series of practical sessions with policy departments and Posts to explain this strategy and demonstrate how to use digital tools in practice;**
- **the FCO will produce refreshed and revised internal advice, guidance and case studies and establish an internal hub to share best practice;**
- **the FCO will establish a network of internal digital champions to share best practice and promote the use of digital across the FCO;**
- **the FCO will update and extend its annual audit process of digital efforts in light of this strategy, looking at how departments and Posts are incorporating the use of digital in their policy, communications and service delivery work; and**
- **the FCO will work the use of digital into the scenarios for its assessment and development centres (ADCs) which allow promotion between grades.**

Learning from external best practice

It is noticeable that emerging technology may provide answers to some of the problems we face across the FCO, even in areas which may not appear initially obvious. The US State Department has made good use of contacts with the technology industry to look at new ways to solve diplomatic problems. They have also held "tech visioning" events, looking at how technology could have helped solve previous diplomatic problems.

That is why:

- **the FCO will introduce regular workshops with the technology industry to take forward collaborative approaches to ongoing challenges;**
- **the FCO will hold a “tech visioning” event at our next annual leadership conference to look at how foreign policy challenges could have been tackled with digital technology.**

Providing staff with the access they need to digital media and tools

The FCO will provide staff with the access to and clear guidelines around social media use that they will need to be able to deliver this transformation in working in practice.

IT access to social media

At present it is difficult to access digital media on the FCO's core IT systems, and any access is often on a white-list basis, further dissuading digital use. To ensure staff do use digital tools in their day-to-day work, we will need to ensure they can access those tools at work and on mobile devices. Particularly important in this respect is access to social media management tools – like Hootsuite and Tweetdeck - that allow staff to make meaningful use of social media in a work context. Such access will also need to be compatible with maintaining secure FCO IT and avoiding abuse of the IT system.

That is why:

- **the FCO will by March 2013 make the necessary IT system upgrades to allow access to key social media tools – e.g. Hootsuite and Twitter - on FCO IT systems without compromising security;**
- **the digital transformation unit will be represented on the new IT customer committee to ensure that IT access keeps up with digital developments.**

A more enabling social media policy

One of the key bits of feedback in the consultation process around the digital strategy was on the need for more clarity for staff regarding the framework for their use of social media, not least a fear of “getting it wrong”. The FCO has had social media guidance in place for some years and a process for applying for new official digital channels. That social media guidance has been updated in parallel with this strategy to provide more encouragement for social media use. The new guidance encourages all staff to listen to social media, acknowledges that many staff will have private social media channels and sets guidelines for their use, and sets a framework for moving from listening to engagement.

That is why:

- **the FCO is adopting alongside this strategy more enabling social media guidance.**

Taking full advantage of the possibilities for digital diplomacy

The FCO will make full use of digital to enhance open policy formulation and transparency, including through the appointment of an open policy lead. The FCO will also review different monitoring solutions and consider increased use of digital in project spending.

Enhancing transparency and formulating policy more openly

The FCO has increasingly been using digital channels to formulate policy more openly, for example consulting on the Overseas Territories White Paper and inviting comments on our Human Rights Report. In line with the Civil Service Reform Plan, we want to get to a point where open policy formulation is the norm rather than the exception, and not limited solely to formal consultations. Digital will be a key enabler of that more open policy formulation.

We are also keen to continue to increase transparency and our release of data. Our Open Data Strategy details the data we have already committed to release. Some of the FCO's economic and political reporting is also available through UKTI's Overseas Business Risk site. We now want to review whether this can be expanded, including by facilitating feedback and dialogue on data published.

That is why:

- **to encourage more open policy formulation, we are appointing an official to act as a departmental lead on open policy. That person will oversee work across the FCO to promote more open policy formulation and share best practice;**
- **the open policy official will also work with the FCO's transparency steering group to look at the possibilities for releasing more FCO policy reporting online, for example economic reporting.**

Enhancing our monitoring of digital channels

Digital channels provide a rich source of information for those formulating foreign policy, linking them to other foreign policy expertise and interlocutors well beyond those Embassies of the past had to rely upon. We already do some central digital monitoring, particularly in crisis situations.

There are two key challenges. The first is broadening out monitoring, with policy officers using digital media to follow key influencers and voices in policy areas. This will enrich the basis on which policy decisions are made and could also act as a gateway to using digitally more ambitiously overall. The second, given the increased availability and capability of different monitoring solutions, is ensuring the right solutions for different foreign policy needs, from identifying the emerging leadership and influencers in a political crisis, to monitoring the wellbeing of British nationals caught up in a natural disaster, to providing a top-level picture of how our key foreign policy action is being perceived.

That is why:

- **we will take forward a detailed review of different monitoring solutions for different policy and service delivery needs.**

Using digital in projects

Foreign policy is implemented in a diverse range of ways – from Security Council resolutions; to building alliances that apply pressure and morale weight; to concrete support and assistance.

One way in which we seek to achieve Foreign Policy objectives is project spending overseas, for example to promote peace and security or human rights. We already fund some digital-related projects, but it is worth reviewing whether we are making enough use of digital.

That is why:

- **we will review our use of digital in projects and consider whether further guidance and training for programme and project fund managers would be useful. The digital transformation unit will provide consultancy and advice around digital in projects.**

Continuing to produce excellent and integrated communications

The FCO will continue to encourage the use of digital as part of integrated communications, taking full advantage of the move to gov.uk to improve content and much more integrate its news operation.

Encouraging further use of digital in communications

The FCO already makes extensive use of digital in its communications around the world. However, the use of digital in different countries is mixed. In some cases this reflects a lack of developed digital channels in those countries. In others, Posts may not yet have taken full advantage of the scope digital offers.

That is why:

- **the FCO will continue to encourage all Posts to make full use of digital tools where they can add value to their communications efforts**
- **the FCO will provide clear guidance for communications staff on core techniques such as landscaping the digital scene in their countries and evaluating their communications efforts.**

Taking full advantage of the transition to gov.uk

The FCO is already fully engaged in the transition to gov.uk as a “trailblazer” ministry. We have established an internal project team – made up largely of existing digital staff – to manage what will be a large and complex transition (the FCO has content across 250 websites).

We want to maximise the potential provided by the transition to gov.uk to improve the content we provide to British nationals, particularly our most used services like travel advice. We also want to ensure that gov.uk provides an effective service for overseas users and take maximum advantage of what will be an easier to use platform to save staff time and resource.

That is why:

- **the FCO remains committed to transitioning the FCO’s international web presence to gov.uk by March 2013;**
- **the FCO will use the move to gov.uk to streamline our most visited travel content, especially travel advice, making it more accessible to British nationals;**
- **the FCO will play the lead role ensuring effective gov.uk content for overseas audiences that is coherent across all HMG activity; and**
- **the FCO will, in parallel with the move to gov.uk, review current international web editing arrangements, looking for opportunities to share resource and improve website quality.**

A much more integrated news operation, in London and at Posts

The changes in media consumption over recent years, including increasing consumption of news content online and the widespread use of digital and social media by journalists, show just how important digital communications now are in ensuring effective news management. Recognising these trends, the FCO has already put its press and digital communications in one Department, as have many Posts.

The move to gov.uk and its easier to use content management system offers an opportunity to move to a much more integrated news operation, using multiple channels seamlessly and reflecting best practice.

That is why:

- **the FCO will take advantage of the move to gov.uk to move to a much more integrated news operation in London (by March 2013) and at Posts.**

Profiling our successes and sharing best practice internationally

The increased use of digital in foreign policy is an issue which many foreign ministries around the world are considering. A strong culture has built up of sharing successes and lessons learned. We will continue to play our part in that.

That is why:

- **the FCO will profile its digital diplomacy work externally through a digital diplomacy blog, sharing successes and lessons learned.**

Delivering digital by default for our services

The FCO will work actively to transform its services to digital by default and enhance its online customer service. The FCO will also work actively to reduce international barriers to digitisation, develop an international model for assisted digital and improve its digital management information.

Transforming our current online customer service

Like other large organisations, the Foreign Office increasingly receives requests for travel advice and assistance on social media channels. Our digital team monitors those channels on a regular basis and responds to major queries and questions.

We are aiming to improve our online customer service further by increasing direct access to social media on the part of consular caseworkers allowing them to directly draft relevant advice in response.

That is why:

- **we will enhance our online customer responsiveness with consular staff responding directly to social media concerns.**

Transforming future services

The diverse range of services provided by the FCO, and the varied barriers to digitising those services, means that moving to digital by default will be a long-running workstream. In addition, detailed plans for service transformation will develop and evolve as a new digital transformation unit is introduced.

However, there are a number of areas it is already evident are worth particular focus.

First, many FCO transactional services include a number of common elements such as service application, appointment booking and payment. Fully digitising these elements would significantly improve the efficiency of our services. Given the small relative size of the FCO's transactions, it would be most cost-effective to draw on common GDS or other government-provided platforms for many of these functions, provided they work internationally.

Second, as set out by the Foreign Secretary in presenting the review of consular evacuation procedures to the House of Commons in July 2011, we attach particular importance to making full use of traditional and digital channels in crises. With this in mind we are actively looking at a new registration system for British nationals in crisis situations and a crisis information database that can incorporate information from a range of digital and non-digital sources. We are also piloting the use of service delivery options where it is impossible to reach British nationals directly.

Third, we are launching a project to establish regional contact centres. British nationals would be able to access those contact centres through a variety of online channels as well as by telephone. This would allow us to extend further the online customer service model referred to above.

That is why:

- **the FCO will work to digitise key standard elements around our diverse range of transactions, including application, appointment booking and payments;**
- **the FCO will continue work to integrate digital into our crisis response handling, with a new registration tool for British nationals in a crisis by spring 2013 and work on a crisis information database that integrates digital and non-digital sources;**

- **the FCO will test crisis and non-crisis service delivery options for situations where we are unable to reach people directly; and**
- **the FCO will establish regional contact centres providing integrated and multi-channel support of consular services.**

Removing barriers to digitising transactions

The FCO faces a range of barriers to digitising its transactions, including UK legislation, international legislation, host government rules and the current use of original documents for identity assurance. In some countries, progress to digital may also be limited by the infrastructure in that country and its likely reliability in different situations.

That is why:

- **the FCO will work with GDS on removing UK legislative barriers to digitisation;**
- **the FCO will work with GDS on implementing an identity assurance system that works overseas; and**
- **the FCO will work within international fora and with bilateral partners to remove international legal barriers to digitisation.**

Encouraging use of digital and providing assistance to those unable to access those services

The FCO provides its services across hundreds of countries, each with a different infrastructure and user demographic. In many cases, the scale of services we provide is also small, meaning regional – and multi-channel – contact centres may be the best way to assist those seeking to access services through non-digital means. We will base our assessment of how best to encourage the use of digital, and assist those unable to access digital, on regular analysis of our users and the situations they face in different countries.

That is why:

- **as the FCO moves more services online, we will carry out a regular survey of customers to establish key reasons holding back use of digital;**
- **as the FCO moves more services online, we will use our contact centres and network of Posts to scope out means of addressing Assisted Digital needs; and**
- **the FCO will build encouragement to use digital channels into its project for regional contact centres and continue to promote digital services in consular campaign material.**

Ensuring effective digital management information

The FCO already collects extensive management information on the assistance provided to British nationals and the time spent on different consular services. However, in part because of the limited digitisation of our services, we have limited Management Information relating to our digital services.

That is why:

- **working with GDS, the FCO will take forward a programme to improve Management Information on its existing services and build effective Management Information into new services;**

- **the FCO will use the transition to gov.uk to enhance how it uses website analytics to improve the services and information it provides to users.**

Acknowledgments

The FCO is grateful to those staff who participated in various workshops, teleconferences or otherwise contributed to the production of this strategy. It is also grateful for the work that went into the two internal reviews of digital in foreign policy and service delivery that contributed to this publication.

The FCO is also grateful to those inside and outside the organisation who contributed to our request for ideas on what should go into the strategy. We read all those ideas and believe many are reflected in either this document or in the government wide Digital Strategy.

We are also grateful to the Government Digital Service for their leadership of the digital agenda across government and the support and facilitation they provided in this process.

Annex A: Implementation plan - summary of actions

Ensuring effective leadership of the digital agenda

The FCO will provide sustained high level leadership to deliver the vision in this strategy, including through a Board-level champion and Digital Transition Leader

1.1	The Board will accompany publication of this strategy with a message to all staff endorsing its vision of an FCO which makes full use of digital in policy and service delivery
1.2	The Board has asked Chief Operating Officer Matthew Rycroft to monitor the implementation of this strategy and act as a Board-level champion for the increased use of digital among staff.
1.3	The Board will review implementation of this strategy in June 2013 and December 2013 and every six months thereafter.
1.4	The FCO will maintain a Digital Transition Leader role overseeing progress in implementation of this strategy across the range of policy, services and communications activities.

Ensuring the capability needed to deliver this digital agenda

The FCO will obtain the additional expertise needed to deliver digital by default and embed digital in policy, including through the establishment of an expert digital transformation unit and the development of relevant training, guidance and best practice.

Resourcing

2.1	The FCO will establish a digital transformation unit which will help service owners move their transactions to digital by default and oversee digital training for service delivery staff.
2.2	The FCO will establish a digital innovation fund under that unit to encourage improvements in internal processes and service delivery. The aim of the fund will be to unlock improvements in services and overall savings in the FCO budget.
2.3	The FCO will establish a digital training officer to lead the reformulation of training and guidance around digital, and push a concerted campaign of upskilling policy staff in the use of digital.

Recruitment

2.4	The FCO will look to streamline and speed-up the process for digital specialist recruitment. It will do this while ensuring that external recruitment is only used exceptionally in line with the current recruitment freeze.
2.5	The FCO will consider innovative approaches to recruitment, for example filling more digital posts on a short-term basis where they relate to specific projects, thus helping inject the latest tools, techniques and thinking into the FCO.

Training and development

2.6	The FCO will include digital diplomacy training in core policy training for senior management and policy officers, alongside a new dedicated "Policy Skills – Digital Diplomacy" training module for policy officers.
2.7	The digital transformation unit, once established, will produce a revised training offer for service delivery staff.
2.8	The FCO will organise a series of practical sessions with policy departments and Posts to explain this strategy and demonstrate how to use digital tools in practice.
2.9	The FCO will produce refreshed and revised internal advice, guidance and case studies and establish an internal hub to share best practice.
2.10	The FCO will establish a network of internal digital champions to share best practice and promote the use of digital across the FCO.
2.11	The FCO will update and extend its annual audit process of digital efforts in light of this strategy, looking at how departments and Posts are incorporating the use of digital in their policy, communications and service delivery work.
2.12	The FCO will work the use of digital into the scenarios for its assessment and development centres (ADCs) which allow promotion between grades.

Learning from external best practice

2.13	The FCO will introduce regular workshops with industry to take forward collaborative approaches to ongoing challenges.
2.14	The FCO will hold a "tech visioning" event at our next annual leadership conference to look at how foreign policy challenges could be tackled with digital

Providing staff with the access they need to digital media and tools

The FCO will provide staff with the access to and clear guidelines around social media use that they will need to be able to deliver this transformation in working in practice.

3.1	The FCO will by March 2013 make the necessary IT system upgrades to allow access to key social media tools – e.g. Hootsuite and twitter - on FCO IT systems without compromising security.
3.2	The digital transformation unit will be represented on the new IT customer committee to ensure that IT access keeps up with digital developments.
3.3	The FCO is adopting alongside this strategy more encouraging social media guidance.

Taking full advantage of the possibilities for digital diplomacy

The FCO will make full use of digital to enhance open policy formulation and transparency, including through the appointment of an open policy lead. The FCO will also review different monitoring solutions and consider increased use of digital in project spending.

4.1	To encourage more open policy formulation, we are appointing an official to act as a departmental lead on open policy. That person will oversee work across the FCO to promote more open policy formulation and share best practice.
4.2	That open policy official will also work with the FCO's transparency steering group to look at the possibilities for releasing more FCO policy reporting online, for example economic reporting.
4.3	We will take forward a detailed review of different monitoring solutions for different policy and service delivery needs.
4.4	We will review our use of digital in projects and consider whether further guidance and training for programme and project fund managers would be useful. The digital transformation unit will provide consultancy and advice around digital in projects.

Continuing to produce excellent and integrated communications

The FCO will continue to encourage the use of digital as part of integrated communications, taking full advantage of the move to gov.uk to improve content and much more integrate its news operation.

5.1	The FCO will continue to encourage all Posts to make full use of digital tools where they can add value to their communications efforts.
5.2	The FCO will provide clear guidance for communications staff on core techniques such as landscaping the digital scene in their countries and evaluating their communications efforts.
5.3	The FCO remains committed to transitioning the FCO's international web presence to gov.uk by March 2013.
5.4	The FCO will use the move to gov.uk to streamline our most visited travel content, especially travel advice, making it more accessible to British nationals.
5.5	The FCO will play the lead role ensuring effective gov.uk content for overseas audiences that is coherent across all HMG activity.
5.6	The FCO will, in parallel with the move to gov.uk, review current international web editing arrangements, looking for opportunities to share resource and improve website quality.
5.7	The FCO will take advantage of the move to gov.uk to move to a much more integrated news operation in London (by March 2013) and at Posts.
5.8	The FCO will profile its digital diplomacy work externally through a digital diplomacy blog, sharing successes and lessons learned.

Delivering digital by default for our services

The FCO will work actively to transform its services to digital by default and enhance its online customer service. The FCO will also work actively to reduce international barriers to digitisation, develop an international model for assisted digital and improve its digital management information.

Transforming our current online customer service

6.1	We will enhance our online customer responsiveness with consular staff responding directly to social media concerns.
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Transforming future services

6.2	The FCO will work to digitise key standard elements around our diverse range of transactions, including application, appointment booking and payments.
6.3	The FCO will continue work to integrate digital into our crisis response handling, with a new registration tool for British nationals in a crisis by spring 2013 and work on a crisis information database that integrates digital and non-digital sources.
6.4	The FCO will test crisis and non-crisis service delivery options for situations where we are unable to reach people directly.
6.5	The FCO will establish regional contact centres providing integrated and multi-channel support of consular services.

Removing barriers to digitising transactions

6.6	The FCO will work with GDS on removing UK legislative barriers to digitisation.
6.7	the FCO will work with GDS on implementing an identity assurance system that works overseas.
6.8	The FCO will work within international fora and with bilateral partners to remove international legal barriers to digitisation.

Encouraging use of digital and providing assistance to those unable to access those services

6.9	As the FCO moves more services online, we will carry out a regular survey of customers to establish key reasons holding back use of digital.
6.10	As the FCO moves more services online, we will use our contact centres and network of Posts to scope out means of addressing Assisted Digital needs.

6.11	The FCO will build encouragement to use digital channels into its project for regional contact centres and continue to promote digital services in consular campaign material.
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Ensuring effective digital management information

6.12	Working with GDS, the FCO will take forward a programme to improve Management Information on its existing services and build effective Management Information into new services.
6.13	The FCO will use the transition to gov.uk to enhance how it uses website analytics to improve the services and information it provides to users.

Annex B: Consular Services: Analysis of citizen-facing services

1. Transactional Services

T1. Consular Assistance Services (see also A1.3-1.4 below)

T1.1 Assistance Services: Emergency Travel Documents service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Emergency Travel Documents service	<i>ETDs are issued to any British national (BN) whose Full Validity Passport (FVP) has been lost/stolen, is about to expire or has expired or is otherwise unavailable. They are also issued to first time applicants in an emergency where there is not enough time to wait for a FVP</i>	<i>Majority of service delivered in person although enquiries are made by phone or email</i>	<i>Applicants have to apply in person except in very exceptional circumstances and original rather than scanned documents are necessary. Scope for digital provision:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application process could be digital in non-traumatic cases; - more use could be made of Identity & Passport Service, Home Office, database; - payment process could be digitised. 	Total: 10% is currently delivered digitally
T1.2 Assistance Services: Transferring funds for prisoners / for financial assistance service				
Transferring funds for prisoners / for financial assistance service	<i>BN in prison (remand or jail term) requires money either on a one-off basis or on a regular monthly basis or BN or family requires money on a one-off basis due to BN being victim of crime or has run out of money. Contact can be with UK or Post</i>	<i>Majority of service delivered by phone or in person and largely in cash</i>	<i>Information about how to transfer funds is given by phone both in UK and Post. Scope for digital provision:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application process could be digitised in some cases; - information could be much more systematically provided online; - payment process could in many cases be digitised, though this will depend on local circumstances. 	Total: 5% is currently delivered digitally

T2. Consular Crisis Services (see also A2.2-2.3 below)

T2.1 Crisis Services: Public Registration service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Public Registration service	<i>We provide a service for BNs, LOCATE, who wish to register their details when they are in an overseas country, either for travel purposes or long-term residency</i>	<i>Web-based service with email</i>	<i>Already provided digitally. We have started work to replace this system with 'just in time' system for specific countries or situations where a crisis has occurred or may occur</i>	Total: 100% currently delivered digitally

T3. Consular Documentary Services (see also A3.6-A3.8 below)

T3.1 Documentary Services: Marriage or Civil Partnership registrations				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Marriage or civil partnership registrations (see also A3.1 below)	<i>We provide an administrative support service for marriages and civil partnerships of BNs that occur overseas, and will in some circumstances perform the marriage/civil partnership (CP) ceremony itself</i>	<i>The majority of this is done manually</i>	<i>This service is covered by UK legislation. Some countries do not require a CNI but have other requirements, eg a statutory declaration. If this service is not provided, BNs cannot get married overseas. Scope for digital provision:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointments could be made online; - payment process could be digitised; - downloading of some documents; - scanned documents could be provided (subject to agreement by local authorities). 	Total: 5% currently delivered digitally
T3.2 Documentary Services: Births and Deaths registration service				
Births / deaths registration service	<i>We provide a registration service for births and deaths of BNs that occur overseas</i>	<i>The majority of this is done manually</i>	<i>There is no legal requirement for births and deaths to be registered. However there are occasions where authorities will</i>	Total: 10% currently delivered

			<p>not issue certificates themselves or lack of a UK certificate could cause hardship; there is no time limit to when an application can be made. Scope for digital provision would need to satisfy legislative requirements and need for fraud checks but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointments could be made online; - payment process could be digitised; - scanned documents could be provided. 	digitally
T3.3 Documentary Services: Service of Process				
Service of process service	<p>This service, provided for non-Hague convention/ non-EU/ non-Commonwealth countries, is mainly when a solicitor in the UK wishes to serve documents on an individual or a company outside the UK, or on a foreign government; and vice versa i.e. a solicitor in a foreign country wanting service in the UK. We process about 400 cases a year</p>	<p>Apart from information about the service and payment, this is done manually. Documents can be large bundles or boxes of papers</p>	<p>Service of documents to and from other countries are governed by the European Service Regulation, the Hague Convention and bilateral agreements. FCO does not deal with these. All other cases (i.e. the ones we deal with) need to go through diplomatic channels. Documents must be original and, where English isn't the common language, translated.</p> <p>Scope for digital provision is hampered by current requirements that the original documents only must be provided</p>	Total: 25% currently delivered digitally
T3.4 Documentary Services: Notarial services				
Notarial services	<p>Notarial services, which are only carried out overseas, are a quasi-legal service for a BN needing to make an affidavit or have a signature witnessed, a certified copy of their passport, or when a local authority demands a letter from Post relating to the applicant</p>	<p>BN must provide original passport and be witnessed so there must be face-to-face contact</p>	<p>These services could in many cases be delivered by local lawyers. In some cases however a service must be provided: where there is extreme difficulty in using local lawyers, or where the host government has a specific requirement for a service by Post.</p> <p>Scope for digital provision is currently limited due to legislative requirements but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointments could be made online - payment process could be digitised - scanned documents could be provided (subject to agreement by local authorities) 	Total: 20% currently delivered digitally
T3.5 Documentary Services: Other Documentary services				
Other documentary services: nationalisation / registration searches; Hong Kong residency; third party letter services	<p>Member of public requires a nationalisation or registration search for certificates issued by British Posts overseas before 1983. Or BN who has lived in Hong Kong needs a criminal record check and HK Police require a letter from the FCO to do this. Other letter services may be required by local authorities who insist on a letter from the local Post for BNs to have a specific service</p>	<p>These services are usually delivered by mail. BNs often turn up at Post to request service or make appointment</p>	<p>There does not appear to be any legislative or statutory requirement to carry out these services- it comes under a general requirement to provide services for BNs abroad. However searches of Posts registration/naturalisation records the only way some individuals can prove they have a claim to British citizenship. The ability to do these digitally is dependent on what the local authority will accept. Scope for digital provision would need to satisfy legislative requirements but could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointments could be made online - payment process could be digitised - some documents (eg letters) could be available online for downloading - scanned documents could be provided where local authorities 	Total: 5% currently delivered digitally

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T4. Consular Legalisation Service

T4. Legalisation Service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Legalisation or Apostille service	<i>Legalisation (for non-Hague Convention countries) or Apostille (for Hague countries, which is around 80% of all legalisation work) confirms the signature of a public official signing a UK public document. This service is mainly provided in the UK and is not restricted to British Nationals; but we also offer legalisation services overseas. The FCO is the only authority "competent to issue apostilles" in the UK</i>	<i>Information and payment is done online, the rest of the service is postal and manual. A phone service is provided for queries</i>	<i>Legislation relevant to this service is the Hague Convention for Abolition of Legalisation 1961. The document must be original or a photocopy certified by a public notary. Around 370,000 documents are legalised in a year. This process will be more digital in the next few years - a project is underway to introduce an eRegister in summer 2013 which is the first stage of an electronic eApostille service for Hague countries. Options for further digitisation will require legislative changes</i>	Total: 40% currently delivered digitally

T5. Consular Travel Advice Service

T5. Travel Advice Service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Travel Advice service	<i>Service providing detailed information for BNs travelling to other countries as part of our consular service and to prevent an increase in assistance cases</i>	<i>Digitally plus a phone service</i>	<i>This service is almost entirely digital and we have agreed to close down the phone service by April 2013 at which point the service will be fully digital</i>	Total: 95% currently delivered digitally

T6. Consular Overseas Passport Service (being handed over to IPS by April 2014)

T6. Overseas Passports Service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Overseas Passports service	<i>Provision of new or replacement passports to BNs overseas (long or short-term expats)</i>	<i>Applications are made on smart forms provided on our website; provision of photos, submission and delivery of passports is done by courier.</i>	<i>This service will come under IPS control in 2014. After that time, the entire service will be delivered by IPS who are looking to provide a fully digital service for enquiries and tracking of passport application</i>	Total: 75% currently delivered digitally but this will not be a Consular service from 2013

T7. Consular Customer Feedback Services

T7.1 Customer Feedback Services: Feedback survey				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Customer feedback survey service	<i>Consular services provide a survey feedback form to measure satisfaction with consular services.</i>	<i>Provided digitally and with a number of hard copies of the survey provided for walk-ins at Posts (responses are then entered digitally)</i>	<i>Service is almost entirely available digitally but we have a number of hard copies at our Posts for walk-ins and BNs without access to the internet. Snap software is used to analyse responses and to improve our services</i>	Total: 75% currently delivered digitally
T7.2 Customer Feedback Services: Correspondence service				
Correspondence service for feedback or complaints	<i>We provide a number of channels for BNs to provide feedback or complaints about services;</i>	<i>Largely provided through online form or email addresses, but</i>	<i>The aim is to centralise this service and reduce the email addresses to one email address for feedback.</i>	Total: 55% currently delivered digitally

	<i>we also respond to MPs' letters</i>	<i>MPs letters are all hard copy and a small number (less than 5%) are by phone</i>	<i>Scope for digital provision: feedback / complaints provided directly to Consular Directorate could be a digital-only service</i>	
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T8. Consular Communications and Campaigns Services

T8.1 Communications and Campaigns Services: Specific campaigns				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Specific campaigns service: Know Before You Go / Gap Year / In Country / In Resort / other specific safety or information campaigns	<i>We run a number of public campaigns each year as part of our commitment to protect BNs abroad and to prevent an increase in assistance cases</i>	<i>Campaigns are largely delivered digitally</i>	<i>This service is delivered at the maximum level digitally – the occasional use of leaflets or newspaper items ensures we reach all audiences</i>	Total: 95% currently delivered digitally
T8.2 Communications and Campaigns Services: General travel information services				
General travel information services: Travel & Living Abroad or Help For British Nationals / Travel News	<i>We provide general travel information as part of our commitment to protect BNs abroad and to prevent an increase in assistance cases</i>	<i>General travel information is largely delivered digitally</i>	<i>This service is delivered at the maximum level digitally – the occasional use of leaflets ensures we reach all audiences</i>	Total: 95% currently delivered digitally

2. Assistance Services

A1. Consular Assistance Services (see T1.1-1.2 above)

A1.3 Assistance Services: General Assistance services				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Assistance services for BNs and their families who are victims of assault or other crime / ill or in hospital / arrested or in prison / death / missing persons	<i>Providing assistance to BNs and their families as set out in the Consular Guide. This can include referring BNs and family to other services once they return to the UK; dealing with local authorities (hospitals, police etc) who may not speak English; and providing a range of services alongside the specific assistance need (eg BN who has been robbed& in hospital may also need ETD)</i>	<i>Majority of service delivered by phone or in person; we provide information online</i>	<i>Providing assistance to distressed BNs is by its very essence a largely face-to-face service that takes part in other countries; contact is often on an emergency basis in hospital / police station / prison and digital services are often outside our control or inappropriate. First contact may also be by local authority who may not speak English.</i> <i>Scope for digital provision:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general "whereabouts unknown" (as opposed to suddenly missing) request could be submitted through an online form - payment for fee-bearing services provided as part of assistance services could be online 	Total: 10% currently delivered digitally
A1.4 Assistance Services: Specialist Assistance services				
Specialist Assistance services for BNs and their families who are victims of kidnapping or hostage taking / child abduction by parent or guardian / forced marriage	<i>Providing specialist assistance help to BNs and their families as set out in the Consular Guide</i>	<i>Majority of service delivered by phone or in person; we provide information online</i>	<i>Providing specialist assistance to distressed BNs on very complex and sensitive cases is by its very essence a largely face-to-face service that takes part in other countries; digital services are often outside our control or inappropriate. Forced Marriage services in other countries must include face-to-face contact with the victim</i>	Total: 5% currently delivered digitally

A2. Consular Crisis Services (see T2.1 above)

A2.2 Crisis Services: Information and support services in the UK				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Information and support services provided in the UK during a crisis	<i>We provide information and updates for BNs when a crisis occurs and during the course of the crisis, as well as a phone help line to register details of BNs who may be affected. This service involves dealing with BNs and their families who are in a crisis situation and may be in distress</i>	<i>The majority of this is done digitally other than the phone helpline</i>	<p><i>Other Foreign Ministries do not provide phone helplines in a crisis but there are strong reasons to continue providing this. It is seen as a vital service and a backup to IT. We have started a project to replace our current Crisis IT system and this will include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>an online "affected person" form;</i> - <i>ways to pull through social media reports to our affected persons database;</i> - <i>ways to provide SMS alerts and registration;</i> - <i>crisis registration to be available through SMS or smartphones.</i> 	Total: 65% currently delivered digitally
A2.3 Crisis Services: provided in host country				
Crisis services provided in host country: Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs) / evacuation or assisted departure / help for BNs to leave the affected area / disaster victim identification / other medical services	<i>We provide help and a visible presence on the ground for BNs affected by a crisis in the host country</i>	<i>Mainly through face-to-face and direct interventions and support. Messaging is through our websites, social media, Skype, SMS, TV and media, phone. BNs may be physically collected or turn up to a pick-up location for removal by plane or coach</i>	<i>There are few opportunities for these services to be delivered digitally as they involve practical support work for BNs caught up in a crisis situation; we are also operating in a third country where the infrastructure may be severely affected and is outside our control. The majority of messaging is digital but we need to get messages out on all channels</i>	Total: 10% currently delivered digitally

A.3 Consular Documentary Services (see T3.1-3.5 above)

A3.6 Documentary Services: Marriages or Civil Partnership service				
Service	User need	How Delivered	Scope for digital provision	% Digital (estimate)
Marriage or civil partnership ceremony service	<i>We will in some circumstances perform the marriage/civil partnership (CP) ceremony as well as the registration service. Marriage services are mainly confined to those taking place in non-Commonwealth countries</i>	<i>This is done face-to-face</i>	<i>This service is covered by legislation. If this service is not provided, BNs cannot get married overseas. We are currently investigating ways we can provide this service in the future and options include as many stages of the process to be delivered online through application form, appointment booking and payment for the service</i>	Total: 0% currently delivered digitally
A3.7 Documentary Services: Citizenship Ceremony service				
Citizenship Ceremony service	<i>We perform citizenship ceremony services for members of the public taking on British Nationality</i>	<i>This is done face-to-face</i>		Total: 0% currently delivered digitally
A3.8 Documentary Services: Maritime services				
Maritime services	<i>The FCO has a responsibility in all non-Commonwealth countries to mariners / for all boats registered in the UK (even if all the crew are other nationalities) according to</i>	<i>This service is invariably non-digital and each case must be treated separately.</i>		Total: 0% currently delivered digitally

	<i>maritime legislation. The service varies widely and could cover wrecks, sailors overboard, crew disputes, deaths on ship. In Commonwealth countries, the local maritime authority is responsible for providing this service</i>			
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