

Update on Government Digital Strategy – aligning IT with Digital - March 2013

The Background

The Civil Service Reform Plan set out the need to move to a “digital civil service” - Digital by Default in skills, style and how citizens use services to interact with government. Following on from that, the Government Digital Strategy was published in November 2012. It set out a clear vision for digital services so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them prefer to do so. These services would be more efficient and cost-effective, delivering on the government’s Efficiency and Reform agenda.

The Digital Strategy established 14 clear actions. In December 2012, each Department published its own Departmental Digital Strategy, corresponding to the 14 actions.

Efficiency & Reform

We estimate that moving services from offline to digital channels will save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion a year. Looking closely at one area of IT spend, a recent NAO report highlighted that Government is likely to meet, if not exceed, its target of £440m savings for 2012-13 from the ICT spend control and shared ICT infrastructure programme. By October 2012, £410m had already been saved through these initiatives in 2012/13.

At present Government spends some £6bn on ICT per year¹ by ensuring the IT and digital agendas are aligned, both strategies can be accelerated and efficiencies made.¹

Technology skills are one of the fundamental parts of creating outstanding digital public services, and we need to improve the diversity of our skills base, particularly in development, service design and legacy renewal. This is crucial to our Digital by Default objectives, and will also deliver savings.

Progress – 3 months on

The 14 actions in the Government Digital Strategy can be viewed **here** and some updates on those most closely linked to digital capability across government are detailed below.

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

- Each department has appointed an active digital leader, working closely with Government Digital Service as part of a digital leader network.

Action 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 Government Digital Strategy required major transactional departments to identify ‘exemplar’ services for transformation. Of the 23 identified:

- Work has begun on 15 of these and 9 are at alpha/beta delivery stages.
- 5 Service Managers have been formally appointed

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

¹ 23rd Jan 2013 “The Impact of Government’s ICT savings initiatives”

Departments are working towards recruiting digital capability in-house:

- For example, Ministry of Justice have created a new Digital Services Division, a team of skilled experts working on cutting edge new ideas for the department.

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

We have reviewed the team and introduced a new structure that prioritises user needs and provides the support departments need to make this transformation.

- 14 Senior Technical Advisors are being appointed to Government Chief Technology Officer Liam Maxwell's team to support departments
- The role vacated by former Government CIO Andy Nelson, who is now CIO at DWP, will not be filled, as the cross-government role is no longer central to delivery.
- Within departments, CIOs will continue to play a crucial role where the role is adapted to user needs. For example, a CIO in the Department for Work and Pensions has a very different role to one in Defra, and both are led by the end service.
- Departmental digital leaders and CIOs will work closely together to drive digital transformation.
- Government Chief Operating Officer Stephen Kelly is to take on the additional role of Government Senior Information Risk Owner (GSIRO). The management of information and technical risks is fundamental to business delivery and a core responsibility for all senior leaders.

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

- A beta version of the Digital by Default Service Standard will be published on 14 March 2013, ahead of a full launch in mid-April.
- From April 2014, all new or redesigned government services must meet this new standard, in order to ensure consistency and quality across Government's digital services, and put user needs firmly at the heart of service design.
- GDS has provided guidance, tools and code for departments alongside the standard.

In summary

Stephen Kelly, Government Chief Operating Officer comments:

"Andy Nelson has achieved remarkable feats in the Government CIO role, and the fact that he has moved to lead IT on a pivotal welfare reform project in such a high-profile department is evidence of his abilities. The legacy he has left means we are in a fantastic position to review our governance and set the direction for the future of our technology leadership. Governance is central to promoting a web-based, user focussed, and participative culture. Because it reflects what our users need from government digital services- but also because it helps us to deliver on our efficiency and reform priorities."

"The NAO report was supportive of what we were doing but it recognised the scale of the change required – and the skills we would need to deliver. We want an exceptional Civil Service delivering the best for Britain: more skilled, less bureaucratic and more unified. The world has changed and so must we – and ensuring we are equipped for the digital future is part of that. Roughly £1.2 billion of savings could be made during this Parliament alone by bringing central government transactional services online. So, the opportunity is huge, and this progress means we are racing to meet it."
