



Office of the
Public Guardian

Digital Strategy

2014-2015



Foreword

I am very pleased to be introducing the Office of the Public Guardian's (OPG) first ever digital strategy. It defines our approach to digital service delivery and sets out eight key actions for the coming years. We want to become a digital by default agency by 2015 and the actions in this strategy will help us to achieve that goal.

The Civil Service Reform Plan made the case for increasing digital capability across government in 2012. Since then the Government Digital Service (GDS) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have each published digital strategies, both making the case for a shift to online service delivery. OPG's strategy is aligned with the priorities set out in all of those documents while acknowledging the distinct needs of our agency.

OPG is currently undergoing a hugely ambitious transformation programme and our vision for transforming the agency, and the journey we will take to get there, are unique to us. While we have taken inspiration from GDS and MoJ, as an executive agency we are not solely focused on departmental or cross-government strategies. We therefore felt the need to write our own strategy to define our own ways of working digitally. However, it is not just our transformation programme that is ambitious; it is the whole of OPG. We are an exemplar agency, and digital services have become an intrinsic part of how we are fulfilling our business plan. Our agency is evolving rapidly and now is the time to focus on the future of the agency, its products and services.

Our digital journey began with the creation of our online lasting power of attorney (LPA) application service, which went live in May, having been the first ever exemplar service to pass the Digital by Default Service Assessment. Since it launched in public Beta last summer, we have begun several new digital products, all built around the needs of our service users (both internal and external). We are building a new case management system for our staff, a faster way of capturing documents and data, and a new tool for deputies to engage more easily with the agency. All of these products and services are helping us to work more efficiently and serve our customers better.

We have also begun moving our online content to the GOV.UK website. We have appointed a Head of Digital to lead digital service delivery and ensure that the actions in this strategy are followed and our goals are met. Our digital team is offering coaching and training for OPG staff and other government departments and agencies. We want to use digital ways of working to transform the whole agency and inspire others to begin working in a similar way.

This is an exciting time for OPG. This digital strategy means a lot to us: it will enable us to improve our customer service and realise our ambitions for growth while contributing to cross-government strategy. This in turn will make life easier for our hard-working staff and our customers.

Alan Eccles
Chief Executive and Public Guardian

August 2014

Executive summary

The Civil Service Reform Plan, Government Digital Strategy and Digital Efficiency Report made the case for a civil service that is 'digital by default', estimating total savings of £1.8 billion per year and setting out 16 actions to take, including more efficient and convenient services for users, and decreased demand for higher cost channels.

This strategy defines the Office of the Public Guardian's (OPG) programme of digital transformation up to 2018. It states OPG's digital vision, and sets out the eight actions that we will take to become a digital by default agency by 2015 and contribute to civil service reform.

These actions are:

Action 1: we will design new digital services, with the user at their heart and meeting the Digital by Default Service Standard

Action 2: we will develop assisted digital provision for all our online services, making sure that those who can't access our services online are not excluded

Action 3: we will redesign service delivery throughout OPG around the needs of the user

Action 4: we will encourage channel and market shift within our services

Action 5: we will make digital service delivery sustainable and cost-effective in OPG

Action 6: we will increase OPG's digital capability

Action 7: we will help others outside OPG to embed digital ways of working

Action 8: we will embed a culture of openness and sharing

This strategy will be refreshed annually.

Background and context

OPG is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). OPG has responsibilities across England and Wales in four main areas:

- to **register lasting powers of attorney (LPA) and enduring powers of attorney**, which allow people to choose who they want to make decisions on their behalf were they to lose mental capacity
- to **supervise deputies appointed by the Court of Protection** (normally where an attorney hasn't been appointed prior to mental capacity being lost)
- to **investigate allegations of abuse** against attorneys or deputies
- to **maintain the registers of deputies, LPAs and EPAs**, which are available for searches by the public.

OPG's vision is to encourage everyone to prepare for a possible lack of mental capacity and to support and safeguard those who lack mental capacity now. We want to increase the uptake of LPA so that more adults prepare for potential loss of mental capacity, and to supervise court-appointed deputies more efficiently and effectively so that we can continue to perform our roles as our customer base increases.

Demand is growing for OPG's services. The UK's ageing population, along with increased awareness of our services, has led to LPA applications increasing by roughly 20% year on year; in 2014-15 OPG will process upwards of 375,000 applications. The number of deputies OPG supervises is increasing by around 9% year on year, with the agency currently supervising in the region of 54,000 deputyship cases. We can only meet this increasing public demand by building digital services to improve the customer experience and work more efficiently.

Our ambition is also growing. The original motivation for new OPG digital services arose in 2011 from the need to replace ageing, business-critical IT systems. Since then we have:

- launched the LPA digital tool into live service, in partnership with the Government Digital Service (GDS)
- strengthened and developed our digital team and appointed a Head of Digital to lead service development and motivate the team
- worked closely with MoJ Digital Services to share experience and support.

We want to build on this success to become a digital by default agency by 2015. We want to put digital services at the heart of OPG, and put OPG at the heart of digital service development in government. We want to build digital services that are so good that people who can use them will do, while those who can't are not excluded. We want all of our services – information and transactions, both internally and externally – to be delivered through digital channels, rather than face-to-face, by phone or by post.

Our actions

To realise our vision, we will do the following:

Action 1: we will design new digital services, with the user at their heart and (for customer-facing services) meeting the Digital by Default Service Standard. We will:

- build a digital deputyships service, to make it possible for deputies (and the visitors who form part of OPG's supervision programme) to interact with us entirely online
- develop a pipeline of digital products and services to deliver the best value for our customers and stakeholders with the resources we have
- use Agile project management methodology and principles.

What Agile means to us

- Building new products and services based around user need
- Being open: about our ways of working, in the way we procure, and in the way we share knowledge with others
- Empowering our staff to improve the service we offer to customers
- Continuously iterating all digital services to ensure they always work in the best way for the user

We have successfully used Agile methodology for all of our digital projects so far, with fantastic results. It allows us to be flexible and to always keep the user at the heart of what we do.

We also want to give our staff simple, intuitive ways of doing their jobs, and will build two new services to meet this need:

- a case management system to process LPA applications, manage our interactions with deputies and enable better safeguarding
- a document and data capture system to make our back office processes quicker and easier.

	Discovery	Alpha	Beta	Live
LPA	Feb 2012	Nov 2012	July 2013	May 2014
Digital deputyships	Jan 2014	August 2014	Nov 2014	Early 2015
Case management	Aug 2013	Nov 2014	Mar 2014	Mid 2015
Document and data capture	Aug 2013	Nov 2014	Mar 2014	Mid 2015

We will provide the best possible user experience for our customers and staff by frequently iterating each service based on user feedback.

Phases of digital delivery

For the purposes of this strategy, the phases in the table above are defined as follows:

Discovery: Finding out what users need, what constraints there are and what initial prototypes will explore

Alpha: First working prototype built, ready to be tested by users and learned from

Beta: First end-to-end service built, ready to be tested publicly

Live: A fully operational tested and approved product or service, released to the public, which will continue to be iterated based on user needs.

Action 2: we will develop assisted digital provision for all our online services. We will:

- work across government and with the third sector to make assisted digital options available so that those who struggle to use our services by themselves are supported and are not excluded by the changes taking place
- make assisted digital provision sustainable through agreements with our partners.

Action 3: we will redesign service delivery throughout OPG around the needs of the user. We will:

- put the user first: designing and producing digital services around the needs of our users, whether public, practitioners, staff, partner organisations or stakeholders, to create the best possible experience for them
- encourage process change internally by:
 - » making our operational teams more efficient through greater use of digital channels
 - » aligning our customer insight and research to digital service development
- develop a policy to remove wet signatures from LPA, working with our stakeholders, and explore legislative opportunity to make this happen
- develop and use accurate metrics to make good choices about how to improve our services by:
 - » knowing what we want to measure from the start
 - » sharing management information across OPG so we have a single view of customer behaviour and what drives it
 - » concentrating on the four GDS performance indicators as drivers for online service improvement: transactional cost, user satisfaction, take-up of digital services and completion rate.

Action 4: we will encourage channel and market shift for online services. We will:

- raise awareness of the LPA digital service from go-live in June 2014, and, in due course, its other products and services, promoting use of the digital channel over other options
- mandate the digital channel for certain services and user groups
- explore opportunities to have different fees for online services in the future
- develop knowledge of the actual and potential user groups for each service
- encourage all our customers to use digital channels rather than post or phone, to reduce our running costs and increase operational efficiency
- reduce per-user calls to our contact centre through better online guidance.

Action 5: we will make digital service delivery sustainable and cost-effective in OPG. We will:

- build support models so that our digital services can be continuously iterated, with software deployed frequently
- have an in-house user research team, so that we are constantly in touch with our users and able to develop our services based on their feedback
- use digital options wherever possible to minimise costs and improve user experience by reinvesting those savings in our services
- reduce our reliance on large systems integrators, opting instead for a wider choice of smaller suppliers who are incentivised to give a quality service
- manage services using in-house product teams so that we own the quality of our digital services ourselves
- use common platforms and services with MoJ where this brings cost savings or strategic advantage, such as secure hosting.

Action 6: we will increase OPG's digital capability. We will:

- continue to develop our digital team's professional skills, so it can support the agency's digital ambitions
- learn from other departments' experience by building a network of contacts across government
- attend events and conferences so that OPG remains a leader in digital service development across government
- increase internal digital capability through learning and training so that the whole of OPG is moving towards more digital ways of working together
- inspire process change and empower staff to make digital 'business as usual' throughout the whole agency, with digital and operational teams working together
- invest in the civil service Fast Stream scheme, offering roles which give real insight into digital service design in government
- develop a digital communications strategy for internal and external communications.

Action 7: we will help others outside OPG to embed digital ways of working. We will:

- achieve quicker, smarter procurement
- work with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) first where possible
- define modern ways of accrediting government software, so that acceptance into service is simpler
- seek out opportunities to build lasting partnerships with the third sector and share our learning with them.

Action 8: we will embed a culture of openness and sharing. We will:

- share data with other agencies wherever possible
- publish code for each service we develop
- use open standards in every service we build, according to Cabinet Office guidance
- publish the performance of our services to increase public trust in us
- identify common frameworks for areas of digital service delivery (such as support and governance) and share them with others developing digital services across government
- integrate with GDS common platforms: GOV.UK, performance platform, etc.
- carry out collaborative and transparent policy-making practices.

What we've done so far

We are redesigning web services around the needs of the user: in partnership with GDS, OPG has already delivered the LPA digital tool, which passed the Digital by Default Service Standard in April. We launched it as a live service on 21 May 2014, as part of GDS's wider transformation programme – the first exemplar service to pass the service standard assessment and go live.

We have started work on a **new online product for our customers:** a 'digital deputyships' tool for deputies to communicate more easily with OPG staff. We have conducted initial user research for an online register search tool to allow professionals and lay people to determine whether an individual has an attorney or deputy in charge of their affairs and this will form part of our pipeline of future digital products.

We are developing new case management software for processing LPAs. This is an intuitive, simple system built with the user at its heart, **giving our staff the same great user experience** that we now expect to give customers. This will go live in alpha in November 2014, along with a hugely improved document and data capture system.

We are **migrating our online content to GOV.UK**, in line with Action 7 of the Government Digital Strategy, so that users can find the information they need from us more quickly, and so that the information is clearer when they've got it.

We are being **more open:** we publish metrics for the LPA service on GDS's performance platform, we're blogging about our experiences, and we're making source code open for new services.

We are **increasing our digital capability:** we have appointed a Head of Digital and Service Manager, and we're building our OPG digital team so that it's central to the realisation of our business plan. We offer staff Agile training and we're raising awareness of the benefits of digital services.

We are working with colleagues outside OPG to **enable better digital ways of working:** we're procuring smarter and faster, from modern digital frameworks, and writing contracts which let us work in the best way for us. We are working with information assurance colleagues to make accreditation quicker and more proportionate, while maintaining the protection offered to customers.

We are **making digital delivery sustainable** in the agency, by designing support models which allow all of our products to be continuously iterated.

We are taking a **pioneering approach to assisted digital provision**, building partnerships for the LPA service which enable users to apply online at no extra cost.

We are committed to being a **digital coaching agency**, identifying common patterns and lessons learned, and sharing them with others so that their journeys are even smoother than ours has been.