



Department  
for Education

# **Department for Education: departmental digital strategy**

**December 2012**

# Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
What is our Department's digital vision?	9
Our current position	10
How will we achieve our vision and what are the challenges?	20
How we will deliver our digital ambition	34
Annex I: GDS UK Government digital strategy alignment	41
Annex II: Glossary	44

## Executive summary

This strategy sets out how the Department for Education will become digital by default. It fulfils the commitment made in the [Civil Service Reform plan](#) and the Government's [Digital Strategy](#). By digital by default, we mean digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded.

The Cabinet Office commissioned [Digital Efficiency Report](#) suggests that transactions online can already be 20 times cheaper than by phone, 30 times cheaper than postal, and as much as 50 times cheaper than face to face.

By going digital by default, the Government could save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion each year.

But this isn't just about saving money - the public increasingly expects to access services quickly and conveniently, at times and in ways that suit them. We will not leave anyone behind but we will use digital technology to drive better services and lower costs.

We will also need to embed digital skills into our organisational DNA, developing a culture that puts people's needs first so we plan and design our services around what users need to get done, not around the ways government want them to do it.

Alongside the Department for Education review, this Departmental Digital Strategy (DDS) sets out how we will improve services and reduce costs. New technology also means that for the first time individuals, entrepreneurs and businesses can now access and exploit public data in a way that increases accountability, drives choice and spurs innovation. Government and the Department will continue to be on the forefront of the open data revolution – putting more and more data in the public domain.

Until now government has been slow to realise the benefits of the digital age. In the future our services will be fit for the 21st century – agile, flexible and digital by default.

We are already one of the leaders in the Government's drive to publish digitally by default. We have some high quality, established online tools which are popular with users, developed by a mature dedicated digital communications team. Our social media channels are between one and three years old, and we have a dedicated digital engagement team.

Between 2013 and 2015 we will:

### **Streamline our digital services further, bringing together important tools and services for the schools and children services workforces in one place**

The creation of four new executive agencies in 2011 led to a range of online tools and services being brought under the management of the Department. We will continue work to rationalise and integrate these, so there is more coherent offer to users. We will create

a single, secure government web portal so that school and local authority children's services staff can access the tools and services they need in one place.

### **Improve the transparency and accessibility of our information and data, and make it available in a range of open formats**

We will enable users to access a wider range of school performance and spend data via a postcode search. We will increase the range of children's services data available. We will increase access to anonymised data from the national pupil database.

### **Develop the digital capability of our staff**

We will ensure that we have the right levels of digital capability in-house. We will assess how digitally literate our staff already are, and introduce an appropriate internal training programme to meet the needs we identify. We will look to create new digital service manager/product manager roles to support our digital services.

### **Build more responsive ways of interacting with the public through digital channels**

We will run a pilot to assess the best way of interacting and opening dialogue with our different customers and audiences about different subjects. We will look at moving to more of a self-service model – where customers' needs can be met at the point of contact with the Department. We will also review our use of social media channels to develop more agile and tactical methods to engage directly with the public.

### **Increase the use of digital engagement in the development and implementation of policy**

We will pilot live-streaming panel discussions, as a way of giving the public a route to question policy-makers directly. We will review whether crowd-sourced models can be used effectively to help develop and implement our reforms. We will continue to use our social media channels to monitor the impact of our reforms on the workforce, and to engage with professional communities.

### **Complete the transition of all the Department's website content to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

The Department's corporate website will be replaced by a presence on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) by the end of 2013. Our corporate publishing activities will move over by March 2013.

### **Improve the quality and reduce the cost of our publishing service**

We will ensure that the digital publications we produce are high quality and accessible to all. We will look at offering our popular publications in formats more suitable for mobile technology. We will work to reduce the quantity of hard copy publications stored in our warehouse.

## Introduction

### What is the Government's digital strategy?

Digital is at the heart of the Government's approach to modernising public sector services. The October 2010 report by Martha Lane Fox as UK Digital Champion, recommended that government move all of its online services to a single website, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), and adopt a 'digital by default' approach to delivering services to offer better customer experience of government services and improve efficiency. This was incorporated into the *Civil Service Reform plan*<sup>1</sup>, and requires departments to develop services that:

- allow straightforward access to information and services in times and in ways that are convenient to the users rather than the providers; and
- are more efficient and cost-effective to develop and run.

In his foreword to the *Civil Service Reform plan*, Francis Maude said:

"Central government where possible must become a digital organisation. These days the best service organisations deliver online everything that can be delivered online. This cuts their costs dramatically and allows access to information and services at times and in ways convenient to the users rather than the providers".

The Government Digital Service (GDS) will implement this strategy, supported by the Digital Leaders' network of senior civil servants, the Digital Advisory Board and the Government Communication Network. Each government department will prepare and publish its own Departmental Digital Strategy (DDS). These documents will explain how departments will make their services digital by default in ways that work for their users. This strategy will be published in time to influence the Departments' 2013/14 business plans. It will set the framework for service transformation over the lifetime of the next spending review.

If we successfully transform our services so they are digital by default, we can earn a reputation for offering high-quality, responsive, convenient and up-to-date services.

### What is the Departmental Digital Strategy (DDS)?

The Department for Education's digital strategy will set out the Department's digital ambition in relation to the Cabinet Office's pan-Whitehall digital strategy<sup>2</sup>. It will identify critical areas of the business, particularly transactional services, where we must embrace 'digital by default' and look to move away from traditional methods of how we do

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office, 'Civil Service Reform Plan' (June 2012)

<sup>2</sup> See Annex I for further information on the Government Digital Strategy and its key action points

business. The recommendations in the strategy will help realise important public and customer engagement, data transparency and cost saving aims for the Department.

The DDS will focus on five broad themes, each aimed at addressing core GDS objectives and Department for Education review themes. These are:

The DDS themes align and support the actions from the Government digital strategy. These are clearly indicated throughout this document within these text boxes

1. Customer experience and digital services

Schools, 16-19 education providers and local authorities should be able to complete all of their transactions in one place whilst embracing social media to engage with the public and our stakeholders in ways that they want. We must put the user at the heart of our tools and services and ensure they are easy to find, intuitive, secure and ultimately services that users want to use.

2. Information and data transparency

Government is committed to making its data available in a range of open formats to simply lift the cover on government information and show citizens what data we collect.

3. Digital engagement and policy development

To engage and collaborate with all our audiences, using all the tools and services that the internet has to offer, and using intelligence to support policy development and implementation, and to improve service delivery.

4. Digital capability

To maximise the benefits of becoming a digital by default department we will need colleagues to become more digitally savvy and capable, alongside developments in technology and infrastructure, to allow us to work in a new manner both internally and with our customers.

5. IT consolidation and standardisation

The streamlining of the Department's arm's length bodies into four new executive agencies brought with them a wealth of online tools, transactions and services which support many business critical services, creating an opportunity to look at where these tools and transactions can be rationalised, and the technology they sit on consolidated to provide a technology platform that supports our digital ambitions

The Department's digital strategy must be achievable and as such the Department will be held accountable and monitored against the actions that are stated within the strategy. It must therefore be understood and adopted by all within the Department, in time to influence the creation of the 2013/14 Department business plan, or it will not succeed.

## **What do we mean by digital by default?**

Our citizens expect us to deliver services digitally. They already use digital devices and technology in many areas of their lives and government should be no different. However, it's not enough to simply provide services digitally. They need to be so simple and convenient that all who can use digital services prefer to do so and will recommend them to others. We should help any of our customers who can't access our digital services to do so, whatever it takes – so that no-one is left behind.

Digital is about making things easier for people – our customers, our staff, our partners and suppliers. Digital is not just about technology or websites. It also includes mobile services and interactive telephony, joining up and improving our business processes, reducing unnecessary calls to contact centres, cutting the amount of paper processed, working more efficiently and gaining new skills, as well as improving the transactions and information services we offer and joining them up with others across the Department and other parts of government.

It also helps us do things cheaply and more efficiently, reducing the burden on the public purse in this difficult financial climate.

## **How does the Departmental Digital Strategy fit within wider government and Departmental reform plans?**

Action two of the *Civil Service Reform plan*<sup>3</sup> sets out the need for government to publish a pan-Whitehall and individual DDS by December 2012 that helps the civil service radically improve the provision of public services within the context of significant budgetary savings. This document sets out the recommendations for the Department to meet its reform obligations.

## **How will the Department for Education review impact on the Departmental Digital Strategy?**

This strategy was developed alongside the strategic Department for Education review, which was published in November 2012. The review addresses the role, size, shape and future operating model for the Department. The review found many positives in the many talented and committed staff, in the new structural building blocks of directorates and agencies, and in the success in delivering significant changes such as the arm's length bodies (ALB) reform whilst managing a big increase in the numbers of academies and Free Schools.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform>

However, the Department for Education review has identified areas where we can be better and remove the barriers that stop us all being as efficient and effective as we can be. At a time when we are requiring schools and children's services to do more with less, it is important that we hold ourselves to similarly high standards for use of public money, so that resources can be maximised where they are most needed.

The Department has also commissioned a report, the Analytical Review, looking at the role of research, analysis and data within the Department itself, English schools and children's services in order to understand how to better approach data transparency and information provision to the public.

Similarly, the Department's [Open data strategy](#) aims to ensure that parents and the public are able properly to hold schools, local authorities and the Department to account using timely, accurate data on the issues that matter to them.

These other department-wide reviews and reports are enablers of this strategy to achieve its outcomes – some of which may need to be amended following their publication and implementation to ensure alignment.

Lastly, as part of the ALB reform programme, the new executive agencies brought with them a wealth of online tools, transactions and services, many of which support business critical services such as teacher training registration, exam paper production, etc. This presents the opportunity for the Department to look at where these tools and transactions can be rationalised, and the technology they sit on consolidated. In addition, it has allowed us to see where existing tools and technology can be reused across other areas of the Department. Large cost savings are achievable through this IT consolidation programme which will be critical in the reaching the Department's expected cost savings as stated in the Civil Service Reform programme.

The Department for Education review identified the following themes:

- The way the Department establishes and then interacts with academies and Free Schools.
- We need more rigorous and frequent prioritisation of the work we do against ministers' objectives and priorities.
- Decision making is often not quick enough and involves too many people whose role in the process is not clear. There is also too much reliance on paper-based decision making.
- To live within reduced budgets we need to move away from maintaining standing teams on all policy areas and inject more flexible deployment to help us adapt as we start regularly re-prioritising with ministers.
- There is duplication between agencies, directorates and corporate services.
- We spend more on our corporate overhead than comparable organisations.



## What is our Department's digital vision?

The Department's overriding vision is a highly-educated society in which opportunity is more equal for children and young people no matter what their background or family circumstances. The DDS will support the delivery of our Department's vision, and through alignment with the Government's digital strategy, enable us to reach our ambition.

We will become a digital by default Department as we put digital at the heart of how we deliver our business. Where possible, our services will become digital, the way we work will become more digital and as individuals we will have enhanced digital skills and capabilities to ensure that we maximise the benefits that digital services and channels have to offer. By focusing on the needs of our customers and listening to what they tell us we will ensure that we provide the right services for them, and we will continually use feedback to monitor, learn and improve.

To move towards the digital vision, the Department will:

- Utilise existing government services, where appropriate, or bring online new services that are integrated and streamlined into existing services, to deliver a better customer experience and/ or improved efficiencies.
- Redesign existing transactional services, using a joined up approach which is focused on the needs of our customers.
- Meet and adhere to the broader Government Digital Services design principles for government online services, ensuring that those who cannot interact through digital have support and assistance.
- Through customer-centricity, enable a greater belief of self-service with our information services to our customers and audiences.
- Consult, listen and learn from our customers through the channels that they want to use to communicate, supporting service improvement and policy development.
- Re-design our organisational structure to enable services that are based on the requirements of the customer and not our existing internal structures.
- Ensure our technology platforms and technologies support our digital services – and not be constrained by them, using open source as an alternative to proprietary software where possible.
- Redesign internal processes to simplify them, reduce duplication and reliance on paper.
- Increase the openness and transparency of the information and data we hold to enable others to use the data for an almost unlimited number of purposes that will ultimately benefit our customers and improve education standards.
- Improve the use of information, data and research to be able to improve outcomes in education as well as providing a source of policy evidence.
- Create a digital culture within our Department with increased capabilities and confidence, new specific digital job roles and with digital embedded in our day to day business.

## Our current position

The Department is committed to creating a world-class state education system, and following a period of significant change, we now need to embrace how operating more digitally can benefit our customers, our organisation and our wider government.

## Where are we today?

The Department has undergone a significant amount of change over the past couple of years. The recent arm's length bodies (ALB) reform programme increased the size and the remit of the Department, and at the same time given us an opportunity to rationalise core processes and systems across the new Department for Education group.

The majority of ALBs have been changed in some way and following cessation of the rest of the Department's ALBs, and as part of this reform, we have established four new in-house executive agencies: Education Funding Agency (EFA), Standards and Testing Agency (STA), Teaching Agency (TA) and National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

The executive agencies all have Chief Executive Officers (CEO) who report to one of the Department's directors general. The CEOs are accounting officers and as such report to the Permanent Secretary as Principal Accounting Officer. This means that they are responsible for publishing annual accounts to be laid before Parliament, either separately or as part of the Department's overall accounts. They therefore have their own budgets to cover their own spending requirements.

The exception to this is with the provision of support services. The Secretary of State took the decision on 14 March 2012 that the Department and the new executive agencies will share one set of corporate support services for HR, payroll, pension administration, finance and procurement. Where appropriate, there will also be shared services for communications, data analysis, ICT, information management, internal audit, legal and property management.

Now complete, these newly integrated support services can help the Department to realise significant savings. This is crucial in a spending period where the Department for Education group is required to make savings of at least one third from its administration budget, and this is where the digital strategy can add significant value to this savings programme.

## Who are our customers?

The Department serves, directly and indirectly, a variety of customers, including:

- The schools and colleges workforce, including governors, bursars and support staff
- The children’s workforce
- Parents
- Students – from primary school pupils to FE students
- 16-19 education providers
- Researchers and statisticians
- Journalists and the media
- Local authorities
- Partner organisations
- The voluntary sector

The creation of the executive agencies following the ALB reform programme has challenged the Department to look again at its customers and how we should be meeting their digital needs.

The addition of the TA, for instance, has added potential teachers and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to the list of wider Departmental customers, whilst the STA has brought with it exams officers and centre support officers. These were not traditional customers of the Department, but now need to be catered for as part of a seamless and integrated digital service.

## What services do we currently offer?

Whilst the Department is not a traditionally heavily transactional services-led organisation compared to some other Whitehall departments, the number of transactional services has increased with the introduction of the new executive agencies.

Below are the main Department web services with some key metrics for the year to July 2012.

Departmental service	Service description	Unique visitors	Visits	Page views
Get Into Teaching	Online facility for teacher applications	1,288,778	2,002,624	15,488,243
School Performance Tables	Facility to find schools in England and view school performance, characteristics and spend per pupil data	843,140	1,142,581	3,748,256
National College members site	National College for School Leadership website for its members	693,048	1,440,616	11,140,494

EduBase	Database of educational establishments across England and Wales	254,807	537,737	6,473,601
Contact Us	Online facility to allow customers to contact the Department and securely upload attachments	153,450	191,468	1,537,031
In Your Area	Search facility and database showing a comprehensive range of school and local area education statistics	92,307	138,006	647,054
Qualifications Finder	The Qualifications List for those delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage	21,206	32,772	503,151
Section 96 Qualifications	Database of qualifications the Secretary of State has approved for pupils in maintained schools, and for under 19-year-olds in further and work-based education and training.	20,979	26,195	130,522
Secure Data Transfer System	Allows secure transfer of sensitive pupil data between schools	17,350	59,988	267,735
Educational Psychology	The online application system for Educational Psychology doctorate degrees	6,402	5,670	27,443
Early Years Qualifications Audit Tool	Early Years Qualifications Audit Tool	5,216	13,835	272,611
Commissioning Toolkit	Allows parents and commissioners to look for parenting programmes and interventions	5,216	5,783	52,277

These services give us a view of how our customers are currently interacting with us and indicate early potential adopters of new digital services or reengineered services.

## What have we done so far?

### 1. Customer experience and digital services - Provided better quality online facilities for our customers

The Department prides itself on the quality of its online tools and services. The Schools Performance Tables is a prime example of an effective digital service that has been seen as a key success in this area providing citizens with the information they require.

The Department has recently successfully delivered:

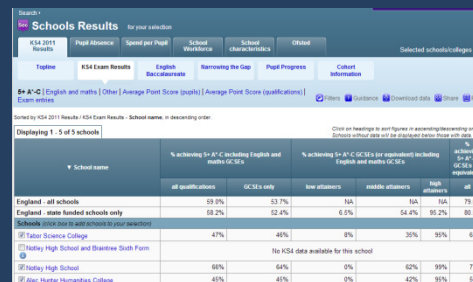
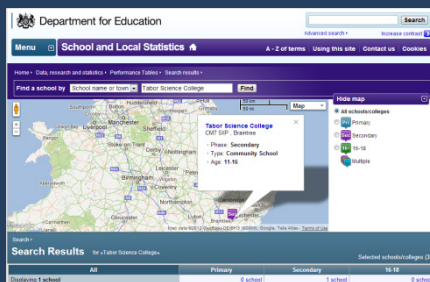
- The 2011 Schools Performance Tables, where customers can find information on schools in England and view and compare school performance, characteristics and spend per pupil data
- A 'Contact Us' facility which allows our customers to contact the Department or its executive agencies, and securely upload attachments to support their correspondence
- A live chat facility to allow prospective teachers to ask questions about the teacher application process and get a swift response
- The seamless integration of our ALB content and services into the education.gov.uk domain, uniformly branded and providing a consistent user experience
- An Office of the Schools Adjudicator tool where Schools Adjudicators make decisions on school organisation proposals
- The Department has also successfully delivered a host of business-critical tools for schools and local authorities to enable them to carry out their statutory duties quickly, simply and securely. However, we recognise these could be easier to access and use.

We have also been one of the leaders in the Government's drive to publish digitally by default, and the quantity of Departmental printed material entering our warehouse was reduced from 1691 pallets in 2009/10 to 15 pallets in 2011/12.

There has been a substantial reduction in costs to the Department incurred by paper, printing, storage and distribution. Monthly storage costs for printed material have been reduced by around 80 per cent over three years. We are well on our way towards transitioning to a fully digital publishing service.

## Case Study: Schools Performance Tables and Spending Data

An example of digital service provision is the Schools Performance Tables for parents and citizens. This data set is made available intuitively and interactively by providing search and mapping tools to help the user to locate individual schools. The user is able to view detailed school overviews as well as the most recent key stage performance data with year-on-year percentage changes, and a spend-per-pupil overview. Users can also create their own league tables, selecting local schools of their choice to compare on performance and spending statistics.



School name	% achieving 5+ A*-C (including English and maths) GCSEs		% achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs				% achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent)
	all qualifications	GCSEs only	low attainers	middle attainers	high attainers	all	
England - all schools	59.0%	53.7%	1%	NA	NA	75.0%	
England - state funded schools only	58.2%	52.4%	6.5%	54.4%	92.2%	80.3%	
Schools close to you							
<input type="checkbox"/> Labor Science College	47%	46%	8%	30%	95%	61%	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hestley High School and Sharncliffe South Farm			No KS4 data available for this school				
<input type="checkbox"/> Hestley High School	66%	64%	0%	62%	99%	77%	
<input type="checkbox"/> Aveo Hunter Homelife College	40%	40%	0%	42%	93%	50%	

Since publishing this tool, the schools performance data saw an 84 per cent increase in page views from the previous year at an average of 45,000 views per month.

## 2. Information and data transparency - Data transparency and open data

So far Whitehall departments have released almost 9,000 datasets on the flagship data portal [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) that cover health, education, transport, crime and justice. People can scrutinise local crime statistics, sentencing rates, school results, hospital infection rates and GP outcomes.

The Department is leading Whitehall in its ambition to make most of its data available to its customers and published its own [Open data strategy](#) in June 2012.

The National Audit Office report *Implementing Transparency* (April 2012) commended the Department for the progress made in opening up access to our data. In particular, they noted the measures taken to support choice and increase accountability, the steps taken to increase the accessibility of data and the increase in the level of public interest in school level information. In the two months following the launch of its comparative schools data site in September 2011, the Department recorded an 84 per cent increase in use of school performance information compared with the same period in the previous year.

The Department is one of the biggest contributors to the Government's drive to increase transparency and particularly to [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), with over 400 aggregate datasets registered on the site.

The new primary and secondary School Performance Tables, published in December 2011 and January 2012 respectively contain much more data than ever before. The secondary school Performance Tables, for example, contain 400 per cent more data than last year.

Finance data published on the 2011 Performance Tables show school income and spend data for 2010 -11 for Local Authority maintained primary and secondary schools in England. This data come from schools Consistent Financial Reporting returns which they provide to the Department. The details are published in grouped categories of income and spending so that users can easily compare schools' spending across key areas such as teaching staff, back office and learning resources.

As well as the Schools Performance Tables, the Department has a demonstrable track record in making useful up-to-date data available to its customers, including:

- Children in Care and Adoption Performance Tables for every local authority in England. These tables report on 15 key indicators relating to children in care and adoption including how quickly they place children for adoption; the number of placement moves children have in a year; the level of educational attainment of children in care; and the number of young people not in education, employment or training when they leave care
- The national pupil database which holds a wide range of information about pupils who attend schools and colleges in England, and from which interested parties can request extracts of data through an improved application process
- EduBase, the de-facto, central repository of all school information, whose data feeds are the cornerstone of the majority of our school data applications
- The 'In Your Area' application which allows users to access a range of education related data within varying distances from their location
- The Department has a dedicated web page for transparency from which all Department releases can be accessed. This page provides links to a diverse range of regularly updated information and can be found at: [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/transparency](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/transparency)

### **3. Digital engagement and policy development**

Our core social media channels are between one and three years old. In February 2012, a dedicated digital engagement team was established in the Communications Group, which increased resource and sharpened the Department's awareness of social media as a core channel.

The Department uses digital engagement for:

- listening, consulting and gaining insight;
- supporting communication, policy development and operational delivery;
- directly serving people better and more efficiently;

- finding new ways to engage with key audiences; and
- tracking issues in real time and in the longer term, both to give information to feed back into policy development and to improve the impact and efficiency of communications.

The Department uses multiple channels for digital engagement, depending on the objective, audience and issue, including:

- Department-owned channels – our websites and our core social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest);
- managed channels – other people’s digital spaces where we are active and where we may have a regular presence; e.g. our content, pictures and posts on others’ websites, forums, and blogs; content partnerships with specific forums and sites; facilitated activity e.g. webchats and Q and As with experts, stakeholders or professionals; digital extensions to face to face and ‘traditional media’ activity such as Select Committees, conferences, visits and events; and
- the rest of the digital world: activity anywhere, by anyone, on anything.

In 2011-12 the Department started to devote more resource to social media. In the same year we saw a massive expansion of traffic to our digital channels, with over 17 million visits to the website, 35,000 new Twitter followers and 2,100,000 impressions taken of our Facebook page - with significant spikes clearly attributable to increased activity.

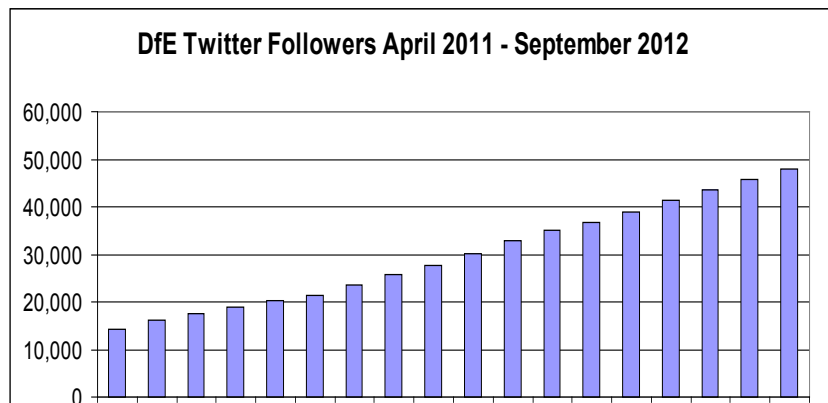


Figure 1 - Bar chart showing increase in the Department’s Twitter followers between April 2011 to September 2012



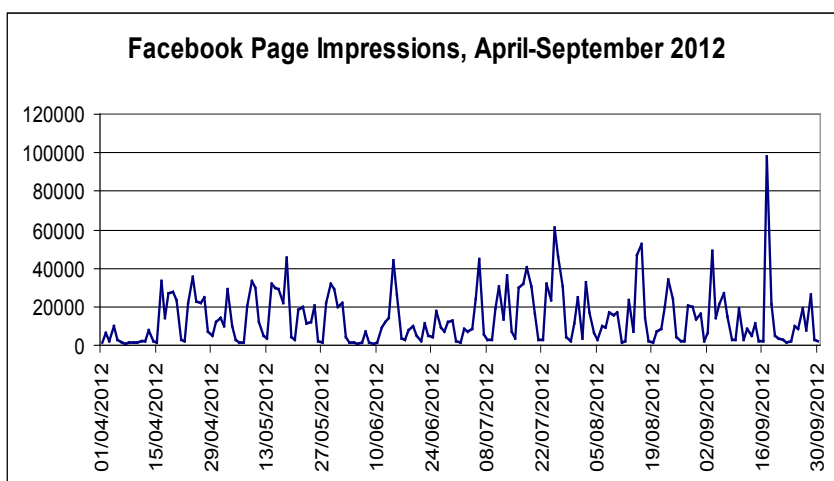


Figure 2 - Line chart showing Facebook Impressions between April 2012 and September 2012

Our in-house team use a wide range of equipment, social media management and analytical tools to create content for social media and third party channels. In-house capabilities include infographics, live streaming, analytics, and Facebook application development.

The Department, along with three of its executive agencies, has only one core ‘educationgovuk’ account on each social media channel for all official business. This suits the overlapping nature of our audiences and networks, and this itself is a significant factor in the growth of our social media audiences.

We have achieved excellent growth in the last 12 months on the Department-owned channels (e.g. our core suite of social media channels) and managed channels (e.g. our partnership with TES online). We have also seen some significant successes in external digital spaces – for example by the wealth of user-generated content posted on blogs and school websites about this summer’s pupil premium summer schools.

We have clear strategies in place for Department-owned, managed and ‘rest of world’ digital and social channels and are starting to build digital engagement skills within the wider Department. We also have popular and growing customer contact mechanisms via social channels.

The Department has been running an online e-consultations application for the last ten years and was at the forefront of consulting with our customers digitally, and using this to quickly analyse the data to help refine policy thinking and implementation.

Digital engagement has also contributed to core departmental objectives in the following ways:

- Academic evidence and research: academic and professional networks are highly active on Twitter. Social media has brought new audiences to the Department’s

extensive research output – for example we have increased the reach of a monthly research bulletin.

- Direct, fast access for factual and navigational questions: we answer as many questions as possible, most from education professionals and stakeholders, via Twitter, Facebook and ‘Ask DfE’ functions on third party spaces. This is popular, valued and cheaper than correspondence.
- Customer contact: we use data on a daily basis from our customer call centres, download figures and media enquiries to promote via social media and on the web the answers that we know people are looking for, at the times of day when they are looking for them. For example, phone calls from parents on how to apply for help with school uniform costs peaked during early September. We then promoted this information via Facebook and Twitter.
- Continuous feedback to support policy development and implementation: the volume of comment on key priorities both to us (on managed channels) and about us (on third party spaces) is a valuable source of audience insight for policy teams. It adds a new layer to knowledge gained from traditional stakeholder engagement routes and allows us to hear directly from individuals who would not contribute to a full formal consultation, or from specific audiences who are difficult to target via traditional communications routes.
- Efficiency gains: by amalgamating customer intelligence data from different sources we can plan communications which use resources better by serving customers better. During summer 2012 we worked with the Exam Results Helpline to divert more routine queries from young people to social media channels.
- Partnership working: in many areas the Department has a strategic role, delivering services and information through partners. Our social media channels help to give a louder voice to partner organisations which are often active on social media, but within smaller networks. We showcase excellent frontline practice and drive traffic to campaigns, resources and consultations.

#### **4. Digital capability**

The Department has taken great strides in embedding digital across the business – moving away from expensive offline processes and the provision of hard copy publications, for example. In recent years, the Department ended the expensive and inefficient exercise of sending regular hard copy newsletters to schools and local authorities and moved to an entirely digital process, where schools and local authorities are emailed regularly outlining critical announcements and highlighting key milestones.

The Department currently has centres of excellence which actively support the wider Department. Teams specialising in digital engagement, website content and development, publications and analytics are points of contact to policy teams. Each of these teams has a role in spreading good practice and training policy teams – e.g. on writing for the web, using social media to monitor reactions to policy, or producing accessible digital publications.

The Digital Engagement (DE) team is the first point of contact for policy teams who wish to use social media or other communication methods. The DE team delivers integrated engagement campaigns to support the Department's priorities, and support other teams to get involved in digital engagement themselves.

Similarly, the Digital Communications Unit (DCU) provides a centralised service supporting the development of the Department's website as new requirements arise, advising on web content creation and publishing, and providing analytics and social media analysis in order to utilise the Department's website most effectively.

The DCU is responsible for the development of the tools, products and services offered to the Department's policy teams and are working to reduce the number of departmental websites ahead of the complete move to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). The DCU trains policy teams on how to write for the web, how to format for digital presentation, and train staff from across the Department on how to use the dynamic content management system and will be key in training the appropriate staff on the use of the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) content management system.

## **5. IT consolidation and standardisation – IT rationalisation**

The September 2011 ALB reform business case identified a Department for Education group savings contribution of £94.8 million to April 2015, whilst the CIO Group business case identified a £50.5 million savings target through rationalisation and cost reduction of CIO Group-provided services. A further £44.3 million savings target needs to be delivered through process and administrative efficiencies enabled by technology to deliver the overall Department for Education group target savings.

A review of progress to date confirms with reasonable certainty that CIO Group can deliver £40.6 million to £52.3 million in the current spending review period. In order to enable realisation of these benefits and accelerate delivery of cost savings a set of prioritised programmes are to be mobilised to deliver the capability to service future Department for Education group needs.

CIO Group intends to source a set of strategic platforms that include CRM, business process management, collaboration and business intelligence to enable standardisation of shared IT services, removal of legacy ALB platforms and applications and delivery of associated cost savings.

These platforms have the capability necessary to re-engineer, standardise and automate business processes and information together with business change to reduce programme delivery and administrative costs.

## How will we achieve our vision and what are the challenges?

To support the departmental digital vision, we will need to change how we operate internally, and change the design and delivery of new and modified services to our customers.

This section of the digital strategy looks at how this is to be achieved through various interventions and governing principles as we move forward. These are grouped under the five themes:

1. Customer experience and digital services
2. Information and data transparency
3. Digital engagement and policy development
4. Digital capability
5. IT consolidation and standardisation

### 1. Customer experience and digital services – a better customer experience

Customer experience must be central to the design of the services we provide. Our customers should be able to complete all their transactional and information requirements through a single user interface to do their jobs effectively.

New digital services will help us deliver and interact with customers when they want and how they want. At its core, this looks at transactional services - which are seen as the critical area within the wider Government digital strategy - to deliver a better customer experience to our citizens whilst improving efficiencies.

This not only is a benefit for our customers but also in how we operate as an organisation building our Department's reputation for delivering world-class front-line services.

### How will we do this?

We have identified a number of existing transactional services as candidates to be reengineered to maximise the benefit that digital offers. Some existing transactions simply mirror earlier offline processes and now need to be redesigned around the needs of the customer, whilst other services have elements that are duplicated in applications elsewhere.

The customer experience and digital services theme supports actions #2, 6, 7 & 11 in the Government digital strategy.

In addition, Cabinet Office will lead in the definition and delivery of a range of cross-government technology platforms, in consultation with departments to ensure they meet business needs. These will underpin the new generation of digital services. Departments will be expected to use these for new and redesigned services, unless a specific case for exemption is agreed<sup>4</sup>.

### **Secure Access portal**

Currently for schools and local authorities to conduct their business with the Department, they must log into disparate systems, which makes for a rather disjointed and potentially frustrating experience.

To ensure there is a single point of access for schools, the Department will develop a centrally hosted secure portal for schools and local authorities to be able to access the transactional tools and services they require. These services will not necessarily all be created and hosted by the Department as we will continue to lever our relationships with the 3rd sector and partners where they can provide and monitor these services whilst we concentrate on our day jobs. The new access portal will be able to be used by existing and future services, with Single Sign On (SSO), thereby reducing the requirement for separate access authentication.

### **School Performance Data Programme**

The School Performance Data Programme will see the provision of a single data warehouse – one single repository for all schools data – bringing together for the first time school spending data, school performance data, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgments in a parent-friendly portal, searchable by postcode.

The interface will be designed around the needs of our users, making it easier to locate, analyse and interpret our data. Data will be presented in a reusable format which will facilitate the intuitive viewing, extraction and manipulation of raw data. Making this data available in an open and accessible format will enable the market to develop new products that will help the public to hold both their local services and the Department to account.

The School Performance Data Programme will see the consolidation of 8 existing data-based services into one.

### **National Curriculum Assessment (NCA) tools**

Managed by the Standards and Testing Authority, the NCA tools suite of services fulfil a number of different functions, for different audiences, but are separate modules managed by a number of suppliers and sit on different platforms, and covered by four separate contracts which will expire at different points up until January 2014.

The NCA tools have developed organically over time in response to policy decisions and aren't developed with the end user in mind.

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from Action 11 in the government digital strategy, 2012.

By 1 September 2013, a web application will be in live service to support the administration of tests delivered by the Standards and Testing Agency that;

- Is intuitive for our customers such that significant communication and training is not required;
- replaces the existing NCA tool web application and provides a reporting tool which can be used on a self-service basis;
- has a contract that supports commercial best practice;
- is flexible to enable systems changes in the event of policy changes; and
- is compliant with Equalities Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

### **Online Publications and Digital Publishing**

Since the ALB reform, the Department for Education group offers a number of different publishing services. The Department has a Single Online Publications Shop with almost 300,000 registered users who sign up for tailored email alerts. The STA similarly has 3 online 'Orderlines', each catering for a niche audience. There are obvious savings to be made here from rationalising these services into a single service.

### **Customer contact**

The Department is also actively investigating how to better interact and respond to the needs of its customers. Currently the Department handles in excess of 250,000 interactions with its customers each year – via telephone, written correspondence and email – with the offline mechanisms being significantly more costly than digital means.

Although the Department provides an online channel by which its customers can interact with the Department, we recognise that we need to move to a more self-service model where our customers' needs can be met at the point of contact with the Department wherever possible, reducing avoidable contact but with necessary support in place to handle more appropriate or complex queries.

The Department, in conjunction with its executive agencies, provides a number of different customer contact delivery operations which respond to customer needs across a number of audience groups and subject areas. These are often reactive responses to customer queries, but some include outbound communications as part of operational delivery responsibilities, such as those around testing and exams. There are also corporate communications covering essential messages for headteachers and local authorities.

With the recent Department and executive agency unification we also need to further embrace the opportunities social media offers to engage more widely and directly with the public and our stakeholders in ways that they want rather than how we dictate. We must put the user at the heart of our tools and services and ensure they are easy to find, intuitive, secure and ultimately services that our customers want to use.

Target delivery milestones:

- Secure Access portal - will provide secure external access to departmental systems – early 2013
- Publication Service rationalisation – to provide a single service across the Department that meets our publication distribution needs – 2013
- Customer Contact Channel Shift - a review on how we best use new and existing channels to meet our and our customers' needs – 2013
- NCA Tools consolidation – a move to rationalise the six separate systems to provide a single service – 2014

## 2. Information and data transparency – increasing the accessibility and transparency of our education data driving school reform and improvement in services

The Government is committed to making its data available in a range of open formats to lift the cover on government information and show citizens what data we collect. The Government plans to mandate the development and opening up of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to 3rd parties - enabling them to be able to use the data for an almost unlimited number of purposes that will ultimately benefit customers with data in formats they can use and understand.

Open data will:

- Drive choice and increase accountability – providing more comparative information will improve standards by informing decision making and allowing the public to hold school to account; and
- improve quality and outcomes – more data will help citizens to compare outcomes and challenge them to improve and increase efficiency.

### How will we do this?

In the Schools White Paper 2010, we committed to make schools accountable to parents for how well pupils do and how taxpayers' money is spent. Every parent will know how much money is allocated to their child's education, the amount spent by local government, and the amount available to the school. They will know how well pupils perform in a particular school across a range of subjects and other indicators, and be able to compare that school with others. Data will also drive reform and improvement by allowing schools to identify schools which are performing better and from whom they can learn.

The information and data transparency theme supports action #2 in the Government digital strategy.

### School Performance Data Programme

Work is underway to rationalise and reorganise our schools data tools, systems, data and contracts, which will remove duplication and inefficiency, thereby delivering a step change improvement for the Department, its new executive agencies, Ofsted, other key groups across the schools sector and the consumers of the Department's information services amongst the general public, the media and elsewhere.

We will bring all of our data that is held in various datasets and databases together into a single data warehouse. This solution, which is in line with technological best practice, would significantly improve our efficiency in developing and maintaining our evidence base and thus enable us to better exploit our rich data to support policy making.



The School Performance Data Project will bring together for the first time school spending data, school performance data, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgments in a parent-friendly portal, searchable by postcode.

This provision of this data in a structured format will allow others outside of the Department to be able to use and manipulate the data for their own uses and third party services.

### **Open up access to anonymised data from the national pupil database**

Work is in progress to deliver this fourth commitment in the Prime Minister's letter of 7 July 2011. The national pupil database (NPD) holds information on pupil/student characteristics linked with school attainment information for all children in maintained schools in England. It is a longitudinal database with the majority of datasets going back 10 years, with the earliest data going back to 1996. As such, the NPD contains a huge range of data, access to which could offer significant benefits to parents, schools, researchers and others. We are aiming to open up access to these data in 2013.

### **Make available even more school and pupil performance data**

We will continue to make improvements to the School Performance Tables. From the 2012 Performance Tables, we plan to introduce new contextual information about the pupils who attend a school. For example, we will show progress and attainment measures for pupils who have completed all of Years 5 and 6 in a school and for those with English as an additional language.

Performance Tables will also change to reflect the recommendations in the Wolf Review of vocational education. From 2014, the equivalences in Performance Tables will be changed so that only the best, most rigorous, qualifications are counted alongside GCSEs. The post-16 Performance Tables will be reformed to reflect the changing accountability system for that phase of education.

Following the recommendations from the Taylor Review, the Department will collect and publish more data on pupil attendance in education. For the academic year 2012/13, the absence data collection will be extended to those aged four at the previous August and to include the last half-term of the year. Provisionally, we plan to publish data for 2012/13 in March 2014.

### **More information on children's services**

The new adoption scorecard, which focuses initially on local authorities and the adoption process for children, will be updated annually when new data become available. Because comprehensive national data on timeliness for prospective adopters will not be available until autumn 2014, in the interim, we will assess the timeliness of the prospective adopter's journey in a cross-section of adoption agencies as they prepare to implement the new training and assessment process.

From 2014, the scorecards will include data on prospective adopters, including the number of these and how long they take to go through the approvals process, and will be published for all adoption agencies so that they can compare their performance in relation to timeliness with each other.

### **Open data standards**

The use of open data standards (as approved by the Information Standards Board, ISB) to standardise data sets across the education and skills sector, at point of collection and publication will, by April 2014, reduce processing costs and ensure the data can be compared across data sets and time series. This will include both government organisations, and the private sector, for example awarding bodies, and school and local authority Management Information System vendors.

The Department has also commissioned a report<sup>5</sup> looking at the role of research, analysis and data within the Department itself, English schools and children's services. The digital strategy will seek to support the key recommendations from this report as the biggest challenge the report faces is not how much data to collect or what to commission but how the data is being used as evidence consistently to drive improvement.

#### Target delivery milestones:

- Analytical Review – identifying how the Department can better use of evidence, data and research with the required unpinning data systems - November 2012
- National pupil database dataset opened up – 2013
- Enhancements to school performance data – from 2014

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<sup>5</sup> Department Analytical Review – published as an Annex to the Department for Education Review, November 2012

### 3. Digital engagement and policy development

Many of our key audiences are highly digitally active. They want to be more involved in policy development, implementation and communication. They are taking advantage of social media to engage with us, ask questions, and provide feedback.

#### How will we do this?

A recent review of the Department's communications capability noted some significant successes by a skilful and active social media team. The review praised the genuine recognition of the important role for social media as a tool for stakeholder and workforce engagement, and found that pilot activity on workforce engagement had been positive and innovative.

The digital engagement and policy development theme supports action #14 in the Government digital strategy.

The review recommended that in the next phase, activity should be more closely integrated with departmental objectives, and noted that the rest of Department needed to increase its skills in order for that to happen, at which point the role for the social media team's expertise would be to train, support and guide.

We are now in the process of taking forward these recommendations, moving to a more formal pilot model, and identifying internal sponsors for specific, time-bound engagement projects so that we can test different models and develop internal champions for doing things in new ways.

To achieve our ultimate aims, we also need to focus on building the digital literacy of the organisation as a whole, with a comprehensive programme of internal training and communication.

It's challenging to plan for channels and platforms which didn't exist a year ago and which may not exist by 2015. The rapid pace of change in social media means it's essential to have a flexible, iterative approach which gives space to innovate, to learn, and to capitalise quickly on opportunities – scaling up what works, when it works, and dropping it when it doesn't.

Our digital engagement is based on five principles:

1. Be useful;
2. make it simple;
3. pilot and evaluate;
4. lead and join conversations; and
5. use intelligence to drive efficiency and business benefits.

## Target delivery milestones:

### In 2012-2013 we are:

- Piloting in-house live-streamed events as a way of providing direct access to policy makers about Departmental priorities;
- running a formal customer contact pilot to assess the potential to use social media as a mainstream, cheaper contact channel for some kinds of customer contact; and
- with partners, using digital engagement to support key delivery priorities such as the recruitment of potential adoptive parents and foster carers.

### In 2013-2014 we will:

- Support more policy teams to engage directly on third party spaces
- more closely engage our key influential workforce networks of bloggers and tweeters;
- use active digital engagement with professional communities to support major reforms, such as to curriculum and qualifications; and
- run a series of pilots to assess future potential for crowd-sourced models in the professional development of our key workforce audiences and curriculum implementation.

### In 2014-2015 we will:

- Support the implementation of key reforms such as changes to curricula and qualifications.

## 4. Digital capability – enabling our Department to have the skills, tools and structure to be able to work digitally

To maximise the benefits of becoming a digital by default Department we will need colleagues to become more digitally savvy and capable, alongside developments in technology and infrastructure, to allow us to work in a new confident manner both internally and with our customers utilising the new technologies. This will enable us to be more responsive and flexible to customer needs – in a way that they want to interact with us – whilst we improve our digital capabilities.

### How will we do this?

For the individuals, new skills and guidance will be required to prosper from the new ways of working whilst at a technology level we will continue to consolidate what we currently have before we can fully lever our digital aspirations.

The digital capability theme supports action #4 in the Government digital strategy.

As we become more mature as a digital organisation and with us putting digital at the heart of all policy development and delivery, our skill sets and organisational structure will have to develop if we are to fully exploit the opportunities that being a digital Department offers.

Our policy and delivery teams within the Department will be empowered to not be reliant on centralised services for digital interactions but to have the ability and confidence to do it themselves. There will be opportunities to learn these new skills to enable colleagues to complete their work with support and guidance always available. This will help mitigate where newly learnt skills are not instantly employed and will act as a refresher for those that require it.

As part of our professional development there will be opportunities and guidance to increase our knowledge and confidence in utilising social media and new digital services that form part of your day job. The Department will shift in how it undertakes its business to decentralise some of the more common decision making accountabilities to local teams with the trust that they will adhere to their training and guidance. This will enable a more efficient way of working that is not constrained by over complex approval or authorisation channels.

A framework of digital skills will need to be developed and alongside an assessment of the existing digital capabilities within the Department we will be able to identify the digital training needs of colleagues throughout the Department. Highlighting where not only skills are required but where they are maybe not being used effectively.

As per Government guidelines, new specialist roles will be introduced into the Department to ensure that digital remains at the heart of the services we provide our customers and that the services provided are kept at the highest level. Digital service/product managers will support new and reengineered transactional services to ensure that they are maximising their potential.

Target delivery milestones:

- New roles to support the inception and on-going support of new and reengineered transactional services Q2 2013
- Establish a benchmark for the Department's digital engagement skills 2013
- Departmental digital skills review Q2 2013
- Run a programme of internal training and support to build the Department's digital literacy and confidence – 2013

## 5. IT consolidation and standardisation – ensuring our technology is consistent and cost effective to provide world-class services

In April 2012, following the 2010 cross-government review of public bodies, the Department's arm's length bodies were significantly streamlined and brought into the Department for Education as four new executive agencies. These agencies brought with them a wealth of online tools, transactions and services, many of which support business critical services such as teacher training registration, exam paper production, etc.

But this also presents the opportunity for the Department to look at where these tools and transactions can be rationalised, and the technology they sit on consolidated. In addition, it has allowed us to see where existing tools and technology can be reused across other areas of the Department.

Large cost savings are achievable through this IT consolidation programme which will be critical in the reaching the Department's expected cost savings as stated in the Civil Service Reform programme.

### How will we do this?

In October 2012, the Government Digital Service launched [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) - the single site for all public-facing government information. On launch, the Department had moved some of its content on to the new site, but work will continue with the Government Digital Service to continue the cleansing and transition of further content to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) for the whole Department for Education group by March 2014.

The IT consolidation and standardisation theme supports actions #7 & 11 in the Government digital strategy.

Demand for new digital capabilities and IT services will need to be co-ordinated and prioritised at a Department for Education group level in order to increase speed of response, re-use of IT/ digital investments and realisation of associated cost savings. Some of the existing digital and IT services will be standardised in order to improve their effectiveness and usage whilst reducing complexity and costs.

We will continue to rationalise our IT estate to make sure that we are getting the most out of the technology we have. There is a drive to reduce IT costs where possible whilst ensuring that we have the right digital tools and technology platforms that underpin the new generation of digital by default services.

The Department will make better use of Government IT procurement best practice through the utilisation of the new G-Cloud procurement framework.

#### Target delivery milestones:

- Department IT services cost reduction – following the ALB reform programme the practical removal of expensive, redundant or duplicate IT services – Q3 2013
- IT services rationalisation – the consolidation and standardisation of IT services and digital capabilities including CRM, management information, business process modelling, Secure Access and devices – Q4 2013 – Q1 2014
- Completion of the Department’s website content to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – Q1 2014
- Re-engineering of business processes, information and data, capabilities and services to support digital transformation across the Department – Q1 2015

## Challenges to implementing the departmental digital vision

Following engagement across the Department through a digital survey to all colleagues, detailed meetings with digital champions and further interviews with senior stakeholders, we have identified the following challenges which the strategy implementation must address:

- Audience fragmentation: Some of our key audiences have distinct digital profiles: many teaching professionals prefer not to use Facebook for professional purposes, and parents are so active on chat sites that it would make no sense to try and draw them away from spaces where they are comfortable. We are happy to engage with people wherever they are. However, a more fragmented approach makes planning resource intensive, and it can be more challenging to evaluate reach and impact in third party spaces. We take a project based approach to planning and evaluation.
- Changing roles: Social media is challenging boundaries and procedures. Policy officials speaking at a roundtable may feel they are in a private space, but then have their name and quotes tweeted by the audience. We have clear governance and processes in place and are now rolling out a training and internal communication programme to build digital skills and knowledge. We are working actively with cross-government networks as roles and skills change.
- Mobility: With many colleagues or customers based in the field, with teams spread across various locations, or simply with customers rarely based at a desk, an appreciation of mobility is required to be successfully digital. This may require new software, hardware or new behaviours in order to access new information in new ways that genuinely benefit the whole Department.
- Business and culture change: In order to truly move to digital by default, the Department must engender a change to its business processes – from policy



making to developing new tools and services – and this culture change cannot be technology-driven. This approach, along with the opportunities to learn new skills, must be embraced by all staff. But only if digital by default is demonstrated at the very top of the organisation will the change in culture be realised.

- **Governance:** It is important to understand who is responsible for the digital change programme, who will make it happen and who communicate with the various stakeholders for the purposes of openness, clarity and delivery performance. With changing roles, tools and organisation structures, a clear and consistent approach to the change is hugely important to help support the change.
- **Return on investment:** It's challenging to marry up data from social media channels with other management information and therefore work out whether you are really cutting the costs of customer contact or just adding to volume of contact. We are concentrating on smaller-scale pilots which can be properly evaluated so that we know when we are delivering efficiencies or business benefits.
- **Access to services:** We recognise that not all of our customers and audiences are online, and that not everyone will be able to use these services independently. The Government has mandated fair access to services through a design principle for all new services known as assisted digital. The Department will be working with GDS to help develop a consistent cross-government approach to this issue ensuring users who need help receive consistent service across.

As per action #9 in the Government digital strategy, the Department will work with GDS to ensure that our audiences that need assistance get a consistent service.

# How we will deliver our digital ambition

The Department has a clear digital ambition as to where we want to be by the end of this spending review period. This is underpinned by the five themes as outlined in this paper and supported by a number of initiatives that will move the Department to becoming more digital in alignment with Cabinet Office priorities.

The Department already uses digital services across its policy and delivery functions but we now need to improve and expand on the services we offer. Where possible, our services will become digital, the way we work will become more digital and as individuals we will have enhanced skills and capabilities to ensure that we maximise the benefits that digital services and channels have to offer.

To reiterate, moving to an organisation that is more digital will help us do things cheaply and more efficiently, reducing the burden on the public purse in this difficult financial climate.

The diagram below shows how the Department will mature as a digital organisation over the coming years.

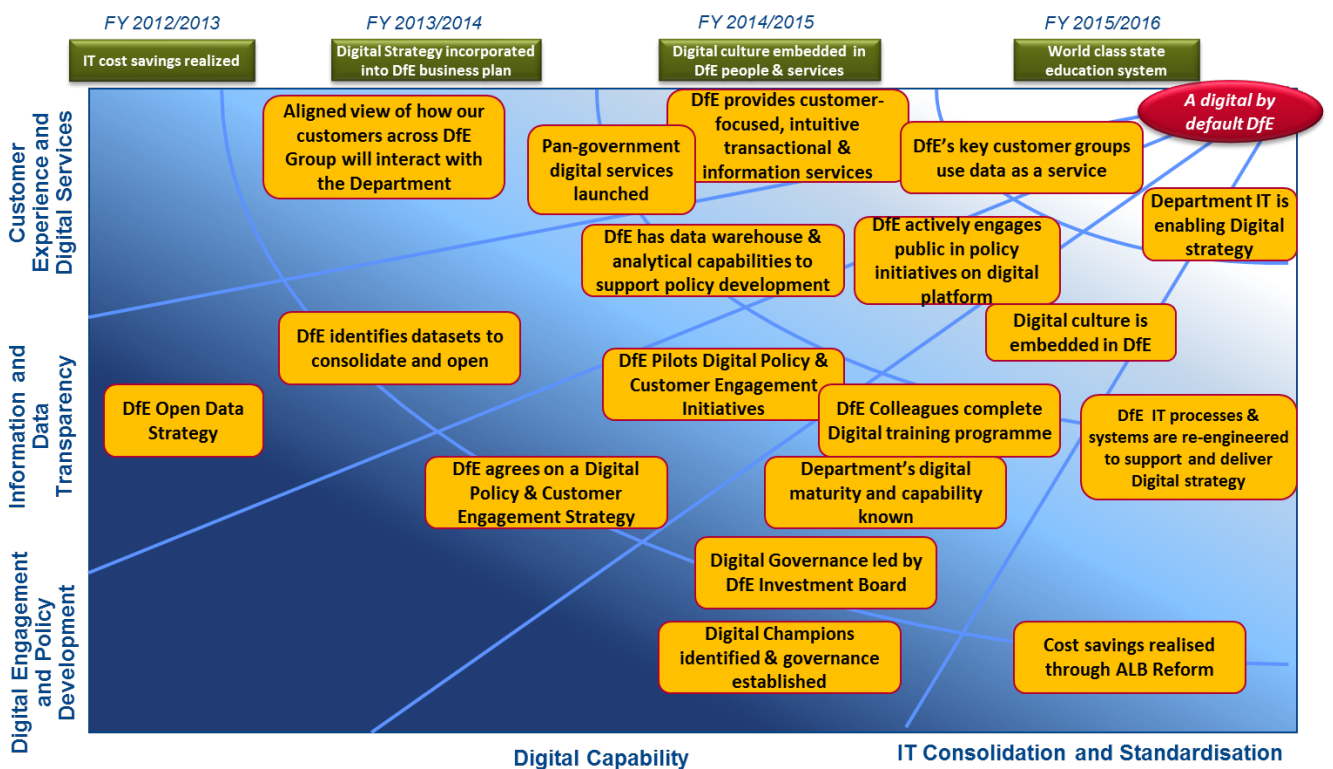


Figure 3 - A chart showing the Department's digital maturity progression to 2015-16

# Implementing the Department's Departmental Digital Strategy

Work is already underway in delivering the DDS as a number of the initiatives highlighted in this strategy paper are in progress. The plan below gives a high-level view of the timelines for these digital initiatives, their associated key activities and other key supporting pieces of work.

This plan will be revisited and validated by key digital stakeholders<sup>6</sup> throughout the Department for Education group before the close of 2012 to produce a confirmed roadmap of project and programmes until the end of the current spending review period.

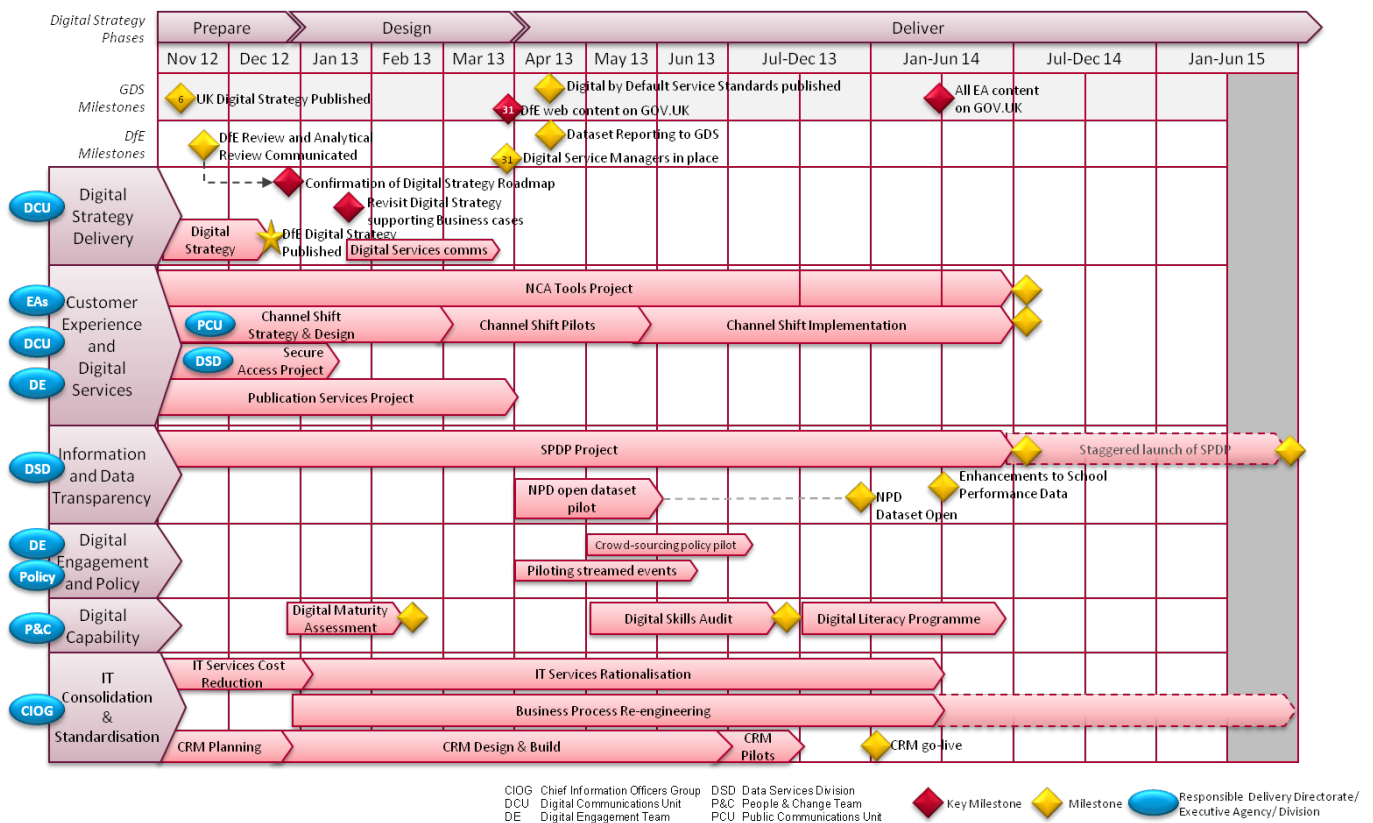


Figure 4 - Draft Departmental Digital Strategy implementation plan

## Digital Leadership

Digital leadership is critical to the success of this strategy. The Department's ICT Investment Board will sponsor the DDS as it has representation from across the Department for Education group. The board is a sub-board of the Department Executive Management Committee providing governance over the totality of ICT deliverables with a view to ensuring continued alignment with business strategy, policy implementation and business operational priorities.

Digital Leadership supports actions #1 & 2 the Government digital strategy.

<sup>6</sup> This group will be the Digital Champions that have been identified as part of the formation of this strategy and is to include other relevant parties

To ensure the successful implementation of the strategy, each directorate and executive agency has appointed a ‘Digital Champion’ to act as an advocate and evangelist to the move to a more digital way of working. These digital champions will also liaise with the business in their respective areas to identify new requirements and act as a conduit to the digital strategy implementation team.

## Digital service managers

In line with the Government’s digital strategy, and to ensure that the Department’s digital services are maintained, transactional services that exceed, or expect to exceed, 100,000 transactions per year will be assigned to a service manager. The service manager is a new post and will be responsible for managing and delivering the end to end process evaluation, redesign and delivery of world-class transactional services for the Department. The service manager posts will be appointed to support the Department’s emerging digital services.

## Digital strategy initiatives

Some of the initiatives noted within this strategy paper are too early in their development to have a full business case attached to them. This section will give further information on the proposed benefits to the initiatives as outlined in Section 4 of this document.

Table 1 - Digital initiatives and their alignment to the Digital Themes

Programmes	Alignment to strategy themes
Active programmes	
Schools Performance Data Programme	Information and Data Transparency
NCA Tools Rationalization Programme (Project Halley)	Customer experience and digital services
Secure Access programme	Customer experience and digital services
Recommended programmes	
Customer contact channel shift programme	Digital engagement and policy development
Publication services consolidation programme	Customer experience and digital services

Further detailed review of the wider digital strategy business case will be undertaken in Q1 2013.

## School Performance Data (SPD) programme

### Programme background

The Department holds a wealth of data about schools and their pupils. Over the years, the Department has also developed a number of disparate data systems using outdated technologies and duplicate tools that enable parents, the public, schools, local

authorities, school practitioners, and other organisations in the school sector to access data and information about the school's performance.

The current proposal is to bring all of Department's data held in various datasets and databases together into a single data warehouse. This single source of truth would allow the Department to replace disparate and confusing toolkits with a more consistent, coherent and powerful data and web tools, with a strong basis for the future.

The key objectives of the programme are to establish a new, more efficient and technically superior mechanism to collect, process, and publish schools performance information, to provide analytical tools suitable to support the Department's own needs and reduce the overall cost of processing and providing this performance information from its 2011-2012 levels

### **Programme benefits**

The programme has non-financial benefits around improved service provision and user experience, improved departmental process efficiency and powerful data analysis capability in future.

For the tangible cost benefits, three options were considered for identifying cost benefits and the recommended option is to procure an integrated solution based around a data warehouse capable of meeting broader Department needs in addition to school performance information and using an existing departmental service to provide hosting service.

## **Rationalise National Curriculum Assessment tools**

### **Programme background**

The National Curriculum Assessment (NCA) tools are a suite of modules that include NCA tools portal, access arrangements, pupil registration, teacher assessment and returns of results. These modules are externally hosted, maintained and delivered under separate contracts. The information architecture for the NCA tools has become outdated by the addition of functionality in response to urgent changes emerging from policy decisions.

The programme objective is to replace the existing NCA tools in STA and provide a new system to support the administration of tests delivered by Standards and Testing Agency.

### **Programme benefits**

There are wider process efficiency savings across the redesign of this service as opposed to the base IT hardware and servicing savings. At present, these have not been suitably estimated or validated.

## Secure Access project

### Programme background

The Authentix password system, which provides common access to six departmental systems, is around 10 years old. Whilst this system was appropriate to the business and security needs of those pre-Hannigan days – where policy was tightly focussed on reducing the burdens on schools by the provision of a single, common, password – this level of protection is no longer sufficient. No formal global exercise to reset passwords has ever taken place since system inception<sup>7</sup>, leaving the Department exposed to a risk that someone might gain unauthorised access to identifiable child data.

### Programme benefits

- Of the eight security risks that have been identified that formed the basis of this project, all can be addressed, thereby providing the necessary level of protection to the systems and their sensitive data;
- The system will be scalable – as required by the Chief Strategic Architect. As such, this will allow this system to be expanded to include more systems and thereby deliver the security benefits across the Department whilst fully meeting the requirements to reduce burdens on schools;
- As schools will be able to re-set their own passwords, this will remove the need for schools to contact the Data Services Division (DSD) helpdesk specifically for this purpose. Given that fully 50% of their current call load is related to this function, this will provide significant relief for the helpdesk; and,  
The provision of a self-service password service to schools will reduce the burden on schools in administering their access to departmental systems. Password resets will be able to be achieved without recourse to the Department and in a much shorter timeframe (a few clicks rather than two or three telephone calls, as at present).

## Customer contact channel shift programme

### Programme background

The Department, in conjunction with its executive agencies (the STA, TA, NCSL and EFA), provides a number of different customer contact delivery operations which respond to customer needs across a number of audience groups and subject areas. These are often reactive responses to customer queries, with the Department handling in excess of 250,000 interactions with its customers each year, via telephone, written correspondence and email – with the offline mechanisms being significantly more costly than digital means.

Although the Department provides online channels by which its customers can interact with the Department, the Department recognises that it needs to move to a more self-service model where customers' needs can be met at the point of contact with the

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<sup>7</sup> However there has been significant password churn during this period as schools often contact the DSD helpdesk to get the password reset.

Department wherever possible, reducing avoidable contact but with necessary support in place to handle more complex queries.

The key programme objective is to increase the numbers of people who are able to self-serve – to achieve their required interaction quickly and at low cost to the Department

### **Programme benefits**

The cost benefits estimation in the customer contact channel shift programme primarily depends upon the digital take up with customers, the current costs of managing customer interactions over different channels and profile of channel preference by customers in different EAs.

## **Department publication services consolidation programme**

### **Programme objectives**

Government's online publishing is in the process of being transformed by the gov.uk programme, a radical simplification of government web publishing started in 2011 in response to Martha Lane Fox's review. The gov.uk website has already demonstrated that it is simpler, clearer and faster for users.

The Department has identified the publication services that exist within the Department for Education group – Single Online Publications Shop (SOPS) and two Standards and Testing Agency facilities that would utilise gov.uk programme to provide customers with better publication mechanism and in the process avoid costs to the department.

Also with the ALB reforms, the EAs have brought in a wealth of digital tools to the Department and an opportunity to reuse services across directorates. In one such instance, a STA publishing service is being replaced by an existing NCA tool resulting in additional cost avoidance.

### **Programme benefits**

The programme brings in non-financial benefits such as greater efficiency by reducing efforts of collecting and publishing, Increased user convenience and standardisation of publishing mechanism.

We will work to ensure that the Department and its agencies are producing high-quality digital publications. There is more work to do to make our digital publishing service simpler and cheaper, with better quality end products which truly suit the needs of all our different users.

- We will improve our quality assurance checks to improve the consistency of our branding and the accessibility of our publications.
- We will aim to ensure that the digital publications we produce are absolutely necessary, of a high quality and easier for potential audiences to find.
- We will train and support the Department on producing clearer, more consistent publications, better targeted at audience needs

- We will continue to reduce the amount of printed material we store in our warehouse.
- We will look into expanding the types of formats our popular publications are available in, including formats more suitable for mobile.



## Annex I: GDS UK Government digital strategy alignment

The Government Digital Service has set out how the UK Government will become digital by default, setting out the actions required to transform central government services and improve policy making and communication. The GDS estimates that moving services to online channels could save between £1.7 billion and £1.8 billion per year.

Government is improving the way it provides information and services by moving to a new website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), and transactional services now present the biggest opportunity to save people time and the government money as the government provides over 650 different transactional services. There are only a handful of these services where a large majority of people who could use the online option do so. Many have a digital option, but few people use it. Half don't offer a digital option at all.

The GDS UK Government digital strategy has 14 actions, which have been grouped under eleven themes.

Table 2 – DDS alignment to the 14 actions from GDS UK Government digital strategy

1: Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active digital leader.
The Department has a digital leader in place to orchestrate digital direction throughout the department and ensuring alignment with the broader government objectives through the Department Investment Board. The board is a sub-board of the Department Executive Management Committee providing governance over the totality of ICT deliverables with a view to ensuring continued alignment with business strategy, policy implementation and business operational priorities.
2: Services handling over 100,000 transactions each year will be re-designed, operated and improved by a skilled, experienced and empowered service manager.
The Department has identified the immediate transactional services that will be re-designed to move the Department to a more digital by default organisation. The Department is considering how to resource the required service managers to ensure their success and on-going development.
3: All Departments will ensure that they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills.
To maximise the benefits of becoming a digital by default department we will need colleagues to become more digitally savvy and capable. We will create a digital culture within our Department with increased capabilities, new specific digital job roles and with digital embedded in our day to day business.
4: Cabinet Office will support improved digital capability across departments.
Not applicable/ will form part of the work to support GDS action #3.
5: All departments will redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions each year.

<p>Amongst others, the Department has instigated two key projects which will support the Government's commitment to becoming digital by default. Firstly, will be Schools Performance Data Programme which will bring together for the first time school spending data, school performance data, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgments in a parent-friendly portal, searchable by postcode. Secondly, will be a redesign of the Department customer contact channels where we will be moving to further digital channel engagement over more traditional methods.</p>
<p>6: From April 2014, all new or redesigned transactional services will meet the digital by default service standard.</p>
<p>Digital by default service standards now form part of the design requirements to any transaction or information service being designed.</p>
<p>7: Corporate publishing activities of all 24 central government departments will move onto GOV.UK by March 2013, with agency and arm's length bodies' online publishing to follow by March 2014.</p>
<p>The Department are aligned with GDS's corporate publishing move to gov.uk. On launch of GOV.UK, the Department moved some of its content on to the new site, but work will continue with the Government Digital Service to continue the cleansing and transition of further content to GOV.UK for the whole Department for Education group by March 2014.</p>
<p>8: Departments will raise awareness of their digital services so that more people know about them and use them.</p>
<p>As new or redesigned services go live, the launch and communication activities that support them will be planned by the specific project teams to meet their specific target audiences. The Department is also undertaking a Channel Shift Strategy which will result in improved sign posting to information and services as part of the move to an enhanced self-serve offer.</p>
<p>9: We will take a cross-government approach to assisted digital. This means that people who are have rarely or never been online will be able to access services offline, and we will provide additional ways for them to use the digital services.</p>
<p>The Department recognise that not all of our customers and audiences are online, and that not everyone will be able to use these services independently. We are therefore aligned with GDS's cross-government approach to assisted digital, with this central to the Customer Contact Channel Shift project.</p>
<p>10: Cabinet Office will offer leaner and more lightweight tendering processes, as close to the best practice in industry as our regulatory requirements allow.</p>
<p>The Department will align to Government defined procurement processes. As we continue to rationalise our IT estate to make sure that we are getting the most out of the technology, we will make better use of Government IT procurement best practice through the utilisation of the new G-Cloud procurement framework.</p>
<p>11: Cabinet Office will lead in the definition and delivery of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of digital services.</p>

The Department is nearing the completion of a significant IT rationalisation programme following the ALB Reform programme and intends to source a set of strategic platforms that include CRM, business process management, collaboration and business intelligence to enable standardisation of shared IT services, removal of legacy ALB platforms and applications and delivery of associated cost savings.

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

While the Department is not aware of any significant legislative barriers to achieving digital by default for our services, we will work with Cabinet Office to identify and amend any legislative barriers, in particular as we rebuild services to be digital by default.

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

The Department's Digital Intelligence Team is fully engaged with GDS colleagues to ensure a complete set of management information is provided.

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

The Department will initiate a digital literacy programme to upskill staff who will have a new requirement to use digital tools and techniques as part of their work. Broader engagement with the public will be made through social media channels and the Department is engaging with GDS and other departments on how best implement open policy development (i.e. crowd-source models)

## Annex II: Glossary

Term	Definition
Application Programming Interface (API)	An application programming interface (or API) is a way of making information available to other developers for use in tools and services. APIs allow developers to use information quickly and easily, and help to ensure that they can access data in the most efficient way available.
Arm's length body (ALB)	See non-departmental public body
Crowd-sourcing	Crowd-sourcing in this context is a method of gaining input or ideas from a potentially undefined and distributed group of people, such as members of the public.
DDS	Departmental Digital Strategy – each Whitehall department have each been commissioned to develop their own digital strategy following the GDS pan-government digital strategy.
Digital	By digital, we mean internet enabled; be that desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile or digital devices not yet invented.
EFA	Education Funding Agency (Department for Education executive agency).
Executive agencies	Executive agencies (EAs) are defined business units that form part of a Government department. They operate with a degree of autonomy from ministers and the main department. Ministers do not concern themselves with the day to day running of agencies but are directly accountable to Parliament and the public for the overall performance of agencies and for their continued existence. Executive agencies typically deliver a service, do not have a separate legal personality and are staffed by civil servants.
Informational services	Informational services cover the publishing of information to assist citizens and businesses in their engagement with government. For example, in August 2012, one of the most visited informational pages on Directgov listed the dates of forthcoming public holidays.
NCA tools	National Curriculum Assessment (NCA) tools. A suite of tools from the STA executive agency to support test administration.
NCSL	National College for School Leadership (Department for Education executive agency).
Non-departmental public bodies (NDPB)	NDPBs are organisations which assist government departments in the making or delivery of its policies or which have judicial powers. They were previously known as QUANGOs. Although mostly funded by a host department, they operate at arm's length and are now called arm's length bodies' (ALBs). As part of the Department for Education ALB review, a number of bodies have been subsumed into the Department as executive agencies.

Services	In this strategy, services mean transactional and informational services.
Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)	Small and medium sized enterprises (or SMEs) are defined by the European Commission as enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million.
STA	Standards and Testing Agency (Department for Education executive agency).
Stakeholder	A stakeholder is an individual or organisation that can affect or be affected by the actions of the organisation as a whole.
Systems Integrator	A Systems Integrator (or SI) is an individual or business that builds computing systems for clients by combining hardware and software products from multiple vendors and ensuring that those subsystems function together.
TA	Teaching Agency (Department for Education executive agency).
Transactional services	Transactional services include interactions with the Government, from booking driving tests and filing tax returns to setting up a company and applying for a Public House licence: everything which involves sharing information, requesting services, buying goods, asking for permission, or paying money.



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