

A central graphic for the digital strategy. It features a blue horizontal bar with the text "VALE of GLAMORGAN COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY" in white. Below this bar is a darker blue bar with the text "2017-20" in white. The graphic is surrounded by various icons: a computer monitor, social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, a group of people, a hand holding a smartphone, and a person pointing at a screen. A circular line connects the top and bottom of the central elements.

VALE of GLAMORGAN COUNCIL
DIGITAL STRATEGY
2017-20

Strong
Communities
with a Bright
Future

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Introduction from the Leader of the Council

The way public services are delivered in Wales is changing at an unprecedented pace. New expectations from our customers, the challenges of working more collaboratively and the availability of technology to improve the way we work means that a digital strategy for the Council is required to set out how this Council will respond to these opportunities and challenges.

I am pleased to introduce the Council's first Digital Strategy. It sets out our vision for how we will leverage new technologies to continue to provide high quality priority services. The strategy seeks to define what residents, businesses and visitors in the Vale of Glamorgan can expect in terms of our organisation and how our staff will work in a more agile way to meet customer needs. Working with our partners is a key focus for this Council. By working together we can deliver creative and innovative approaches that tackle complex issues and we have identified this as a key priority for a digital Vale. Promoting our area as one that is a great place to live, work and visit is also a priority and digital offers new and exciting opportunities in this regard.

The Council has a strong pedigree when it comes to delivering transformational change via new ways of working. The OneVale transformational change programme introduced new approaches alongside an integrated corporate services system that streamlined processes and improved the way we operate our HR, payroll, procurement and finance services. It also provided us with the opportunity to establish a corporate contact centre, Contact OneVale. In more recent years, Reshaping Services is establishing a new operating model for the Council that is enabling us to meet ever increasing demands for services at a time of diminishing financial resources by adopting new models of working.

This digital strategy is part of our overall set of Council strategies, supporting the delivery of our Corporate Plan. I see digital as a key enabler in ensuring we achieve the Council's ambition for technology to be at the heart of service delivery, helping individuals, business and communities achieve their full potential, in their work, their education, at home and in their social life. In doing so, digital will be at the forefront of our Council's overall vision for the Vale of Glamorgan – strong communities with a bright future.



Councillor John Thomas
Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council

Background

The National Context

Digital delivery of public services has been an ambition for the UK for some time. In 1999, the Modernising Government White Paper set out a vision for an ‘information age government’ that relied on ‘new delivery channels like the Internet’. Since then, huge advances have been made in the private sector by companies like Amazon, Apple, Google, Twitter and a host of other household names, several of which did not exist 15 years ago. At the same time we are seeing:

- **Rapid development of new technologies.** Technology has radically transformed the way that services are delivered in recent years and this trend will continue. Broadband access has been described as the ‘fourth utility’ while digital service delivery in the private sector will soon extend to using driverless and wearable technology. The pace of technological innovation is leading to different expectations of services. People want transactional services and information to be accessible through their preferred device and services that require human interaction, such as social care, can be supplemented and improved by technology.
- **Increased integration across the public sector.** The public sector is becoming increasingly integrated as organisations identify the need to work together to tackle complex issues at the same time of reducing budgets. Efficiencies beyond “salami slicing” are encouraging organisations to share services, assets and knowledge.
- **Significantly different ways of working.** This is partly driven by increased public sector integration as well as the increase in mobile working. Tablet and smart phone technologies are enabling mobile workforces to be more connected, efficient and effective and the way people are working more flexibly is enhanced by the ability to be connected on the move.

This ‘digital revolution’ is transforming the way that many people live their lives, from the way we purchase goods and services to the way we communicate with others. It also represents a significant opportunity for local authorities to harness new and emerging technologies to redesign public services in a way which meets the expectations of residents.

Despite this opportunity, local authorities are presented with a unique set of challenges in this field. This includes the availability of financial and other resources to harness cutting edge technology to deliver services. It is also recognised that there are ‘digital skills gaps’ in the workforce, the need to adhere to strict data security standards and, most significantly, unprecedented cuts to budgets.

The Local Context

- **Why a Digital Strategy?**

Digital technology has the potential to enable the Council and our partners to deliver services in a more efficient, productive and cost-effective way. This Digital Strategy will benefit our staff and citizens, develop the Vale of Glamorgan as a place and improve the support we provide to others. For these reasons, we have recognised digital as a key enabling project within the Council's transformational change programme, Reshaping Services. Reshaping Services seeks to reshape the way we work in order to mitigate the effect of the impact of cuts and assist in continuing to provide priority services. The strategy also supports the Council's ongoing development of an operating model for the organisation that will make it fit for purpose in future years.

During 2016 we undertook a review of the way in which the Council operates key organisation-wide processes. This review considered the current operating model (i.e. how the Council works across and between departments and interacts with our customers). Key findings from this work was a desire to further integrate the way departments work together to find collaborative approaches to deliver services in a more joined up way for our customers, facilitated by digital ways of working. The work also identified the role that digital technology can have in how the Council interacts with customers and partners and the potential efficiencies that can be harnessed via a move to digital channels such as through the website and online apps, rather than the more traditional means of customer contact such as via telephone, post and face-to-face.

Our Digital Strategy will support and contribute towards achieving the Council's vision of "Strong communities with a bright future". The strategy will support work that is underway across a variety of the well-being outcomes and objectives the organisation is working towards. The Strategy responds to the increasing demands of our customers to interact with us in different ways and to reflect our strategic agendas in services such as the 21st Century Schools Programme.

It is important to consider the potential digitisation has for both improving access to services, the area of the Vale of Glamorgan as a whole and the ability to deliver financial savings as a result of changing ways in which services are provided and accessed. This is particularly the case through "channel shift" for customers to digital channels of contact, as well as through changes to working practices, with associated productivity improvements and more efficient use of resources.

The strategy is part of the Council's suite of corporate planning documents, which together support the delivery of the Corporate Plan. These documents include the Workforce Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Corporate Asset Management Plan. As these documents are refreshed, they will increasingly reflect the work outlined in this strategy. The digital strategy will be supported by the Council's ICT Strategy and actions included in this strategy will be delivered and monitored via the Council's Performance Management Framework, including quarterly well-being outcome reports, service plans and team plans.

This strategy has been developed since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. As part of our activities, we have a duty to meet the Sustainable Development principle which is to seek to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Our digital strategy will develop in line with this guiding principle. Throughout its development and delivery we will challenge ourselves with regards the five ways of working introduced by the Act. These ways of working are:

- Looking to the long term – for us, this means planning for the future and taking a strategic approach to ensure services are sustainable and that we understand the future need and demand for services. This strategy will seek to identify ways of investing in the infrastructure of the Vale of Glamorgan and supporting regeneration across the area.
- Taking an integrated approach – for us, this means thinking about the needs of our customers and working with our partners. There are a series of actions in the strategy to contribute towards delivering services that are more integrated and accessible to customers and also a stream of work associated with closer working with our partners.
- Involving the population in decisions – for us this means engaging with our residents and customers, including the business community and ensuring that we are listening to a wide range of views to inform our thinking. We will implement this strategy by engaging with these stakeholders and find digital ways to encourage greater participation in the work of the Council.
- Working in a collaborative way – for us this means recognising we can achieve more and deliver better services by working as part of a team, for example by working with the Third Sector, Town and Community Councils and neighbouring authorities. This strategy has a specific theme associated with collaboration as we recognise the ability of digital to simplify and streamline access to services and assist us in joining up our work with others.
- Understanding the root causes of issues and preventing them – for us this means being proactive in our thinking and understanding the need to tackle problems at source, for example, by undertaking needs assessments to inform our priorities. This forms a part of the digital strategy and also in how we will engage with customers and others on a range of issues using digital channels. The design principles we will use to guide us (Appendix A) also encourage whole system redesign and provide an opportunity to consider the root causes of issues and find ways of preventing them.

- **The Current Digital Position in the Vale of Glamorgan**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is already responding to the opportunities and challenges associated with the digital agenda through a number of initiatives such as the Digital Inclusion Strategy and the Connecting with our Customers programme. These build on the significant work undertaken as part of the e-government transformational change programme between 2005 and 2011. The Council has also embraced a range of technologies to support the delivery of services, such as an online council tax portal, mobile working technologies and the development of the Council's app.

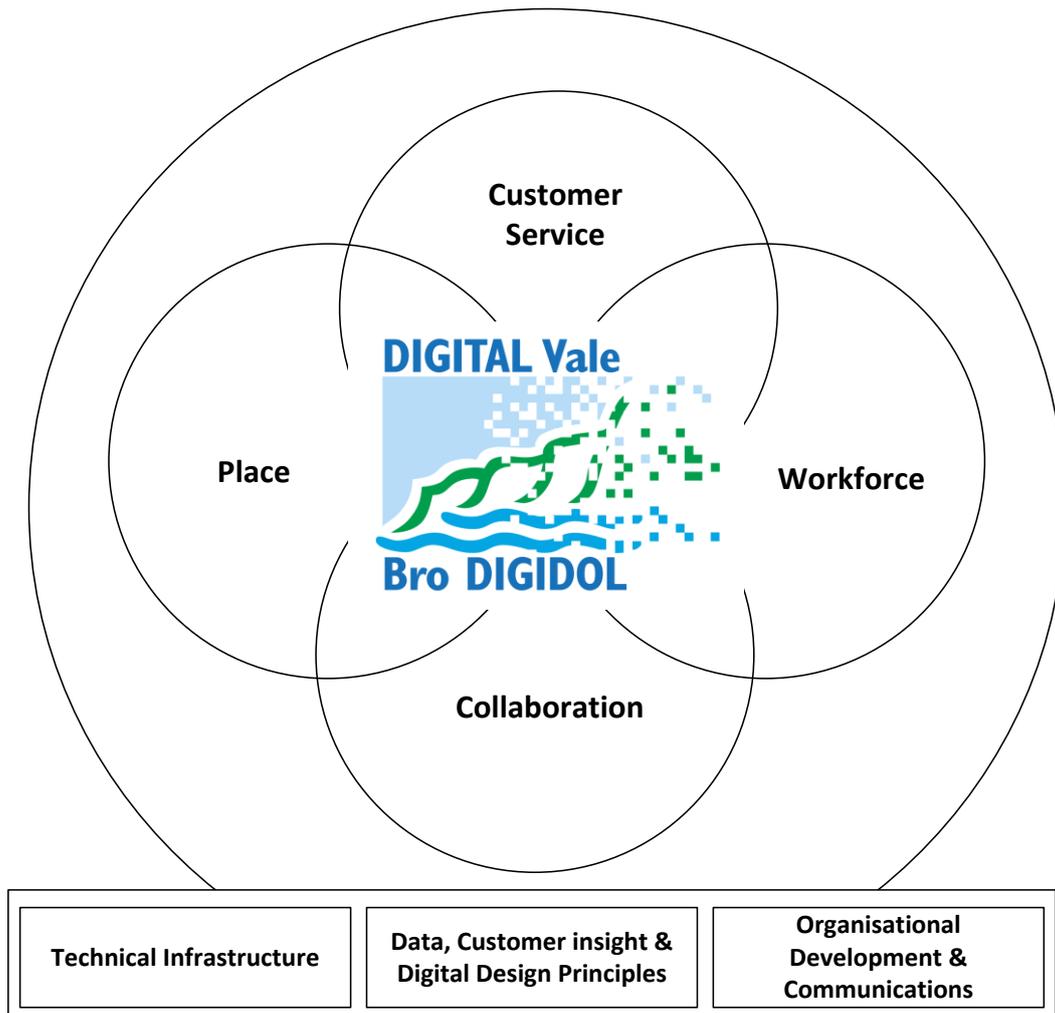
Examples of where digital has changed the method of delivering services include the council's online planning portal, which provides an end-to-end mechanism for submitting prospective applications in digital format. Parents can now pay for school meals via an online portal, removing cash handling and allowing parents to track the nutritional value of their child's food choices. Development of a digital monitoring solution for homecare will ensure that clients receiving reablement services can monitor their recovery progress whilst ensuring that staff are equipped with the relevant information to best provide care and rehabilitation services.

As part of the 2016 Reshaping Services Baseline Assessment Update project, work was undertaken to identify in more detail the potential for digital working to become a major theme of the Programme in future years. Work will now be progressed on individual projects as part of the Digital Strategy. The Baseline Assessment Update project also considered the overall target operating model (TOM) for the Council and how it manages contact and interaction with councils and partners and internally. Digital has been identified as a major driver for delivering changes to the way the Council works to deliver savings and improvements. As part of the Reshaping Services Programme, consideration has been given to the projects and initiatives that can form the next phase of projects for delivery from 2018/19 onwards. Digital is seen as a key project for the programme, supporting the delivery of new ways of working, financial savings and efficiency improvements. Digital delivery is very much in line with the aim of Reshaping Services which is to mitigate the impact of cuts on priority services.

Developing & Delivering our Digital Strategy

The Strategic Framework

In order to provide a framework within which the varied and extensive work associated with the digital strategy can be delivered (and to ensure appropriate linkages are made between this activity), the Council has identified four interrelated themes that, when progressed together, will enable us to achieve our vision of a digital Vale. These are complemented by three support activities.



Our vision for a digital Vale will be delivered through four interrelated themes with the objectives of:	
Digital Customer Service	<p>Enabling citizens to get the services and information they need online digitally by default</p> <p>This means embracing technology to re-design our services and the way they are provided to customers. Starting with a digital solution as the default solution, we will work to redefine the relationship with our customers, responding to their increasing expectations and experiences of the best services provided by both public and private sectors.</p>
Digital Workforce	<p>Enabling staff with the digital tools and skills required to deliver services effectively and efficiently</p> <p>This means delivering positive outcomes for our residents by giving staff access to the data they need and the best available technology, ensuring they have the skills to use it effectively.</p>
Digital Place	<p>Equipping residents and businesses with the digital skills and technology they need to enhance their lives</p> <p>This means enabling residents and businesses in the area to use digital technology to improve their lives, providing them with access to devices and the internet as well as developing their digital skills, from the children and young people in our schools to our elderly residents.</p>
Digital Collaboration	<p>Enabling the council and its partners to tackle complex issues and work together seamlessly</p> <p>This means using digital technology to work with our partners to deliver the outcomes we both desire.</p>
Our vision for a digital Vale, is supported by:	
Technical Infrastructure	Ensuring appropriate technical infrastructure is in place to deliver our objectives.
Data, Customer Insight & Digital Design Principles	Using the customer data we receive from online services so that is securely stored and used in the most effective possible way, allowing us to anticipate the future needs of our residents and divert resources to meet resident demand where required. The digital principles we propose to use are contained in Appendix A.
Organisational Development & Communications	Supporting the delivery of our strategy requires the organisation to have appropriate skills and capacity to undertake the work. We also need the ability to communicate, engage and work with others to ensure success.

Delivering Our Vision

Theme 1: Digital Customer Service

Objective: Enabling citizens to get the services and information they need digitally by default.

This means embracing technology to re-design our services and the way they are provided to customers. Starting with a digital solution as the default solution, we will work to redefine the relationship with our customers, responding to their increasing expectations and experiences of the best services provided by both public and private sectors.

What are we doing currently?

- Enabling customers to request and pay for services via a range of digital channels (via the website, via mobile apps)
- Enabling deep integration of the website with back office systems to provide staff with the right information at the right time to deliver services.
- With the help of our partner organisations, we are enabling staff access to a range of systems that provide joined up information regarding our citizens and their needs.
- Addressing digital exclusion through the “Get the Vale Online” campaign.

What outcomes will we deliver?

- Services, information and data will be more accessible to residents through online council channels, increasing accessibility, transparency and satisfaction.
- Channel shift in the way customers interact with the Council, with a move to lower cost, more available channels mirroring the approach adopted in other sectors.
- Services will be delivered more efficiently, enabling the council to make better use of diminishing resources.

What strategic actions will we take?

- We will review and continue to develop the Council’s websites and mobile app to ensure they meet our customers’ needs and expectations now and in the future.
- We will design services from a “digital first” perspective, embracing what the technology can do to streamline service delivery and not simply transfer existing processes online.
- We will assess the need for a single digital customer access point to enable customers to engage, monitor and view the history of their service requests to integrate the way our services are presented to service users.
- We will continue to break down the barriers between council departments and the council and its partners to ensure that customer interactions are supported by information that assists the delivery of services.

- We will provide access and make use of social media to extensively involve and engage with our citizens and to enable further feedback and learning from them.
- We will continue to address digital exclusion through the “Get the Vale Online” campaign.
- We will work to support the movement of customers from more traditional channels of contacting the Council (such as face-to-face and telephone) to more cost effective digital channels, such as web transactions and web chat.

Theme 2: Digital Workforce

Objective: Enabling staff with the digital tools and skills required to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

This means delivering positive outcomes for our residents by giving staff access to the data they need and the best of available technology, ensuring they have the skills to use it effectively.

Council staff will be given access to multiple sources of data and the relevant training to enable decision making to be based on business intelligence that will underpin the way in which all services are designed.

What are we doing currently?

- Increasing our mobility of staff by providing mobile solutions that can be effectively used in the field.
- Enabling home working via the use of secure portals that encrypt and protect data.
- Addressing skills gaps by ensuring that our staff are trained in new technologies.
- Investing in the council's infrastructure and equipment to enable staff to provide a more responsive service to our customers.

What outcomes will we deliver?

- Staff have access to information data sets that enable decisions to be intelligently informed.
- Deliver secure and effective mobile working to enable our staff to provide effective services irrespective of their location.
- Productivity improvements, with associated reductions in overall costs of providing services.
- Further reduce our paper and printing costs as we move on our journey towards paperless offices.
- Staff who are proficient and confident in their ability to exploit the best of available technology to perform their roles.

What strategic actions will we take?

- We will use emerging technology to explore opportunities for optimising and streamlining service delivery.
- We will pilot new technology that will enable our workforce to become truly mobile and collaborative, helping to adapt to changes in the traditional model of office based working.
- We will roll out the use of digital workspaces to reduce costs and provide staff with secure access to information. We will ensure that our colleagues are provided with the support and opportunity to make the best use of the digital environment.

- We will consider changes to our policies and procedures to support a culture which enables staff to embrace the best of available technology in a secure way in line with the Council's Staff Charter.
- We will adopt digital ways of working to support key business processes, such as recruitment.

Theme 3: Digital Place

Objective: Equipping residents and businesses with the digital skills and technology they need to enhance their lives.

This means working with others to enable residents and businesses in the area to use digital technology to improve their lives, providing them with access to devices and the internet as well as developing their digital skills, from the children and young people in our schools to our elderly residents.

It is our ambition that all of our residents and businesses will be able to quickly and easily access digital technology and the internet throughout the Vale of Glamorgan and will be equipped with the digital skills required to improve their lives from an early age. This will require us to work with others to enable the infrastructure and support is available throughout the county. We will increasingly be perceived as a digital authority, gaining a reputation for the council as being a hub of digital technology. Communities, businesses and our partners will work alongside the council to design and develop technological solutions to problems.

What are we doing currently?

- Introducing free Wi-Fi to all our public buildings and spaces, for examples the 'Digital Beach' at Barry Island.
- Encouraging uptake of digital access channels by offering training and support to our residents.
- Ensuring that our small businesses are supported and signposted to sources of digital skills.

What outcomes will we deliver?

- An increase in the amount and quality of digital information available across the authority to enable quick and easy access to businesses.
- We will improve levels of digital literacy amongst our citizens.
- An increased awareness of the range of digital services provided by the council to both domestic and business customers.

What strategic actions will we take?

- We will further the use of assistive digital technology via the "Internet of Things" to provide support to enable people to remain independent in their homes and prevent the need for more intervention.
- We will develop digital marketing solutions that ensure that the Vale of Glamorgan as area to live, do business and visit is promoted on a worldwide basis and the work of the Council is placed in this context.
- We will enable customers that may be unfamiliar or uncertain of using digital channels to access the support they need.
- We will work with our partners and businesses to develop opportunities for economic development and growth associated with digital ways of working.

Theme 4: Digital Collaboration

Objective: Enabling the council and its partners to tackle complex issues and work together seamlessly.

This means using digital technology to work with our partners to deliver the outcomes we both desire. We will streamline data sharing processes to facilitate simple and secure data sharing with our partners where agreed and appropriate, allowing for a better picture of multi-disciplinary issues. We will work with our partners in an integrated way, enabling us to work together to identify solutions to issues, provide efficient and effective services and develop well-informed organisational strategies.

What are we doing currently?

- We are working closely with our partners to share data that will improve the lives of our citizens. In respect of Healthcare, our Social Services departments continue to share vital information with Health in order to work together and achieve joint outcomes for social care users.
- Launching a joint digital working solution across our Share Regulatory Services.
- Furthering the use of open data sets to inform our joint commissioning strategies.

What outcomes will we deliver?

- Improved outcomes for service users as a result of developing holistic views of multi-disciplinary issues.
- Enhanced partnership working relationships between the Council and others.
- More joined up ways of working and efficiency improvements.

What strategic actions will we take?

- We will continue to learn from the experience we have in delivering collaborative services and the challenges and opportunities that technology presents.
- We will strengthen the use of information sharing agreements to enable the smooth and secure flow of data between relevant partners and support collaborative working.
- We will streamline data sharing processes to facilitate simple and secure data sharing with our partners where appropriate.
- We will provide strong and secure infrastructure to enable our staff to work with partners across organisational boundaries, such as in Customer Relations with Health and Social Care.
- We will work with partners to identify, develop, procure and share new technology rather than developing solutions in isolation.

- We will explore commercial opportunities to collaborate with private sector organisations, for example, working with utilities companies to harness the use of smart meters.
- We will work with our partners (as well as our service users) to identify solutions to issues, provide efficient and effective services and develop well-informed organisational strategies.

Support Activities

Our support activities underpin the delivery of the four digital themes described above.

Support Activity	Objective & Actions
Technical Infrastructure	<p>Ensuring appropriate technical infrastructure is in place to deliver our objectives.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to invest in the Council’s infrastructure to enable the effective provision of digital services. • Make use of the full range of options for the delivery of technical infrastructure, for example, evaluating “on premise” and “cloud” based solutions.
Data, Customer Insight & Digital Design Principles	<p>Using the customer data we receive from online services so that is securely stored and used in the most effective possible way, allowing us to anticipate the future needs of our residents and divert resources to meet resident demand where required.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow digital design principles to ensure appropriate and sustainable digital work is undertaken. The draft digital principles we propose to use are contained in Appendix A. • Ensure customer insight is used to inform the development of the full range of digital projects progressed under this strategy and others. • Promote the use of evidence and data driven decisions.
Organisational Development & Communications	<p>Supporting the delivery of our strategy requires the organisation to have appropriate skills and capacity to undertake the work and an ability to communicate, engage and work with others to ensure success.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective communication processes are put in place to support the organisation and our staff to change the way we work and the way our services are delivered. • Consider the skillsets required of our staff now and in the future and anticipate training and development needs through the Council’s Workforce Strategy & Plan. • Support our staff to work differently, providing training and support, in particular through the Management Development Programme by making links with the Management Competency Framework.

Managing Delivery & Monitoring Progress

Managing Delivery

The delivery of the Digital Strategy will be overseen by the Council's Reshaping Services Programme Board as a distinct programme of work. The overall programme sponsor will be the Managing Director. Responsibility for the delivery of the actions contained in each of the four themes will be assigned to an individual project sponsor. The project sponsor will bring together a team to deliver the actions.

Monitoring Progress

The Digital Strategy will be monitored through the Council's performance management arrangements ensuring linkages with Service Plans and other Corporate Strategy documents are maintained. A regular update will be given to the Council's integrated planning group, the Insight Board, to ensure this work maintains a high degree of visibility.

The strategic actions will be developed into operational project delivery plans and be regularly reviewed with updates provided to the Council's Reshaping Services Programme Board and elected members as appropriate.

The strategy will initially be reviewed after one year when the initial phase of work via shorter-term actions has been undertaken.

Appendix A - Government Digital Service Design Principles

Listed below are our design principles and examples of how we've used them so far. These build on, and add to, our original [7 digital principles](#).

[1 Start with needs*](#)

[2 Do less](#)

[3 Design with data](#)

[4 Do the hard work to make it simple](#)

[5 Iterate. Then iterate again.](#)

[6 This is for everyone](#)

[7 Understand context](#)

[8 Build digital services, not websites](#)

[9 Be consistent, not uniform](#)

[10 Make things open: it makes things better](#)

1. Start with needs*

*user needs not government needs

Service design starts with identifying user needs. If you don't know what the user needs are, you won't build the right thing. Do research, analyse data, talk to users. Don't make assumptions. Have empathy for users, and should remember that what they ask for isn't always what they need.

- [What we mean when we say "service transformation"](#), by Mike Bracken
- [Most of government is mostly service design most of the time](#), by Matt Edgar
- [Vertical campfires: our user research walls](#), by Kate Towsey

2. Do less

Government should only do what only government can do. If we've found a way of doing something that works, we should make it reusable and shareable instead of reinventing the wheel every time. This means building platforms and registers others can build upon, providing resources (like APIs) that others can use, and linking to the work of others. We should concentrate on the irreducible core.

- [Building digital civic infrastructure from the ground up](#), by Mike Bracken
- [What we've learned about scaling agile](#), by Jamie Arnold

3. Design with data

In most cases, we can learn from real world behaviours by looking at how existing services are used. Let data drive decision-making, not hunches or guesswork. Keep doing that after taking your service live, prototyping and testing with users then iterating in response. Analytics should be built-in, always on and easy to read. They're an essential tool.

- [Performance data for government services](#)
- [Retiring our icons, by Guy Moorhouse](#)
- [Combining user research and analytics to improve the user experience,](#) by Lana Gibson and Charlotte Clancy

4. Do the hard work to make it simple

Making something look simple is easy. Making something simple to use is much harder — especially when the underlying systems are complex — but that's what we should be doing. Don't take "It's always been that way" for an answer. It's usually more and harder work to make things simple, but it's the right thing to do.

- [Doing the hard work to make things simple, by Mike Bracken](#)
- [I fought the law and the users won, by Pete Herlihy](#)
- [This is what we mean when we say "service transformation",](#) by Mike Bracken

5. Iterate. Then iterate again.

The best way to build good services is to start small and iterate wildly. Release [Minimum Viable Products](#) early, test them with actual users, move from [Alpha](#) to [Beta](#) to Live adding features, deleting things that don't work and making refinements based on feedback. Iteration reduces risk. It makes big failures unlikely and turns small failures into lessons. If a prototype isn't working, don't be afraid to scrap it and start again.

- [Discovering discovery, by Sarah Prag](#)
- [6 case studies using research and data to improve a live service, by Ben Holliday](#)
- [Exemplars making examples of themselves,](#) by Mike Bracken

6. This is for everyone

Accessible design is good design. Everything we build should be as inclusive, legible and readable as possible. If we have to sacrifice elegance — so be it. We're building for needs, not audiences. We're designing for the whole country, not just the ones who are used to using the web. The people who most need our services are often the people who find them hardest to use. Let's think about those people from the start.

- [Building for inclusion, by Léonie Watson](#)
- [What are we doing about accessibility? by Joshua Marshall](#)
- [Here's what we mean by "building for inclusion",](#) by Mike Bracken

7. Understand context

We're not designing for a screen, we're designing for people. We need to think hard about the context in which they're using our services. Are they in a library? Are they on a phone? Are they only really familiar with Facebook? Have they never used the web before?

- [How we recruited people with low/no digital skills on Carer's Allowance, by Simon Hurst](#)
- [The right place to do rural research](#), by Emily Ball

8. Build digital services, not websites

A service is something that helps people to do something. Our job is to uncover user needs, and build the service that meets those needs. Of course much of that will be pages on the web, but we're not here to build websites. The digital world has to connect to the real world, so we have to think about all aspects of a service, and make sure they add up to something that meets user needs.

- [Digital leadership, by Kit Collingwood-Richardson](#)
- [Revealing the hidden side of transformation, by Mike Bracken](#)
- [Not the HMRC of old](#), by Mike Bracken

9. Be consistent, not uniform

We should use the same language and the same design patterns wherever possible. This helps people get familiar with our services, but when this isn't possible we should make sure our approach is consistent.

This isn't a straitjacket or a rule book. Every circumstance is different. When we find patterns that work we should share them, and talk about why we use them. But that shouldn't stop us from improving or changing them in the future when we find better ways of doing things or the needs of users change.

- [The GOV.UK Design Patterns Hackpad](#)
- [What's the design process at GDS?](#) by Ben Terrett

10. Make things open: it makes things better

We should share what we're doing whenever we can. With colleagues, with users, with the world. Share code, share designs, share ideas, share intentions, share failures. The more eyes there are on a service the better it gets — howlers are spotted, better alternatives are pointed out, the bar is raised.

Much of what we're doing is only possible because of open source code and the generosity of the web design community. We should pay that back.