FUTURE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

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FUTURE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

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DATA STRATEGY

How to realise data potential without compromising trust

People want digital services that make their lives easier. But data silos and a general distrust of government initiatives have held back progress

Tamlin Magee

Data really does make the world go around. With the 'app-ification' of everything, consumers now expect this world at their fingertips – a simple swipe here or a tap there and they've got almost everything they could ask for. Understandably, people want to use similarly sophisticated systems to access public services. Shouldn't a hospital have access to medical notes from a GP, by default? But those joined-up, data-powered, personalised experiences have been elusive. So far.

The UK was early off the blocks in the race to digitise government. Many of its services, like the Gov.uk website, won awards. Now, though, the public is more concerned with the government's ability to manage data responsibly. Just take a look at Deloitte's *The State of the State 2022-23* report, which found that when engaging with public services online, 73% of respondents said data security is "essential" or "very important". But according to the Thales *2022 Consumer Digital Trust Index*, Brits just don't trust the government with their data. Only 19% of respondents believe the government will keep their personal data secure, which is among the lowest level of trust for any nation.

That's not to say that the public sector is barren of examples where data is driving utility and innovation. Caroline Carruthers, the former chief data officer for Network Rail, points to the fact that Fire and Rescue Services have started using digital twins for training purposes. The interiors of buildings are mapped out in virtual worlds so, rather than setting a room on fire, recruits can simply don a headset. The Police Digital Service, meanwhile, coordinates cloud deployments and knowledge-sharing among the UK's many forces. And NHS Digital, which recently merged with NHS England, has rolled out plenty of tech-powered programmes, from the Adoption Registration Service to the urgent care self-service tool used in A&Es.

So there's a plethora of digital services that do exist. Delivered well, these can "cut through the politics and inform superior public services," says Kevin Curran, professor of cybersecurity at Ulster University. Consider the Covax project by Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE). While the organisation had long planned to digitise, the emergency of the Covid crisis forced the HSE into taking action. It built web portals for public engagement, managed vaccine appointments by the cloud, reported using business analytics and created an API-led approach to connectivity that joined up all the systems that sprang to life. It's a far cry from spreadsheets and PowerPoint slides.

STR/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Yet there remain roadblocks to making good on the public sector data promise, not least that low level of trust, combined with often disconnected and siloed data and a complex tangle of regulations. Perhaps even more pressing is what Carruthers calls a "paralysis of perfection", when the fear of a failure to achieve immediate excellence hampers that first leap towards innovative thinking.

"People are frightened to take that first step because they're wandering into the unknown or they believe they're going to end up on the front page of the *Daily Mail*," Carruthers says. "The idea of failing is this sword of Damocles hanging over their head. But unless they can experiment and innovate, how do they move forward?"

One possible solution lies in starting small, to solve common low-stakes problems where "nobody is going to die" if it goes wrong, she adds. By running small-scale simple pilots, organisations can test their methodology around how they solve challenges and deploy the technology, rather than getting bogged down in the problem itself and if it careens off course.

Incremental steps like these can help organisations see where they're getting service delivery right and where there's room for improvement. At the same time, it removes – or at least lessens – the pressure of that perfection paralysis.

Another glaring issue is the complexity of the public sector itself. While service users may view organisations such as the NHS as a monolith, it in fact consists of 219 trusts. The labyrinthine structures that have evolved over the years across the public sector mean that is often siloed and subject to its own specific legislation, depending on the function of the public body – whether that's policing or cross-country data-sharing. There's no getting around this, and it should be thought of as an opportunity to ensure that data is protected.

"There can be privacy issues in releasing public data sets," Curran says. "Care needs to be taken to prevent any personally identifiable information from being released inadvertently. There is also a need to clarify terms of how the government can access and release any large-scale population data."

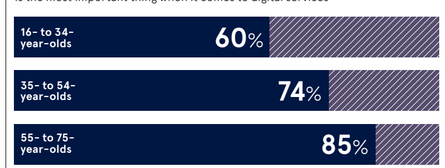
While there has been progress in connecting this data, this must continue. Verifying the quality of data is a tough nut to crack until the issue of silos is tackled.

John Bruce is co-founder and CEO of Solid (Social Linked Data), Sir Tim Berners-Lee's web decentralisation project. Bruce explains that data tends to collect in silos from one government agency to the next and the result of that is that these silos grow independently and operate out of sight of the citizen. That can translate to little in the way of transparency around how that citizen's data is used. To help solve this, Solid recently spearheaded a digital identity project in Belgium. Millions of citizens in Flanders access public services using a digital identity that is contained in a personal data store called a Solid Pod.

"The question of whether citizens trust their government to use data responsibly can vary massively. But technology can open two-way communication between citizens and governments, which garners trust," Bruce says. "Citizens want to have some visibility into what the government knows about them – and the ability to augment that information when it's relevant. Digital services work best when citizens feel that their individual needs and circumstances are properly understood." ●

DATA SECURITY IS THE TOP CONCERN

UK citizens who say that taking appropriate steps to ensure the safety of data is the most important thing when it comes to digital services



Deloitte, 2022

INCLUSIVITY

Gap analysis: how to solve the UK's digital exclusion problem

In their rush to digitalise, public sector organisations must remember that millions of vulnerable citizens remain ill-equipped to go online and access services that could help them the most

Sally Whittle

Every morning, a team of volunteers boards a converted double-decker bus to roam Gloucestershire offering free IT support and training to digitally disadvantaged people around the county. In a typical session, the trainers might show someone seeking council housing how to submit an online application or help an elderly person who's struggling with their first smartphone to set up the NHS App.

"It's easy to assume that everyone is online and has the digital skills to use public services," says Lucy Pollock, general manager of the DigiBus service. "That's not the case."

Research published by Ofcom last year indicated that 6% of British households did not have internet access at home, for instance. Over-75s, unsurprisingly, remain at most risk of digital exclusion. A study by Age UK in 2021 estimated that 2 million people in this age group were offline – and that only 15% of them had any interest in remedying that state of affairs. Other disadvantaged groups include single-person households, unemployed people and those with disabilities such as visual impairments.

The Good Things Foundation is a charity that's spearheading the effort to build the UK's first national device bank. It supplies laptops, tablets and phones reconditioned from e-waste programmes, along with prepaid SIM cards that have been donated by mobile networks, to thousands of community groups around the country.

Ensuring that everyone has the kit to get online is one thing, but digital exclusion often results from a lack of basic IT skills, notes Natasha Bright-Wray, the foundation's associate director of communications, campaigns and advocacy.

"Without real investment in skills, nothing will change," she argues. "That's why we're also trying to develop a national minimum digital standard of living. This identifies what support is needed to give people enough knowledge to be included in digital services."

The Welsh government is already in the process of adopting the standard, Bright-Wray adds.

Services such as the DigiBus provide vital support to local communities. While users can borrow devices from it to get online, the most important element of the project is that it gives people IT skills and the confidence to apply them, Pollock stresses.

"We have a large population of people who grew up in a non-digital world," she says. "We're often engaging with people who don't think that anyone can help them."

The problem doesn't always lie with the users of public services, adds Pollock, who explains that too many providers aren't designing and delivering digital facilities with enough consideration for the needs of vulnerable citizens.

"Most apps are not developed with the involvement of people with lived experience of these barriers to access," she says. "If you look at the hoops that people have to jump through to access key services, you can see why vulnerable users get stuck and just give up."

If a local authority requires prospective applicants to register online before they can use a given facility, that can be a huge problem, especially if that facility – a mental health service, say – is aimed at helping vulnerable people.

"If you're someone who doesn't know how to use email or scan and upload ID documents, you're locked out of the service completely," Bright-Wray says.

The adult social care team at Kent County Council recently completed a three-year project to detect barriers to digital inclusion and develop a new suite of online services with these in mind. Having identified "lack of support" as a key barrier, it trained a group of volunteers who could provide such assistance in the community.

The team also invited residents and service users to give their input at the design stage, notes Georgina Walton, senior project manager for adult social care at the council.

"The idea of co-production is important," she says. "I could have a whole set of ideas for a service, but I'm not someone who'll be using it. We're developing all these digital services, but they're going to fail if the people they're supposed to help can't access them and don't get the support they need."

Since the end of the project, the council has launched a range of facilities designed with inclusivity in mind, such as a talking therapy service that uses smart speakers.

"That service has been built for people who struggle with anxiety and are still at the stage where they need support that doesn't require them to leave their homes," Walton explains. "This is about building innovative services that meet people where they are."

> **It's easy to assume that everyone is online and has the digital skills to use public services. That's not the case**

At Newham London Borough Council, there's a similar desire to involve the whole community in its digital transformation. Newham Sparks is an ambitious programme that aims to build specialist data skills, attract private investment and create more employment opportunities in one of the capital's poorest boroughs.

As part of this project, the council is developing partnerships with tech companies and working with local schools and colleges. One of the key ambitions is to bring more than 5,500 jobs into Newham, says Amit Shanker, its deputy CEO and chief digital officer.

While Newham Sparks is designed to equip young people with the latest digital skills, the council also wants to ensure that borough residents who are less IT-savvy also benefit. For instance, the old town hall building will be redeveloped into a high-tech "data campus" with a digital café on the ground floor. Here, any member of the community will be able to get online and obtain free help to access the council's 700-plus digital services.

"We will be providing access to hardware and an infrastructure of high-speed connectivity, so that people can simply walk in off the street and access those facilities," Shanker says. But he adds that it's important for any public sector body to accept that there will always be a significant minority of people who are unwilling and/or unable to go online in order to access their services.

> **If you look at the hoops that people have to jump through to access important services, you can see why vulnerable users get stuck**

Shanker lives in a different borough, where parking meters no longer have coin slots. Residents are required to use an app to pay for parking spaces.

"I don't think that's fair," he says. "You can't expect everyone to make that transition. Are we really saying that residents of a certain age, who aren't digitally literate or who don't have easy online access, are no longer supposed to drive? To put it frankly, that's just not acceptable." ●

What is digital exclusion?

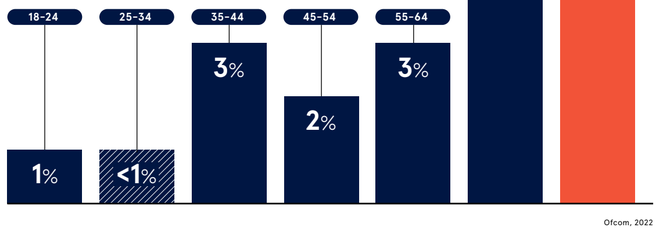
According to Ofcom, someone can be classed as digitally excluded when they have problems using online services for at least one of the following reasons: a lack of access (no home internet connection); a lack of ability (poor IT skills and low confidence in using services); and a lack of affordability (the inability to pay for the requisite hardware and/or network access).

Exclusion is most likely to be a problem for older citizens, with a quarter of elderly people lacking online access at home. A study published by Age UK has estimated that 42% of people aged 75 or over in this country don't use the internet.

Ofcom's 2022 research suggests that one in every 20 British households don't have home internet access. In October 2021, about two million households were thinking about downgrading or cancelling their home connections as a money-saving measure.

OLDER PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE DIGITALLY EXCLUDED

Percentage of UK citizens who did not have internet access at home as of 2021, by age group



Ofcom, 2022

INSIGHT

'The scaffolding to support digital skills and innovation'

Tech partners and local councils must work together to boost skills and innovation, says **Julian David**, CEO of techUK

Set against a backdrop of rising citizen expectations and financial constraints, local government is no stranger to doing more for less. The real reward, however, is when councils find ways to improve services for their citizens. This is where innovation comes in.

A commitment to innovation offers space to rethink processes and, in the case of local government, ultimately leads to creating places where citizens thrive and feel safe. To deliver meaningful innovation, we need to create an environment where technology can flourish and a culture that empowers people to take risks and fail fast. Technology is the easy bit. At the heart of change is people, from leadership buy-in to attracting and retaining the talent to deliver transformative services.

But the public sector faces a skills challenge – and organisations won't be able to make the leap to new ways of working if they can't hire the right talent in the fields of technology, digital and data. The London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) recognises how this hinders councils. It has pulled together a 10-point plan of action to help boroughs access digital skills, from establishing a community of practice to setting up a LOTI job board.

Councils have a crucial role to play in creating a digital skills pipeline. They can help to nurture this by providing and supporting infrastructure investments that align with their local economic strategy and vision. For example, Newham London Borough Council has unveiled its plans for London's first data campus at East Ham Town Hall. These plans are part of the council's £1.2m investment in Newham Sparks, a programme to bring digital and data education, and skills and employment opportunities to the borough. Elsewhere, the Norfolk and Suffolk Innovation Network will help to build a digital ecosystem to boost entrepreneurship, digital skills and economic growth.

The tech industry needs to provide the scaffolding to support digital skills and innovation. TechSkills, techUK's digital skills arm, does this by bringing together employers and educators to develop accredited pathways into tech careers, opening up alternative ways to enter the industry by offering degrees and apprenticeships from level three (advanced) through to level seven (MSc), as well as short training programmes and accredited boot camps.

We also need to collaborate across both the public sector and the supplier base. We ultimately have the shared ambition to make things better for citizens. Gone are the days of suppliers being seen as sales partners. They are now valued as a vital cog in the machine, helping to facilitate change and offering expertise. TechUK's *Local Public Services Innovation* paper outlines how councils can grasp the innovation opportunity and maximise the benefits they derive from digital technologies and their suppliers. This includes early and effective market engagement so councils can be on top of the latest technological trends and understand the art of the possible. Technology suppliers can add particular value when it comes to the 'unknown.' That is why techUK has established the Innovators Network, a forum for councils to connect with innovators and access new technologies, which will help to solve some of the public sector's most pressing challenges.

Our public services can lead the way in teaming up with innovative solutions that inspire and motivate the UK to greater success on behalf of its citizens. As outlined in the government's *Science & Technology Framework*, we need to create the workforce of tomorrow and develop an environment that supports innovation. Together we can deliver change and a brighter future for society and the economy. ●

Julian David
CEO, techUK

Front door to foundations: redesigning digital citizen experiences

From improving public access for the disabled to helping Brits abroad get instant help, it is time for the public sector to embrace transparent, holistic processes with staff and users at their heart

Those with accessibility needs can often feel at the back of the queue when it comes to using public services. A simple interaction with providers may involve long call times or difficult journeys. And often, vulnerable citizens may have to wait until a carer or member of the family is around to help. So, when a service that supports 10,000 vulnerable people in South Australia talked of taking a "risk" when rebuilding its accessibility offering, it would be reasonable to assume there were significant challenges.

Instead, Joe Young, director of service reform at South Australia Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) and his team sought to create one "source of truth" across AU$300m worth of services, a single digital platform where everything users might ever need – whether they are clients, carers or NGO service providers – was accessible in one place. Need a wheelchair ramp, a carer's grant, or a visit from occupational health? The new reimagined system enables all parties to tackle each issue on one platform at the same time. This not only means fewer forms and shorter call waiting times but also more time for carers to respond to urgent needs rather than paper chase or send endless updates to clients.

Simon Collinson
Head of UK public sector at Salesforce

The DCSI also deployed Salesforce's Community Cloud to launch MySupportAdvisor.com.au – an online community where people with disabilities publicly rate and review service providers – meaning every scrap of data or user feedback provides a constant feedback loop, delivering useful improvements to create the front door services users want.

This overhaul paid back dividends. Payments processed by the DCSI nearly doubled and processing times shrunk "astonishingly" from six weeks to less than three days, says Young, all while administration staff numbers remained static. Todd Williams, executive manager at Cara, a provider delivering complex, 24-hour disability support in 77 locations in Australia, praised the new transparency. "We can see what we're contracted to provide, right down to which support workers, and on what days and where."

The new shift also did the hardest job in government – breaking down multi-agency silos, which juggle people through one department to another, meaning true needs get lost between cracks, says Simon Collinson, head of UK public sector at Salesforce. "The UK government doesn't want another product vendor, what it wants is an innovation partner for change. One that links front office experiences, middle office processing and back office data seamlessly. Government has an issue with not connecting front experiences with the back office."

Improving services and retaining staff

Faced with economic uncertainty and having to deliver results for a government which faces an election in the next two years, the UK public sector needs affordable solutions that solve crises without breaking the stride of hard-working staff.

This extra pressure also means the UK public sector faces a talent retention crisis – with around 5.2% of staff leaving or switching departments during the period between March 2021 and March 2022 – something which directly impacts end users. The key to keeping together the UK's "Rolls-Royce civil service" is giving them the right tools and data, which allows them to make an impact and deliver change effectively, says Collinson.

To do this, Salesforce "t-shirt sizes" its solutions to showcase both the experience and the likely delivery costs and timescales. This makes the change real to users, says Collinson. "We know it's hard for departments to move quickly and adopt new technologies. They want to try before they buy, not just have a PowerPoint about how it might look. We also bring global Salesforce case studies – from the US, EMEA and Australia – and say 'here's a big city example; here's a tiny village example.'" Examples of how commercial entities engage in digital transformation can help too.

The General Service Administration in the US wanted to create a change that instantly improved daily tasks for staff and its users. Salesforce helped them create an entire app store that offered staff across all departments a common set of apps that unified correspondence and contact management. This also allowed the government to track usage and show the data each interaction produced, as well as the depth to which each app was used. This transparent, flexible user experience kept the end customer in mind throughout, whilst also providing an essential feedback loop.

> The public sector doesn't want off-the-shelf tech products, what they want is an innovation partner for change

Balancing digital and human experience

Recent Salesforce research into global trends and attitudes impacting citizen and government interactions found that, while citizens are open to digital services, for more complex issues they tend to want to be able to speak to someone too.

"It is fine to be digital," says Collinson. "But when things go wrong, people want to know who they can turn to and where they are in the process. There is a lot of worry around 'will granny be able to understand this?'. However, through relentless research, we see that older citizens are very IT-engaged, so long as services are easy to use and consistent, and there is a person they can speak to when things go wrong."

Contact centres can drive down needless engagement by allowing simple tasks to be done by AI, and also allow staff to deal with complex and difficult problems. This not only helps the public sector retain staff, but also provides a better service for users. A good example of this is a contact hub that Salesforce created alongside the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

This universal platform, operational in 200 consular regions, helps British nationals tackle any issue they may face abroad, from lost passports to kidnapping or the sudden death of a relative. By working closely with the staff on the ground, rather than simply prescribing technology, Salesforce and FCDO got the new portal up and running within three months. Critically, says Collinson, this portal can be flexed up or down to suit needs, whilst also monitoring data and offering transparent progress reports for staff of all agencies so they can instantly understand complicated processes.

Providing flexibility in times of crisis

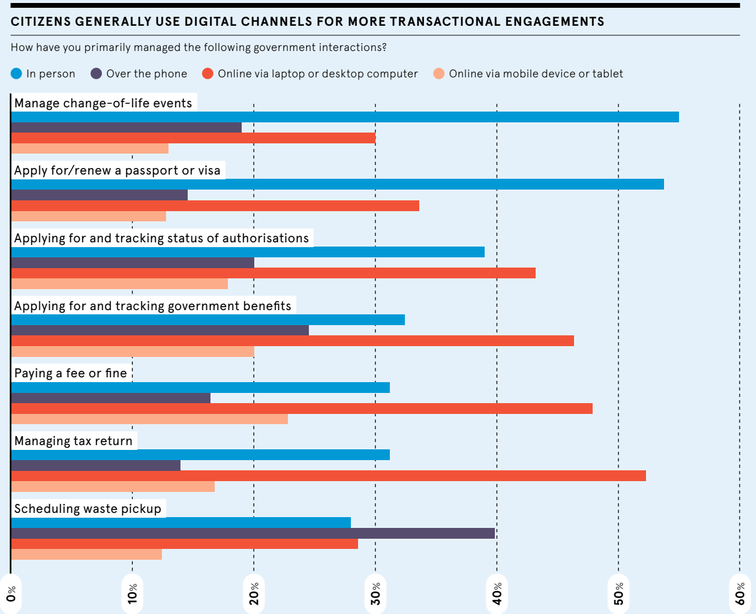
In 2018, the Cabinet Office embarked on an ambitious programme to create a platform that would give them agility and a single view of grant assessments. Ivana Gordon, head of government grants management function response at the Cabinet Office says: "We wanted to build something at the centre with no barriers to access across government or the public sector, which meant a cloud-based platform with the right security accreditations."

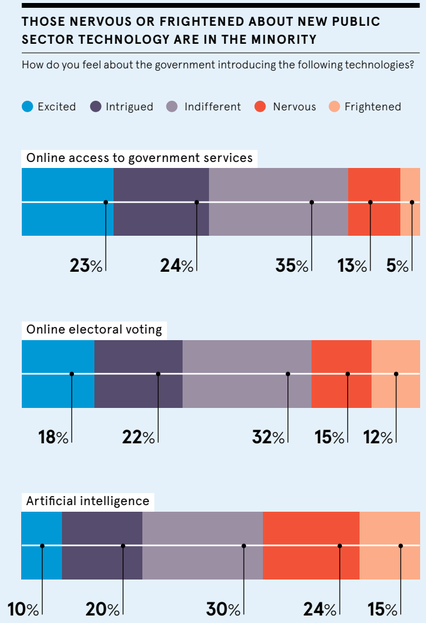
Spotlight was the outcome – a due diligence tool to check recipients and ensure money goes to the right places, marrying everything from HMRC and Experian checks to open sources and criminal records. However, when Covid-19 struck barely a year later, Spotlight switched from being a useful admin tool to being placed at the heart of the economic response. The delivery of billions of pounds of grants became pivotal to keeping the country going, sifting through fraudulent claims whilst providing immediate data to back-end offices.

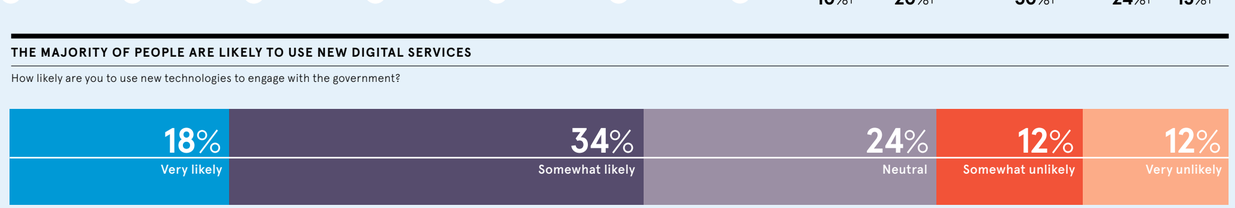
This flexibility is key to maximising value while meeting changing user demands, says Collinson. "We create things that can be small or large applications, that are easy to spin up and spin down as needed. Spotlight started as a stop check, then – with grants increasing – we needed rapid platforms to solve an issue that also spotted fraudsters applying for grants."

Some 55,000 civil servants log into and trust a Salesforce platform of some description across police forces, schools, hospitals and admin offices. This adaptability while meeting complex commercial and technological needs enables public services to embrace transformative change, Collinson explains. "[Public service organisations say] 'That was easy, what else can we do with this? How far can we go? Can we solve the other problems we have the same way?' That's the best praise we can have."

Find out more at salesforce.com/uk/publicsector







Salesforce Connected Government Report, 2022

Q&A

How a digital police station is transforming victim journeys

Former police chief inspector **Andy Doran** joined the force in 2006. However, he left Lancashire Constabulary for Salesforce in 2021 in a bid to transform the way policing and citizens interact

Q What issues did police forces have keeping victims updated when you left the police?

A Policing is facing a difficult time in terms of public trust and confidence, but it is essential to recognise the vast majority of dedicated officers and staff who go to work every day and put others first. However, their time is often taken up with demands that the public would not necessarily expect the police to deal with, and this has a profound impact on their ability to keep victims updated. From my experience, this results in repeated calls on 101 and 999 from victims and members of the public asking for an update. Lack of updates also drives increased complaints and victim and witness attrition. Keeping victims updated is essential to building trust and confidence in our police service.

> Whilst not everybody will wish to engage in a digital-first way, a digital police station introduces self-service, which is the missing link to effective channel management in policing

Q What is wrong with the way police record crimes?

A The National Crime Recording Standards set out how policing must record crime, so it is less about what is wrong with the way it is recorded and more about how traditional policing technology and thinking focuses on the crime recording process as the golden thread. Often unintentionally, this shifts the raison d'être to ticking a compliance box but missing the point. Victims should always be at the centre of the investigation and, whilst crime recording is essential to legitimacy, it should never be at the expense of putting victims first.

Q How does a digital police station improve this process?

A A digital police station adds the requisite variety to meet the needs of the public. Whilst not everybody will wish to engage in a digital-first way, a digital police station introduces self-service, which is the missing link to effective channel management in policing. Whilst policing has opened up new digital channels to support the public, they have become digital letterboxes rather than a way for the public to get instant answers to predictable common questions. Salesforce is working with leading UK police forces on delivering personalised and automated citizen experiences, including a citizen portal where victims can log in and get updates on their crime while speaking with the officer on their case. This provides a superior user experience, reduces staff hindrance stressors and provides a more cost-effective service delivery model.

Q Why hasn't this process been made smoother before now?

A We keep throwing staff at the issue and becoming really efficient at simply doing the wrong thing, faster. Throughout policing, we have people acting as system integrators because the incumbent point-to-point applications often fail to communicate with each other. This means that officers and police staff have to double and triple check key data between systems.

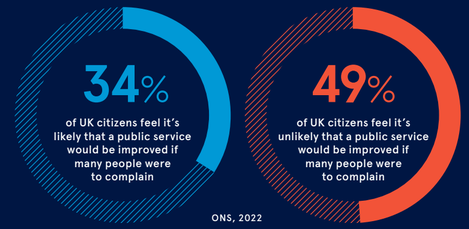
Technology integration is often seen as a nice-to-have and not thought about as a strategic asset. This afterthought perpetuates the need for more back office teams who manually enter data rather than use their knowledge and experience to add value.

Q What issues have legacy technology caused in this process?

A I think it is less about apportioning blame to legacy technology and more about how policing buys technology. Traditionally, policing buys technology, often on premise, to fix a specific problem. As such, you end up with technical debt and spending more time keeping the lights on than innovating and making it easier for officers and staff to provide outstanding services to communities. Whilst the unit cost of these systems often appears more cost-effective, the proof is in the total cost of ownership and return on investment. From experience, this is often lacking. Moving to software- and platform-as-a-service enables IT teams to focus less on patching and maintenance and more on driving the changes that will make a difference to officers and staff, who in turn can provide a better service to the public.

CITIZEN PRIORITIES AND TRUST

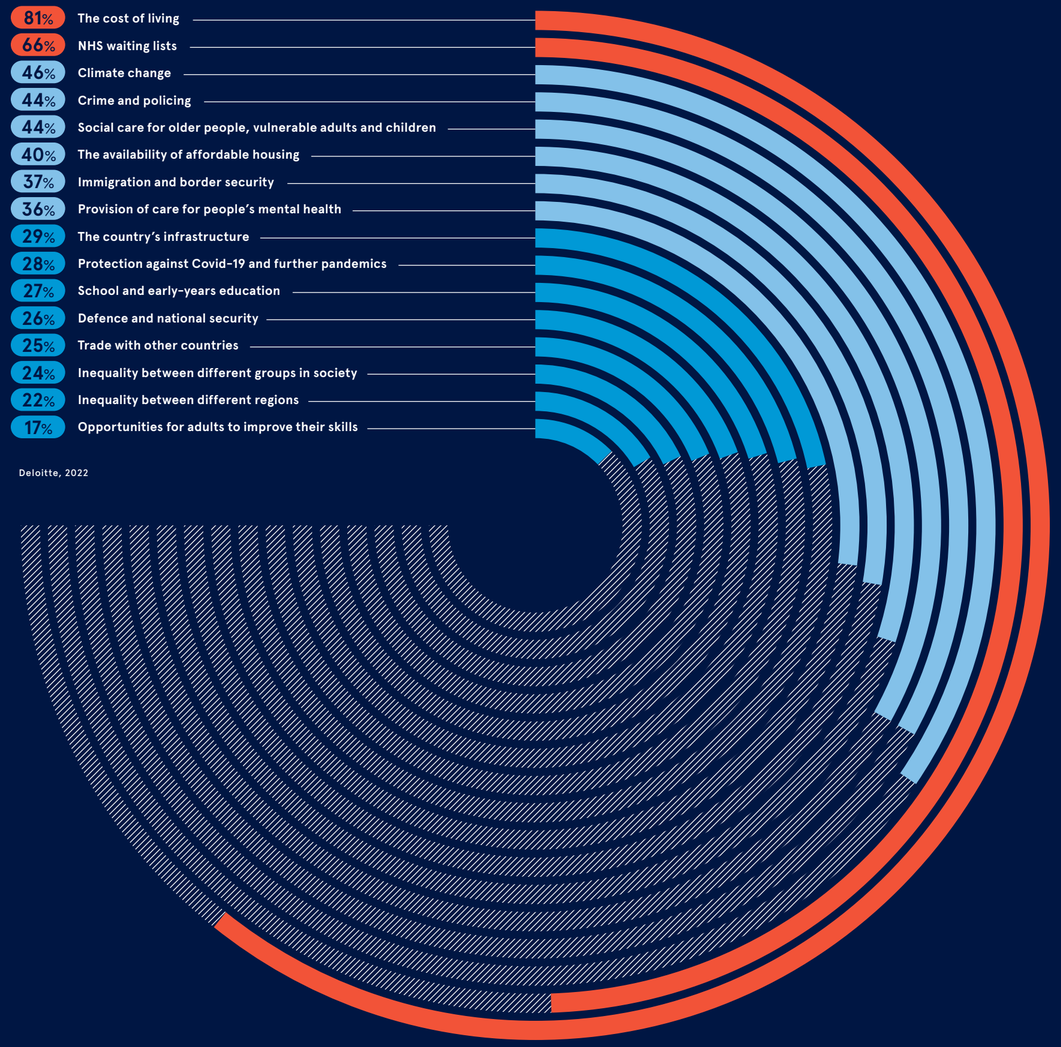
Against a backdrop of permacrisis, it's proving a challenge for the public sector to deliver services that citizens are satisfied with. What exactly are they looking for from public services? And to what extent do they trust the government to provide what they need?



ONS, 2022

CITIZEN PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC ISSUES

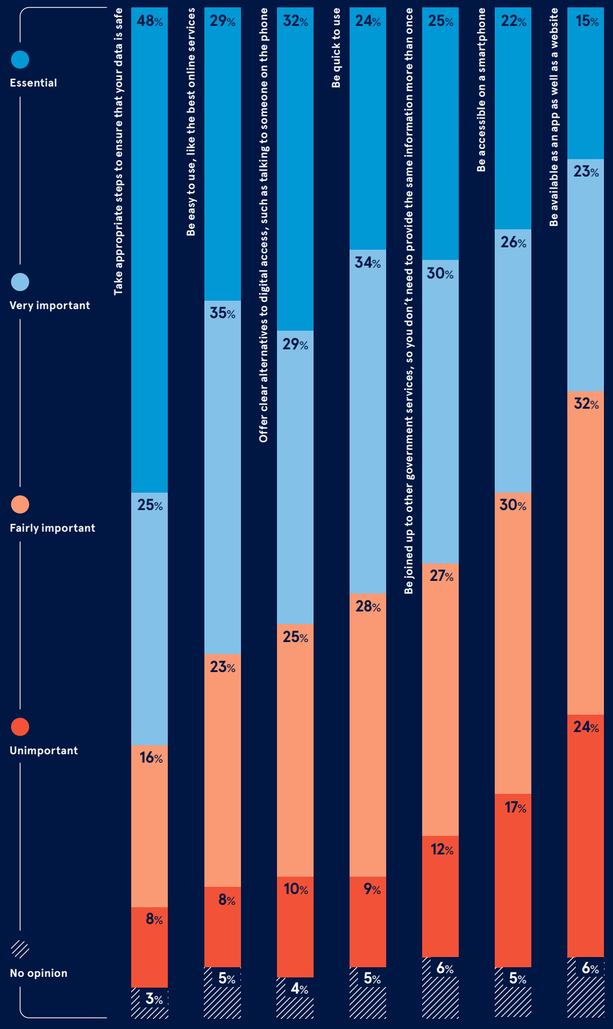
Percentage of citizens who say the following are top priorities for improvement in the UK over the next few years



Deloitte, 2022

CITIZEN PRIORITIES FOR DIGITAL SERVICES

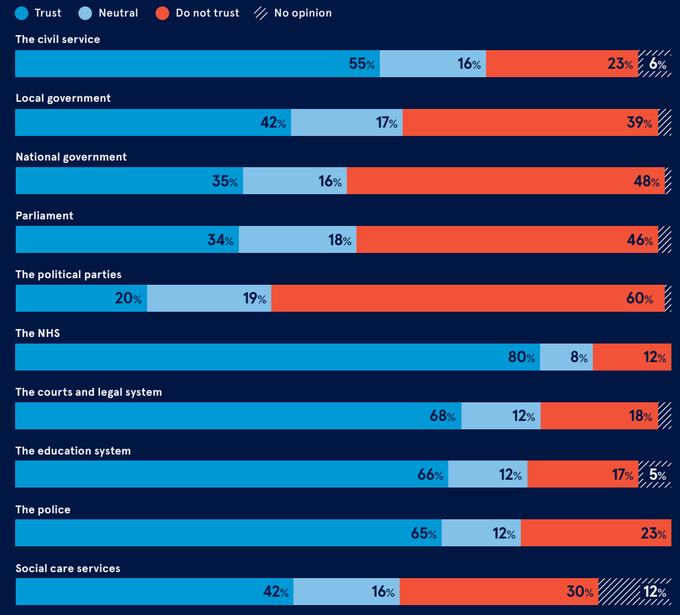
Percentage of citizens who feel that the following factors are important or unimportant



Deloitte, 2022

LEVELS OF TRUST IN UK PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

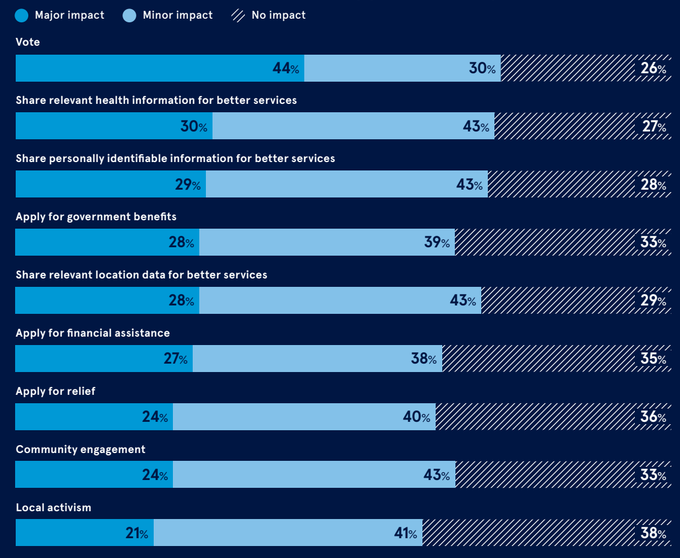
Percentage of respondents who fall into each category, with trust measured on a scale of one to 10



ONS, 2022

IMPACT OF TRUST ON CITIZEN BEHAVIOUR GLOBALLY

Extent to which respondents feel that trust affects their engagment in the following services and activities



Salesforce, 2022


JarusKCharak via iStock

TECHNOLOGY

Smarter working: time to embrace automation

Where should the public sector start when looking to automate complex manual processes and routine tasks? And what are the pitfalls?

Christine Horton

With the government facing several barriers to transformation, including skills gaps, a funding crunch and a need to do more with less, process automation could be a godsend – if implemented correctly. For that, public sector organisations must identify where automation would help them to achieve their aims.

The first step for leaders is to pinpoint complex manual processes and routine tasks that would be better undertaken by a machine.

Lianne Anderton is delivery lead of the Intelligent Automation Garage (IAG) at DWP Digital, which delivers services for the Department for Work and Pensions. The IAG uses agile working methods and design-led practices across a range of technologies, including robotic process automation (RPA) and chatbots, machine learning and deep learning.

Anderton says that before setting out on an automation project there are two qualifying questions. Is the process of high value to the organisation (owing to the time taken or cost to process) or is there value in the outcome to citizens or the organisation, or both? Could an automation solution be applied and bring a return on investment within the year? In essence, she says, the solutions that the IAG develops fall into the category of "problems that are worth solving".

Anderton continues: "These two simple criteria have meant that the work the IAG does is rooted in realising value quickly and has brought innovative solutions that can scale up to the size of the DWP. This is how a comparatively small team has helped to save millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, freed up hundreds of thousands of agent hours to spend on more meaningful decision-making work and created a better experience for the people who need the DWP's help. And all in the most sustainable way possible."

Decision-making takes up a huge chunk of DWP agents' time. This means evaluating evidence; understanding complex legislation and policy; and knowing how to apply that to an individual's life, usually at a point when they are experiencing a crisis or some kind of hardship.

"Automation can do the simpler, mundane elements of a process, such as gathering information, digital filing and transcribing documents, which leaves more time for agents to dedicate to making those decisions. It can also create a more flexible workforce, as teams have the potential to be better used or redeployed where there is a more immediate need," Anderton explains.

For example, budgeting loans are available to people in crisis. The demand for these always spikes in the run-up to Christmas. Originally, issuing them was a high-volume, highly manual paper-based process that lasted 36 days from application to money transfer. This often meant that applicants felt the need to contact the DWP to chase up their applications. The IAG fully automated the service in 12 weeks. Applications are now made online, progress updates are sent via SMS and the funds are paid into a citizen's bank within five days – seven times faster than the original process.

The NHS has also been leading the charge in process automation. Reuben Morgan is team manager at Medicines Homecare. He has led a project, funded by the Welsh government, that uses RPA to clinically check prescriptions for Swansea Bay University Health Board.

"We needed to make sure that we mirrored the role of the pharmacist," Morgan says. "Because then we can release the pharmacist from this rather monotonous, repetitive process and give them more time instead at the cutting edge of pharmacy. There, they can make those serious clinical interventions and add lots of value to a patient's treatment, rather than checking a routine repeat prescription."

The success of the project led the organisation to look at other manual and time-consuming processes that could be automated, such as invoicing. The key, Morgan says, is to always engage with the workforce from day one to show them the value that they could provide and where they can best apply their skills.

"We have a human workforce and a robotic workforce that are working hand in hand to make sure we can provide the best possible service for our patients," he adds.

Elsewhere, the University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust is still in the early stages of its automation journey. It is already clear that small steps add up to a big difference, according to William Monaghan, its executive chief digital information officer.

"Replacing simple processes is a big one," he says. "As one example, last week we wrote some code to pull workforce information from one system into another. That process now runs 365 days a year and doesn't need anyone to intervene. So we are getting better information and the person who was doing it manually gets more than 260 hours back a year to do more meaningful work. And we never build up a backlog."

> **Start small. Make sure you do as much research as you can and speak to people who have implemented automation**

Monaghan adds that his organisation is also starting to use automation in research, pulling data from multiple systems to allow research specialists to analyse it faster and more easily.

There are, of course, challenges, to implementing any kind of technology modernisation programme and process automation is no different.

Consultant David Biden has worked on many automation projects across the public sector. He says it's common to run successful proof-of-value tests, but they don't lead to the full roll-out, sometimes because of problems with scaling up the solution. More often projects hit a wall with trade unions, which are concerned about the impact of process automation on jobs.

Working on an automation project for University College London, Biden says the union's concern was that people would be replaced with robots and that couldn't be allowed to happen. "And that was a battle," he says.

He adds that the 'people will lose their jobs' mantra has been a common one across almost all RPA projects on which he has worked. Another example is the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, where concerns have been triggered about job losses across many digital projects, not just automation. So despite potential huge cost savings, the prospect of job losses can halt plans for automation.

But the public sector can still investigate automating aspects of people's jobs and train those people to take on other roles across the organisation, according to Biden.

That would mean "reducing the cost of onboarding someone, which is a lot in the public sector. We are going to train someone up to advance their career and then we're going to also remove the cost from this HR department of processing these timesheets. That's the way that automation should work in the public sector," he says.

> **We're getting better information and the person who was doing it manually gets more than 260 hours back a year to do more meaningful work**

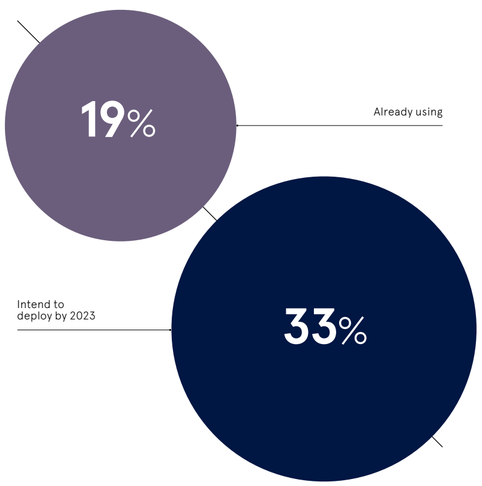
When it comes to how public sector leaders can identify automation opportunities, Morgan has this advice: "Start small. Seek advice from health providers and the public sector, but also see what the private sector is doing. Ensure that you do as much research as you can and speak to people who have implemented automation. Also, get IT involved and they can highlight time delays, any access and firewall issues, and user settings. And make sure that you get your paymasters on board really early."

He adds that these decisions should involve the people who are in fact doing that job.

"I couldn't implement an invoice-processing automation piece without the assistance of the invoice-processing staff, because you have to mirror the exact process," Morgan says. "They know how those invoices come in and what the pitfalls are, and how many steps to take. If you involve all members of staff, you get greater buy-in – and that means you have a greater chance of success." ●

GOVERNMENTS ARE INCREASING INVESTMENT IN RPA

Government respondents' usage of robotic process automation, 2021



Gartner, 2021

Commercial feature

Q&A

Rapidly delivering energy support schemes

A conversation with **Karl Hoods**, chief digital and information officer at the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero

The government has introduced several support schemes to help citizens and businesses manage rising energy costs, which the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero (formerly known as Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) has designed and implemented. Karl Hoods talks us through the objectives and challenges – and how Salesforce provided vital support.

Q What were the main objectives you needed to achieve with the energy support schemes?

A The primary aim was to provide a set of energy support packages across domestic and non-domestic audiences. We needed to come up with something which would be robust from a policy perspective and have maximum impact, which the technology support team would then deliver. And we had to act swiftly because it was imperative to get the money to people as quickly as possible.

To achieve this, we needed a set of services and solutions that would enable us to deliver at pace, and a set of partners that could work across the digital team, policy team and third parties.

> **Issues that have come up have been resolved quickly, together – and that's something we always look for in our strategic partners**

Q What audiences did you need to reach? And how did you ensure maximum engagement with the support available?

A It was a mixture of public-facing [audiences] – citizens and businesses – [and involved] application services, [as well as] integration with local authorities, third-party call centres and payment providers. So the ecosystem across the various schemes was quite broad.

Our primary focus is always to take a user-centred design approach to anything that we build. Whether it's something we're delivering internally or externally, it has to be as easy and as simple to use as possible.

We needed to make sure that we'd done adequate user research within the timeframes available, so the UTE (usability test environment) team talked to care homes, boat [communities], farming communities, local authorities, call centres [and other stakeholders] as part of our discovery activity. We then tested out ideas with those audiences, aligned with the policy objectives.

Q Why did you decide to work with Salesforce on this project?

A We felt that they were able to move at the pace that we needed for this particular scheme. [But] first and foremost, it's about whether we have a partner that as is interested in the end outcomes as we are, and is willing to engage and commit resources to achieve them. We found that from the first conversation with them [Salesforce], that was very much the case.

They also offered broad knowledge from work they've done across other public sector organisations, as well as in other sectors. [That's something we value], as learning from other sectors is a really important tenet in our strategy.

As a cloud-first, platform-based service provider internally, we also wanted to make sure that we were playing to our strengths by using a cloud-based platform-as-a-service.

Q Did Salesforce's low-code and automation capabilities help you to move at speed?

A Salesforce covers all the typical usage scenarios that you would want to exploit with a low-code platform: speed of development; integration with third-party systems; being able to iterate with our user base; and particularly because we are moving at pace, being able to deploy things quickly.

With limited timeframes, we also wanted to make sure that we were automating the end-to-end process: whether that's ingesting data, providing postcode look-ups, reference data, etc. We were keen to make sure that we weren't introducing unnecessary delays by having manual processes.

Q How easy has it been to resolve the issues and challenges that inevitably arise when delivering a major project in a short time frame?

A Issues that have come up have been resolved quickly, together – and that's something we always look for in our strategic partners. Can we have an open set of conversations? Is there constructive challenging on both sides? We feel that we've had that [experience], and both Salesforce and their partners have come to the table with solutions, suggestions and opportunities.

Q How might the outcomes of this project influence future ones?

A A platform-based approach is a core pillar of our strategy. We're not hand-building solutions to meet one specific policy objective; we're always trying to take a step back and ask how we can productise what we're doing, so that we can either reuse the entire platform or entire components. It makes future deployments quicker, and it means that we're able to respond faster to internal pressures and demands, as well as service external needs.

Find out more at salesforce.com/uk/publicsector

salesforce

Could CRM software help solve NHS engagement issues?

CRM software has helped businesses in every sector maximise employee and customer satisfaction. Now, the same tech could help the NHS to attract and retain talent and provide world-class patient care

The NHS is facing the biggest battle in its nearly 75-year history. Staff vacancies have hit a record high of 133,000, a figure that represents 10% of its total workforce. Data from NHS Digital shows that 15,000 nurses resigned from the health service in the year to March 2022, with 4,000 citing work-life balance as their reason for leaving. It's not just nurses quitting. In England last year, 3,229 doctors resigned from the NHS, with 341 citing burnout.

Patients are suffering as demand for NHS services outstrips supply. The number of people waiting for treatment stands at 7.21 million. Three million of those patients have been waiting over 18 weeks and 379,245 have been waiting over a year. This isn't a new issue, either. Staffing issues meant there were 4.4 million people on waiting lists in early 2020, before Covid arrived in the UK and resulted in the cancellation of 2.4 million operations.

Patients are turning to private healthcare to jump the queue. More than 250,000 people paid for private treatment last year – 29% more than in 2019 – and that figure excludes those who already have private insurance. This has relieved some of the NHS's backlog but worsened its recruitment problem. The NHS and private sector both recruit from the same pool of talent, meaning there is fierce competition to attract and retain the best staff. In March, it was reported that private healthcare companies were offering NHS doctors bonuses of up to £5,000 to recruit colleagues for commercial healthcare providers.

Healthcare staff who work in the private sector are typically paid significantly more than NHS workers. Between August and October last year, private pay increased by an average of 6.9%. In contrast, public pay rose by an average of just 2.7% at a time when inflation is at 10%. The NHS also can't compete with more manageable workloads and better work-life balance offered by private healthcare providers. So, what can it do to improve the employee experience, win the war for talent and give patients a world-class service?

Cloud-based software giant Salesforce built several digital tools for the NHS to tackle the Covid-19 crisis. Now, the company believes it can help the world's fifth-largest employer to modernise and boost its recruitment by transforming how it collects and harnesses data. "We want to develop state-of-the-art digital communications for the NHS," says Salesforce's chief health officer, Simon Eccles, who was previously chief clinical information officer at the NHS. "That includes communicating with patients about their clinical journey and with staff about their working environment, conditions, pay and job applications."

2.7%
growth in public sector pay between August and October 2022

6.9%
growth in private sector pay between August and October 2022

ONS, 2022

Simon Eccles
Chief medical officer at Salesforce

> **The NHS needs to get much better at understanding an individuals' communication preferences**

Salesforce believes customer relationship management (CRM) software has transformed the way businesses across every industry communicate with their customers and staff by collecting and analysing data to create streamlined, personalised and automated processes that save time and money and generate income. Eccles believes an NHS-specific CRM could optimise its recruitment. The UK government wants to recruit 50,000 more nurses by 2024/25 and rapidly increase the pace of recruitment across all roles and professions – but its current system isn't working. "We need to make it much easier for people to apply for roles in the NHS," says Eccles. "The NHS needs a tool that can automate the process as much as possible and remember if you've applied for another NHS role previously. At the moment, there are too many steps and communication is poor during the application process, which is hampering recruitment."

Bureaucracy is also a hindrance for staff once they've been hired. Doctors and nurses who are embarking on their first roles in the NHS are often on rotation, meaning they change departments or hospitals on a frequent basis. "There is a huge slew of paperwork for doctors and nurses to complete," Eccles explains. "If they get this wrong, they face not being paid correctly or having their annual leave recorded properly. The last thing a doctor or nurse needs after a 12-hour shift is to spend hours on the phone querying a mistake with their pay."

Saleforce believes the solution could be a personalised dashboard with a simple interface that records the individual records of every employee. This would include qualifications, career records and references to reduce paperwork and ensure staff can apply for new roles at speed. The same dashboard would also give staff visibility of their weekly and monthly rota. Displays would be individual to each employee, making it easier for management to optimise workforce planning. "We can build simple tools to ensure clinical safety in the workplace," says Eccles. "These would make it easy to view staff availability and plot the right mix of staff with the right mix of skills each shift – we don't do that at present."

During the pandemic, Eccles says the NHS underwent "between five and 10 years' worth of digital transformation" to implement remote working solutions for staff and to enable patients to access consultations online. But it still lags behind businesses in other sectors, which have a granular understanding of how to communicate with different types of customers thanks to their use of data-rich CRM tools. "The NHS needs to get much better at understanding an individuals' communication preferences," says Eccles. "But digital communication isn't the answer to everything – roughly 20% of the UK population doesn't own a smartphone – so we need to work out what different demographics want at different stages of the patient journey."

Preferences could include simple options such as receiving appointment invitations or confirmation via phone, letter, email, text message or via an app. Automated translation tools could also provide clearer communication with patients with limited English language skills. Salesforce's CRM software would enable the NHS to store people's preferences in one place and communicate appointments via patients' preferred methods automatically, rather than offering millions of people a blanket solution that doesn't fit their needs.

Understanding and recording patients' preferred mode of treatment is also key to optimising patient care. In London, the majority of new sexual health infections are now diagnosed online. Remote solutions are also the preferred option for early mental health support, where people often feel more comfortable discussing issues from home. Offering a mix of in-person and remote solutions is another opportunity to enhance NHS services. Virtual fracture clinics offer a convenient alternative for patients who have attended hospital with a bone, joint or muscle injury and struggle to attend follow-up appointments around work or childcare.

At the same time, the NHS must also upgrade its traditional communication methods. "Ringing up an NHS switchboard to change the time of an appointment, find out test results or even contact another department as a member of staff can be a long process," says Eccles. Salesforce works closely with businesses to deliver CRM solutions that underpin call centres. By helping to reduce the number of people who need to pick up the phone, minimise call times for those that do and improve the number of times people find out the answers they need when calling, patient satisfaction can be significantly improved.

The NHS has much work to do to improve employee and patient engagement and provide a level of service that can compete with the private sector and attract and retain the best staff in the long term. But CRM software provides an opportunity to transform the NHS into a modern and personalised service. One capable of delivering world-class health interventions that boost the population's health, save lives and secure the future of public healthcare.

Find out more at salesforce.com/uk/public-health

Lessons from New Zealand's digital healthcare revolution

New Zealand's healthcare system has used cloud CRM software to transform the way it manages the health of its population at scale

Weeks before the first cases of Covid-19 arrived on the shores of New Zealand in February 2020, the country's healthcare system began a rapid digital transformation that has boosted citizen engagement and productivity, and generated cost savings. Its investment in digital solutions could now provide a template for the modernisation of the NHS.

New Zealand's Ministry of Health initially developed a bowel screening system on the Salesforce CRM platform as part of its National Bowel Screening Programme. It enabled patients to sign up to receive a test in the post using an online portal built on Experience Cloud, where they entered their personal details and relevant health history.

This data, along with their test results, was then stored on an individual profile on an online community portal called Service Cloud. This portal enabled the ministry to follow up on cases, share results, and invite patients in for additional screening services like a colonoscopy via a simple app.

This workflow provided a template for the country's Covid-19 contact tracing system, which was built on the same platform. The first version went live in just 10 days and provided the government, healthcare staff and patients with the tools to communicate and keep the spread of the virus under control, while ensuring data security. "We worked with our regional partners, co-designing a system that not only met the changing needs of frontline staff, but also included the type of security controls that are required of a national programme that is dealing with personal data," said Michael Dreyer, group manager, national digital services, Ministry of Health.

The results were staggering. In August 2020, the New England Journal of Medicine (along with numerous other publications) highlighted New Zealand as the premier example of how to eliminate Covid-19 transmission after the country reached a zero case count while the rest of the world was wrestling with wave after wave of cases. The system that was put in place put the patient and provider at the centre, moving the needle in vaccine uptake and proving that when citizens have a degree of control and involvement participation goes up.

The success provided the evidence and incentive to modernise the rest of New Zealand's healthcare system. "The pandemic created heightened expectations amongst citizens and staff of what healthcare should look like, because there was now an app for Covid symptoms and later vaccinations," says Louise Ashbrook, vice-president of public sector health at Salesforce. "People involved in managing the outbreak wanted streamlined workflows, and patients expected personalised, engaging experiences."

Since then, additional programmes have been built on Salesforce to manage the health of New Zealand's population. These include the Aotearoa Immunisations Register, a Communicable Disease Management Platform, a system to manage adverse effects of medicines, and a system for managing health sector agreements and payments.

This personalised approach could now be adopted by the NHS. "The needs of people living in London, which is well served in terms of healthcare services, are very different to people living in rural areas," Ashbrook explains. "We need data to build a picture of what those needs are, so we can communicate with patients and deliver services more effectively. This could mean booking appointments via an app rather than letters or offering virtual care rather than hospital appointments."

Doctors could also be relieved of unnecessary paperwork if patient data is collected once and stored in a singular system to avoid patients being asked for the same information, which eats into appointment slots. NHS backlogs may be slashed with the help of CRM software. Almost a million women in the UK missed mammogram appointments because of the pandemic, but keeping a register of those who are available to come in at short notice and take up unused slots could accelerate this clear-up.

This vision of a modernised NHS could soon become a reality. "We're really keen to show the healthcare sector what's possible and the timeframes," says Ashbrook. "A lot of the software systems that the NHS may need have already been pre-built, so we're able to configure them for the needs of the NHS and get them live really quickly."

If they can, then NHS staff and patients can look forward to a healthier future.

Louise Ashbrook
VP of public health at Salesforce

TRANSFORMATION

All on board: overcoming legacy attitudes and technology

It can sometimes be easier to effect transformational changes than it might at first appear. But where to start?

Andy Jones

It isn't easy dragging old technology and attitudes into a new era, particularly when it involves partners who may not share your vision. In 2014, for instance, the Ministry of Defence awarded General Dynamics a £5.5bn contract for 589 armoured vehicles, with delivery due to start three years later. But problems arose and the order has yet to be fulfilled.

Anyone familiar with working across many departments will nod in recognition at how an original agreed vision can become lost in the realities of the situation.

When the Oldham Partnership committed to making the Greater Manchester borough "a place of ambition" it started at grass-roots level, rather than the top. This helped to make challenges more visible to decision-makers. This in turn energised them to use their position to help solve problems. These were the findings of a report by innovation agency Nesta (formerly the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts), which designs solutions for social good. Nesta noted that front-line staff in Oldham Council identified issues, recording how many times each one occurred and its impact. These so-called system conditions were then brought to the attention of those who could make the changes needed. The programme resulted in three elements of agreed focus: "thriving communities, an inclusive economy and cooperative services".

The Covid crisis forced local authorities to quickly find new ways to deliver public services at a distance. A study by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) shows that at the onset of the pandemic there were skills gaps, budgetary constraints, poor technical practices and problems with legacy technology. There was also a lack of clarity on what personal information could be shared with other authorities.

But, faced with the crisis, many local authorities switched from using old methods and focused on finding new solutions and working collaboratively. Argyll and Bute Council's trial of drone technology delivered vital medical supplies across its islands, as well as using mapping tools to support social distancing. Hackney London Borough Council used predictive analytics to help identify people who were particularly vulnerable to Covid-19.


Maria Synchych-Navrotska via iStock

> **Light-speed change occurs only when everyone is working with legacy systems, rather than against them**

To help support vulnerable children when the schools were closed, a cross-borough agreement was set up between London boroughs to use cloud software, enabling them to share details of children in receipt of free school meals. According to the CDEI, one participant described the change as "equivalent to taking a leap two years forward".

But this kind of light-speed change occurs only when working with legacy systems, rather than against them.

Doccla virtual wards provide a successful case of marrying legacy attitudes and technology to the latest software, so that NHS patients can be monitored at home instead of on a ward. Doccla, a healthtech firm founded in 2019, addressed potential NHS delivery pain points early on, including managing devices, onboarding users, monitoring compliance and providing proper support. The system can refer patients using only their NHS number or directly out of the NHS records system. Dag Larsson, co-founder and CEO of Doccla, says the implementation is fast and streamlined to minimise the work for NHS partners.

"And it got us to the point where we are delivering an end-to-end service faster," he adds.

Most users tend to be slow to embrace the new, especially when there are barriers to change such as the need to evaluate options, gain approval at a senior level or wait for legacy contracts to run their course, Larsson notes.

"You can't afford to throw out the cumulative result of years of investment each time there's a new development to exploit – a development that will become tomorrow's legacy problem," he argues. "The trick is to embrace openness. If a key supplier takes a year to manage orders or erects commercial barriers to prevent third parties from integrating, you don't have an open system."

One of the breakthroughs for Doccla was identifying "champions" among staff and patients within the structures that were changing.

"That could be someone who is already won over by digital transformation or someone who is bearing the brunt of the workload from the pain of legacy technology," Larsson explains. "These figures have the power to accelerate the process of buy-in across the organisation. We let the stories speak for themselves."

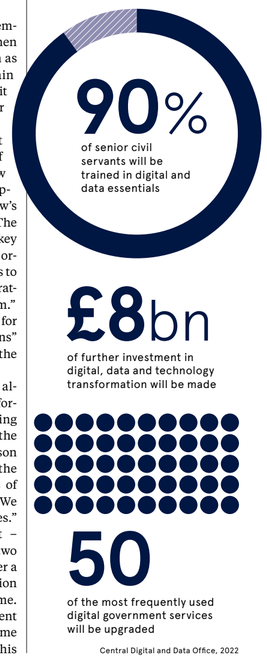
One champion was a patient – Brian Smith, 80 – who spent two weeks in a ward in Stevenage after a heart attack and whose condition improved once he returned home. He and his wife were lent equipment to provide him with oxygen at home and a tablet computer to record his observations. Smith's success story helped to increase take-up. His doctor, Elizabeth Kendrick, hopes the service will increase from treating 90 patients in Stevenage to 200 by the end of the year.

"Hospital is the right place for some people, but others can decondition rapidly," she says. "It's also obviously cheaper to look after someone in their own home because we don't need to deploy a nurse to check somebody's observations."

Clarity of vision is also key and lessons can be learnt from how businesses approach innovation. Helen Ashton helped fashion giant Asos through various transformations as CFO before leading her own consultancy, Shape Beyond. She says the private sector overcomes legacy attitudes quickly by outlining clear goals in a style that front-line staff embrace. From there, leaders build trust by sharing outcomes – good and bad – and acting on these.

"Gather feedback, listen and – critically – act," Ashton stresses. "This should take place via different channels and media, start early and finish way after the transformation has finished. The amount of support that people require to embed change is always underestimated and it is definitely a key reason why programmes struggle."

When transformation is vital, as in a public health crisis, change can happen at pace. But public sector organisations can help to maintain this momentum by listening to everyone, developing a clear vision for change and building strategically on what they have. ●



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Checks and balances: Westminster's verification challenge

The government is aiming to make it easier for citizens to access a range of key public services, but it has a delicate path to tread with its new system

Rich McEachran

Expensive, intrusive and unjustified – these are just some of the words that civil liberties groups and other critics have used to describe the UK's government's plans to introduce digital identity systems in the recent past. It's hoping to avoid such a response after its replacement of the troubled Gov.uk Verify online ID verification platform with a system called One Login. Dozens of departments are expected to migrate to it.

The Government Digital Service (GDS) claims that the incoming tech will provide "a fast and simple way for people to access government services, while maintaining stringent safeguards on user data and protecting against fraud".

In a world that's becoming ever more connected, digital IDs make sense. Research published by McKinsey estimates that their use in the UK could unlock economic value equating to 3% of GDP in 2030.

Plenty is riding on the success of One Login too. If large numbers of people were to have trouble accessing the key services beyond this new gateway, there would be serious ramifications, notes Dan Prince, professor in security and protection science at Lancaster University.

"This wouldn't be as simple as being unable to log into your social media account and view your favourite celebrity's posts," he says. "In this case, you might not be able to receive your benefits, say, or renew your passport."

He suggests that, although the system should run smoothly for most users, merging government service log-ins will introduce a single point of failure. If anything were to go wrong, the GDS would need to throw resources at getting the problem fixed quickly.

"Failures in a digital ID system, along with a poor, slow response, increase the likelihood that the system will become untrusted," Prince warns. "That could damage public trust in the government and wider digital services."

People seem largely receptive to the idea of a digital ID system. Research published in March by the Entrust Cybersecurity Institute revealed that 70% of the 1,450 consumers it had surveyed would probably "use an electronic form of government-issued ID if one were available". Their most cited perceived benefit of doing so was an increase in convenience. These respondents deemed sharing their personal data to be an acceptable trade-off for such a gain.

Westminster does seem to be taking concerns about data privacy seriously. At the start of this year, the Cabinet Office held a two-month public consultation to determine whether departments can improve how they use the data they hold to help people prove their identities online. At the time of writing, the government still hasn't finished analysing the responses.

The GDS has stressed that it will continue to comply with the data protection legislation and guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office. In particular, it will uphold the principle of data minimisation, as set out in the Data Protection Act 2018. This requires data controllers to limit the collection of personal information to the smallest amount required to verify a person's identity.

Dr Felipe Romero-Moreno, principal lecturer at Hertfordshire Law School, applauds "the government's decision to take a 'data protection by design and default' approach". In effect, this means that it is "considering privacy issues and safeguarding individual rights up front", but there are caveats.

He explains: "The government must lay down clear responsibilities for verification organisations and differentiate between data controllers and data processors. People must always be able to know who is processing their data, when they're doing it and why."

Romero-Moreno adds that, if One Login is to prove fit for purpose, the government must ensure that the many British citizens who can't or won't access digital ID systems are not put at a serious disadvantage (see the article on page 4).

Prince agrees, noting that "the key thing to remember is that identity shouldn't be a digital-only concept. The use of digital technologies reduces friction between systems and makes things more efficient, but the ID system needs to embody a process that can be run without digital technology."

Research published by Ofcom in 2021 estimated that between 1.3 million and 1.8 million UK households did not have home internet access. Older people are particularly likely to be digitally excluded. It's vital that the government makes it easier for these "non-digital natives to use physical processes to identify themselves in physical locations", Prince argues. While this might not be as efficient as online verification, it should provide fair and equal access to government services and ensure that the UK's digital transformation is inclusive.

The government at least acknowledges the need to retain alternative gateways to essential public services. The GDS has stressed that One Login "is not about replacing existing offline and face-to-face routes, which we know some users need".

The government has also made it clear that One Login is not "about the creation of an ID card".

The idea of storing individual public records on personal devices was talked up recently by Sir Tony Blair and his old opponent across the despatch box, Lord Hague. In a report published in February, the pair argued that it was "illogical" not to make such records as easily accessible as airline tickets, banking details and vaccine statuses. Number 10 rejected their calls.

Regardless of whether the UK eventually adopts digital ID cards, the government must remember that any such system has to put citizens first, says Romero-Moreno.

"The right to personal identity is a human right enshrined in international law. It's closely connected with personality rights (the right to one's voice, name, image and so on) and the right to life, privacy and freedom of expression," he says. "It is therefore crucial that the government refrains from adopting a narrow meaning of personal identity and implements its verification system in a human rights-compliant way." ●

> **Failures in a digital ID system, along with a poor, slow response, increase the likelihood that the system will become untrusted**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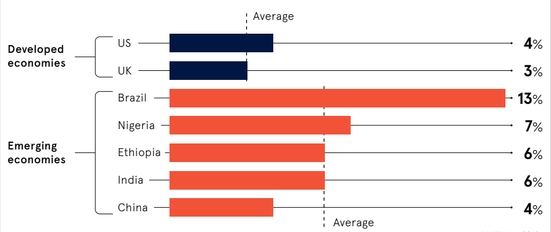
DIGITAL ID ADOPTION COULD UNLOCK ECONOMIC VALUE

Projected growth in economic value from high levels of digital ID adoption in selected nations by 2030



McKinsey, 2019

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