



## What are Local Digital Services?

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### A Step Change from 'eGovernment'

Local Authorities have implemented a programme of 'eGovernment' in which councils have introduced 'electronic' channels for customers to access their services. Channels such as e-forms, customer contact centres, online payments, and so on, have created an online 'front-office' characterised by new, cheaper, and more available ways for customers to access local services. However, eGovernment channels are often not integrated into the 'back-office' leading to re-keying, duplication, and lack of feedback to the customer.

New digital technologies, and access to shared data, can now be applied to improve services, as well as how they are accessed.

The complex needs of individuals can be understood and addressed across many local and national agencies by a digital joining-up of services and shared operational and analytical data.

Digital services will both protect and exploit data so that the individual can access and control how data about them is used; personal data is re-used for specified purposes; and services are defined to meet customer expectations, transparency and public accountability.

### Local and National Capabilities

A local digital service will reuse 'capabilities' which are provided as 'platform components' at either a government, local government, or service provider platform. Examples of re-usable capabilities include

- identity management;
- user preferences;
- payments;
- transaction logging;
- forms handling;
- data matching;
- consent based attribute exchange;

- mapping;

The interfaces between capabilities are defined as open standards, such as APIs. The use of open standards encourages a market for the components, that provide a capability.

A digital service will give an end-to-end experience to the user by an orchestrated delivery chain across the participants, including

- the channel provider, i.e. those providing forms, apps, web pages etc
- the service provider, i.e. the organisation actually delivering a service
- contractors, and staff
- data controllers, i.e. those that have information that can be re-used to support a service
- the responsible organisation, i.e. the organisation responsible for performance
- platform service provider, i.e. those providing re-usable components of a service.

There may be a choice of channels from a number of different channel providers, e.g. 'reporting a fault' may be possible in various apps. Each role above may be performed by a single organisation.

## **Government as a Platform**

The need to build capabilities once and reuse many times has gained traction in government. This approach has been dubbed "Government as a Platform". As Mike Braken, the head of Government Digital Service [has said](#):

"Siloed approaches to transformation don't work. Reinventing the wheel every single time we build a service has led to far too much duplication and waste. That's not good enough. We want to fix that by building Government as a Platform."

Government as a Platform brings a number of advantages:

- Reduced cost
- Reduced risk
- Quicker deployment
- Greater reliability
- Greater consistency

Initial discussions in government show there are potentially 30 platform services that could be developed. GDS has started Discovery work on online payments as an exemplar of what could be achieved.

Many, if not all of the platform services developed for central government could be of benefit to local government. The key is to ensure that local government use cases are considered alongside central government use cases, and that the platform services are developed to be context agnostic, capable of being styled in line with established local brands.

## **Characteristics of a Local Digital Service**

A Local Digital Service will

- take all opportunities to self-serve, and pre-validate a customer request for service, to ensure that it is valid, and eligible, and not duplicated, so that by the time it reaches the back office, it is a genuine new case;
- gain consent from the customer to access personal information held across the public (and potentially the private) sector to be able to check eligibility for a service;
- share data early, online and in real time so as to automate where practical without human intervention;
- reduce the amount, and sensitivity of data that is shared between agencies, by asking business logic questions that have a yes/no answer;
- provide a consistent end-to-end process with feedback and information updates to the customer at each step;
- provide clarity about who is providing a service with 'terms and conditions', privacy statements, and transparency etc;
- provide a performance dashboard about the service in general such as service levels, current performance, throughput and budget, etc so that local citizens can engage with local decision making;
- capture insight about the use of services so as to continuously improve their design;
- be joined up for 'assisted' and 'non-assisted' channels;
- find solutions to a user's needs, across many service providers;

## Characteristics of Local Services

The Local Government Association (LGA) list over 700 types of services, provided by more than 400 Local Authorities.

See <http://id.esd.org.uk/list/englishAndWelshServices>.

For each type of service, the LGA provide:

- a description;
- the type of local authority that provides it;
- the powers and/or duties that enable it, linked to legislation

The LGA have grouped service types by the way that users can engage with them, for example:

- applying
- reporting
- booking

See <http://id.esd.org.uk/list/interactions> for the list and how each service type is grouped.

Many separate services follow a similar pattern, but may be provided by different local organisations, and are enabled by different legislation. For example, the 'reporting' interaction includes:

- Abandoned shopping trolleys
- Abandoned vehicles
- Dangerous structures
- Dead animal removal
- Flyposting
- Flytipping
- Graffiti removal
- Recycling sites
- Road maintenance
- Tree management

Individual services at individual local authorities do not have the high volumes of national services, such that, improving the efficiency of a single one is unlikely to lead to significant savings; rather, an enterprise, and partnering approach is needed to realise efficiencies and transformation.

## Localisation of Local Services

Each local service provider will have prioritised and designed each local service to achieve the best use of resources to meet their objectives and local needs.

Similarly, governance, such as privacy undertakings and risk assessments are set by the local service provider, such that the terms and conditions associated with a service need to be communicated when the provider is selected.

## How Local Digital?

The Government Digital Service (GDS) has defined a 'Digital by Default Service Standard' at <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default>, containing 18 measures that characterise a national digital service.

This is backed up by the Government Service Design Manual at <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual>

Local Authorities now need to supplement and interpret the national guidance to meet the aspirations of Local Digital Services.

In particular defining:

- a framework of data standards and APIs;
- sources of trusted data, and a local information infrastructure;
- a local logical architecture incorporating re-usable capabilities;
- a standards based data sharing regime.

The sector can set priorities by identifying the benefits that can be derived from transforming specific groups of service type. That prioritisation can then drive a program to develop specific standards, trusted data, and re-usable architecture.