

Making Lives Better

Digital Transformation
Strategy

Midterm Review

2020



Department of

Finance

An Roinn

Airgeadais

www.finance-ni.gov.uk

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Introduction



The world is changing at a rapid pace, and digital technology is recognised as a key enabler and driver for change. New technology makes it possible to do things that were not imagined ten years ago. For the public sector it offers the opportunity to radically change and improve how we deliver public services and engage with the public and businesses. Delivering new services and changing the way we work requires government departments and the wider public sector to behave differently to make the most of these opportunities. Building a digital government here is the responsibility of all public bodies and is about changing cultures to embrace uncertainty, to put the public needs at the heart of service delivery, and to truly collaborate across departments and sectors. Digital pervades the modern world and our public expect digital services to underpin modern public services.

According to Ofcom's Communications Market Report 2019, 82% of adults use smartphones, 64% of households own a tablet and 87% of households have an internet connection at home¹. It is clear that a huge majority of people use technology in their day to day lives. Increasingly, the public are expecting their interactions with government to be seamless and "digital first", with a user experience that is intuitive and akin to that which they get from their bank, supermarket or utility company - there is a growing expectation that they will be able to engage with government at a time of their choice and using a device/channel of their choice. Digital technologies are essential on a daily basis to keep organisations functioning and delivering public services, often to the most vulnerable in society. Government needs to be able to predict and react quickly to emerging technology, and help public bodies understand how this could be used to improve outcomes for the public. Government also needs to assess what risks new technology brings and to put appropriate safeguards in place to ensure delivery and to protect the data it processes. Transforming public services is an evolving process, enabled by digital, and is helping make public services better for the general public and businesses alike.

Digital Transformation Service (DTS) within the Department of Finance set out an ambitious Strategy for Digital Transformation of Public Services in 2017 to continue its digital transformation journey and the delivery of a range of new and improved digital services. "[Making Lives Better](#)"² describes how our Digital Transformation Programme is providing better public services and enabling collaborative design of public sector digital services to deliver on Programme for Government (PfG) outcomes through the '*increased usage of online channels to access public services*'. It brought new opportunities to improve how we engage with our public and stakeholders to develop better policies, deliver better services and to modernise business processes.

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- 1 Ofcom – The Communications Market Report 2019
(<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/interactive-data>)
 - 2 <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/digital-transformation-strategy-2017-2021>

Progress on the delivery of the Strategy has been vital to modernising public services, driving our “digital first” approach and proving the value of investing in enabling technologies. This mid-term review offers an opportunity to report on progress in support of the delivery of PfG outcomes. As such the review aims to build upon the drivers behind [Making Lives Better](#), and provides an opportunity to refresh the direction of travel rather than to undertake a full re-assessment of the strategy.

This review will reassess progress to date, identifying which are the most appropriate actions to focus on to achieve continued progress within the Digital Transformation Strategy’s accompanying strategic Service Delivery Plan. This is crucial at a time of unprecedented change to the way Government is delivering its services and the increased pressure on funding and resourcing in response to the global Covid-19 pandemic. This mid-term review will provide a platform to allow the Digital Transformation Steering Group to monitor progress and the delivery of actions on an ongoing basis for the duration of the strategy.

The continued move to “digital first” is as much about how we operate, organise and run the NICS and wider public sector to be as efficient and well-organised as possible as it is about delivering transactions online to the public and businesses. The strategy offers a focus on making digital part of the culture of the NICS and public sector. It will require a revolution in continuous and determined change to the design and operation of public services that can capitalise upon developments in technology. In turn, we can create services that better meet the needs of the public, develop channels that offer efficiency and increase inclusion to everyone, and re-invent service supply chains to deliver faster, cheaper, and more effectively.

The Strategy seeks to allow Government to drive and enable transformation of services to make a real difference to how people transact with us. This Strategy and associated Roadmap and Service Delivery Plan cannot remain fixed. They will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure that the Strategy is delivering its overall aim and outcomes, and flexible and adaptable enough to allow us to evolve our plans as new opportunities arise. This is not simply about creating websites or online forms - technology is merely an enabler, the key to true transformation of the public sector lies with our people, leadership and collaboration.

Ignatius O’Doherty, Director of Digital Shared Services and NICS ICT Head of Profession

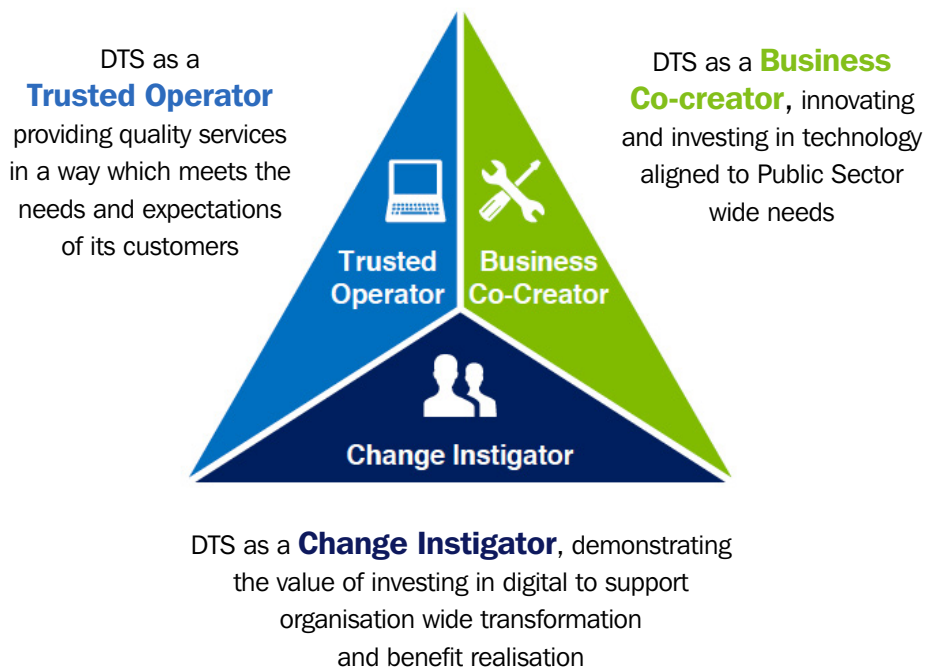
1 Strategic Context

Digital transformation is a key priority for all NICS Departments, who provide a broad range of services such as applying for a passport, completing a tax return and taxing cars. The strategy is designed to help transform government and for user needs to be at the heart of service provision. It recognises that digital and technology must be used to help develop and implement policy more effectively. It describes how modernising and automating services can generate efficiencies and simplify the way the public access services. It recognises that civil servants need to have the right skills, tools and techniques to be able to deliver excellent digital services – so the use of the word ‘digital’ within this strategy mid-term review refers to “the tools, techniques, technology and approaches of the internet age”. This definition recognises that the way people are working digitally is as important as the tools they are using. Our Digital Transformation Strategy focuses on leveraging innovative technologies to improve public service provision and crucially, it identifies the following nine key digital transformation strategic enablers so as to specifically contribute to the delivery of PfG Commitments in respect of ‘increased use of online channels to access public services’:

- **Leadership** - Creating a digital change environment throughout organisations.
- **Digital Principles** - Establishing a common understanding for digital transformation delivery.
- **Digital Platform** - Providing a digital infrastructure to support and accelerate service improvement.
- **Delivery Capability** - Developing the optimum blend of digital skills to support delivery.
- **Digital Inclusion** - Giving citizens access, skills, motivation and trust to use digital services.
- **Innovation** - Creating the environment to enable services to be designed differently.
- **Procurement and Supply Chain** - Evolving procurement and sourcing practices to optimise delivery of digital initiatives.
- **Government Data** - Using, sharing and analysing data to design and deliver better public services.
- **Cyber Security/ Data Management** - Building public trust in digital public services.

DTS are established as the digital transformation advocates within the Public Sector, helping to deliver a digital vision on behalf of Government. The role of DTS in delivering the Strategy therefore is to:

- Work with Departments and Agencies to design and deliver services to meet user needs;
- Provide centralised support, expertise, assurance, and a cross cutting perspective to help them collectively deliver digital transformation of public services to achieve better outcomes for people and businesses;
- Add value through insight and best practice gleaned from strategic partners and countries and collaborate to deliver joint solutions via representation on bodies such as the British-Irish Council; and
- Liaise with other sectors to ensure that the Digital Transformation Strategy continues to align with, and support delivery of key Government strategies.



DTS manage all three roles illustrated above to deliver outcomes, adapting to the situation at hand, and delivering reliable reusable services alongside innovative and responsive change. They support the NICS Board to deliver on the digital agenda in Government by advising and challenging where necessary to ensure consistency, quality and value for money in the delivery of digital solutions across the Public Sector.

There are a number of significant challenges facing Government over the remaining Strategy duration, including continued increased expectations of people and businesses, and continuing financial pressures, as well as new ways of working arising from the challenges of providing services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital technology provides us with a huge opportunity to re-think how our public services can be better delivered and to work collaboratively to transform and revolutionise how we do business.

2 Strategy Vision

The vision of the Strategy is that:

We will transform how Government works, by leveraging digital methods and innovative technologies to make lives better.

This was to be delivered through a range of projects underpinned by this set of four themes:



Connected Citizen

Public services are personalised putting our citizens in control with a range of integrated services available across the public sector



Connected Business

Public services are easier to use for businesses within the region, reducing red-tape and administration requirements



**Northern Ireland
Executive**

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Digital Government

Public services are 'Digital-by-design' with core systems and processes transformed to enable efficient and effective delivery



Digital Society

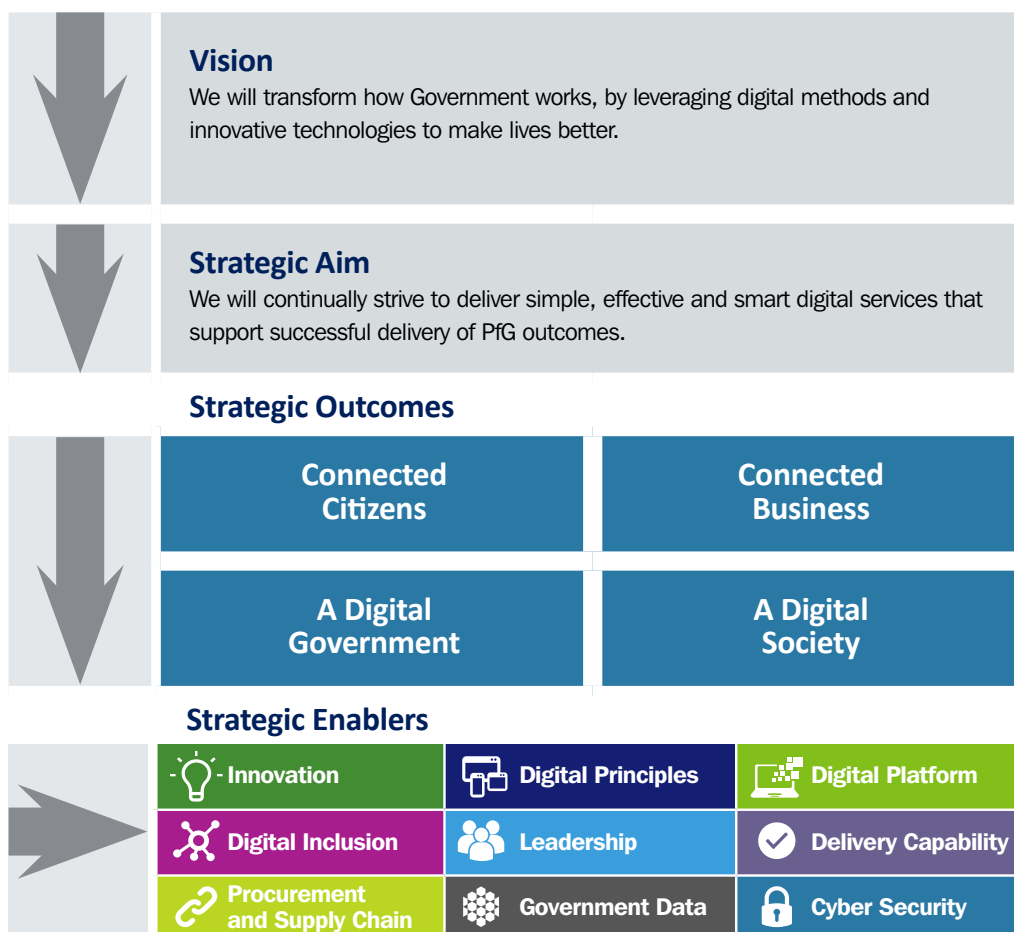
Digital public services have a real and meaningful impact on the daily lives of our citizens, helping to address society's greatest challenges and achieve the outcomes agreed in the Programme for Government (PfG)

These projects have delivered a number of outcomes to improve access to, and quality of, public services including:

- A culture of innovation across the Public Sector
- Public services personalised by putting our customers in control with a range of integrated services available across the Public Sector;
- Increased use of social media to communicate with service users and to encourage participation in society;
- Maximising use of common technologies and shared services; and
- Channel shift is being addressed through anticipating needs of the public.



The “Strategy Map” shown below sets out this vision, the Strategic Aim and Outcomes we seek to achieve, and the Strategic Enablers that have been supporting delivery of this ambitious Programme of reform.



Benefits to service users

Time

People spend less time completing services which are better designed, and digitised from end to end. This means that users do not have to repeat steps or provide the same information more than once, resulting in less time wasted.

Simplicity

Digitised services are easier to use. There is a greater degree of accessibility. This means that more people are able to complete transactions with government and access the services that they need.

Benefits to government

Back office

Digitising services makes back-end administration and the review of processes much more efficient. This saves time for staff who no longer have to complete long and manual processes.

3 Progress

NICS Departments are making the most of the opportunities created by digital technology, both to meet their users' needs and to modernise their internal operations. Many people here now have the convenience of doing business with government from their home or on the move at a time of their choosing – for example, many people now tax their vehicle online (and no longer need a paper record) and apply for a driving licence online. Locally between January and November 2020 there were over 63 million hits on the NI Direct website. Some of the top pages visited include:

- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Motoring**
- **Benefits and money**
- **Employment, training and careers**



The Digital Transformation Strategy publication in 2017 aligned with a number of other Government Strategies here including the eHealth & Care Strategy³ and the Industrial Strategy⁴. A Digital Transformation Steering Group was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy, and the Digital Transformation Leaders Forum was formed to support and shape the programme of work. DTS developed a suite of reusable tools, a set of core applications, which allows business areas to quickly introduce and manage a range of online services. This Digital Toolkit includes:

- ‘Book IT’** Allows people to book appointments online.
- ‘Tell US’** Provides an online channel for enquiry, feedback or complaining about specific government services
- ‘Pay IT’** Provides an online payment channel for Government services.
- ‘Rate IT’** Allows real time feedback on a user’s experience of the online service.

In this period DTS have also commenced, or continued development of, a number of transformation projects including the ‘MyDirect’ customer portal, and Secure Messaging. The programme has also expanded the use and functionality of SMS text messaging for notifications and reminders. Many citizen services have been introduced which has allowed our customers to access Government services at a place and time that is convenient to them, and uptake continues to increase, for example:

Farm grants	155,000 payments
Repeat prescriptions	over 3.6 million
Angling	100% digital with 71,000 rod licences
Firearms licensing	100% digital with 26,000 licences
Schools	40% of school transport applications are online. 65% of pre-school and primary school admissions online.

In support of driving the four strategic themes in our vision, we continue to enhance and evolve the role of DTS to work with the public sector as a trusted partner and supplier to support the transformation and delivery of digital shared services.

3 <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/ehealth-and-care-strategy>

4 <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/industrial-strategy>

4 Strategic Enablers

We believe that digital transformation provides the opportunity to build a digital government and to deliver it in a cost-effective way, a way that simplifies and automates many processes. This requires changes to approach, leadership, mandate, technology, platforms, interfaces and capabilities. Nine strategic enablers exist within the Strategy, which have provided the foundation for ongoing digital transformation. Progress on Strategy implementation was closely monitored by the out-workings of a service delivery plan, which was reported to the Digital Transformation Steering Group over the last two years.



1. Leadership

Creating a digital change environment throughout organisations

The Digital Transformation Programme addressed the need to exhibit leadership for change initiatives by:

- Establishing a Digital Transformation Board to provide leadership in respect of delivery of the Strategy;
- Reinvigorating the Digital Leaders Forum to drive transformation across the public sector;
- Promoting an agile 'mind-set' for the delivery of change to public services; and
- Supporting Digital Leaders in defining and developing the leadership skills required to achieve transformation.

The Digital Transformation Steering Group was established to provide leadership in respect of strategy delivery, and DTS have been promoting digital transformation and sharing learning across the NICS and wider Public Sector through this group. This has enabled the showcasing of digital transformation from all sectors, and has also included the collaboration with other groups e.g. the DAERA Digital Engagement Group.



2. Digital Principles

Establishing a common understanding for digital transformation delivery

As the Strategy has been delivered, users and their needs are being placed at the centre of design, rather than selecting solutions technology and then making users work around its limitations.

To understand our customers, Citizen Space is an online consultation and survey tool that has now been approved for use across NICS, ALBs including Health Trusts and NDPBs at no cost to individual areas. Members of the public can access consultation links from a website, social media or email to interact and connect with government, to complete forms to instantly claim help and benefits provided by the public sector and to give their views on social policy and decisions, examples this year include:

- Financial Support Covid-19 scheme
- DFC online priority shopping slots for Covid-19 shielding
- Consultation on Liquor Licencing
- Consultation on Gambling in NI.
- Consultation on The environment strategy for Northern Ireland.
- Consultation on Sentencing Review in NI.
- Changes to Abortion Law in NI.

In addition, the NICS Information and Technical Design Authority (ITDA) published a set of Enterprise Architecture Principles which will be used to guide the NICS when making decisions regarding business and technology innovation and change. The document was developed by the ITDA to provide an enterprise architecture governance function for the NICS.

The Digital Transformation Service and Digital Development teams are also currently hosting applications on the Gov.UK Platform as a Service (GPaaS) platform which is on the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud. This provides developers with a safe cloud environment for delivering services, and is entirely suited to web development projects, providing all the relevant resources in “backing services”. The platform is secure and resilient.



3. Digital Platform

Providing a digital infrastructure to support and accelerate service improvement

Digitally transforming services makes them easier for everyone to use and complete. This digitisation of public services needs to be built on the application of open technical standards and platform-based architectural principles. These services also often contain similar processes such as making payments, making sure people are who they say they are, and receiving notifications. This strategic enabler has been aided by the development of a suite of reusable tools which allows business areas to quickly introduce and manage a range of online services – the Digital Toolkit has already been mentioned earlier in this report and DTS continue to grow its functionality to deliver additional services. The development of the Toolkit is realising the ambition to create a platform for Government for the NICS and the wider public sector for the same cost as a single line of business application. Significantly, as the toolkit continues to deliver additional new digital services greater cost benefits are realised and the platform itself is enhanced with more reusable components.

The MyDirect portal and supporting technology also ensures that there is a single point through which the public and business areas can transact securely with government. It provides the facility to register an account, access online government services and share official information securely.

The NICS Enterprise Architecture team have also launched the API Developer Portal. This portal provides a list of reusable APIs to help the building of services for the NICS.

The number of services using reusable toolkit elements to accelerate channel shift continues to increase. There is evidence that we are successfully sharing some services and common components, however, there is more which can be achieved and we should continue to endorse the re-use of existing government platforms such as GOV.UK Notify, Pay, Platform as a Service (PaaS), and the Digital Toolkit where it is relevant to do so.



4. Delivery Capability

Developing the optimum blend of digital skills to support delivery

We cannot underestimate the importance of people in the digital transformation journey. DTS recognise that staff and teams need to have the right resources and tools to do their jobs, and that investing in training staff can enable the digital workforce to become agile and flexible. DTS have agreed a plan to deliver a way in which digital skills can be fully incorporated across the public sector here, and a Digital Skills & Capability Research Report being published in Q1 2021 will review current digital and agile project management course availability, and establish an understanding of the digital skills required at basic, advanced and professional levels across the public sector.

Partnerships have been key in this strategic enabler. For example DTS has entered into an agreement with Government Digital Services (GDS) and signed a memorandum of understanding, stating that GDS and the Department of Finance would work together to build digital skills and capabilities in their respective government areas and that both parties will endeavour to comply with GDS principles.

Promoting the digital transformation roles as key specialisms has also been vital with the ICT HR team aligning job roles to the DDaT (Digital, Data and Technology) capability framework in order to promote these roles and provide expert advice and learning journeys for each role.



5. Digital Inclusion

Giving citizens access, skills, motivation and trust to use digital services

Digital technologies impact on almost every aspect of modern society, creating huge social benefits. They can improve **how we work**, how **we are entertained**, how we **communicate** with each other, how we access the **healthcare available** to us, and how information and **knowledge can** be brought together and used for our benefit. The flipside of our increasing reliance on ICT – in public, economic and social life – is that the digitally excluded also become excluded from engaging with public services, modern working life and society itself. Being online is often easy to take for granted and yet thousands of families are still not online, and there is a persistent minority who have never been online, and a much larger group of people who only use the internet in a very limited way.

Many individuals here don't have the digital skills required to take advantage of the benefits the internet offers:

1 in 7 adults do not use the Internet

1 in 4 do not have access to a computer with Internet access

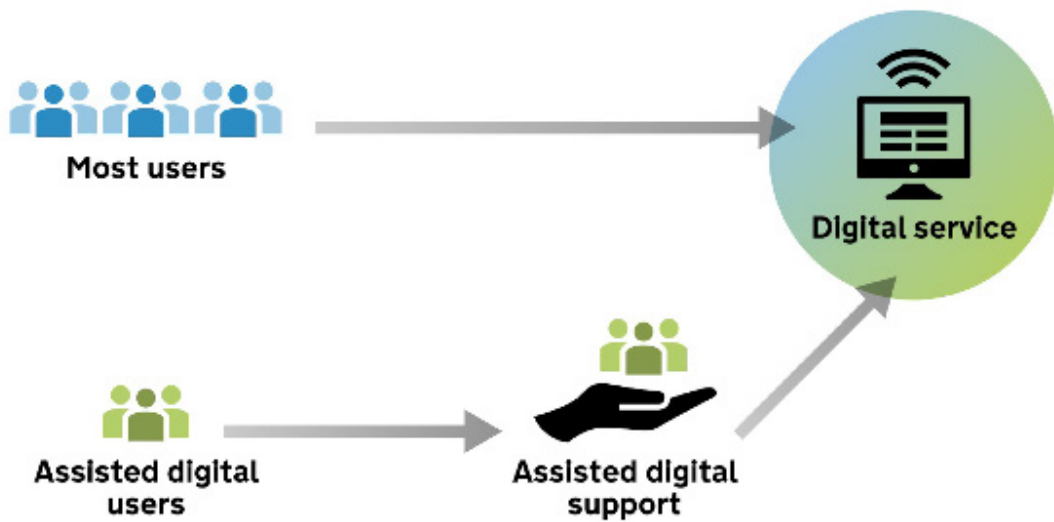
Half of those aged 65+ do not use the Internet

1 in 3 of those with a disability do not use the Internet

DTS has been addressing this with the Go ON NI programme, it starts with user needs, and ensures those individual needs come first.

- **Affordability & access Improve access** – simple, low-cost options
- **Government services**
- **Skills - Work with others** - Work together to maximise expertise, experience and resources to better meet user needs
- **Motivation** - Motivate people - Bring digital into people's lives in a way that benefits them
- **Security**- Make it safe

Many of us require this digital assistance and upskilling to interact with online government services, and by delivering projects in readiness for digital transformation projects going live, DTS can ensure the skills needed to use online government services are provided when they are needed most. 86% of adults in NI now use the web compared to 67% when Go ON NI commenced.



Assisted digital services provided so far within the term of this Strategy include support with applying for a Driving Licence, booking an MOT, using the EA School Registration service, Universal Credit and a Census 2021 rehearsal.

DTS are also members of the Digital Assist Steering Group which is cross-sectoral and is chaired by Business in the Community. This ensures that government services are not in isolation, and allows interaction with organisations from across the private, voluntary and community sectors.



6. Innovation

Creating the environment to enable services to be designed differently

DTS continues to make progress in encouraging innovative approaches in development and delivery of major new projects. Within the term of the Strategy, a concept of innovation was examined to harness creativity to solve problems with new solutions. This “Gov Hack” allowed members of the IT Industry to showcase potential solutions to problems. Work continues to ascertain how this model of collaboration could develop what innovation means to NICS and bring together hybrid teams to move forward ideas. NICS Live sessions and SCS Masterclasses were also utilised to promote innovation within the NICS and its staff.

The draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy is currently under consideration prior to being issued for public consultation.



7. Procurement and Supply Chain

Evolving procurement and sourcing practices to optimise delivery of digital initiatives

Digitising government and building digital capability means that we do not always have to use third party providers to deliver digital services or host technical infrastructure. Use of these common capabilities reduces costs for government, and reduces dependency on legacy technology.

DTS continues to collaborate with DoF Economists and CPD (Construction and Procurement Delivery) to develop principles for procuring agile solutions and partnering with SPAR (Strategic Policy and Reform) on NIGEAE Agile guidance.

The DigitalNI Enabling Programme team within DOF are also responsible for priorities with regard to the procurement of digital services including the promotion of procurement frameworks. This also entails exploring their role in managing and integrating digital development, while also making sure contracts or frameworks are available for use in the public sector.



8. Government Data

Using, sharing and analysing data to design and deliver better public services

Data is a valuable resource that has the power to transform the services government provide and the decisions we make. Providing access to data can empower people, encourage innovation and enable the delivery of government policy and operational objectives. In this digital era both individuals and organisations are creating more data than ever before, and this will continue. DTS continues to support effective re-use of this data in multiple contexts by increasing accessibility and by opening up our data. We collect and publish a broad range of data from a multitude of places and sources, and we work hard to improve accessibility to our data as well as making more effective use of it. OpenDataNI brings together, in one place, a range of data from government departments and other public sector organisations and the data is available under an Open Government Licence which means that it is free to copy, adapt, commercially exploit and publish.

We also recently published an Open Data Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020–2023⁵ which is the blueprint for driving a transparency agenda across government and creating a resource which will improve the economy and lives of people here. This Strategy's vision is to stimulate the availability and use of Open Data, to build trust in government services through a greater commitment to transparency and demonstrate the value of Open Data as an agent of economic growth, whilst also supporting the burgeoning Open Data ecosystem that has developed locally.

The OpenDataNI Innovation and Outreach Fund was also launched as part of this Strategy, with aims to promote NI government Open Data re-use, stimulate innovation with data, and broaden skills and competence in working with Open Data here. The Fund attracted applications for innovative re-use of data and/or promotion of awareness and re-use of NI government Open Data through outreach events. With a total of £30,000 available, the Fund attracted a wide variety of proposals; 22 applications in all, seeking over £80,000 in funding between them and covering activities and projects from all parts North, South, East and West.

5 <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/open-data-strategy-northern-ireland-2020-2023>



9. Cyber Security/ Data Management

Building citizen trust in digital public services

The Digital Transformation Programme has:

- Ensured that our policy and implementation adopts and reflects the best practice that the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has and continues to provide.
- Developed a regional Cyber Security Strategy that is effective and efficient, scalable and resilient and which will allow us to capture the trust and confidence of our consumers; and
- Promoted Cyber Security Awareness across public sector bodies to ensure that it is considered as part of digital transformation initiatives.

The NI Cyber Security Strategy: A Strategic Framework for Action 2017 – 2021⁶ was launched with objectives grouped by 3 themes - Defend, Deter and Develop. DoF Digital Shared Services lead on implementation of the Defend theme, working towards making public services cyber resilient. (DoJ leads on the Deter theme and DfE leads on the develop theme). The Cyber Security team within DSS work closely with the ITAssist service providers and have developed a work programme based on the UK NCSC's 10 steps to cyber security. Highlights of the work programme include:

- A Strategic awareness and education programme for staff including the development of a Cyber Security intranet Hub, the delivery of staff awareness seminars, phishing simulation exercises, end user training, training & development plans for technical staff and gamification to support conference exhibitors.
- Secure by design principles for all development work utilising the NCSC Technology code of practice, complimented by increasing internal capability in vulnerability scanning. The team also manage the NICS CHECK services contract, providing access for business areas across the NICS to NCSC CHECK accredited IT Health Check services.
- Increased monitoring and reporting of email, web traffic, malware increasing visibility and understanding of cyber threats. A Project which will lead to the acquisition of an NICS SIEM supported by external and internal SOC capability is well progressed and solutions will be in place by the end of the 2020/2021 FY.
- Continued robust technical security measures including firewalls, anti-virus software, device PINS, aggressive patching, Active directory access management and adoption of the NCSC Active Cyber Defence suite of tools including being early adopters of the Host Based Capability end point monitoring functionality, implementing this functionality on all NICS end points.
- Supply Chain management - the inclusion of cyber security standards in NICS IT contract's Terms & Conditions and the promotion of Third Party supplier assurance exercises.

6 <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/cyber-security-strategic-framework-action>



- NICS Cyber Incident Management & Co-ordination Plan provides a framework for the management of incidents across multiple Departments and connects with the NCSC Cyber Incident Management Plan.
- DSS Cyber Security staff work closely with NCSC and all other Devolved Administrations to further strengthen NICS Cyber resilience and as members of the Cyber Security Information Sharing platform (CiSP), the NICS benefits from cyber threat information in real time.
- DSS Cyber Security staff support remote working across NICS through the evaluation of risk, provision of supporting guidance and the production of information material aimed at informing staff of actions they can take to work securely while mobile.

The launch of the NI Cyber Security Centre in February 2020 now enables provision of advice and guidance for local government, private and 3rd sector businesses to be cyber safe and secure in order to deliver secure, resilient public services.

5 Governance

The Digital Transformation Programme specifically contributes to the delivery of PfG Commitments in respect of ‘increased use of online channels to access public services’. The Strategy calls out the fact that Digital Transformation is a major change programme and needs to be owned by, and driven across, all parts of Government.

The formation of a Digital Transformation Steering Group was endorsed by the NICS Board and is chaired at Permanent Secretary level. The steering group plays a key role in prioritising strategic projects in line with PfG commitments and prioritising resources for those projects which have the potential to create real and lasting change across Government. There remains an expectation that individual departments will consider transformation opportunities at an early stage of policy development and to consider how they may work collaboratively to deliver. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Strategy is implemented through a Strategic Delivery Plan, and regular updates are reported to the Digital Transformation Steering Group and NICS Board. The Steering Group has been set up as follows:

1 Role

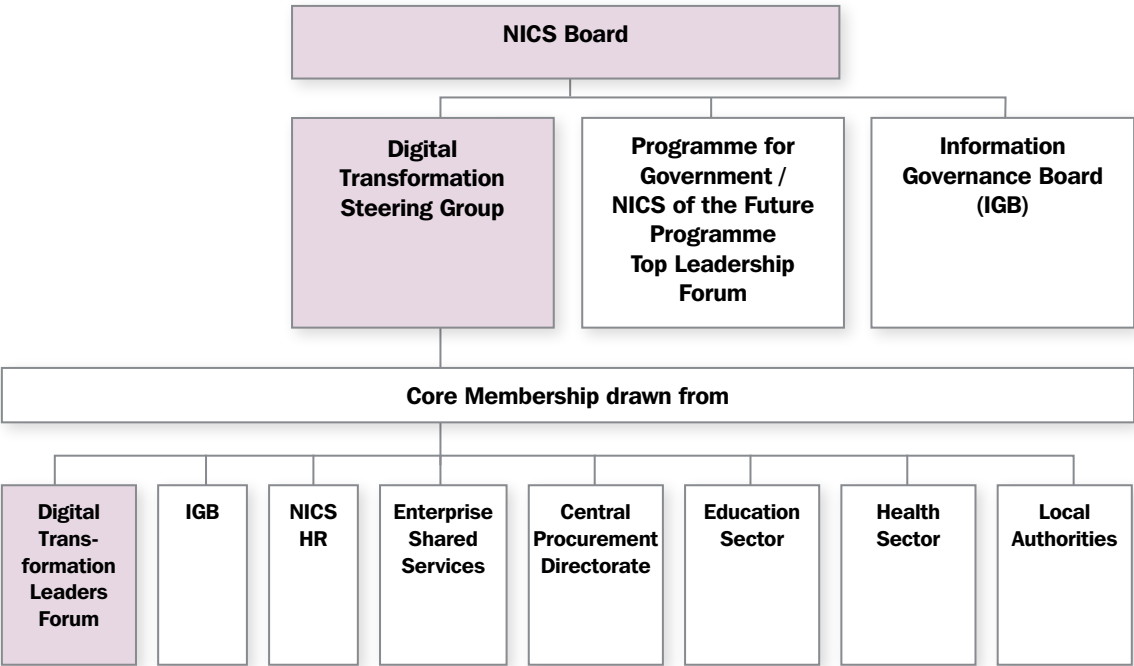
Its role is to ensure that the advancement, development and delivery of digital services across the NICS and wider public sector meets the needs of business and the public and is in line with the Executive’s Programme for Government commitments.

2 Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Steering Group include:

- Provide senior level leadership, challenge, advice and guidance to the programme;
- Mandate programme plan priorities to meet evolving business needs and oversee the Digital Transformation programme of work to ensure delivery against plans;
- Ensure the Digital Transformation programme plan aligns with PfG commitments;
- Ensure the Digital Transformation programme plan includes reference to projects outside of the direct control of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, but which impact on the overall Programme, showing dependencies and milestones;
- Advise on business strategy and on policy matters which have an impact on service delivery;
- Consider and resolve any disputes escalated to the Steering Group from the Digital Transformation Leaders Forum;
- Manage Strategy delivery risks and issues and provide assurance to NICS Board, the Permanent Secretary and Minister on programme delivery and strategic direction.
- Ensure there is appropriate accountability for the programme benefits realisation.

Figure 1
Digital Transformation Steering Group -
Governance Structure and Relationships



6 Landscape Review

The DTS team has made significant progress in facilitating the provision of digital transformation services to the NICS through the use of the NI Direct initiative. The Digital NI Enabling Programme will assess options for future delivery of services, and DTS has led the digital engagement with Departments and public sector bodies in a Landscape Review – consulting with service users, front-line staff and leadership in relation to transformation, skills, capability and governance. This Landscape Review is an opportunity to reach out to public sector organisations taking into account their level of public contact and how they will continue to enhance existing and deliver new government services online. The review is key to identifying future digital projects focusing on what opportunities there are for change in ways of working and enhancing user experiences. The review is built on the principle of promoting the potential for collaboration and reuse and also examines digital capability. Crucially the Landscape Review has also taken account of internal services/back office processes, not just those services that face external customers, and will ensure that all digital strategies and digital plans within the wider NI Public Sector (where available) are examined to determine digital opportunities in the future. In 2019, the NIAO completed a report on the NI Direct Strategic Partnership, and one of the recommendations was a review of transformation activities across the public sector and use of the results to ensure that future transformation is taken forward in a strategic and more co-ordinated way.

The Landscape Review meets this obligation and gathers evidence to inform a prioritised pipeline of work for the Digital NI Enabling Programme and Digital Transformation Service beyond 2022, and the information and analysis from the review may be used to:

- Determine existing Public Sector services still in need of digital transformation;
- Identify services that are not attaining the levels of digital transformation and channel shift anticipated for the success of the project;
- Identify any services whose systems are approaching end of life, therefore triggering the creation of a new digital system / application;
- Identify any telephony and routine back office services not delivered through the NI Direct Contact Centre;
- Determine the total potential spend through contracts and frameworks through a thorough understanding of the size and scale of the contact centre and digital development projects and programmes.
- Understand the variety of digital skills and capabilities required by the wider public sector to not only develop digital services but also to transform their organisations and maximize business benefits.
- Identify key skills gaps in NI Public Sector digital capability within teams

Over 175 organisations have been consulted since the Landscape Review commenced in March 2020, through an online survey and a series of engagement meetings, and a final report will be published to summarise the solid evidence base. 61 organisation responded (plus services within DTS who completed a sub section of the survey) meaning that the response rate was 34% across central government, local authorities and the education sector. Data from the review provides valuable information on digital advisory and development services, contact centre services, payment services and digital skills. The Review also provided an opportunity to directly engage with a number of the surveyed organisations to facilitate an in-depth understanding of their survey responses and also to glean information on the pandemic response. Insight from the Review includes:

1 Challenges

Themes around the challenges to overcome emerged, including: (i) resourcing (ii) management of change (iii) organisational culture (iv) skills, and; (v) the procurement process.

2 Advisory Services

The review aimed to quantify the demand for digital advisory services and digital development services. There was strong demand for a wide range of supporting and advisory services to scope, plan and design digital services prior to and beyond procurement of development services. In the majority of cases, the demand for advisory services being required was greater than those organisations who responded to say they had 'sufficient capability'. The response rate for 'we will require capability in the future' over 15 different example advisory services (e.g. development of citizen contact strategies and development of channel shift plans) was between 30-50% of organisations surveyed. When asked to elaborate in more detail (via a meeting) organisations were unable to quantify exactly how much of each service they would require over the next 5 years. It is important to state that some organisations, particularly small NDPBs, were unsure of what sort of digital advisory services were available and there was a lack of knowledge of how their approach to digital projects would benefit from such services and what the return on investment would be. Just over 50% of organisations said they would need to put procurement arrangements in place to access advisory service capability in future.

The survey responses for digital development also reflected a strong demand. Again between 30-50% of organisations stated that 'We will require this capability in the future' across 19 example types of digital development services (e.g. ICT advice and guidance, web development, Agile development, data migration). Approximately 50% of organisations said that they would require a procurement process to access digital development capability in future.

3 Citizen Facing Services

The Review has produced a detailed list of services for the organisations sampled including details of what changes they aspire to make over the next 5 years. Three quarters of the survey respondents said that they had, or will have in the next 5 years, a citizen facing service. Around half of these services were greater than 10 years old. The survey attempted to quantify the volumes of transactions across all delivery channels (face to face, post, email, sms, etc), although a large number of organisations were unable to present this transaction data. The survey also indicated that there will continue to be strong demand for digital services to support further development of citizen facing services over the next 5 years. 76% of the listed services indicated that they would be making changes (e.g. adding to existing digital functionality or replacement of a service). A further 15% were unsure of what changes, if any, would be made. 10% of the services indicated there would be no changes. There was support for the continued need for delivery of multiple channels to meet the needs of the digitally excluded, although a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they were unsure of what the channel shift concept meant.

4. Digital platforms

The survey showed some use of the digital tool kit components to date such as NIDA, Tell Us and Rate It. When asked in engagement meetings, service owners and digital leaders were encouraged by the potential of the tools to provide functionality that they believed their service could benefit from. There were significant expressions of interest in finding out more about these reusable services and their benefits, and in what benefits the use of AI could bring to service delivery.

The Landscape Review has also been produced with an integrated cost modelling tool in such a way that teams are able to estimate the potential spend of future contracts and frameworks through a better understanding of estimated size and scale of potential contact centre and digital development projects. These estimates may be useful to inform the business cases of future digital transformation programmes, as well as for informing the scope of potential tenders which will help meet procurement strategy objectives. To take account of industry best practice the cost model was commissioned through the NI Direct strategic partner. The model assumes there is a strong correlation between organisational digital maturity and project complexity, so organisations that are mature may have less costs associated with a project of the same size and scope compared with another less digitally mature organisation. Typically the cost difference would be associated with digital capability - less mature organisations would have lower capability and require additional spend on advisory expenditure and on digital skills.

Furthermore, the Review has evidenced (i) a willingness across sectors for better collaboration at a strategic and operational level leading to better sharing of lessons learned and reuse of platforms/code (ii) the continued need for more effective communication and engagement on what services are available to support organisations going through a digital transformation project and how to access these, and; (iii) a wide range of success stories around the transformation of services – steps will be taken to further communicate these stories with the wider public sector.

7 Conclusion

There will continue to be significant demand for digital transformation as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and now more than ever the spotlight is on the public sector to deliver responsive and collaborative digital services. It is very clear that we can continue to digitalise many paper based services and change how many services can be delivered in the future. A number of key challenges lie ahead, however this presents a huge opportunity to work collaboratively to deliver in new ways and digital technology is a key enabler in this regard. It creates a renewed sense of urgency and offers us the opportunity to transform and revolutionise how we do business right across Government, so that we can deliver better and more trusted and connected services for our customers (people and businesses), and in a more modern and efficient way for taxpayers. While the benefits of transformation can be huge, delivering these projects can be incredibly challenging. By their very nature, complex transformations usually involve significant organisational and cultural change, the introduction of new ways of working, and experimenting with new and innovative technology. Importantly, much of this needs to be delivered at the same time.

The public sector faces severe financial constraints, yet public services also face increasing demands, so our public services will have to be affordable in this environment. New investments will be expected to show that they can be funded through defined benefits and that this new more cost-effective government can fund better public services. But there are many other benefits that cannot be ignored. For example, improving digital skills will improve people's employment prospects and productivity as well as giving them access to cheaper goods and services.

There are also benefits that are less tangible to identify and more difficult to evaluate financially than employment or productivity, but that still carry significant value to people and our society. For example, increasing the level of trust and participation in public services, or driving innovation. This mid-term review clearly demonstrates that whilst generally delivering on the Digital Transformation Strategy principles and achieving the majority of the projects outlined in the Strategic Delivery Plan, there is a need to consider how the final years of the Strategy can contribute to and support the delivery of improved outcomes for everybody. The Strategy is a solid starting point for NICS and public sector leaders to progress their digital transformation journey, but which can be strengthened with consideration to the following:

Development of a clear and coherent roadmap that addresses the key elements of digital transformation.

Looking at culture, leadership, workforce, and procurement. The Strategy should be accompanied by a mechanism to track and measure progress against the digital goals that it sets.

Ensure citizens and service users are part of digital transformation.

Projects across the public sector must start with the user. Research suggests that many public sector organisations aren't engaging the public in service design and that there is a lack of user-centred design awareness in the workforce. The Strategy should highlight that digital services are to be based around what users say they need.

Utilise the NI public Sector Digital Skills and Capability Research Report to analyse our teams and plan where our skills will come from.

Recent research undertaken by DTS shows that many government Departments lack some skills to take full advantage of digital transformation and this is a big challenge. It is important to ascertain what capabilities are needed and how they will be secured, ensuring a blend of upskilling existing workers and teaching genuinely new skills.

Ensure procurement processes are suitable for digital solutions.

It is vital that public money is spent effectively, but the digital age and the rate of change which that brings means that procurement models and practices need to be supported by the Strategy and optimised for digital transformation initiatives. We must continue to demonstrate the value of investing in digital to support transformation within organisations and across traditional boundaries.

Highlight user data to reveal how people interact with government services.

It is important that the benefits of digital transformation are measured and therefore to show specific examples of success metrics, such as increased digital take-up, reduced processing times, and higher public satisfaction rates. By demonstrating the economic benefits, this can help departments make better use of their data to improve public services.

Commission and prioritise work going forward from Landscape Review data.

DTS should use the Landscape Review to produce a pipeline of future digital transformation activity with a clear on-boarding process that will prioritise outcomes for accelerating digital transformation to drive further changes in culture and behaviours

There are real opportunities within this Strategy to further join up service delivery, for example through the use of digital zones/citizen hubs, and these should be explored further. The Digital Toolkit is also fundamental to the swift and efficient delivery of future services, allowing these reusable tools to be rapidly deployed across business areas when required. This mid-term review highlights that the public sector must invest in developing digital skills, digital leadership, capability and capacity to deliver in innovative new ways. COVID-19 has had a profound impact on public service delivery and this transformational change will increase as the public sector strives to make more of their services available online. The challenge will be to manage the allocation of resources across competing priorities, ensuring that progress on delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy is maintained.

