The Local Digital Declaration

A common aspiration for the future of local public services.

July 2018

Introduction

This declaration affirms our collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it. It commits us working on a new scale to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

This joint endeavour was initiated by the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. We invite all local authorities and the organisations we collaborate with to join us by signing the Declaration and committing to deliver a first action from which we can all benefit.

The opportunity

Never before has it been possible to collaborate so effectively, to deliver services across so many boundaries, to interrogate our data so insightfully, to realise such great efficiencies, and to reshape public services for the benefit of all while retaining local sovereignty.

Great work has already been done to transform our services using digital tools and technology. But we have an opportunity to do more.

Our ambition

We want to co-create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where technology is an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for citizens and officials to use. We know that one size doesn't fit all, but by developing common building blocks local authorities will be able to build services more quickly, flexibly and effectively. Only in this more open and flexible market will we unlock our full potential for innovation.

Our ambition requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, and we've agreed 5 principles to help us do it:

1. We will go even further to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.
2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively. This means insisting on modular building blocks for the IT we rely on, and open standards to give a common structure to the data we create.
3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively.
4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.
5. We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our commitments

DLUHC will establish a delivery team to support all Declaration co-signatories in realising this ambition. It will play a leadership role within central government, advocating for the approach set out in this declaration. It will work with councils as equal partners to create the tools and conditions for reform, delivering common technical patterns and routes to procurement for core services. And, as part of a collective effort alongside local government networks, it will help local authorities find out about priority projects that support this mission and support the continued growth of the local digital community. In addition, each co-signatory will commit to the following activities:

Our leaders, service managers, board members and politicians will:

- Make sure that digital expertise is central to our decision-making and that all technology decisions are approved by the appropriate person or committee. This will ensure that we are using our collective purchasing power to stimulate a speedy move towards change.
- Have visible, accessible leaders throughout the organisation (publishing blogs, tweeting and actively participating in communities of practice), and support those who champion this Declaration to try new things and work in the open.
- Support our workforce to share ideas and engage in communities of practice by providing the space and time for this to happen.
- Publish our plans and lessons learnt (for example on blogs, Localgov Digital slack; at sector meetups), and talk publicly about things that could have gone better (like the GOV.UK incident reports blog).
- Try new things, from new digital tools to experiments in collaboration with other organisations.
- Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of our digital services and systems.

Our transformation, information technology and digital teams will:

- Research how to reuse existing user research, service design, common components, and data and technology standards before starting to design or procure something new.
- Build capacity in service-design, so that each service we transform is informally tested by our peers against our national service standard where appropriate.

- Where appropriate every new IT solution procured must operate according to the technology code of practice, putting us in control of our service data, using open standards where they exist and contributing to their creation where they don't.
- Share knowledge about digital projects where there is an opportunity for potential reuse or collaboration with others.
- Work together to establish the trust frameworks we need to safely analyse and share personal data. This will allow us to better serve our shared customers and reduce the need to ask citizens for the same information multiple times.
- Work together to create common solutions that allow us to check people's eligibility for services with central government and others in real time with their consent.
- Take inspiration and ideas from a wide range of sources, and participate individually in communities of practice and interest outside the organisation (for example, LocalGovCamp, OneTeamGov, and related networks and events).

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6. London Borough of Camden
7. Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
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