

24<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL STRATEGY**

### **Purpose**

- 1 To update Members on the Local Government Digital Strategy and the work of the Local Government Chief Digital Officer and team.

### **Background**

- 2 The Local Government Chief Digital Officer (LGCDO) took up the role in November 2020 and has been building a team of digital professionals over the last ten months. The drive for the establishment of this role came strongly from the [System Reboot](#) paper sponsored by Lee Waters MS and the current Deputy Minister for Climate Change.
- 3 System Reboot identified a lack of leadership in digital across the Welsh Public Sector and a need for more joined up thinking to really accelerate and establish Wales as a nation that adopts and harnesses the very best from digital innovation.
- 4 The WLGA and Heads of IT developed a business case which was put to the Welsh Government for grant funding for the establishment of a Chief Digital Officer and Delivery Unit, an approach endorsed by the WLGA Executive Board. The Welsh Government has committed £500,000 annually to fund the LGCDO and team and has recently agreed to provide a further £290,000.

### **Progress to date**

- 5 The Local Government Digital Team now stands at six members. They have a range of skills including delivery management, Agile delivery, user research, business analysis, content design, information architecture and service design.
- 6 In the last few weeks, the LGCDO has secured additional funding to expand the team which will be carried through annually to the end of the grant term. Roles are currently out for advertisement.
- 7 The team have organised, facilitated, or delivered a host of training to local government officers from authorities across Wales. A selection of these are –
  - Writing for the Web (45 officers)
  - Service Design (51 officers)

- Lean User Experience and Agile (51 officers)
  - User Experience Practitioner (75 officers)
- 8 There have also been Executive Training in Service Design sessions for two senior leadership teams, Blaenau Gwent, and Caerphilly. These were 'trial' events that the team are evaluating before offering more widely.
  - 9 Alongside this the team have established 'show and tell' sessions where authorities can share their innovative work.
  - 10 The team have also worked to support 'discovery' projects identified by either authorities directly or through the Welsh Government supported Transformation Fund. The LGCDO and team have supported several collaborative applications for funding from local authorities. These have included:
    - Library Management System – 21 authorities involved
    - Education Management System – 5 authorities involved
    - Webcasting – research for all authorities
    - eLearning – WLGA, WG, NHS and most authorities involved
  - 11 The LGCDO has also met with the majority of Chief Executives to discuss the support the team can offer, discuss the emerging Local Government Digital Strategy and to understand the drivers for the coming year from their authority. These sessions have been very well received and will be repeated in the new year. The LGCDO has also established relations with local authority CDOs and Heads of IT.
  - 12 Part of the LGCDO's role has also been to showcase and raise the profile of Wales's approach to digital and technology and, in particular Welsh local government's adoption of digital and technology. The LGCDO has spoken at several events throughout the year, including giving keynote addresses at two conferences and had the honour of delivering the Annual Lecture at Digital Leaders Week in June. The Team's show and tell sessions are key in highlighting and sharing the excellent digital practice within local authorities.
  - 13 Politically, digital is a topic under the spotlight with Welsh Ministers, with particular interest from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government. Lee Waters MS has retained the digital leadership role in government and meets with the CDOs regularly. The LGCDO has met with the Minister for Finance and Local Government, Rebecca Evans, to discuss digital aims and emerging challenges. Digital is increasingly a political priority within local government, and the LGCDO working with Cllr Jane Mudd, the new Spokesperson for Digital and Innovation, will prioritise engagement with leaders and lead members for digital within authorities during the coming months. The WLGA intends to establish a Digital Advisory Board including senior members and officer stakeholders to shape the direction of the LGCDO and team and the digital agenda for Welsh local government.

## Working with Partners

- 14 There are four leadership roles all working together to drive forward digital, data and technological development across the country. They meet weekly, work on shared problems and champion their sector. They are:
- Local Government Chief Digital Officer – Sam Hall
  - Welsh Government Chief Digital Officer – Glyn Jones
  - Chief Executive of The Centre for Digital Public Service – Sally Meecham (interim)
  - NHS Wales Chief Digital Officer – currently vacant
- 15 The Centre for Digital Public Service, (CDPS), has been established to create an environment of learning and support across all public sector bodies, including local government, Welsh Government, Health, and arm's length bodies. They have been awarded a budget which allows them to recruit teams or third parties in support of large-scale projects. One of these is the Landscape Review, which is essentially aiming to understand the current state of technology and digital throughout the public sector. It will be an incredibly useful piece of research which should help future decision making and prioritisation. The LGCDO and team also work closely with Data Cymru and colleagues across the WLGA.

## Local Government Digital Strategy

- 16 The LGCDO has drafted a Local Government Digital Strategy, which is attached as an Appendix A. This has been informed by local authorities' own digital strategies and informed through engagement with chief executives, CDOs and Heads of IT.
- 17 The Strategy focuses on the next 18 months and spotlights three main areas:
- **Human-centred design** – building services with our citizens at the heart
  - **Data** – using data to make better, quicker more informed decisions and interventions.
  - **Capability** – to really embrace the future of digital we need the most highly skilled and digitally minded people throughout our authorities and communities.
- 18 The Strategy has been endorsed by the WLGA Senior Management Team, and it incorporates feedback from authorities, the CDPS and Welsh Government.

## Priorities for the next 6 months

- 19 The LGCDO and team have initially focused efforts on engagement, building relationships and understanding the digital challenges faced by local authorities and

where digital approaches could lead to improved services and outcomes. In coming months, the LCDO will seek to engage with more Leaders and senior member with an interest in Digital, Data and Technology.

- 20 Working with Health and Social Care colleagues in support of the **Welsh Community Care Information Service** is a clear priority. Work has already begun, however, the issues many authorities are facing has affected confidence in the service.
- 21 September sees the start of **10 Working Groups looking to solve issues raised within authorities**. Over 100 officers are signed up to these groups which is a sign of the level of engagement with the Digital Team and the relationships being developed.
- 22 The team are also about to begin the '**pathfinder**' **project on Food Poverty** with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. This project will look to understand the triggers for food poverty by analysing data sources, and areas for intervention.
- 23 Work will be starting on a '**Pattern Library**' which is essentially a set of blueprints for services. The idea being to create a library of high quality, accessible and reusable designs that can be lifted and adopted by services within authorities. The value of this to citizens is great, whichever authority they use, be it where they live, work, study should have a level of consistency that they can recognise. It should also reduce the cost of redesign for web facing services in authorities.
- 24 In the new year, the team will also identify the next set of **training and development courses** for officers and discussing funding for this with Welsh Government.
- 25 **Establishment of an Advisory Board**, chaired by the Spokesperson for Digital & Innovation and involving other senior members and officers to shape and support the work of the LGCDO and team.

## Recommendations

### 26 Members are asked to:

- 26.1 **Note the work of the LGCDO and Delivery Unit and the proposed establishment of an Advisory Board;**
- 26.2 **Consider and approve the draft Local Government Digital Strategy (Appendix 1).**

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# Welsh Local Government Digital Strategy 2021-2023

Improvements to local government digital services benefit everyone. Citizens, businesses, and visitors.

In Wales, we have:

- 22 Local Authorities
- 3.1 Million Citizens
- 1 in 5 people living with a disability
- 238,200 active enterprises
- Over one million tourists
- 28% of people that speak write or understand Welsh

This strategy outlines the priorities for the Welsh Local Government digital team for 2021-2023. The priorities will have all people in mind when delivering against them, to ensure our work is always accessible and fully inclusive.

## How we operate

Our team is funded by the Welsh Government and is proud to be hosted in the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

## Welsh Digital Ecosystem

We work closely with Welsh Government, the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS), and NHS Wales to deliver digital services to people in Wales.

- The Digital Team for Welsh Local Authorities will prioritise the 22 Local Authorities.
- The Welsh Government Digital team will concentrate on Welsh Government's Digital Services.
- The Digital Health team will support all digital development in health and social care.
- The Centre for Digital Public Services has a focus across the public sector in Wales, identifying opportunities where we can all work together for the greater good and where skills and capability can be developed for all of us to benefit.

The digital leadership across Wales share a single goal: making digital public services better for people living, working, and visiting Wales.

## Guiding Principles

### Future-ready

To create sustainable and robust digital services, they must be flexible and adaptable to future requirements and needs. So everything the Welsh local government digital team will do will be with the mindset of ensuring that services welcome change, improvements and updates. We must ensure that we are able to take advantage of digital innovation that hasn't yet been developed.

### Inclusive

"For everyone" is a big task. To create inclusive digital services, delivery teams must consider every person at every stage of service development, and this consideration must continue when services are live. There will always be new ways to make services a little better for someone, and the Welsh local government digital team will remain open, curious and proactive to support local government services to be accessible to all.

### Responsible

The Welsh local government digital team will act responsibly and remain accountable, ensuring the best interests of the people we serve are met. To ensure our work is of the highest value to people in Wales, we will embed research and evidence in all decision making.

### Sustainable

The Welsh local government digital team will work with local government bodies to share responsibility for the environmental footprint our services leave. The Welsh local government digital team will be open about the services we provide and ask to be held to account when assessing our impact on the physical world. We will continue to push towards more sustainable services.

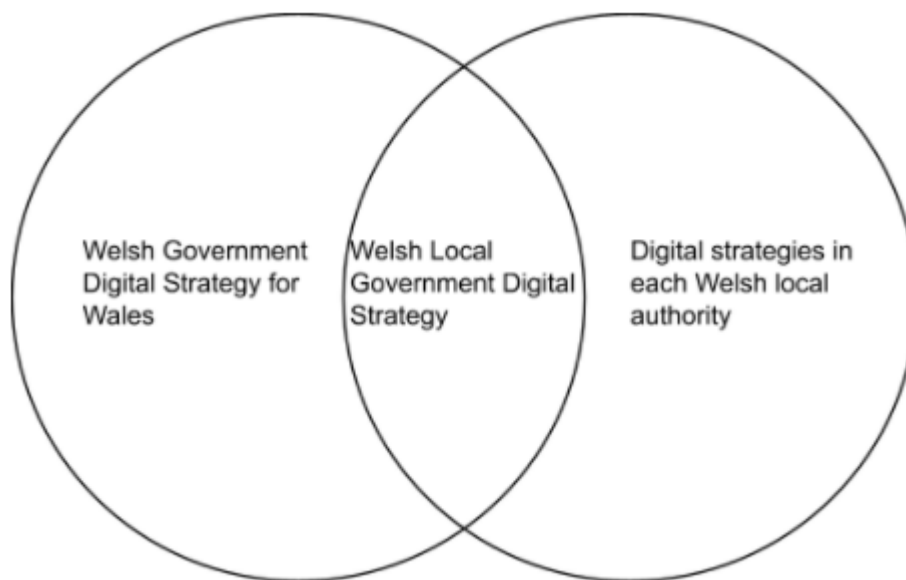
### Trusted

The Welsh local government digital team will always work in the open to share our learning and work. We hold ourselves to the highest standards to ensure we gain and maintain the people we are fortunate to work with and the people we serve.

### [How we developed our strategy](#)

This strategy has been developed by taking into consideration the Welsh Government Digital Strategy and the local authorities' digital strategies. The Welsh local government team reviewed these strategies for digital and have focused on the core themes demonstrated.

This strategy addresses the priorities identified by local authorities in Wales and the work that the local government digital team will take to support and help the wider sector to meet these priorities. We do this through support, guidance, training, communication, projects, collaboration and leadership.



## Once for Wales

The Welsh local government digital team sees an opportunity to create local government digital services collaboratively, sharing capability, capacity and learning. This strategy sets the ambition to consolidate service delivery to deliver best practice for all and reduce duplication across local authorities in Wales.

Through the collaboration and consolidation of service delivery, 'Once for Wales' provides an opportunity to increase the capacity across digital delivery teams to improve overall service quality for people who work, live and visit Wales.

A 'Once for Wales' approach sets the ambition to provide consistently high-quality services, regardless of where they are in our country. Consequently, citizens and visitors will receive the same quality of service, with familiarity and accessible digital interactions aligned to offline channels.

Once for Wales is not stating that all local authorities will have the same approach and the same technology stack. Once for Wales is an ambition to have a single set of standards, data, shared principles and a framework that enables maturity and collaboration. This may include technology platforms when appropriate.

**For local authorities**, 'Once for Wales' means that digital teams can share skills and capabilities within the Digital, Data and Technology professions, to help overcome some of the resourcing and recruitment challenges all the local authorities face. We will share and develop best practice and scaling service delivery so that all authorities work together, supporting and delivering the best services with the most talented officers in the country. This also means working together to overcome barriers and frustrations to do what we do best and deliver excellent services to our communities, and not see digital as a blocker to that. We also use our skills and experience to identify and facilitate the right training, to support capability in the local authorities.

**Our suppliers and the organisations we work with** means they negotiate once in Wales and get a clear set of requirements and user needs. Consequently, an environment of transparent accountability between ourselves and our suppliers will emerge.

**For the third sector and partners** across Wales, 'Once for Wales' will mean that it will be easier to work with many local authorities in Wales. Additionally, the local authorities will be transparent on the support and systems they need to work with, which will allow partner's and the third sector's work to deliver and support our communities.

The Once for Wales strategy outlines our passion for getting the end to end service right for all people living, working, and visiting Wales, including online and offline service design. It highlights how we want to see the whole person who is accessing a local government service, serving them as a person, and not designing services as individual transactions. To do this, everything we do should meet the following three criteria; human-centred design, data and capability.



To drive improvement forward we have identified them as our critical areas of focus:

- **Human-centred design and services**
- **Data**
- **Capability model**

## Human-centred design and services

Human-Centred Design is a creative approach to problem-solving and how we will design services in Wales. It's a process that begins with the people we are creating the service for and ends with a solution tailor-made to their needs.

Human-Centred Design is about building empathy with people, defining their pain points, prototyping solutions, and finally, producing a service based directly on their input.

We commit to creating services that prioritise the needs of the people who live, work and visit Wales.

More than the recognised digital practice of user centred design, this strategic priority will use those guiding principles and methodologies but will go further. Human centred design is about recognising a person's needs, not for an individual service, but as a person, with unique circumstances at a point in time, and how services can support and help that individual.

### **Impact on Citizens**

It is important to us that citizens trust that their voice is heard. To achieve this, we will ensure that people can easily identify actions based on their feelings.

Gaining a range of insights from the people that use our services, enabling us to boast an end-to-end service for everyone, with no citizen excluded.

Finally, we will view citizens as customers, so they feel that their money is spent on receiving the best services possible.

### **Impact on local authorities**

The pursuit of insights will give local authorities a catalogue of research to support their service design. This will help local authorities produce detailed requirements that feed into a service that will be right the first time.

### **Impact on Suppliers**

We will communicate our requirements to suppliers effectively and clearly. To do this, we will use and champion clear use cases and complex needs, which will ensure that the solutions we receive are optimum for the task.

Also, we need to be transparent about what is driving the service. Adopting a human-centred approach means that we want the best customer service; cost and other factors, while important, will not be weighted as highly as the benefit to the user. Getting the user requirements right first time will reduce the need for costly changes later in the process.

### **Impact on Partners**

The Welsh local government digital team will share research and findings with partners and the third sector. We are encouraging everyone to focus on citizen needs during design, which will lead to better-served communities.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

We will create and develop services that work for everyone. In achieving this, we will look to engage with as many citizens as possible. We recognise that we will not always get this right, but we ask to be challenged and informed if our services are not as inclusive and diverse as we strive to make them.

## Data

Historically, the public sector has consisted of valuable organisations trying to keep pace with an ever-changing political and economic climate. However, recent advances in understanding how data can help concentrate decisions and actions in public and private sectors can help change public organisations from being mainly reactive to proactive. Our ambition is to ensure we work alongside other public organisations, like Data Cymru and the NHS, to use data to benefit citizens, local authorities, suppliers, and democracy as a whole.

### **Impact on Citizens**

A democracy needs to provide easy access to data for citizens. This will help people make informed decisions on how various governing bodies are performing.

We will also plough data back into decision making so that citizens can be confident that the data they share with us has a value and is being used to improve the service they receive. As a team, we commit to working in the open and being transparent about what we're doing. We hope this will create an open and trusting relationship where people can easily challenge and engage with us.

### **Impact on local authorities**

Better data will translate into better decisions. We want local authorities to be able to reference quality data when making important choices that will affect their community. Data will enable local authorities to analyse trends and be proactive when making interventions. This view of the future will help make the local authority more efficient while also allowing more time to create solutions. Together, this will help local authorities to focus their spending on evidence-based information leading to more targeted intervention and less expensive remediation activities.

### **Impact on Suppliers**

Having access to good data will help us define measurable outcomes with suppliers and then objectively monitor performance against these. This will create a relationship based on clear accountability.

### **Impact on Partners**

We will share data gathered with partners and the third sector to learn from our combined data insights. This can help them to focus their efforts and create solutions of maximum value.

## **Commitment to Citizens**

Citizens are rightly apprehensive when allowing permission for organisations to use their data. To instil confidence, we will follow Government Digital Service's Data Ethics Framework. This entails:

- Transparency – Our intentions and actions can be easily scrutinised.
- Accountability – The public and its representatives will have oversight and control over our actions and decisions.
- Fairness – We will respect the dignity of individuals, be non-discriminatory, and consistent with the public interest.

## **Capability model**

Great work happens in Welsh local authorities every day. The people that make this happen have diverse skills, capabilities, and characteristics. Our ambition is to champion these people and to support their skills and training in the digital space. As a result, they can continue to do great things, not only in their own area but to support and contribute to local government services across Wales. We also acknowledge that there are gaps and we need to do more to attract the best people to fill these gaps through training, development and targeted recruitment.

We want to bring people together to align service delivery and create a pan-Wales multidisciplinary team of experts. This will make service delivery in Wales more consistent, more collaborative, and more supportive of the people that are delivering. By sharing people's skills and passions, we can strive to do it once for Wales and make services more efficient, wider-reaching, and better for the people who live, work, learn, and visit here.

## **Impact on Citizens**

Citizens will be able to trust that they have the best workforce working for them. They will recognise an improvement in services and feel that we are proactively looking for ways to make them even better.

## **Impact on local authorities**

Local authorities will have the best talent working for them. We will help spot potential and present opportunities for growth inside their organisation, supporting an environment focussed on building careers.

## **Impact on Suppliers**

Across Wales, we can be more assured that we are giving suppliers the right direction, as we will have a team who knows what is needed and will speak the same language when communicating those requirements effectively.

## **Impact on Partners**

We will support partners and the third sector by sharing knowledge and expertise. Our people can help them to help communities by engaging with and collaborating on meaningful projects and programmes of work.

## **Raising our game and raising the profile of Welsh Local Government**

The technology and digital landscape is ever-evolving and adapting. To ensure we are always at the forefront of these developments, we will continuously invest in skills and capability with colleagues in local government in Wales.

We will share learning, best practice, and skills to ensure all local government digital services are of the highest quality. We will create accessible, inclusive, and adaptable services in local government in Wales, ensuring we always put the needs of the people using the service first.

We will establish practitioner communities in collaboration with the wider public sector to continuously learn the latest technology and digital skills.

We will support recruitment activities ensuring we bring the best people in to local government in Wales, but also champion the amazing work we do for citizens across Wales.

## Our Approach

### **Agile**

We will adopt Agile methodologies and mindset. We will continuously learn, adapt and iterate our work to ensure it is always relevant and valuable to the people for whom it is intended. This also means we focus on work that matters and never waste effort on something that isn't proven to improve local services.

### **People centric**

We will always remember that we are delivering services and products for people. Therefore, we will test and build services with real people in mind, not focusing on our products and services' technical capabilities but focusing on how these make people's experiences and interactions with local government better.

### **Collaboration**

Wales has a lot of talent, capability, innovation, ideas, and experience. But, to have excellent services across Wales, we have to find ways to work together and share. Share code, share knowledge, share insights, and share solutions. Our citizens, businesses and visitors deserve the best services, and through collaboration, we can achieve it across Wales.

## How This Translates into Practice

To conclude this strategy, we are going to give examples of some of the practical activities and work streams we are currently undertaking and are going to start in order to deliver this strategy.

### **Digital Projects**

We are already working with local authorities to deliver various projects. We are also developing a backlog of work to ensure a large portion of our time is focussed on delivering solutions to problems. For these projects we will use agile methodologies because we believe that it is the most effective methodology available when designing services for people. Additionally, we will be actively promoting the use of this working method to the officers within the working groups formed so agile practices can be taken back and adopted within their own local authorities.

### **Pattern Library**

We want to create a centralised repository where the best designs and services throughout local authorities in Wales are stored. This will give authorities the opportunity to lift these designs and services from the pattern library and implement them in their own authority. This will save authorities time and cost, but also will give local authorities, as a collective, the opportunity to provide residents with consistently great digital services wherever they are in Wales.

### **Collaborating with Leaders**

We have already had a lot of engagement with Chief Executives and senior leadership teams within local authorities. We have also met with political leaders and ministers too, and will continue to do so in future. There are various reasons for doing this. Firstly, we want to understand what their priorities and challenges are, which when added to the priorities and challenges of residents, will fuel our backlog of work. Secondly, to champion concepts like human centred design so it has leadership endorsement in local authorities across Wales. Finally, it gives us the opportunity to further advocate the importance of digital in local authorities and the potential for what can be achieved should it be driven forward by senior leaders in Wales.

### **Skills and capability**

We have already set up multiple training sessions for local authority officers. These sessions have included Content Design, Content Accessibility, User Experience Design, Service Design, and Agile and Lean methodology. These sessions are pilots so we will assess whether officers feel as though it has been beneficial to them. Depending on feedback, we will look to introduce more training sessions going forward. We have also set up events like meetups and show and tells. Meetups are an opportunity for officers to come together to talk about a topic and stay in touch to collaborate in future. Show and Tells give local authorities a platform to present digital services they have implemented so attendees are aware of good work that is happening throughout Wales.

Additionally, we are going to create a pathway for officers within authorities to learn about digital and pursue a digital practitioner discipline. We will do this by offering the chance to join our team for a certain amount of time to work on a project. We will

then provide the officer with the knowledge and skills to take back to their authority and hopefully progress in their chosen digital role.

Finally, for Capability, we are looking into how we can create a centralised multi-disciplined team that all local authorities can access. This team will work on projects that impact multiple authorities and will design sustainable services to address the challenges that are being faced.

## In conclusion

We have developed this strategy based on extensive research, learning, and understanding across the public sector in Wales.

- It has a clear focus on local authority service improvement which can be sustained for the future.
- It is the conduit between the high level aims of the Digital Strategy for Wales and local authority plans and visions for citizens across our country.
- It is centred on what we have learned are the three main areas of need, which are also important to the foundations of good digital development and service design.
- It purposely covers the only a two-year period, which in the internet age is a long time. We will want to revisit it regularly, reviewing and revaluating, so that the next strategy clearly takes us further on the journey.
- It will not be shelfware. We will refer to it and test our projects against the strategy to ensure we push forward on these clear priority areas.