

A COUNTRY REPORT 2004

United Kingdom

1. UK Government Structure

Overview of UK Government Structure

The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy, based on universal suffrage. It is also a constitutional monarchy in which ministers of the Crown govern in the name of the Sovereign, who is both Head of State and Head of the Government. There is no 'written constitution'. Instead, the relationship between the State and the people relies on statute law, common law and conventions.

The UK Parliament makes primary legislation - other than for matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly - and is the highest authority in the land. It continues to have the supreme authority for government and law-making in the UK as a whole.

The executive comprises the Government (members of the Cabinet and other ministers responsible for policies), government departments and agencies, local authorities, public corporations, independent regulatory bodies and certain other organisations subject to ministerial control. The judiciary determines common law and interprets statutes.

Most government departments are headed by ministers. The main role of government departments and their agencies is to implement government policy and to advise ministers. They are staffed by politically impartial civil servants and generally receive their funding from money provided by Parliament.

As Minister for the Civil Service, the Prime Minister Tony Blair, is responsible for central co-ordination and management. He is supported by the Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Andrew Turnbull, who chairs the Civil Service Management Board. The Cabinet Office oversees the central framework for management of the Civil Service. Day-to-day responsibility for a wide range of terms and conditions has been delegated to departments and agencies, to the Scottish Executive, the National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland. More information on the structure of government and parliament can be found at www.direct.gov.uk and www.parliament.uk

Delivery and Reform of the Civil Service

The UK Civil Service faces new challenges and there is currently significant debate and activity around delivering better public services. This is Sir Andrew Turnbull's top priority and building on the Prime Minister's four principles of standards and accountability, devolution, rewards for frontline staff and greater choice for citizens, he set four major goals for the Civil Service he would like to see. These are:

1. A Civil Service respected as much for its capability to deliver as for its policy skills, and works with a sense of urgency.
2. An enhanced capacity to think creatively and operate strategically.
3. A Civil Service which young people and people successful in other walks of life want to join and to work with.
4. A Civil Service which is valued by the public not only for the service it delivers but for its values of:
 - Integrity and trust,
 - Impartiality and readiness to serve all citizens and governments,
 - Recruitment and advancement on merit,
 - A make-up that reflects the society that it serves.

Civil Service Reviews in 2004

Reform of the Civil Service is set against the backdrop of the 2004 Spending Review, Efficiency Review and Lyons Review. The main theme of these reviews is maximising efficiencies and reducing administration costs to release resources to improve frontline public services.

The Lyons Review has focused on the reduction and relocation of civil service jobs from London and the South East to the regions - delivering estate savings and a more even distribution of civil service employment across the country.

The Efficiency Review has focused on maximising returns on investment in ICT and rationalising back office functions such as financial management, human resource management and procurement. It has also sought to deliver savings in the procurement of commodity goods and services across government. A particularly important workstream of the Efficiency Review is that of modernising transactional services, and in particular maximising the take-up of electronic delivery channels to achieve efficiency savings.

The planned savings from the Efficiency Review are locked into departmental spending agreements for the 2005-2008 period as a result of the 2004 spending review process. So for the first time there are tough financial constraints on departments related to the e-government agenda¹.

For its part the Cabinet Office revised its Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets during the 2004 Spending Review to:

- Ensure departments deliver better regulation and tackle unnecessary bureaucracy in both the public and private sectors, by April 2008;
- Improve public services by helping departments meet their PSA targets, consistently within the fiscal rules (joint target with HM Treasury); and
- Build the capacity of the Civil Service to deliver the Government's priorities, by improving leadership and skills and meeting the agreed diversity targets by April 2008.

The Evolution from Office of the e-Envoy to e-Government Unit

In 1999 the UK was behind other countries in key areas of the e-economy, for example less than 1 in 10 households had Internet access, our broadband market was underdeveloped and less than a third of government services were online. There was a need for a focused approach to the e-agenda. In 1999 the Government established the Office of the e-Envoy and set three key targets:

- **Establish the UK as the best environment in the world for e-commerce by 2002;** to tackle the fundamental environmental issues holding back individuals, households and Public sector from realising the full benefits of the Internet and ICT
- **Provide Internet access to all who want it by 2005;** to tackle the digital divide – the clear lack of equality around Internet access in 1999.
- **Deliver all services online by 2005;** to drive a coherent, joined-up, strategy to transforming government services.

There have since been a number of amendments to these targets. In March 2000 the Prime Minister announced that the target for making all government services available electronically would be

¹ More information on the reviews can be found at:
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/spend_sr04_index.cfm
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/spending_sr04_efficiency.cfm
http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/lyons/consult_lyons_index.cfm

brought forward from 2008 to 2005. And towards the end of 2002 when it became apparent that the government needed to focus on demand for electronic services in addition to supply, the target was enhanced to read: '100% capability by 2005 with *key services achieving high levels of use*'.

In September 2000 the Government launched the UKonline initiative to get the UK online. Between 2001 and 2004 the Office of the e-Envoy, based in the Cabinet Office and headed by Andrew Pinder, was the lead department driving forward the UK online programme and raising the level of electronic business and Internet use in the UK².

Achievements

The Office of the e-Envoy achieved some notable successes. A network of 6000 UK online centres, providing a safe secure environment to learn and use the Internet, successfully opened and has brought the Internet into every community. Internet access is now available to all with physical access no longer a barrier; 96% of the population is now aware of a place where they can easily access the Internet and all households are within 10km of a centre. UK online centres provide a valuable community safety net for those who do not have access at home - however, access at home has also increased rapidly. Around half of households are now online which is a fivefold increase since the OeE was established. This surge in uptake has been driven by a climate of competitiveness, Internet access prices are among the lowest of the countries we benchmark against. Furthermore, the increased competitiveness of our broadband market has driven a rapid migration of narrowband users to high speed services. By the end of April 2004, the UK had reached almost 4 million broadband users (3,992,500), with over 40,000 new connections each week. For its part government has developed its services and content. There are now 74% of government services online, and departments are on track to meet our target of 100% by the end of 2005.

Transition

These achievements have helped to establish the UK as one of the leaders for e-business and e-commerce environment, as presented in the 2002 international benchmarking study 'The World's Most Effective Policies for the e-Economy'. But there is much more work to do, particularly in the area of transforming government and services, so the focus is shifting away from the broader e-commerce and e-business agendas. Progress on services has required taking a radical look at the way in which the UK government conducts its own business and moving transformation away from mere automation or the addition of a new channel to an existing service. Indeed as the barriers to the delivery of e-government services are being removed, the future for the UK is to consolidate this strong position and to take on the new roles as the strategic head of profession for IT across government and help departments deliver against their efficiency targets particularly in the areas of IT and transactional services.

This new shift in focus, a natural evolution of the UK Online strategy, is reinforced by the change in leadership, with Andrew Pinder leaving the Office of the e-Envoy and his role and office evolving into the new e-Government Unit. Ian Watmore, former UK Managing Director of the global management consultants and technology services company Accenture, started his new role as the Head of the e-Government Unit on 1st September. His role incorporates ongoing business set by the Cabinet Office to support the Government's delivery and reform programme³.

The use of IT has the potential to achieve long-term cost savings by transforming the underlying processes by which government interacts and transacts with citizens and businesses. However,

² More information can be found in our annual report:

http://e-government.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/MediaCentre/NewOnSiteArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4006060&chk=rIWVHj

³ More information can be found at: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/min-org/organisation/index3.asp>

these benefits will only be realised when government services are moulded around the needs of citizens and not the structure of departments. It is the role of the new e-Government Unit (eGU) to help departments to make best use of IT to improve the delivery of public services. Specific areas of focus for the eGU include:

- Ensuring the Prime Minister’s targets for electronic service delivery are met (100% of services available electronically by 2005 with key services achieving high levels of use).
- Acting as change agents for Transactional Services and IT to help departments achieve the required transformation and deliver against their efficiency targets.
- Promoting the development and use of cross-government solutions.
- Developing an Information and Communication Technology strategy and Enterprise Architecture.
- Acting as the new Head of the IT Profession in government.
- Overseeing government IT security policy, standards, monitoring and assurance, and contingency planning for the critical national infrastructure.

The new eGU comes at a time of Civil Service wide change in the UK, specifically the implications of the 2004 Spending Review. Sir Andrew Turnbull has outlined in broad terms the far reaching consequences and what this means for the various departments including the Cabinet Office and the eGU. With this in mind the eGU have drawn up their business plan to reflect this.

e-Government Unit: Top Level Plan 2004/5



Strategic Approach to e-Government: the role of the e-Government Unit Service Transformation

In line with the e-Government agenda to make all its services available electronically by 2005, services have enjoyed significant levels of new investment in recent years. However, relatively little emphasis has been given to the efficiencies that could be delivered by realising the full benefit of these investments in seeking to migrate particular customer segments to new channels, or by restructuring internal processes to reduce time spent on paper handling, data entry and correction. Significant duplication also exists, for example, across organisations in relation to the payment of benefits, or in the multiplicity of contacts between a single person or business and different government agencies – and these result in inefficiencies to both the private and public sector.

The government therefore initiated a radical review of the way it does business in 2003. The Efficiency Programme aims to release major resources into frontline services that meet the public's highest priorities out of corporate activities which can be undertaken more efficiently. It also aims to reduce the bureaucracy faced by frontline professionals and free them up to better meet the needs of their customers. The eGU plays a significant role in the programme by acting as change agents and Centres of Excellence for delivering efficiencies from transactional services and IT services.

Transactional Services Change Agent

The role of the eGU Transactional Services Change Agent is to accelerate and underpin the changes necessary for the achievement of departmental efficiency savings through their transactional services. The required outcome is the efficient delivery of high-quality public services resulting in:

- A total of £1.3 billion in departmental efficiency savings over a three-year period;
- Customer benefits of approximately £1 billion;
- Improved customer satisfaction in relation to service operations; and
- The implementation of departmental measurement and change mechanics which can be used to drive further efficiencies and reform.

The Change Agent will help in particular by:

- Providing expertise to enable departments to realise the full savings potential from service transformation;
- Delivering incremental savings through identifying cross-departmental collaborative opportunities that would not otherwise be captured; and
- Delivering savings earlier than would be possible merely using departmental resources and skills.

To support the migration of customers to cheaper channels, there is a need for reinforcement of planning and implementation processes to achieve high levels of take-up of e-enabled transactional services by appropriate customer groups. This will require full awareness of the needs of different customer groups as well as greater understanding of the costs of serving customers via different channels, and an emphasis on determining the appropriate balance between encouraging, incentivising and mandating use of these services.

To help departments achieve greater take-up of electronic services, the eGU has developed guidance in the form of a checklist of the essential elements of a high-quality take-up plan. Departments are developing take-up strategies for all of their key e-services, and any other existing or new services that are expected to deliver efficiencies. This will include proposed strategies for segmenting customer groups and interfacing with each group appropriately, including:

- Plans to adopt best practice within each channel for interaction with the public and businesses – such as increased automation of call centres, better targeted deployment of face-to-face contacts and improvements to web services.
- Their strategy for greater usage of public, private and voluntary sector intermediaries; and
- Proposals to ensure that socially disadvantaged groups continue to have full access to services.

IT Change Agent

Functions such as HR, finance and IT are essential to support frontline staff in doing their jobs and to manage resources effectively. The Efficiency Review programme identified a range of improvements that could be made if these functions were provided on a more efficient basis and if best practice was achieved consistently and rapidly, resulting in:

- £2 billion in efficiency savings across central government departments and the wider public sector over the next three years; and
- The implementation of departmental measurement and change mechanics that can be used to drive further efficiencies and reform.

As with Transactional Services, central change agents will support departments in achieving these efficiencies, and the eGU will act as the IT Change Agent.

Cross-government solutions

The eGU has established a suite of central IT platforms including a secure transaction engine and an integrated content management system. This central infrastructure is being consolidated into a single managed datacentre environment that will offer web hosting and server co-location services to departments and other government organisations. A public sector service delivery platform is also being developed. The new service, Directgov, will deliver services to citizens and is covered in more detail on page 10.

The eGU also plans to investigate the feasibility of additional cross-government solutions including, shared service centres, shared distribution channels and, identity verification and management solutions.

Identity Verification and Management

The eGU is taking a leading role on identification management initiatives and the technologies that support them. It has recently initiated a project to provide a cross-government solution to registration and enrolment for electronic services. This project will increase take-up of electronic services and reduce the cost to government of delivering services securely, by delivering customer convenient access to e-Government transactions across multiple channels, so that government meets the confidentiality required for the customer data supplied.

When implemented the solution will provide a number of benefits including:

- Reduced cost to government of providing secure electronic services.
- Reduced delays for customers in gaining access to services.
- Enabling the same user friendly process to form the basis for security by all electronically assisted channels and routes to government services.
- Increasing take-up of transactions by enabling users to use their account to build-up convenient access to more services.
- Enabling additional take-up of transactions by removing barriers caused by inconvenient processes.

Central Sponsor for Information Assurance (CSIA)

Information and communications technologies bring great benefits to government, business and the individual and we all, directly or indirectly, rely on these technologies. These benefits bring new risks that could affect the economic and social well-being of the nation, continuity of government, or even national security. These risks include electronic or physical attack, accidents, software errors and obsolescence.

Government needs to be confident that key systems function as expected, are available when needed, and are under the control of the right people, so it is essential that the Government addresses the risks and puts procedures and processes in place to protect key information systems.

The protection of the nation's information systems crosses into many areas and needs to address the very complex and global nature of the Internet. Therefore, there are a number of Government departments such as the Home Office, the National Infrastructure Co-ordination Centre (NISCC), the Department of Trade and Industry and Communications-Electronics Security Group (CESG), which play key roles in information assurance and security.

Until recently, these Information Assurance (IA) activities lacked a single overarching strategy. To address this, the Central Sponsor for Information Assurance (CSIA) was created in 2003 to have overall responsibility for government information assurance strategy.

The CSIA brings together organisations from across both the public and private sectors to provide a co-ordinated and coherent approach to addressing and managing IA issues as well as ensuring that risks to the national information infrastructure are managed appropriately.

The CSIA works with industry and community-based organisations such as the Information Assurance Advisory Council, the British Computer Society, tScheme, the Confederation of British Industry and the Security Alliance for Internet and New Technologies [SAINT– a consortium of interested organisations, including Microsoft and IBM]. They also work closely with telecommunications providers (both fixed and mobile), to identify and address vulnerabilities of national telecommunications.

In February 2003, as Central Sponsor of CSIA, Andrew Pinder, the former e-Envoy, signed the Government Security Programme agreement with Microsoft which will allow the UK Government to access Microsoft source code. Under the agreement, the Government will be able to reap the benefits of greater visibility of the security design and will have the opportunity to influence future products, thus ensuring they better meet the security needs identified by government. CSIA is engaged in similar activity with other major suppliers.

Over the next three years, CSIA will be working with partners to raise awareness of the threats and vulnerabilities to information systems; broaden the availability of assured products to counter these vulnerabilities; improve the training and professionalisation of information risk managers; improve the response to incidents; and ensure that government departments have robust information risk management processes in place, based on BS7799 and ISO17799, the British and International standards for information management.

2. Organisational Issues

ICT Strategy and Architecture

Major deliverables for the eGU will be an ICT Strategy and Enterprise Architecture for government. These will set out the future vision and design for both the front and back office environments of government. They will also add to and complement our existing and highly successful Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) which sets down the architecture and standards for e-service delivery.

Enterprise Architecture

This will be a strategy driven framework that can be used to develop plans for moving organisations towards the future vision and coordinate ICT across government. The architecture will map key ICT initiatives and processes thereby helping to identify potential improvement initiatives. The eGU will undertake research in areas covered by the Enterprise Architecture and promote innovation by working closely with suppliers. The eGU will also develop and maintain the policies necessary to drive the e-enablement of government and continue the development and take-up of standards and common datasets to allow interoperability of systems across the public sector, thus reducing duplication of effort.

Developing Government Without Boundary Systems

We are continuing to monitor the advances and take-up of Open Source Software [OSS] and update our policy accordingly. A new version of the policy is scheduled to be released in Q4 2004. A significant piece of activity this year has been the running of OSS trials to identify the cost benefits of OSS v proprietary software. These trials have been conducted by IBM and Sun and a full report on the conclusions will be published later this year.

Professionalism: Head of IT Profession

Ian Watmore, as the Head of e-Government will act as Head of Profession for IT, leading the professional development of IT in government. This will raise the profile and credibility of IT across government and improve staff morale, retention, mobility and career development. It will also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government IT through enhanced capacity and capability, enabling more effective partnerships with suppliers and ensuring dissemination of best-practice.

In a major speech on 24 February 2004, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair set out seven key points to transformation of the UK Civil Service. The second key point was “a Civil Service with professional and specialist skills”. He said:

“The IT projects now underway in the NHS are among the biggest and most complex in the world – that’s why it was right, for example, to bring Richard Grainger in to oversee IT in the National Health Service. Similar arguments apply to finance and human resource management. The talented amateur, however talented, is simply not equipped for these complex, specialised tasks. In future the key roles in finance, IT and human resources will be filled by people with a demonstrable professional track record in tackling major organisational change, whether inside or outside the Service.”

The Prime Minister’s speech was accompanied by publication of a document ‘Civil Service Reform: Delivery and Values’, which sets out in more detail the work being undertaken in this area. It said:

“A sub-group of the Civil Service Management Board has begun work on what skills we are likely to need in the future, whether in policy advice roles, large operational functions, corporate services, or the delivery of services to the public. They will vary from newer disciplines such as project management to the continuing importance of supporting the Government’s business through Parliament. This will enable us to articulate our expectations much more clearly and will provide a solid foundation for the recruitment, training and development, and deployment of the most effective people to do the job. We will use this as the basis for a new understanding of ‘career anchors’ for management grades and the Senior Civil Service, based around a core of experience in a particular area, supplemented by periods of work elsewhere to broaden experience or particular skills Essentially the arrangement will be that to progress beyond certain key stages, civil

servants will need to have met specific requirements for skills or experience. The purpose of this is not to govern behaviour at the point of promotion, but to influence career choices in training or experience at an earlier stage, so that a much wider group of people is both eligible to compete for higher posts and better equipped to take them on ???

“Securing the right outcomes in turn depends on a clear strategic vision. Successive spending reviews have encouraged a more strategic view of departmental goals and the relationships between resources and outcomes through Public Service Agreements ...???” To support these developments, departments will need stronger internal corporate disciplines in:

- Human resources
- Financial management
- Communications
- IT

“These are the critical tools that enable us to operate effectively; they should support every aspect of a department’s operational purpose.”

More information can be found at: www.civil-service.gov.uk/reform/

3. Operational Issues

Directgov

It is widely recognised, through surveys and research, that the key groups most at risk from exclusion are those who use public sector services regularly. These same groups currently have the lowest levels of access to, and confidence in electronic channels.

In late 2002, the former OeE carried out a major audit of customer research into experience and wishes of existing and potential users of e-Government services in the UK, and of international best practice and the lessons from successful commercial e-services. The clear conclusion from this research was that in order to drive take-up, e-service delivery must be built on the foundation of a single, highly citizen centric government website clearly branded and heavily promoted directly as well as through deals with major commercial sites. Consequently, early in 2003, the then OeE developed plans and recommendations to develop an ‘online government store (OGS)’ to become the UK flagship website for citizens’ online dealings with government. OGS was branded Directgov.

At the end of February 2004, Directgov was successfully launched as a proof of concept with three full customer franchises in collaboration with 18 departments, and a further 6 ‘starter’ franchises. The proof of concept has delivered on its aims of validating that citizens want a single entry point into government and demonstrating that a scalable business model for running such a service could be developed within government.

Directgov therefore now offers the Government for the first time ever a business capable of managing its service delivery on an integrated basis with a single, cross-government view of the customer: an environment in which we can manage and prioritise our services and customers in order to maximise take-up of services which are most valuable to us. Governance of the business is also cross-government, with the franchise businesses owned and supported by a range of departments. More information can be found at: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/Homepage/fs/en>



Screenshot of The Front Page view of www.direct.gov.uk



Screenshot of Directgov on SKY platform
Central Infrastructure

As we move ever closer towards the Government's 2005 target there has been an increasing need to reduce the duplication of Internet technology spend and resources. Over the past five years, the eGU has invested heavily in building the infrastructure to support electronic delivery of information and services. The two main building blocks provided by the eGU are Delivering on the Promise (DotP) and the Government Gateway.

DotP

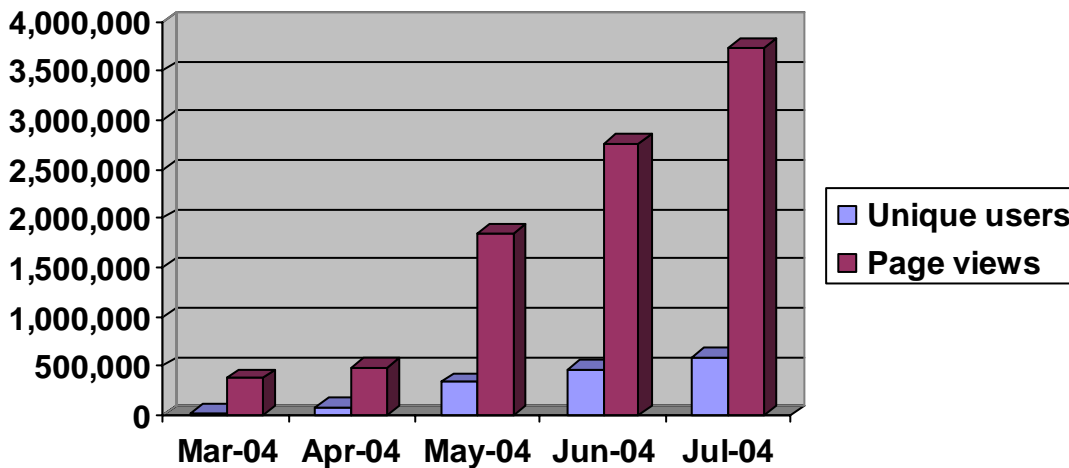
DotP is a content management framework that allows departmental websites to be constructed quickly from a series of pre-built and pre-tested modules. These websites can then be hosted on a common infrastructure to further reduce cost by avoiding duplication of technology.

As the Internet becomes an increasingly important channel for government, our customers expect up to date and dynamic content as standard. Content management systems allow the business owners within Government to take control of their own content and change it at will in order to provide the most up to date information. Normally, implementation of content management solutions can be a lengthy, costly exercise, however DotP enables departments to avoid that process and simply concentrate on provision of content.

DotP currently supports the Directgov site, as well as the Department of Health website, the Healthcare Commission website and the eGU's own website.

The initial funding for DotP, developed by the eDelivery Team (eDT) within the eGU, came out of a central modernisation fund, and the ongoing services and developments are expected to come from contributions and charges to government organisations as they begin using the platform to host their websites.

The task of the eGU is to continue to lead the '*accelerated*' usage and adoption of Central Infrastructure and best practices in technology adoption across government. By using this centralised hosting infrastructure, the costs associated with website maintenance and technology upgrade will be shared more widely across government organisations. This approach mirrors the outcome of the recently published Efficiency Review.



Government Gateway

The Gateway was developed in 2001 and is the infrastructure that allows secure authenticated transactions to take place electronically between citizens/businesses and enables government departments and organisations to communicate between themselves. The Gateway makes it much easier and more efficient for citizens and businesses to use online public services as registration, enrolment and transaction handling are fully operational. Citizens, businesses and agents only need a single credential for multiple services. The Gateway simplifies and enhances the user experience.

The system has been able to fully support departments and organisations outside the Government Secure Intranet (GSI) to allow them access to the Gateway. As the roll out of government services gains momentum use of the Gateway increases. This growth in take up has been monitored in two ways – enrolment on the Gateway and transactions. Gateway enrolments have exceeded 4 million since February 2001 and there have been over 3 million transactions since April 2001.

One of the major users of the Gateway, Inland Revenue, has so far conducted 1 million transactions on its various services, such as submitting Self Assessment tax returns online and applying for Working Tax Credit. Local Authorities are also putting their services on the Gateway. King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council for example, have facilities for individuals to pay their council tax and to submit a variety of change of circumstances. More information can be found at: <http://www.gateway.gov.uk/>

4. Other departments involved in the over arching e-strategy

The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)

The DTI works to ensure fair markets, promote science and innovation and support for businesses to help drive up UK productivity and competitiveness to deliver prosperity for all. It leads in the broadband and e-business policies.

Broadband

Stimulating broadband across the whole of the UK especially in rural and remote areas is one of the UK's top priorities. Pro-competition policies have stimulated broadband availability and BT have made a commitment to ensure 100% access across the UK by 2005. Current availability of Broadband is 85%.

A key element of DTI's broadband strategy is to further the partnership between the Regional Development Agencies [RDAs] and the devolved administrations. For example a series of broadband discussion events will be held in each region and nation in the autumn focusing on broadband content, access, aggregation and rural issues. A series of workshops and conferences were also held in the last 10 months with the RDAs, devolved administrations and industry (including the Broadband Stakeholder Group and the Digital Content Forum) to raise awareness levels and engage at a deeper level on the importance of broadband content as take-up issues are resolved.

The Regional Broadband Unit in the DTI has been working closely with the Local Government Association to develop a Guidance Note for Local Authority Officers to explain how local government can support and exploit a broadband world. The Guidance Note is due to be launched this autumn.

Furthermore, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs [Defra] have placed broadband firmly at the centre of their agenda to meet social issues across the piece. They have continued to attach importance to this as an awareness/take-up issue for rural businesses, especially in market towns, as aggregators of demand, services and support for wider rural businesses.

Aggregation of public sector demand

The Broadband Aggregation Programme is a joint central Government and Regional Development Agency initiative, which was launched by the DTI to aggregate public sector demand at both national and regional levels in England.

The Programme has created one national and nine regional trading organisations called Adits to achieve optimum value for money and increase the availability of innovative and cost-effective

broadband services. Adits aggregate demand from different public sector bodies with the objective of delivering the best broadband and network solutions at the best price.

To simplify and accelerate the procurement process, framework agreements have been set up with 17 leading telecoms suppliers. The Adits act as network architects designing solutions for complex requirements while calling on the resources and technical expertise of the telecoms suppliers. All customers have to do is to contact their local Adit with their requirements. The Adit will do the rest while also looking at aggregating demand in a region to achieve cost efficiencies. The ultimate objective is to improve service delivery and promote take-up. The Programme is contributing to the achievement of e-Government and availability targets. The Programme is also engaging with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) concerning the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England to improve the economic infrastructure of the regions.

Providing support for business

The DTI is committed to ensuring that UK businesses can exploit the immense potential of the information age and has set the goal of making the United Kingdom a world leader in e-business.

The Department has streamlined the way in which it provides advice and support to business in order to make it simpler and more efficient for business to access the support on offer. The e-business agenda has been integrated into the wider business support solution, 'Achieving Best Practice in Your Business'

A core aspect of the work of this service is to promote the benefits of broadband to small and medium sized businesses [SMEs]. Businesses will be able to access publications, tools and advice on adopting best practice to address business problems, including how adopting broadband can deliver improved business performance. This includes a guide to broadband for business, case studies and a booklet answering frequently asked questions about broadband. More information regarding the Government's business support solution, 'Achieving Best Practice in Your Business' can be obtained from the website: www.dti.gov.uk/bestpractice.

Office of Government Commerce (OGC)

The OGC headed by Chief Executive John Oughton, is responsible for a wide-ranging programme to improve value for money across the whole procurement lifecycle in UK central government - not just the 'buying' phase, but service implementation and realisation of business benefits as well.

The OGC, as part of its work to embed best practice in departmental activity, assumed a key role in helping departments put in place a Programme and Project Management [PPM] Centre of Excellence. By June 2003 every department had established a PPM Centre of Excellence and in March 2004 the remit was extended to cover all acquisition based programmes and projects - not just IT-enabled ones.

A PPM Centre of Excellence supports the successful delivery of programme and projects by providing core functions of:

- Coherent upward reporting to the Management Board, the Centre of Government and ministers to provide assurance, to support prioritisation and enable effective decision making.
- Networking and cross-government lesson learning to build on the outward relationship with other Government departments, the centre and delivery partners in the public and private sectors.
- Inward support to help programmes and projects develop the right expertise when they need it, and to embed best practice and project management standards.

OGC formed an early alliance with the IT industry through the formation of the Senior IT Forum in 2000. The Forum is jointly hosted by OGC and Intellect [IT, telecommunications and electronics association], and is chaired by Mr Oughton. It is made up of an equal number of senior people from government departments and IT industry representatives on the supplier side. Its brief is to identify and address systemic issues affecting the supply of IT services to the public sector.

In the past year the Forum has launched three products. These initiatives, designed in parallel with the three critical stages of project concept, development and delivery, help to further cultivate a modern relationship between Government and Industry based on openness and trust.

IT Supplier Code of Best Practice

This promotes and aims to establish high standards across the industry, (from 'best in class' companies) and is based around ten key commitments.

Effective Partnering

This guidance is aimed at helping Senior Responsible Owners, Senior Responsible Industry Executives and their respective teams to understand the attitudes and behaviours required to make a partnering relationship work well. This guide also contains self-assessment questions to assist in measuring progress in the developing relationship.

Concept Viability

Intellect has introduced a Concept Viability Service, which helps senior public sector decision makers to assess the key factors and risks involved in the development and delivery of their proposed IT-enabled programmes and projects. This service provides UK government departments with the opportunity to present an outline of their thinking, through Intellect, to a group of suppliers, who then respond giving their insights and recommendations.

5. Emerging Issues and Innovative projects

Accessibility

The UK Government recognises the potential of the Internet to transform people's lives and has made the commitment to have all its services online by 2005. It also realises that some groups are still less likely to be online such as:

- Income continues to affect Internet access - 12% of the lowest income group have home Internet access, compared to 86% in the highest income group.
- The age gap is also significant - while 82% of 16-24 year olds are regular users, only 18% of over-65s are.
- Motivational barriers remain the most common barrier for non-users: 43% say they have no need for or no interest in the Internet. 35% feel they lack the knowledge or confidence to use it.

Home Computing Initiatives (HCI)

Since 1999 there has been a tax exemption in the UK which effectively enabled employers to loan computing equipment to their employees for personal use in the home. Prior to April 2003, public sector employers could not implement the scheme as they were prohibited from using salary sacrifice. The public sector amounts to 19% of all jobs and in January this year Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry launched the Government Guidelines on HCI.

Employer-provided HCI schemes make owning a computer more accessible for many. International evidence shows that such schemes help increase home computer ownership thus driving up levels of

Internet access and use. HCI schemes simplify choice, reduce the costs of acquiring a computer by up to 40% and promote improved IT skills.

The government worked in partnership with industry (British Telecom, Intel and Microsoft – collectively known as the HCI Alliance) to produce and promote these guidelines. Industry partners have also committed funding to a digital inclusion fund for those not in employment and therefore unable to benefit from an HCI scheme.

The government ran a public consultation on the proposals and formed an Advisory Board with representatives from industry, the voluntary sector and government. An important aspect in the success of the project was the support of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Institute of Directors (IoD), who all did complementary awareness raising.

HCI schemes have benefits for employers, employees and the government;
The employer benefits by:

- NIC savings
- Productivity gains
- Recruitment and retention
- Cost neutral HR benefit Better equipment information before buying

The employee benefits by:

- Cost savings
- Attractive finance packages through their employer
- Better support services
- Better equipment information before buying
- Can facilitate flexible working
- Personal benefits e.g. learning and entertainment

For Government it will help towards the targets of:

- Becoming a world leader in e-business
- ICT as a third skill for life
- E-government agenda
- Every household having a digital connection by 2008

More information can be found at: www.ukhomecomputing.co.uk

Get Started Campaign – conclusions

We ran the ‘Get Started’ campaign in May-June last year. Over 130,000 people responded and asked for more information and the campaign helped nearly 37,000 people get online. Of these it introduced over 11,000 of our target offline groups to the benefits of Internet.

The communications structure of the Get Started campaign provides a valuable model for future work to engage those who remain offline. The importance of working in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors that have resonance with particular offline groups cannot be overstated. For example, to a large extent the success of the campaign in engaging older people reflects an extremely effective partnership with Age Concern.

Digital Inclusion Panel (DIP)

In early 2004 the Government established a Digital Inclusion Panel [DIP] bringing together stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors to:

- Identify groups most at risk of digital exclusion;
- Identify future actions that might encourage digital take-up;
- Make recommendations about how industry, government and the voluntary sector can work together to drive a digitally United Kingdom.

The panel outlined a framework for action that includes the following elements:

- Commercial innovation and enterprise. This is a key driver to increase and accelerate digital take-up in the UK. Because very significant commercial opportunities remain, business and industry are likely to place even greater emphasis on creating products, services, and business models that are compelling for people who are digitally disengaged, as well as for retaining those already engaged;
- Social innovation and enterprise. In the form of corporate social responsibility initiatives, social innovation and enterprise represents a powerful vehicle to enable people and communities to become stronger and more digitally connected. An effective way of engaging often hard-to-reach groups is through those with who they are already in regular contact. This could mean relatives, friends and neighbours, carers or health professionals and trusted organisations such as registered social landlords. Through innovative service delivery, such community points-of-contact have the potential to be used more routinely as a basis for enabling digital engagement.
- E-Government service delivery. Transformation of government services presents a significant opportunity to improve services that are important to people who are currently disengaged, such as healthcare, education, and social benefits. Government needs to design digital services around the needs of the user, making it simple to find and access government information and services electronically. Research shows that citizens want a single point for the delivery of e-Government. It is essential that people are able to access e-services when, where and how they want. To meet this need, the Government should seek ways to deliver services across a portfolio of traditional and digital channels. This would require Government working in an innovative way, and in partnership with industry and the voluntary sector.
- Lifelong learning opportunities. The Government, and organisations such as e-Skills UK and the Learning and Skills Council, provide vital resources that enable people to develop their capacity to become digitally engaged.

Other Initiatives

National Health Service [NHS] National Programme for IT

The National Programme for IT focuses on changes to IT in the NHS that will improve patient experience. The programme has four particular goals: electronic appointment booking, an electronic care records service, electronic transmission of prescriptions, and fast, reliable underlying IT infrastructure. Over the next few years the National Programme for IT will bring in:

- Contact: A centrally managed email and directory service provided free of charge to NHS organisations in England.

- NHS Care Records Service: Every patient's medical and care records will be held electronically and will eventually be available securely online. The information will be safely and easily accessible to healthcare professionals and patients, whenever and wherever it is needed.
- Choose and Book: GPs and other primary care staff will be able to book initial hospital appointments electronically, at a convenient date, time and place for patients, without sending referral letters to hospitals and waiting for a reply.
- Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions: A new service making it easier and more convenient for GPs to issue prescriptions and for patients to collect medicines.
- New National Network: A national network (known as N3) with sufficient connectivity and broadband capacity to meet current and future NHS needs.
- QMAS - supporting GP practices: QMAS [the Quality Management and Analysis System] gives GP practices feedback on the quality of care delivered to patients measured against national achievement targets detailed in the GMS [General Medical Services] contract, which sets out the way GPs work and the way they are financially rewarded.
- Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS): Systems to capture, store, distribute and display static or moving digital medical images, supporting improvements to the patient's NHS journey.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

1st January 2005 sees the UK Freedom of Information Act, introduced in 2000, come into force. This will allow members of the public, including foreign nationals, access rights to public information. The last five years have seen the UK government investigating all aspects of receiving and disclosing information and putting in place good management practices.

In addition to providing information when asked, the act requires public bodies to be proactive in releasing information and to produce a publication scheme detailing information it already makes available or intends to publish. From 1st January 2005 all requests for information will be assessed thoroughly, regardless of any protective markings, as all decisions to refuse information will potentially be open to challenge. Currently government departments already use an IT system to monitor requests for information, including correspondence monitoring systems and systems to monitor requests under existing access regimes. Some government departments are also looking at developing an FOI request monitoring system that is not related to a correspondence tracking system

The UK Presidency of the European Council: July - September 2005

The *e*Europe 2005 Action Plan sets out targets for EU Member States and European institutions in all areas of the knowledge economy. This Action Plan forms part of the Lisbon Agenda: a programme of reform with the aim of making Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. The current action plan will come to an end during the UK's presidency of the European Council.

*e*Europe 2005 targets for e-Government, reflecting many national e-Government programmes, relate primarily to the basic delivery of e-Government services and 20 basic public services are benchmarked according to their sophistication. The current *e*Europe action plan and related benchmarking therefore ignore important issues such as user take-up of e-Government services and the realisation of social and economic benefits, e.g. improved services and efficiency savings, the very reasons why many countries started their work on e-Government several years ago. While many EU Member States are scoring highly in the delivery of e-Government services, there is, as yet, little evidence of real benefits being gained from electronic delivery of government services.

As part of the policy formulation process for both the UK and the European Union beyond the 2005 targets, the e-Government Unit will commission studies and benchmarking reports into e-Government. This work will analyse performance and best practice in new e-Government policy areas such back office transformation, multi-channel integration, smart registration, driving e-Government take-up and customer focussed delivery. In particular, work will also focus on the impact of e-Government, i.e. the social and economic impact, the business case for e-Government, changes in work practices and cost and efficiency savings. It is only with understanding the potential impact of e-Government and maximising this impact, that e-Government can contribute to Europe's ambitious 2010 target. For this reason, block comparisons will also be carried out, comparing, for example, the success of policies in the EU and North America.

This research into successful e-Government policies and further studies to be carried out for the European Commission will provide essential input for a high-level UK/Commission conference scheduled for late 2005 which will focus on the economic and social impact of e-Government.