

## **The UK Strategy: Transformational Government - Enabled by Technology**

### **An Article by the UK eGovernment Unit**

What do DVLA's vehicle licensing online ([www.vehiclelicence.gov.uk](http://www.vehiclelicence.gov.uk)), NHS Direct and DWP's Payment Modernisation Programme have in common? They – in company with other recent developments using technology - helped to inform thinking on *Transformational Government: Enabled by Technology*, the strategic document which outlines how government plans to use the opportunities presented by modern technology to transform public services.

The Prime Minister asked the eGovernment Unit, based in the Cabinet Office, to drive work across the public sector to develop a strategy for using technology 'to transform government services'. Under the Unit's leadership the newly formed Chief Information Officer's Council was the focus for the collaborative work across departments, local authorities and other public bodies to generate and agree the strategy itself. The CIO Council acts as the forum for partnership between IT professionals across government and has a membership drawn from the wider public sector. It is charged with creating and delivering a government-wide CIO agenda to support the transformation of government and to build capacity and capability in IT-enabled business change, balancing this with accountabilities from individual CIOs' line organisations. So the strategy published in November 2005 is very much the product of the CIO Council, based on the input and knowledge of those actually delivering public services as well as input from the IT industry, from best practice in other sectors and experience in other governments internationally.

Since the launch of the strategy we have produced a follow-on document - the *Implementation Plan* – describing the real changes that will be seen as a result of *Transformational Government* to July 2007, including changes already underway. In this article I will be describing in summary what *Transformational Government* is all about. If you want to read the documents themselves or some of the work and responses that contributed to them, you can find them at [http://www.cio.gov.uk/transformational\\_government/index.asp](http://www.cio.gov.uk/transformational_government/index.asp).

Transformational Government described a picture of government enabled by technology – inspiring policy, delivering business change, providing customer and corporate services and backing up the work that frontline staff do day in, day out. Technology alone doesn't change government, but government can't meet modern citizens' expectations without it. The strategy's vision is about delivering better public services through greater choice and personalisation; supporting effective policy outcomes; reducing burdens on front-line staff; streamlining and delivering efficiencies through the smarter use of tools, technology and information. Everyone benefits from this vision. Citizens and business have greater choice, reduced paperwork and lower costs in their interactions with government. Public servants have better tools to help them to undertake their jobs, enabling them to provide better service. Policy makers will be better able to achieve outcomes sought. Resources are freed from the back office to the front-line and efficiency gains are made.

Gartner, a consultancy, have described the world of technology as entering a 'perfect digital storm' where speed, capacity and connectivity combine to create an environment characterised by extremely rapid change. The strategy envisages government being able to create and retain the capacity to innovate and transform itself as technology continues to develop – even if we enter

this digital storm - ensuring that public services can keep up with a continually changing, globalised society.

**Transformational Government** is part of a wider programme of work to transform public services using technology, and should be read in that context. Other aspects of this work programme are set out in *Connecting the UK: the Digital Strategy* (March 2005) which set an agenda for dealing with the so-called digital divide – the variation witnessed in access by different socio-economic groups to services provided electronically - by providing stronger incentives for people to get online. Other key documents include *Harnessing Technology*, the e-learning strategy (March 2005) which described the use of technology to achieve a more personalised approach within education and children's services; and *Inclusion through Innovation* (November 2005) which set out how government can use technology to reach out to disadvantaged groups.

*Transformational Government* set out three areas of focus:

- Delivering better public services through increased Customer Focus
- Moving to a shared services culture – releasing efficiencies through standardisation, simplification and sharing
- Professionalising the planning and delivery of technology-enabled business change

#### **Delivering better public services through customer focus**

The strategy takes the approach that services should be designed and delivered around the customer, whether citizen or business. To deliver this approach government must understand and engage with the customer to understand their needs and requirements. Using this information, principles of design, including the most appropriate channels through which to deliver services, can be drawn. For some, though not necessarily all, customer groups this process of redesigning services around the customer will be led by specific individuals. These 'customer group directors' will be responsible for sponsoring customer insight and research into the needs of that customer group; leading the design of services including overall channel planning; tracking and communicating performance against customer-related targets; and representing the interests of their customers. Directors have already been appointed for one citizen group and one business group – older people and farmers. Other candidates include Directors for parents and for small businesses. People rarely fall into neat categories, so services need to be responsive enough to deal with people associating themselves with different groups at different times. The approach is likely to be most effective by identifying the challenges which certain groups typically find particularly difficult and then tackling these from the customer perspective.

#### **Moving to a shared services culture**

*Transformational Government* outlined the benefits in terms of improved working, better outcomes and increased efficiency through a shared approach in government. Initially significant effort is going into shared 'back office' services – the development of a shared approach to Human Resources, Finance and other corporate services. But other opportunities exist in sharing customer service centres; shared infrastructure; and crucially better use of government-held information.

*Transformational Government* outlined how government would enable the joining-up of services and information by continuing to develop and use consistent standards and architecture for technology use. Other enabling work includes the continued development of the information assurance programme to ensure that IT systems are secure and trusted by those using them; development of an identity management strategy and a new focus on finding a balance between

maintaining the privacy of the individual and sharing information to deliver better, more efficient services.

**Professionalising delivery of technology-enabled business change**

In order to deliver the vision described by *Transformational Government*, a step-change will be required in the professionalism with which it is delivered. There must be broadening and deepening of government's professionalism in terms of the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of IT enabled change. This will result in more successful outcomes; fewer costly delivery failures; and increased confidence by citizens and politicians in the delivery of change by the public services. As well as a new approach to the Government IT Profession, as part of the *Professional Skills for Government* programme, this will encompass a further programme of work on the management and control of technology-enabled business change to support both successful delivery of major projects and the reliability of successful delivery. Technology-enabled programmes will be managed at portfolio as well as programme level, enabling government to match supply with demand, identify duplication and set priorities. A further shift in supplier management will accompany this, ensuring capacity and capability are addressed; sharing supplier intelligence and increased standardisation of contracts, services and service boundaries.

**Timeline**

Transformational Government outlines a large scale programme of work, looking beyond 2011, within which we identified three discrete phases of work. The first, ending in July 2007, is mainly concerned with continuing to deliver on the big departmental programmes and big IT projects, for example *Connecting for Health* or *Criminal Justice IT*. This period will also see the activity outlined in *Connecting the UK, the Digital Strategy* completed. In addition, work to address some of the specific barriers identified will begin, as outlined in the *Implementation Plan*. Some aspects of this first phase will appear in the Annual Report, due to be published in November 2006, as described in the strategy.

The priority for the second phase of work, August 2007 to 2011, will be transforming delivery into public services centred round citizens and businesses, and transforming support into a shared services framework. During this period it will also be important to realise the financial and service benefits of current and planned investments. The goal should be to have made the key changes, to have embedded the new cultures, and to have made the process irreversible, by 2011. The third period is deliberately left flexible at present. The pace of technology change is such that it is only sensible at this stage to recognise that this will be a period of further radical change. Our goal for the preceding years must be to ensure that a strong foundation is laid to enable this.