

Law Officers' Departments

Digital Strategy

December 2012

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Introduction

This strategy sets out how the Law Officers' Departments will become digital by default. It fulfils the commitment made in the [Civil Service Reform Plan](#).

By digital by default, we mean digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded.

Transactional services are defined as being interactions with the government, from booking driving tests and filing tax returns to setting up a company and applying for a public house licence: everything which involves individuals, businesses or other organisations sharing information with government, requesting services, buying goods, asking for permission, or paying money.

The Attorney General's Office (AGO) is a ministerial department which supports the Attorney General and the Solicitor General (the Law Officers). The Law Officers are government ministers who:

- Provide legal advice to government;
- Superintend, or oversee, the main independent prosecuting departments - the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office. They also superintend Her Majesty's CPS Inspectorate, which inspects how cases are prosecuted, and oversee the work of the Treasury Solicitor's Department, which provides legal services to government. The Law Officers answer questions about their work in Parliament;
- Perform other functions in the public interest, such as looking at sentences which may be too low. These duties are independent of government.

Collectively the Attorney General's Office, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Serious Fraud Office (SFO), Treasury Solicitor's Department and Her Majesty's CPS Inspectorate are known as the Law Officers' Departments (LODs).

The Law Officers' Departments have very few interactions with citizens or business and most of its work is within government and the legal system.

The Law Officers' Departments do not manage any transactional services that are used by large numbers of people (>100,000 per year) but there are opportunities to improve the way that we interact with citizens. For example:

- The Attorney General's Office is migrating to GOV.UK in December 2012 and the Law Officers' Departments without an exemption will be moving their online presence to GOV.UK by March 2014.

Moving to GOV.UK will allow the Law Officers' Departments to improve the way that they communicate and share information and gives us an opportunity to improve digital transactional services where they already exist.

Moving to GOV.UK will save the Law Officers' Departments approximately £38k per year in hosting and support costs.

- Continuing the process of migration to a predominantly digital caseload system for use by the Crown Prosecution Service, through the ongoing T3 change programme (see [page 5](#))
- The Crown Prosecution Service to share the lessons from the T3 programme with the other Law Officers' Departments to help identify areas where it may be possible to digitise processes and drive efficiencies elsewhere.

What we have already done

Crown Prosecution Service – T3

The Crown Prosecution Service is by far the biggest of the Law Officers' Departments and although they have relatively few direct transactions with members of the public or business they have the largest opportunity to find efficiencies through digitising processes.

The CPS is responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by the police and other investigative authorities, in England and Wales. As the principal prosecuting authority in England and Wales, they are responsible for:

- advising the police on cases for possible prosecution;
- reviewing cases submitted by the police;
- determining any charges in more serious or complex cases;
- preparing cases for court;
- presenting cases at court.

The Transforming Through Technology (T3) Programme is a key transformation programme for the CPS. The CPS aims to maximise its use of technology and the T3 programme brings together technological change and business change to enable the CPS to achieve its aim of modern, efficient, paperless working.

Working together through the Criminal Justice System (CJS) Efficiency programme the CJS has succeeded in moving from a paper based system towards being a predominantly digital service. Nearly all police caseload is being transferred electronically to the CPS and all caseload from the first hearing onwards to the magistrates' court. The CPS will agree plans to increase to full digital working by December 2013

Significant progress has been made to support the defence in moving to digital working:

- Defence representatives can take IT devices into police custody and prison estate
- Legal aid fees have been amended to ensure there is no differentiation in payment when evidence is digital.
- The technology needed to work digitally is industry standard - the software needed to use the prosecution digital case bundles is open-source and free to download
- MoJ CJS Secure email is free at the point of use and fast becoming the accepted standard for cross-CJS communication

The CPS have been – and will continue to – work very closely with defence representative bodies to ensure that practitioners are supported in the transition to digital working. The National Defence Steering Group (NDSG) and the Digital Practitioners Group were created to this end. The NDSG meets regularly to identify and resolve practical issues with digital working and have been working successfully with defence representative bodies. Locally across England and Wales, CJS digital working implementation teams have worked with defence practitioners to resolve local issues and encourage the benefits of digital working.

T3 has already achieved a lot:

- 43 police forces are transferring case information electronically to the CPS for first hearings. Work is ongoing to design the processes necessary to handle overnight/weekend remands and traffic cases.

- 3,500 CPS prosecutors have touch-screen tablet devices to present cases in court and, in some areas upwards of 75% of cases are being presented electronically.
- The commitment for all magistrates' courts to be able to receive digital first hearings files by secure email from the CPS has been met.
- All CPS areas are transferring information for pre-sentence reviews electronically to National Offender Management System (NOMS).
- 52% (873) of the 1663 Legal Services Commission (LSC) Legal Aid Contract Crime Providers have already signed-up to CJSM Secure email
- 95% (20) of the 21 largest influential crime defence practitioner firms (Big Firms Group - BFG) have signed-up to CJSM Secure email

The T3 Programme expects to deliver £51.6 million of staff effort savings cumulatively over the four year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period. Towards the end of the CSR period, when full digital working is bedded in, £28.6 million of staff effort efficiencies will be being saved year on year (past the end of the CSR period).

Developing digital transactions

Because of the limited number of citizen and businesses transactions that the Law Officers' Departments undertake, there are relatively few opportunities to develop further digital transactions. Of the transactions that there are none are high volume services where digitising will benefit a large number of users.

Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service make payments to witnesses who attend court to cover their expenses. This currently requires them to complete a four page paper form. The CPS are planning to make the claim process web based over the next 12 months.

Barristers and expert witnesses who appear for the prosecution are paid a fee. The process was paper based until this year. By the end of December 2012 it will have been migrated to our P2P system.

Treasury Solicitor's Department

Migration to GOV.UK gives the Law Officers' Departments who are moving their online presence the opportunity to look at how existing digital services can be improved and developed for new areas.

The Treasury Solicitor's Department are due to transition across to GOV.UK in 2013-14. This transition will also involve migrating the Bona Vacantia (BV) Division website.

The BV Division of the Treasury Solicitor's Department deals with the estates of people who die without known relatives and without leaving a will. They also deal with the assets of dissolved companies.

BV Division use their current website to advertise the estates that have been referred to them to help find relatives. Where relatives are found, the estate is handed over to them.

BV Division also encourages members of the public and business to refer new estates and dissolved companies cases to them via their current website. They also publish extensive guidance on their work for citizens and business.

The migration of the BV Division website offers opportunities to increase take up of its digital services by improving them, making them easier to use and easier to find.

BV Division already has some guidance for members of the public on the mainstream section of GOV.UK and will look to supplement this with a new digital case referral process and improved ways of searching the estates that they are dealing with.

BV Division are keen to look at the viability of using identity verification and online payments to help drive further efficiencies. They are keen to work with GDS on looking at possibilities to utilise these as part of their transition to GOV.UK and learn from the use of these in other departments.

Serious Fraud Office

The Serious Fraud Office are looking at opportunities to digitise its business processes in a similar fashion to the CPS T3 programme. The SFO engages with a number of stakeholders in the public and private sector and digitising interactions and information sharing would improve efficiencies within the agency. Consideration on this work is at an early stage but they are keen to learn from the benefits that other organisations have had from digitising their business.

Assisted digital and digital inclusion

Assisted Digital

The Law Officers' Departments note that 18% of adults have never or rarely been online, and that the implementation of Digital by Default must not reduce the ability of these people to make use of the services and benefits they are entitled to.

The Law Officers' Departments' engage with a diverse section of the general public, including individuals from a range of backgrounds and companies and organisations of a range of sizes. We recognise that take up of digital services will be very low in some of these groups, and some groups may be unable to engage in transactional services online.

Consequently, when designing new services, or redesigning existing services, the Law Officers' Departments will consider the needs of those who are unable to access the internet, or find it difficult to do so. We will ensure that Assisted Digital support is available wherever necessary. This support will be delivered over the phone or face to face. In these cases the customer will not access the digital channel, however the staff member assisting them will use the same interface as used by customers online.

Digital inclusion and channel shift

The Law Officers' Departments will also provide support for those who could use the digital channel, but choose not to. This support will enable the customer to access the service through non-digital channels, but will encourage them to use the digital channel and aim to develop their digital skills (if they do not have the skills necessary to access digital channels easily), by guiding them through the online process step-by step. As well as improving customers' digital skills, the objective will be to encourage channel shift where possible and appropriate.

Principles and actions

We will:

Departmental and transactional agency boards will include an active digital leader

The Attorney General's Office has board level responsibility for digital, with oversight of the digital by default agenda. The Law Officers' Departments are not transactional agencies but all have a board member with responsibility for digital.

Services handling over 100,000 transactions each year will be re-designed, operated and improved by a skilled, experienced and empowered Service Manager

The Law Officers' Departments do not have any transactional services handling more than 100,000 transactions a year but recognise the importance of leadership. We will identify a suitably skilled and empowered Service Manager for all digital services that we operate.

All departments will ensure that they have appropriate digital capability in-house, including specialist skills

The Attorney General's Office has a team who are leading on digital and are assisting the Law Officers' Departments on digital transformation where required.

Cabinet Office will support improved digital capability across departments

The Attorney General's Office is working with the Cabinet Office and Government Digital Service to ensure that it has the digital capability it requires and will be assisting the Law Officers' Departments where required.

The Law Officers' Departments are keen to work with Cabinet Office to improve their digital capability.

All departments will redesign services handling over 100,000 transactions each year

The Law Officers' Departments do not have any services handling over 100,000 transactions a year.

From April 2014, all new or redesigned transactional services will meet the digital by default service standard

The Law Officers' Departments have identified their transactional services. Any new or redesigned services launched after April 2014 will meet the digital by default standard. We will be working with GDS to redesign the BV Division's advertisements of the estates that they are dealing with and their case referral process in 2013 and these will also meet the standard.

Corporate publishing activities of all 24 central government departments will move onto GOV.UK by March 2013, with agency and arm's length bodies' online publishing to follow by March 2014

The Attorney General's Office moved to GOV.UK in December 2012. The Law Officers' Departments without exemptions will move to GOV.UK by March 2014.

Departments will raise awareness of their digital services so that more people know about them and use them

The Law Officers' Departments are raising awareness of their digital services as part of the migration to GOV.UK.

The Law Officers' Departments will also provide support for those who could use the digital channel, but choose not to. This support will enable the customer to access the service through non-digital channels, but will encourage them to use the digital channel and aim to develop their digital skills (if they do not have the skills necessary to access digital channels), by guiding them through the online process step-by step. As well as improving customers' digital skills, our objective will be to encourage channel shift where possible and appropriate.

There will be a cross-government approach to assisted digital. This means that people who have rarely or never been online will be able to access services offline, and we will provide additional ways for them to use the digital services

When designing new services, or redesigning existing services, the Law Officers' Departments will consider the needs of those who are unable to access the internet, or find it difficult to do so. We will ensure that, where necessary, support and encouragement is available for those who could use the digital channel and that phone or face to face support is provided for those who will never use digital channels.

Cabinet Office will offer leaner and more lightweight tendering processes, as close to the best practice in industry as our regulatory requirements allow

The Law Officers' Departments support leaner and more lightweight tendering processes and are keen to make use of processes that the Cabinet Office make available.

Cabinet Office will lead in the definition and delivery of a new suite of common technology platforms which will underpin the new generation of digital services

The Law Officers' Departments support the use of common platforms and where they are not already in use, will move to them where there are opportunities.

The Crown Prosecution Service has been leading in this area, working across the Criminal Justice System to develop a common platform to share case information throughout the chain.

Cabinet Office will continue to work with departments to remove legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services

The Law Officers' Departments supports the removal of legislative barriers where they unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services.

Departments will supply a consistent set of management information (as defined by Cabinet Office) for their transactional services

The Law Officers' Departments have supplied management information on its transactional services and recognises the importance of reporting and using this information on an ongoing basis to improve services.

Policy teams will use digital tools and techniques to engage with and consult the public

The Law Officers' Departments do not lead on any policy areas and only have input into other departments' policy areas where we have an interest.