

A report by the Design Commission

MEETING NEEDS
SAVING MONEY
HUMANISING SERVICES
ENGAGING CITIZENS

RESTARTING BRITAIN 2

DESIGN AND PUBLIC SERVICES

This is the second publication in the Design Commission's 'Restarting Britain' series.

The first set out the strategic importance of design education as a driver of economic growth. This report turns to the question of public service renewal.

In the context of politics and governing, the word 'design' is applied liberally – the design of legislation, the design of policy, the design of public services – with little thought as to the significance of the word itself. Here we shift our focus to that word 'design', and explore its potential for creating cost-effective public services in the 21st century.

We are grateful to Barry Quirk and Baroness Kingsmill for their tireless and rigorous interrogation of this question, to the steering group for their invaluable expertise, and to everyone who – through the process of evidence gathering over recent months – has taken the time to share with us their thoughts on this important topic.

– The Design Commission

FOREWORD

**'DESIGN' IS INTEGRAL TO THE
DNA OF EACH AND EVERY
PUBLIC SERVICE.
DESIGN IS NOT A MATTER OF
SURFACE APPEARANCE.**

**HOW PUBLIC SERVICES
ARE 'DESIGNED' IS CENTRAL
TO THEIR PURPOSE,
THEIR FUNCTION, THEIR
CHARACTER. DESIGN IS
ABOUT THE APPLICATION
OF HARD DISCIPLINES
NOT SOFT FURNISHINGS.**

There are lots of ways to approach public service reform: opening up public services to choice and competition; reducing the public service cost base and improving its overall productivity; and bringing public services into the 21st century through greater use of digital technologies. But to succeed, each of these approaches must incorporate the principles of great design.

We do not argue that design is a panacea for all public service ills. Nor do we argue that it will enable people, in one bound, to escape the fiscal challenges that they face across the public sector. But we know that badly designed services cost the country a great deal; and that the best of design thinking and practice can help make services much more relevant to 21st century needs as well as help lower the overall cost of service to the taxpayer. Critically, design starts from the 'user's experience'. It begins by asking how users can best extract value for themselves from a product or a service. It seeks multiple sources of inspiration in searching for solutions. It encourages 'prototyping' – practically-focused and tangible approaches to experimental fast learning. And it enables productive public engagement. All of this helps designers build products and services that meet users' needs most acutely and at lowest cost.



This is why we believe that, during this challenging period, great design can help restart Britain by reshaping our public services.

The fabric of public services we see today was woven by previous generations in response to the needs of their time. Successive governments, together with successive cohorts of professionals, have stamped their imprint on the shape of public services. This leads to a situation where the pattern of service found today reflects particular paths of service provision more than the urgent needs and preferences of today's citizens.

A design approach to public services starts not with service providers but with citizens, customers and service users. Designers try to stand in their shoes - to fully understand preferences, needs, behaviours and context. This makes design-based approaches to service change far more likely to both improve social well-being, and to generate greater efficiency. As with the design of buildings, a small investment in getting the service design right, up front, can save public bodies a lot of money in the long run.

The challenge for the coming decade is how best to ensure that public services are reformed swiftly to meet 21st century needs at a cost that taxpayers can sustainably afford. We believe significant rewards – in terms of maximising policy effectiveness and lowering overall costs – could be reaped by the public sector taking a proactive, deliberate and professional approach to 'designing' what it does for its citizens.

To test this theory, over the last nine months we have interviewed a wide variety of people from the design industry and the public sector (we include details of evidence in the Appendix). What follows is the synthesis of those conversations, alongside our own ideas and research. We strongly recommend that policymakers and public managers take a much more professional stance towards the design element of policymaking and public services, and we have identified a number of steps that could help move to towards this goal.

Baroness Kingsmill
Barry Quirk
– Inquiry Co-chairs

WHO IS THIS
REPORT FOR?

This report is primarily written for those with responsibility for shaping the future of public services in the UK.

These include:

- Ministers and policymakers in central government
- Parliamentarians
- Leading Members in local government, senior managers and service commissioners
- Public service managers
- The communities of practice involved in service design in the UK

In writing this report we are responding to a substantially increased appetite for more information on the subject of design in public services.

As far as possible we have tried to err on the side of practical advice. However we hope this will also make an informative read for anyone interested in the history and development of design, and its contribution to social innovation.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

| 1 | Leadership | Ownership/next steps | Examples |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 1.1 | Cabinet Office must take responsibility for developing design capacity across government. This should include initiating demonstrator projects and commissioning evaluation. | Cabinet Office, Design Council and others. | See recent Danish Design Strategy and previous Design Council challenges. |
| 1.2 | Policymakers across government should trial a multi-disciplinary design studio method for originating policy. | Strategy Units and Heads of Departments, policy teams in Local Authorities. | Helsinki Design Lab 'InStudio' model. |
| 1.3 | Department leaders must create career paths for social and service design professionals in public service work. | Heads of departments, Local Authorities. (The whole question of career paths in this area requires further research.) | Skills Development Scotland. |
| 1.4 | Establish an advisory network of professional designers – who can act as mentors for public sector leaders. | Cabinet Office, DBIS, DCLG and design intermediary bodies to draft proposal and support. | |
| 2 | Capacity in government | Ownership/next steps | Examples |
| 2.1 | Training in the use of basic service design principles must be a normal part of civil service training. This must also include training for design professionals working with public sector clients. | Civil Service Learning/ Design Council/ the Commissioning Academy/ Cabinet Office to explore further, with support from social and service designers. | Design Council training workshops, DBA courses. |
| 2.2 | A better commissioning model for design. We recommend some design input to the new Commissioning Academy. | Commissioning Academy, CO, all public sector commissioners. Further research needed, (such as European House of Design Management project). | (Learning from) Design Council Challenges projects, forthcoming Nesta publication. |
| 2.3 | A peer network of public sector employees trying to apply design approaches. | Public sector employees and social/ service designers. Design Council to support. | As currently exists for other disciplines across departments/authorities. |

| | | | |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 2.4 | A resource of design practice toolkits for social and public sector work. | To be hosted by central and local government websites: - eg BIS/Cabinet Office/ DCLG/LGA/ Design Council) | See our list of toolkits p50 |
| 2.5 | A bank of public sector examples (evidence) where design input has led to success/improvement and cost-savings. | | See our case studies p32 |
| 2.6 | Design thinking modules to be introduced to public policy courses, as has happened with MBAs. | Design Commission to initiate conversations with KCL and Cambridge. | Design thinking module at Saïd business school. |

| 3 | Capacity in the design sector | Ownership/next steps | Examples |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 3.1 | A directory of (experienced) designers. | DBA, BDI and other trade bodies to coordinate. | DBA and BDI lists of members. |
| 3.2 | Design agencies to improve in terms of evidencing their impact. | Design Council, design trade bodies and HEIs to promote/support. | Design Council case studies, DBA Design Effectiveness Awards. |
| 3.3 | Design education to broaden into: service and social design, ethics, organisational culture and change, systems thinking, impact metrics, economics, policy, social knowledge. | Design HEIs and trade bodies to develop as part of full time education and CPD. | Designer Breakfasts, RCA service design MA. |
| 3.4 | Designers to use new reporting system to feedback about good and bad procurement practice. | Design trade bodies to promote. | https://www.gov.uk/doing-business-with-government-a-guide-for-smes |
| 3.5 | HEIs and public sector organisations to explore possibilities of further research and knowledge transfer work. | Design HEIs, AHRC and Design Council to develop further. | TSB Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Design Council/AHRC service design research. |
| 3.6 | Greater publicity and/or awards scheme for good public service design. | Guardian Public Leaders Network, Design Museum, V&A. | INDEX awards for social design. |

“A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It’s where the rich use public transportation.”

- Gustavo Petro, Mayor of Bogota

“Every system is perfectly designed to achieve exactly the results it gets”

- Donald M. Berwick

“At their best design methods and design thinking catalyse people to see issues and possibilities in a fresh way. They spark creativity and help us to spot the possible connections between things, which so often become obscured by the silos of daily life which dominate governments and businesses alike. But we’re at a fascinating moment when design needs to do better at learning as well as teaching, if its full potential is to be realised. If it does, it could become one of the defining fields of the next few decades. If it doesn’t it risks being seen as a fad that failed.”

– Geoff Mulgan

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**“DRIVING A SYSTEM TO DO
MORE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH
IF SOMETHING DIFFERENT IS
NEEDED”**

**– CHARLIE LEADBEATER,
SYSTEMIC INNOVATION,
NESTA, 2013**

1

THE ARGUMENT FOR DESIGN

- What public service problems need redesign not cost-cutting?
- What do you do when you can't rely on past learning to determine future action?
- How can we turn government into a learning organisation?

The pace of change, in the economy and across society, is quickening. Everyday we see a freshly designed product or service that has the potential to improve our lives, our businesses, our communities. And yet we know that public services and government institutions have not kept up with this pace of change. Why should our lives as private sector consumers be so improved, while our lives as citizens accessing public services often seem stuck in the 20th century? On the other side of the fence, public sector organisations across the country are struggling to resolve the twin demands of reducing budgets with apparently rising demands for services. Many accept that 'salami-slicing' services – just doing less of the same thing – is not a practical answer, but what is the alternative?

In 2012, Ipsos Mori found that public sector leaders thought that 'redesigning services to meet users needs in a different way' was most likely to lead to significant improvements.¹ We agree, and believe the public sector would achieve a step-change in quality and effectiveness by more assertively embracing design practice.

Design may sound an improbable suggestion. The design sector has an undeniable reputation for fuelling the whims of fashion, and for pursuing creativity at someone else's expense. However there are many kinds of design, and many kinds of designers. We are not advocating the frivolous use of public money for vanity projects. Rather, we are concerned with the application of certain methodologies pioneered over the last twenty to thirty years in the fields of social, service, and strategic design. Private sector organisations adapt their service or product offering all the time with the aid of these design processes, because they help to:

- retain a focus on the user-citizen;
- give a structure for being creative about problem-solving;
- test iterations of possible solutions in order to learn more about the problem;
- identify new, more relevant ideas and services and steward them through delivery;
- engage users (citizens and employees) in the design of change.

We are all far too familiar with the negative impact of poorly-designed public services. We know of the frustration that arises from experiencing public services that are meant to make our lives easier, but which turn out to be inconvenient, inaccessible, and sometimes even obstructive. Taxpayers' money and public servants' good intentions are not enough if public services are badly designed; or if they place the provider's interest above those of the user. Worse, policies that fail at the point of application are wasteful of public money. This problem arises because too often in the public sector, service design happens unconsciously, by whim or accident, and without professional design input.

1 http://www.ipsos-mori.com/_emails/sri/understandingsociety/july2012/mobile/no2.html

Why do we think design can help?

A disciplined design process has three important characteristics when it comes to transforming public services.

First, good design starts from the point of view of how people really experience those services, and how those experiences might be made better, quicker and cheaper.

For example, in the redesign of a government website, a design approach starts by picking both typical and extreme users, and understanding their real life experience of interacting with that website. If one can imagine the profile and thought process of (say) a small business owner, unconfident navigating the online world, trying to find out the national minimum wage through a government website, one can do a much better job of improving the experience. How might the pathway to locating that information be simplified?

This is not rocket science. But it too often contrasts with how policy and public services are typically determined. “Disjointed incrementalism” characterises public service design: where services are altered and adapted by changing political drivers, professional fashions, shifting institutional norms and boundaries, and the biased lessons of past experience. As a service designer with years of private sector experience told us, the mistake is a common one:

The problem is trying to reengineer what exists, rather than stepping back and thinking about what is actually needed. At Intercontinental Hotels we spent a lot of time looking at how people would use a hotel room, or what the purpose of being in a space was. And then we would work back, to try and deliver something that was fulfilling the need and purpose, rather than simply saying, how can we make a room better? That way you can improve the quality of the service and reduce cost – you’re giving people what they want, and not providing other things that were never being used.²

Additionally, public services are too often designed for the “average” user, when in fact they are best designed if they take fullest account of “extreme users”. Extreme users might be those who use the service all the time or those who use it hardly at all, they might be skilled computer hackers or digitally illiterate. Designing to the average produces average services. Designing with the extremes in mind produces inclusive services.

So design methods – through tools such as customer journey mapping, observation, profile-building, etc. – offer several ways of quickly getting closer to the user in order to define the problem and create shared intent.

Second, design helps us make decisions in complex situations.

The machinery of government in general in the West has been designed to consider objective facts and make decisions based on those facts - which is fine as long as you have facts.³

In reality, Government frequently has to make decisions in the absence of sufficient empirical evidence: will small businesses apply for export loans? will this kind of school reform lead to greater literacy and numeracy rates? will payment-by-results approaches effectively increase employment? will people happily step in to start co-producing some public services? The appeal of ‘design’, in the context of so many ‘unknown unknowns’, is its central practice of prototyping, which helps to quickly establish some facts by actually trying something out – on a small scale, where a failed experiment is not costly. After the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, the

2 See [http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/transcript%20130912%20proofed\(2\).pdf](http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/transcript%20130912%20proofed(2).pdf)

3 Bryan Boyer, interviewed in <http://www.seeplatform.eu/docs/SEE%20Platform%20Bulletin%20Issue%208.pdf>

need to rebuild the hospital has provided an opportunity for redesign, which they are doing with cardboard mock-ups of rooms and ward layouts. This has allowed hospital management to test and make changes before things are - quite literally - set in stone. Learning comes through doing, not through reading papers on the outcomes of previous policies. This kind of learning can help to refine a design and test it again in an iterative process.

For example, one might be trying to improve the client experience of arriving at a housing association office. At relatively little cost, one could change elements of the physical space (remove the glass barrier separating the officer and client, provide armchairs) or the human interactions (bring the officer to the client side of the desk, put someone on the door to greet people and make an initial assessment of the reasons for their visit) and observe those effects. Even before that stage of intervention, one could make a very basic mock-up of the new layout, and test it by asking clients how they feel about it.

Third, and partly because of the need to involve the user, design methods help with public engagement. Even when public service institutions are outdated, costly, and ill-suited to current needs, there is often a noticeable public attachment to them. How many people have protested about the closure of libraries they rarely use? Or against the outsourcing of services? Public service redesign, the 'design' way, means consulting and collaborating with the public, not imposing change upon them. Being involved in the change conversation from the start means people (as citizens, taxpayers and service users) are more likely to feel a degree of ownership. This, in turn, means they are less likely to oppose the agreed solution, and will potentially be more willing to play a part in delivery.⁴

In Bath, the Council's Urban Regeneration panel used a design-led engagement process to help overcome the strong opposition of heritage interest groups who tended to block proposals for upgrading or developing the city. In Cornwall, the Chief Design Officer similarly encouraged local participation in solving common public problems through a design-led engagement process. Both of these examples demonstrate the potential advantages of allowing the community to define local services: 'if people feel intensely about something you can either shut them out and they'll block everything that you're doing, or you include them from the very beginning and get them to shape the values. Involve them in the process, and it's a completely different outcome.'⁵

This is really where the cost-saving benefits come in. Decommissioning services will only be publically and politically acceptable if a better alternative has already been established.

In so many areas of life, cutting-edge design practice has led to far more useful technologies, products and services. But – with the exception of some isolated pockets of interesting experimentation (see p32) – public services and government institutions seem to have become walled off from this body of expertise. This is curious, considering that Britain is a world-leader in all design disciplines: in place-building, in communications, in services, in products and, increasingly, in digital. Equally, in many ways our public services have led the field throughout the twentieth century. Considering the scale of the financial challenge faced by public services in the UK, it would now be worth exploiting some of this readymade expertise in creative innovation.

Although many of the projects completed up to now have tackled social or welfare type services (indicative of where the most money is spent, and the emergence of co-production models in health and social care), design practice can contribute equally well to other areas of policy: such as in business growth and support services, banking reform, or the Green Deal. Each of these could benefit from some rigorous design input.

⁴ See NLGN publication 'Changing Behaviours' for an interesting case study
⁵ <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/transcript%20270912.pdf>

What stops 'design' being applied consistently across the UK public sector?

If a "designerly" approach truly is a better way of working, this may have some disruptive implications. The above mentioned advantages of a proper design process – user knowledge, prototyping, and real public engagement – suggest a reorienting of the policy hierarchy. It suggests that best practice may not emanate from Whitehall but from the front line of delivery. In a reversal of the traditional process, the design approach privileges the knowledge and experience gained at the interface of service and citizen, and posits this as a primary driver of policy. Further, we feel that design-led innovation is stifled by closed cultures of established orthodoxies, chronic short-termism and overly fixed procurement norms. As one respondent to the inquiry commented,

designers are unlikely to be given the opportunity to showcase their skills within local government policy areas tightly defined by legislative and statutory frameworks. Outdated and often outmoded policy frameworks have the distinct advantage of being long standing, and politically 'safe'.⁶

In other words, some things are just incredibly hard to change, no matter the approach or methodology. Other barriers we identified included a lack of basic knowledge about design – what it does and where to find a designer who can help.

Design also faces its own challenges.

- The word itself is confusing, embodying a multitude of meanings.
- It is not clear that a sufficient proportion of the design community is ready and prepared to respond to this massive public service challenge, and what's more the career paths that prepare designers to work in this way are limited.
- The history of the development of the design industry means it is not regulated and represented in the same way as many industries. This is both a strength and a weakness, however it does make it harder for non-designers, or prospective design buyers, to understand where to go, and to feel assured of quality and impact.
- Most problematic for selling professional services in a cash-strapped climate is that the measurable impact of applying design to public service challenges has rarely been consistently documented (aside from those projects delivered by the Design Council).

The evidence vacuum applies to all methods and approaches, not just to design. Metrics on cost are easier to come by than metrics on utility, which has several dimensions (including functional, emotional and social). Hopefully, as the scope of evidence-based policymaking widens to include 'well-being' and happiness metrics, the impact of design-led innovation in public services will be easier to quantify. The central problem is that design processes – and therefore their particular strength when introduced into the public sector context – are driven by qualitative and cultural observations and motivations, not just economic 'evidence'. This makes it more difficult to translate the benefits and end goals, conceived in qualitative terms, to quantitative descriptions. But it's not impossible, as the Design Council has proved with its post-project evaluations.

There is more good news. Alongside the Scandinavian nations, and Australia, we are already a world leader in this field. Throughout the inquiry we have seen many examples of interesting and innovative practice, much of it design-led, overtly or otherwise. There is a growing general acceptance of the need to move towards more collaborative approaches – between public sector bodies, and between the state and the citizen. And this shift has created an opportunity for design professionals oriented towards social benefit goals to jump into public sector work. Years of investment by bodies like the Design Council and Nesta have nurtured and grown this pool of creative practitioners geared towards addressing broad public challenges, and this is now something of a national asset. Additionally, over the last year we've seen some excellent and very

6 [http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/Oliver%20Coppard\(2\).pdf](http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/Oliver%20Coppard(2).pdf)

high profile design practice by government – in the planning around the Olympics, and the rollout of a new unified digital platform, gov.uk, which has earned a design award for being both vastly cheaper and much easier to use.

After hearing from public sector service and design experts over several months of evidence-taking, we are convinced that design methodologies offer a route to making public services more relevant, better and cheaper.

What do we think needs to happen?

We have identified three broad recommendations, which together outline a vision for design in the public sector. Attached to each of these are a number of suggested actions.

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Leadership |
| | Central Government and Local Authorities need to establish strong leadership in the use of design. |

Good design practice requires strong leadership where support for design is set by the top tiers of the organisation. This is particularly important in the context of public bodies where a design process may be initially seen as risky or unusual. Overt permission to follow a different and creative process is often necessary. Leaders in central and local government therefore have an important role in promoting awareness of design practice as a fundamental tenet of policymaking and public service development, setting the conditions for good design practice to flourish, and taking responsibility for raising design capacity within the wider civil service body. Further, there is now a real opportunity for government at the highest level to take charge of an emerging body of practice, knit it together, and make it an absolutely accepted part of public service culture.

1.1 Cabinet Office must take responsibility for developing design capacity across government. This should include initiating demonstrator projects and commissioning evaluation.

This is a valuable and emerging area of practice and we would suggest the Cabinet Office might be the right home to incubate and promote this new skillset. Building on the work of Design Council challenges projects, a government home for design demonstrators would help raise its profile as an accepted practice.

1.2 Policymakers across government should trial a multi-disciplinary design studio method for originating policy.

The Helsinki Design Lab developed a process called the studio model, which is a proven way of working through strategic design questions.

1.3 Department leaders must create career paths for social and service design professionals in public service work.

At the moment the opportunities for design professionals seeking to apply their skills in a public sector context are lacking. Civil service recruitment criteria (for more strategic design roles) may need addressing as part of this process.

1.4 Establish an advisory network of professional designers – who can act as mentors for public sector leaders.

See our thoughts on how to introduce design leadership on p30

2 Design capacity in government**The public sector needs to be far more assertive in its use of design**

Policies and public services that fail or are not cost-effective are frequently the result of antiquated solutions or a lack of design input, and yet the public sector rarely acknowledges explicitly the importance of this design element. This means that much public sector design work is unconsciously done or amateurish. In order to be more design-competent across the board, the public sector needs to embed some basic design skills, as well as an understanding of where they would benefit from professional design input. This would lead to an improvement in 'public sector client' behavior, in terms of awareness of how external design support can help to respond to service challenges and result in culture changes within the organisation. However there is also a problem with procurement norms: commissioning and procuring capacity and process around design need improvement.

2.1 Training in the use of basic service design principles must be a normal part of civil service training.

This should also include accredited training for design professionals working with public sector clients. Knowledge in this case needs to go both ways.

2.2 A better commissioning model for design.

More research and work is needed around how to align thinking around good commissioning and good design practice. Importantly, the new Commissioning Academy ought to embed design thinking into its curriculum.

2.3 A peer network of public sector employees trying to apply design approaches.

Many public sector employees we spoke to said they felt isolated in their attempts to drive innovation through design-led work. A peer-run network would help make visible what is at the moment a hidden community of people.

2.4 A resource of design practice toolkits for social and public sector work.

Design is not about magic dust or black boxes. There are some steps anyone can follow in the right context, and plenty of design practitioners have made these available. See our list p50 Ideally this information would be aggregated by a government website.

2.5 A bank of public sector examples (evidence) where design input has led to success/ improvement and cost-savings.**2.6 Design thinking modules to be introduced to public policy courses, as it has been with MBAs**

3 Capacity in the design sector

Designers need to upskill and upscale if they are to deliver design-led innovation effectively to public sector clients

Whilst there are a number of leading edge design consultancies in the UK specialising in public sector work, and an array of highly innovative and capable service designers, for the most part designers are yet to see government as a market. The public sector is an unparalleled source of interesting and challenging design briefs, but often the rigours of the procurement process, and the sometimes bureaucratic context, can be a deterrent. Procurement practice needs to improve in order to mend the somewhat broken relationship between the design industry and government. Designers need to both understand the necessary limitations and context of working with the public sector, and upskill (and this is a point for design education bodies) in social, service, and organisational design issues. Design courses at university need to plug in some extra skills and knowledge. Public sector bodies could help by being more attentive to the potential opportunities for design work.

3.1 A directory of (experienced) designers.

Many people in public sector bodies suggested they wouldn't know where to start trying to find a designer. We have highlighted a number of lists but there is scope for some kind of aggregator that publicises referrals of agencies proven in public sector work.

3.2 Design agencies must improve in terms of evidencing their impact.

They need to be supported in this by organisations such as the Design Council and design trade bodies.

3.3 Design education to broaden into: service and social design, ethics, organisational culture and change, systems thinking, impact metrics, economics, policy, social knowledge.

Service design and public sector work requires additional knowledge and training to the basic design skillset. This need could be met through CPD and/or whilst still in education.

3.4 Designers to use new CO reporting system to feedback about good and bad procurement practice.

As part of its procurement review, government has established a reporting system which design agencies should be encouraged to use.

3.5 HEIs and public sector organisations to explore possibilities of further research and knowledge transfer work.

The AHRC should support further research in this area.

3.6 Greater publicity/ awards scheme for good public service design.

Design awards are abundant, but there are few celebrating social and service design, and even fewer celebrating public service design. We believe this needs to be addressed.

2

LEARNING MORE ABOUT DESIGN

Definitions

What do we mean when we say...

1. Service design?

Service design is a collaborative activity that incorporates many disciplines – including design and the social sciences. It is not a blanket application like LEAN, but a bundle of skills and practices. Service design agencies in the private sector are usually multi-disciplinary affairs, but frequently employ professionals with a design background, commonly product or industrial designers. At present, in the public sector, a great deal of service design happens without any professional or practical design input, which is what we think needs addressing. The UK and other European countries happen to have very healthy service design sectors, and there is a burgeoning service design community brought together under the Service Design Network.⁷

2. Social design?

Social design refers to the traditional practices and methods of design as applied in a social context, where the material with which the designer is working, and the ends they are working towards, are social (rather than commodities). It has often been commented that this kind of design work requires a different attitude to traditional design work, partly because it means de-centring or de-privileging the role of the designer. The position is much more one of facilitation than autonomous creation.

3. Strategic design?

Helsinki Design Lab coined the term ‘strategic design’ to describe the act of

applying some of the principles of traditional design to “big picture” systemic challenges like healthcare, education, and climate change. It redefines how problems are approached, identifies opportunities for action, and helps deliver more complete and resilient solutions.⁸

Strategic designers have three core competencies: integration, visualisation, stewardship. This is a particularly useful concept when dealing with high level policymaking, where the ends are often large-scale organisational change. However at present there are only a handful of true strategic designers (in the HDL sense of the word) out there, and the career paths to develop these competencies are not always clear.

4. Design thinking?

Design thinking is a term originally used by some design leaders and others in the business academia world, to refer to the qualitatively different thought processes, and approach to problem solving, that comes from having had a design training and career, and working in the culture of design. Typically, designers move from a speciality and deep knowledge in one discipline, to more strategic innovation advice across many areas for their clients, as they progress upwards through their career (commonly referred to as being ‘T-shaped’). The term design thinking is often used as a shorthand for approaching a problem in a ‘designerly’ way, and it should be acknowledged that its invention has served the commercial needs of design and innovation consultancies well. However its legitimacy is contested within the broader design community because it suggests a

⁷ <http://www.service-design-network.org/>

⁸ <http://www.helsinkidesignlab.org/pages/what-is-strategic-design>

split of thinking from practice (and design is all about thinking *through* practice), and suggests that non-designers might be able to think like designers if they read enough books about design thinking.

What is the professional design skillset?

Designer and academic Lucy Kimbell provided us with a very useful breakdown of the typical bundle of skills and characteristics that designers embody. We are grateful to her for letting us share her analysis.⁹

Paying attention to the human scale.

Designers tend to be good at focusing on the experiences and capacities of users in a social and material world. Unfortunately the language of 'human-centred' has been appropriated by the marketing discipline, so even when managers say they know they need their services to be citizen centred, they don't necessarily know what that means, and probably, they can't operationally do it. They are not of the culture which really profoundly attends to human experiences at human scale and pays attention to the artefacts.

Designers do pay attention to the artefacts within the social world. Most managers think the artefacts are something you do later once you've worked out the strategy. This is what distinguishes the designerly approach: it's at the human scale. It's not the macro picture, it's actually quite detailed, it's about asking, 'what are we doing in this room right now, what are the objects, what are the human interactions?'

This is not to say that other people don't or can't do it. For example: the army really cares about 'stuff'. Because if that goes wrong, in the middle of an invasion, then you're in trouble. And the same with, for example, Citizens Advice – if you get the forms and the bits of paper wrong then it doesn't work. So whilst there are other professions that do care about the interactions of the people and the stuff and the teams, designers do it consistently, and they probably care more about the crafting of those things, as a starting point.

Synthesising.

Designers are of course analytical – to do any design work, somebody has to do some analytical work (the segmenting of the users, etc. – and working out which of the things they've moaned about are the ones that matter). But actually a more profoundly significant skill from a designerly training/background/profession is the ability to synthesise, particularly through giving shape and form.

So it's 'I've listened to everything you've said, now here is my sketch for that webpage and how it should be.' The very rapid synthesis, not 'let's write a list of how it could be changed, and then write another list, and then have another five meetings', but 'here it is right now, on a piece of paper'. This is not necessarily the same as 'making it visual', which is what designers are often credited with – the ability to visualise. The emphasis is on the synthesising. The ability to say 'I've heard what you've said and the interviews from those five users and now I've synthesised it'.

The generative and the creating of the new.

For cultural, psychological, cognitive, motivational – all sorts of complex reasons – some people are really good at generating ideas and some people are not.

9 Read the full transcript at <http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sites/default/files/transcript%20111012.pdf>

Designers generally are good at having lots of ideas. Many other people will probably just have one idea, and then they really stick to it. Typically the studies of designers show they have a gazillion ideas, and they just keep having more and more. And there's for them a sort of pleasure in having lots of ideas. Other people are not like that. So there is definitely something about generative creativity, which is celebrated and practised in design culture. And rewarded.

An exploratory inquiry approach.

This includes prototyping. It's not that you have the right answer... You may get solution fixation, but you may also just keep throwing away your ideas from one day to the next. So it's not just the generation – it's the co-evolution of the problem and solution. It's not a linear model, where you understand the problem, and you work towards a solution, which is the model in books. It's more like a real life model – you have an understanding of the problem, you suggest a solution, and the insight that gives you makes you keep going back to re-evaluate the problem and find better solutions – you keep evolving the problem and solutions.

This often gets described as 'iterative'. The fact that it is iterative is not the important thing, it's the fact that you keep refining your understanding of what the issue is that you're working with. Most organisations are not geared up to do that. They want to define a problem, sort out a solution, put some resources to it, and then make it go away. Again, it's not only designers that can do this – entrepreneurs typically do this as well – but research shows it is certainly true of designers.¹⁰

One other thing that is part of that exploratory approach is the assumption by designers that they don't know best – they usefully don't know. Their lack of expertise is generative for a project. The whole design approach is actually about continuous learning for the organisation.

Some other versions...

Design Council have a wealth of information about what design is, why it matters, and what designers do all day, all available here:

www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-design/

Geoff Mulgan has written a concise summary of the design skillset and its relevance for public work. According to his analysis, it comprises: understanding users, ideation, visualisation, rapid prototyping and systems thinking.

www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/GMDesignWhatWorksWhatCouldWorkBetter.pdf

Helsinki Design Lab have their own version too. They credit strategically-minded designers with being good at integration, visualisation and stewardship.

www.helsinkidesignlab.org/pages/what-is-strategic-design

10 See Dorst, K. and N. Cross. 2001. "Creativity in the Design Process: Co-evolution of Problem–Solution." *Design Studies*, 22(5): 425–37.

History and context

“It is important to remember that for the public sector to commission design agencies to address social challenges was, and still is, a big leap in thinking. Design is not typically associated with creating social solutions within the public sector. Without the backing of key organisations like Nesta and the Design Council, and the promotion of innovation (i.e. trying new processes and methods to produce innovative results) by the Government, a design agency proposing to tackle an inadequate public service or improve a health or social inequality would have seemed absurd. Even with the work of these key organisations and the innovation agenda, for many it still is.”

- Mary Rose Cook,
UsCreates¹¹

11 From Cook, M., 'The emergence and practice of co-design as a method for social sustainability under New Labour', PhD thesis

The design industries we see today are the great-grandchildren of the industrial revolution. Design practitioners now, due to new market opportunities and the relentless curiosity inherent to the discipline, are moving into areas far beyond their original remit, tackling social, service, and large-scale systems challenges.

Before mass industrialisation changed the world of manufacture and consumption, the act of designing and making was normally embodied in the same person or team of people – small workshops, communities of artisans, guilds. The introduction of mass manufacturing systems created the discipline of design by separating the functions of designing and producing, thereby splitting the artisan class into a small body of highly skilled workers whose role it was to design, and a large body of lower-skilled labourers whose role it was to produce, repeatedly, the pre-designed objects.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that cohort of designers began to assert their own identity as distinct from industry. The ongoing debate about design IP is really a dispute about whether the design process is an act of autonomous artistic creation, or a subset of an industrial process. Either way, it quickly became accepted that improving the quality of the design function, and the level of artistic input, was one way to improve the commercial value of industrial output. Seeing the gains that could be made through the application of design, later in the 20th century design came to be applied to objects beyond discrete industrial products, to more ephemeral outputs such as ‘brands’, be it of companies, or of nations (the design input into world ‘Expos’ was considerable).

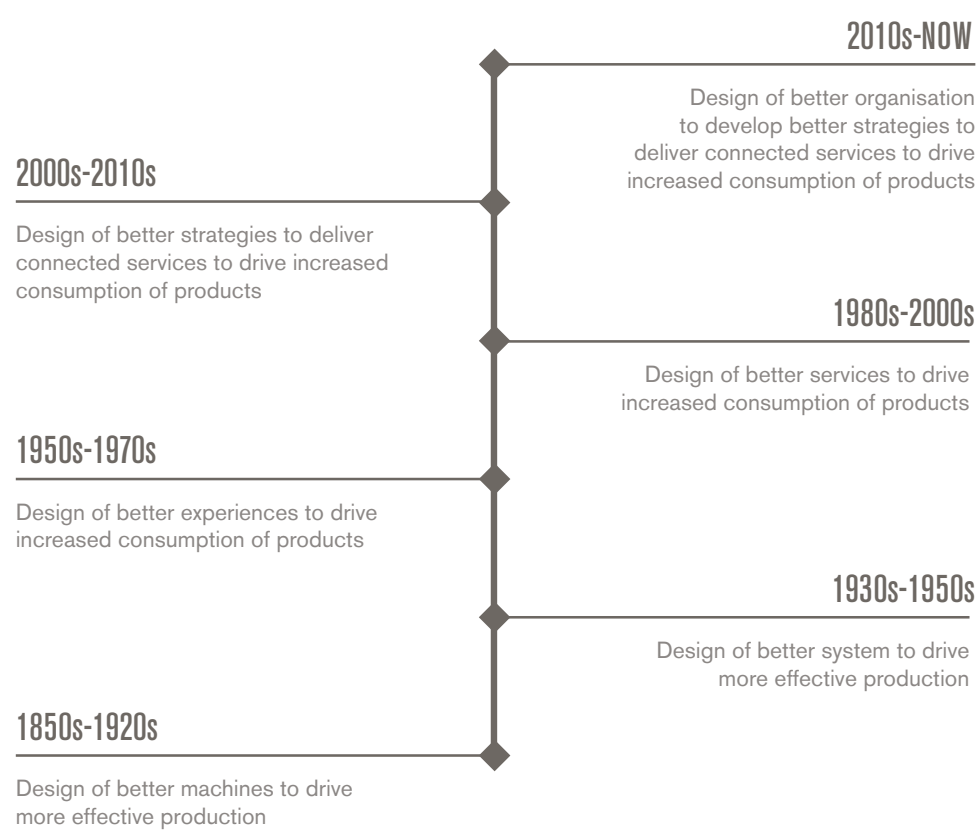
Over the same period, design’s inspirations started to change – the identity of the designer moved from that of the ego-driven artist (although there are still a few of those around) to the expert manipulator of user insight. Customer experience became a relevant metric in creating saleable items and concepts. The discipline of ergonomics emerged. This ability to claim user understanding, creativity, and advanced problem solving skills has allowed designers to move into far more strategic areas. What happens if you apply design to a business plan, or to a service experience? What can design do to help manage huge and complex systems?

The evolution of design described above has taken place within the incentives and motivations set by capitalism, driven by the economics of consumption. There has been an interesting parallel development of design in non-commercial fields, where the motivations are quite different. This has frequently been driven by research and educational institutions, and much of the expertise in social design rests in these kinds of organisations. The international Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESI) network is a good example. There is clearly a continuing role for research and academia to drive the development of thinking and practice around non-commercially viable design applications. All design education – from school through to CPD – would benefit from thinking more broadly about possible fields of application.

Social design expertise has also been developed by large commercially oriented organisations branching out into social practice. The UK has a strong tradition in this. For example, Britain’s first multidisciplinary design agency, the Design Research Unit was important in shaping many of the features of Attlee and Beveridge’s Welfare State in the post-WWII era. Ideo is another good example, with their recent expansion into ideo.org and OpenIdeo.

The interesting thing to note here is that, although design agencies must of course make money, the motivation of the designer is often different to that of the manufacturer. A social design brief can be just as, if not more, interesting than an industrial design brief. The public sector is thus potentially full of fascinating design briefs. Unfortunately, designers (as a group) also seem to be motivated by the ability to create change rapidly, and the relatively slow pace of change in the

Design’s concerns in the commercial sector:



public sector often becomes a deterrent to pursuing further work there. Nevertheless, the past 10 or so years has seen a growing cohort of small creative agencies – particularly those focused on service design and social innovation – who have built businesses on the back of public sector work. Such agencies have won contracts to help tackle public service problems where other more traditional measures, such as business process engineering, have failed.

The reasons for this are part accident, part investment. The past three administrations have presided over a discernible change in the nature of citizen engagement: from top-down politics, to consultative politics, to participatory politics. So while the ‘open policymaking’, ‘big society’ and ‘digital-by-default’ initiatives are Coalition projects, they can also be seen as part of a broader and longer-lasting change in how politicians interact with the electorate, and how citizens expect to be treated.

Simultaneously, the design field has evolved new forms – service design, social design, interaction design – that build on the structured creativity of design, but incorporate ideas and practices from other areas, the social sciences in particular. Political change created opportunities for these designers, with their unique claim to creative problem-solving and user-focused methods, to get involved in the policymaking and public service process. In particular, the appearance of co-creation and co-production models, developed initially in the areas of health and social care, opened up a space for design to fill.

Under New Labour money flowed, and this allowed some new kinds of mission-driven design agencies to enter the market and mature. The development of an innovation agenda and the expression of design as a key driver of innovation in both the public and private sectors, allowed

organisations such as Design Council, Nesta, the Young Foundation, the Social Innovation Lab for Kent and the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement to champion design as a lever in the innovation process. These organisations brokered design projects, de-risking an untested approach for public sector clients, and acted as commissioners to the design market, shaping new kinds of agency and offer.¹²

The UK is not unique in having developed this capacity, although we are at the forefront of practice. The UK has an enviable reputation for design, traditionally in the private sector, but this body of professionals has also lent credibility to the idea that the UK is very good at design in the public sector. Because we have a Design Council focusing on public sector problems, and some high profile examples of design applied to public challenges, our reputation in this field potentially exceeds the reality across much of the UK. We must now act to consolidate this reputation, as it is a potential source of expertise to export. Unfortunately it would so far seem that the Coalition government has presided over the undervaluing, and in some cases neglect, of this pool of expertise.

Other nations with strongly-developed design capacities in public sector work include Denmark, Finland, and Australia, all of which have created high profile design-led public agencies – Helsinki Design Lab/ Sitra, MindLab and DesignGov. Beyond these best known examples there is plenty of evidence that this skillset and approach is being taken very seriously internationally. The SEE research project has found that most European countries have or are in the process of articulating a national design vision or strategy.¹³ La 27e Région in France, for example, is making steady progress towards this goal.¹⁴ This is an area which requires some attention and coordination from the UK government if we are going to continue to be global thought leaders.

The design sector also needs to behave more strategically. Unfortunately, there are some unresolved internal issues with the design profession that make it difficult to regulate or treat as a whole, and thereby raise standards or create movements for change. Perhaps because of the inbuilt counter-cultural attitude of many in the design industries (often a key ingredient of their success as innovators), the sector is not strongly organised, institutionally. There is no consistent representation or accreditation as there is with other professions. This causes a number of problems:

- The sector is not very visible to those outside it, and particularly to those in government.
- It is difficult to apply standards, or guarantee quality – there are no boundaries to the industry and anyone who chooses might refer to themselves as ‘a designer’.
- There is no obvious mechanism for conducting CPD and thereby creating a step-change in the capacity of the industry.

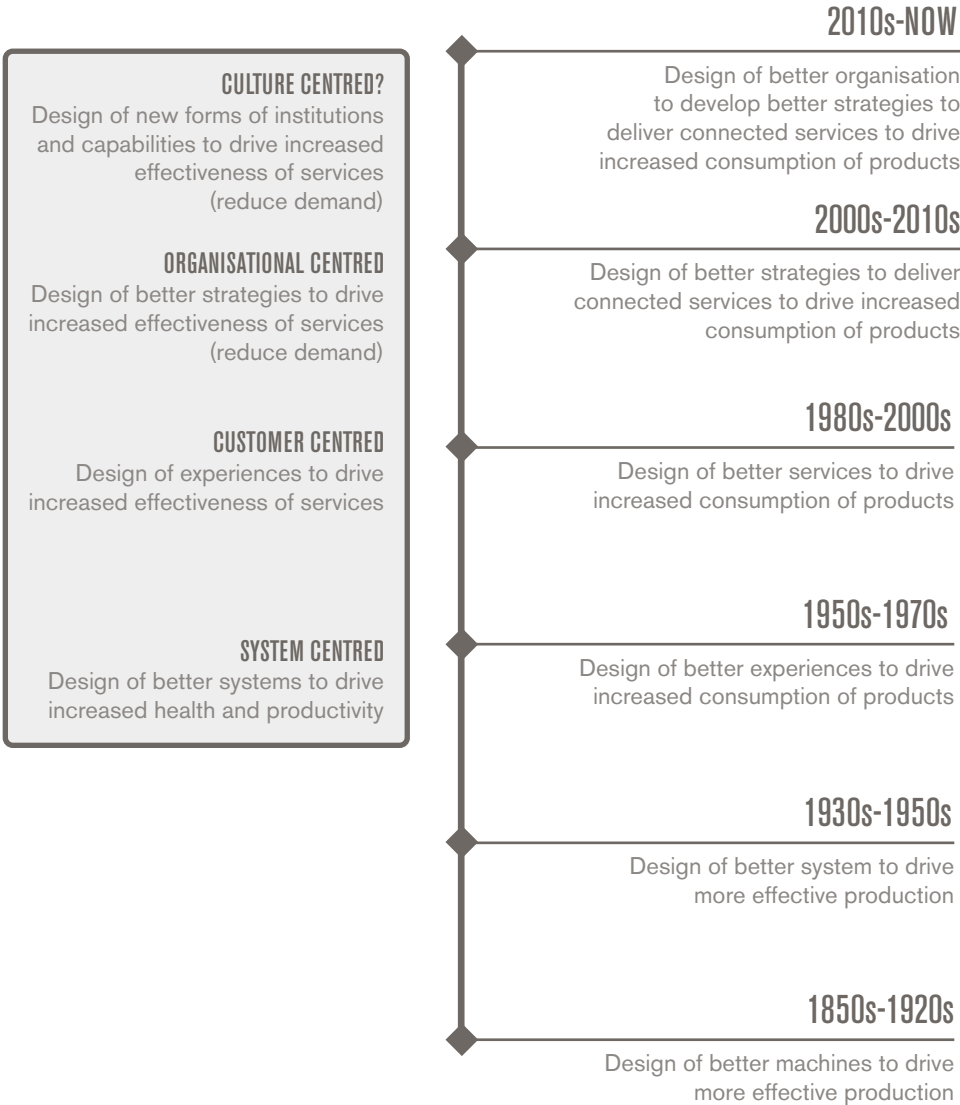
The question of industry representation and accreditation is a long-running debate for the design industry and unlikely to be solved overnight. It also does not alter the fact that there are within the industry a great number of highly talented and experienced practitioners. But the sector must recognise the disadvantages that come with weak institutional backing, and we would suggest this is an area requiring further research and discussion. A request from government that the design industry coordinate itself to talk to the public sector would galvanise that conversation.

¹² We are grateful to Mary Rose Cook of UsCreates for sharing her analysis of this era of social design history

¹³ <http://www.seeplatform.eu/>

¹⁴ <http://www.la27eregion.fr/>

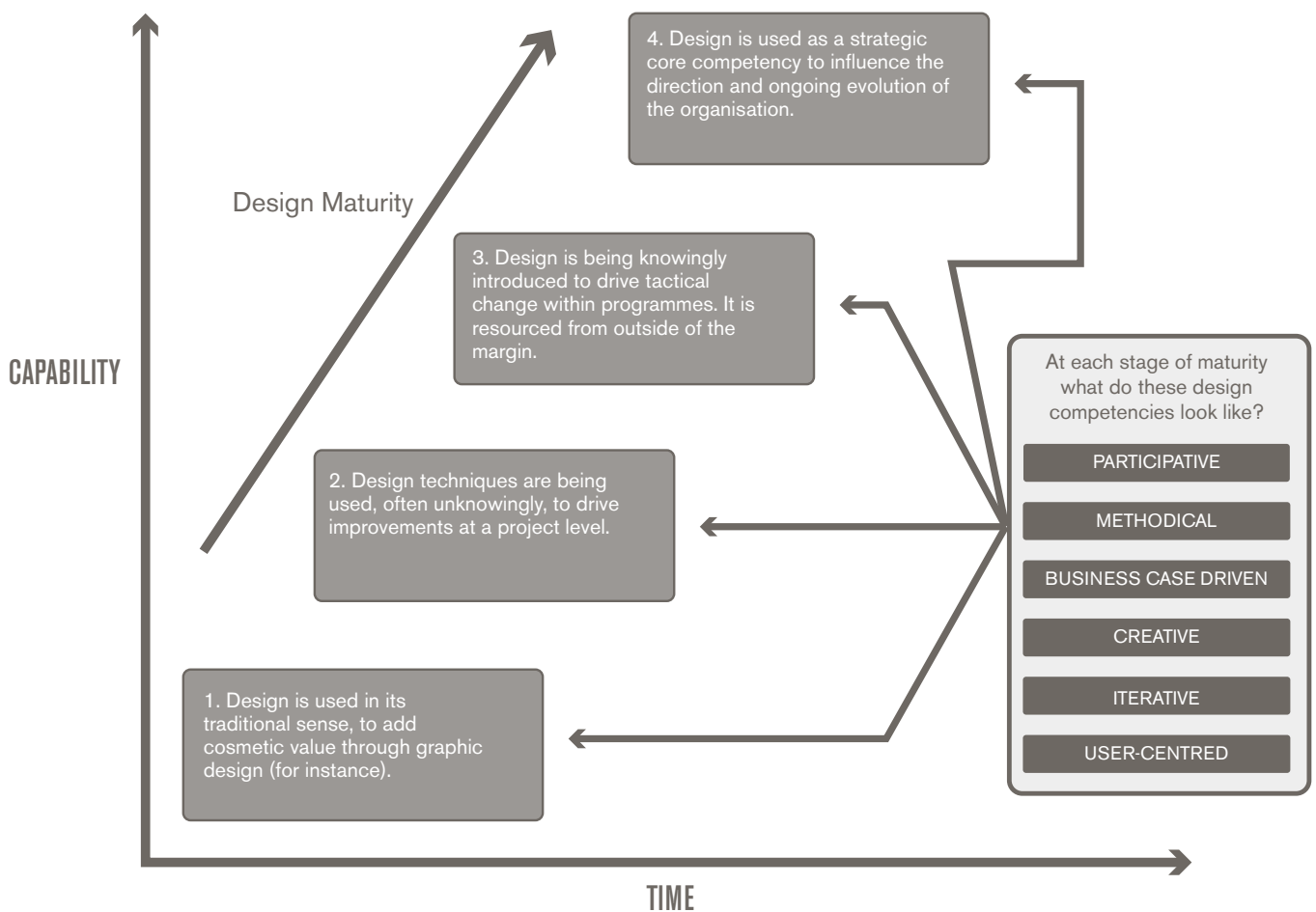
A different journey for the public sector?



What does it look like?

The design ladder

In 2003 the Danish Design Centre developed something called the ‘design ladder’ which usefully visualised the ascending levels of sophistication in terms of how companies used design.¹⁵ This ladder could equally be applied to public sector organisations. Our own formulation is below. The general lesson here is that design increases its value to the organisation in proportion to its involvement.



15 <http://www.seeplatform.eu/casestudies/Design%20Ladder>

Where might design be applied?

In public sector work, design can be applied to different levels of transformational challenge:

- redesigning individual services
- redesigning policies
- moving beyond the idea of discrete services and redesigning what organisations as a whole do, i.e. systems-level design

In reality design-led work naturally shifts between these levels, ‘zooming’ between the detail and the macro view, with one informing the other. Across all these levels, however, we have often seen how design work engages citizens themselves to help design and deliver solutions.

As it is far easier to do the small scale repurposing of services than large scale organisational change, the majority of design work in the public sector to date has been at the level of individual services. There are, however, a small number of examples where wholesale organisational change through design has been attempted. The work of the Helsinki Design Lab is one, as is Nesta’s Creative Councils project. But in reality this seems to be very difficult to do. Partly because of the natural limitations of design, partly because prevailing conditions within many public sector organisations can make it hard for design processes to work at all. As mentioned in the opening chapter, these include:

- the reversal of the traditional policy process that design work implies
- tendencies to short-termism and blame-aversion
- procurement norms
- a lack of basic design knowledge
- a culture clash between local government personas and the design industry

It is important to remember that although design is a very useful process for realising innovation, and radically different results, it is not necessarily a ‘magic pill’ that can be applied to any situation. This is usually down to where design sits in the wider change process. Designers are rarely in a position of power in the product or service development process, being brought into oversee one step in a much larger project arc. Although they may have the ambition, it can be difficult for the designer to effect change outside of their particular remit. The most successful design-client relationships tend to be those where the original brief was the starting point of a much bigger conversation, where the designer, with outsider’s eyes, was able to spot other more systemic issues around the original brief.

Unfortunately, public procurement processes often mean that a design professional who has spotted, researched and developed a brief for a particular problem is then disqualified from working on its solution. We believe this is a fundamental barrier to achieving better designed public services.

Many witnesses to the inquiry told us that there needs to be a qualitative difference in approach to social and public service design work: it must have a particular tone, one of greater humility. Design in a public and social context has to operate differently to design in other more material and commercial contexts. Often this means the designer giving up a certain amount of control over the outcome. The role is much more one of facilitating a process rather than owning it. Tim Brown of Ideo has written well on this point.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Brown, T., ‘From Blueprint to Genetic Code’ in Rotman Magazine, Spring 2012, p17

How does design work sit in institutions?

Over the course of the inquiry we have spoken to many different kinds of organisations, and individuals who have applied design in a variety of ways. However there are some recurring features in terms of how design work sits within, or intervenes in, institutions, which we have attempted to map out and describe on page 31. Hopefully these will be useful in helping readers think about how design work might be situated or brought into their own organisation.

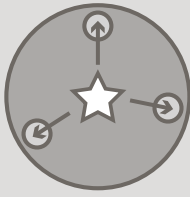
We also have some thoughts on how public sector organisations can establish stronger design leadership.

As is the case with most successful private sector organisations, design expertise could also be of great benefit at board level (or the equivalent) in public sector organisations. Leaders could bring design thinkers into their boards to help influence the views of other senior decision makers, who are perhaps removed from the needs of citizens, or out of touch with emerging behavioural research and digital developments.

Experienced design thinkers have the ability to:

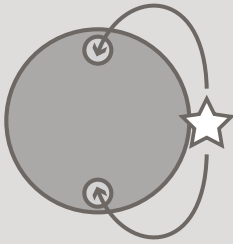
- See the world from the point of view of the user;
- Bring an outside pair of eyes to organisational challenges;
- Change the traditional institutional or managerial dynamic, disrupt orthodox thinking and customary positions;
- Have no vested interest other than what's best for the citizen.

Admittedly we have not seen many examples of this kind of intervention yet, but we believe that sustained design advice at this level could produce huge gains in the public sector. In reality, public services need to be constantly refined and redesigned as needs, budgets and contexts change. Establishing some long-term advisory relationships with trusted design professionals could be a potential model for bringing good design practice into public sector organisations.



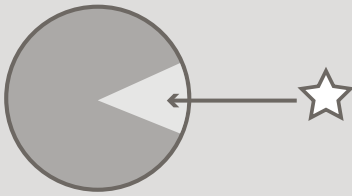
Embedded designer

Full time strategic-level employee responsible for developing organisational design capacity, as well as for specific service redesign programmes.
e.g. Cornwall Council, Capita, Helsinki Design Lab Exchange project, Scottish Government.



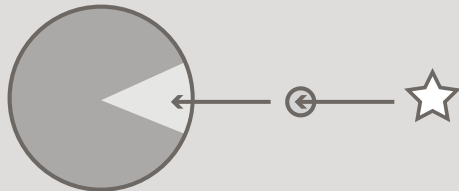
Internal agency

A service design unit (normally multi-disciplinary) works with other parts of the organisation on a project-by-project basis.
e.g. Social Innovation Lab Kent, MindLab, Behavioural Insights Team.



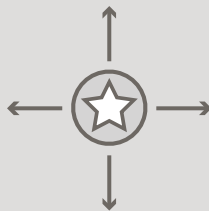
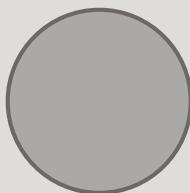
External agency

Consultancy from an independent design practice on a project-by-project basis.
e.g. Ideo, Snook, Uscreates, ThinkPublic, LiveWork, Engine, STBY – and many others.



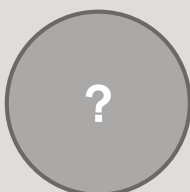
Brokered intervention

Organisations such as the Design Council, or Nesta, in order to address a perceived market failure, broker design work for a public sector body, thereby introducing new expertise in a de-risked way, and supporting design businesses through procurement.
e.g. Patchwork, Creative Councils, Design Council Challenges and public service leadership projects.



Design-led startup service

Design-led teams move outside of the traditional public service institutions to start services that meet a specific public need independently.
e.g. Participle, Good Gym, Care4Care.



No-designer design work

Public service managers deploy design methods without professional design input.

SOME GREAT EXAMPLES

There are myriad ways of doing design in the public sector – each problem has its own approach and solution, and the organisational context makes a big difference to what is possible.

Design can mean complex system redesign - pooling budgets around troubled families, for example - or small material interventions that make a big difference - improving the legibility of signs in an A&E department, perhaps.

Here are a handful of examples that we like...

Andrea Siodmok, Chief Design Officer, Cornwall Council

'Shaped.By.Us' provides an example of citizen engagement and council strategically supporting local social innovation.

Andrea's position as Chief Design Officer in Cornwall is a direct result of the Design Council's 'Design of the Times' (DOTT) project. Since she has been embedded in the Council she has worked to spread good design practice by advising and helping officers and teams, developing an innovation methodology (called 'Thinking Room'), and initiating some large scale public engagement projects.

Shaped By Us has been one such project, which surveyed council members and local people in trying to determine which problems everyone was most bothered by, and were therefore ripe for some collaborative problem-solving. The materiality of the engagement was crucial, setting a different tone, sending a message: this was not 'business as usual'. The engagement steered away from traditional clipboards and questionnaires and took a more ethnographic and 'designerly' approach. The original answers from councillors were arranged as a wall of post-it notes in the shape of Cornwall. They spread helium balloons around the town centres with key questions attached to them. Two huge white armchairs were positioned outside Asda to encourage people to sit down and talk. A 'talkeoke' at the Royal Cornwall Show triggered new conversations between strangers.

The approach – open and citizen-centred – intentionally sought to build bridges across the public, private and third sector, and the media response was incredibly positive. The DOTT evaluation showed the public loved it too – seemingly not too disheartened by the fact that not every idea was progressed.

Out of hundreds of ideas that were produced, five key themes were established and developed further. And out of these, three have been helped with business plans, a team, and initial funding. These are Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network, Shop by Layby and St Austell Market House. There were also those that failed to galvanise enough support, or were victims of recession, and fell by the wayside, as might be expected. But such was the success of the project that the Shaped By Us website now has national ambitions. The team have secured external investment to help it become a hub for crowd-sourcing ideas across the UK. A crowd-funding function is also in the pipeline, hoping to attract investors willing to kick-start community entrepreneurs.

Source: Social Design Talk 6

The Australian Taxation Office

The ATO is responsible principally for the administration of revenue collection and is one of three key organisations that make up the Australian Taxation System (ATS). The ATO has embedded design thinking in its organisation over a twenty year period.

Around the mid 1980s, the ATO had reached a crisis point. Their prevailing approach of bureaucratic and rigid administration was 'burying' the organisation in paper and a 'we're right, and they're wrong' mind-set had created an intensely negative perception in the eyes of the Australian people. People lived in fear of their punitive and seemingly capricious auditing of even slight unintentional mistakes, and individuals and companies responded with evasive strategies to target loopholes and gaps in the tax law. These gaps were fixed with cosmetic amendments to the legislation, adding layers upon layers of complexity to these already incomprehensible documents.

In response to this crisis the ATO began a programme which systematically embedded design thinking and processes within the organisation, this involved:

- Codifying 'design' into project management, ensuring design was written into the organisation's procedures. The development of 'the wheel' design process and its on-going deployment to the current day, supported by a set of formal design principles to guide its future work.
- Multiple training courses on dialogue, visual thinking and design practice. This work was directed towards the goal of establishing the ATO Design Centre on a firm foundation.
- Design conferences in 2000 and 2001 including presentations by renowned design academics and interaction design practitioners.
- Employing a design team between 2002 and 2005 in order to implement strategic reporting systems in the ATO to ensure efficient knowledge architectures are used to report on the health of the system.

In the midst of these changes a crisis emerged. The new requirement, to submit a Business Activity Statement (BAS) quarterly, created significant pressures for small businesses around Australia.

In April 2001 a very distressed ATO leader asked the design team to write a review of the BAS. The original form had not been developed using the ATO's user-based design capability (which at this point was still at the edge of the organisation). The government was concerned about the political fallout from the BAS, and 'customer experience' was both a key worry and was a huge strategic issue given their self-assessment model.

As part of the review process, the design team conducted ethnographic research on the experience of users filling out the BAS. One 'extreme user' in the analysis was a woman who dutifully and carefully did the books of her small businesses after hours and was 100% committed to complying with the tax laws. She couldn't fill out the BAS and was moved to tears because of the experience.

The ATO leadership was influenced strongly by the review, and associated videos and follow-up workshops demonstrating the power of user research. The BAS became a cautionary story within ATO folklore about the strategic consequences of treating customers insensitively. As a consequence, tactical user-based design

became embedded in the culture of the ATO. The mantra from then on, for any and every initiative, was 'do design always!'

Source: Michael York, Otto Wicks-Green, Tony Golsby-Smith, 'Cultural Transformation: 20 years of 'Design Thinking' at the Australian Taxation Office: Some reflections on the journey'

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham & Design Council

Following a design project which brought about cost savings and profound operational cultural change, B&D has embedded new ways of thinking, new skills and new techniques.

Barking & Dagenham's housing and environment services were under pressure - from growing demand, the diverse nature of the local population, and public sector budget cuts. The council wanted to understand how to use design to become more innovative and user-centric in order to address the issues it faces, improve the experiences of people using its services, and deliver those services more efficiently. With the Design Council's help, they engaged the services of a design agency who trained staff to undertake ethnographic research and led co-design workshops and service prototyping work.

Through this intervention, initial savings worth £20,000 were identified and are now being reinvested into other service improvements. The project also generated 70 ideas for potential service improvements and the residents involved in the co-design project rated the council more highly in terms of keeping them informed and listening to their needs. Staff have successfully adopted the new design methods and are now training colleagues, with a transferrable model now in place and ready to roll out across other services in the Council.

Source: Inquiry Evidence

Bill Pollard, Deputy Business Programme Director, HMRC

HMRC/ Companies House Project with the Design Council, redesigning how a company is incorporated using a design process to get better user insight.

"One of the first activities that we set off with Sean (the designer) was to develop a workshop where he brought in some other Design Associate colleagues but we also brought in a wider cross section of people, and this was one of the early things which I found very useful from the Design Council, it was essentially a brainstorming session but from a variety of perspectives. That really got us going, if you like, and started to throw different ideas on the table. So it was no longer the little groups' ideas; it was a much wider perspective.

Once we'd gone through the workshop and starting to develop the initial project areas that we wanted to look at, what we then decided would help us to develop our thinking there was to appoint a service design agency, so that was really the next stage on and that's where Sean was, again was very helpful to us.

From the initial work we expect significant cost savings for both Companies House and HMRC and also customer benefits, and we're starting to quantify those as we go through. And certainly on the customer side, we are probably talking about benefits ranging from half a million pounds to five million per annum

so we're talking about something fairly significant there. I certainly think for the future I would want to take forward design projects. Indeed, I see the current project I'm working with very much as an exemplar as to how we can do things in the future."

Source: www.designcouncil.org.uk/case-studies/case-study-hmrc/

Carrie Bishop, director of FutureGov, with Staffordshire and Brighton Councils

The 'Patchwork' social services families project used a design approach to join up a disparate range of social workers involved with a single family.

FutureGov are a creative agency that brings digital innovation to local government organisations. One example of their work is the Patchwork App, a project rooted in careful observation of how social workers go about their work practice across a number of local authorities. During a process which included around 75 workshops, they heard from front line staff who told them that a huge barrier to their working collaboratively with other agencies was that they simply didn't know which local organisations were also involved in their clients' lives. When troubled families are accessing multiple services, things can become very complicated when those agencies don't have a clear picture of who the others are.

After finding one very understanding chief executive in Staffordshire, FutureGov developed the App, which allows social workers from multiple agencies to find out quickly and easily who else is working with their family. The idea is not a complex one – common sense in fact – however this highlights the considerable barriers to making services joined up and simple. Not least, when working with government data, there are a number of restrictions on what, legally, can and cannot be done and shared: a frequent stumbling block in digital projects, especially in cases where the implication is that people cannot be given information about themselves.

In a talk as part of the Social Design Talks series, Carrie Bishop explained that she believes her own background in local government is a significant factor in FutureGov's success working with councils. Throughout the 'risky' design process, they make a real effort to support and reassure their local government colleagues as much as possible, with such steps as underwriting the risk associated with the project, rigorously documenting its development and implementation process, and being patient while things are approved to move forward.

By utilising their team's knowledge of local government, and their collective design expertise, FutureGov are able to surmount these internal organisational challenges, in order to help the organisation meet its community's challenges. The result: an innovation which makes the work undertaken by social workers simpler and more efficient, leading to earlier interventions and better outcomes for families.

Source: Social Design Talk 3

MindLab (Denmark)

MindLab is a cross ministerial innovation agency unit that works with civil servants, citizens and businesses to create new solutions for society. MindLab worked with the National Board of Industrial Injuries to develop a better understanding of the reality experienced by people injured at work, to generate efficiency dividends for the Board.

The employees of the National Board of Industrial Injuries go to work every day in order to help those who have been injured at work. Their desire is to make a positive difference, however the services they provide are often perceived as bewildering by the victims of industrial injuries.

To address this miss-match of perception MindLab conducted home interviews with five industrial injury victims. These interviews, which were recorded on video, charted the experiences of each industrial injury victim throughout the entire handling of their case from the moment they were injured at work up to their interview with the mobile team. MindLab also took part in the mobile team's interviews as observers and conducted follow-up interviews with the industrial injury victims.

Following this research MindLab organised a workshop with representatives from the National Board of Industrial Injuries, municipalities and unions. The workshop offered an opportunity for everyone to consider how to improve the experience of the proceedings leading up to the interview that the Board conducts with industrial injury victims, as well as looking at how to improve the interview itself. The adjustments the National Board of Industrial Injuries then made gave the industrial injury victims a new, calmer and more manageable interview experience.

Source: www.mind-lab.dk/en/cases/portrait-of-a-citizen-young-industrial-injury-victim

Claire Webb, Policy Officer, Southwark Council

Southwark worked with Engine to research and develop some typical user profiles, which they then used as a driver for policymaking at the highest level.

"We worked with designers 'engine' – who we met quite randomly – to build up a better, more complete picture of our users and citizens. We found some funding for the project through the cabinet office and we used ethnographic research to develop 6 detailed profiles, many of the families lived in quite challenging circumstances. We took these profiles to our council leaders and partners such as the borough commander and found them to be influential in enabling people to look at challenges and the role of public services very differently, and in persuading people to try more experimental approaches, and to rethink certain policies. Even in local government it is easy to get detached from the detail of peoples day to day lives and how they interact with services - but it's essential we start from this. When officers are overwhelmed by managing difficult budgets and complex systems... human stories help to link systematic problems to real life. In my experience the real value of the design approach has been to bring strategic policymaking and delivery together - which is just where they should be."

Source: Inquiry evidence

Denis O'Rourke, Lambeth CCG and Lambeth Council

Together with a number of colleagues involved mental health service provision across Lambeth, Denis worked with the Innovation Unit to develop co-creation workshops for mental health services, which has resulted in 'The Lambeth Collaborative'.

"We began in early 2010; we were spending £80 million on adult mental healthcare for people with serious mental illness (schizophrenia, bipolar). There was a lot of hospital bed based care, we were spending £80 million but experiencing poor outcomes for our local population. Most inner-London and metropolitan areas will have a similar scenario - spending a lot of money on mental health services but finding that people remain socially excluded.

With the onset of massive public sector reductions we brought together a group of users, carers, voluntary sector providers, clinicians and managers. We targeted a group of people who were up for a different sort of conversation.

Across health and social care we began a process of standing back and actually asking what would a much better system of care and support look like? We ran design workshops working up a new script of what the new system might look like. We found it best to do the delivery and commissioning of services. This was to use co-production as our operating system. By this we mean taking an asset based approach; the NHS is a sickness based service which looks at people as deficits, as burdens. We're saying flip that on its head. We need to engage with patients as people who use services and communities as people who have skills, talents, abilities. You have a very different conversation with people - with communities - if it starts with 'how can we help you realise your personal goals or your wider neighbourhood or community ambitions?' rather than 'what "drugs" can I give you?' The fact is that a lot of people, 4000 people with mental illness in Lambeth, their main contact, other than talking to themselves, is with a care coordinator based at a hospital. Part of our agenda is 'lets support you to have a life of your own.'

It's changing the dynamic of the relationship. We're doing this through our 'living well collaborative' which is a group of pioneers who are committed to the principles of co-production. We aren't experts in design; what we do recognise is valuing a co-productive approach and underpinning that is a design lens which we think really helps.

I think the message is that everyone is part of the solution. We're taking £11 million out of our budget by 2014 and we're talking about similar levels through to '18-'19. The idea that we can sit back and do the old ways of commissioning and procuring... it's a nonsense."

Source: Inquiry evidence session

Chris Howroyd, Head of Programmes & Health – Challenges, Design Council

Design Council worked with the Department of Health and the NHS, bringing in design to improve user experience and the NHS equipment supply chain.

"The Challenges programme brings the power of design to bear on big, gnarly social issues. An example of that is infection control in NHS hospitals. Healthcare

associated infections, one of which is MRSA, were on the rise in 2008 - there was a concerted push to reduce them by the Department of Health and in NHS. We were asked to help tackle this spread through better designed equipment and furniture, under the assumption that if a piece of furniture is easier to clean, it is cleaned better, more quickly and more often. The collaboration relied on an inspirational figure within the NHS, who appreciated what design could do, approaching us; he valued a different approach, a design-led approach.

Another example is the single-sex-accommodation agenda where we were approached by the Department of Health to try and improve patient dignity and privacy on NHS wards. This included everything from redesigning the patient gown to developing modular bed and wash rooms which slotted into the existing fabric of NHS hospitals.

These are all practical, feasible, low cost solutions which address real social issues in a very intuitive, user-led way. We do this by reframing the issue as an opportunity, by really understanding it from frontline user's perspective, by researching it in-depth, from literature reviews to ethnographic research, to understand the barriers, drivers, wants and needs of users. We then curate a series of design briefs and promote as inspiring, positive opportunities to engage industry and try to match designers within industry suppliers (manufactures, service suppliers etc.) to tackle the issue(s) together, as a team. At the heart of this process is collaboration, we want multidisciplinary teams to tackle issues through a design lens, in as many different ways as possible.

There are some quite compelling examples where the design intervention has really worked. For example there's a modestly sized manufacturer based in Suffolk who have never been on the NHS roster before, they've tried and they've failed many times, yet they are manufacturing high quality furniture for care homes. They teamed up with the design agency that designed the upper class seating in virgin aircraft to redesign the commode and the patient chair, together. Since then they've sold thousands of commodes into the NHS and they've continued to work together to develop new products.

Some of our latest work has been in A&E departments where we worked with the Department of Health to try to develop solutions to reduce violence and aggression against NHS staff. We engaged a multidisciplinary design team with no less than eight disciplines. They tackled it holistically, using the ethnographic research we commissioned to understand the triggers and context of why violence occurs and coming up with two solutions which are being installed in hospitals as we speak. This includes a physical, large scale guidance package to reduce anxiety and frustration of those waiting in A&E and a training package specifically designed for frontline staff to help them better understand their behaviours and the causes of violence and aggression and how they can proactively manage them."

Source: Inquiry evidence

The Government Digital Service

An excellent example of a design-led approach to the development of a public service, which has saved money and works better for the citizen.

GOV.UK, the new single platform government website designed by the Government Digital Service (this year nominated for a Design of the Year Award at the Design Museum) has successfully revolutionised Whitehall's digital presence. Having been set up as a new department, from scratch, has made it easier for the leaders of the unit to establish a completely different tone. The GDS office is far more akin to a digital design studio than a government department. Little touches around the office remind those who work there of the user: typical profiles adorn the walls, piece of paper with a scribbled 'users' with an arrow points out of the window at the street outside. The challenge has been twofold: to move all central government websites onto a single platform, thereby creating a unified look and feel, and a single point of entry for citizens wanting to interact with, or find things out from, central government departments; and to drastically simplify the experience of using the sites. The team established some ruling design principles very early on:

1. start with needs
2. do less
3. design with data
4. do the hard work to make it simple
5. iterate. then iterate again
6. build for inclusion
7. understand context
8. build digital services, not websites
9. be consistent, not uniform
10. make things open: it makes things better

This drastically different approach - by bringing the right design skills into government, and being ambitious in the scope of the challenge - has not only created a far better digital service, it is also much cheaper. Gone are the multiple contracts for 24 government differently specified and procured department websites. Its success has been due to its strong political backing, the mission and tone were set from the top, and those in charge of the redesign were allowed to be radical.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Isabel Dedring, Deputy Mayor for Transport, London

The introduction of the oyster system and the bus spider maps were both very user-led innovations.

Everyone knows what an iconic piece of design the London tube map is. But arguably an equally influential piece of design - in terms of systems, services, and user experience, is the oyster card. The card itself is the material touchpoint of a much bigger intangible system, which allows seamless travel across all modes of public transport in the city. As well as greater convenience for the user, the system also allows TfL to monitor passenger flows and journeys, gathering huge data sets that help them to better programme services.

The spider diagrams at bus stops are another piece of very user led communication design. The previous version of the bus stop map - where the numbers of the buses were written alongside each road on their route - was one of the least legible city maps ever invented. The new version, which is different at almost every stop, starts from the presumption that someone standing at a bus stop primarily wants to know all the different places they could get to from that particular stop. That was the starting point for the redesign.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Joel Bailey, Head of Service Design, Capita

Capita has been practising service design for the past five years, to help clients better understand the customers they're seeking to serve. This insight is used to provide customers with better more personalised service experiences, and to find innovative ways of encouraging valuable customer behaviours such as digital uptake or prompter payment.

"Capita has built a central service design team, pledged to 'represent the end-user'. The team acts as an internal agency to facilitate design projects across Capita. Over time this team has set up a number of satellite insight and service design functions within many of Capita's contracts, including TV Licensing, Teachers' Pensions and British Army Recruitment. These teams are deploying new ways of working that are delivering real benefits to these contracts.

With TV Licensing, as well as rich behavioural data from our analytics system, we have invested in qualitative research to understand and segment the UK population's attitudes to the TV Licence. Through an on-going programme of Insight and Innovation workshops we bring together frontline staff, customers and enabling teams (IT, process change, HR etc.) to map future customer journeys that enable the BBC's critical success factors. The concepts that emerge from these workshops, such as a new payment lifecycle and a multichannel service style guide, then undergo a test and learn prototype cycle, prior to standard product development and change control.

With British Army Recruitment, we segmented the target demographic to develop a clear set of candidate requirements. We distilled these into personas that were used to facilitate a series of customer journey mapping workshops, aimed at specifying the idealised candidate journey. These exercises formed the backbone of more detailed business process and technology specification work, leading to the service which is currently under development."

As with any change of practice in a large organisation, Capita has had to overcome a number of challenges in achieving success with service design. The following is a reflection of how Capita overcame challenges to adopt design as a strategic practice:

From product-centred to customer-centred – moving people from thinking about the product and technology first, to instead think about the behaviours we need to enable has been crucial. It means starting from evidence about who the customer is and what their needs are and allowing time for customer research, data analysis, customer journey mapping and prototyping phases.

From rational to irrational considerations – there is an overarching tendency to believe that if we build it ‘they will come’, which is rooted in a traditional economics view of the rational consumer. Service Design taps into new behavioural economics that explore the irrational and often counter-intuitive aspects of human behaviour, to make sure the service gives them full consideration. Many people find this perspective challenging. Often showing people live tests of customers using the service opened people’s eyes to this reality.

From waterfall to iterative approaches – traditional waterfall projects plan a phase of work which, once completed, is closed. Design involves testing and learning, often repeatedly, until the product or service is right. So teams often have to do re-work. Often it has been a case of reinforcing the point that it’s the quality of the product or service that matters – and that the project needs to adapt to new ways of delivering those better products and services.

From management to the frontline – as well as engaging customers in the design process, it’s been crucial to involve frontline staff. They are highly familiar with the challenges faced by customers in using the service, in a way that managers aren’t, and therefore they often know the shortcuts to success. Tapping into this latent resource is crucial, but has led us to challenge some organisational hierarchies.

Balancing risk and innovation – Design is inherently a risky business. No matter how much risk we remove through prototyping and customer testing, our work remains at root a creative activity. We are seeking new ways to tackle existing problems, some of which will work and some that won’t. It’s been important to be honest about this, as it runs counter to many corporate assumptions that risk must be avoided at all cost.

Being practical and communicating clearly – as with any change in practice, progress is a matter of changing hearts and minds. We’ve had to flex our approach and methods to every project and every team, making sure we take the time to explain Service Design. Most people intuitively ‘get it’ – that designing services with customers gives better results – however the reality of shifting behaviours and habits has taken longer.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Jonathan Clark, Director of Service Design and Innovation at Skills Development Scotland

SDS have developed an internal service design function, and are actively upskilling and shaping their supplier market.

“Skills Development Scotland was formed from a merger of four bodies, and we were already familiar with the idea of service design – so from the outset we had a service design team. The idea was to use design and design thinking to bring a greater focus on customers in service development, and to be better at progressing projects from conception to delivery. Often things would get progressed without any real testing for efficiency or customer experience and satisfaction. We recruited a multidisciplinary team that included designers; although we use a mix of internal expertise and external agencies when necessary. One of the problems we have found is the lack of focus on ‘business

ready' design solutions and specific public sector expertise in the market we are looking to buy from. So actually by bringing interns in-house for a year or so we are actively skilling up the external market – helping people get some work in their portfolios. We are also trying to work with design schools and university courses to make their curricula more relevant."

Source: Inquiry evidence

Marco Steinberg, Helsinki Design Lab (Finland)

Embedding design professionals in government departments. <http://insidejob.fi/>

"In 2008 the Finnish Innovation Fund built a Strategic Design team. The team has since been building initiatives, such as Helsinki Design Lab (www.helsinkidesignlab.org), to develop expertise in 'strategic design' for government and the public sector. Our founding premise is that the major challenge facing most public services is that they are increasingly about redesign propositions rather than optimising existing ones. Designers, thanks to their training, are uniquely possessed with integrative skills to engage people in building more viable propositions. The challenge in bringing design skills to bear in a public sector context is as much a cultural one as anything else, so one major project underway at present attempts to bridge the cultural divide through an exchange programme. Professional designers have been embedded inside public sector organizations, hired as employees in various departments working on problems around city planning, social services, the environment and employment. This isn't necessarily about service design, rather about bringing some different decision making capabilities into departments at a strategic level. Most departments have economists – why not have a designer or two?"

Source: Inquiry evidence

Participle

Participle have taken a radically different stance to public service reform, which they call 'Beveridge 4.0'. They believe we need to shift to a capabilities-based view of our public service systems, which is what they have enacted through the Circles project. Their working method employs a mix of user-centred innovation, policy and business thinking. Design-led processes are very much at the heart of their approach.

In September 2007 Participle started a unique public-private partnership with Southwark Council, Sky and the Department for Work & Pensions, to design a new service to improve the quality of life and well-being of older people in Southwark. Working with over 250 older people, they developed Southwark Circle, a membership organisation that helps people take care of household tasks, forge social connections and find new directions in life.

Circle is now on its way to becoming a national network, with Circles operational in deliberately diverse contexts such as Suffolk, Nottingham and Rochdale, and a London-wide Circle aiming to bring on three London boroughs a year over the next four years. It offers a three-fold return on investment for local authorities, and a service with a far greater positive social impact, as measured by the increasing capabilities of its members. Circles offers a blueprint of what redesigned public services across Britain could look like.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Peter Wardle, Head of the Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission have an interesting design challenge - to balance accessibility and inclusivity with the rigour required to ensure elections are fair and scrupulously-conducted affairs. Peter described an interesting attempt to get a bit more user insight, the first step in any design process...

"I followed them in to this big church hall and what you got when you walked in was an enormous white notice with big black letters saying 'polling station'. The only other place you see notices like that is footage from the 1950s where it says 'air raid shelter'. Big black letters on cardboard and a bit of string, and there was also this drooping one across the road. You found your way but until you got there you didn't know, you couldn't have googled your polling station (which I think you can in many parts of the United States these days). So you got yourself there. Inside there were signs which told you in very verbose terms about six different criminal offences you could do in the next six minutes. Then there was a fairly typical little table of poll clerks sitting inside. They were really friendly and welcoming. They ticked off your name on their list and handed you a ballot paper. There is a principle that the actual voting booth has to not be in a place where the clerks can see over your shoulder. In this church hall the voting booths were right down the other end of the room. These guys were handed a ballot paper but they didn't know what to do, one started filling it out at the clerks' table... There is a huge assumption everyone knows what to do. Even within the existing system we're probably designing people out of it."

Source: Inquiry evidence

Simon Ruda, Behavioural Insights Team, Cabinet Office

The BIT follow a very sound design process, doing user research and insight, identifying some possible solutions, working with service deliverers and then testing, refining and testing again. The Jobcentre process redesign is a good example.

"At the BIT we are all service designers really, although we don't necessarily call ourselves that. We're doing policy development from the end user point of view, trying to draw policymaking much closer to the front line. After a hesitant reception initially from some parts of Whitehall, we are now in high demand right across Government Departments and the public sector."

Our approach... It's not always perfectly linear in practice, but generally we start with data analysis, thinking about what evidence we already have and what we know from behavioural research. Then we work a lot with stakeholders, working with the experts and service deliverers in the system, and develop new ideas through a co-creation process. Then we test our ideas and adapt them. And test them again. We're also very rigorous in our analysis – we try to use randomised controlled trials to test our approach as much as possible. Truthfully, for this approach to be fully rolled out across the public sector, there's a need for a different mix of competencies – which possibly has implications for recruitment."

The Behavioural Insights Team has been working with Jobcentre Plus in Loughton, Essex, to help get people back into work. They ran a six month randomised controlled trial to test the impact of three changes to the existing Jobcentre Plus system. The trial tested the difference between the existing process and three new changes.

The changes were as follows:

1. Making sure every customer talks about getting back to work on their first day (not after 2 weeks) by cutting down and reorganising processes;
2. Introducing stretching commitment devices which focus on what the job seeker will do for the whole of the next fortnight. This replaces the present system where advisors ask if job seekers have done three job search activities in each of the previous two weeks;
3. Building psychological resilience and wellbeing for those who are still claiming after 8 weeks.

The results are impressive: job seekers in the treatment group are 15-20% more likely than those in the control group to be off benefits 13 weeks after signing on (see graph below). Following these results, the BIT are about to launch a much bigger trial across all of Essex, alongside even larger trials in the North East.

Source: Inquiry evidence and www.blogs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/behavioural-insights-team/2012/12/14/new-bit-trial-results-helping-people-back-into-work/

STBY (Netherlands)

Service design agency STBY worked with the Amsterdam Chambers of Commerce on a service design project, looking at how entrepreneurs experience and use business support services, and found room for improvement.

Following a nationwide study on how easily entrepreneurs could access regional support in Holland, Amsterdam returned a relatively low score. SBTY were contracted to help provide a deeper insight into the experiences of entrepreneurs in Amsterdam. The team used design tools, such as customer journey mapping, to capture the everyday experiences of entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and brought this to life with video documentary which could be used by the local Chambers of Commerce. Once the analysis was completed it was obvious that the majority of entrepreneur's experiences involved the same recurring process: initiating a specific request, applying for a service, negotiating the details, waiting for an answer, then implementing the results.

In this process there were clear barriers and gaps for the entrepreneurs to navigate. Limited opening hours, confusing switchboards, alternating colleagues with different interpretations and attitudes, unpredictable processing times and additional requirements – all were highlighted as clear areas for improvement.

This analysis contrasted with the entrepreneurs relatively positive experiences of digital platforms, highlighting those areas where online/offline synergy could be improved, and where the latter could learn clear lessons from the former.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Snook

Service design agency Snook worked with the Scottish Government to visualise and improve the post-16 learner journey.

Snook was commissioned by the Strategy Unit in the Scottish Government to explore the experience of a post 16 learners – developing new insights into Scotland's education system by understanding the human stories of those within it.

The initial stages focused on the development of these stories. Snook then dove further into the backgrounds and experiences of individuals (with their permission) using design led research tools to visually map individual's journeys and dig deeper into the reasons why people make decisions, progress and don't progress, and what leads a learner journey to positive destinations.

With visual and written material, Snook developed a rich picture of the system, illustrated with personal insights and fresh perspectives on the issues. Snook mapped every insight and concept on to a blueprint of the Learner Journey. Following this they produced a range of solutions and materials working at different scales. Recommendations for wider changes across Scotland were made. Templates and models of student ecosystems and user interfaces were developed, enhancing the current infrastructure of products and services on offer in and around the post-16 Learner Journey.

Critical to Snook's ability to do this work was their founder's experience of working inside a government department. They are currently mentoring another designer doing the same thing inside the Scottish Government.

Source: Inquiry evidence

Some lessons and conclusions

As can be seen from many of these examples, often the solutions seem more like common sense than radically new ideas, particularly once things are appreciated from the user point of view.

The really hard work is in making the space for change to happen, which is often about paying attention to the internal dynamics of the organisation, sometimes about getting public buy-in, but always about thinking about the behaviours and contexts of everyone interacting with the system - what Mindlab's Christian Bason terms 'double-sided ethnography'. It therefore really helps if the remit to do exploratory and potentially unpredictable design-led transformation work is endorsed from the very top of the organisation.

It also relies on people having good ideas - which some people are naturally better at, and designers happen to be very good at. Having another idea - not stopping when you've had one good one - is the *modus operandi* of the design industry.

... for Central Government

The Government Digital Service has been an inspirational demonstration of what can be achieved with a government department through a design-led transformation process. The challenge for Central Government now (notwithstanding other existing pockets of good practice) is to learn the lessons from the GDS and see if these can be applied to all areas of Whitehall.

The particular ways we can see design practice making a difference to Central Government work are:

- generating user insight, reminding civil servants who presumably have rare interaction with the beneficiaries of the policies they work on, what the lived experience of those policies is;
- bringing multiple stakeholders into a conversation through problem articulation processes, getting buy-in across silos and being more outcomes-focused;
- drawing strategy-policy-delivery much closer together (by focusing on the user/ outcome);
- predicting likely policy failures through prototyping;
- thinking through systemic problems;
- tackling the bigger questions – not 'what should happen in Jobcentres?' rather, 'are Jobcentres the right model?'

In order to facilitate better design practice in Central Government, we see the following changes as necessary:

- improvement to commissioning guidance to allow greater innovation through design-led processes;
- analysis of how current procurement practice either facilitates or discourages (in our experience the latter) the contracting of design agencies (usually micro or small businesses), and how far it pushes new providers to innovate by default;
- a review of HR policy, and what mix of skills make up the core of the civil service - design should be in that mix just as (for example) economists are;
- end the practice of constantly moving civil servants around the system – which means they have little incentive to be inventive;
- put civil servants on the 'front line' more intensively and for longer;
- generate research and user insight on a large scale, create large data sets and make them open/ available;

- generate and use feedback in more novel ways (not through surveys);
- trial a design studio model for policy origination.

At present, design practice in the public sector is varied and scattered. What it really needs is for Central Government, and probably the Cabinet Office (in conjunction with the Design Council), to provide it with an institutional home, to cohere and consolidate best practice.

This would happen through doing things which make design more visible and an accepted part of public sector expertise, through thinking about this in the context of the skills mix of the civil service of the future, and through setting the conditions for good design practice to flourish in the rest of the public sector.

... for Local Government

Evidently, there are plenty of examples of design-led innovation and transformation work going on in local government. In many ways it is the obvious home for design work. Local government is responsible for many front-line public services, so locally-tailored design solutions, and co-creation, by necessity have to happen in communities. Given the budget cuts local authorities have to implement, there is an opportunity to do radical transformation work through bringing in design practice. The need to reduce demand by empowering users, and to move local authorities more towards the model of place-shaping strategic bodies, makes local public bodies ripe for design input. Let's not waste a good crisis. This may be ambitious but it is achievable, there are some basic steps you can follow, and it's less risky than doing nothing.

The particular ways we can see design practice making a difference to local government work are:

- redesigning individual services to be more user-oriented and to find cost-savings;
- redesigning what organisations as a whole do, creating cultural change, moving towards more vision-led and collaborative ways of working;
- offering modes of public engagement in order to
 - ... find out what people want, need, and are prepared to do themselves;
 - ... bring citizens onside so decommissioning or outsourcing isn't a painful and politically damaging process;
- joining up strategy with delivery – using lessons from delivery to inform policy;
- empowering employees to create change themselves, increasing staff capability, happiness and reducing absenteeism;
- potentially providing routes to councils being more entrepreneurial, generating revenue from entirely new service offers or value propositions.

In order to facilitate better design practice in local government, we see the following conditions as necessary:

- acceptance of the design approach from the top of the organisation, both leaders and chief executives;
- strategic change that allows councils to work across internal silos and partner smartly with external stakeholders – community budgets are a good example;
- improved (in some cases) commissioning skills – particularly in terms of commissioning innovation;
- access to good, impartial, design advice and input;
- willingness to relinquish professional ownership of areas where co-creation/ co-production would yield more effective results.

3

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE

With design as with other areas of life, there are times when you can do things yourself, and times when it's better to call in the professionals. Sometimes you can just take a paracetamol, sometimes you have to go to the doctor. By and large, there is a great deal of design work that, with a bit of training, practice and the right mindset, most people in the public sector could manage. Rather helpfully, most social and service design organisations are very open about their methodologies and approaches - whether that's to allow others to have a go, or to demystify their work for clients. Here we have compiled a list of toolkits and processes that support non-specialists in doing design and innovation work.

Useful design toolkits

These toolkits provide a flavour of the processes involved in applying design methods to social challenges. These are just a sample that we have come across in the course of our research and which to us seem to be sound and useful. There may, of course, be others that we have missed, and they are not necessarily a substitute for seeking professional design support.

The Australian Centre for Social Innovation

Co-designing thriving solutions

TACSI's guide offers a broad overview of how to use design tools in a social innovation context and provides a brief introduction to the different phases of the design process:

www.tacsi.org.au/assets/Uploads/Co-designingThrivingSolutions.pdf

Cornwall Council

Shaped.By.Us

A community leaders pack for individuals taking up a community challenge:

shapedbyus.sea-communications.co.uk/documents/SBU_Leader_Pack_V1.pdf

The Shaped.By.Us website also contains plenty of advice and methods for addressing social issues:

cornwall.shapedbyus.org/outreach-activities

Design Council

Design Methods

www.designcouncil.org.uk/about-design/How-designers-work/Design-methods/

Also some contextual information and definitions of key design terms, some tools/guides here:

www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources-and-events/Business-and-public-sector/

Engine

Engine Service Design have curated a list of the techniques/methods which they use in they work across the public and private sector. Take a look at:

www.enginegroup.co.uk/service_design/methods/

Fieldstudio/Lucy Kimbell & Joe Julier

Social Design Methods Menu

Aimed at public service leaders and managers the Social Design Methods Menu is a guide to the principles behind and practice of social design:

www.lucykimbell.com/stuff/Fieldstudio_SocialDesignMethodsMenu.pdf

Frog Design

Collective Action Toolkit

Frog's recently published Collective Action Toolkit is a resource for change makers working on social problems around the world:

www.frogdesign.com/collective-action-toolkit

Helsinki Design Lab

InStudio: recipes for systemic change

An in depth guide to running collaborative problem solving processes from Finland's government-funded design and innovation unit:

www.helsinkidesignlab.org/instudio/

Ideo

The Human Centered Design Toolkit

Developed for Social Enterprises and NGOs The Human Centered Design Toolkit from Ideo walks users through the user centered design process:

www.ideo.com/work/design-for-social-impact-workbook-and-toolkit/

Nesta

Prototyping Framework

In collaboration with ThinkPublic Nesta have produced a useful guide to prototyping, a key element of the design process:

www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/PrototypingFramework.pdf

Open Workshop

Their open workshop tools/ project spiral are a helpful guide to running a transformation/ innovation process:

<https://openworkshop.nesta.org.uk/>

NHS Institute of Innovation and Improvement

The Experience Based Design team have produced a guide to the approach they developed specifically for healthcare services. Available on request.

www.institute.nhs.uk/index.php?option=com_joomcart&Itemid=194&main_page=index&cPath=84&Joomcartid=ge5kpr4hgubc593dlo74mtleo5

Roberta Tassi

Service Design Tools

Collated as part of a PhD thesis Service Design Tools is a website which contains a collection of crowd sourced service design methods:

www.servicedesigntools.org/

Service Design Toolkit

Put together by a consortium of three Dutch design agencies the Service Design Toolkit provides a number of printable templates and outlines for service design methods:

www.servicedesigntoolkit.org/

Social Innovation Lab Kent

Methods Deck

SILK's 'methods deck' consists of a number of cards detailing different design methods to help you run a design process:

socialinnovation.typepad.com:silk:silk-method-deck.html

Stanford Design School

Virtual Crash Course

The Design School's website offers a range of educational materials including a 90 minute virtual crash course:

dschool.stanford.edu/dgift/

Bootleg Bootcamp

A range of design methods which you can view individually or download in their entirety:

dschool.stanford.edu/use-our-methods/

Where can you get training?

The following organisations offer training and support in buying or doing design. Again, this list is not necessarily exhaustive.

Central St Martin's, University of the Arts London

CSM runs a service design summer school:

www.csm.arts.ac.uk/shortcourses/threedimensionaldesign/summerschool/

[productdesignanddevelopment/servicedesign/](http://www.csm.arts.ac.uk/shortcourses/productdesignanddevelopment/servicedesign/)

Design Business Association

The DBA runs a training course called 'Design Does It', which helps buyers and managers of design to address the challenges they face when commissioning design, and maximise their design investment.

Design Council

Building design capacity in government is a major strand of Design Council work and as part of the Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth (DBIS 2012) the Design Council delivers design-led coaching to government. This work currently has several strands:

- Delivering sustained coaching programmes which place experienced Design Associates in organisations. Associates have worked with local authority and NHS teams to identify strategic challenges, building the capability to use design effectively and develop tangible solutions.
- A growing portfolio of training workshops for central and local government which provide introductions to design approaches and are tailored to the specific challenges and goals of clients. Recent examples include sessions for the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department for Communities and Local Government, UK Trade and Investment and Civil Service Learning.
- The Design Council also runs a number of training programmes for the public sector through its Leadership programme:
www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/leadership/

Design Wales

A new service design programme for public managers, 'SPIDER', has just launched:

www.thespiderproject.eu

Design Wales also run training programmes for designers in service design, and for companies looking to improve their service design:

www.testyourservice.com

Royal College of Art

The RCA offers a Service Design MA and other training services.

How to find a designer?

As previously mentioned, the design industries, apart from architecture, don't have a system of chartered accreditation, therefore it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start in finding a designer or agency. A number of design trade associations and institutions carry lists of their members:

British Design Innovation

www.britishdesigninnovation.com/design-directory
+44 (0)1273 621 378

Design Business Association

<https://www.dbadirectory.org.uk/dba/directory>
+44(0)20 7251 9229

Design Council

The Design Council has a network of design associates that support its work. They also have a good informal network beyond this list of associates.

www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/leadership/how-we-can-help-you/design-associates/
+44(0)20 7420 5200

SDN-UK

The international Service Design Network has a list of UK members
uk.service-design-network.org/?page_id=23

Commissioning design

We have seen that commissioning design can be particularly challenging in the public sector as procurement can be heavily regulated. In light of this we think it is useful to bear the following in mind:

- Ideally design should be involved at the earliest stage, with internal teams using design tools to help explore and shape the requirement prior to any procurement being established. This avoids the risk of 'getting the right answer to the wrong problem'.
- Considering early on what the anticipated customer and business outcomes are provides designers with a framework within which to create. This is often better than providing an overly prescriptive list of requirements, which will force bidders down certain routes.
- Don't be afraid of setting clear constraints, as this drives good creative thinking. The Dyson Airblade was the result of a strong brief: twice as fast and half the cost of standard hand dryers. The cost constraint led to a better product.
- Ask for evidence of customer insight and design methodology from bidding companies, to ensure that they are aligning to your own aspirations around the strategic use of design.
- Try not to expect the full solution during the procurement process. After all, bidders have very limited access to your staff/ customers to truly explore new thinking or to prototype possible solutions. There's a consequent risk that 'the right procurement answer' isn't actually right for customers. Some design will necessarily have to take place once the work is awarded.

Where do you start?

Naturally, this very much depends on your organisation, resources, and the challenge you have in mind. Here are a few prompts to get started...

- Where is design work, acknowledged or unconscious, already happening in your organisation?
- Who are the natural designers, innovators, creative personalities?
- What is the nature of the problem? Material, social, service, system or strategic level?
- Are you going out to market with the right question?
- Is there shared agreement about the problem?
- What extra training or help might you need?

4

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This inquiry has thrown up a number of questions which time, resources, and scope have not allowed us to explore further. We think the following issues require either more research, development or collaborative action:

- Should the UK have an articulated design vision or strategy?
Is this question being considered inside government?
What would such a vision be?
- What will it take to support design career paths within the public sector/ civil service?
How do career paths work at present and is this for the best?
- How does good design practice align itself with current or proposed models of commissioning?
- Should the UK design industry take steps towards accreditation and stronger representation?
- What are the opportunities for collaboration between design HEIs and public bodies?
- How can policy, business and social knowledge be built more systematically into design education?

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APPENDIX

Witnesses

During the evidence-gathering process the steering group heard from witnesses working in the design industry, government, policy and academia. Evidence took three forms: roundtable discussions, interviews and written evidence submissions. Transcripts and written submissions are available to view online at:

www.policyconnect.org.uk/apdig/evidence-submitted

Oral evidence/roundtable discussions

13.09.12

Service design

Joe Ferry, Vertu

Daniela Sangiorgi, Lancaster University

20.09.12

Design in local government

Amanda Askham, Cambridge Council

Helen MacFarlane, Camden Council

Claire Webb, Southwark Council

27.09.12

Design in local government

Joe Heapy, Engine

Denis O'Rourke, Lambeth CCG and Lambeth Council

Rhodri Samuel, Bath and NES Council

SILK, Kent County Council

Andrea Siodmok, Cornwall Council

11.10.12

Social design

Lucy Kimbell

Carol Moonlight, Citizens Advice

18.10.12

Procurement

Sally Collier, Cabinet Office (procurement)

25.10.12

Public service challenges/trends

Paul Buddery, 2020 Public Services Hub

Jane Dudman, Guardian Public Leaders Network

Melani Oliver, Nesta

Ben Page, Ipsos Mori

15.11.12

The work of the Design CouncilElla BrittonChris HowroydPauline Shakespeare

29.11.12

Nesta Creative Councils programmeKaty BenthamMelani Oliver

13.12.12

Design for Elections/Design ThinkingSue Siddall, IdeoAlex Thomas, Cabinet OfficePeter Wardle, Electoral Commission**Oral evidence/interviews**

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| <u>Jonathan Clark</u> | <u>Skills Development Scotland</u> |
| <u>Prof. Rachel Cooper</u> | <u>Lancaster University</u> |
| <u>Michael Coughlin</u> | <u>LGA</u> |
| <u>Tony Coultas</u> | <u>Skills Development Scotland</u> |
| <u>Dr Leon Cruikshank</u> | <u>Lancaster University</u> |
| <u>Lauren Currie</u> | <u>Snook</u> |
| <u>Jason Davies</u> | <u>SWM Probation</u> |
| <u>Isabel Dedring</u> | <u>TfL</u> |
| <u>Sarah Drummond</u> | <u>Snook</u> |
| <u>Ian Drysdale</u> | <u>Good Gym</u> |
| <u>Rhona Gaynor</u> | <u>Cabinet Office (open policymaking)</u> |
| <u>Adam Hardy</u> | <u>Capita</u> |
| <u>Richard Harries</u> | <u>DCLG</u> |
| <u>Steven Johnson</u> | <u>Collaborative Change</u> |
| <u>Ben Kingsmill</u> | <u>Goosebumps</u> |
| <u>Dr Nick Leon</u> | <u>Royal College of Art</u> |
| <u>Dr Emma Murphy</u> | <u>Lancaster University</u> |
| <u>Jonty Oliff-Cooper</u> | <u>A4E</u> |
| <u>Teresa Payne</u> | <u>LGA</u> |
| <u>Piers Roberts</u> | <u>Designersblock</u> |
| <u>Mary Rose Cook</u> | <u>Uscreates</u> |
| <u>Michelle Rose-Innes</u> | <u>Service designer</u> |
| <u>Chloe Ross</u> | <u>Cabinet Office (open policymaking)</u> |
| <u>Simon Ruda</u> | <u>Behavioural Insights Team</u> |
| <u>Jill Rutter</u> | <u>Institute for Government</u> |
| <u>Annabelle Simmons</u> | <u>DBIS</u> |
| <u>Marco Steinberg</u> | <u>Sitra</u> |
| <u>Andrew Stemberge</u> | <u>Cliveden House</u> |
| <u>Ben Terrett</u> | <u>Government Digital Service</u> |
| <u>Leo Trinick</u> | <u>Islington Council</u> |
| <u>Megha Wadhawan</u> | <u>Stby</u> |
| <u>Claire West</u> | <u>DBIS</u> |
| <u>Jennie Winhall</u> | <u>Participle</u> |

Written evidence submissions

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <u>Christian Bason</u> | <u>MindLab</u> |
| <u>Adrian Berry</u> | <u>Factory Design</u> |
| <u>Oliver Coppard</u> | <u>Dearne Valley Eco Vision</u> |
| <u>Phil Coppard</u> | <u>Former CE of Barnsley Council</u> |
| <u>Claire Coulier</u> | <u>RSA</u> |
| <u>Geoff Mulgan</u> | <u>Nesta</u> |
| <u>Dr Alison Prendiville</u> | <u>LCC - University of the Arts</u> |
| <u>Tracy Ross</u> | <u>Loughborough Design School</u> |
| <u>Lior Smith</u> | |
| <u>Eduardo Staszowski</u> | <u>Parsons the New School for Design</u> |
| <u>Anthony Sully</u> | |
| <u>Prof Seymour Roworth-Stokes</u> | <u>Design Research Society</u> |
| <u>John Thackara</u> | |
| <u>Adam Thorpe</u> | <u>University of the Arts London</u> |
| <u>Thurston and Cawood</u> | <u>Design Wales</u> |
| <u>Prof Sue Walker</u> | <u>University of Reading</u> |
| <u>David Wastell</u> | <u>University of Nottingham</u> |
| <u>Diana Yakeley</u> | <u>Yakeley Associates</u> |
| <u>Sean Wijesiri</u> | <u>Amicus Horizon</u> |
| <u>Professor Robert A Young</u> | <u>Northumbria University</u> |

Social Design Talks

Lucy Kimbell, Guy Julier and Jocelyn Bailey have been running this series of talks over the last year, with support from Policy Connect, the V&A and the University of Brighton. The goal of the talks series is to reflect critically on the spread of socially-motivated design practice and the use of 'design thinking' with social innovation and public policy; and to bring together people working in adjacent areas, including project managers in public policy, social enterprise and innovation, and civic society, policy-makers, elected representatives, researchers, activists and designers. Our learning from this series has informed this report.

socialdesigntalks.org

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| AHRC | <u>Arts and Humanities Research Council</u> |
| ATO | <u>Australian Tax Office</u> |
| BAS | <u>Business Activity Statement</u> |
| BDI | <u>British Design Innovation</u> |
| BIT | <u>Behavioural Insights Team</u> |
| CCG | <u>Clinical Commissioning Group</u> |
| CO | <u>Cabinet Office</u> |
| CPD | <u>Continuing Professional Development</u> |
| CSM | <u>Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design</u> |
| DBA | <u>Design Business Association</u> |
| DBIS | <u>Department for Business Innovation and Skills</u> |
| DCLG | <u>Department for Communities and Local Government</u> |
| DESIS | <u>Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability Network</u> |
| GDS | <u>Government Digital Service</u> |
| HDL | <u>Helsinki Design Lab</u> |
| HEI | <u>Higher Education Institution</u> |
| HMRC | <u>HM Revenue and Customs</u> |
| KCL | <u>Kings College London</u> |
| NGO | <u>Non-governmental Organisation</u> |
| NLGN | <u>New Local Government Network</u> |
| RCA | <u>Royal College of Art</u> |
| RSA | <u>Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce</u> |
| SDS | <u>Skills Development Scotland</u> |
| SILK | <u>Social Innovation Lab for Kent</u> |
| TACSI | <u>The Australian Centre for Social Innovation</u> |
| TfL | <u>Transport for London</u> |
| TSB | <u>Technology Strategy Board</u> |

Design Commission Members

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| <u>Alice Black</u> | <u>Design Museum</u> |
| <u>Lord Michael Bichard</u> | <u>House of Lords</u> |
| <u>Sir George Cox</u> | <u>Institution of Engineering Designers</u> |
| <u>Jeremy Davenport</u> | <u>Imagination, Lancaster University</u> |
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| <u>Catherine Large</u> | <u>Creative & Cultural Skills</u> |
| <u>Kieran Long</u> | <u>V&A</u> |
| <u>John Mathers</u> | <u>Design Council</u> |
| <u>Jeremy Myerson</u> | <u>The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art</u> |
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| <u>Guy Julier</u> | <u>V&A/University of Brighton</u> |
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Graham Hitchen



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Fanny Sigler



Michael Thomson

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Design Commission

The Design Commission is a research group that contributes to the work of the Associate Parliamentary Design and Innovation Group. It is composed of parliamentarians from all parties and leading representatives from business, industry and the public sector. Its purpose is to explore, through a series of investigative inquiries, how design can drive economic and social improvement, and how government and business can better understand the importance of design.

www.policyconnect.org.uk/apdig/design-commission

Policy Connect

The Design Commission is powered by Policy Connect, the think tank that works with parliamentarians, business and the public sector to help improve policy in health, education and skills, sustainability, design and manufacturing.

www.policyconnect.org.uk

The Design Council

The Design Council enables people to use design to transform communities, business and the environment for the better. As an enterprising charity, our work places design at the heart of creating value by stimulating innovation in business and public services, improving our built environment and tackling complex social issues. We inspire new design thinking, encourage public debate and inform government policy to improve everyday life and help meet tomorrow's challenges today.

www.designcouncil.org.uk

Arts and Humanities Research Council

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK.

www.ahrc.ac.uk

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Capita are the UK's leading provider of business process management and integrated professional support service solutions, with 46,000 staff across the UK, Europe, South Africa and India. We play a key role in our clients' operations, delivering their customer, administration, and professional support services. We listen to the needs and challenges of our clients and their customers, designing unique, cost-effective services that provide better customer experiences. We then bring together the right people with the right skills to make those designs a reality and to drive fresh and innovative thinking throughout our partnerships.

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This is the second publication in the Design Commission's 'Restarting Britain' series. The first set out the strategic importance of design education as a driver of economic renewal and growth. This report turns to the question of public service renewal.

In the context of politics and governing, the word 'design' is applied liberally – the design of legislation, the design of policy, the design of public services – with little thought as to the significance of the word itself. Here we shift our focus to that word 'design', and explore its potential for creating cost-effective public services in the 21st century.

Part-polemic, part-manual, this report is the culmination of a nine month inquiry, and our response to a substantially increased appetite for more information on the subject of design in public services.

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