

**Creating safe
spaces for
challenge...**

**...being a lead
assessor for
Service Standard
Assessments**

Sam Villis @stamanfar

Local Collaboration Lead - MHCLG

Clara Songaila @clarasongaila

Digital Engagement Manager - GDS

Steve McCready @stevemccready

Spend Controls Lead - GDS

Write down what you would like to get out of this session...

What we will cover:

- Why and how we assess services against the Service Standard
- How assessments help teams to deliver the best services for citizens
- Code of Conduct

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Standards Assurance

The Standards Assurance Team in GDS run the digital and technology Spend Control and Service Assessment processes on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

The aim is to reduce government waste and ensure departments make the right technology decisions to deliver great digital services to citizens.

Maybe we could all talk more about what the service standard enables: a transparent way to measure progress, a lodestar for government to work towards, a fair and reasoned way to avoid departments marking their own homework, an important sponsor of working in the open and, most importantly, a catalyst for better services for users.



Senior Technology Advisors (STA's)
work with departments to approve
(...or not) requests to spend public
money.

Digital Engagement Managers (DEM's) work with departments to make sure that the services they are creating meet the Digital Service Standard.



**Why have
assessments?**

Services are assessed to make sure they meet the Digital Service Standard and to protect the quality of GOV.UK.

They also help get feedback from a panel of experts and solve problems with the service as it is built.

**What are
assessments?**

- A four hour peer review of a service,
- using an agenda-guided discussion,
- with up to five assessors on the panel
- and five members of a service team,
- to understand if the service meets the Service Standard.

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BETA

Complete our quick 5-question survey to [help us improve our content](#).

[Service manual](#) > [Service assessments and getting on GOV.UK](#) > Check if you need a service assessment

Service assessments and getting on GOV.UK

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Check if you need a service assessment

Published by: [Standards and assurance community](#)

Last updated: over 1 year ago

Page contents:

- [When services get assessed](#)
- [What counts as a transactional service](#)
- [Who will run your assessments](#)
- [Get a voluntary assessment](#)
- [Examples and case studies](#)
- [Related guides](#)

Services are assessed to make sure they meet the [Digital Service Standard](#) and to protect the quality of GOV.UK. They also help you get feedback from a panel of experts and solve problems with your service as you build it.

You must get your service assessed if it's the responsibility of a central government department and either of the following apply:

- getting assessed is a condition of your Cabinet Office spend approval
- it's a transactional service that's new or being rebuilt - your spend approval will say whether what you're doing counts as a rebuild

These rules apply even if your service is internal and will only be used by civil servants.

**How do service
teams feel about
assessments?**

Well, there are a number of different views...

Pretty much everybody involved in UK [central] Government digital work these days knows about the GDS Service Assessments. Created to provide a level of peer review and assurance around compliance with the Digital by Default Service Standard they were envisioned as a way of building trust in the previously utterly untrusted—Government technology project delivery. Almost a 'kitemark' for digital transformation.

Given the scale of the transformation that has been undertaken and the widely held lack of confidence initially in the Civil Service to be able make good on the mission the Assessments have played an important role in raising standards and capability. Not to put too fine a point on it they have been a necessary evil.







stamanfar @stamanfar · 40m

If someone says the phrase "service assessment" to you, what's the first thing that pops into your head? Thanks! 😊



7



2



1



Trilly Chatterjee

@TrillyC

Following

Replying to @stamanfar

People bricking it about a service assessment because their organisations aren't allowing them to do things in the way that meets the standard.

4:28 AM - 25 Feb 2019



Jessie Ferguson

@jfergusonur

Follow



Starting my last week at DWP off with a bang with a service assessment today. Eeeek! 🙈

8:18 PM - 8 Apr 2018

Failure. A battering.

This week was supposed to be our kick-off for beta, but over the last couple of weeks, we have been taking a battering from all sides¹. Firstly we received a not-met result from our GDS assessment, and then we failed to achieve programme board funding because of a risk that we believed we had a decent mitigation for.

∴





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A good chance to get outsider perspective.

To share knowledge
and make contacts
with people doing the
same role in other
government departments.





stamanfar @stamanfar · 3h

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10



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1



Andy Williams-Jones

@andyjones_1981

Following

Replying to @stamanfar

Reassurance and validation that you've designed something to the best of your understanding, knowledge and ability

4:11 AM - 25 Feb 2019 from Birmingham, England

3. Kahar drafted a great MVP guide for assessors ** at Hackney (we're using the excellent GDS guidance as our starting point—standing on the shoulders of giants. We're testing it out next week with two separate service assessments. Assessing our work against the Digital Service Standard is a key part of our governance as a service—an opportunity for the team to share learning, discuss challenges, and provide assurance that we are building the right things, to the right standard, in the right way. Simply put—they're a way of answering the question “How's it going?”.



**How have
assessments
changed?**

We've made improvements that reinforce this being a peer review and guidance opportunity

We do this by engaging with service teams earlier and by using an 'agenda-guided' discussion in the assessment

**Are assessors
power hungry
narcissists?**

Well no.... We're really just very nosy.



stamanfar @stamanfar · 44m

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Jessica Gough

@JessGoughESFA

Following

Replying to @stamanfar

Getting to tell others how great your work is
(aka a bit of showing off)



Andy Porter

@Hindsightery

Follow



Service assessing today.

Assessing helps so much in designing your own/departments services.

Stepping outside of your own service/dept helps you see you own more clearly, and you learn so much you can share with you team/colleagues.

Assessing is x-gov collaboration 👍

7:15 am - 21 Feb 2019

4 Retweets 18 Likes



I'm frequently in awe of the teams that I meet across that table. Of a service manager with an encyclopedic knowledge of her service. Of a product owner with a sure hand and an ability to confidently guide a team. Of my own designers ability to tell the tale of a design, the hypotheses, the pathways explored and rejected, the search for a better way yet to get the thing done. Of our researchers ability to bring their work, and the people they speak to, to life and to evidence their needs as users. It's a privilege to be part of this as a panel and get the in-depth story of a service and its users.

Like any good interview, we're *willing* service teams to be great. Looking for opportunities for them to tell the story of their service to the best of their abilities, always appreciative of the effort involved.



Being an assessor needs preparation too

Preparing for a service standard assessment is a real undertaking for a service team. The time leading up to an assessment is like a multi-week retrospective - you look back and scrutinise every aspect of what you've done, finding potential gaps and making sure your service is everything it can be to your users at a particular stage. As an assessor you've got 4 hours to do justice and respect to that preparation, and get the best out of the team in front of you.



Being a lead assessor is a big responsibility.

Making a safe space

How do you make a safe space?

1. Making sure everyone is heard

Learning people's names! Seating!

Enabling people to speak early

Giving people opportunity to reflect

2. Giving teams the opportunity to explain their context

It's impossible to know everything about other departments

Dedicating time to understanding the context of services is imperative

This extends outside the realm of the assessment...

Service assessors can request more information from teams before or after the assessment.

3. Work hard to create a space free of judgement

Looking out for language

Making sure everyone understands the details

Clarifying

4. Make sure that everyone in the room feels that the time has been valuable

We believe it is important for assessors to look for opportunities to add value - if we can

Building connections, making introductions, suggesting reading or case studies

**Panels need safe
spaces too!**

Creating a safe space extends to the panel -
often we don't all agree!

Lead assessors have to weigh up a range of different views from the panel, made up of colleagues from across government



Martin Jordan 🌈
@Martin_Jordan

Following



I love the fact I can read service assessment reports on the internet!

For example, this one: gov.uk/service-standards

...

[#makethingsopen](#)



[@simoneverest](#) [@ClaraSongaila](#)



Tell us about a death alpha assessment

The report from the alpha assessment for DWP's tell us about a death service on 10 May 2018.

[gov.uk](#)



Steve Parks

@steveparks

Following



Lots of people working on Gov Digital services are a bit scared of service assessments. But read any of previous reports ([gov.uk/service-standa...](https://gov.uk/service-standards)) and tell me you wouldn't value that kind of constructive steering & support to get your service to be the best it can with least pain



stamanfar @stamanfar · 40m

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Code of conduct

The team pulled together a number of examples of Codes of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

LEARN AND CONNECT

Make use of OneTeamGov to learn, share and make connections.

DIFFERENCE AND INCLUSION

Everyone has the same right to be here as you do. Treat everyone as you would like to be treated.

LISTEN TO EVERYONE

Respect everyone's right to be heard. Share the conversation so that everyone has an opportunity to speak.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT

Harassment includes offensive comments, unwelcome photography or recording, sustained disruption and inappropriate physical contact. People who harass fellow participants will be asked to leave immediately.

POSITIVE SPIRIT, GENEROUS NATURE

We're here to learn from each other. Have a critical debate in a positive and generous way.

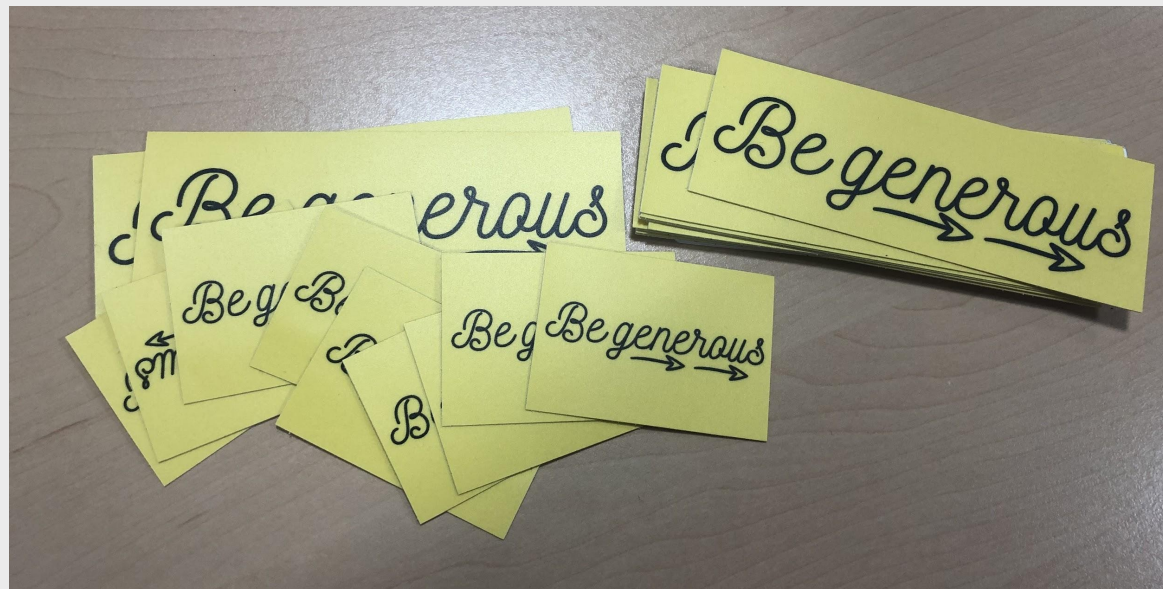
Value everyone's ideas, skills and experiences.

Ensure all are free from discrimination
and harassment.

Listen. To everyone.

Don't assume. If you don't know, ask...
and ask again.

Have empathy and respect.



Questions?



Thanks!