



Cabinet Office

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Andrew Miller MP
Chair
Science and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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31 October 2013

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 9 July which followed my evidence to the Science and Technology Committee regarding the Digital by Default strategy in June. You raised a number of points which are addressed below.

You asked for clarity about the detail of savings being made as a result of making services Digital by Default, and the cost of designing, or redesigning, those services.

The Digital Efficiency Report, published by the Cabinet Office in November 2012, estimates that, on the basis of historic data looking at the savings already achieved by existing digital services over offline alternatives, between £1.7 billion and £1.8 billion could be realised as total annual savings to the government and service users. The savings made from greater digitisation of transactions, including their back-end processes, can be achieved whilst maintaining and ultimately improving service quality. Savings are likely to come from four key areas; the reduced staff time involved in processing digital transactions compared to offline alternatives; estates and accommodation; postage, packaging and materials; and the costs of supporting IT systems.

To help departments achieve these savings, the Government Digital Service, within Cabinet Office, has set up a programme to redesign and rebuild 25 exemplar digital services. They will be made so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will prefer to do so. This work began in April 2013 and is due to be complete by April 2015. Once this is complete, departments will apply any lessons learned to redesign and rebuild all other services that have in excess of 100,000 transactions a year.

Departments are currently working on their business cases for these exemplar digital services with support from the Efficiency and Reform Group within Cabinet Office. The business cases will detail the costs and benefits to be realised.

The Committee was concerned about inadequacies in Government software leading to security vulnerabilities and wanted to know whether the Government was confident that the software developed met the highest engineering standards. Also the Committee suggested that the Government should be clearer with the public about whether online Government services are developed to withstand cyber attacks.

Software is developed to meet the needs of the users, engineering standards are proportionate to those needs. Services that, for example, run on the Public Services Network are accredited by CESG before they are allowed to operate. Through the National Cyber Security Programme and specifically the Trustworthy Software Initiative (TSI) work is underway to improve cyber security by making software more secure, dependable and reliable, and to educate on why trustworthy software is important. TSI is designed to engage with UK Stakeholders from across government, industry and academia to ensure their views are represented. A number of working groups and open events to capture stakeholders input are held.

John Taylor, The Deputy Government Senior Information Risk Owner will meet with you if you wish to discuss this further. You can contact him by email at: CIO-ChiefInformationOfficer@defence.gsi.gov.uk

The Committee expressed concern that sensitive personally identifiable data could be compromised and be the subject of unauthorised use.

The identity assurance service will provide a more secure and safe way for users to assert their identity when accessing digital services, and for the government to establish that a user is who they say they are. Privacy and security are designed into the service and there are requirements and monitoring in place to make sure that identity providers comply with the privacy and security requirements that are placed upon them.

Each identity provider is required to be compliant with international IT security standards (ISO27001) and certified against this standard. The Cabinet Office's identity assurance service and government departments using the service will also be accredited to CESG (UK National Technical Authority) standards. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

In the event that an identity provider ceases to be compliant with these standards or in the event of a security incident, appropriate action will be taken, which may include stopping their ability to provide services.

The use of identity providers allows government to take advantage of private sector innovation in developing solutions for meeting the security requirements outlined above.

You asked for evidence to support my assertion that if the Government can get 20% of the population to transact online, it can achieve 80% participation.

The Digital Efficiency Report looks at the data from 17 case studies. The evidence from these case studies shows that at around 20% digital take-up, the rate of adoption tends to increase as they become increasingly accepted by the mainstream, often reaching 80% take-up within 3 to 5 years. The pace of change could be further increased where digitisation is driven by a process of fundamental service redesign focused on meeting user needs. For example, in the 10 weeks since the launch of the beta service for applications for Lasting Power of Attorney, digital take-up rose from 0% to 5%, without any promotion of the service. Licensing forms received online have risen by 45% since January.

Following my explanation that the Digital by Default strategy was being promoted by word of mouth and good user experience, you asked if the Government had evaluated the effectiveness of these public awareness techniques.

The Government Digital Service constantly tracks the performance and use of all its content and services to inform decisions on managing and adapting service provision.

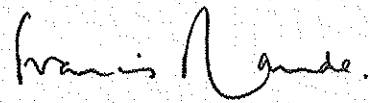
GOV.UK has proved immensely popular, and is consistently around the 50th or so most visited UK website, ahead of a number of major banks and popular newspapers. It has had 41 million visits per month as opposed to 25 million for Directgov and BusinessLink (comparing July 2012 to July 2013) and over 353 million visits since launch in October 2012.

Thank you for your comments about the draft identity assurance principles. The Committee suggested a ninth principle about citizens' online data set.

Privacy considerations will continue to be an integral part of the Identity Assurance Programme. The Privacy & Consumer Advisory Group's Draft Identity Assurance Principles have been the subject of a public consultation which closed on 12 September. The views expressed by the Committee have been fed into this consultation process.

In addition, officials from the Identity Assurance Programme are arranging a meeting with you, and the Chair and members of the Privacy Group to discuss your comments. I understand that this meeting was unable to take place before the end of

the consultation period, nevertheless any comments discussed at that meeting will be taken into account.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Maude." The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'F' and a trailing flourish.

FRANCIS MAUDE