



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Digital strategy for Wales: integrated impact assessment

Summary

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Contents

1. What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

2. Conclusion

1. What action is the Welsh Government considering and why?

In narrative form, please describe the issue and the action proposed by the Welsh Government. How have you applied / will you apply the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to the proposed action, throughout the policy and delivery cycle?

1.1. The Welsh Government is proposing to publish a new Digital Strategy for Wales. The Strategy sets out our overall vision for using a digital approach across sectors and across Wales to change our culture and ensure people experience modern, efficient and streamlined public services. The strategy aims to stimulate innovation and help businesses succeed in a modern world, ensure citizens have the confidence they need to engage with their communities and to build the knowledge and skills people of all ages need to join the digital workplace and economy.

1.2. The strategy is structured around the following six missions: Digital Services, Digital Inclusion, Digital Skills, Digital Economy, Digital Connectivity, and Data and Collaboration. Combined, the missions aim to generate improvements in both public services and businesses, across every sector. The missions form the foundation for the development of truly user-centred public services that take advantage of new technologies, data and innovation to meet the needs of citizens, businesses and the public sector.

1.3. The strategy is intended to provide the framework for future activity across

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all Welsh Government portfolios. It is not a list of actions, and it will not achieve change on its own. Instead, it sets out our aspirations for the future, as well as how we are intending to work to achieve those goals. Each change or new service brought online will be fully impact assessed to ensure that the unique impacts are identified, properly considered, and mitigated where required.

1.4. We have developed the strategy and an accompanying delivery plan in accordance with the Five Ways of Working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and they are at the foundation of the way we intend to deliver the outcomes we want to see.

Long term

1.5. Adopting a digital approach to providing public services will help to meet short and longer term needs and balance both priorities. The strategy sets out how designing public services in an iterative, agile and user-centred way ensures that services meet current needs but also are able to adapt and develop to reflect changes in those needs in the longer term.

1.6. The strategy also recognises that it is important to build citizens' digital motivation, confidence and skills in the long term to fully engage in an increasingly digital world. It also outlines the importance of a future proof digital infrastructure that connects citizens, businesses and the public sector to the reliable and fast digital connectivity and infrastructure required to support new technologies and attract innovation.

1.7. Through supporting remote working, designing public services effectively, using data smartly and ethically as well as modernising the technology we use we can support our ambition to reduce carbon usage in the longer term, although we will need to consider the net effect of increasing data usage.

Prevention

1.8. Applying user-centred design principles to the development of services will help prevent problems occurring because newly developed services will meet the needs of the end user. This will also prevent inefficiencies and

inconsistencies in user experiences.

Integration

1.9. Joined-up, frictionless public services will only be delivered through collaboration and integration. The digital strategy is for all of Wales and is designed to bring together the collective efforts, and integrated working, across local authorities, academia, community councils, health boards and trusts, education providers, fire and rescue bodies, arms-length bodies, third sector and social partnerships.

1.10. The strategy sets out how together we will design and implement better public services, develop the economy and reduce inequalities. These will help us collectively meet our objectives and the Well-being Goals.

1.11. In developing the delivery plan, we have identified a number of interdependencies between missions and actions in different sectors. We will ensure that we take joint action wherever possible.

Collaboration

1.12. We have taken an iterative and collaborative approach to the development of the Digital Strategy for Wales. Responsibilities for digital and data lie across all Ministerial portfolios. The strategy and delivery plan have been developed and refined in collaboration with officials across the Welsh Government.

1.13. The Chief Digital Officer for Local Government, the Chief Executive of the Centre for Digital Public Services, along with the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport's Ministerial Digital Board and his Expert Digital Panel have also contributed to the development of the Strategy and the Delivery Plan.

Involvement

1.14. The strategy has been refined through considerable engagement with

stakeholders across Wales. Continued engagement will support the design of user-facing services that prevent inefficiencies and inconsistent experience for the citizen. Developing services which are user-centred is essential in ensuring they are more accessible and inclusive, eliminating barriers that prevent people from being treated equally. We know that designing public services around user needs will deliver better outcomes for all.

1.15. In order to gain wide feedback and crowd-source ideas on the ambitions within the strategy, we published a series of blogs, raised awareness from them through networks and social media, and invited responses. Officials have also attended a number of internal and external forums, including engagements with representative trade and industry bodies, equality and diversity groups including the Welsh Race Forum, the Children in Wales Youth Forum, and the Learning Disability Community of Practice.

1.16. Stakeholders identified three key priority areas as being critical to the future success of the strategy, due to their importance to all six missions. They were digital inclusion, digital skills and connectivity. The strategy will address these issues by seeking to build citizens skills and confidence in using the digital, ensuring that no-one is left behind as we embrace a digital-first approach. While digital connectivity and telecommunications are fully reserved matters, the Welsh Government recognises the importance of these to citizens and businesses and the strategy commits us to working with the UK Government and intervening with targeted solutions where necessary.

Impact

1.17. Digital change continues to accelerate, and taking a digital approach offers us a wide range of tools for solving new and old problems. Digital offers the potential to enhance people's lives, improve the delivery of public services, support the work of government, and help businesses adapt to changes in the economy and consumer's expectations.

1.18. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important digital and data are to maintaining the delivery of public services. Digital and data have enabled organisations across all sectors to adapt their services to continue to deliver to

citizens. Additionally, the pandemic has shown that citizens are both willing and able to engage with services online.

1.19. There has been substantial recent investment in Digital programmes across portfolio areas, including in health, education, infrastructure, support for businesses, digital inclusion, and the establishment of the Centre for Digital Public Services. The new Strategy ensures a more cohesive approach to action and prioritisation over the coming years.

Costs and savings

1.20. There are no substantial costs as a direct result of the publication of the strategy; costs associated with the development, publication and monitoring of the strategy will be met by existing budgets and resources.

1.21. The strategy identifies that adopting digital and agile ways of working can bring financial and resource benefits. Each action outlined in the strategy and delivery plan which is taken forward will follow the usual policy development process, including identification of financial and budgetary implications as part of normal approval processes.

Mechanism

1.22. No legislation is proposed. The strategy is a high level vision and set of ambitions for Wales. It will be accompanied by a dynamic Delivery Plan which set out actions which will deliver the outcomes articulated in the strategy. The delivery plan will be updated to reflect changing priorities and needs throughout the lifespan of the strategy.

2. Conclusion

How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

2.1 The Strategy has been developed following extensive engagement with

stakeholders, including the public sector, private sector, third sector, businesses and the public. We have sought views through a series of blog posts, and through more detailed discussions at fora and interest groups including those representing children, those who are disabled, and groups from a range of diverse backgrounds. We have engaged substantially with Welsh Government teams which will be at the forefront of delivering the changes the Strategy proposes and to develop the Delivery Plan which accompanies the Strategy.

2.2 The delivery of the goals the Strategy sets will be done through projects and activities – in line with the Strategy, these will be developed with user-centred principles, including user research, to ensure those who will use the service have their needs understood and met. The impacts of each activity or project will be assessed as necessary.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

2.3 Although the Strategy is not likely to have a substantial direct impact on its own, the improved coordination and strategic direction for the development of digital services, the increased use of user-centred design, and improvements to accessibility of digital services will have a substantial impact on citizens, businesses and public services. It will ensure that new projects or proposals are joined up and activities are planned and their interdependencies identified and accounted for. At present, digital is often viewed as a ‘nice to have’ rather than an essential, and projects are often developed in isolation with no real consideration to their dependencies on other projects. The Strategy aims to change that.

2.4 Ensuring new services are built on user-centred design principles, and that they are developed to be bilingual and fully accessible will help support the use of the Welsh language, meet the needs of those who use adaptive tools or software, and provide the services based on what citizens need. Promoting and developing digital skills for all will ensure children and adults are equipped to engage with digital services and the digital economy safely and effectively.

2.5 The Strategy represents additional responsibilities for the public sector to ensure that they adopt its ways of working to achieve the outcomes it envisages.

In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,
- avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

2.6 The Strategy contributes to our progress towards all of the national well-being goals. Digital innovation can lead to greater economic opportunities and a more prosperous and resilient society. Equipping people with the digital skills they need, and designing services around the user will improve social cohesion, create a more healthy and equal society, connect communities and support use of the Welsh language.

2.7 Increasing remote working, offering effective public services, making the best use of data and modernising the technology we use will help support reductions in carbon usage, which will contribute to the efforts to reduce climate change.

2.8 Achieving real digital transformation of public services provides an opportunity to support the ways of working described in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Joined-up digital public services will be delivered through collaboration and integration. Good engagement will support the design of user-facing services that prevent inefficiencies and inconsistent experience for the citizen. Designing services in an iterative, agile and user-focused way will ensure services are designed for the long-term.

2.9 The Strategy will not deliver any benefits on its own – it is through the projects and programmes that result from it that will realise these benefits. The impacts of these actions will be fully assessed as necessary.

How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

2.10 The Welsh Government will take a leadership role in ensuring delivery against the Strategy. This will include ongoing monitoring of progress against,

and updates to, the Delivery Plan.

2.11 The Centre for Digital Public Services will also assist in monitoring progress against the Strategy, particularly for actions relating to the public sector.

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