

***HOW THE UK PUBLIC  
SECTOR CAN DELIVER  
A FIRST-RATE CITIZEN  
EXPERIENCE***



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**SECTION 01**

**CX, DX AND  
THE PANDEMIC**





## Digital transformation in the public sector demands a better citizen experience.

A year after the UK Cabinet Office decided that the public sector needed to significantly improve how it delivered digital services, the citizen-facing website Directgov was absorbed into the new Government Digital Service (GDS). Gov.UK, the platform for GDS, went live in 2012 to provide government services in a cost-effective and exponentially more user-accessible way, and to do so digitally by default. Gov.UK even won a Design of the Year award in 2013.

After almost a decade in operation, however, GDS faced pressure from a global pandemic that strained the ability of government agencies to meet surges in demand for a range of services delivered digitally.

The heightened awareness of the problem is not new for government agencies around the world. Despite growing efforts to improve digital experience for citizens, public agencies continue to fall short of constituents' expectations. People are used to interacting with brands such as Amazon that prioritise the customer and deliver consistent, personalised experiences without long waits or bureaucratic pitfalls.



## **WHY WE NEED STRONG CITIZEN EXPERIENCE**

People visit government websites for two reasons. The first one is to find information, which requires public sector agencies to manage and present content at scale. The second reason is to transact with government services. Such transactions require personalisation, which in turn requires a keen understanding of citizens' needs based on rich data.

In this e-book, we provide agencies with a systematic process, step-by-step process for improving the digital experience for their constituents, while meeting today's stringent security standards. We discuss new approaches and tools to analyse and utilise citizens' data in a privacy-preserving manner and illustrate real-world examples and best practices of how public agencies have optimised the digital services and experiences for their constituents. Readers will learn what a modern digital experience platform (DXP) needs to empower public sector agencies to deliver exceptional digital experiences that are always safe and secure.





**SECTION 02**

**GIVE CITIZENS  
THE CONTENT AND  
SERVICES THEY WANT**



In order to meet the rapidly evolving demands of a digitally enabled public, government agencies need to deliver the following fundamentals:

- Choice.** Citizens want to access digital content on any channel they access commercial content (websites, apps, digital signage and so on). In 2021, over 50% of users on GOV.UK are using the site on mobile devices. This mobile usage number has almost tripled in just six years, demonstrating the importance of building sites that are mobile-friendly.
- Accessibility.** The content of public sector websites has to be accessible to visitors, regardless of their language or disabilities. Many countries have explicit laws in place to ensure that content is accessible to the differently-abled (those with permanent or temporary visual, hearing, physical, or cognitive impairments).

- Relevancy.** Agencies need the ability to update digital content in minutes, providing information that is relevant to the present hour. Editing, removing and replacing content needs to be simple and intuitive. Agencies must be able to orchestrate messages in real time across all communication channels, including email, social, SMS/push and direct mail. Agencies must also be able to launch new websites in response to public needs, as we saw during the pandemic. New sites can't be built from scratch in a timely or cost-efficient manner, so governments need reusable templates and components to quickly build and launch new sites that are secure and functional.



**OF USERS ON GOV.UK  
ARE USING THE SITE ON  
MOBILE DEVICES.**



# UK GOV ACCELERATOR

## **ACCELERATING SITE-BUILDING WITH LOW-CODE TOOLS**

The public sector had to work with limited budgets and resources to create accessible and user-friendly websites. In Government Digital Service's (GDS's) pursuit of more cost-effective methods to design public sector websites that effectively serve constituents, the **GOV.UK** Design System went into beta in 2018 as a community-driven effort to bring government design patterns, styles and components together in one place. Design systems that build and iterate on the work of others are essential to creating easy-to-use websites and services.

To optimise the approach of the GOV.UK Design System, Acquia

launched the UK Government Accelerator as an out-of-the-box solution with baked-in compliance and governance. That makes it easier, faster and cheaper for users of the Gov.UK Design System to design, build and manage Drupal websites while adhering 100% to GDS design principles. Through reusable components and low-code developer tools, the UK Government Accelerator speeds up and simplifies public sector digital projects. In fact, the design kit has resulted in 5 to 10x increases in production speed for content pages on public sector sites.





## CASE STUDY

# KEW GARDENS

## PROVIDING BETTER CONTENT AND RESPONSIVE DESIGN

The Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew Gardens) had a website that averaged 1.5 million page views per month and served diverse audiences all over the world. The [kew.org](https://www.kew.org) website is key to improving the wider understanding of Kew's mission and values and stoking interest and engagement with conservation efforts. It also supports revenue goals by displaying stunning botanical attractions to drive ticket sales and donations.

The existing website lacked multidimensional flexibility in the user experiences it could offer and the information architecture needed improvement. Key moments in the user journey, such as booking tickets and finding directions, were suboptimal, rigid and dated.

The goal of the Kew website redesign was to build on a new platform with

modern, decoupled capabilities that would enable them to publish interactive content for all audiences and repurpose their library of horticultural research. The new website had to provide an enhanced digital experience that would equally serve commercial business objectives and establish Kew's brand mission in the public sector.

Kew's digital team decided Drupal's open CMS solution hosted on Acquia Cloud Platform was the right fit in terms of power, scale and security. By using open source solutions, the Kew digital team was able to complete a successful redesign without rebuilding from the ground up. Since relaunching [kew.org](https://www.kew.org) in March 2019, the new site has increased user engagement and the average bounce rate has decreased by 19.9%.



**SECTION 03**

**PERSONALISE  
THE CITIZEN  
EXPERIENCE**





## Digital experiences in the public sector need to meet the standard found in the private sector.

When a citizen transacts business with a government agency, the relationship resembles that of an e-commerce operation, where customers expect quick, convenient and personalised service. Government agencies need to figure out how to organise their citizens' data to the point where they can act on it to provide the same level of service and personalisation as the private sector.

These are the best practices from private sector businesses that public sector agencies must now embrace:

### **Enabling citizens to create profiles that include contact and payment information:**

A saved profile automatically makes things more convenient. The constituents don't have to share personal information every time they want to conduct a transaction with a public agency.

**Learning more about citizens' preferences and behaviours over time:** A citizen profile enables public agencies to build out a robust, up-to-date record of individual citizens and their transaction history with agencies.

**Using citizens' data to personalise the experience on multiple levels:** Citizens' data enables agencies to personalise the web experience every time the citizen visits. It also helps to ensure that the agency contacts the citizen on their preferred channels (email, text, etc.) to contact them with important alerts such as a fire or outage in their vicinity.

Delivering this level of personalisation for public sector organisations requires each agency to collect all personal data and share it across separate departments or agencies so it can be used for a single, personalised experience.

Getting tax assessment data, applying for a building permit, renewing a driver's license and paying a utility bill involve multiple departments and multiple systems. A citizen trying to complete these different tasks will usually have to access several different sites and, if payment is involved, enter personal payment information into several different systems. This results in an inconvenient, confusing and frustrating experience.

Citizens expect better collaboration between agencies in service of the people. That the Department of Public Safety is separate from the Department of Public Works may be a fact of life, but from the citizens' perspective, it doesn't make sense. It's all part of the same government, just like the sales department and the service department are part of the same company.



This challenge must be addressed through cooperation and alignment between agencies around data privacy and protection. The technology is here today to support secure data sharing. Consistent policy and mutually agreed standards, however, are not. Ultimately, governments should be striving for enabling citizens to create a “citizen profile” that would follow them from department to department.

Given the current complexity of interagency cooperation, data standards, secure data transfer, oversight and more that would be involved, it will take some time before this is possible. The key is to choose an architectural framework now that is capable of supporting both current and future efforts to smooth the citizen experience across multiple government departments while complying with applicable data protection regulations.






## CASE STUDY

# NHSBT

### ATTRACTING NEW DONORS THROUGH A STREAMLINED DX



The National Health Service Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), a public body sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care, manages NHS blood donation services in England and transplant services across the UK. NHSBT needed to quickly respond to the increased interest in blood donation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and to capture new donors. Amplified interest led to spikes in web traffic on the [NHS website](#), and their Give Blood forms required speedy modernisation to both maintain uptime and attract new and diverse donors for future blood intake.

NHSBT decided to build and host a temporary, brand-compliant registration landing page to handle the additional demand without overtaxing their internal

systems and to quickly filter through registrants to prioritise donors with rare or high-demand blood types.

Working with partners to map out the existing customer journeys and modernise the donor registration process, NHSBT chose Acquia Site Studio and its low-code approach to accelerate the delivery of the website. NHSBT and its partners also used Acquia Personalization Profile Manager to build enhanced user journeys and data profiles of site visitors for future touchpoints and execute A/B testing to draw actionable insights from user visits. The new Give Blood form receives an average of 25,000 daily visitors and provides a significantly improved user experience.



## The Role of Consolidated, Cross-Channel Data

A new practice in data management has emerged, one that enables best-in-class consumer brands to deliver seamless customer experiences across channels. This practice is based on the use of a modern customer data platform (CDP), which collects, consolidates and activates layers of personal data. This data in turn powers convenient and contextual experiences. CDPs can make it easier for organisations to conform to all aspects of data privacy legislation while helping them deliver a better experience for their customers.

The same will be true for government agencies that adopt CDP technology to power citizen experiences. By using CDPs, public sector agencies will gain the following powerful capabilities:

- /// **Consolidating data from every relevant source within the agency:** Agencies can now create comprehensive citizen profiles that reflect each interaction between the citizen and the government.

- /// **Propagating data to all relevant users and channels:** In the private sector, the marketing department would want to know if a customer is experiencing a service issue so they don't send marketing messages that may be perceived as annoying. Likewise, the public sector agencies should be aware of a citizen's history of interactions with the agency and not send requests or messages that are no longer relevant.

- /// **Leveraging cutting-edge analytics, including machine learning, to deepen citizen insight and understanding:** This insight itself can support hyper-personalisation of interactions with constituents or even predict potential issues. Determining whether or not a citizen qualifies for unemployment benefits, for example, is a critical task with serious consequences. Machine learning can not only analyse consolidated data to expedite the decision but could also determine when a human should take over to provide advice and encouragement.

- /// **Complying with relevant data privacy requirements:** From both a credibility and a compliance standpoint, maintaining trust and transparency with the data organisations collect from individuals, as well as quickly and accurately fulfilling any requests to remove their information, is crucial for private and public sector organisations alike.

Not all CDPs are created equal or meet the needs of public sector agencies. CDPs consolidate data from online and offline sources and can activate it, but for the public sector, these tools need to balance personalisation with trust, governance and security expected from government agencies.



# CDPs vs CRMs

## **CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORMS ARE BUILT TO LEVERAGE ALL SOURCES OF CUSTOMER DATA**

There can be confusion in the market regarding the difference between customer data platforms (CDPs) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. CRM systems are used to manage interactions with current and potential customers. Unlike CDPs, CRMs were not designed to facilitate personalised customer experiences. They are limited with regard to the number of channels and data sources they can interact with.

A traditional CRM cannot, for example, pull in information from a customer service solution or a social media tracking system, nor can it deliver relevant content to diverse channels. The modern CDP arose as a response to these limitations, when enterprises needed “analytical CRMs” that could access and incorporate customer data from any online or offline source.



**SECTION 04**

**ENSURE  
GOVERNANCE  
AND SECURITY**





## Citizen experiences need to be compliant, composable and secure.

The balance between delivering a strong citizen experience and ensuring adequate security and governance is quite unique for the public sector. The demand on IT to deliver trusted, non-intrusive and scalable service is significant and it's much easier said than done. Coupled with the fact that most public sector IT groups need to factor in many legacy solutions and technologies, the job may seem impossible at times.

A platform approach allows an agency's digital footprint to grow in a logical, controlled way that is overseen from a single dashboard. There are certain critical attributes and capabilities, however, that a platform must have in order to modernise public sector infrastructure and deliver first-rate digital experiences to constituents:

/// **It must be secure and compliant from the ground up.** A modern public sector digital platform needs to meet the most stringent government compliance standards and certifications right out of the gate:

- Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Service Organization Control (SOC) 2
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 27001

/// **It should be composable.** Such digital experience platforms (DXPs) should enable the creation of reusable components that are easier for end-users to work with. They should also ensure the maintenance of compliance and security standards by building controls into the components themselves. This is the only way to get IT out of the content support

game. No longer do IT departments have to waste valuable time supporting content updates — they can now enable non-technical, public-facing staff to do this on their own.

/// **It must maintain data security.** Through tight integration with a CDP, a modern web platform for public sector organisations needs to access and deploy data as needed without exposing it to risk or falling out of compliance with data regulations.

When you have a platform that is flexible enough to be responsive to the needs of citizens and stakeholders, but structured enough to be easily governed, you have the best of both worlds.

## CASE STUDY

# HARLOW COUNCIL

## INCREASING ADOPTION OF DIGITAL SERVICES

Harlow Council is a government authority that serves the residents and businesses of Harlow, a town and government district in Essex, England. Harlow Council delivers services to more than 80,000 constituents, including rubbish and recycling collection, council tax collections, housing applications and land planning permits. Its outdated website, [Harlow.gov.uk](https://www.harlow.gov.uk), was not designed to easily meet user needs, causing constituents to seek alternative, non-digital channels. In-person visits strained the staff's time and resources, which made it difficult to prioritise those residents who most needed their help.

Harlow Council needed its website to provide intuitive digital experiences that would quickly and easily connect users

with the essential information and services they sought in clear, easy-to-understand content types.

Working with a digital agency partner, Harlow Council identified Drupal and Acquia Cloud Platform as the best solution to replatform and redesign their new website — and to comply with the WCAG 2.1 AA specifications. Using Drupal 8's flexible, open-source architecture, Harlow Council migrated to a new website with a revamped site experience, better-managed content and improved responsiveness across all devices. Since relaunching, Harlow Council has seen a 30% increase in their overall site visits in addition to an uptick in constituents opting for digital rather than in-person services.





**SECTION 05**

**THE LEADING  
DXP FOR THE  
PUBLIC SECTOR**





## With the right DXP, government agencies can deliver the digital experiences today's citizens demand.

As digital-first initiatives sweep across all sectors — accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic — heightened citizen expectations for digital experiences are here to stay. For the public sector, delivering digital information and services is no longer a nice-to-have; it is imperative for providing the level of service constituents now expect and demand. The right DXP is critical to enabling public agencies to respond quickly to these evolving expectations and build a strong, scalable and secure digital foundation for the future.

With our long history of working closely with the public sector, Acquia has adapted solutions to provide what every government agency needs to deliver great constituent experiences:

- /// **Flexibility to deliver new digital services and access emerging channels**
- /// **Personalisation that serves customer needs and builds trust**

- /// **A “golden customer record” that allows government agencies to have a single view of a constituent**
- /// **Governance to manage a portfolio of websites and digital applications**
- /// **Compliance with key government certifications**
- /// **A reasonable total cost of ownership**
- /// **Ease of use for non-technical stakeholders**

Acquia is not only a field-tested partner for government agencies — it is the DXP that meets and exceeds government standards with core certifications.

Acquia's UK Government Accelerator is available for all public sector websites and is instrumental to delivering world-class digital services to citizens. By enabling the recommissioning of features that are already available in open

source projects (and that adhere to GDS design principles), Acquia's UK Government Accelerator saves the public sector money, quickens delivery times and reduces the risks inherent to any project being built from the ground up.

UK government agencies need to deliver an increasing volume of personalised digital services to satisfy today's constituents. The interoperability, agility and reliability of Acquia's platform and Drupal's open architecture empower them to do so today and into the future — without sacrificing security or compliance.

# ***BRING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO THE PEOPLE***

Connect with us today to see how Acquia can enable your agency to deliver personalised digital experiences to your citizens.

**LEARN MORE ▶**



# Acquia

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## **ABOUT ACQUIA**

Acquia is the open digital experience platform that enables organisations to build, host, analyse and communicate with their customers at scale through websites and digital applications. As the trusted open source leader, we use adaptive intelligence to produce better business outcomes for CX leaders.

