

Government Digital Service

Communications Strategy 2018/19



Cabinet Office

What is GDS?

The Government Digital Service (GDS) was established following Baroness Martha Lane Fox's 'revolution not evolution' report on the future of Directgov. The report was published in 2010 and work began that year to set up what would become GOV.UK and to build a team that would develop and support it.

GDS was established in 2011 and GOV.UK launched in beta in January 2012. GOV.UK has become the single website for the UK Government and a vital part of UK society.

GDS now supports more than 400 services from 120 organisations across the public sector. Our work has accelerated the pace of digital transformation and helped make it easier for departments to produce and run excellent digital services. Since 2011 we've:

- run the Digital Transformation Project
- set up the Digital Service Standard and the Service Manual
- set up the Technology Code of Practice collaboratively
- launched identity assurance platform GOV.UK Verify
- built the Digital Marketplace in collaboration with the Crown Commercial Service (CCS)
- developed common components GOV.UK Pay, GOV.UK Notify and GOV.UK Platform as a Service
- launched the GDS Academy

and lots more...

**We help
government
work better
for everyone
by leading
the digital
transformation
of public
services.**

How we work

We want to transform the relationship between citizens and the state - putting more power in the hands of citizens and being more responsive to their needs.

We work with government departments and agencies to transform their services. This vision is described in detail in the Government Transformation Strategy. Our aim is to make government a truly digital organisation so that:

- users have a better experience when interacting with government services
- civil servants have the digital skills and capability necessary to carry out their roles
- government can better deliver on policy goals
- the cost and time to build, change and run government is reduced, saving public money
- we improve trust between citizens and state
- we build secure systems by default

GDS supports the digital transformation of government in a number of ways, through products, platforms and tools.

Products

GOV.UK

is the single website for all central government services and information.

GOV.UK Platform as a Service (PaaS)

is our cloud-hosting platform.

GOV.UK Verify

is the secure way to prove who you are online.

GOV.UK Notify

lets you send emails, text messages and letters to users.

GOV.UK Pay

is the secure payment service.

GOV.UK Registers

provides direct access to up-to-date government data.

GovWifi

allows staff and visitors in government locations to connect to a secure wifi service.

Platforms

The Digital Service Standard

is a set of 18 criteria to help government create and run great digital services.

The Service Manual

helps teams create and run great digital services that meet the Digital Service Standard.

The Open Standards Principles

make it easier for departments to adopt open standards.

The Technology Code of Practice

is a set of criteria to help government design, build and buy better technology.

Tools

The Digital Marketplace

is the place to find technology or people for digital projects in the public sector.

The GDS spend controls pipeline assessment criteria

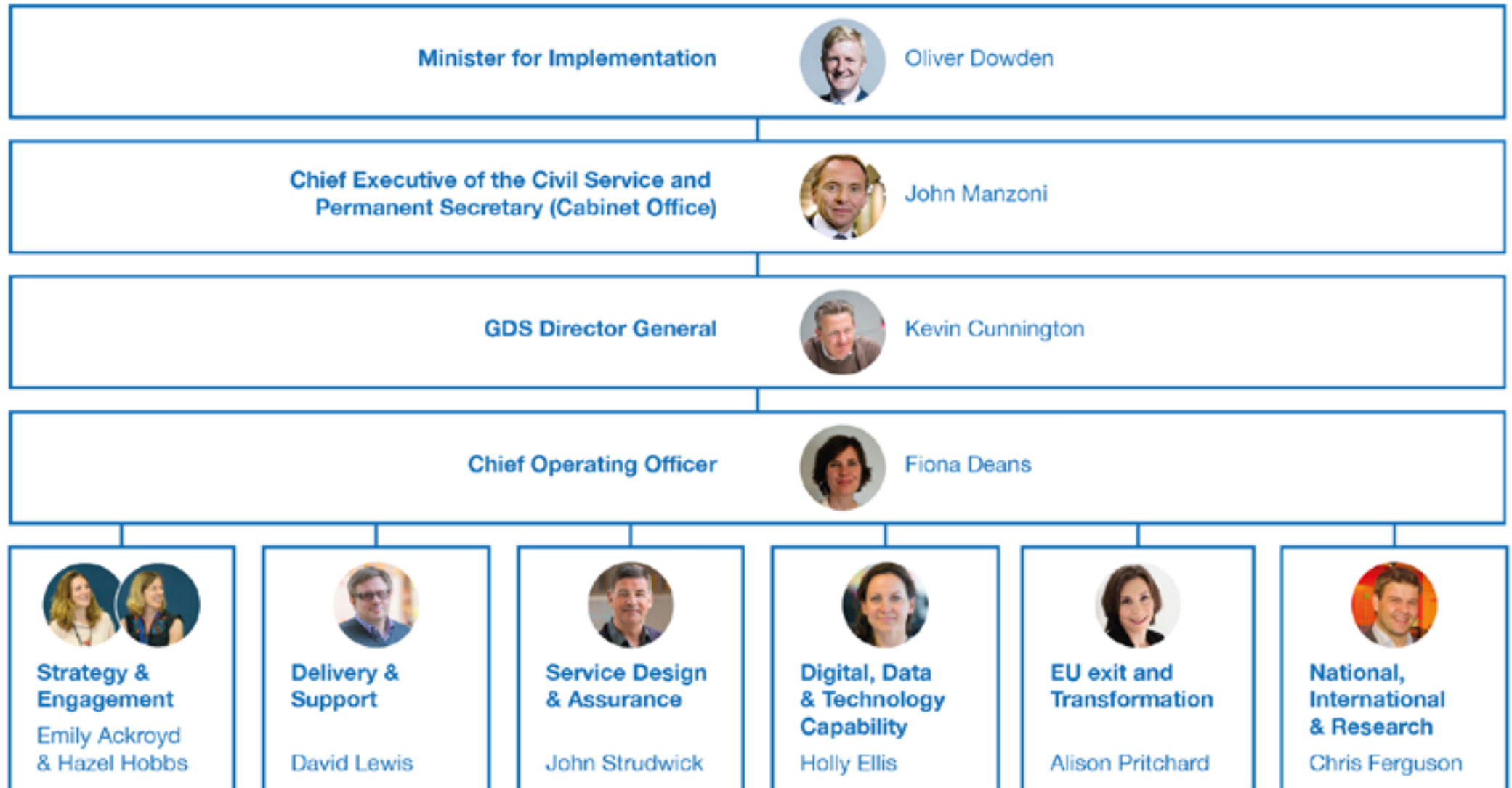
are the processes through which spend on digital or technology is approved.

The GDS Academy

teaches civil servants the digital skills they need to transform public services.



How we are structured



Our work is guided by

The Government Transformation Strategy (GTS)

The Government Transformation Strategy 2017-2020 sets out how the government will use digital to transform the relationship between the citizen and state and the role of GDS in delivery.



#govtransformation



Cabinet Office Single Departmental Plan

Cabinet Office supports the Prime Minister and ensures the effective running of government. It is the corporate headquarters for government, in partnership with HM Treasury, and it takes the lead in critical policy areas. Our objectives are:

1. Maintain the integrity of the Union, coordinate the security of the realm and sustain a flourishing democracy.
2. Support the design and implementation of HM Government's policies and the Prime Minister's priorities.
3. Ensure the delivery of the finest public services by attracting and developing the best public servants and improving the efficiency of government.

The GDS Values

GDS has 4 values that help us prioritise and assess work. Every piece of our work at GDS should strive to meet all 4 of these values and must meet at least 1 of them.

The 4 values are:

1 Show what good looks like

By 'good' we mean things that help government be more efficient, effective and user-focused. Everything we build, run and support should have this aim.

2 Solve the hardest problems

Because GDS works across all of government, our role is to come up with solutions that work for all of government. We do the hard work to make things simple.

3 Help government transform

We want to help all of government use digital ways of working to improve processes and build and run user-focused services.

But this is not just about giving departments tools and standards and leaving them to get on with things. Where appropriate, GDS will work directly with departments to help them build and run projects and to create lasting change.



4 Reflect the society we serve

GDS's purpose is to help government work better for everyone. We will only achieve that if we, as an organisation, are as diverse as the society we're working for. This means GDS places critical importance on ensuring our people are highly skilled, talented, and diverse.

Reflecting the society we serve also means levelling the playing field so that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) can do business with government. Through the Digital Marketplace, suppliers from across the country can bid for government contracts.

We are also expanding our national footprint through the GDS Academy and through regional engagement managers.

The GDS Communications Strategy 2018/19

Alanah Donnell

Deputy Director, Communications and Engagement

The Government Digital Service is like no other part of the Civil Service. We are here to help government transform, from establishing common standards (and ensuring they're met) to bringing new technology and innovation into departments. We do the hard work of researching, identifying and procuring new digital solutions so that others don't have to.

As communicators, our role is simple: we're here to tell the GDS story.

For the general public, that could be how changes we've made to GOV.UK have made it easier to perform complex and sensitive tasks, through step-

by-step navigation on everything from 'setting up a charity' to 'reporting a death'.

For industry, that might mean showing how we are increasing opportunities for technology and digital businesses to supply to government. As it stands, almost half of the £4 billion spent through the Digital Marketplace has gone to SMEs.



And for civil servants, this could be how through the creation of GovWifi, more than 400,000 colleagues can now work flexibly across a number of public sector buildings - it is even deployed on Border Force patrol boats!

All of these share a common thread: digital is at the heart of the relationship between the citizen and the state.

In 2018/19 we will be telling that story in three parts: Transformation, Collaboration and Innovation. These themes reflect our business



priorities and sit at the heart of a new strategic approach to communications for GDS.

Sprint 18 kick-started the year by launching these themes and getting our relationships, both internal and external, back on the front foot. By reinstating this global event and showcasing the UK's public sector digital and technology achievements, we sent a clear message: GDS is helping make government better for everyone.

In the next year, we will capitalise on the momentum from that flagship event. A series of



campaigns will show what these themes mean in practice: celebrating how the GDS Academy is transforming digital skills across the public sector, how the GovTech Catalyst Programme is collaborating with the Home Office to bring in new technology to combat Daesh propaganda online, and how innovative changes to GOV.UK mean you can now use Alexa to search for information about learning to drive.

To deliver this, we'll work in multi-disciplinary teams on a campaigns model which allows different parts of the Communications and Engagement team to work together on shared objectives. We'll review and refresh our internal and external channels to make sure they're evolving with our audiences, and look at more effective ways to manage our social channels to increase their impact. This will be supported by new insight, evaluation and analysis to ensure that our communications are user-led and achieve their aims.

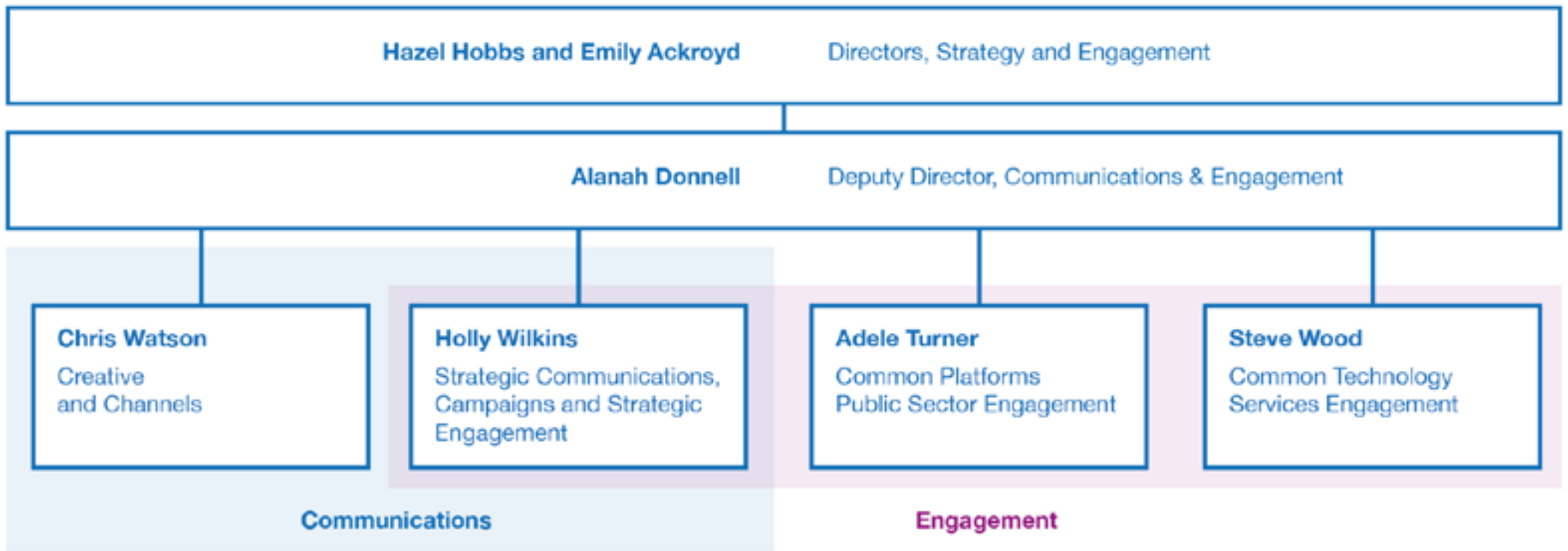
Our campaigns will not only deliver core GDS business objectives, they'll also be part of the wider Cabinet Office Communications messages and the cross-government Smarter Government campaign.

Through programmes like Accelerate, Comms Exchange and Inspire, we'll work more closely than ever with colleagues across the Government Communications Service to jointly improve skills, talent and opportunities.

Working at GDS presents so many diverse and unusual opportunities for government communicators; I'm proud to lead our team and excited about the difference our work will make this year.



How we're set up to deliver



Who we talk to and how we reach them

We continually monitor and refine who our users are and how we can best reach them. This ensures we use the right channel, at the right time, to engage with them. To help us do this we look at where our users are already talking about things. It's much better to go to where the conversation is already happening rather than insisting they come to us.



In 2018/19 we'll be reviewing and refreshing our channels strategy, to make sure they are best suited for the audiences we're trying to reach, and that we're using them to their full advantage. Already this year we have refreshed our YouTube presence to better reflect the work we are doing and our campaign themes for 2018/19, by reformatting and categorising our videos to reflect GDS as a learning organisation. We have also looked at how we can make better use of Instagram through Instagram stories, and are now evaluating this to better inform our use of the channel.

Our people

GDS is an organisation of committed and passionate people who care about the work they do.

We strive to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace, one which reflects the society we serve and one in which expertise is respected. Our job is to ensure that everyone at GDS understands how their work fits into the bigger picture.

Our people are our strongest ambassadors. This year, our goals are to promote our valuable role within, and contribution to, Cabinet Office; create a more engaged and stable workforce; and to raise the profile of GDS as a great place to work. This autumn, we will launch the 'We Are GDS' campaign as a vehicle for these messages.

We use a range of channels to do this, both offline and online. These include monthly huddles, biannual All Staff conferences, community tools like Slack and Trello, and the GDS wiki.

Our partners

We work with departments, agencies and the wider public sector to achieve the joined-up digital transformation of public services.

The Strategic Engagement team works across government to build and manage relationships, and co-ordinates GDS teams to give a consistent experience to departments and agencies. The team creates buy-in with stakeholders and invests in understanding departments' digital transformation objectives so that GDS can effectively support delivery.

Our communications also support the development of communities through outputs including blogs and conferences. Beyond the UK public sector, we are proud of GDS's reputation as a global digital leader. Sharing our learnings through channels such as the GDS Blog, @GDSteam and @DigiCareersGov on Twitter, helps keep us at the forefront of digital developments. The role of these channels is to discuss work happening at GDS with partners inside and outside of government, allowing us to be more technical in the language we use. Instagram and YouTube channels support this work through more creative content. The new YouTube 'We Are GDS' series, for example, allows practitioners, students and commentators to better understand what we're doing and why.

The Industry

Outside of government, our partners include suppliers, think tanks and digital start-ups, as well as the digitech trade media and industry. We want to support the nascent govtech industry, show the benefits to UK SMEs of working with government, and share what we're doing both at home and internationally to do the hard work to make interacting with government easier for everyone. Our programme of events, from conferences and roundtables, to external speakers presenting in GDS and Sprint19, support the development of these critical relationships.



The public

In 2018/19 we will look to go 'beyond the bubble', and seek to use our best case studies to demonstrate that digital services are helping improving people's lives. Working in close partnership with Cabinet Office communications through the Smarter Government campaign, we will show not just the output of our work (e.g. new task by task navigation on GOV.UK), but the real-world outcome too: you can now use voice activation such as Google Home and Alexa to search for information on GOV.UK.

To engage with the public we will develop a proactive media approach that tells our stories through national and local press, and high profile Ministerial opportunities. Alongside these, we will continue to share developments publicly through @GOVUK in a clear, matter of fact way. Twitter naturally also has to play the role of customer service, and we respond to over 3,000 enquiries from members of the public through this channel each year. The tone of these channels is helpful but to the point, never diverting away from the facts. We strive to avoid any risk in users misinterpreting what we post.

Our approach

The Communications and Engagement Strategy seeks to engage people in the work of GDS simply and effectively. Our work should be driven by insights and should meet the needs of our audiences.

The strategy will:

1. Weave GDS's strategic priorities through all our communications and engagement activity.
2. Enable colleagues at GDS to see their work communicated.
3. Increase confidence, trust and support for GDS both internally and externally, building our reputation across government and within the sector.

Our campaigns are time-bound pieces of work that support at least one overarching communication/campaign theme to ensure alignment with business priorities. We will make evidence-based decisions about our communications approach for each campaign, using quantitative data and qualitative audience feedback. Aligning our campaigns to three overarching themes is designed to increase cut-through and the impact of our messaging.



Our 2018/19 themes

Transforming government for all

To show citizens and government the benefits to be had through the transformation of services, and the role GDS plays in delivery.

Collaborating to deliver the best

To support both the recruitment of high quality talent into government and the development of skills and culture to transform public services.

Innovating for the future

To show how GDS, in collaboration with other government departments, is using innovative technologies to deliver the services users need and expect when interacting with government.



GDS comms as part of GCS

In 2018/19 GDS will work more closely with the wider Government Communications Service (GCS), to develop and enhance our skills, and help build capability beyond our team. This year we will embed GCS professional standards across our team and seek out GCS assessment for our performance against them. This will enable us to learn what more we can do to improve. We will actively engage in (and deliver our own) GCS Comms Exchange events, and look at ways in which the digital insights gained in GDS can support the Accelerate programme.

GDS comms as part of CO

As part of the Cabinet Office, our communications contribute to the delivery of the Cabinet Office Communications Strategy. In particular, our campaigns will seek to:

- demonstrate that government is improving public services, and creating a smarter government, through collaboration and harnessing new technologies which are increasing value for money and benefits for citizens, and
- increase understanding across the Civil Service of how we contribute to ‘A Brilliant Civil Service’: delivering high-quality public services and keeping the UK prosperous and secure.

GDS also works with other Functional Communications teams to align messaging to the rest of government, such as working with the IPA to support the Transforming Together programme, and collaborating with the Crown Commercial Service on Digital Marketplace communications.

GDS campaigns 2018-19

Innovation

Telling the story of innovative technologies and their role enabling government to continue to deliver the services people need and expect when interacting with government.

GovTech Catalyst

Supporting the GovTech Catalyst to distribute £20m funding to innovative suppliers, solving common problems across government with innovative solutions.

GDS Academy

Marketing the GDS Academy and our training to civil servants, to ensure that we are building a better civil service for now and the future.

We are GDS

Building clarity on GDS's principles, purpose and vision and improving understanding, engagement with and buy in from GDS staff on these. In the second stage of this project we'll look to focus on building engagement cross departmentally and externally.

Growing the Digital Marketplace

Ensuring that the frameworks on the Digital Marketplace are attracting the best suppliers, from across the UK to sell services to government.

Setting the Standard

Telling the story of how GDS is building the standards and support the public sector needs to transform effectively and safely to offer simple, accessible and effective public services.

Toolkit of Services

Showcasing the services we have built to deliver cost-effective solutions and services to solve common problems across government: GOV.UK, Notify, Pay, Verify etc.

Emerging talent

Marketing the Digital, Data and Technology Profession as an exceptional opportunity to future civil servants.

International collaboration

Positioning the UK as a leader in e-government, sharing skills, tools and expertise internationally. Governments don't compete, they collaborate.

GDS campaign themes			Cabinet Office comms objectives		
Transformation	Innovation	Collaboration	Improvement to Public services	Innovation	Smarter spending
✓	✓		✓	✓	
	✓			✓	✓
✓		✓	✓		
		✓	✓		
✓	✓		✓		✓
✓		✓	✓		
✓			✓		
	✓	✓	✓		
✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Evaluation

Our activities are measured using the Government Communication Service Evaluation Framework. GDS's agile planning cycle allows us to be responsive to campaign insights and adapt our approach at least quarterly, based on iterative evaluation. In 2018/19, our evaluation priorities are baselining our campaign KPIs and improving our outcome measurement.

GDS has led on the use of digital tools in government, to gather insight and increase data-driven decision-making. As an early adopter of Brandwatch, the communications team has also supported other departments to develop their approach to social listening and analysis.

The challenge of EU exit

GOV.UK isn't just a digital platform, it's a core channel for government communications and trusted source of public information. Together with GOV.UK colleagues, we are working with communications teams across government to ensure that information communicated over the months and years ahead can be published easily, on time, and in the most user-friendly format. Whether that means developing new functionality for GOV.UK, or working with departments to stop the proliferation of new channels, we'll do so in partnership between the digital and communications professions.

GDS Communications in Action

Sprint 18

Aim: Position GDS on the front foot and showcase our expertise in transformation, highlighting the work going on across government to build a government that works for everyone.

Output: Day-long event integrating workshops, keynotes, Ministerial and JAM announcements, and panel sessions, creative content including blog posts, videos and animations, press briefing, and event design.

Outcomes: 23 trade sector publications on Sprint 18, 66% of overall coverage held a positive sentiment, 26% a neutral sentiment, and 8% a negative sentiment. Social media coverage: 7,494 page views across all Sprint related blog content, sentiment from attendees.

Business impact: Delegates gained an understanding of the role of GDS and transformation across government, shifted GDS's profile from neutral to positive.



GDS Academy

Aim: Bring to life government as a community and GDS Academy as an enabler of cultural change for transformation.

Output: GDS blog post and Katherine Ogilvie testimonial published on Digital People. Twitter campaign from the GDS Academy channel @GDSacademy. Crowdsourced the audience and asked to share their memory, tag a classmate and use #GDSacademy hashtag for the campaign to raise awareness.

Outcomes: 56 people joined GDS Academy Twitter list. Twitter: engagements 952, impressions 24,086, links clicked 222. LinkedIn: impressions 7,613, clicks 103.

Business impact: greater knowledge of the GDS Academy and its role, GDS academy courses fully booked for the next quarter.



Digital Marketplace

Aim: encourage suppliers to sign up to sell their services through Digital Marketplace.

Output: Targeted social media campaign through @GOVUKdigimkt, promoting the application window and supporting case studies from suppliers successfully selling through the Digital Marketplace.

Outcomes: uses of the #gcloud10 hashtag, 12 trade press articles with 98% positive sentiment, audience generated content (including press releases).

Business impact: 25% rise in applicants on previous iteration, 90% of suppliers applied as SMEs, improving the range of suppliers selling to government, increasing competition, and growing satisfaction with the Digital Marketplace.



Find out more and get in touch

The GDS About Us page

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-digital-service/about>

The GDS blog

<https://gds.blog.gov.uk/>

GDS on Twitter

@gdsteam