

## **Cabinet**

**11 September 2019**

**A Digital Strategy for County Durham**

**Ordinary Decision/Key Decision No.**



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### **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Andrea Patterson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Corporate Services and Rural Issues**

**Councillor Joy Allen, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation,  
Culture and Tourism**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

1 To adopt the Council's new Digital Strategy for the County.

### **Executive summary**

2 In 2014 the Council adopted a Customer First Strategy with three core objectives:

- To provide easy to use and effective ways for people to contact us
- To provide responsive and customer focussed services
- To use customer feedback for learning and to improve services.

3 Since that time, and in delivery of the Customer First strategy, the Council's digital offer to its customers has seen dramatic improvement.

4 The Council is now delivering an ambitious programme of Transformation with the overall objectives of:

- Redesigning our services to better meet our customers' needs at reduced cost to the Council.
  - Helping communities become more self-reliant and resilient
  - Moving our partnership working from good to great
  - Becoming renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and our employee engagement.
- 5 Digital is central to the achievement of these transformational goals.
- 6 The new Digital Strategy sets out the Council's digital ambitions for the County. It provides a framework within which these ambitions can be delivered, and aligns to the interlocking objectives of the Revised Council Vision and the Transformation Programme.
- 7 The new strategy is set out under three main themes along with individual service specific ambitions set out by each service grouping. The three themes are:
- Digital Customer
  - Digital Organisation
  - Digital Communities
- 8 The new strategy has been designed to be presented and consumed primarily as digital document and although hard copies will be available on request, this will be by exception.
- 9 The full document is included in Appendix 3 and can be viewed at:

[Durham County Council Digital Strategy](#)

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 10 Cabinet is recommended to:
- approve the adoption of the new Digital Strategy;
  - Approve the publication of the Digital Strategy on the Council's website.

## Background

- 11 For most people, digital technology is an essential part of daily life. We live in an increasingly connected world. The internet has given us access to a world of information and entertainment. We can shop, bank, and transact with public services on a 24/7 basis and we can share our thoughts, opinions and photographs with the world instantly through social media. Global communication is readily available and instantaneous.
- 12 These connections have changed the way people expect to interact with their Council to request, access and receive our services.
- 13 To meet these changing expectations the Council continues to enhance and expand its digital offer. This means getting the most out of technology to increase choice and improve quality, finding innovative solutions that allow us to work in better and smarter ways and helping our communities to thrive in a digital world.
- 14 In 2014 the Council adopted a Customer First Strategy with three core objectives:
- To provide easy to use and effective ways for people to contact us
  - To provide responsive and customer focussed services
  - To use customer feedback for learning and to improve services.
- 15 Since that time, and in delivery of the Customer First strategy, the Council's digital offer to its customers has seen dramatic improvement.
- 16 The significant improvements to our website and online services has resulted in a substantial change in how people contact us. Over one hundred thousand customers are now choosing to transact with the Council online through our easy to use 'do it online' service along with more service specific systems in areas such as culture, leisure and planning. Online is now our most popular contact channel for service requests in many of our most used service areas.
- 17 Not only is transacting online easy and convenient for customers, it also enables us to direct service requests straight to the front line, improving service response times and increasing efficiency.
- 18 The way we deliver services has also changed. Mobile digital devices are now routinely used in frontline service delivery, harnessing the power of digital and data to provide a better customer experience. Digital devices and paperless working have also delivered efficiencies

and improvements to our administrative and decision making processes.

- 19 Customers can now provide much more feedback to us when completing a request, either through our website, by completing one of our automated satisfaction surveys or by registering a compliment, suggestion or complaint. Feedback mechanisms are now embedded in digital service reviews and service designs, bringing us closer to the customer.
- 20 As a result, increasing numbers of people are providing feedback on their online and service experience. Nearly five thousand fully automated electronic satisfaction surveys have been completed by customers. This information is actively used to change and shape service delivery.
- 21 In 2017 the Council's transformation programme was launched with the objectives to:
  - Redesign our services to better meet our customers' needs at reduced cost to the Council.
  - Help communities become more self-reliant and resilient
  - Move our partnership working from good to great
  - Become renowned for our skilled and flexible workforce and our employee engagement.
- 22 Digital is central to the achievement of these goals and the new digital strategy sets out a framework for delivering against them.
- 23 This ambitious and exciting work continues across all service areas and ongoing digital implementation projects in Children's and Young People's Services, Adult and Health Services and Regeneration and Local Services will bring further enhancements to our digital customer offer. The new strategy also sets out specific ambitions for each of our service groupings, demonstrating the breadth and depth of the work in hand.
- 24 A public consultation exercise on the Council's digital interactions was undertaken in November 2018. The results of this have been used to inform the strategy and the programmes already underway.

## **A new Digital Strategy for County Durham**

- 25 The new Digital Strategy sets out the Council's digital ambitions for the County. It provides a framework within which these ambitions can be delivered, and aligns to the interlocking objectives of the Revised Council Vision and the Transformation Programme.
- 26 While the new document is ambitious in its scope, it is also important to set digital development within a context of providing more choice to customers and not less. In this respect the Council will maintain the position of ensuring that access to services is not dependent on digital access and that other alternatives, through telephone and face to face services will be available to those who prefer or need them, and also that digital assistance will be available for those that require it.

### *Digital Strategy Themes*

- 27 The strategy is structured around three interrelated themes that, when progressed together, will enable us to achieve our vision of a digital county.
- 28 Theme One: Digital Customer, relates to how we improve people's experience of interacting with the Council and sets out the Council's commitments to improve access to our services through technology and to be responsive to people's needs. It is important also to recognise that our digital developments remain in the context of increasing choice for customers and not restricting contact to online methods only. The new strategy will replace the existing Customer First Strategy when published.
- 29 Headline commitments in the Digital Customer theme include to:
- Continue to develop online services that are simple and convenient to use
  - Use online services to provide better information to those using them
  - Ensure all interactions are as quick, simple and secure as possible, ensuring service fulfilment at first point of contact
  - Provide support for those who need extra help using digital technology
- 30 Theme Two: Digital Organisation, relates to how we can use digital within the Council to improve service delivery, operate more efficiently and deliver positive outcomes for people in the County. It sets out the Council's commitments to achieve these goals.

- 31 Headline Commitments in the Digital Organisation theme include to:
- Continually improve services and processes based on comprehensive, available data and evidence - including customer feedback
  - Continue to use digital practices to mobilise our workforce and support agile working in order to provide a more flexible, responsive workforce
  - Develop a one council approach, integrating front and back office with a range of services dealt with at first point on contact (where appropriate)
  - Use the information and intelligence we hold in a secure and effective manner
- 32 Theme Three: Digital Communities, relates to how the Council can work alongside and within communities to help the people of County Durham to get the most from digital. This means working across services and partnerships to enable residents and businesses in the county to use digital technology to improve their lives, providing them with access to devices and the internet as well as developing their digital skills, from the children and young people in our schools to our elderly residents. Alongside this is the necessary and important role of the Council in providing the hard infrastructure to connect even our most rural communities through superfast broadband investment programmes.
- 33 Headline Commitments in the Digital Communities theme include to:
- Be digital leaders for our community and strengthen our digital partnerships through collaborative working, shared learning and best practice.
  - Work with partners to enhance connectivity through further development of our digital infrastructure.
  - Encourage and enhance data sharing.
  - Develop digital skills in our communities through our adult learning programmes and working with schools and colleges to ensure our children and young people have the skills demanded by future employers.
- 34 The Strategy also sets out specific digital ambitions for service areas, showing how digital is enhancing and improving customer interactions and service delivery across the full range of council services, including back office and support services.

## *Digital Strategy Document*

- 35 The new digital strategy has been designed to be viewed and consumed primarily as digital document and although hard copies will be available on request, this will be by exception. The full document can be viewed at:

[Durham County Council Digital Strategy](#)

- 36 A static form of the full document is also presented in Appendix 3 of this report for completeness.

### **Conclusion**

- 37 The new Digital Strategy for County Durham sets out the Council's digital ambitions for the future under three main themes along with service specific ambitions set out by each service grouping. The three themes are:

- Digital Customer
- Digital Organisation
- Digital Communities

- 38 The adoption of the new Digital Strategy provides a framework within which these ambitions can be delivered, and aligns to the interlocking objectives of the Revised Council Vision and the Transformation Programme.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Digital Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the Council's digital ambitions. Delivery within this framework will be managed within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual legal, contractual and regulatory positions.

### **Finance**

The Digital Strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of the Council's digital ambitions. Delivery within this framework will be managed within a range of project and programme environments, each with individual financing provision, monitoring and control.

### **Consultation**

A public consultation exercise on the Council's digital ambitions was undertaken in November 2018. The results of this exercise were used to define the position taken in the strategy document.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics in terms of widening choice of access and communication channels and will positively contribute to our public sector equality duty. Impact is likely to be particularly positive in terms of age (younger) and for some disabled people. There is potential disproportionate negative impact in terms of age (older), some disabled people and gender (both men and women) who may be more likely to experience digital exclusion. Availability through traditional contact methods, for example telephone and face-to-face will continue to be available, also, customer support in the use of digital channels and staff training will mitigate any negative impact. Furthermore, providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them will allow us more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone. Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our duty under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable



**Staffing**

Not applicable

**Accommodation**

Not applicable

**Risk**

Not applicable

**Procurement**

Not applicable

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## Appendix 2: Link to the Digital Strategy

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[Durham County Council Digital Strategy](#)

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## **Appendix 3: Digital Strategy Document**

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Attached

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## Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

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### Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

**NB:** The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

#### Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Customer services – Digital and Customer Services
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Victoria Murray – Customer relations manager
<b>Title</b>	Digital strategy consultation
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	NA
<b>Cabinet Date (if relevant)</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Start Date</b>	July 2018 (pre-consultation), updated August 2019
<b>Review Date</b>	October 2020

## Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

Digital and customer services have developed a new digital strategy with the aim of enabling customers to access and receive services and information effectively from a modern, forward thinking council which uses customer insight and digital technology to build resilient systems which support staff and partners to deliver value for money services.

Our proposed digital approach has three priority themes underpinning improved outcomes for our customer and focusses on commitments that will help us drive forward effective service delivery as a modern, transforming, council. These are

- Digital customer
- Digital organisation
- Digital communities

We recognise that digital access is an essential part of daily life and advances in technology are changing the way in which customers want to access and receive services and information from the Council. Within an environment of reducing resources, we want to use technology to enable us to work more efficiently so that we can continue to offer our customers choice in how they have fast, effective and satisfactory dealings with the council.

We are committed to working with our partners to understand the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors and to deliver services, which meet those needs. This means reviewing how we work and ensuring that our staff have the skills to deliver. We want to be able to deal with the demands on our services effectively and look innovatively at solutions that allow us deliver in a better and smarter way.

The strategy will continue to offer customer choice over contact and transacting with the council but, at the same time, use technology as an enabler to support customers, employees and partners in communicating in new ways that support ease of access and digital inclusion so that no-one is left behind.

The strategy will aim to deliver council transactions (services) electronically via a range of digital devices connected to the Internet i.e. mobile telephones, tablets, personal computers etc thus providing choice and flexibility.

Public consultation took place for six weeks from 17 October to 25 November 2018 to seek public views and digital priorities. To ensure inclusivity, targeted sessions were held with younger people groups, Disability Partnership and paper surveys made available at customer access points and libraries. All AAP boards received updates. Feedback has been used to inform the digital strategy.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users):

- General public: County Durham residents, businesses, visitors and landowners
- Employees and Elected Members
- Prescribed bodies including neighbouring authorities
- North East Combined Authority
- Town and Parish Councils
- Area Action Partnerships
- Groups with protected characteristics

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact	Positive Impact
	Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure

Age	?	Y
Disability	?	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	Y
Race (ethnicity)	N	N
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	?	Y
Sexual orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The Digital Strategy will not include plans to make any services available online only as this could have a direct or indirect negative impact for some, in particular, people with disabilities and older people.

Our availability through traditional contact methods for example telephone and face-to-face will continue to be available but by providing alternative channels for

those that wish to use them will allow us more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

Strategy outcomes will assist advancing equality of opportunity for all. The aim of the strategy is to make use of and maximise the potential of digital transformation, making more services and processes available online to those who prefer, whilst freeing up officer time to support those customers who are most in need.

It will aim to harness a 'digital culture' which provides a focus on innovation, using customer insight, reviewing the way we handle data and investigating the potential of tools like automation to improve processes across all contact channels.

It will benefit anyone who is able to access the internet, with particular benefit for customers who:

- may find it difficult to access the Council offices during usual working hours i.e. working age people and carers
- want more choice on how and when to transact with the Council
- have physical access, mobility difficulties or sensory impairments
- want choice over the communications channel(s) they prefer i.e. mobile telephone, PC, tablet etc
- use or want to learn about the free internet services in customer access points, libraries and other customer facing council locations

It is understood that not all individuals or communities will have access to the internet and digital inclusion will form part of the 'Digital Strategy' as well as continued provision of services by telephone, correspondence and face to face.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our duty under the Equality Act 2010.



## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

The following evidence sources, along with public consultation feedback has been used in the development of the strategy and informed our equality analysis in section two of this assessment:

- Existing customer services data – which includes metrics (how, when, why etc) and satisfaction
- Customer feedback, complaints and comments to Ombudsman level
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- National statistics confirming the take up and demand of digital services

### Current usage

We currently offer more than 100 services online, with over 40% of our customers accessing this facility.

### Public Consultation 2018

179 respondents participated in the public survey element of the consultation with 55.3% of respondents confirming that they have used the internet to interact with Durham County Council in the last year. Link to consultation:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19438/Digital-Strategy-consultation>

In summary, consultation informed us that people in Durham would like to see:

- a clear and concise website that's easy to use
- increased availability of self-serve technology, with a simple and uncomplicated log on process
- technology used to improve efficiency
- all customer information held in one place

### Research and data sources

Since 2011, when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began recording annual usage data, internet use in the UK has steadily increased. It currently sits at 90% for the adult population (age 16 and over). For people aged 16 – 44, it has reached 99%. Internet use by older people is still lower than by younger people, and

decreases with age: of those aged 65 – 74, 80% have ‘recently’ (within the last 3 months) used the internet, while only 44% of those aged 75+ have. Internet use is similar for men and women in younger and middle age groups. Among those aged 65 – 74, men are a little more likely to use the internet than women, but there is a marked difference in the oldest age group as 51% of men aged 75+ have recently used it compared to 38% of women.

Research undertaken by Ofcom in June 2017: **‘The real digital divide? Understanding the demographics of non-users and limited users of the internet: an analysis of Ofcom data’**

(<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/research-publications/real-digital-divide>)

identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion:

- Residents aged 75 years and over
- Disadvantaged residents
- Residents who left school without qualifications
- Residents who are chronically ill
- Residents on a low income

There are 15.2 million people in the UK who are either non-users, or limited users of the internet. An estimated 7.8 million people (14.9%) do not currently use the internet in the UK. A further 7.4 million people (14.3%) in the UK are ‘limited users’ of the internet, giving a total population of 15.2 million people who are not using the internet to its full potential.

90% of non-users can be classed as disadvantaged. This takes into account the most common indicators - social class DE and being disabled, as well as leaving education at 16 or under.

Although age is a factor in defining non and limited users, it isn’t the only one: 18.9% of under 65s are non or limited users of the internet; a population of approximately 7.5m people. Nearly half (48.9%) of non or limited users of the internet are under the age of 65.

The most pronounced indicators of non and limited use include age, disability, social class, income and the age at which people leave education:

64.4% of non-users are aged 65 or over: 25.3% aged 65-74; and 39.1% aged (Information taken from: <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/research-publications/real-digital-divide>)

The following table shows the estimated non-user populations for each region in England and Wales. Ofcom survey data extrapolated to ONS’ 2015 adult population estimates.

2015 adult population estimate	% of non-user adult respondents from each region		Estimated number of non-users in region
London	6,720,843	12.8%	860,268
South East	7,029,838	8.4%	590,506
South West	4,389,099	11.9%	522,303
Eastern	4,776,467	12.7%	606,611
East Midlands	3,705,500	13.6%	503,948
West Midlands	4,489,117	23.4%	1,050,453
Wales	2,471,198	12.7%	313,842
Yorkshire & Humber	4,244,933	24.0%	1,018,784
<b>North East</b>	<b>2,100,204</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>367,536</b>
North West	5,652,470	17.1%	966,572

### Population data available at Durham Insight

<https://www.durhaminsight.info/>

### Being Disabled in Britain, a journey less equal (EHRC)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/being-disabled-britain-journey-less-equal>

### Government Guidance on encouraging use of digital take up

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/communications/increasing-digital-takeup.html>

### Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Yes – sections 2&3 completed
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	

## Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Victoria Murray – Customer relations manager	Date: July 2018 Updated August 2019
Service equality representative sign off: Equality team leader	Date: July 2018 Updated August 2019

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>												
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?										
<p>The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact for the Countywide population, although this impact will vary for differing age groups.</p> <p>Improving digital access and widening the choice of channels for those that wish to use them, allows us to spend more time with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.</p> <p>Impact could be particularly beneficial for younger people who are more likely to have good digital skills and rely more on digital technology. Evidence suggests that 99% of people aged 16 – 44 years use the internet.</p> <p>With more council services, communications and consultation taking place</p>	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>Broad countywide age ranges:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Range</th> <th>County Durham</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0 to 15</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16 to 64</td> <td>62%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85+</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>- Between 2001 and 2011 the population of County Durham increased from 493,678 to 513,242</p> <p>-The 2016 mid-year population estimate for County Durham shows a population of 521,800 an increase of 4,027 people since mid-2014 and a 5.9% increase since 2001. County Durham has experienced a higher rate of growth than the north east region (3.3% over the period 2001-2015), but a considerably lower rate of</p>	Age Range	County Durham	0 to 15	17%	16 to 64	62%	65+	18%	85+	3%	<p>The Digital Strategy will not include any plans to make any services available online only.</p> <p>Our availability through traditional contact methods for example telephone and face-to-face will not change and by providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them provides us with more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.</p> <p>Support in use of digital channels will be provided e.g. support in CAPs</p>
Age Range	County Durham											
0 to 15	17%											
16 to 64	62%											
65+	18%											
85+	3%											

<p>online, younger people who may not have previously interacted with the council may find it easier to do so. This is also supported by the increase in social media engagements relating to community projects and how public services are provided.</p> <p>Increased levels of digital access will prove beneficial for working residents (predominately 18-67 years old) who will be able to access/request/book certain services 24/7.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that some older people may be less likely to use the internet, this can be linked to factors like not having used a computer at work and not learning about IT in school.</p> <p>The proposed strategy increases the various digital ways to engage with and access council services meaning all current access and communication channels are also retained. This will benefit those people unable to access services digitally as alternative routes of access such as telephone and face-to-face will still be available.</p> <p>The strategy aligns with the council's Transformation</p>	<p>growth when compared to England as a whole (10.8% from 2001-2015).</p> <p>-2014 based population projections for County Durham indicate that from 2016 to 2035 the county's population aged 65 or over will increase from 105,200 to 146,300 (a 39% increase) and those aged 75 and over will increase from 45,00 to 75,700 (a 65.6% increase). This age group is projected to increase more than any other age group in the county.</p> <p>Since 2011, when the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began recording annual usage data, internet use in the UK has steadily increased. It currently sits at 90% for the adult population (age 16 and over). For people aged 16 – 44, it has reached 99%. Internet use by older people is still lower than by younger people, and decreases with age: of those aged 65 – 74, 80% have 'recently' (within the last 3 months) used the internet, while only 44% of those aged 75+ have.</p> <p>Ofcom research identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents aged 75 years and over</li> <li>- Disadvantaged residents</li> </ul>	<p>Gap analysis to be undertaken to identify areas of improvement required to support implementation of the digital strategy and improve digital inclusion e.g. provision of community ICT learning, use of emerging technologies etc. Individual project specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary.</p>
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<p>programme to redesign services to meet customer needs and providing a skilled and flexible workforce. This will drive the culture change required for staff to deliver the digital strategy.</p> <p>A programme of training and support is available for both front line and back office staff using new technologies as part of their job role. The inspire programme provides additional support mechanisms to facilitate new ways of working e.g. staff roadshows, best practice sharing, change advocates etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Residents who left school without qualifications</li> <li>- Residents who are chronically ill</li> <li>- Residents on a low income</li> </ul> <p>Ofcom data shows that over a third of the non-digital user population are aged 75 and older. This equates to an estimated population of approximately 100,000 people in County Durham.</p> <p><b>Staff Digital Survey</b></p> <p>46.9% of staff survey respondents provided feedback on what is stopping DCC from taking advantage of digital trends. Key themes identified were culture/resistance to change, cost and lack of digital skills.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>For many disabled people improved digital technology will increase access to services and this is positive.</p> <p>Digital access can enable</p>	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>County Durham has a higher percentage of permanently sick and disabled people than the North East average, representing nearly a quarter (23.6%) of the overall population (Census 2011).</p>	<p>As above (for age)</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our</p>

<p>people with disabilities to remain independent as</p> <p>people will be able to access more council services from home without the need to travel, particularly those with mobility and hearing impairments.</p> <p>Social contact can be increased through digital technologies, especially for people with conditions like Agoraphobia. However, it is worth noting that physical social contact may reduce through increased digital interaction, which may impact on mental health conditions. Some people rely on personal contact with public services to maintain positive mental, and sometimes physical, health (by getting out of the house).</p> <p>Equally, people with conditions such as Alzheimer's can benefit from using technology to support memory loss, for example, calendar reminders for appointments.</p> <p>Although the strategy is likely to have a positive impact for many disabled people there are some complex conditions that mean that some disabled people may never be able to use the internet (for</p>	<p>Increased life expectancy is leading to an increase in the number of years adults may live with poor health.</p> <p>(Source: Durham Insight)</p> <p>Research from Equality and Human Rights report 'Being Disabled in Britain', 2017, states that disabled people were less likely than non-disabled people to have accessed the internet (63.6% compared with 89.5% in 2013).</p> <p>ONS data tell us that 22% of disabled adults have never used the internet (compared to 9% for the adult population as a whole).</p> <p>Ofcom data shows that 47.7% of the 'non-user' population said that they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. This represents an estimated population of 3.7m people in the UK and indicates that disabled people are more likely to experience digital exclusion.</p> <p>A specific public consultation session was held with Durham's Disability Partnership on 27 September 2018 (evidence of feedback below).</p> <p>Digital solutions (often very basic and simple) can considerably improve access for disabled people, for example, text messaging and BSL via skype improves</p>	<p>duty under the Equality Act 2010.</p>
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<p>example people with severe learning disabilities).</p> <p>Some disabled people may not have access to the internet or sufficient IT skills. Some conditions may require additional support to process information to help make decisions. People with memory loss and dementia are at particular risk if they don't already have IT skills.</p> <p>A programme of training and support is available for both front line and back office staff using new technologies as part of their job role with reasonable adjustments made for staff with disabilities where necessary.</p>	<p>access for the Deaf community, browse aloud software improves access for people with visual impairments, voice recognition can improve access for people with physical and mental impairments and and/or reduced dexterity. However, solutions that improve access for some people may worsen access for others with particular impairments, a point raised at consultation with Disability Partnership – for example, the use of voice recognition systems are a barrier for those with speech impairments such as people who have had a stroke. In response, multiple access channels and tailored access solutions (reasonable adjustments) will remain available as part of DCC's digital approach.</p> <p><b>Staff Digital Survey</b></p> <p>46.9% of staff survey respondents provided feedback on what is stopping DCC from taking advantage of digital trends. Key themes identified were culture/resistance to change, cost and lack of digital skills.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact		

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Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Improved digital technology will increase access to services and this is likely to be positive for most pregnant women and new mothers.</p> <p>By making services available online, the council can support women who may have lower mobility due to pregnancy related health problems.</p>	<p>No specific consultation feedback was received in relation to this protected characteristic.</p>	<p>As above (for age)</p>

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race (ethnicity)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Providing information digitally enables people to use online translation services.</p> <p>Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available, where necessary, as is current policy.</p>	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>In County Durham BAME communities are a relatively small number of the population. According to the 2011 Census, 98.1% of Durham's population is white British. 1.9% is 'other ethnic group', the largest component of this being mixed race and Asian. We</p>	<p>As above (for age)</p> <p>Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available, where</p>

<p>Improved digital access supports our provision of interpretation, for example, interpreters via skype.</p>	<p>also have a significant population of Gypsies and Travellers who are either migrant or settled in the County.</p> <p>(Source: Durham Insight)</p>	<p>necessary, as is current policy.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>No identifiable impact</p>	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>In County Durham 72% state their religion as Christian; around 0.19% as Buddhist; 0.12% Hindu; 0.37% Muslim, 0.12% Sikh, 0.04% Jewish and 26.8 percent as having either no religion or not stating their religion (Census 2011).</p>	

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex (gender)</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact for the Countywide population, although impact could vary for men and women.</p>	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>The balance of males and females within the County is fairly evenly split and there are 251,280 (49%) males and 261,962 (51%) females living in County Durham (Census 2011). Looking at</p>	<p>As above (for age)</p>

<p>Evidence suggests that older women are less likely to access the internet.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that disadvantaged residents and those on a low income are more likely to experience digital exclusion. As women are more likely to experience financial disadvantage compared to men there could be a disproportionate impact. However, men are more likely to experience disadvantage such as homelessness and addiction problems and this is likely to lead to digital exclusion.</p>	<p>older age groups (aged 70+) there is a higher proportion of women which accounts for the 49/51 split.</p> <p>Internet use is similar for men and women in younger and middle age groups. Among those aged 65 – 74, men are a little more likely to use the internet than women, but there is a marked difference in the oldest age group as 51% of men aged 75+ have recently used it compared to 38% of women.</p> <p>(Source: ONS)</p> <p>Ofcom research identifies several characteristics that strongly correlate with digital exclusion which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disadvantaged residents</li> <li>- Residents on a low income</li> </ul>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>No accurate data is available about the number of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB+) people living in County Durham. However,</p>	

	<p>Government and Stonewall estimates state that between 5 and 7 % of the population is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). This would amount to between 25,000 and 35,000 people in County Durham.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: <b>Transgender</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
No identifiable impact	<p><b>Baseline population data</b></p> <p>We have no accurate data on transgender populations.</p>	

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.

The proposed digital strategy will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics in terms of widening choice of access and communication channels. Availability through traditional contact methods, for example telephone and face-to-face, will continue to be available but by providing alternative channels for those that wish to use them, this will allow us more time to spend with those that need to contact us face to face and through telephone.

Evidence demonstrates that younger age groups are more likely to have good digital skills and rely more on digital technology and are therefore likely to receive the greatest benefit from the strategy. Digital solutions can also improve access for a lot of disabled people although it is recognised that some solutions may worsen access. In response, multiple access channels and tailored access solutions (reasonable adjustments) will remain available as part of DCC's digital approach.

Evidence shows that residents who are older, disadvantaged, left school without qualifications, are chronically ill or on a low income are more likely to experience digital exclusion. This has disproportionate impact across the protected characteristics in terms of age (older), disability and gender (both men and women). Mitigation includes; provision of support in use of digital channels e.g. support in CAPs, alternative access channels and reasonable adjustments.

Further mitigation includes undertaking a gap analysis to identify areas of improvement in support of the digital strategy e.g. provision of community ICT learning, use of emerging technologies etc. Individual equality impact assessments will be undertaken on identified projects where necessary.

A programme of training and support is available for both front line and back office staff using new technologies as part of their job role with reasonable adjustments made for staff with disabilities where necessary. The council's inspire programme provides additional support mechanisms to facilitate new ways of working e.g. staff roadshows, best practice sharing, change advocates etc.

A robust approach to consultation through various channels and forums including protected groups ensured that the consultation was inclusive and received a wide range of views.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

With more council services, communications and consultation taking place online, people who may not have previously interacted with the council may find it easier to do so. This is also supported by the increase in social media engagements relating to community projects and how public services are provided.

## Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Action plan and timescales for implementation
Support in use of digital channels provided e.g. support in CAPs	Customer services	Ongoing
Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled service users, customers and staff where appropriate and in line with our duty under the Equality Act 2010.	Customer services	Ongoing
Specific requests/need for face to face interpretation and/or document translation will continue to be available, where necessary, as is current policy.	Customer services	Ongoing
Gap analysis to identify areas of improvement required to support implementation of digital strategy and digital inclusion e.g. provision of community ICT learning, use of emerging technologies etc. Individual project specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken where necessary.	Head of digital and customer services	

## Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	Yes, as distinct digital projects emerge.
When will this assessment be reviewed?  Please also insert this date at the front of the template	October 2020

### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Alan Patrickson, Head of Digital and Customer Service	Date: 21.08.19
Service equality representative sign off: Mary Gallagher, Equality Team Leader	Date: 21.08.19

Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)