

BYO technology goes mainstream

Attitudes to Bring Your Own (BYO) technology in local government have gone from “over my dead body” to overwhelming support in three years, according to the authors of an authoritative annual survey of council IT.

Responses to the latest Socitm IT Trends survey found that 90% of organisations allow employees to use their own devices for business purposes, including 30% who allow the use of smartphones. Three years ago the idea was ‘fiercely resisted’ by the IT community, states the report. One reason for the new enthusiasm could be the age of the installed base of council-owned hardware, now an average of seven years – and as data for the survey was collected in June 2011, that BYO figure today could be even higher.

Central government is watching the development with interest. Jo Clift of the Cabinet Office’s efficiency and reform group said that she had been surprised by the finding. “This was an area that was unexpected, and one

we would look to develop in central government,” she told a launch event in London.

As expected, the survey finds IT departments under severe pressure from falling budgets. The number of people employed in local government IT has fallen by 5,000 to 22,000. This is the largest change in 25 years of conducting the survey and is “impacting service standards”, said IT Trends editor, John Serle.

For the first time the survey shows rates of customer satisfaction dropping. Meanwhile, the skills shortage has returned as a topic of concern for the first time in several years, probably because of the ongoing pay freeze.

The current climate does not seem conducive to innovation, said Serle, which could be bad news for central government’s plans to encourage new IT service models. “Cloud, G-Cloud and utility computing are still regarded as too immature,” he said.

www.socitm.net

GDS live and kicking

Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude put his full weight behind the official launch before Christmas of the Government Digital Service (GDS). Led by Mike Bracken (pictured) the team is charged with revolutionising the way citizens and business interact with government and delivering digital by default services.



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Maude said that e-services had come a long way but that, as there was no new money, new ways had to be found for making public services cheaper whilst giving more choice and control to the citizen. “Digital is a way to deliver this... Where a public service is capable of being delivered digitally it should be.”

In the quest to design ‘digital by default’ services the sector should be “willing to turn off non digital channels”, he added, and not fall prey to the arguments about the “uniqueness of parts of government”. Maude said that he was expecting to meet inertia and resistance to these plans but that the prize - in terms of both savings and improved quality - was worth it. Whilst one immediate focus was on transactional services, the way in which government publishes information must also change, he said, adding, “We are closing down a plethora of websites and working towards a single domain.”

Simplicity and standardisation would cut costs, but the sector should also “take the opportunity of moving online to redesign the business processes as we digitalise”. Everything from here on in should be designed “from the citizen’s point of view”.

Due early in the new year, the new beta site following on from alpha.gov will be accompanied by a governmental ‘global experience language’, or kit of common language, that should be used on public sector websites to ensure a common end user experience.

LARGEST GOVERNMENT SUPPLIER TO HELP MINNOWS:

Central government’s largest IT supplier, HP, has announced a politically astute initiative to help small firms win government contracts. The multinational firm, whose multi-billion-pound outsourcing contracts became a focus for critics of the last government’s IT policy, said its ‘robust plan of support’ for SMEs is the first by a large systems integrator. Helping SMEs to win government contracts is a key element of the coalition’s ambition for ‘agile’ and innovative public sector IT. In response, HP UK’s managing director, Nick Wilson, said that the company would: revamp its own procurement process to establish an approved suppliers list for SMEs and appoint an ‘SME champion’; increase the use of SMEs in its supply chain; and launch a new award.

Don’t just scrap ICT teaching, Gove urged



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A clear framework for schools to improve the teaching of computing and classes for kids as young as nine are among measures now needed to back up the government’s announcement that it is to scrap the current ICT curriculum, education campaigners have said.

Education secretary, Michael Gove, intends - subject to a 12-week consultation - to scrap the national curriculum programmes of study and associated attainment targets and assessment arrangements for ICT in England, from September 2012. “There is a

significant and growing base of evidence, not least from Ofsted inspections, that demonstrates that there are persistent problems with the quality and effectiveness of ICT education in schools,” Gove said. However, he did not announce any intention to replace them with anything, beyond confirming that ICT would remain a compulsory subject.

Gove’s analysis of the problem is supported by a Royal Society report which finds that just 35% of ICT teachers are specialists, compared with, for example, 74% of maths, 76% of history, 80% of English, and 88% of biology. The report suggests that ‘computing education in many UK schools is highly unsatisfactory’ due to a shortage of specialised teachers, poor school infrastructure, and insufficient status afforded to computing in schools.

However the report does suggest several concrete actions, including a review of qualifications and curricula, and a framework to support formal and non-formal learning in computing including after-school clubs, school speakers, and mentoring for teachers.

The need for a framework for progress was also cited by Emma Mulqueeny, director of Rewired State, as essential to improve the teaching of computing in schools. “I know they don’t want to be prescriptive, which is great, but there need to be a few suggested options like how to set up computer clubs, or bring in local businesses, targets for how many pupils should be able to code. There needs to be something from government that a headmaster can tick.”



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'Tell Us Once' on backburner

Plans to expand a much-praised data-sharing scheme - to make life easier for the public - have been quietly dumped by the government, MPs have warned. The 'Tell Us Once' initiative will no longer be rolled out beyond the 'relatively simple' area of people notifying their local authority of a birth or death, a cross-party Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) inquiry heard.

Ninety six percent of councils will be offering 'Tell Us Once' in the next few months - giving citizens a single appointment with their local registrar to notify up to 28 central government or council services of a person's birth or bereavement.

In a statement, a spokesperson from Tell Us Once said, "Currently, the Tell Us once scope is purely focused on government services and departments. While removing government red tape is a long awaited and sensible development, there is so much potential to expand it by taking on new partners.

"Because there is so much happening already, the government recently decided not to progress a possible change of address service at this time."

According to the PAC report: 'The 'Tell Us Once' project aimed to reduce the burden on individuals by allowing them to tell just one government agency of a change in their circumstances, placing responsibility on that agency to inform all other public organisations. This has been introduced for the reporting of a claimant's death, but its extension to other areas is no longer being actively pursued.'

Other opportunities to 'improve the claimants' experience' are also being missed, the report warns.

£500 DISCLOSURE RULE FAILS TO STAUNCH FOI REQUESTS: Publishing all items of spending over £500 has yet to have any impact on the volume of freedom of information (FoI) requests handled by local authorities. FOIA and Local Government in 2010, published by the Constitution Unit at University College London, states that while 'it is still very early days to say if the new publication policy has succeeded or failed' the ambition of communities secretary Eric Pickles to create an 'army of armchair auditors' is 'unlikely to be realised... as most people won't have the time or the patience to scroll through long excel sheets, but NGOs and journalists will find it useful.'

CENTRAL LONDON TO GAIN FREE WI-FI – EVENTUALLY: In an impressive commercial



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sleight of hand, Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea have reached an agreement with network operator O2 to provide completely free outdoor wireless access across their entire areas - over time. Following a tender process with an outcome of which most austerity-hit purchasing directors can only dream, O2 has agreed to fully fund the entire service from keeping the revenue raised from advertising on the service's landing page. A spokesperson for Westminster said that O2 will begin installing the network in January "in a limited number of areas". The service would be extended across the whole two boroughs "over the longer term", with the precise timescale "to be confirmed".

SCHOOLS LAPTOP FAILURE 'SCANDAL IN THE MAKING': Schools are failing to ensure that all pupils - including those from deprived



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backgrounds - have access to their own learning technology devices such as laptops at home and at school, in what amounts to a "scandal in the making", a national conference heard this month. Valerie Thompson, chief executive of the e-Learning Foundation charity which aims to ensure that all children have access to learning technology, hosted a session at this year's BETT event on technology in education. She said that schools are failing to make the most of existing funding sources which could be used for technology including more than half a billion pounds worth of pupil premium funding.

ALLAN, ASSIRATI AND DERRICK HONOURED IN NEW YEAR LIST: Three names well-known to the e-government community were recognised on the New Year's Honours list. Alex Allan, Tony Blair's e-envoy from 1999-2000, was awarded a KCB, presumably more for his work as late chairman of the joint intelligence committee than for laying the groundwork for the 2005 e-government targets. Bob Assirati, former director of the Major Projects Authority, Cabinet Office, picked up a CBE. On a local level, Amanda Derrick was awarded an OBE 'for services to children and families'. Derrick was responsible for one of the unequivocal successes to emerge from the e-government national projects of the 1990s, the eAdmissions project, run from Hertfordshire County Council.

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Business transformation drives Hillingdon's ascent to cloud

Plans to transform front-line services - plus the small matter of multi-million pound savings - are driving Hillingdon council's pioneering move to shift staff desktops into the cloud.

With help from Cloudeach, the London borough is to shift around 3,500 staff onto Google Business Applications, in one of the most comprehensive adoptions so far of desktop 'software as a service' by a UK local authority. Services to be drawn from the cloud include email, calendar, desktop documents and real-time collaboration tools with voice and video support.

Roger Bearpark, assistant head of ICT at Hillingdon, said that the new arrangement would come in around £3m cheaper than the council's current in-house management of GroupWise. Further savings could also be made in future as staff will need only a Chrome web browser to access the new services, requiring a PC of a low spec or a cheaper mobile or tablet device, he added.

Apart from savings, the main benefits to the council will be from enabling new ways of working, he said. "We've got a programme running at the moment - the Hillingdon Improvement Programme - looking at opportunities to do things in a radically different way. It's not just about mobile and flexible working, it's about collaboration on a much larger scale. For example we have a 'Street Champions' project running in Hillingdon where residents report on damage to street furniture and graffiti. Now they could use geotag information and put it onto the same system. So rather than saying this is the technology and the business has to adapt to that, we will adapt the technology to the business."

Health monitoring at home to be extended as study shows success of trials

The prime minister has announced the roll out of advanced telehealth and telecare systems to the homes of three million people in England over the next five years. Patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or heart conditions are to get hi-tech equipment to monitor their health at home.

David Cameron was announcing a campaign called 3 Million Lives (3ML), in support of which the Department of Health has published headline findings from the Whole Systems Demonstrator (WSD), a long-awaited randomised controlled trial of telehealth and telecare services delivered to 6,000 people.



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The headline results from the WSD study included a 45% reduction in mortality rates; 20% reduction in emergency admissions; and 14% reduction in elective admissions. The trial involved patients in Cornwall, Kent and the London borough of Newham. Information is uploaded daily to a centre which monitors a patient's heart rate and blood pressure and can help early detection in deterioration in health.

How many council staff does it take to change a website?

Huge variations in the number of staff assigned to develop council websites have been found by the first national survey of council web teams.

One group of councils of roughly the same size and serving a similar sized population reported web teams varying in size from two to 12, according to the research by Ian Watt, e-government manager at Aberdeen City Council.

Watt conducted the survey as part of an exercise to develop a business case for replacing a member of his own web team in the face of extreme budget pressures. After launching an online questionnaire he received promotional support from the public sector Society of IT Management (Socitm), eventually gathering data from 108 authorities - around a quarter of all UK councils.

The questionnaire asked council web team representatives to provide information including location of the web team within the council; number of people working on web content, technical developer and managerial roles; number of additional council or partnership sites hosted; whether and how content management is devolved; and number of visits per year received by the website.

In successfully using the data to build a business case for his own team, Watt compared data from seven councils of a similar size and serving a similar sized population as Aberdeen. The survey's findings have been posted for discussion on the Web Improvement and Usage Community, part of the communities of practice discussion forums run by the Local Government Improvement and Development agency.

Councils should jump into new digital arena

Local authorities should move now towards implementing the new unified design concepts outlined at the launch of the new Government Digital Service or risk being forced to do so at a future date, says Socitm.

Direct.gov is to be phased out and replaced with a new single domain with a strong focus on user needs; an obsession with user testing and feedback; an emphasis on common tasks; and a determination to achieve a consistent user experience for all parts of online government. Consistency will be achieved through use of a "global experience language" defining all aspects of online design such as use of words, buttons, layout and fonts.

Martin Greenwood, from Socitm Insight, said this new design trend "will definitely spill over into local government. It can either happen through people observing what's happening and trying to apply it locally, or as the result of a specific initiative by DCLG to encourage or push local authorities into doing something similar."

SO FAR, SO GOOD - NAO ON WHITEHALL'S ICT STRATEGY: A preliminary audit of the government's ICT strategy - just nine months after publication - has found signs of schedules slipping already. The National Audit Office (NAO) commends 'early progress' being made in implementing the ICT strategy, but has identified areas where 'progress has not kept pace with the government's ambitions', according to a report presented to parliament. Among the warnings is a caution that the public sector will require at least another 84 staff to carry out projects in the implementation plan. www.nao.org.uk/publications/1012/government_ict_strategy.aspx

MAY PRESSES ON WITH SCHEME FOR POLICEIT.CO.UK: Plans to create a national police IT company are still under way. In a statement to parliament, home secretary Theresa May said, 'good progress' is being made in phasing out the current coordinating body, the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), in 2012. Some of the agency's functions would be absorbed by the new ICT company, which would also take over most IT procurement currently carried out by individual forces. "The company will be responsible for the procurement, implementation and management of complex contracts for information technology, related business change and outsourcing services, supplying both national and local services for police," May said. The company will be owned by police authorities and subsequently Police and Crime Commissioners, with the police service as its customer.

School admissions 'digital by default'

Around one in five English local authorities are now achieving electronic secondary school application levels of 80% or higher, the target at which the government considers services to be 'digital by default'. One or two councils are even around the 100% mark, in what could become a model for all public services shifting to e-channels, one leader of the online school admissions revolution told IT in Use.

The new figures have emerged from Connect Digitally, a programme born out of the school eAdmissions national project, one of the former national projects for local e-government. The programme is a central-local partnership funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and based at Hertfordshire County Council. Its core focus is on the education sector, specifically online school admissions, automated application for free school meals and online payments related to schools.

Last year, an average of 55% of secondary school applications were made online, with 26 out of 152 top tier English authorities achieving the digital default target of at least 80% online take-up. The 2010-11 admissions round for English secondary school entry in 2012 has now closed and official figures for this year's online take-up will not be published by DfE until March 2012. But early unofficial figures collated by Connect

Digitally suggest that around 30 councils have achieved or exceeded the 80% target this year, including some councils like Solihull and Stockton-on-Tees which reported less than half that level last year. Hertfordshire itself is now running at 98% online admissions; and Tameside council claims to have achieved 100% online applications - up from just 11% last year.

Connect Digitally programme director, Amanda Derrick, said that many perceived problems with shifting services online by default were "mythical barriers" in need of debunking - such as the notion that service users on lower incomes cannot gain internet access. But with the online application service for free school meals - offered by 112 English authorities by the end of September - up to 60% take-up had been observed, she said.

The principles of work in schools were equally applicable in other service areas, said Derrick. "The barriers of accessibility, usability, trust, technology, are all the same, whatever it is you're trying to shift online. The number of councils that are getting above 80% take-up is showing it can be done nationally, in councils of different sizes, with different demographics and different priorities. Often people say you can't transfer solutions across areas, but we have demonstrated that you can."

Patient records enter blizzard of open data

Sharing NHS data with industry - to help Britain become a world leader in life sciences - was one of a winter blizzard of open data measures unveiled by the government in time for Christmas.

David Cameron sparked controversy by unveiling plans to allow firms to view anonymous NHS patient records and other data - with "all necessary safeguards". The prime minister argued that the 'cradle-to-grave' care of the NHS mean it has some of the most detailed and comprehensive patient data in the world. Such information can help Britain become a centre of excellence for research, fuelling advances in treatment that will benefit patients, he said.

The announcement caused alarm in some quarters. The BBC reported campaign group Patient Concern as saying that the policy would mean the "death of patient confidentiality". However, the DoH said: "Health and care data will be made available in anonymised and de-identified form. We will continue to see how we can further strengthen the approach to patient confidentiality."

Other new open data initiatives include:

- **Data on the quantity of each type of prescription** - by September 2012, to help patients make decisions about their care, but also to support research by health and companies.
- **Personal data** - all NHS patients will be able to access their personal GP records online by the end of this parliament, in 2015, and parents' and pupils' access to education data will be improved.
- **Releasing reference data** - the government will establish a group to maximise the value of the data from the Met Office, Ordnance Survey, the Land Registry and Companies House.
- **Train and bus data** - by April 2012, release of real-time train and bus information to improve passenger journeys, working with the transport industry.
- **Rail fares data** - a consultation early 2012, on providing access to allow passengers and businesses to make "cost-effective travel choices".
- **Airports and airlines** - legislation to give the Civil Aviation Authority power to publish data on performance, to allow cost and quality comparison.
- **Traffic data** - from March 2012, data on road works and delays will be released, to help reduce congestion and aid decision making.
- **Fit note data** - the government will consult on publishing anonymised data, to improve management of sickness absence.
- **'Universal Credit' data** - will be published during the first year of 'live' running.
- **Linking welfare data** - the government will consider opportunities for linking welfare data to other government and commercial datasets to "increase their value to industry".
- **An Open Data Institute** - up to £10m over five years, with match-funding from industry and academia, to establish the world's first institute dedicated to "helping business exploit the opportunities created by release of public data".

Interactive map shows councils are saving millions



Councils are saving more than £156m a year through the sharing of services and are outperforming central government, according to new research from the Local Government Association. The nationwide study found that 219 English authorities are sharing IT, recycling and waste, procurement and other corporate services in a total of 143 examples of shared services, which the association has plotted online on an interactive map. District councils came out on top in the investigation, leading in 99 of the 143 examples.

Cllr Ruth Cadbury, deputy chair of the LGA's Improvement Board, said that councils are the most trusted and efficient part of the public sector, outperforming the rest of Whitehall, despite the challenging financial situation. "These innovative approaches to delivering services have resulted in millions of pounds worth of savings, which otherwise could have affected frontline services. However, it's not a case of one-size-fits-all. Each council must consider its local needs and also the fact that it may have a different structure to others. For example, our results found that district councils were very effective at sharing services with other districts."

Some of the examples named at www.local.gov.uk/better-for-less-po-map include:

- **Association of Greater Manchester Authorities** sharing procurement of goods and services, which has saved £18.5m so far. This approach targeted existing AGMA contracts to find savings.
- **Tamworth and Litchfield** sharing the management and communication of waste services, which is saving £1m a year. This new approach also led to much greater customer satisfaction through clearer information being passed on. This also brought benefits to the environment, through lower emissions and improved recycling rates.
- **Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea** are merging a variety of services to avoid making reductions to frontline services. This approach has included children's services, corporate services and adult social care. Savings of £33m a year by 2015 are anticipated.

Socitm Conference Buzz

IT in Use magazine and its sister service UKAtv were at Socitm 2011 to cover every angle of the annual conference in Birmingham, by video and web.

SOCITM, SCOTLAND AND A MODEL FOR PUBLIC SECTOR ENGAGEMENT:



Kay Brown, head of ICT at Lanarkshire Council, will be Socitm president from next April. She told UKAtv how she has been active in leading pan-public sector ICT engagement in Scotland - and how

she believes this could be replicated across the UK.

SOLIHULL, SHARED SERVICES AND THE PSN:

Steve Halliday, head of ICT at Solihull MBC and Socitm vice president, talks to UKAtv about shared services, a cost saving DIY upgrade to core Oracle systems, and shared Public Service Network ambitions.



PROFESSIONALISM AND WOMEN IN PUBLIC SECTOR ICT:

Socitm vice president, Nadira Hussain, aims to jump start interest in public sector ICT among women. The project manager for Future Sourcing at Tower Hamlets has ambitions to create opportunities for young women to experience both public sector and supplier sides of technology - and Socitm plans to roll out this pilot if successful.

MOBILE & FLEXIBLE WORK, PROPERTY CONSOLIDATION:

Glyn Evans, Socitm president, told delegates that technology is our future. He suggested that, whilst often over-hyped initially, the long term impact of technology on society is profound - and could have equally profound impact on delegates' own organisations.

GOVERNMENT DIGITAL SERVICE - WHAT, WHY, WHERE:

Mike Bracken, executive director of digital at Cabinet Office, talks to UKAtv's Helen Olsen about how the Government Digital Service intends to change how citizens and business interact with government and enable the public sector to deliver on 'digital by default'.



POST-BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT, OPEN PLATFORMS, AND INNOVATION:

Why Government IT should never be the same again - Mark Thompson, ICT futures advisor at the Cabinet Office, told delegates that there was no going back, and that open source and open standards were key for the future.

COLLABORATE OR DIE:

Geoff Connell, head of ICT Services at the London Boroughs of Newham and Havering, urged CIOs and CTOs across the public sector to work together. Efficiency, he said, should be the focus, not just cuts, and ICT is essential to sharing services and delivering change and innovation for both front and back office services.



CHALLENGES AND TECHNOLOGY:

David Hopkins, deputy leader of Milton Keynes Council, outlined to delegates the challenges facing local government and the role technology must play in addressing those challenges.

HOW LAS CAN SUPPORT THE THIRD SECTOR:

Volunteering, intelligent buying and working in partnership with charities such as the Salvation Army - and its plan to develop a social network - are just some of the ways local government could give support to the third sector, said Martyn Croft, CIO, Salvation Army, and Mark Walker, founder of SCIP, a Brighton-based charity which provides IT support to the third sector (www.it4communities.org.uk).



Video highlights from Socitm are all still viewable at:

www.ukauthority.com/socitm2011

DUDLEY IS THE CHAMPION:

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council was named as the local authority with the best ICT service, becoming the first winner of a new suite of awards made by Socitm in Birmingham. Eden District Council won the award for best local authority website and SiteHelpDesk most recommended supplier.

New skills for a new technology age

In tough economic times public sector organisations will be looking to in-house ICT capabilities to build the foundation for delivering both local and national ICT strategies - and better government for less. But do those skills exist in the public sector today?

Andy Nelson, CIO at the Ministry for Justice and SRO for the Government ICT Capabilities Programme, says not. On the one hand he wants public sector ICT professionals to be seen as both essential and trusted advisors to the business of government, but on the other he is acutely aware of the work that must be done to foster those skills across government and frontline services.

The modern CIO - or chief information officer - needs to focus less on managing the technology and more on integrating information and technology services in business planning to match organisational priorities. New skills in procurement and commissioning will also be needed as the sector moves away from large traditional contract models to new cloud-based, agile technology. The ICT Capabilities strategy aims to develop the career path and opportunities to build this capacity across the sector.

However, CIOs themselves need to rise to this challenge. Socitm's immediate past president, Jos Creese - CIO at Hampshire County Council and local CIO Council chair - has written a thought provoking pamphlet on the role of the modern CIO. 'A... B... CIO' defines the role of the CIO as being to translate the potential of new technology into business benefit - and being able to inspire decision makers with that vision.

Says Creese, "I see an increasing divergence between the traditional head of IT and a modern CIO. The CIO focuses much less on managing technology, and more on integrating information and technology services in business planning to match organisational priorities. Understanding and managing stakeholder ambition is central to this, working with business colleagues to find the best route to delivery and, when needed, challenging the status quo."

This realisation is not just coming from inside the sector. Andrew Carr, sales and marketing director for UK and Ireland at Bull, believes that these new CIO skills must be nurtured. But he also says that 'leadership' is a key ingredient for the public sector ICT profession: "Without leadership the charge to deliver digital by default services whilst reducing costs will lead nowhere. I believe that those skills exist already within the sector - it is just time for them to be nurtured and for this new breed of CIO to come to the fore."