

Gloucestershire County Council  
**Digital Strategy**  
**2025-2028**



Gloucestershire  
COUNTY COUNCIL

# Introduction

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**This strategy outlines our commitment and ambition to continue to grow and maximise the use of our digital capabilities to improve performance and create efficiencies and to making sure residents and local businesses feel the associated benefits through the services they access. to ensure we could meet the future needs of our staff, communities, and local businesses.**

## Developing a digital council

The accelerated shift to digital channels caused by the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the inadequacies of the council's network infrastructure, outdated legacy software and service delivery model.

Since then, we have modernised our network infrastructure and rolled out Microsoft365, we are moving away from on-premises solutions to software and platform as a service and cloud hosted solutions. We have also implemented a new service delivery model, supported with a new third-party ICT support contract.

Having the right ICT infrastructure and equipment, as well as the support and training for staff to get the most out of it will remain a focus for us, as will continuing to deliver modern technologies and devices to ensure that staff have the tools that enable them to work flexibly and redesign how they deliver services to better meet the changing needs of residents.

Digital technology is also a key enabler for supporting low carbon activity across the council and the wider community, so we will continue to increase our use of digital technologies that contribute to meeting our net zero carbon emission targets.

Our recent LGA cyber review highlighted our clear commitment to cyber security governance, risk management, and asset management, underpinned by robust frameworks but with Cyber security incidents affecting UK organisations every week, there will also be more we will need to do in this area.

Now we are better equipping our staff they can more effectively meet the needs of communities and local businesses.

## Delivering a digital county

For many of our residents, digital engagement is now the channel of choice. However, for many years there has been a digital divide with many areas of the county suffering from poor or no broadband.

In 2011, we partnered with Herefordshire Council to launch the Fastershire project to address the lack of viable commercial broadband in certain areas.

Data from the independent website ThinkBroadband shows that by spring 2024, when the Fastershire project concluded, an impressive 98.2% of Gloucestershire properties could access superfast broadband, and 77.08% could benefit from gigabit-capable speeds of 1,000 Mbps.

We are proud of the significant progress made through the Fastershire project, but we know for the 1.8% of remaining properties in the county connectivity remains a problem. As part of this strategy will be looking at ways that we can address this and work towards a 100% connected county. making sure that every household can benefit from improved access to online services, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

As of June 2022, Gloucestershire was home to more than 1,000 cyber security professionals and more than 120 firms involved in cyber related activities. The Golden Valley Development in North-West Cheltenham with its' nationally significant cyber-business park is expected to contribute substantially to the growth of the cyber-tech cluster, with 11,000 jobs expected to be created through this development.

We want more and more local people to be able to secure high-level skills and jobs in skilled occupations so will continue to work with partners in the county to achieve this ambition.

To make sure local people can benefit from opportunities linked to the cyber-business park and similar future developments, our further and higher education providers have developed class leading digital courses and programmes including the new Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College.

**Digital continues to transform our everyday lives - we are committed to making the most of the associated benefits for Gloucestershire.**

# Objectives

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Through our previous digital strategy, we deliver major improvements towards delivering a digital county and the development of a digital council. On pages 5-8 we have set out key achievements for our residents and in the way the services they may access are delivered and for our workforce.

Having made these advances we can now be more ambitious about where we want to go next and what we want to achieve. The following objectives set out what we want to achieve by the end of the period covered by this strategy. These objectives and the wider strategy does not stand in isolation. Digital successes so far and those that will be achieved under this strategy are important enablers for delivery of the councils current and future corporate strategies.



## **Maximise the use of data:**

**Use advanced analytics and artificial intelligence to draw out insights from our data to support informed decision-making and strategic planning**



## **Deliver better for customers:**

**Develop solutions and services that meet the evolving needs and expectations of our customers**



## **Foster Innovation:**

**Develop an organisation wide culture of innovation and collaboration**



## **Ensure Data Security and Compliance:**

**Maintain robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard our assets and data**

# Linked strategies and programmes

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The Digital Strategy is designed to provide an organisation wide view of our digital ambitions but in order to be successful it should and does align with and support several national, local, and organisational strategies.

Gloucestershire County Council Strategy: Building Back Better in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire ICS Digital Strategy

Gloucestershire Economic Strategy

Gloucestershire Climate Change Strategy

The council's Information & Data Management Strategy

Gloucestershire County Council Workforce Strategy

Gloucestershire Library Strategy

Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue ICT Delivery Plan

Agile Working Programme

Adult's Transformation Programme

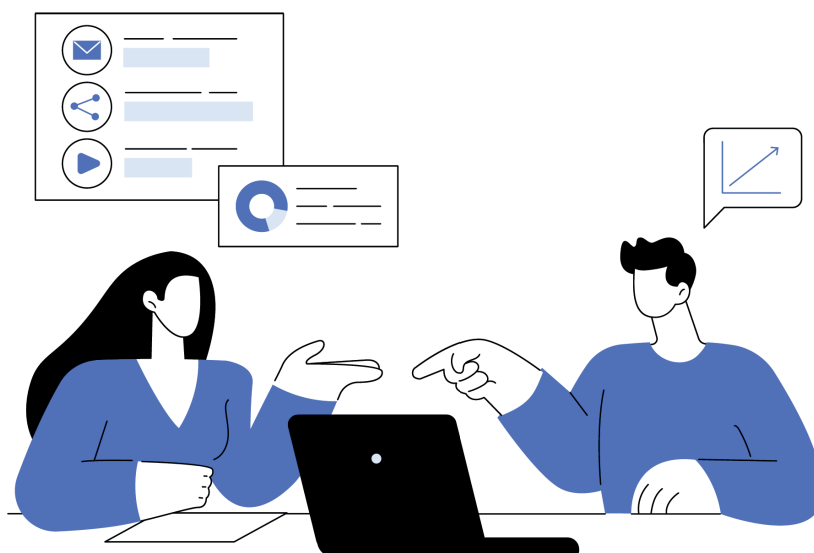
Children's Improvement programme

Customer experience Programme

Highways Improvement Programme

Gloucestershire Data Insights Programme

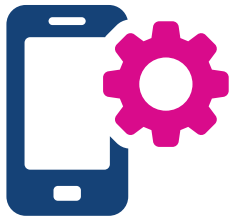
Local Digital Declaration



# Digital Improvements

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## Our residents



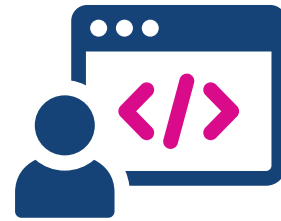
### Device surgeries

Sign posted in all libraries for residents to book in with a Computer Buddy, or where we don't have a library offer, we sign post to local Digital Champion in partnership with a range of local organisations. Since April 2024, over 460 hours of computer buddy support has been provided.



### New Libraries

A new library in Oakley, Cheltenham opened in Spring 2023 bringing the total of Council run libraries to 32, and Stroud Library relocated into a new venue within the Five Valley Shopping Centre in Spring 2024 and has seen visitor growth of 94%.



### Code Clubs

Enabling children and young people to develop coding skills in a range of libraries in the county, often run with volunteers expert in their coding skills. Free coding resources available for all ages in all libraries for self-learning and entertainment.



### Digital Access

Free Internet and public computer access in all 40 Gloucestershire Libraries. Gloucestershire Libraries is also working in partnership to support the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council Daisi project to distribute free Data SIMs to residents in need.



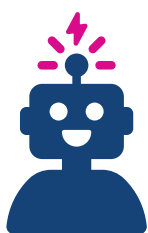
### GCC public WiFi

Upgraded in GCC public venues across the county.



### Digital learning tools

**Digital Skills and Coding Skills:** Self-directed learning resources, videos and support tools free for residents. Gloucestershire Adult Education digital courses on offer in libraries and community venues.



### STEAM Activities

An innovative programme of Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEAM) activities in Gloucestershire Libraries including **Space to Create** targeting those not in education or employment, and the digital innovation devices and skills development on offer to members of the six Labs, located in Gloucestershire Libraries. STEAM has been embedded within The Library Challenge summer programme targeting children since 2023 with thousands of children participating each year.

# Digital Improvements

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## Our services

### Waste Wizard

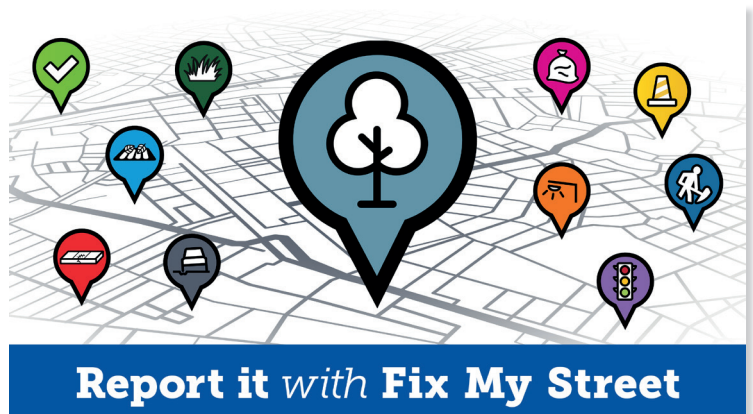
Is a tool that helps residents to find out alternative ways you can repair, reuse, recycle or dispose of your household items.



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### Fix My Street

An app launched in November 2023 to improve customer experience, making it easier to report highways issues and stay up to date with repairs.



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### Financial Assessment and Benefits Portal

If an adult needs a financial assessment following their care needs assessment, they can now submit their financial documents online, removing the need for in-person visits.



# Digital Improvements

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Through our previous digital strategy, we made major improvements to our digital and technical capabilities, for our workforce, our residents and our services. Improvements under each of these heading is set out on the following pages.

## Our workforce



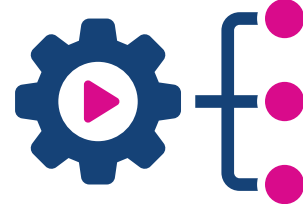
### M365 roll out

Modern, cloud-based software to connect employees to the people, information, and content they need to do their best work, from any device.



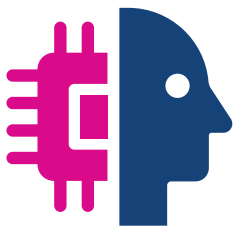
### Improved access to and use of data

Development of the infrastructure, tools and skills to enable us to use data to drive performance improvement.



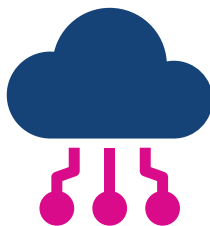
### Digital process automation

Starting the journey to ensure easy to use, efficient transactional processes for all residents.



### ICT teams and services

Responsive, skilled, customer focused digital and ICT teams supported by a range of specialist partners to provide capacity and resilience.



### Key applications in the cloud

Modern, resilient and secure specialist applications to support the provision of services and protect resident information.



### New technology trials and pilots

Trialling new generative AI and automation tools with a view to increasing efficiency, customer and employee satisfaction



### Digital Smarties network

Building our skills and confidence.



## So where are we now in 2024:

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We have a strong, stable and secure technology infrastructure



Our communications and collaboration between staff and partners is improved, enabling appropriate and secure access to data and services



Our staff have the tools they need to make it easier to do their jobs and be able to work anywhere they need to



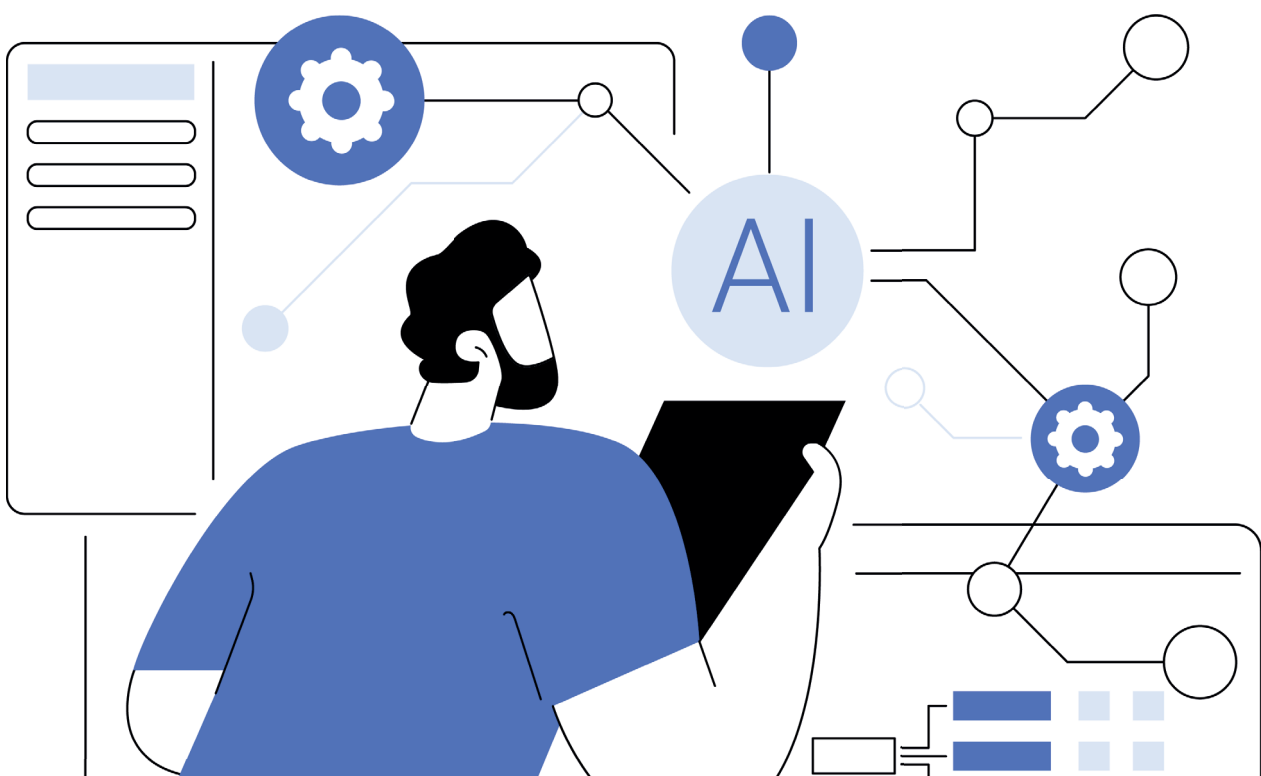
We have enabled staff to protect themselves & council data against cyber threat



We have a new and stable network across the county council's buildings



We hold technical expertise internally and via partners to support delivery of ongoing improvement and wider digital strategy





# Drivers for change

There are both internal and external factors that mean that want and must continue to change, evolve and improve. Whilst almost certainly other drivers for change will present themselves over the lifetime of this strategy we have set out our current key drivers for change.

## **Delivering improvement and innovation:**

To use innovative technology to deliver services that better align with the way people and communities want to live.

## **Inclusion:**

We want to be a digitally inclusive organisation, designing our digital services from a resident view and support them and our staff to develop or increase digital skills and access to technology and data.

- **Our workforce:** A proportion of our workforce continue to lack the digital training, skills, and knowledge they need in today's society. They also lack the confidence to experiment with digital tools and applications reducing the opportunity to increase productivity. There is limited understanding of the art of the possible reduces the ability to digitise processes.
- **Our residents:** A considerable proportion of our community lack digital skills and the confidence to engage through digital channels. Some of our communities can't access equipment to enable digital engagement. (See appendix 2 - map).

## **Our services:**

Some front-end digital solutions have been delivered but without end-to-end service redesign. There are opportunities for automating manual and repetitive tasks, exploiting Artificial Intelligence, for smarter working practices with partners and for making information more accessible.

## **HMIFRS inspection programme and frameworks 2025-27:**

Due to the threat posed, HMI is proposing an inspection of fire and rescue services' cyber security arrangements be included in their inspection programme and frameworks from 2025-27.

## **Employment:**

Gloucestershire has long been a home to significant professional services and IT service cluster, with over 1,000 cyber security professionals and more than 120 firms involved in cyber related activities as of June 2022. Gloucestershire is the second largest cyber cluster behind London; Cheltenham has the highest density of cyber businesses in the country, with 620 businesses across the county and increasing. The Golden Valley Development with its' nationally significant cyber-business park is expected to contribute substantially to the growth of the cyber-tech cluster, with 11,000 jobs expected to be created through this development.

## **Cyber security:**

During our recent LGA cyber review our clear commitment to cyber security governance, risk management, and asset management, underpinned by robust frameworks was highlighted, it was noted that leadership champions strong buy-in, ensuring consistent commitment throughout all management levels and addressing concerns regarding fragmented reporting remain ongoing challenges.

With Cyber security incidents affecting UK organisations every week, it's important we continue to improve in this area.

## **Responding to the findings of our LGA Peer Challenge:**

One area identified through our 2023 Peer Challenge was that staff highlighted that our ICT infrastructure continued to significantly impact on our effectiveness, with some staff reporting that it was impacting their health and well-being. It was recognised that things have improved in recent years but even with the major investment that had been made, issues still exist.

It was recommended that we prioritise continued investment in ICT as an enabler to the council's operations.

# Our design principles

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In order to achieve what we have set out in this strategy we know it is essential to prioritise where we place our resources. The following principles, adapted from the UK government's design principles, will help guide our decision making.

- **Start with user need:** Service design starts with identifying user needs. If you don't know what the user needs are, you won't build the right thing. Do research, analyse data, talk to users. Don't make assumptions. Have empathy for users and remember that what they ask for isn't always what they need.
- **Design with data:** In most cases, we can learn from real world behaviour by looking at how existing services are used. Let data drive decision-making, not hunches or guesswork. Keep doing that after taking your service live, prototyping and testing with users then iterating in response. Analytics should be built-in, always on and easy to read. They're an essential tool.
- **Do the hard work to make it simple:** Making something look simple is easy. Making something simple to use is much harder - especially when the underlying systems are complex - but that's what we should be doing. Don't take "It's always been that way" for an answer. It's usually more and harder work to make things simple, but it's the right thing to do.
- **Iterate. Then iterate again:** The best way to build good services is to start small and iterate wildly. Iteration reduces risk. It makes big failures unlikely and turns small failures into lessons. If a prototype isn't working, don't be afraid to scrap it and start again.
- **This is for everyone:** Accessible design is good design. Everything we build should be as inclusive, legible and readable as possible. If we have to sacrifice elegance - so be it. We're building for needs, not audiences. We're designing for the whole county, not just the ones who are used to using the web. The people who most need our services are often the people who find them hardest to use. Let's think about those people from the start.
- **Understand context:** We're not designing for a screen, we're designing for people. We need to think hard about the context in which they're using our services. Are they in a library? Are they on a phone? Are they only really familiar with Facebook? Have they never used the web before?
- **Be consistent, not uniform:** We should use the same language and the same design patterns wherever possible. This helps people get familiar with our services, but when this isn't possible, we should make sure our approach is consistent.

This isn't a straitjacket or a rule book. Every circumstance is different. When we find patterns that work, we should share them and talk about why we use them. But that shouldn't stop us from improving or changing them in the future when we find better ways of doing things or the needs of users change.



## Our vision

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**Our vision is to digitally enable our workforce, residents and services through innovative use of technology and data; facilitating how people work and access council services, reflecting their personal preference, choice and engagement, promoting independence for people and communities.**



## Priority one: Developing digital residents

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We will deliver this by:



Designing our digital services from a resident view.



Ensuring we are digitally inclusive and supporting the community to develop or increase digital skills and access to technology.



Promoting independence and wellbeing using digital services and smart technology.

## Priority two: Developing digital services

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We will deliver this by:



Becoming a Digital First Council that has digital at the heart of its service redesign and a focus on eliminating waste.



Identify opportunities for automation with the focus on end-to-end self-service.



Continuing as a council that recognises the importance of cyber security in delivering safe and secure online services. Maximising the use of emerging technologies to adapt to changing business requirements.



Creating social care digital services and experiences for community support provided to people at home.

# Priority three: Delivering a digital council

We want to deliver our services smarter not harder and enable our staff to focus on delivering added value. We want digital technologies to be an enabler and not a barrier to accessing public services.

## We will deliver this by:



**Designing our services around the needs of the users**, putting them at the heart of all we do.



**Having an open culture that values and expects digital ways of working** from every member of our workforce.



**Replacing the remaining legacy outdated technologies** that restrict our ability to provide modern joined up services.



**Collaborating with our partners in the county to promote and support the adoption of digital technologies and increase digital skills and access within the community.**



**Managing our digital risks** and ensure information is appropriately secured.



**Ensuring that the use of technology provides value for money.**



**Maximising the use of technology** to collaborate and share information with our partners **to support the most vulnerable people and to target our resources more effectively.**



**Developing an inhouse capability** that ensures we can **respond to the changing needs of the organisation** in a flexible, cost effective and efficient manner.



**Demonstrating digital leadership**, creating the conditions for organisational transformation.

## Priority four: Developing a digital workforce

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We will deliver this by:



Becoming an organisation which embraces a digitally trained and skilled workforce and supports staff to make the most of digital systems.



Developing a workforce that actively seeks opportunities for automating and streamlining processes.



Encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace through digital technologies.



Developing digital leaders that actively enable and support staff to continually develop their digital skills.



Providing a digital induction which enables new starters to maximise the use of the digital technologies available to them.



Developing digital leaders that consider digital inclusion in the design and decision making for all services.



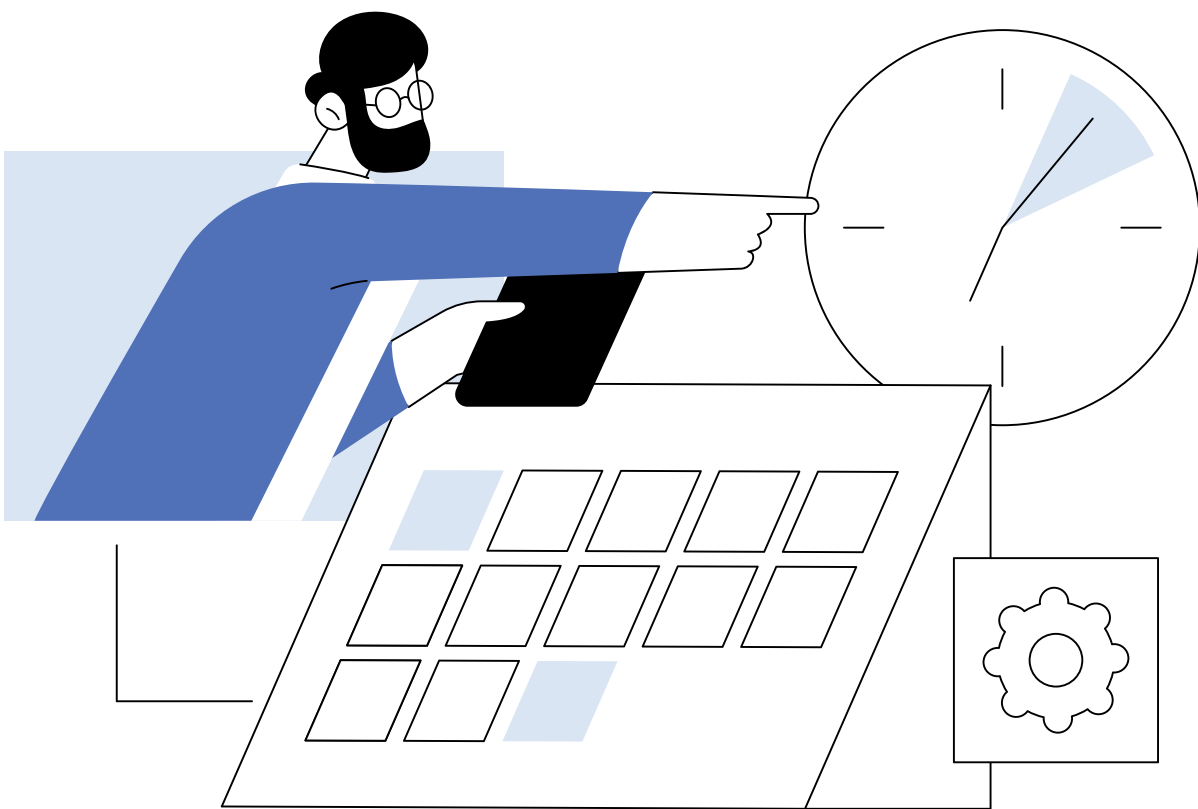
Developing a culture where our staff view digital systems as an enabler to helping them deliver their role.

# Delivering our priorities

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To successfully achieve our digital priorities a 3-year plan has been developed capturing the activity taking place across the organisation (Appendix 1). This will plan will be a living document to make sure it meets the ambitions of this strategy and benefits from that pace of change in digital innovation.)

DICT will produce a technical roadmap to enable and support the delivery of the Digital Strategy.





# Resourcing delivery

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To successfully achieve our digital priorities, we have developed a plan which captures the activity taking place during 2025 and 2026 (Appendix 1). As the pace of change in the digital arena is fast paced, a plan for the remaining years covered by the strategy will be developed during 2026. All plans will remain 'living' documents to make sure they benefit from the advances in digital innovation.)

A technical roadmap to enable and support the delivery of this strategy will be developed by the Digital and Information Communications and Technology Service.

## Measuring success

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**Whilst delivering the strategy is everyone's job, there are a number of key responsibilities within our organisation – but here are the key responsibilities within our organisation:**

**Members:** Scrutiny and challenge of frameworks and assurance

**CEO/Cabinet:** Ultimate strategic accountability for data quality and decision making

**Corporate Leadership Team (CLT):** Responsible for overall assurance that arrangements are in place, operational and delegated decisions

**Information Governance Board:** Cabinet oversight and assurance board for delivery of programme

**Digital Governance Board:** Officer oversight and assurance board for delivery of programme

**Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO):** Responsible for organisation's information risk policy

**Heads of Service:** Maintaining data assets, ensuring staff are appropriately trained in data and information management

**Information Asset Owners/Managers:** Senior leaders with accountability for their information assets

**System users – all staff:** Awareness of personal responsibilities for data use and storage

**Data Analysis & Insight Team (DAIT):** Data and Performance framework owners - Centralised data function, Analysis expertise, report/dashboard design and delivery

**Data Protection Officer:** Statutory role, fulfilling tasks sets out in General Data Protection Regulations. Must be consulted (via IMS) on any proposals involving the use of personal data

**Information Management Service (IMS):** Information governance – supporting delivery of good governance

**Digital and ICT service (DICT):** Infrastructure owners - Data engineering lead, permissions and gateways for movement of data

# Digital Strategy - Roadmap Overview 2024

## Developing Digital Residents

- ☒ **Data Academy:** Launch training programs for data literacy and skills (continues to Q3 2025).
- ☒ **Digital Household Grant:** Transition of grant applications from Herefordshire to GCC. Applications for funding via M365 solution built by D&ICT.
- ☐ **Young People's WiFi:** Implementing a safe, accessible network for young people.

## Developing Digital Services

- ☐ **Tech Enabled Care:** Implement digital solutions to support independent living and care services.
- ☐ **Education System Requirements Gathering and Options Appraisal:** Engage stakeholders for the new educational platform.

## Developing a Digital Council

- ☐ **New Operating Model for D&ICT:** Implement a new digital and ICT operating model.
- ☒ **New SAN Implementation:** Complete the upgrade of data storage capabilities.
- ☐ **Compute and Data Migration:** Continue transitioning data and compute resources.
- ☐ **Centre of Excellence, Policy, Governance, Standards:** Establish centralized governance.
- ☐ **Further Development of Digital Governance Board:** Strengthen governance oversight.
- ☐ **ServiceDesk Bot:** Piloting the use of robotic agents to share knowledge with users
- ☐ **Leveraging our strategic relationship with Microsoft:** Understanding their full technology offer and optimise routes to access it.
- ☐ **Build Digital Innovation Team:** Start forming a team to foster innovation and manage digital projects (continues to Q2 2025).
- ☐ **AI Strategic Objectives:** Define goals for the integration and use of AI in council operations.
- ☒ **New StaffNet Launch:** built on SharePoint and integrated with our IT estate.
- ☒ **Accessibility:** Inventory of accessibility tools developed, and training provided on their use.
- ☒ **NHS Shared Channels:** Seamless communication via MS Teams with NHS colleagues.
- ☐ **Horizon Scan and Partner Engagement:** Identify emerging trends and engage with partners.
- ☐ **Upgrades to Social Care Platform:** Update to the latest web-based version.
- ☐ **JUYI2:** Launch the integrated health and social care information system.
- ☐ **Electronic Record Keeping:** Roll out digital record-keeping systems for adults and children's services.
- ☐ **Executive Support Pilot:** Roll out modern ways of working maximising productivity and efficiencies.
- ☐ **Link into data strategy:** Continue to work with colleagues in strategic intelligence to manage our data infrastructure and architecture.

## Developing a Digital Workforce

- ☒ **Digital Induction:** Initiate a program to introduce new employees to digital tools and culture.
- ☐ **Core Digital Skills Development Plan:** Roll out a plan to ensure all staff possess essential digital skills.
- ☐ **Lone Working App (and associated services):** Keeping our people safe using technology.

Key: ☒ Completed

☐ Underway

☐ Not yet started

Produce and refine our guidance, policy and governance for AI, software development and system procurement for all services

Continue to maximise our use of our technology investment in Microsoft and other key partners, focussing on social value and climate impact

# Digital Strategy - Roadmap Overview 2025

## Developing Digital Services

- ⊖ **Continual service improvement:** Furthering our methods for officers and citizens to access our services digitally.

## Developing a Digital Council

- ⊖ **Expand Digital Offerings and Support:** Increase the range of digital services and support.
- ⊖ **Review Current Ways of Working:** Assess and improve practices.
- ⊖ **Consolidation of Digital Portfolio:** Streamline digital projects (H1 2025).
- ⊖ **Decommission Old SAN:** Phase out outdated storage systems.
- ⊖ **Recycling Legacy IT assets:** Linking into the GCC-wide climate action plan initiatives.
- ⊖ **Review and Refine Modern Ways of Working:** Ongoing assessment and refinement of digital work practices.
- ⊖ **Continuous adaptation and integration of new digital technologies and methods.**
- ⊖ **PSN Accreditation**
- ⊖ **Continued refinement and enhancement of digital skills and innovation teams as needed.**
- ⊖ **Optioneer Modern Ways of Working:** Explore and implement inclusive work practices.
- ⊖ **Single View of the Child:** Develop and implement a comprehensive digital platform for child-related services.
- ☑ **Initial Delivery of Finance, HR, Payroll, Procurement Systems:** Launch new administrative systems.
- ⊖ **Copilot Social Work Proof of Concept:** Pilot digital tools for social work.
- ⊖ **Automation in GFRS Fire Control Room:** Introduce automation for managing resources (by summer 2025).
- ⊖ **Completion of New Station End Equipment in All Fire Stations:** Upgrade equipment by end of 2026
- ⊖ **Ongoing Implementation of Social Care Platform Configurations:** Continue the rollout and optimisation of new configurations.
- ⊖ **PowerPlatform University:** Ongoing specialized training on Microsoft's PowerPlatform.

## Developing a Digital Workforce

- ⊖ **Digital Smarties Campaign 3:** Continue promoting digital literacy and skill enhancement among employees.
- ⊖ **Review and Refine Ways of Working:** Assess and improve practices to support diversity and inclusion.
- ⊖ **Goals and Appraisal, Learning Management System:** Implement performance management and learning systems.

Key: ☑ **Completed**

□ **Underway**

⊖ **Not yet started**

**Link our data together to produce meaningful management information, measures and support predictive, evidence-based decision making**

**Continue to; horizon scan, engage with peers, develop digital skills/capability and modernise our technology offer**

# Digital Strategy - Roadmap Overview 2026

## Developing Digital Services

- ⊖ **Continual service improvement:** Furthering our methods for officers and citizens to access our services digitally.

## Developing a Digital Council

- ⊖ **Review and Refine Modern Ways of Working:** Ongoing assessment and refinement of digital work practices.
- ⊖ **Continuous adaptation and integration of new digital technologies and methods.**
- ⊖ **PSN Accreditation**
- ⊖ **Recycling Legacy IT assets:** linking into the GCC-wide climate action plan initiatives
- ⊖ **Continuous adaptation and integration of new digital technologies and methods.**
- ⊖ **Continued refinement and enhancement of digital skills and innovation teams as needed.**
- ⊖ **PowerPlatform University:** Ongoing specialized training on Microsoft's PowerPlatform.
- ⊖ **Completion of New Station End Equipment in All Fire Stations:** Upgrade equipment by end of 2026
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Key: ☒ Completed

☐ Underway

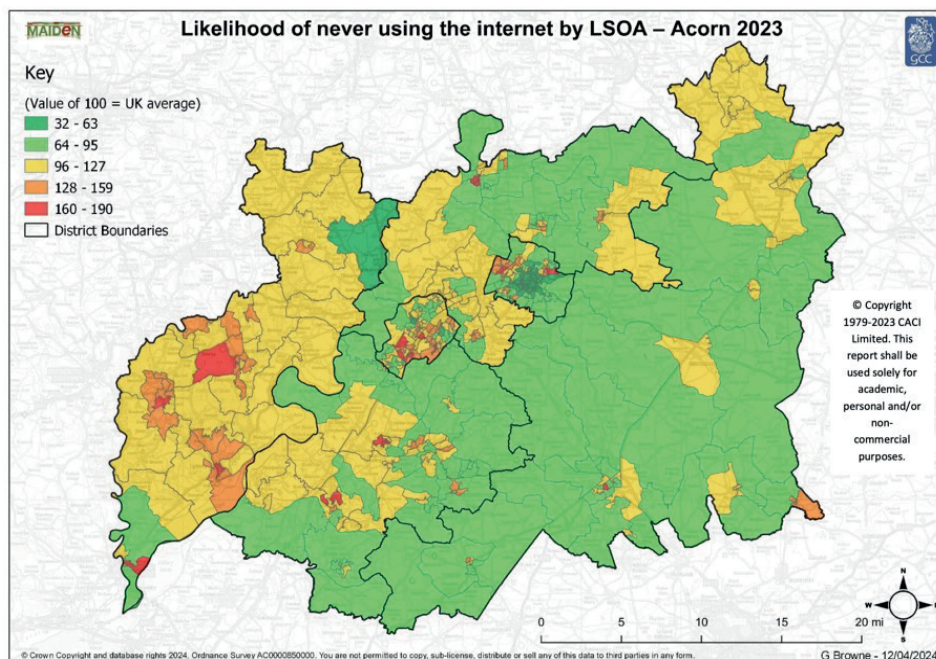
⊖ Not yet started

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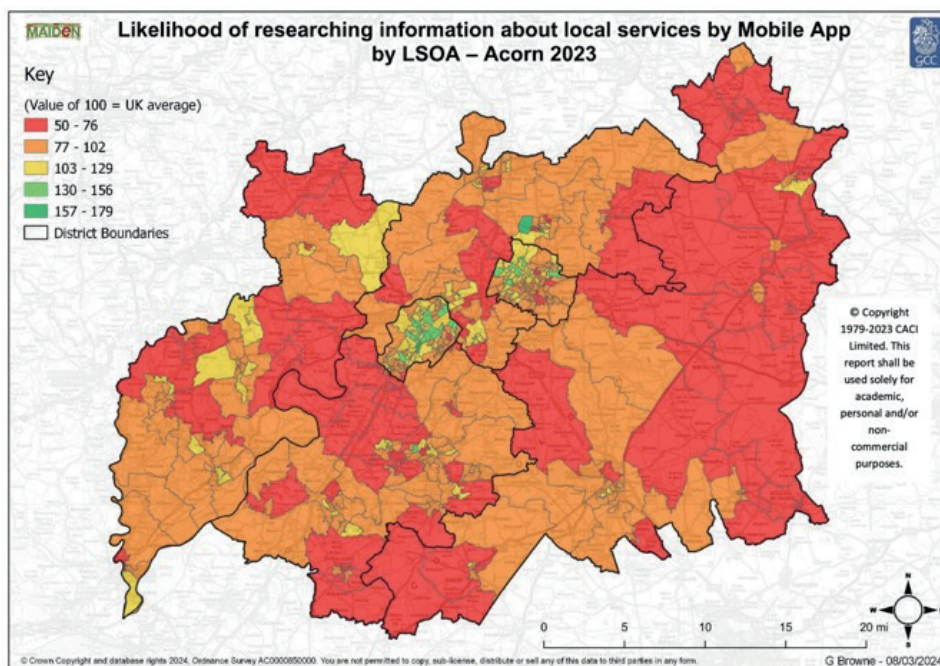
Continue to; horizon scan, engage with peers, develop digital skills/capability and modernise our technology offer



## Digital engagement in Gloucestershire



**Digital Literacy varies significantly across Gloucestershire**



**In rural Gloucestershire the use of Apps to research local services is lower than the national average**

Gloucestershire County Council  
**Digital Strategy**  
**2025-2028**



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