Scottish Social Services Council

Digital Strategy Strategy 2024-2026

sssc.uk.com

Contents

1. Introduction

Digital and information technologies have transformed lives on an unprecedented scale and will continue to do so at an increasingly accelerated pace. The effect has been to revolutionise travel, shopping, banking and social interactions. Although playing 'catch up', there is now a greater prominence of how technology is used to modernise the delivery of public services.

The availability and development of digital services and information technologies that are easy to access, anytime, anywhere and using different kinds of devices from smartphones to smartwatches has changed the way we use services from shopping to paying bills and, increasingly how we access public services. We are used to doing things online and the expectation that we can manage the services we use online will only continue to grow.

We want to make sure the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) builds on the rapid progress we have made so far and that we design our services and the technology behind them to meet the fast pace of development and the growing need for simple, user focused digital services.

Our digital strategy has been developed to support the delivery of our **Strategic Plan** and focuses on how we want to do things to support customer and business requirements. Our strategy is not about delivering digital technologies, it is about delivering user-led and centred services in the digital age.

Our digital strategy is based on research with our customers and is aligned to the **Digital Strategy for Scotland**, A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world. It is also guided by the Scottish Government's **Digital Scotland Service Standard**.

2. Background

This strategy comes on the back of a significant and highly successful digital transformation journey. Since opening the Register in 2003, there was an initial gradual move towards digital processes, providing huge opportunities and achieving benefits both within the organisation and for our service users. This included developing an online registration portal and the development of a significant number of digital learning products for people working in social services to help them develop their skills using mobile technology so that learning is more flexible, effective and at a lower cost than traditional methods.

This was then followed in 2017 by an ambitious digital transformation programme to deliver new digital capabilities, supporting increased automation and realising opportunities and benefits from modern and emerging technologies to transform not only how we deliver services but enhance the user experience for both our staff and service users.

- → We migrated to Microsoft Dynamics 365 bringing together our online portal and main website into a single platform.
- → We implemented a dedicated legal case management solution to streamline our fitness to practise processes.
- → We implemented Microsoft Office 365 to provide a modern email/calendaring solution and provide a technology platform for further digital innovation.
- → We delivered a modern device (laptop) and associated peripherals to enhance the digital experience for all staff and support flexible and agile working.
- → We hosted our core digital infrastructure with an external supplier to provide a reliable and highly available technology infrastructure platform.
- → We formed a dedicated Digital Services department within the SSSC to support the organisation to provide a proactive IT support service and digital development capacity.

The digital transformation programme, which was fully delivered in February 2019, not only provided tangible improvements to support the services we provide to our customers, but also afforded a basis for further digital development.

A new digital programme was created in April 2019 to further develop our digital capabilities and services, in particular, to build upon the systems and services delivered in February 2019.

→ We migrated our main telephony system and contact centre software to a cloud hosted platform providing additional functionality and, vitally, location independent access supporting off-site working.

→ We updated the main corporate website to deliver an improved user experience.

→ We further developed our online portal (MySSSC) to deliver process improvement, additional functionality and an improved customer experience.

→ We upgraded our legal case management system (MatterSphere) to improve productivity and to digitise the process of sharing information.

→ We scoped out our data and reporting requirements to inform the deliverables for a new intelligence and insights system.

→ We implemented digital technologies to support paperless hearings, delivering process improvements and enhanced service provision.

→ We migrated our core data files from traditional file servers to Teams SharePoint, delivering new functionality to improve communication and collaboration.

As well as using digital technologies to transform how we deliver our services, we have made a considerable impact on workforce development. We have designed and developed a large number of high quality resources have been designed and developed to support the training needs of the social service workforce.

Our 2017 digital transformation programme and subsequent digital programme have had a profound impact on the workforce both in terms of rethinking and reskilling and supporting flexible and agile working. Investment in digital skills and upskilling was crucial to supporting staff to successfully deliver services differently.

In March 2020, the digital transformation and developments previously implemented allowed the organisation to respond positively to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff were able to work from home using mobile and cloud technologies, securely accessing systems and data, providing a seamless service to our customers. We were also able to support the social service sector by further developing our systems and by developing additional resources. It is important we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic experience, in particular the importance of modern, fully supported and secure digital technologies and having the flexibility to adapt to change.

'Our 2017 digital transformation programme and subsequent digital programme had a profound impact on the workforce both in terms of rethinking and reskilling and supporting flexible and agile working.'

3. Policy

We align our own digital strategy with Scottish Government's drive to forge a future in a digital world. The principle of our digital ambition is taken from the Scottish Government's digital strategy – A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world. Basic digital skills are required for nearly every job and in supporting the social service sector, our own strategy must support the digital capability of our own staff and that of the social work, social care and children and young people workforce.

We developed our digital strategy at a time of considerable change within the policy landscape of the social service sector. We will support the social care workforce to increase their digital capacity and capability to allow them to deliver technology enabled care as set out in **Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy: enabling, connecting and empowering.**

4. Research with people using our services

In October 2020, we carried out quantitative and qualitative user research to help inform this digital strategy. The extensive research provided valuable insights into our current digital offering, barriers and future opportunities. The research highlighted four main points.

→ Scotland's social service workforce is hugely diverse.

→ Challenges with digital literacy need to be addressed.

→ For many registrants there are practical barriers to connecting with the SSSC's digital interfaces.

→ There is a very cluttered learning and development landscape in the sector.

In summary, the research highlighted two main considerations for this digital strategy.

→ Customers want an enhanced inclusive digital offering and desire a one stop shop for all their interactions with the SSSC.

→ Customers want a single hub to access all learning and development resources in the social service sector.

This strategy is based on both the research and existing knowledge. It builds on the firm foundation achieved in the last few years and outlines how digital can further enhance our services and ultimately improve the experience for those using our services.

When designing our services, we will also be mindful of **The Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD)** to help ensure our services are designed both for and with the user.

5. Vision

Our vision is for digital and information technology to have a transformational impact for both the staff who deliver our services and for the users of our services.

A key aim of the digital strategy is to ensure the organisation is truly enhanced by the use of digital and information technology, with developments aligned with organisational objectives and operational need.
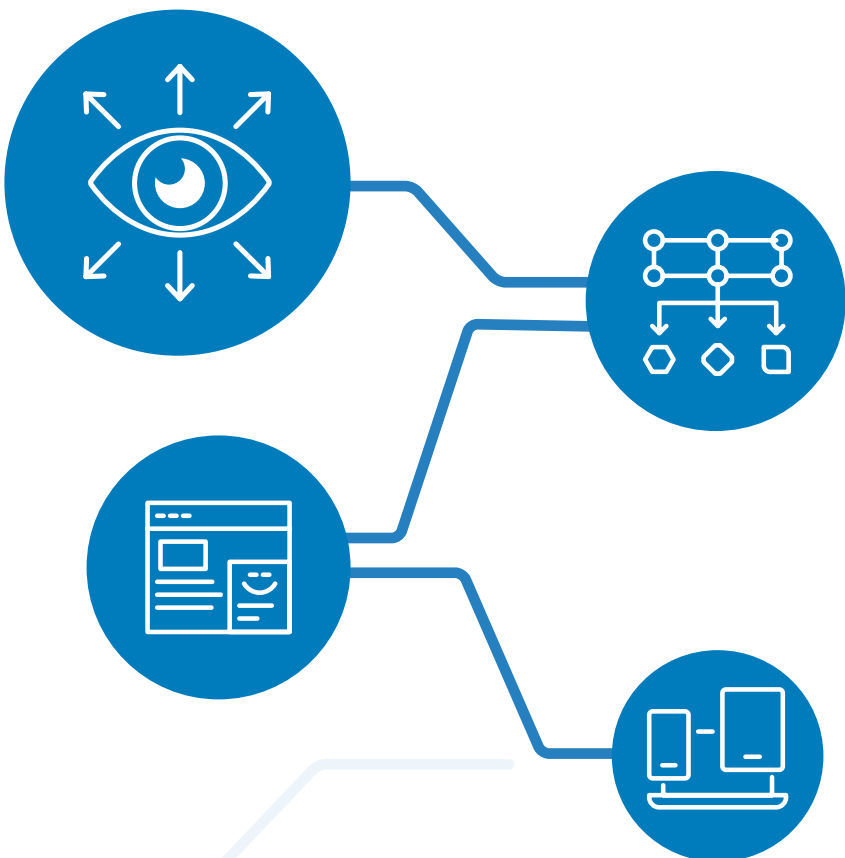
6. Principles and themes

It is important the strategy is flexible, agile and can be adapted to further internally and externally driven change. The strategy is based around the following key principles and themes.

Principles

1. Right access, right time

Design and deliver inclusive and accessible services using the right technology.

3. Effective governance

Ensure all activities associated with digital and information technology are aligned with overall business objectives.

2. Customer service focus

Understand our customers challenges and opportunities to provide user-centric services.

4. Continual service improvement

To be future-focused, to listen to user feedback and continually find opportunities for service improvement.

Themes

1. User experience

To ensure all digital systems and resources are effective, integrated and aligned to the needs of our users.

We know our users want to interact with us digitally and want to use our services 24/7, with an increased desire to use mobile devices. We know our users want a single place to access our services and for there to be a more joined up experience between the different services we offer.

Our focus will be to deliver an enhanced digital journey, ensuring finding and using our services is simplified and personalised.

What this means

→ Perform a comprehensive review of our registration portal and main website to inform further developments.

→ Create a one stop shop for all our services.

→ Ensure all services are fully accessible on mobile devices.

→ Deliver a mobile phone app for our core services.

→ Develop better integration between registration and learning and development services and resources.

→ Improved signposting for external services and improved collaboration to deliver joined up public services.

→ Develop further personalisation of our services.

→ Design and develop a consistent branding across all digital services.

→ Investigate a single authentication mechanism, delivering a single username/password to access our services.

→ Redesign our business processes by developing end to end digital services.

→ Ensure all our services are fully supported including providing an assisted digital service.

2. Data informed

To collect, store, manage, share and use data and information, supporting the organisation to make the best business decisions.

The SSSC collects datasets from our many business systems and from external organisations. It is more important than ever that we produce evidence and intelligence that helps us, and others, make the right decisions.

Our focus will be to identify, store, provide, process, share and govern our data and information to support decision making and improve reporting.

What this means

→ Design and deliver a data warehouse to pull all data together into one location from our various systems.

→ Design and configure an analytical environment or extract, transform and load tool (ETL) to combine multiple data sources.

→ Deploy visualisation and reporting tools to provide managers and others with self-service dashboards and access to real time information.

→ Safely store external workforce data with the ability to integrate with internally held data.

→ Create processes to share data securely and appropriately with external organisations.

→ Evaluate open data and the role it can play in supporting the public sector provide more joined up and collaborative services.

→ Training and support for staff on how to use tools and technology to make more informed decisions.

3. Intelligent automation

To examine and adopt emerging technologies to support further process automation.

Technological breakthroughs in areas from artificial intelligence and robotics to internet of things (IoT) are now heralding a fourth industrial revolution. Emerging technologies have the power to reshape every aspect of how we deliver our services.

Our focus will be to analyse our existing business processes and identify areas where emerging technology can improve and optimise performance.

What this means

→ Carry out a comprehensive review of existing business processes to identify areas for process improvement and enhanced user experience.

→ Evaluate robotic process automation (RPA) to further automate business processes.

→ Investigate how artificial intelligence (AI) can provide efficiencies and an improved customer experience.

→ Explore natural language processing and integrate chatbot technologies into both internal and external services.
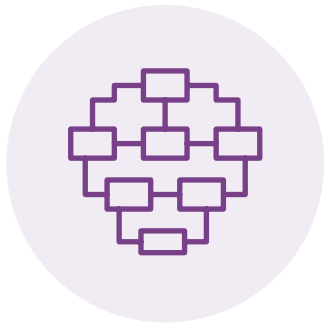
4. Technology architecture

To develop and maintain a flexible and sustainable design for the physical and logical IT systems and follow a robust set of guidelines for new systems and future developments.

Our technology architecture needs to allow services and information to be available 24/7 and staff need to securely access our technology platforms from any location. A simplified technology architecture and the integration of information technologies will be a fundamental building block in delivering an enhanced digital offering to our customers.

Our focus will be to design, develop and maintain a technology infrastructure to support the current and future digital needs of the organisation with an emphasis on leveraging cloud technologies and managed services.

What this means

→ Continue to use public cloud technologies to deliver flexible and sustainable services allowing the organisation to be agile and respond to further internally and externally driven change.

→ Continue to focus on using managed services to deliver and support our critical information technology architecture.

→ Rationalise and consolidate our web architecture.

→ Work more closely with strategic partners to design, develop and support our learning and development resources.

→ Collaborate with partner organisations with a focus on service delivery and not being constrained by organisational boundaries.

→ Ensure the underlying technology architecture supports the delivery of location independent and device agnostic access to services.

→ Ensure all technology infrastructure and services are fully supported, either internally or through support agreements with external suppliers.

→ Provide more joined up and collaborative services.

→ Training and support for staff on how to use tools and technology to make more informed decisions.

5. Security and compliance

To meet our moral and legal obligations in securing, storing and sharing information and resources.

With the increased dependence on IT systems, organisations are becoming more vulnerable to IT security threats. The growth of cloud computing and mobile devices are providing new opportunities for unauthorised access to IT systems. IT security threats are generally expected to become more widespread and increasingly sophisticated.

Our focus will be to take a risk-based approach, aligning people, process and technology to ensure our information and resources are secure from unauthorised access.

What this means

→ Implement appropriate technical controls to mitigate against cyber threats, including network and device security and access control and authentication.

→ Ensure technical controls meet to National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) best practice guidance.

→ Continually evaluate cyber threats and ensure technology controls and processes evolve and are effective in managing cyber risk.

→ Work closely with external suppliers to ensure cyber threats are appropriately controlled for our externally managed services.

→ Deliver appropriate cyber security awareness training to staff.

→ Deliver simulated cyber attacks to support staff awareness of common threats.

→ Provide external assurance through audits and maintain the Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, a Government backed scheme to help protect against the most common cyber attacks.

→ Join the Cyber Security Information Sharing Partnership (CiSP) to better understand and share cyber threat information.

→ Create, maintain and test comprehensive disaster recovery and business continuity plans to minimise the impact of cyber threats.

→ Training and support for staff on how to use tools and technology to make more informed decisions.

6. Digital inclusion

To ensure systems and services are easy to use and accessible and to provide opportunities to increase the digital capability of our service users.

While we live in a digital age, we also know from our research that not all users have either the confidence or skills and many have challenges with connectivity and access to devices. Our research has also highlighted the importance of digital technologies being accessible and easy to use.
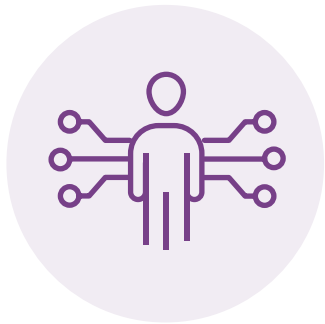
Our focus will be to design and develop easy to navigate and accessible systems with an emphasis on user experience. The SSSC will also play an active role in increasing the digital capabilities of the social service workforce, supplemented by an assisted digital support model.

Current initiatives

→ Simplify the main corporate website to create a one stop shop for all digital services.

→ Enhance the customer portal and website to improve the user experience and help users find what they need.

→ Design our services with accessibility at the core, meeting our obligations under The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

→ The SSSC will have a lead role in increasing the digital capabilities of the social service workforce through the development of additional resources.

→ All digital services and resources will be designed and developed to be mobile responsive.

Future initiatives

→ Enhance the customer portal to improve the user experience and help users find what they need.

→ Design our services with accessibility at the core, meeting our obligations under The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

→ Develop an assisted digital model to support users who lack confidence, capability or have challenges with connectivity or access to suitable devices.

→ The SSSC will have a lead role in increasing the digital capabilities of the social service workforce through the development of additional resources.

→ All digital services and resources will be designed and developed to be mobile responsive.

7. Digital workforce

To ensure our staff have the right skills and capabilities to live and work in a digital world.

Digital and information technologies have become integral to personal and professional life and almost all roles require staff to interact with technology. New technologies are only as effective as the staff trained to use them and it is essential staff have the required digital capabilities to adapt and thrive.

Our focus will be to understand the digital capability of staff and ensure there is a comprehensive training programme to achieve a skills transformation in an ever-changing digital age.

What this means

→ Undertake a digital skills assessment to identify gaps and help form a training needs analysis.

→ Ensure digital training is incorporated into development discussions and personal development plans.

→ Provide training on new and existing technologies ensuring staff are skilled and motivated to deliver services in the digital age.

→ Invest in existing staff to create a long term digital talent pipeline.

→ Ensure Digital Services staff have the capability to support and maintain core digital infrastructure.

7. Delivering and resourcing

For each theme, the key deliverables will be detailed in the annual operational plan to ensure there is budget and resources allocated as required and other elements will be based on business cases and evidence. Resources for these elements will be considered on a case by case basis.

The SSSC will pursue national funding opportunities where available to supplement business cases for any additional requirements that come up during the year, with a focus on return on investment and robust procurement and financial management.

Delivering the key initiatives alongside staff's day-to-day roles will require flexible, cross-departmental working, supported by the Programme Management Office and governed by the Digital Programme Board.

8. Evaluation and measuring impact

How will we know if our digital strategy is working?

We will measure success using a combination of regular analysis of stakeholder feedback, asking people if what we are doing is working and by measuring against the outputs from each theme.

When implementing digital improvements and developments we will create benefits realisation plans and regularly report to our Digital Programme Board, Digital Sponsor and Audit and Assurance Committee.

The SSSC Council are responsible for approving this strategy and they will receive annual reports on the implementation and effectiveness of our digital strategy.

Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Tel: 0345 60 30 891
Email: **enquiries@sssc.uk.com**

If you would like this document in another format,
please contact the SSSC on 0345 60 30 891

We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment on the
grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.