



REGIONE CAMPANIA



# Best Practices in the European Countries

United Kingdom



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## Introduction

The United Kingdom Government has embarked on an ambitious strategy concerning the modernisation of the government with the final aims of creating new opportunities for people to participate in the government's policy process and of ameliorating service delivery by using the Internet.

In particular the UK government is committed to strengthening its connections with citizens, so therefore also in representative democracy, building up confidence in the political process, and producing better policy outcomes.

This paper aims to analyse the latest steps taken by the UK government in this regard and to show how technologies are bringing public administration and citizens closer together by putting citizens at the centre of government.

In 1999 the UK Government launched the white paper *Modernising Government*, which set out a comprehensive programme for the renewal of government.

Its central themes are:

- policy-making - to ensure that policies are strategic, outcome-focused, inclusive, flexible, innovative and robust;
- responsive public services - to deliver public services that are accessible, interlinked and personalised for the benefit of citizens;
- Information-Age Government - to make all public services available electronically, using new technologies to meet the needs of citizens;

Chapter 5 of the *Modernising Government* White Paper sets out the Government's vision for Information Age Government. It gives a commitment to bringing about a fundamental change in the way IT is used. The Prime Minister has set out a clear target that all Government services to the citizen and to business should be available online by 2005.

In order to fulfill the commitment in the *Modernising Government* White Paper and thus to make services available to all on-line, the Government has launched several initiatives, the latest one of which is named "*e-government*" and has four guiding principles:

- building services around citizens' choices
- making government and its services more accessible
- social inclusion
- using information better.

This initiative focuses on better services for citizens and businesses and more effective use of the Government's information resources. The strategy challenges all public sector organizations to innovate, and it challenges the centre of government to provide the common infrastructure that is needed to achieve these goals<sup>1</sup>.

### 1 - e-Government Unit: responsibilities and structure

With the aim of speeding up the process of making 100% of services available on-line by 2005, a new e-Government Unit (eGU) based in the Cabinet Office was set-up in June 2004. The e-

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<sup>1</sup> UK on line annual report 2003, <http://e-government.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

Government Unit takes on most of the work of the Office of the e-Envoy (in charge of developing the e-gov strategy to date).

The change to the e-Government Unit represents a development from the original e-Envoy's task of 'getting the UK online', to ensuring that the government capitalizes on the potential of IT to both transform service delivery and achieve a step change in operational efficiency across the public sector<sup>2</sup>.

The e-Government Unit works with departments to deliver efficiency savings while improving the delivery of public services by joining up electronic government services around the needs of customers.

Specific responsibilities of the e-Government Unit are:

- Strategy - developing policy and planning for ICT within Government and providing an element of programme management for implementation, to support the Government's objectives for public service delivery and administrative efficiency.
- Architecture - providing policy, design, standards, governance, advice and guidance for ICT in Central Government; commissioning Government-wide infrastructure and services; and addressing issues of systems integration with other levels of government (e.g. EU, Devolved and Local).
- Innovation - providing high-level advice to Government bodies on innovative opportunities arising from ICT to improve efficiency.
- IT Finance - in partnership with Office of Government Commerce (OGC), monitoring major IT projects in Government and advising on major investment decisions.
- Projects - undertaking ad hoc policy and strategy studies as necessary to support Ministers, the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Office or the Treasury.
- Research - identifying and communicating key technology trends, opportunities, threats and risks for Government.
- Security - overseeing Government IT security policy, standards, monitoring and assurance, and contingency planning for the critical national infrastructure.
- Information Assurance.
- Supplier management - managing the top-level relationship with strategic suppliers to Government and conducting supplier analysis.

The e-Government Unit is also responsible for leading the work on Directgov the new portal of UK government launched in March 2004 that replaced the old UK on line web site and UK on line interactive.

The e-Government Unit is divided into teams, units and groups entrusted with different tasks:

The e-Government Strategy team

The e-Government Strategy team is responsible for developing central policy and strategic direction for the e-Government programme.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://e-government.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

The team is working with Departments to develop a longer term vision for the e-government programme and public services more generally and how this might be delivered.

### **The e-Economy group**

The e-Economy group provides strategic support to the e-Minister and the e-Government Unit on their broader e-economy responsibilities. The UK government is committed to developing the UK as the best environment for electronic business. The e-Economy group will do this by working with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as internationally. e-Economy looks at the following areas: internet access, modern markets and market analysis.

### **The e-Communications Group**

The e-Communications Group has five main objectives:

- Developing and delivering UK online interactive services across multiple channels;
- Improving information sharing across government by delivering the Knowledge Network infrastructure;
- Spearheading the UK online programme - marketing, branding and campaigning;
- Coordinating joint working to improve the quality of all government websites, promoting best practice and innovation, and developing the professional community of e-communicators

### **The Security and Authentication Unit**

The Security and Authentication area of work covers:

- Enabling trust, authentication and secure transactions across government and the wider economy;
- Providing universal access, by enhancing take-up of, and trust in, electronic services.

Current Activities include: Supporting the Cabinet Office initiatives to introduce the information security standard and providing trust guidance for the eGU strategy of wider Internet access through new technologies and applications.

#### *The e-Delivery team*

The e-Delivery team (eDt) is responsible for the implementation and operation of projects initiated by the e-Government Unit.

Accountable to the e-Government Unit, the team is actually taking forward the Government Gateway, the new portal direct.gov.uk and the DotP (delivery on the promise) initiative.

eDt focuses on delivery and technology innovation and provides the products and services to government departments that will enable the internet to become the primary channel for interaction with government. eDt is developing a common e-government infrastructure to ensure economies of scale benefits to departments, the provision of best of breed technologies and an

increased speed to market for quality government web services, both for departments and end users.

The eGU Local Government Unit has the following roles:

- Participation in the governance of the local gov National Projects Programme (see paragraph 4).
- Co-ordination of eGU representation or liaison with the National Projects and ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister ) over the delivery of local e-government services.
- Point of contact in respect of Local Government issues within the eGU.

## **2 - DIRECTGOV the new UK on-line web site**

Another important step towards achieving the target of all Government services available electronically to the Citizen and Business by 2005 is the creation of a new UK government portal (Directgov). It represents an extremely ambitious project to provide a next generation interface to current and future Governmental information for the UK citizen.

This new electronic service is designed around the needs of the user, making it much easier to find and access government information and services electronically.

The idea behind Directgov is closely related to the Government's proposals for the reform of public services. The service puts the complexity of government firmly behind the scenes, drawing together government resources to address the issues and interests of real people.

Directgov really addresses how people use the internet today and incorporates best practice from the public and private sectors. It has been designed around the needs of the customer and thus is a major step forward in joining-up online government services.

It brings together information from across many Whitehall departments in one place, making it easier for people to find what they want from government, rather than having to search across several departmental sites.

Directgov arranges services according to groups of citizens and categories of service. There is also a quick find section with common online services, an index of agencies and a full search engine.

It includes extensive content for motorists, parents, the disabled and carers together with broader information for other clearly identified customer groups.

It will be expanded over time to include content for other groups including householders, jobseekers and adult learners. As well as government departments, the site links through to relevant third parties which can offer additional trusted advice and support.

To date already 71% of Government services are available online, the priority areas for delivery being: *Dealing with crime, Education, Health, Transport*.

It is also worth noting that the Directgov service has been extended to Digital TV providing government information structured around topics such as learning, health, local information and travel. This topic-based rather than departmental approach ensures users can find information that is relevant to them.

The document Digital Television, DTV, 2003, Policy Framework outlines the Government's vision on how to deliver services and information to the citizens over digital television and encourages departments and local authorities to evaluate the benefits of DTV. Over 45% of UK households now have DTV, and it is becoming clear that government should make effective use of the medium to give citizens the opportunity to communicate with government at a time and place of their choosing<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> www.directgov.gov.uk

- *The Government Gateway website.*

The Government Gateway is the website citizens use to register for online government services. It is an important part of the Government's strategy of delivering joined-up government. The Gateway enables people to communicate and make transactions with many parts of government, from a single point of entry.

*Once one is registered with a Government Gateway User he will be able to:*

- submit forms to government departments for the services for which he has enrolled. He will be able to carry out some services by filling in online forms on government or private company websites.
- enroll for additional services as they become available.
- assign an Agent to act on his behalf for any of the services he has enrolled for.

### **3 - e-Democracy**

In order to take advantage of the new technologies' potential to encourage people to participate in the democratic process on 16 July 2002 the government published *In the Service of Democracy*, outlining a possible policy on e-democracy and asking a number of questions on the issue.

A wide-ranging public consultation, that included an on-line questionnaire and discussion forum, ended on 31 October 2002.

A report on the consultation, entitled "*In the Service of Democracy: Your Response*", along with individual responses, has been posted on the e-Democracy web site.

This was the first step in an ongoing process to understand and develop a policy for e-democracy.

There are three objectives:

- Facilitating participation in the democratic process: making it easier for people to collect public information, follow the political process, discuss and form groups on political issues, scrutinise government and vote in elections.
- Broadening participation by opening up a range of new channels for democratic communication – that may enable involvement from people who in the past may have felt excluded from the democratic process or unable to participate.
- Deepening participation by creating a closer link between citizens and their representatives.

The policy has two tracks:

- e-voting- firstly it is about encouraging people to take part in elections by giving them choices about how they cast their vote, including through the Internet, either at home or at public venues, and by using mobile phones.
- e-participation- it is about getting people to interact with Government, allowing them to raise topics they want discussed, and influencing Government policy, including participating in on-line discussion forum.

*e-Voting*

e-voting programme mainly concerns the Government commitment to the modernisation of the electoral process and aims to hold an e-enabled general election some time after 2006. It is currently promoting an extensive programme of pilots at local elections in order to develop the systems that will need to be in place for an e-enabled general election, and to develop public confidence and familiarity with them. At the 2003 local elections, 17 local authorities took part in the largest test of remote e-voting at any public election so far, using a variety of different channels:

- Internet
- Interactive Digital TV
- Touch-tone telephone
- SMS text messaging
- E-voting kiosks

The systems proved to be popular with many voters. On average, 27% of electors in the pilot areas used one of the electronic channels to cast their vote. The impact on overall turnout was mixed, but on average an increase in turnout of about 5% was reported<sup>4</sup>.

#### *e-Participation*

Behind the e-participation initiative there is the idea that technology should be used to modernise the democratic process and particularly how the public and government communicate<sup>5</sup>. Even if it is still in its infancy, there are already a number of innovative examples of it in practice across central government.

Examples are:

- e-enabled debates on genetically modified (GM) foods, pensions and the future of the EU, which have allowed people to obtain information and discuss issues online;
- the development of online spaces for groups with common interests to exchange information and share good practice, such as Teachernet.
- the initiative of the Scottish Parliament to facilitate the creation of on-line petitions. Citizens can sign, and join an integrated electronic discussion forum on the topic of concern.
- the UK Parliament initiative to allow free and easy access to documents and information. This includes: debates in the Commons and Lords; an explanation of Parliamentary procedures; details of select committees; texts of Bills before Parliament; and House of Commons library research papers.

## **4 – The National Strategy for Local e-Government**

The aim of modernising public services and making them available on line to all citizens also involves local authorities.

A key objective of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Public Service Agreement (PSA) is thus to improve delivery and value for money of local services within a framework of national targets and policies.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> UK on line annual report 2003, <http://e-government.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>;

A White Paper - *Strong Local Leadership: Quality Public Services* - published in December 2001 set out a vision for local services at the beginning of the 21st century, based on a partnership between central and local government. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) then published a consultation paper in April 2002 - *e-gov@local: Towards a national strategy for local e-government* - that set out a framework for delivering local e-government and sought to promote debate by requesting comments about the delivery of public services.

Between June 2001 and June 2002, the ODPM funded 25 Local Government Online (LGOL) Pathfinder projects, with the aim of exploring and developing new ways of implementing e-government.

The Pathfinder partnerships involved 110 local authorities and many public and private sector partners. Throughout the year Pathfinders have developed generic solutions for a variety of technical, policy and management issues surrounding the implementation of e-government.

This led to the publication in November 2002 of a new *National Strategy for Local e-Government*.

The *National Strategy* sets out a common framework, within which local strategies can be planned with confidence, describes what needs to be put in place nationally to help this happen, and identifies common priorities for developments in technology and services to reduce the costs to councils.

The *National Strategy* key areas are:

- support for individual councils
- support for national projects
- support for partnerships

It is also supported by a website [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk), offering resource packs and advice to the local government community, in addition to information relating to implementation of the strategy.

The site provides the tools with which local authorities can develop and build their own e-strategy. It aims at helping councils understand the whole picture of local e-government, analyse their current position and build future strategy by providing a “building blocks” model that comprises a successful e-enabled organisation .

These blocks are organised into six themes:

- People
- Enablers
- Trust & connections
- Core systems
- Access channels
- Interactions

These blocks cover not only the key technologies necessary, but also the ways in which councils and citizens or customers interact and the issues to consider if they are to lead and manage the changes they have to make to exploit e-government to the full.

Taken together, they can help councils to think through the whole process of planning, designing and building their local e-government organisation.

The Localgov website contains details of all the *National Projects*, Partnerships and Pathfinders as well as Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) and e-innovation information.

It was also rated the top website in the recent Central Government Websites report.

Another website **Info4local.gov.uk** provides the first one-stop portal for local authorities to get quick and easy access to information they need on the web sites of central government departments, agencies and public bodies. It is run by a group of six departments, led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. More than 50 departments and agencies add data to info4local. It is run by a group of six departments:

#### *National Projects*

The localgov programme has established a number of national projects that aim to deliver products, guidance, standards and take-up strategies for Local Authorities by December 2004. These national projects assist Local Authorities in making real progress towards getting services online for 2005.

The programme aims at ensuring that all councils have access to key electronic services and building blocks, without having to build them from scratch.

*National Projects* are run for, and by local government, based on practitioners' knowledge of what councils need.

Since publication of the *National Strategy* 23 National Projects have been established, over 100 councils are involved on National Project Boards, and over 300 have attended one or more National Project events.

The projects have pulled together councils, central government, the private sector and others to define and deliver national solutions..

These will help drive progress in local government, in key Government departments and in the wider UK Online programme by addressing two strands:

- Priority services , providing ways in which joint central-local electronic services can make concrete contributions to delivering the seven priority services areas identified by the Central Local Partnership;
- Essential technical building blocks of the e-organisation and the national communications infrastructure.

Examples of Approved National Projects to date are:

- Schools Admissions
- Customer relations management
- Local Planning Service
- e.Procurement
- Digital TV
- Council Tax and Business Rate Valuation
- Local Authority Websites
- e-Democracy
- Take Up & Marketing
- Revenue Collection and Online Payments

Details of the projects can be found via [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk).

#### *Partnerships*

The development and support of Partnerships is a key strand in the National Strategy. Partnerships are intended to build capacity at a local level. They also deliver linked solutions cost effectively. They complement support to individual councils and the support for generic solutions through National Projects.

Proposals for the first year of Partnerships were sought in January 2002. Over 100 were created so 99% of local authority are now part of at least one e-government Partnership.

### **Implementing Electronic Government Statements (IEGs)**

Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statements are corporate plans which set out how local councils are approaching the task of e-enabling service delivery. To date, the IEG process has been extremely successful in engaging councils and in promoting a corporate approach to tackling e-government. At the national level, the IEG process also provides a valuable source of information from which the Government can monitor progress in implementing local e-government.

Round 1 of IEG statements in 2001 required councils to set out their plans for implementing e-government. Round 2 of IEG statements (IEG2) in 2002 emphasised the need for councils to provide evidence of progress in taking the e-government agenda forward and to demonstrate realistic plans of action and expenditure to meet the 2005 target. Round 3 of the IEG process (IEG3) simplified the submission process through the introduction of a standardised proforma format. IEG3 emphasised the opportunity for self-assessment, benchmarking and measuring progress on key factors, including working towards the delivery of key technical building blocks and priority services through National Projects and partnership working.

#### *e-Innovations*

Local e-Government Minister launched on 16 September 2003 a new financial support for e-Innovation in local councils.

This new support will complement the work of individual councils, Pathfinders, National Projects and Partnerships that are already being carried out under the Programme.

The first round of support for e-innovations will be targeting the following four themes:

- **E-Learning**  
This theme includes the internal sharing of information and good practices, staff development and better use of e-government to assist service transformation.
- **Bridging the Digital Divide**  
This includes using e-government in ways that help services to reach those socially excluded and in particular addressing the concern that e-government might lead to some people being further isolated from the support and services they need.
- **Emergent technology for better government** Innovative use of ICT to improve services.
- **Local authority e-business**, better use of ICT to improve internal business in councils, including service planning and performance management<sup>6</sup>.

### **Conclusions**

The significant initiatives undertaken by the UK Government illustrated in the pages above reflect its strong commitment to take advantage of the opportunities that IT offers to modernise the

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<sup>6</sup> Defining E-Government Outcomes For 2005 To Support The Delivery Of Priority Services & National Strategy Transformation Agenda For Local Authorities In England, [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk) ; Research Summary: Local e-Government, [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk) ;

delivery of public service and to improve the relationship with citizens by fostering their participation in the government 's policy process.

The creation of a new government unit entrusted with the developing of the e-government process, as well as the creation of a new UK government portal really give the idea of how important it is for the Government to deliver the promise of making all services available on line by 2005. The results achieved to date (71% of services already available on-line) also show that the programme is proceeding at a good path.

With regard to The National Strategy for Local e-Government the *National Strategy* first Year Report "One Year On" published On 16 December 2003, show that good progress is being made toward reaching the 2005 target. All Local Authorities now have websites and the Average Council now<sup>7</sup>:

- Has 60% of services online and expects to get to 100% by 2005;
- Has submitted its IEG3 return including corporate e-Government commitments;
- Is working towards a single public access telephone contact centre;
- Is developing Customer Relationship Management to handle transactions across multiple channels;
- Is working toward e-procurement and other e-business solutions;
- Is engaged with National Project programme;
- Is part of local e-government partnership;
- Is concerned about capacity and resources.

Of particular interest are also the two initiatives linked to the development and definition of an e-democracy policy that are moving their first steps (e-voting and e-participation).

The idea of increasing the turnout of elections by using the electronic channels brought to the realization of the largest test of remote e-voting at any public election so far. If e-voting proves to be effective in increasing the turnout it will represent a relevant step toward the strengthening of representative democracy. The same could be said for the e-participation initiative, which is expected to involve citizens in the democratic process, allowing them to consult with Government and Parliament.

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<sup>7</sup> One Year One, The National Strategy for Local e-Government, December 2003, [www.localgov.gov.uk](http://www.localgov.gov.uk);

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