



**W**e have seen in Briefing 2 that it is not a straightforward task to get the user experience right. There are many pitfalls that can quickly lead to problems and a poor online experience.

As it requires much effort to get the user experience just right, it becomes very easy to neglect the need to promote self-service. However, you cannot assume that, just because the online facility is there and works, people will use it. Experience over the past ten years shows that it is important to invest time, resources and a little money to promote online information and services to potential audiences who are not yet used to going online for social care.

### **What approach for promoting online social care should you take for ensuring the greatest take-up?**

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# 1. THE DEVELOPING ONLINE WORLD

A very useful starting point for understanding the context of current online usage is this infographic produced by the [Tinder Foundation](#), a not-for-profit social enterprise that promotes digital inclusion.

## THE DIGITAL NATION

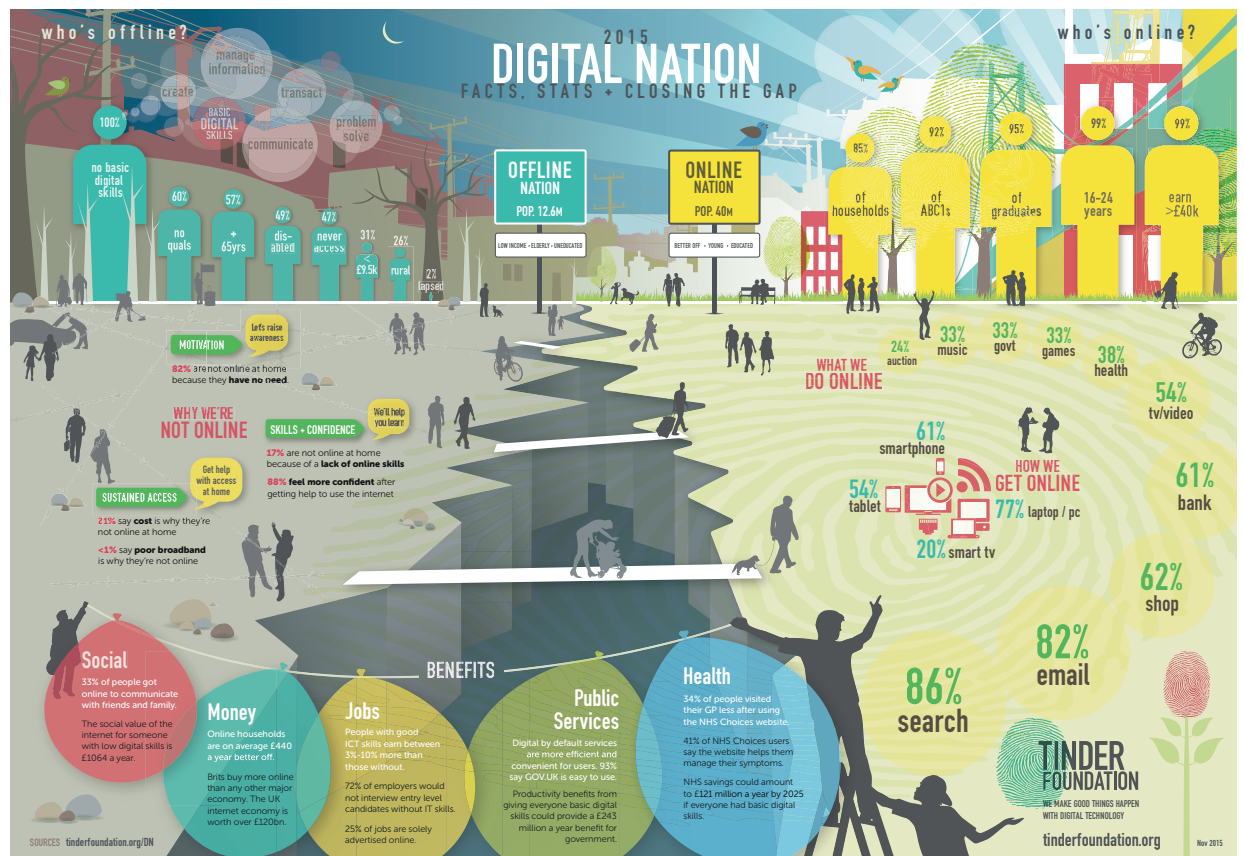
This picture of the digital nation captures well the complexities of the digital divide in comparing the online world with the offline world. The 'online nation' summarises the profile of online users, what they do online and what devices they use. This contrasts with the profile of offline users and the reasons why they are offline.

Those who do not go online are likely to be older, poorer, less well educated, more severely disabled and living in rural isolation. They may not go online for one of three broad reasons:

- they lack the skills and competence
- they lack the physical broadband access
- they see no need to go online.

In the foreground the picture summarises the benefits of going online in a number of categories:

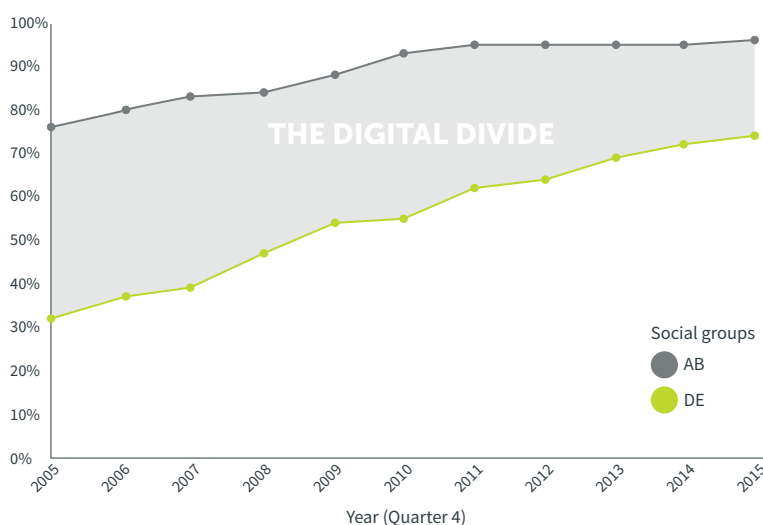
- social benefits of keeping in touch with friends and family
- financial benefits of buying goods and services online
- employment benefits in being able to secure higher paid jobs with IT skills
- public service benefits of accessing information and services online
- health benefits of managing medical conditions online.



## THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide is often at the heart of the debate about online social care. Most clients are elderly and unlikely to take to self-service and it is unrealistic to expect this to change, runs the argument.

One very important counter to this is the impact of gradual changes in behaviour. At its simplest this argument sees the digital divide narrowing over time. Socitm has monitored this trend by using the Ipsos Mori Technology Tracker



**Chart 1** Digital divide (2005 to 2015)

Here, we see the gap narrowing between those in social grade AB (relatively high web usage) and those in grade DE (relatively low web usage). In 2005 the gap was 44 percentage points; ten years later this is halved to 22 percentage points.

This narrowing of the gap is driven by the increasing availability of cheaper, better and easier-to-use devices. According to industry-watcher ZenithMedia, 3.5% of people owned tablets in 2010; by 2015 this had increased to 51% and by 2018 is likely to reach 65%.

## PROFILE OF SOCIAL CARE VISITS

If we move closer to home within local government, Socitm's [Website performance service](#) showed that 17% of all visitors to council websites were aged 60 or over. By 2015 this had nearly doubled to 33%. No doubt, one factor is just the natural impact of people growing older. Those 50 'somethings' in 2010 who were comfortable in using the web are now 60 and older and moving gradually towards the time when they might be more interested in social care on their own account and on the account of those older than themselves for whom they now care.

For November 2015 Socitm provides the profile of visits to council websites, set out in the chart below. It shows that on average there are just over 7,800 monthly visits to county council websites for social care, just under 3,900 for London boroughs, just under 5,800 for metropolitan districts and just over 2,800 for unitaries. In England this gives an estimated total of more than 706,000 monthly visits for social care. This ignores visits made to standalone sites and a host of third party information sources in search of social care information and services that might not be hosted on corporate council websites. It also ignores use of a rapidly growing number of mobile apps.

	AVERAGE VISITS	% FOR SOCIAL CARE	AVERAGE SOCIAL CARE VISITS
COUNTY COUNCIL	155,769	5.01%	7,804
LONDON BOROUGH	183,606	2.12%	3,892
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	207,050	2.80%	5,797
UNITARY	115,323	2.45%	2,825

**Chart 2** Visits to council websites (November 2015)

## IMPACT OF INTERMEDIARIES

Another important factor to take into account is the point that social care clients who are too frail to go online themselves are very likely to be cared for by a range of intermediaries of family, friends, professionals and carers. These are often the ones who will be going online on behalf of the client. The Tinder Foundation produced a report about carers in December 2015. Entitled [\*The Health and Wellbeing of Unpaid Carers: Where Can Digital Skills and Community Support Add Value?\*](#), it found that carers are benefiting from digital technology and local support. Of those carers surveyed:

- 81% shop online
- 74% keep in touch with friends and family online
- 69% bank online
- 92% use the internet several times a day or daily.

## IMPACT OF NEW POLICIES

One final factor to note is the impact of new policies on digital delivery. In particular, changes within the NHS cannot be ignored. Martha Lane Fox was instrumental in changing round central government policy by a report that led directly to the creation of the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the GOV.UK award-winning website in 2012. In 2015 the new government tasked her to advise on the NHS. In December 2015 she published an initial report that made these proposals:

- *making sure those with most health and social care needs, often least likely to be online, are included first in any new digital tools being used across NHS*
- *free wi-fi in every NHS building*
- *building basic digital skills of NHS workforce to ensure that everyone has digital skills needed to support people's health needs*
- *at least 10% of registered patients in each GP practice should be using digital services, eg online appointment booking, repeat prescriptions and access to records by 2017.*

In summary, there is a need to build up a local profile of current usage as a baseline for measuring take-up. Such a baseline should include:

- **monthly visits for online social care (an annual profile is very useful in establishing seasonal trends)**
- **profile of types of visitor (clients and a range of intermediaries such as family, friends and other carers)**
- **age profile of visitor**
- **completed offline and online transactions by type (eg information and advice, needs assessment, financial assessment).**

A web visit exit survey such as [\*Socitm's Website performance service\*](#) is a very useful tool for capturing such baseline information.

## 2. NEED FOR MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

In Briefing 2 we stressed the importance of having a web performance framework that helps you measure success and failure. This should start with usage based on numbers of visits and reasons why people visit social care pages. Is the website achieving the visits anticipated? Is channel shift from traditional phone and face-to-face services being achieved? This also means having basic data about offline enquiries and transactions for comparison.

There are many ways of promoting online take-up. Some will be more successful than others. This might just be a question of getting the timing right as well as any inherent advantages or disadvantages of the method. It is critical to have the statistics at one's fingertips to know what has worked and how well. Only by knowing this can you repeat success and avoid repeating failure.

As part of the preparation to this series of briefings we carried out a survey of councils into various aspects of online social care. We asked whether the council's online usage had increased in the past 12 months. Predictably most reported an increase. The most interesting finding related to whether or not they knew there had been an increase. Just less than half reported that they did not know.



Chart 3 Take-up on the increase?

We asked a different question about the average number of web visits per month in 2015 for each of up to eight application areas. Here are the answers to the two most important areas.



Chart 4a Social care web visits (corporate site)



Chart 4b Social care web visits (dedicated site)

The 'Not known' figure, particularly from the second of this pair of charts, are of real concern. Having access to information about any dedicated social care site should be readily available within social care, unlike the corporate website which might be less accessible for information about web visits.

These findings back up anecdotal evidence from workshops and from talking with councils as part of the research for this briefing. They are symptomatic of a lack of priority into understanding and increasing online take-up.

**The first requirement, then, is to have a set of relevant figures, ideally a regularly updated dashboard that will monitor the success of take-up initiatives. Such a framework should allow web teams to notice the spikes of activity that follow specific actions to promote the service (eg the use of Facebook groups) so that the effectiveness of those actions can be compared with different actions (eg use of Twitter feeds).**

This is also the stepping stone to the next requirement for customer insight.

# 3. NEED FOR CUSTOMER INSIGHT

## CUSTOMER PROFILE

By using data collected by Socitm's [Website performance service](#) we are able to provide some useful insight into who accesses online social care and what prompts them.

The starting point is to identify first-time visitors from regular visitors, because promotional campaigns need to understand what prompts that first visit. Our visitor feedback survey asks respondents about the frequency of visiting the council website and found the following proportions of first-time visitors in nearly 5,000 responses over October to December 2015.



Chart 5 First-time visitors (Quarter 4, 2015)

This chart shows that the percentage of first-time visitors is much higher for those who visit social care services compared with those who visit all other council services. This is not surprising, given current activity in developing online social care facilities and the relative immaturity of that 'market' compared with other local public services.

What can we find out about these first-time visitors? Again the *Website performance service* provides some useful insights. Firstly, we ask about gender and age.

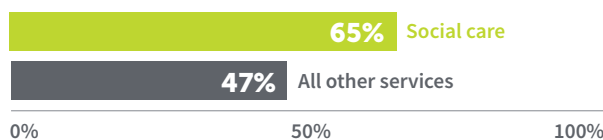


Chart 6 First-time visitors by gender - female

Not surprisingly, the analysis shows that nearly two-thirds of social care visitors are female compared with less than half for all other services. Intermediaries such as carers are more likely to be female.

On the other hand, the analysis of age shows a much more surprising outcome.

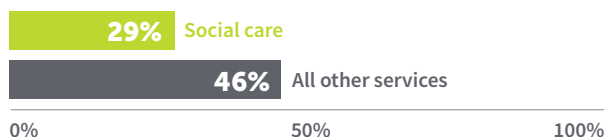


Chart 7 First-time visitors by age - 60 or over

Here we can see that the percentage of social care visitors who are 60 or over is significantly lower than for all other local services. Only 29% of social care visitors are 60 or over compared with 46% of visitors for other services. This is quite surprising in view of the generally-held view that social care visitors are likely to be mostly elderly, and by implication less likely to go online.

A likely explanation for this comes from answers to two related questions, analysed next. We ask visitors to indicate if they are looking for information related to somebody else. The next chart reveals the replies. First-time visitors to online social care are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be intermediaries than for any other service.



Chart 8 First-time visitors who are intermediaries

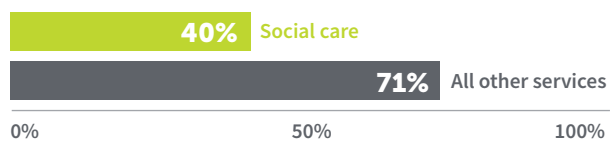
The second question asks if respondents are looking for information related to their work. First-time visitors to online social care are nearly twice as likely as any other service to be what might be called professionals, enquiring on behalf of their work.



Chart 9 First-time visitors who are professionals

If we take the two questions together, this suggests that many intermediaries for social care are in fact professionals.

Just to complete this series of questions, we also ask if respondents are looking for information for themselves, as opposed to working on behalf of others or as part of their own work. The next chart summarises the answers.



**Chart 10** First-time visitors looking for themselves

The percentage of first-time social care visitors, looking for information for themselves, is significantly lower than for all other services and is clearly explained by the increase in the percentage who are intermediaries and professionals. However, the percentage of those who are looking for information on behalf of themselves, at 40%, remains a significant group.

In short, there will be significantly more first-time visitors for social care than other services. They are much more likely to be female and, surprisingly, younger than for other services. They are much more likely to be intermediaries (eg family, friends) and more likely to be professionals asking for information as a result of their work.

This kind of insight into first-time visitors is helpful in two ways:

- It helps to visualise the characteristics of those likely to be turned into online users from being offline.
- It also helps to deal with employees, in providing hard evidence that can be used to deal with doubters. They might be overstating the barriers to self-service by following hunches and ‘gut feel’ that can undermine plans for going online.



## CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

Socitm's [Website performance service](#) also provides useful insights into user behaviour. It asks respondents the question: 'How did you find out about the website?' Those who say they are first-time visitors give the following answers:

SOURCE OF VISIT	SOCIAL CARE	OTHER SERVICES	COMMENTS
Search engine result eg Google, Yahoo	58%	49%	By far the biggest source for all services. It is critical to ensure that search from internet direct to task works.
Someone at the council told me	8%	3%	Role of council employee nearly three times more important for social care.
Friends/family told me	6%	5%	Other word of mouth important but little difference for social care.
Guessed the website address	4%	4%	
Link from GOV.UK	3%	4%	Less likely for social care first-time visitors to come from GOV.UK.
Link from another website	3%	5%	Less likely for social care first-time visitors to come from another sites.
Forms and leaflets	2%	8%	First-time social care visitors much less likely to be influenced by forms and leaflets, but this may be because councils have not yet produced many.
Other council advertising	2%	2%	
Already knew site from previous visit	2%	4%	
I work for the council	1%	1%	
Through my local library	0%	2%	
Unsure	2%	2%	
Other - please specify	8%	13%	

**Chart 11** First-time visitors by source of visit

The findings from this question are of great interest in that by far the most important source is the internet itself. Across all services (and social care a little more so than others), first-time visitors are already online when they come across council websites. This makes it a clear number one priority to ensure that search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing take people direct to the right place with terms that the customer will use, rather than the organisation might use.

A recent example with one large county council shows some significant variation in results when you investigate how high up in the search results the right item appears.

SEARCH TERM	GOOGLE	BING	COUNCIL SITE
<i>Help for carers</i>	Item 3	Item 9	Not found
<i>Respite care</i>	Item 2 and not same page as above	Item 19 (second page)	Found
<i>Break for carers</i>	Item 3	Item 9	Only for dementia carers

**Chart 12** First-time visitors using search

The right answer is found on a dedicated social care site (MyChoiceMyCare) and not on the council site. However, the first time visitor will not even know that such a site exists. Using Google she (much more likely than he) will probably find out if she realises that the title **Carers Assessments – XXXXXXXshire Adult Social care** and the MyChoiceMyCare address underneath is pointing to the site she needs. Here XXXXXXXshire relates to the county, but not explicitly to the county council. The search results point to a plethora of other sites which do not fit the bill when clicked, but the right answer in such a list is not crystal clear. If the first-time visitor uses Bing, then in two cases the right result comes up as number nine, which is well down the list and may well be ignored; in the third case it comes up as number 19 and on the second page of results, which few people will visit. If the visitor thinks that she should go on the county council site (and this is around a 40% likelihood from these figures), she will really struggle to find the right page from the home page and may well use the site search, in which case she will succeed in one case but fail in two cases.

There are always two variables – the search term and the search engine. Here the council has introduced a third variable which muddies the water by having a separate social care site with a name that might not resonate as a council service.

Overall, although far from disastrous, this is not a good enough experience for first-time visitors when you think of the percentage of people who will not find the right information quickly. This might have the effect of preventing a significant minority from finding the information. The irony is that, if the visitor overcomes these hurdles, the information about respite care is good and relevant.

## 4. NEED FOR DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

### CORPORATE CULTURE

Another prerequisite for successful promotion of online services is corporate support for self-service. There is little point in promoting an online service if all the messages 'on the ground' reveal that offline operations are still ingrained in the council. The most effective way of changing any such views is to articulate a set of digital principles that now drive the way that the council does business.

As a service that is generally behind most other council services in committing to self-service, wherever appropriate, social care might have to change its culture to embrace this new approach. Other services in the council that are more advanced might be able to help by passing on the lessons that they learnt in embedding use of self-service.

There are two points often made by employees in social care that can quickly become barriers to changing the culture.

Firstly, social care, it is claimed, is a much more complicated service than services such as rubbish collection or parking permits that have already embraced digital working. The counter to this is to acknowledge that parts of social care are indeed more complicated, being dependent on building relationships between the client and the social worker. However, this is not a reason for avoiding the potential for putting a large number of simpler tasks online.

Secondly, it is claimed that typical social care clients prefer face-to-face or the phone and just will not go online. Again, there is a grain of truth in this for some clients, but it ignores the kind of points that we have already made, eg that intermediaries who are much more likely to go online will be the main customers for self-service.

**Using a set of digital principles to drive channel shift, and at the same time improve the service helps to overcome some of these points.**



## CASE STUDY

### HAVERING'S DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

Here is an example of the kind of checklist that you might use, that is currently being applied by Havering Council. It indicates the importance of consistency, the positive encouragement of online solutions and the active discouragement of offline alternatives.

#### WHERE A SERVICE IS ALREADY AVAILABLE ONLINE:

- Promote this in all communications.
- Remove other channels from all communications in order to direct as much traffic as possible to the online channel:
  - **DO NOT** publish telephone numbers.
  - **DO NOT** publish email addresses. Use online forms that capture structured data instead. The web content team can do this.
  - **DO NOT** generate postal contact by requesting letters or other papers to be sent to the council. If forms need to be completed, create online forms. The web content team can do this.
  - **DO NOT** request payment by cheque. Postal contact and cheque payments are the least efficient method of taking payments.
- If the online offer is a form that generates an email which is then manually handled internally, consider:
  - whether automating this would deliver savings
  - automating the form in order to save time and effort.

#### WHERE A SERVICE IS NOT YET AVAILABLE ONLINE:

- Consider whether a form could be available online to capture initial contact details. The web content team can do this.
- If the service is not appropriate for an online form:
  - Only publish one telephone number.
  - Do not publish an email address. Unstructured emails generate follow-up contact and are inefficient.
  - Publish and maintain all information about the service on the website.

#### WHERE A NEW SERVICE IS BEING CONSIDERED:

- Approach the new service on the basis of Digital by Default.
- Design the service for digital consumption from the outset.
- Avoid the use of any other channels if possible. Make it online only.
  - Those that do not have their own access to technology can use ours in libraries and the Public Advice and Services Centre (PASC) where they can get help and support.
  - Those that do not know how to use technology can get support from friends, family and neighbours, or in our libraries and the PASC.

#### FOR ALL SERVICES:

- Is the service available online? If not, why not?
- Are cheque payments involved in the process?
- If so, put a plan in place to remove cheque payments.
- Is there any paper involved in the process?
- If so, put a plan in place to remove all paper.
- Is there an email address published for the service?
- If so, put a plan in place to replace it with an online form.
- Is the technology integrated so that the customer can be automatically notified of updates and outcomes?
- If not, put a plan in place to assess the benefits of doing so and submit a bid for funding to integrate it.

#### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING AND PROMOTING DIGITAL PRINCIPLES?

- You are!
- From senior management to front-line staff.
- This forms part of the council's strategy.
- Everyone must work together to Do Digital.

#### WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Digital provides the opportunity to deliver better service for less. Use Digital to:

- Make savings.
- Improve efficiency.
- Improve communications to customers.
- Remove or reduce the drudgery of manual administration.
- Do things faster.

## 5. IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

All those we spoke with in the research for this briefing stressed the importance of engaging all employees involved in the delivery of social care services:

- It was a core activity in the Kirklees promotional campaign for self-service.
- Employee engagement is working well in the planning for work at Liverpool City Council.
- The Hertfordshire *Enabling the Worker* programme focused on the digital know-how of its workforce so that employees can then develop into digital champions.
- Croydon is committing to the concept of digital champions throughout the workforce.
- Engaging with employees has also provided momentum to achieve high levels of take-up of [My Newham](#).

The key point is that employees must understand how the online system works so that they can help those they deal with use the same facilities. This can be achieved by full training sessions or less detailed awareness sessions, depending on the roles of the people involved.

Employees are the best advocates of the change for a number of reasons:

- Many will deal directly with the customers, whether clients or carers, and so are ideally placed to influence them positively.
- If they are happy with the change, then this will transmit to customers.
- They will create the expectation that the council now wants people to go online wherever possible.
- As likely residents in the council area, (eg in Havering 70% of employees are also residents), they can also be powerful champions by word of mouth with family, friends, neighbours, etc.

The converse is also important to recognise. If employees are unhappy or negative about the change, they can quickly subvert the change and become a major barrier to its success.

## PLANNING FOR CHANGE AT LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL

Engaging employees who are involved in the delivery of social care information and services is all-important. At Liverpool City Council there is a specialist team called Careline, that provides the first line of contact for children, adult social care and the homeless who need help and support. This team has around 110 customer advisors and social workers.

The Careline service is the front door for Adult Social Care and Health, acting as a central point of contact for referrals and enquiries 24 x 7 every day of the year. Careline handles each year 180,000 calls, and 2,000 electronic contacts, and generates over 26,000 referrals. It operates a fully integrated social work cover including the out-of-hours service that responds to all adult social care emergencies.

In the summer of 2015 the team attended a series of awareness-raising sessions aimed at enhancing their knowledge of the [LiveWell Liverpool site](#), a directory of the city's resources that can be used to search for information and explore options for care and support as well as social activities and clubs.

The exercise was well-received, providing Careline with a useful tool to help them signpost to services where appropriate to help improve the quality of life of the Liverpool residents. Customer service advisors are able to search on behalf of the individual and also encourage greater use of self-service.

As there are seasonal peaks in demand for the Careline service, there may be times when customers have to wait to speak to a customer service advisor. As a result, the automated message also signposts people to LiveWell to look for information themselves. Helping customer service advisors to find information more quickly and also encouraging channel shift are both ways of improving customer service.

## SOME ARGUMENTS FOR GOING ONLINE AT NEWHAM COUNCIL

It is well worthwhile having arguments that people can use in communicating with residents about the benefits of going online. Here is an example used by Havering and Newham Councils in their campaigns to persuade colleagues. **The key message is that there are strong social and economic benefits for people who are not currently online to go online.**

### ACCORDING TO THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL STATISTICS (ONS):

- Not having an internet connection is costing consumers more than £3bn a year.
- Internet users could make 8-10% savings for food and clothing, which amongst the poorest, accounts for 40% of their total expenditure. This means that the poorest non-users could be saving 5% of their income.
- The average non-user is currently losing £260 per year.
- This represents 2.6% of the average income for the poorest people, who are most affected.

### THE COST OF NOT BEING ONLINE

- If just 3.5% of people offline and unemployed in social housing found a job by getting online, it would deliver a net economic benefit of £217m.
- If just 3.5% of people offline and in work got online and developed their ICT skills, it would deliver around £750m of overall economic benefit.
- More than 70% of UK employers are unlikely to offer an interview to a candidate who doesn't have basic computer or internet skills.
- On average, children with internet access attain one grade higher than children without internet access.
- Of the 65+ age group, 81% say computer literacy makes them feel part of modern society.

## 6. RANGE OF PROMOTIONAL CHOICES

There is a range of options available for promoting take-up, from simple online 'nudging' with the right phrase to the execution of traditional marketing campaigns.

As a starting point it is worth thinking about the classic marketing mix of the four Ps – product, price, promotion and place. When applied to a digital service, these need broad interpretation along the lines suggested below.

MARKETING CHARACTERISTIC	INTERPRETATION FOR DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICE
PRODUCT	The digital service must meet a user need and work easily for the customer, or else as a product it is not worth promoting.
Further Information	Briefing 2 in this series
PRICE	In the context of a public service there is unlikely to be a price for the product as defined above, but there is a clear benefit. In effect the price should be the convenience of the customer (eg client or carer). As such, it should also be cheaper for the customer than making a phone call, or a face-to-face visit.
Further Information	See PROMOTION OF BENEFITS, opposite.
PROMOTION	There is a variety of promotional methods to consider.
Further Information	See next page for CHOICE OF METHODS for offline and online options
PLACE	Promotions can be offline and online. It is more important to consider the reach of the promotion in terms of where the target audience is likely to be, rather than in relation to sheer numbers.
Further Information	See next page for USE OF PLACE for offline and online choices.

Table 1 The marketing mix for online promotion of public services

### PROMOTION OF BENEFITS

When planning a promotional initiative, you need to consider the message and the benefits to the customer. For a large number of simple tasks (eg finding information), the key benefit is likely to be the convenience of doing the task at a time that suits the customer, eg often outside working hours, and the much quicker completion of the task. Other benefits are likely to include greater accuracy (eg fewer errors in form-filling), greater likelihood of up-to-date information and creation of an audit trail.

It is important to remind website visitors of these benefits at every opportunity. For example, on the Liverpool City website, under 'Contact us', the link to 'Careline adults and older people' contains the very prominent reminder **Remember it costs less if you contact us online**. Messages such as this at the point when web visitors may require just a little persuasion to nudge them to go online help to create the expectation that in this council things are increasingly done online.

Similarly, the City of Edinburgh has the message [Save time. Do it online:](#) as part of the top navigational bar on every page of its website.

It is also important to avoid putting off people by promoting the benefits in the wrong way, as illustrated by this insight from a survey of potential applicants of social care.

*Many would have preferred a shorter, less 'glossy' booklet, which simply spelled out the options and contact information for those looking for care in the future.*

*Younger participants found that the booklet was too idealistic – even sales-oriented – in its depiction of care.*

Source: piece of research for one county council by Ipsos Mori in 2014

## CHOICE OF METHODS

Promotional methods should communicate the expectation at every opportunity, offline and online, that, as much as possible, information and services should be based on self-service.

It is important to consider every place, offline and online, where clients and carers might appear and to have an appropriate method for exploiting that opportunity.

- Leaflets should be available in all public places (eg one-stop shops, customer service centres, libraries, community centres, GP surgeries, care providers, hospitals, opticians, pharmacies, dentists). These do not need to be very detailed, but merely point out the benefits of going online and provide the right links.
- In core venues (eg customer service centres, GP surgeries) leaflets might be supplemented by electronic displays (eg large scale plasma screens). The impression should be created that going online is now the recommended way of finding information and services about social care.
- Advertisements might be considered on billboards, at bus stops or on council vehicles.
- QR codes might be used on appropriate physical media.
- Hospital and/or local radio might also have a useful role to play.
- Recorded messages on phone lines (eg when busy or out-of-hours) should remind callers that the website might provide the information they need more quickly than waiting for the line to become clear or the lines to be open.
- Increasingly, social media (eg Twitter and Facebook) can be used to promote online services (always remembering that intermediaries in particular might be regular users).
- At all points 'word of mouth' contacts should be actively encouraged. We have already stressed the value of employee engagement, but there may be many other ways of spreading the message by 'word of mouth' (eg by short presentations to stakeholders for adult social care such as clinical commissioning groups, care providers and other health agencies).

## USE OF PLACE

The most suitable places for promoting online social care are where potential clients and carers are likely to be found. This should, of course, include council premises (eg service centres, one-stop shops, libraries) where they are likely to visit. But they should also include GP surgeries and walk-in centres, which are particularly useful places, because clients and carers are likely to spend several minutes, at least, sitting waiting for appointments. Other locations might include care homes and places delivering social care.

## WIDER REACH OF ONLINE SERVICES IN LIVERPOOL

Working in partnership with other local services enables a wider reach for your customers. The Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) holds annual events for GPs where they are provided with updated information about the local health and social care services that their patients might use. They use a system called Refer and Learn for You (RALFY) which has been developed as a resource for GPs. Now, as a result of a collaboration between the CCG and Adult Social Care, the directory part of RALFY is populated by LiveWell and includes health, social care and information about activities and events that support well-being. This has widened the reach and use of the council's online directory. The LiveWell directory is also used to populate the directory of the Wellbeing Liverpool website which is a resource focused on mental health.

The council has also encouraged colleagues from other areas to contribute their information to LiveWell, rather than develop their own directories.

Finally, there are also plans for LiveWell Liverpool to become part of the a wider Liverpool City Region and provide a shared resource across a number of councils, having the potential to extend the information across Merseyside.



## CASE STUDY

### MANAGING A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN AT KIRKLEES COUNCIL

Kirklees Council was a founder member of the regional collaboration of 15 councils that built *Connect to Support*, one of the earliest e-marketplaces where people can safely access the support they need, by visiting an online shop, to view care services, leisure services and other activities that promote health and well-being.

Early on, the council recognised the need to mount a marketing and communications campaign as part of the overall project for implementing the system. It ran the public campaign in 2013 in two four-weekly phases, in March and then in December, each phase being completed with a formal evaluation report. The council has a marketing and communications campaign managed by a fully qualified marketing professional. She believed that it was vital to target and reach the people who currently did not go online.

It is important to stress that the council is committed very firmly to a set of policies that promote the need for early help and prevention and that maximise personal independence. Self-service as a principle fits comfortably with these values. It is interesting that the marketing team is currently committed to the concept of social marketing to find out more about the attitudes and behaviours of the target group for the Care Act towards planning and paying for their care costs.

The 2013 campaign covered a variety of approaches to achieve this objective, including:

- running well-attended free drop-in sessions at 13 libraries and customer service centres over the four weeks (no need to book) to learn what to do to go online
- using 'floor walkers' at its two main customer service centres
- contacting 4,200 carers by text about the new online service

- targeting people holding the Kirklees Passport, which is a council-run discount scheme for many different activities and services, available to residents who receive benefits or are disabled or full-time students
- sending leaflets to people who need help with their wheelie bins every week (and so might need social care and support)
- using various Facebook groups and Twitter feeds to promote the service
- providing articles in council-led newsletters (eg Neighbourhood Housing).

As far as possible each activity was measured by actions resulting from the activity. The advantage of a two-phased approach is that lessons can be learnt from the first for the second. For example, the team found that the most popular Facebook advert space unit (ASU) related to '*independent living*', the use of which was expanded in the second phase.

A vital part of the campaign was to engage with employees and partners. The marketing team ran a big event for employees (around 180) involved in the delivery of health and social care so that they could see the new services at first-hand.

The total external costs for both phases for marketing and communications, including events, film clips, 'above the line' media, direct mail and print was approximately £20k.

**The measure of any such campaign overall is the increase in take-up. By the end of 2013 the take-up on the *Connect to Support* website came to 30% of the total for the whole consortium of 15 councils, significantly more than the other participating councils who, it is believed, at the time had not undertaken such a campaign.**



## 7. SCOPE OF ASSISTED DIGITAL SCHEMES

### CONCEPT OF ASSISTED DIGITAL

Although the numbers of older people going online is creeping upwards, as we have shown, the reality is that there is a significant percentage of people who cannot or do not go online because of lack of skill, access or inclination. It is important for reasons of equality, fairness and pragmatism to help those who might struggle. The Government Digital Service (GDS) has adopted the phrase 'assisted digital' to describe the support required for people who cannot use online government services independently, in ways which will ensure that they can access and complete those services online.

The [GDS manual for departments creating digital services](#) says assisted digital support should not be a paper-based service but could be:

- help to guide someone to use the digital service, eg by sitting alongside them in an office location or the user's home
- a telephone service where the individual is helped to use the service themselves, or where they give information that is then typed into the system on their behalf.

The manual also provides a methodology for how to develop assisted digital plans. covering the standard phases for an agile project of discovery, alpha, beta and live. For example, the discovery stage starts with understanding user needs.

*You must develop a high-level understanding of assisted digital user needs, user numbers and what assisted digital support for your service might look like. You should develop a plan to answer these questions:*

- *What are your early estimates of how many of your users will require assisted digital support?*
- *What are the demographic characteristics of your assisted digital users?*
- *What might the personas and user journeys look like for your service's assisted digital users?*
- *What is your plan for developing your understanding of assisted digital user needs and support requirements during the alpha phase?*

Aimed at large central government departments and agencies providing national services, such an approach is unlikely to be followed by local authorities with a much smaller reach and covering a wide range of services with different profiles of non-web users. Moreover, social care departments are unlikely to be in a position to provide assisted digital services, unless such initiatives are led and supported corporately by the council working to a comprehensive digital inclusion strategy.

As a result, social care departments are likely to find themselves in a situation where they can contribute to and gain from corporate initiatives or, much less helpfully, go it alone. In either case, the recent publication [Later life in a digital world](#) (Age UK, December 2015) is a very useful starting point for research into this area, and also a useful source of other references and surveys.

## ASSISTED DIGITAL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In our survey about online social care (September 2015) a number of councils indicated examples that were in operation, as set down in the tables below. They indicate the range of options that might be available.

	COUNCIL	ASSISTED DIGITAL EXAMPLE
1	Dorset CC	Community channel project. iPad clubs, People's Network in libraries, digital champion project.
2	Essex CC	Library access and support through Healthwatch already in place and looking to expand further.
3	Hertfordshire CC	Library support sessions in place. Carers in Herts also providing guidance at group sessions (see opposite for further information).
4	Lewisham	There are existing support services for digital support. However, we are also working with Go ON to develop this work. Currently, we are conducting deep dive exercises in this area.
5	Peterborough City	Part of a much wider programme focusing on all council services, not just social care.
6	Staffordshire CC	The Staffordshire care contact centre is a telephony-based single point of access for people to call to discuss queries/ issues and get personalised information, advice and guidance. Advisors use all the online resources available with the person over the phone. They offer a call-back service to provide further support and signpost on where appropriate, print off and send out recommendations and information leaflets as required.
7	Worcestershire CC	Digital Inclusion Strategy for the Council

**Table 2** Examples of assisted digital initiatives in operation (September 2015)



## CASE STUDY

### PROMOTING DIGITAL INCLUSION AT HERTFORDSHIRE CC

The county council has promoted online services such as blue badge and registering as a disabled person as well as services provided by third parties, but no specific need for promoting online social care has yet been identified. The council has been active in encouraging people to go online who might in the next three to five years need access to online information and services about social care.

This started with a programme that was funded by the Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance Scheme and developed by the council's Adult Learning Services. It consisted of four components:

- A new 'Introduction to the internet using tablets' course, commissioned with Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service.
- A new Volunteer IT Champion Scheme and a fixed-term position to attract and support new volunteers.
- 'Tablet taster' sessions in Hertfordshire libraries with the purchase of 12 Android tablet devices to deliver the course.
- New tablet devices and broadband access for four adult care service providers to develop digital inclusion sessions for their service users.

When the funding ended, this programme was absorbed into the mainstream of support in the library service, with funding then to be sought for targeted activities to deliver specific objectives as they are identified.

Another important thread of activity that will help take-up of online social care in the medium term is a comprehensive digital skills initiative for all county council employees as part of a broader 'Enabling the worker' programme. The impetus behind this initiative is to encourage the smarter use of technology and enable employees to become in the course of time digital champions in their dealings with the general public.



## CASE STUDY

# PLEDGING TO REDUCE DIGITAL EXCLUSION IN CROYDON

### THE CUSTOMER COMMITMENT

Croydon is the second largest London borough by population (363,500 residents) with digital exclusion estimated at 23.4% in line with the national figure across the UK of 22% (end of 2015).

This means that around 85,000 people in Croydon do not have basic digital skills or regular access to the internet. The council's approach to reducing this is an innovative 'whole council' approach that starts with its customer service charter, setting expectations that business will be done primarily online.

*We want to deliver the best possible customer service to you and to improve your quality of life locally at an affordable cost. We will deliver your services efficiently but should you need to contact us, we will provide a variety of cost effective channels.*

*Our commitment sets out the standards of service you can expect from us, whichever service you use, we promise that:*

- You are treated as a valued customer

This is the first of five promises to the customer. Each is broken down into further commitments. The first of these states:

*When you use our website:*

*We will make life easy for you by giving you 24/7 access to information via our website, ensuring that we provide you with access to enable you to report, pay, book or enquire about our many services online.*

*Wherever possible, we will enable you to resolve your enquiry fully online in a secure, user-friendly environment – allowing you to interact with us at a time convenient for you, always making sure that we have gained your permission first.*

*By doing this, we will generally be able to resolve your enquiry faster and more effectively where you use our online services.*

However, the council makes it clear that Croydon is a place where no-one gets left behind and that its digital services meet the needs of local people. Accordingly, it has committed to help those that might be digitally excluded.

### THE PARTNERSHIP WITH GO ON UK

The council sets the clear expectation, then, that self-service is the preferred way of doing business, but it underpins this commitment with a comprehensive digital inclusion campaign that is currently being implemented. This is based on a partnership with the digital skills charity [Go ON UK](#), which has made it the first Go ON council in the country (at the date of this briefing, neighbours Lewisham had just followed Croydon's lead to become the second).

The council is recruiting digital champions from its employees who are invited as volunteers to help those who are digitally excluded. Additionally, all staff are asked to make a written pledge of a minimum of one hour of their time in 2016. The first pledge received was from the chief executive who has pledged to devote an hour of his time.

As well as supporting the digitally excluded, this makes it clear to council employees that they are expected to embrace digital ways of working.

The national Go ON UK partners supporting the Go ON Croydon project include Age UK, Argos, BBC, Big Lottery Fund, EE, Eon, Lloyds Banking Group, Post Office, Sage and Talk Talk. Local Croydon partners include community and faith groups, charities and voluntary sector organisations. All partners are working to spread the message of the benefits of basic digital skills, through initiatives and activities that will boost the digital skills of employees, customers and communities across Croydon.



## ACCESS CROYDON

The council sends a strong message that ‘we can help everyone even if they have not used the internet before’. Taking advantage of the opportunity offered by its new civic centre building at Bernard Weatherill House, its new Access Croydon centre includes a number of innovative features, such as:

- a custom-built document-drop solution, whereby customers can upload their documents in the face-to-face service – the only UK council known to have such a facility, when it was introduced
- council employees with tablets that enable them to deal with all face-to-face enquiries: employees have become cross-skilled and the customer journey is now seamless
- a fast-track reception that allows customers to have assisted digital services and floorwalkers available to help customers with their online journey.

Access Croydon also includes a digital zone where people can drop in from 9am to 4pm every Friday to get one-to-one help. This is just one of several such zones currently being set up across the borough with an eventual target of 40 by the end of 2016. The first few include zones at Age UK Croydon, Argos, Croydon African Caribbean Family Organisation UK, Job Centre Plus and Lloyds Bank as well as the council’s own Access Centre Croydon.

## USE OF DROP-IN CENTRE

### *Discover your world online!*

- *Be surprised at how much you can save*
- *Keep in touch with family and friends*
- *Explore more of your interests*

These slogans used in the digital zone show that it is important to understand each individual’s possible interest in going online. This is very unlikely to be about using local public services, but is much more likely to be in touch with family, hobbies or interests. Then, in time it may lead to going online for public services.

Since the start of Go ON Croydon, the first zone at Access Croydon, has attracted 111 visitors who spend an average of 1.25 hours with a digital champion. Their motivation to attend is analysed below:

Ability to find day-to-day information and learn new things	62%
Ability to save time and money	14%
Increased opportunity to find work or use skills in my job	14%
Chance to connect with friends and family	10%

**Chart 12** Motivation to drop into Croydon digital zone

Overall, visitors leave almost entirely with a positive experience, strongly agreeing (62%), agreeing (35%) or neither agreeing or disagreeing (3%) with the statement that ‘Today has helped me feel more confident about basic digital skills and the opportunities and benefits of using the internet, my tablet, smartphone or computer’.

Once people have built up some confidence in using computers, they are referred to other places such as a public library (the main one is just across the road) for further training and support. The public library is often thought of as the natural place to provide assisted digital support, but in reality it attracts a different type of person and the digitally excluded may well lack the confidence to go there in the first instance.

**In conclusion, it is too early to judge the lasting impact of this scheme in Croydon but its scope is ambitious and imaginative. Most importantly, it also shows that assisted digital schemes have to be based on a ‘whole council’ approach. Social care services have a clear role in supporting and influencing such schemes.**

## 8. VALUE OF ONLINE CITIZEN ACCOUNTS

### CONCEPT OF ONLINE ACCOUNT

One mechanism that is very useful for building take-up is the online citizen account. Surveys in 2015 by Socitm indicate that around one-third of English councils with social care functions have such a corporate facility and that this number is gradually increasing. However, we have not found one such facility that as yet includes social care applications.

For other services the benefits of having a corporate online citizen account are various:

- viewing online accounts for council tax, business rates, rents, benefits etc
- subscribing to text or email alerts for local events, library renewals and other service reminders
- getting updates on planning applications
- applying for various permits and licences
- pre-populating regularly used forms
- tracking enquiries.

The potential benefit for online social care is that the use of online citizen accounts allows the council to personalise the relationship between the customer, or the customer's carer, and the local authority (eg promoting personalised messages based on previous information and advice).

It is important, then, to use the online account for applications that are relevant to such personalisation for achieving any one of the types of benefit listed above. Each year in the *Better connected* reports Socitm comes across examples where users are required to register inappropriately (eg, for reporting street lighting failure where there is no real need to provide one's name and address).

We feature next a case study from a council that has been at the forefront in promoting online citizen accounts for other services. If your council is already active with such accounts, then it will make it easier for those already registered to extend their application to social care.

### BENEFITS OF ONLINE ACCOUNT

One further very important point about the online citizen account is the need to set out the benefits of using it before the citizen attempts to register for the first-time. Councils should not take it for granted that such accounts are of benefit to their customers just because they are of benefit to the organisation.



Chart 13 Explanation of benefits of online accounts

This chart shows that 87 (64%) of the 133 councils using online accounts do explain benefits; the rest do not.



## CASE STUDY

### MANAGING ONLINE ACCOUNTS AT NEWHAM COUNCIL

One very early adopter of such an account is Newham Council, the second poorest council area in England, ethnically very diverse and with high unemployment rates. By December 2015, over 176,000 people had [registered for an online account](#) and 88% of Newham households have at least one person who has registered, possibly the highest usage of any such facility in local government, although as yet it does not cover adult social care. The contact centre had seen a major increase in channel shift with face-to-face contact dropping from 67% to less than 10%.

It is worth considering the journey that Newham has taken in the past four years to achieve this. Back in June 2011 when it was launched as part of a new policy to encourage channel shift, it attracted some 200 registrations per week and gradually built up a 20% take-up without promoting the facility very strongly.

Spurred on, however, by the need to make significant cutbacks in customer services, the council was more ambitious and decided to be more aggressive in its approach by selecting non-statutory services that should only be offered online. In May 2012 it made it compulsory to go online for visitor parking permits, a high-volume operation that was deemed to be low risk in terms of negative feedback, rightly as it turned out. This now operates almost 100% online and the switch received no complaints. It then focused on various street scene services such as collection of green waste (now 91% logged online). Within one year online take-up doubled.

One interesting lesson learnt came with an attempt to use interactive voice response (IVR) on the phone, which did not work and attracted much negative feedback. One impact was a clear increase in people going online instead. When the IVR experiment was withdrawn, the numbers going online dropped! At both stages this showed a clear relationship between the offline experience and online take-up.

It was also very important that the council as a whole gave the move online strong corporate support. Linked to the opportunity offered by the 2012 Olympics as well as the impact of public austerity, the council championed a new resilience agenda affecting community, economic and personal resilience. For example, in their own interests people need to do much more for themselves.

*For instance we want people to feel more confident taking ownership of the challenges they face and efficiently manage the solutions. So we now ask people to make appointments for many council services instead of just turning up, or we support them to access information through our website instead of seeing someone face-to-face. In this way we are building the skills people need to navigate other areas of their lives but we are also making their interactions with us less stressful and more fruitful – less time queuing and more time dealing with the problem.*

#### **Resilience: Making it happen (Newham Council, 2012)**

Finally, the council has placed strong emphasis on the people who deliver services being fully engaged with the channel shift agenda. This is important not just because they deal directly with customers in their jobs, but employees are also residents and, outside work, they can be powerful advocates in giving ‘word of mouth’ support for the council’s policies.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

**Promotion of online services is not a task that can just be implemented in isolation from other aspects of service delivery.**

Firstly, we have shown that in planning to increase take-up councils should have a good understanding of current trends in the developing internet world and, in particular, of the major influences affecting the digital divide.

Secondly, there are three important prerequisites for effective promotion:

- An appropriate measurement framework for the evaluation of campaigns
- Some customer insight into the online and offline behaviour of clients and carers
- A set of digital principles that can be used to change the organisational culture.

A common thread in our case studies has been the importance of employee engagement in underpinning promotional activity. All employees and partners involved in the delivery of social care must understand how the online facilities work and why they are increasingly important. Employees should be seen as digital champions, able to persuade those clients and carers who have not yet done so to go online.

When it comes to planning a campaign, there are many ways of encouraging people to go online. There are probably no silver bullets and so what matters is to have a range of options. These options should take advantage of information that is already known within the council about the target audience. The aim should then be to create an environment, whereby the council sets expectations that, as much as possible, self-service is the way of doing business.

However, this process must be handled sensitively and with support through assisted digital approaches. In particular, adult social care should seek the help that can be gained from corporate digital inclusion programmes of awareness, training and ongoing support, whether or not it has any immediate plans to introduce online social care.

Finally, if we can learn one lesson from other local public services that are ahead of social care in the use of self-service, that lesson is the value of online citizen accounts in promoting online take-up. Although hardly any council currently uses this feature for social care, it is well worth planning to do so.

### NEXT STEPS FOR YOU

- **Be sure that the online offering is simple and easy to use, and proven by user testing to be so.**

**Only then should you start a campaign:**

- Establish a baseline of current levels of take-up and profiles of usage.
- Develop some customer insight from existing data or new sources.
- Test rigorously the way in which people will make initial contact with your site from various starting points (eg Google search).
- Develop some digital principles that will help to achieve the culture change within adult social care.
- Ensure that all employees involved in the provision of information and advice are fully engaged in achieving greater levels of self-service.
- Promote the benefits of self-service at every opportunity, online as well as offline.
- Devise promotional campaigns that offer a range of options for clients and their intermediaries to find out about the online offer.
- Provide promotional material in places where potential customers might gather (eg GP surgeries).
- Work with other agencies in your locality to extend the reach and usage of your online information and services.
- Plan for how an online citizen account might encourage take-up of online social care.

**Finally, whether or not you are ready for promoting online services:**

- Influence and contribute to any corporate digital inclusion strategy or initiative.
- And, if your council does not yet have one, be proactive in helping to create one.

**This will support your future need to increase online take-up when you are ready for this.**

# FURTHER INFORMATION

- [\*The Health and Wellbeing of Unpaid Carers: Where Can Digital Skills and Community Support Add Value?\*](#) (Tinder Foundation, December 2015).
- [\*Later life in a digital world\*](#) (Age UK, December 2015).

## Socitm Insight ([www.socitm.net](http://www.socitm.net))

- *Digital by default (Part 2): encouraging take-up of the online offering* (Briefing 32, August 2011)
- *Better with less: delivering local public services in the digital age* (December 2013)
- *Redesigning health and social care: challenges and opportunities from an IT and digital perspective* (January 2015)
- *Better connected 2015* (February 2015)

## Engaging Citizens Online

### List of briefings: topics

-  **01** *Identity and authentication*  
December 2015
-  **02** *Methodology for developing the online user journey*  
December 2015
-  **03** *Business case for digital investment*  
March 2016
-  **04** *Planning online transactional facilities*  
March 2016
-  **05** *Supplier offerings of social care self-assessments*
-  **06** *Supplier offerings of social care financial assessments*
-  **07** *Examples of effective use of national information sources*
-  **08** *Examples of good practice of e-marketplaces in operation*
-  **09** *Promotion of online services*
-  **10** *Role of third sector and care providers*