

# The Local government service design maturity model

Published May 2023

## Contents

About the Local Government service design maturity model.....	2
What is service design and why is it important? .....	2
Service design can help councils to design and deliver better services .....	2
Introducing the service design maturity model.....	2
The service design maturity model and how to use it.....	3
Using the service design maturity assessment.....	3
The levels of maturity defined .....	4
Planting .....	4
Emerging .....	4
Growing.....	4
Embedding .....	4
Thriving .....	4
The characteristics, and what good looks like .....	4
People focused outcomes.....	4
Co-design .....	5
Prototyping .....	5
Evidence informed .....	5
System awareness.....	6
Leadership endorsement .....	6
Sharing and adapting the service design maturity model .....	7

## **About the Local Government service design maturity model**

### **What is service design and why is it important?**

Designing local government services is about solving people's problems, supporting people with what they want to achieve, and shaping the experiences that people have when interacting with Councils.

Good services do not happen by accident. Many things shape the experiences that people have when interacting with Councils.

This can include:

- the ways that teams share information and work together
- the business models and technologies that support service delivery
- the initiatives that have driven service improvement in the past

Any constraints or organisational inefficiencies can directly impact the ability to meet people's needs and the service experience.

### **Service design can help councils to design and deliver better services**

Service design brings creative and participatory ways of defining, exploring, and solving problems. It focuses on people-centred outcomes, collaborative ways of working, learning by doing, and evidence-informed decisions.

Service design can work for simple transactions and in complex, changing environments as service design, and seeing business practices from the resident's viewpoint, highlights the interconnectedness of an issue.

This ensures that services being designed are easy to use and deliver, improve the experience that residents and staff have, and enable people to achieve what they set out to do. The approach helps to improve resident outcomes whilst enabling sustainable, cost-effective services.

### **Introducing the service design maturity model**

The local government service design maturity model helps councils to explore how well they support and grow service design practice. Councils can use the model to ascertain where service design approaches are already adding value or could add more value, and to identify opportunities to develop the capabilities and conditions for service design to thrive.

The model is intended to raise awareness of the key components of service design, provide a standard language to describe service design activities in a local government context, and help establish a consistent approach to service design across a council. The model aims to encourage conversations around service design and its role in local government in supporting improvement and innovation.

The assessment outlines six of the main ‘characteristics’ of service design. These characteristics are distinct yet are all connected. People-focused outcomes and system awareness frame the co-design, co-design is used to inform and undertake the prototyping, prototyping provides the learning for being evidence informed, and the leadership endorsement creates the conditions for the characteristics to take place. Within each of these characteristics there are three prompts that describe good practice. There are five levels of maturity, ranging from planting to thriving. These show how the ways of thinking and doing change and develop as service design maturity levels increase.

By working through the framework, you will get a clear understanding of your current levels of service design practice, and the path to increased maturity. As with all models this isn’t perfect, but we hope that it’s useful!

## **The service design maturity model and how to use it**

The Local Authority Service Design Maturity Model has been developed by a collaboration of council service designers, facilitated by Newham Council. Councils that form the collaborative network are: Barking & Dagenham, Cambridgeshire, Camden, Essex, Manchester, and Newham.

### **Using the service design maturity assessment**

Use the framework on the next 4 pages to undertake an assessment. A PNG version with the model on a single page has also been provided which is easier to use in a workshop format.

Either print out the single page for each individual participant, have as a poster to work on collaboratively, or insert the PNG into your preferred online collaboration tool. Choose to apply the assessment at the level of team, department, or Council.

Let every participant put a sticky dot or mark on each row where they feel it best reflects their service design maturity level given the characteristic description and prompt of what good looks like. The maturity scale runs from ‘planting’, the lowest level, on the left to ‘thriving’, the highest level on the right.

Discuss as a group any discrepancies in your individual assessments and take the time to acknowledge what is working well. Consider where on the scale your team, department, or Council would like to be and identify opportunities for improvement.

#### **Steps:**

1. Choose whether you are assessing the maturity of your team, department, or Council.
2. Each participant takes 18 sticky dots and places one onto each row where they feel it best reflects their service design maturity level.

3. Discuss as a group any discrepancies in your individual assessments and take the time to acknowledge what is working well. Consider where on the scale your team, department, or Council would like to be and identify opportunities for improvement.

## **The levels of maturity defined**

### **Planting**

Starting to get curious about service design and whether to test out this approach to change.

### **Emerging**

Aware of good practice, developing understanding and recognising the value of service design, with a few examples starting to emerge.

### **Growing**

Building service design capabilities, mindset, processes, and tools, and applying these to some change activities.

### **Embedding**

Service design approach is used for many change activities, and the impact on resident experience and outcomes are starting to be seen. Governance, leadership, structure, and resources are starting to reshape and there is a roadmap to embed service design across the council.

### **Thriving**

Service design is core to the council's approach to change. Capabilities, processes, and tools are consistently applied and the impact on resident experience and outcomes is evident. Governance, leadership, structure, and resources enable service design to thrive across the council.

## **The characteristics, and what good looks like**

### **People focused outcomes**

Understanding people's needs to design the right thing

### **Service design is driven by resident focused outcomes**

It starts with research to identify what residents need and want to achieve and understand their experience. This guides the design process.

### **The customer journey shapes the business process**

End-to-end customer journeys are designed to support resident needs, and business processes are developed to enable these customer journeys.

### **The needs of all people are explored**

Services are designed to provide a good experience for residents and to work well for staff to deliver.

### **Co-design**

Working in partnership with those who use and deliver the service to design the service right

#### **Services are designed with those involved with them**

People with lived experience and people with professional experience work together to define the problem, share ideas, and design the solution.

#### **Relationships and trust is built with the community**

Dedicated staff develop networks, and these are utilised to facilitate participation and create an environment where honest conversations can take place.

#### **People are treated as equal collaborators**

People's expertise is equally valued, barriers to participation are removed, and facilitators are confident in ways to engage participants and manage healthy tensions.

### **Prototyping**

Testing concepts to learn, build on what works, and avoid costly mistakes

#### **Services are tested to learn, adapt, and evaluate before full implementation**

Services, or service components, are tested by those who deliver and use them. Each round of testing incorporates the learning from previous iterations, evolving to a detailed solution.

#### **The ability to hold uncertainty and move out of it**

People are comfortable to sit temporarily with ambiguity to test a few concepts before converging on the best way forward. Testing becomes more resource intensive as the concept evolves.

#### **It is a safe space to experiment and iterate**

People accept experimenting can generate concepts that do not work well at the start, and the learning from this can be used

### **Evidence informed**

Making decisions based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative information to improve resident outcomes

#### **The problem is understood and defined before attempting to design a solution**

A range of different research activities are undertaken to understand the problem, the context and root causes, and hypotheses are tested before solutions are explored.

### **Qualitative and quantitative data is used to generate insights**

There is a balance between figures and information that tells people's stories and reveals their experience. Both are used to generate insights that are informative, memorable and compel people to act.

### **Decisions are evidence informed**

Evidence is used to design the right solution and to design the solution right. The impact of the service is tracked post implementation to ensure performance is on track, outcomes are being achieved and to identify future improvements.

### **System awareness**

Exploring the interconnected elements of the whole problem to avoid unintended consequences

### **Systems awareness is championed**

There is an openness to exploring the whole problem end-to-end, and not just the elements within a department's or the council's control.

### **The system is defined**

Where the challenge is complex, with many diverse and dynamic interconnections between the problem and the broader environment, the different elements and how they are connected are mapped and understood.

### **Impact is viewed through a systems lens**

The solution is scrutinised to identify and mitigate against any unintended consequences on the wider system.

### **Leadership endorsement**

Governance, structure and resources enable service design to thrive to produce lasting, sustainable change that improves residents' lives

### **Change activity is framed by service design**

Service design is integral to the staffing structures alongside other change professionals, the change portfolio governance arrangements, and the process for undertaking change across the council.

### **There is investment in building service design capability and capacity**

Appropriate resources (finance, time, people) are allocated for service design to be thriving. Staff receive training and development opportunities, and a community of practice is in place.

### **Leaders are committed to and endorse service design**

They achieve this by: challenging their teams to be people and outcome focused; elevating lived experience; providing a safe space for experimentation; sitting temporarily with ambiguity and not rushing to solutions; making decisions that are evidence informed; encouraging system awareness; and, promoting the impact of service design.

## **Sharing and adapting the service design maturity model**

The model has been developed by a collaboration of council service designers, facilitated by Newham Council. Councils that form the collaborative network are: Barking & Dagenham, Cambridgeshire, Camden, Essex, Manchester and Newham. We are opening out this collaboration into a Local Government Service Design Network and if you would like to be part of the network, please contact [henrietta.curzon@newham.gov.uk](mailto:henrietta.curzon@newham.gov.uk)

We have made the model available under a creative commons license. You are welcome to share, remix, adapt, and build upon our work non-commercially, as long as Newham Council are credited, and any new creations are licensed under identical terms.