GRANICUS

Granicus' solutions currently support:

3,000
PUBLIC SECTOR
ORGANISATIONS
WORLDWIDE

150M
PEOPLE CONNECTED
WORLDWIDE

180+
UK PUBLIC SECTOR
ORGANISATIONS

9.5M+
PEOPLE CONNECTED IN
THE UK

1
UK ASTRONAUT*

*The UK Space Agency (UKSA) and the European Space Agency (ESA) have been using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to help keep everyone up-to-date with news of UK astronaut Tim Peake's time on the International Space Station.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

It could be argued that following the 2009 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) the public sector no longer has sufficient funds to meet existing and future costs of service delivery - especially in areas such as health and social care. With this in mind, "no change is no longer an option".

To meet the future needs of both citizens and communities, a fundamental change is needed in the way many public services are delivered – if they are to be delivered at all. Efficiency savings and moving citizens online can account for some, but by no means all, of the savings needed to balance the books.

Focus has now moved towards reducing demand for services, addressing what has been referred to in some quarters as "learned dependency". By engaging in work to change behaviours we may reduce citizens' longer term need for services and help to support independence, self-reliance and community resilience.

Behavioural economics, using prompts to effect change in choice (nudge theory as it is sometimes called), and assessing forward or future liability (measuring the future cost of delivery vs the cost of early intervention) have become important parts of the public sector's armoury of change.

Joining together the dots of behavioural change is by no means easy. Long-term costs (forward liability costs) or future savings are often not met or recouped by the same organisations that have the opportunity to make early interventions or reduce pressures downstream.

Much work is now being undertaken to address

this, for example, through devolving budgets to local commissioners. What remains clear is that proactive engagement rather than a coercive style of communication – "do this or else" - is likely to be the best option and "nudge" is an important way to deliver effective change.

Achieving sustainable behavioural change requires not only a change to the message, but also a change to the way messages are delivered and received. Choice architecture - considering how information is structured and written – can help affect the way citizens make decisions. Fundamentally, change is unlikely to be secured without proactive communication and genuine engagement.

There is no silver bullet for effecting behavioural change and there are many ways to deliver a message. However, as social media has increasingly become both a publisher and a platform - where complex algorithms play a large part in determining what content users see - being able to send targeted and personalised messages to citizens via other means is essential. This will continue to be crucial to engaging successfully with citizens and stakeholders.

While we understand that digital take-up is not yet universal, and we are still mindful of supporting those that aren't able to access services electronically,

in this document we look at examples of how Granicus' solutions are helping to deliver real and effective engagement; engagement which supports and empowers change. We discuss how these engagement tools are providing value for money and positive outcomes at a time when all budgets, and particularly communication budgets, are under significant pressure.

Communications teams' budgets are shrinking

Based on recent FOI data received from councils showing communications teams' budgets for the past three years, over half of all responding UK local government communications teams (53%) have seen a reduction in their overall budgets.

If that change is representative across all UK councils, this would suggest that department budgets for local authority communications teams have shrunk by over £20 million within the last three years.

OVERALL BUDGET FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNICATIONS TEAMS IN THE UK
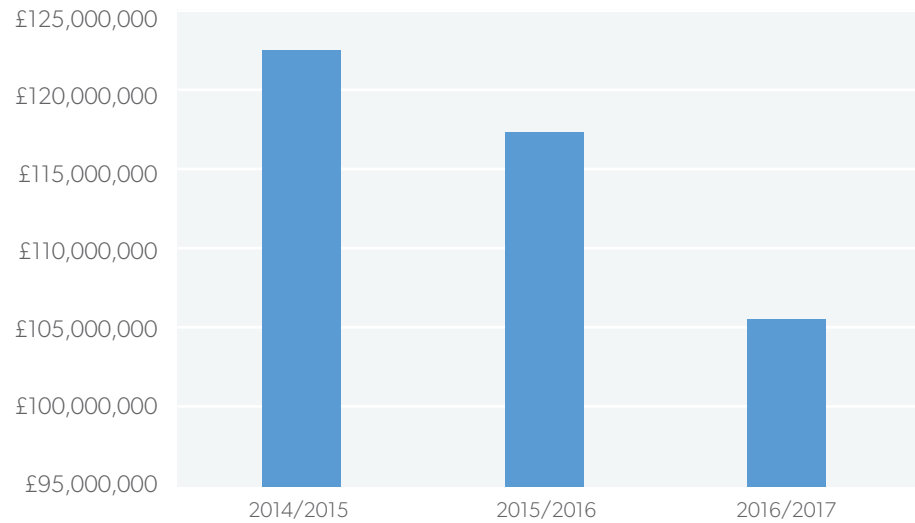
2 CONTEXT

Many terms are being used to describe the future of public sector finances in the UK, including "perfect storms", "financial black holes" and "graphs of doom", but wherever you stand on the rhetoric, what is clear is that the pressure to balance the books will remain extremely challenging going forward.

The recent Brexit decision in the EU referendum has led to uncertainty about the UK economy and any further impact this, or a loss of access to EU funding, may have on public spending budgets.

Continued reductions in central government funding, mixed with a range of different spending priorities for the devolved Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies, have led to very different approaches to service provision and service delivery models across the UK public sector.

The language of transformation has also shifted from service provision and outputs towards sustainability, growth and outcomes, and empowering citizens to look after themselves.

The Local Government Association (LGA), in its response to the local government finance settlement (Dec 2015), indicated "there are still significant challenges ahead" for the sector as a whole.

The 2016 budget includes additional savings to be found from public spending and while some budgets are ring-fenced, the pressure on service delivery remains across the board. The challenges of reduced funding and increasing costs - particularly in health and social care - have led organisations to look again at their business models. For many organisations wide reaching transformation and change programmes have become the building blocks for a fundamental re-framing of the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Alongside this very challenging financial landscape there are fundamental changes to both the funding and structure of local government. For example, withdrawal of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in return for the retention of business rates has ignited ideas of what a self-financing council might look like.

And, devolution - the devolving of "significant" powers to local government (DevoNext as it has been coined) - has set in motion a chain of vigorous regional debates about the benefits and/or drawbacks of combined authorities.

Whatever new model or models of service delivery emerge, the challenges of reduced funding, growing demand and enhanced public expectations are likely to continue to exert significant pressure throughout the system.

It is clear that change is now a necessity and a fundamental given across the whole sector, and the need to communicate and engage with citizens to enact this change has never been more important or more pressing.
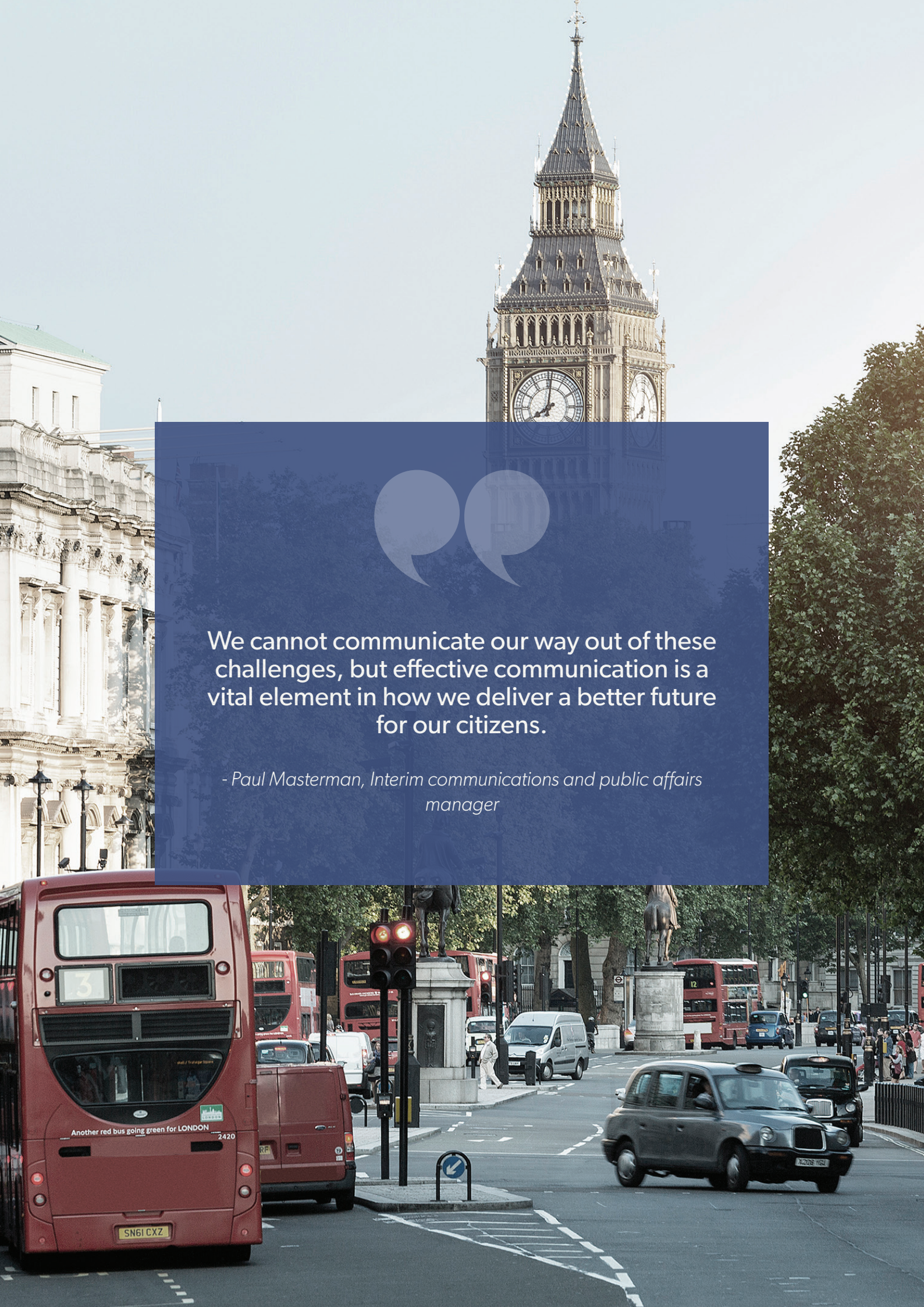
We cannot communicate our way out of these challenges, but effective communication is a vital element in how we deliver a better future for our citizens.

- Paul Masterman, Interim communications and public affairs manager

3 ENGAGEMENT FOR CHANGE

It is clear that both challenges and opportunities lie ahead for the public sector - but the scale of these challenges and opportunities appears to be, at this stage, by no means evenly distributed.

For many public sector organisations, the financial imperatives of reduced government funding and increasing pressure on service delivery are driving an unprecedented necessity for change.

The idea that being "digital by default" and moving citizens to online self-serve could on its own bridge the funding gap, has largely been overtaken by the realisation that not only do service costs have to be reduced, but the rising pressure on future service demand also has to be addressed.

Words like "reframe" and "reimagine" have become part of the language that defines or, perhaps more appropriately, redefines the emerging relationship between the citizen and the state. The aim is now to create resilient communities and to build stronger economies less dependent on the support and provision of public services.

The public sector needs to find ways to help citizens help themselves: to take responsibility for things that have traditionally been provided by others; to help support the elderly, the isolated and the vulnerable to remain within their communities for longer before needing to access social care; to remain active and healthy; to reduce the forward liability of long term health conditions.

Many difficult decisions and many difficult choices lie ahead – whether these are to address the impact of further funding reductions, the debates on devolution or variations in local tax raising requirements. The principle "you can go quickly alone, but further together" still holds true. Effective and sustainable change requires engagement, participation and ultimately support from citizens, communities and businesses.

Whatever the nature of the challenges and opportunities ahead, communication and engagement with citizens and communities, and the resetting of expectations, lie at the very heart of long-term, sustainable and successful public sector transformation.

The following sections consider the impact of effective communication and engagement on the key pillars of transformation:

4 SHIFTING CHANNELS - REDUCING COSTS

5 AVOIDABLE CONTACT - EFFICIENT DELIVERY

6 REDUCING DEMAND - ADDING VALUE

7 INCREASING INCOME - GENERATING GROWTH

8 CHANGING BEHAVIOUR - IMPROVING OUTCOMES

4 SHIFTING CHANNELS

...AND REDUCING COSTS

Channel shift has long been one of the key drivers in reducing the overall cost of customer transactions. Moving citizens towards more cost-effective online channels has to date been the cornerstone of many public sector transformation programmes.

In 2009, the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM)* benchmarked the average cost of customer contact: a face-to-face visit £7.40, phone call £2.90, and website visit 32p.

These and similar figures have been extensively quoted in many "invest to save" business cases that followed the 2009 Comprehensive Spending Review. The key premise still remains: move 50 face-to-face visits and 1,500 phone calls a day to online channels and you'll save £1 million a year.

However, the pace of building end-to-end digital services has been slow. Reengineering complex business processes and dealing with legacy IT infrastructure have taken both considerable time and significant upfront investment.

The public appetite for accessing government services online has also been much slower than equivalent services in the private sector, where online shopping and banking have more quickly become the norm. There may have been a variety of reasons for this, including the quality of the service, user-experience and expectation.

Certainly, siloed working - both through organisational resistance and technical challenges to cross-departmental collaboration - and an adherence to performance indicators such as "all calls answered within 'X' rings" (very much at odds with the long waiting times experienced through many private sector call centres) may well have continued to reinforce telephone as the first, and easiest point of customer contact. This is evidenced in some local authorities where contact via the telephone remains as high as 80% of all customer contact.

As an increasing number of public sector organisations commit to making the web the channel of choice, driving traffic (particularly those most likely to self-serve) to online services remains essential to realising savings targets.

Investment in online services and the reworking of back-office processes have now started to deliver a high quality product and according to figures from a number of sources, including Ofcom, the European Commission and the Government Digital Service, the public's appetite for accessing government services online is now rising.

But the paradigm "build it and they will come" does not hold true for many online transactions and, for some organisations, channel shift and take-up of online services, remain slow or elusive.

GOV.UK

In late 2012 GOV.UK replaced DirectGov and Business Link as the point of access for online government services in the UK. Recent figures from the Government Digital Services (GDS) now put usage of GOV.UK at 1.03 billion visits per annum.

From the moment it was launched the GOV.UK website became the channel of choice for hosting and promoting government services – an example now being followed by many others in the public sector in the UK and globally.

While there are many ways citizens can find their way to the website, being part of the GovDelivery Network directs nearly 3.5 million visitors to GOV. UK each year1.

NEARLY

3.5M

visitors are directed
to GOV.UK from the
GovDelivery Network

[1][GovDelivery traffic as % of total: 0.34%]

Nottinghamshire County Council

Targeted communications – messages sent via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud – are supporting channel shift initiatives to increase the number of visits to Nottinghamshire County Council's website, encourage visitors to self-serve, increase reach and engagement with customers via social media, and save money by reducing the number of printed publications and marketing materials produced. The council introduced its Email Me e-alerts service in October 2013, and by spring 2014, this had already contributed to a multi-channel shift programme that had realised savings of £179,000.

Currently, Nottinghamshire County Council's e-alerts engage almost 65,000 subscribers and have led to a marked increase in these people feeling more informed about the council. Currently

90% of subscribers report feeling informed (up from 69% in 2014). Customer satisfaction ratings (with the council) have also increased greatly – directly as a result of the provision of email updates. The rating currently sits at 60% (up from 43% in 2014).

On average each subscriber is signed up to receive 2.5 different topic alerts, and over the past 12 months, the council's e-alerts have achieved engagement rates of up to 66% – 7% higher than the median for local government agencies in the UK and US. For more insights into digital communications performance in the government sphere, take a look at GovDelivery's 2016 benchmark report - "Digital Communications in the Public Sector: Improving Metrics that Matter".

*The council introduced its Email Me e-alerts service in October 2013, and by spring 2014, this had already contributed to a multi-channel shift programme that had realised savings of **£179,000.***

5 AVOIDABLE CONTACT

...AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY

In 2008 the Government announced the introduction of the now defunct National Indicator 14 (NI14) – "Reducing avoidable contact: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer".

While the NI14 indicator may have retired, avoidable contact - alongside channel shift - has remained a focus for cost savings and is identified within many transformation programmes.

Recent figures released by one council that still records avoidable contact, suggest that 50% of all recorded contacts remain within the "avoidable" definition.

During these times of financial challenge, avoidable contact is not just a case of minimising the number of unnecessary calls received by customer contact centres; it also links to the cost of failure to deliver and of correcting problems customers call in to report.

For example, missed bin collections can generate significant call volumes – especially as a result of changes to collection days – scheduled or unscheduled.

Proactive communications particularly via digital channels such as text message and email; "please don't forget tomorrow is your bin collection day", "please put out your black bin", "please ensure your bin is presented by 7am" and "here's a list of what you can put in your black bin" have been shown to reduce both the number of missed bins and incorrectly presented bins. Consequently, improved communication has reduced the number of calls to customer contact centres.

Timely client and community engagement can help reduce avoidable contact. It can also address situations where delivery failure can have significant cost implications – for example, missed appointments. Data from NHS England (2014) identifies that 6.8 million outpatient hospital appointments are missed each year in the UK.

The cost of this type of delivery failure, from missed appointments and missed NHS procedures can add up to millions of pounds a year. The consequences of delivery failure can also create onward or forward liabilities. For example, failure to pay a council tax bill or housing rent on time can result in expensive debt recovery action or, if taken to the extreme, can lead to homelessness. These are all expenses that the public sector can ill-afford and might be reduced or avoided in some cases through more proactive customer engagement.

Relevant and timely communication can help to ensure that citizens and businesses have appropriate information. As a consequence, this can reduce both avoidable contact – "when do I need to do this?" – and compliance problems further downstream – "I didn't know I needed to do that!"

The Mayor's Office of Reintegration Services (RISE)

In 2014 the state of Philadelphia recognised that keeping ex-offenders engaged with the city's reintegration service (RISE) could significantly reduce the cost of future liability and also improve outcomes for ex-offenders.

Every year, 30,000 citizens return to Philadelphia from federal, state and county prisons. Most return jobless, without stable housing, and lacking the skills they need to succeed. According to RISE, getting ex-offenders "back on their feet" is likely to not only reduce the cost of welfare support but also, in the longer term, reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

RISE uses Granicus interactive SMS messaging service to deliver effective two-way communication between caseworkers and ex-offenders. The bite-size text messages are helping to keep more than 5,500 service users engaged with the programme so far.

The communication builds trust between caseworker and client, and ensures attendance at case meetings and training workshops. Overall, RISE has seen a 30-40% increase in first-day-of-class attendance since the introduction of interactive texting.

Keeping clients engaged with the programme not only delivers longer-term outcomes but also helps busy caseworkers more effectively target resources on those who are not engaging with the programme. There are also huge financial implications if the reintegration services are inefficient and ineffective. Text messaging is a quick and easy way to reach people wherever they are. The average response time to text messages sent as part of this initiative is just 15 minutes.

AVOIDABLE CONTACT CASE STUDIES

Broxtowe Borough Council

After implementing a customer-facing email updates service, Broxtowe saw a 58% decrease in the number of people needing to visit its recycling web pages over Christmas 2015/16, in comparison to the same period the year before. While the absence of severe weather in Broxtowe over Christmas 2015 may have contributed to the reduction in web traffic, the council had introduced its "Email Me" service during the year, in conjunction with social media activity, to help keep more residents informed.

Email Me provides e-bulletins on waste and recycling collection dates for subscribers, which are of particular support during holiday periods - when customer contact centres operate reduced opening hours.

This provision of bitesize info via email can reduce demand for more information via other channels – including online. Broxtowe's email bulletins provided residents with the information they needed about their collection calendar, avoiding the need for them to access service information via other means.

Vale of Glamorgan Council

New homelessness duties within The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 changed the way local authorities deal with homelessness cases within the principality. The act places a "strong duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness" and encourages those who may be at risk from homelessness to report any concerns at an early stage.

As a result, households which present their threat of homelessness early on provide the local authority greater opportunity to identify preventative measures that can remove the risk, and prevent homelessness.

Vale of Glamorgan Council found that case workers each had as many as 100 individual cases open at any one time. It was becoming a time consuming process regularly following up cases where clients had reported concerns, only to find that the initial support and solutions put in place by housing officers had successfully mitigated the risk of homelessness - and the case therefore no longer needed attention.

Identifying and closing these cases at an early stage leads to better casework management and allows resources to be focused on those most directly at risk of homelessness.

93%
of UK people have a mobile device that can send and receive texts.

5 SECONDS
is the average time it takes to read a text message.

98%
is the average open rate with text messages.

> We're now exploring using two-way SMS for future elections, so that staff can report issues with their polling station immediately and digitally, without having to wait or call.

-Shelley Bellamy, Communications Officer at Vale of Glamorgan Council

Vale of Glamorgan housing officers are starting to use Granicus' two-way SMS messaging services to keep in touch and up-to-date with the status of individual cases. Although the project is in its infancy, it is hoped that the pilot will help the council meet its statutory obligations to regularly review the housing status of at-risk clients, help reduce the amount of written correspondence, and shorten the process of closing cases that no longer present a risk of homelessness. This will free up limited resources for focusing on cases which represent the most pressing need for support by the authority.

Furthermore, two-way SMS can help to reduce the number of phone calls, face-to-face visits and written correspondence with customers. Previously, Vale of Glamorgan Council managed 73 visits over a 6-month period which cost nearly £1,500 in staff resources. Postage costs over 6 months for notifications relating to housing rent arrears and other breaches of tenancy add up to a further £1,500. On top of this, the council had to pay printing fees. By helping to replace and reduce the need for these communications and staff contact, two-way text messaging presents a huge opportunity for thousands of pounds worth of financial savings a year.

The SMS services will also be vital for notifying Homes4U applicants on the success of their bids for permanent social housing, allowing an applicant to promptly confirm their decision to accept or refuse the offer. This will help make efficiencies in the allocation of housing, reducing the number of phone calls, face-to-face visits and written correspondence with customers.

Engaging staff via digital channels

"We used our Granicus e-bulletin service to engage and recruit staff volunteers to help run polling stations on Election Day. On the day, we sent e-bulletins and SMS messages to the volunteers, communicating timely and important information, and motivational messages.

"Being able to send digital messages was particularly important for reaching staff in rural areas with poor signal. Being able to communicate proactively, by email and text, meant that our elections team spent less time fielding calls from staff at polling stations, allowing them to concentrate on other Election Day matters. Feedback from recipients was also positive and they appreciated the regular contact."

6 REDUCING DEMAND

...AND ADDING VALUE

It has been clear for some time that efficiency savings on their own are unlikely to address the increasing longer term financial pressure of reductions in direct funding, growing citizen demand and increasing expectations.

"Channel shift", "channel shove" or even "channel shut" as it has sometimes been described – turning off or restricting access to costlier contact channels – is undoubtedly helping to reduce operational costs and drive more efficient service delivery.

Evidence shows some channel shift programmes in local government have identified annual savings in the region of £1 million to £2 million – including those organisations seeking to achieve an 80% channel shift to online services. But as the financial pressures continue to grow, organisations are having to look to other ways to address the funding gap.

In the private sector, increased demand usually goes hand-in-hand with increased sales and profit. The contrary is often true in the public sector, increased demand typically leads to increased cost pressures and - at a time when resources are limited - to tough decisions on priorities and outcomes.

Engagement and dialogue with citizens and communities are essential when communicating the need for change and rationale behind the difficult decisions having to be made – whether that is closing a service, reducing access, or passing control and/or responsibility for delivery to the community or alternative providers, for example the third sector.

The phrase "learned helplessness" has begun to slip into the vocabulary of public service providers – the idea that some citizens and communities have become dependent on public services simply because they are there.

A recent NHS publicity campaign tries to address this by focusing on those who attend A&E when their needs could be met through other means – NHS 111, GP services, a local pharmacy, self-medication or simple prevention.

Reducing demand for services – either through finding other ways for citizens and communities to resolve a need, or removing or reducing the root cause of the demand - provides the opportunity to significantly reduce pressure on service delivery costs.

Considerable time is being invested in early identification and early intervention to try to reduce demand for direct services and/or to reduce long-term delivery costs.

Life events – having a baby, starting school, getting a job or setting up a business can offer a fixed point for what are sometimes known as anticipatory services.

As the public's appetite to access online resources increases, it has become evident from web analytics provided by the Department of Health (DoH) that

email alerts and e-bulletins are a significant tool in engaging with citizens and signposting them to relevant resources to reduce demand for face-to-face engagement.

DoH figures show email content sent though the GovDelivery Communications Cloud is the top source of referral traffic (visits that do not come through search engines) to the Dementia Challenge website and other DoH sites.

Subscribers to Public Health England's "Health Matters" e-bulletin regularly receive advice and encouragement on leading healthier lives and, in the recent Granicus whitepaper, "Measuring the Financial Value of a Subscriber", author Guy Dominy considers the financial value that can be accrued from informing people.

According to his findings, based on surveys of Granicus subscribers, when asked "has reading an e-alert influenced your behaviour in any way?", 43.8% of respondents claimed it had.

Just over 7% of respondents claimed that reading an e-alert had led them to postpone a journey because of a weather alert; 15% to take part in a leisure activity; 24% to attend an event; and 20% to visit a library.

Dominy notes that respondents often "over claim behaviours that they believe are seen as good", but nevertheless, these responses are clearly indicative of the benefits of positive and proactive communication, and the report is recommended reading.

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

HMRC understands that the fixed point of starting a new business is an opportune moment to engage with clients. By structuring a series of proactive and timely communications, HMRC is able to support a fledgling business through its first year of trading.

Choosing email as its preferred communications channel and the GovDelivery Communications Cloud as the delivery vehicle, HMRC sends out a mixture of reminders, training and awareness-raising content.

This regular contact aims to keep new businesses on track. It can help reduce compliance issues and the need for ad hoc contact with HMRC. Ultimately, the communications can

help ensure the right tax is paid and on time, minimising the need for expensive and time consuming recovery action.

This light-touch compliance regime keeps those most likely to cooperate (with a little nudge) to meet their obligations. The communications also reduce demand and free up resources, enabling HMRC to focus on businesses not meeting their obligations – either willfully or through lack of capability.

Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The Food Standards Agency has been using the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to support many of its food safety campaigns. As well as delivering urgent food safety alerts and product recalls – an important and potentially lifesaving service in its own right - the FSA uses the platform to support key behavioural change programmes.

It's estimated that foodborne diseases cost the UK economy 650,000 working days a year; this figure doesn't include the cost to the NHS nor, in extreme cases, the risk to life. There are about 1 million cases of foodborne disease each year in the UK. The Campylobacter bug is considered to be responsible for more than 280,000 cases of food poisoning each year and is the most common cause of food poisoning. The FSA's campaign 'Acting on Campylobacter Together' (ACT) set out to reduce the levels of Campylobacter in chicken by working with the whole industry.

Targeted communications – messages sent via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud – are supporting the FSA to change behaviours around the preparation of chicken. The Chicken Challenge Summer Campaign 2015 engaged nearly 19,000 email subscribers and it's estimated that this part of the overall ACT campaign reached more than 33 million people across all channels.

> **Targeted communications – messages sent via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud – are supporting the FSA to change behaviours around the preparation of chicken.**

The results of an FSA survey of Campylobacter on fresh shop-bought chickens for January to March 2016 continued to show a decrease both in the number of birds with Campylobacter on them and those with the highest level of contamination (in comparison to the same quarter last year). Undoubtedly, improved communication and tailored messaging are helping reduce instances of contamination and pressures on health services downstream.
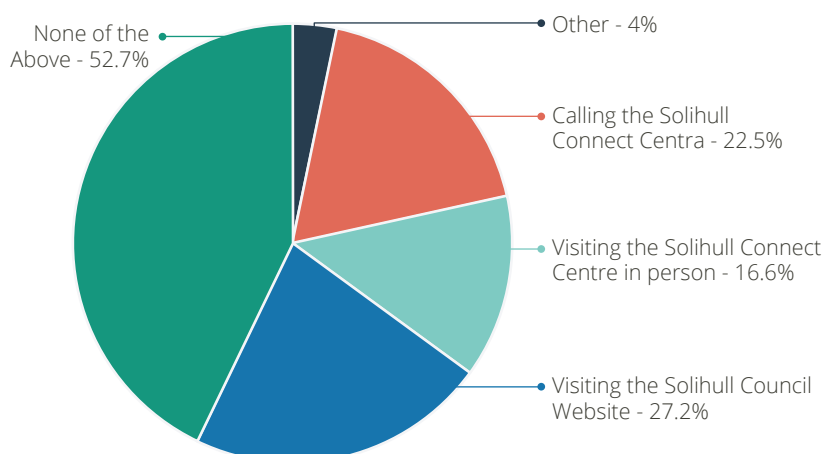
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Solihull recently surveyed 10,000 people subscribed to its Stay Connected email updates service. Of the respondents (450), 43% said e-updates had meant they had avoided the need to contact the council either face-to-face, over the phone, or online.

If the results of this sample are extrapolated and representative of behavioural change (and reducing demand) across Solihull's wider subscriber base, the council says "we can quantifiably demonstrate that our Stay Connected e-bulletins service (delivered via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud) is a financially worthwhile tool. If we achieve our current (and reachable) subscriber target of 20,000 residents, the e-bulletins service would pay for itself twice over in a year".

RESPONSES TO A SURVEY OF SUBSCRIBERS (MARCH 2016):

None of the Above - 52.7%

Other - 4%

Calling the Solihull Connect Centra - 22.5%

Visiting the Solihull Connect Centre in person - 16.6%

Visiting the Solihull Council Website - 27.2%

QUESTION:

Has the Stay Connected service helped you avoid any of the following?

7 INCREASING INCOME

...AND GENERATING GROWTH

In much the same way as the 2009 Spending Review was a step change in the direction of public service delivery, the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the subsequent regulations have started to reshape the way local government will collect and raise its funding in the future.

Not forgetting that reductions in direct central government funding will continue, the new opportunity for councils to retain business rates has opened up a debate on future models of local government finance.

Councils that have vibrant local economies, planning development opportunities and the ability to raise funds through increases in local taxation have spoken of "the self-financing" council. Those in more deprived areas, with less vibrant business sectors and communities less able to absorb increases in local taxation may be at a considerable disadvantage in such a model.

Devolution too has presented the chance to review and debate both geographic and structural models of democratic representation and what future service delivery might look like.

Whatever models emerge for local government, its ability to collect revenue and generate income are likely to play an increasing role in determining the level of financial security. Any decline in economic growth has the potential to impact both the levels of income local authorities will derive from the retention of business rates, and also the likelihood of increased council tax arrears.

Recent figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) put the amount of council tax outstanding in England at £2.7 billion (at 31/03/15) – "an increase of £129 million over the figure for 2013-14".

Maximising revenue collection and minimising default of both council tax and business rates will become increasingly critical. Engagement models to encourage and remind, similar to the HMRC model presented in the previous section, could increase collection and compliance rates and reduce debt recovery. In addition, income generation as a means of raising revenue or as a mechanism to offset existing delivery costs will become increasingly important to the public sector.

London Borough of Havering Council

The London Borough of Havering uses the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to reshape the way it delivers its garden waste collection scheme.

Prior to this, research indicated that customers weren't renewing before the end of their annual contract. Green boxes were being collected from customers only to be redelivered back to customers when they realised the contract had lapsed and needed to be renewed.

Using proactive communications to remind customers of the renewal deadlines has not only significantly reduced the lapse/renew rates, but also provides the opportunity to channel shift the renewals process online; for customers to self-serve. This now accounts for 98% of all renewals.

Not only did this new process deliver significant efficiencies and a better service for existing customers, it also grew the number of new customers, resulting in £350k extra income for the council.

Medicines & Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

The Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) encourages participation at pay-to-attend events. Last year, bookings directly through bulletins accounted for 25% of event attendees: £100,000 in fees. This year, website traffic delivered directly from the GovDelivery Communications Cloud platform accounted for 25% of all visitors to the events site.

Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council promotes arts and heritage workshops and activities using direct e-alerts to subscribers, sent via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud.

At July 2016, income for 2015/16 showed that nearly £40,000 of sales (26% of total sales) could be directly attributed to customer take-up via this route, realising savings on the annual promotions budget.

> I love finding out what's going on in the city entertainment wise, and the updates regarding road works are very helpful.
>
> *– A Southampton resident*

8 CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

…AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES

It has been understood for some time that encouraging behavioural change at an early stage (early intervention) can significantly reduce future costs - the forward liability - for a citizen, community or business.

In adult social care supporting people to remain in their own home and within their own community, for as long as they are able to do so, can substantially reduce the costs associated with long-term care support packages – the forward liability.

Many public sector organisations are now focusing on work aimed at reducing forward liability costs for both citizens and communities.

> Key to this is getting the right message to the right audience at the right time. Investing in early intervention activities can significantly reduce future cost pressures.

For example, some studies have suggested that a 1% reduction in childhood obesity could save the NHS up to £20 million a year in long-term reductions in adult cancer rates. Furthermore, a recent UNICEF report suggests that increased take-up of breastfeeding across the UK could save the NHS as much as £40 million a year.

If properly targeted, changes in behaviour can deliver measurable reductions in the forward liability costs: smoking cessation can have a significant impact on future health outcomes; keeping individuals out of the criminal justice has benefits for both citizens and communities. Figures suggest that the cost of sending someone to prison - the judicial process - can cost over £100,000 and the cost of keeping someone in prison exceeds £30,000 a year.

As well as encouraging behavioural change to reduce the risk of negative consequences, many organisations have been undertaking positive engagement campaigns that equally have the potential to reduce future or forward liability.

Healthcare.gov aka "Obamacare"

Healthcare provision in the US is primarily provided through personal health insurance – unlike the UK, where healthcare is paid for through general taxation.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Health Care Act – commonly known as "Obamacare" - which introduced health insurance reforms. The act recognised that there was a significant level of underinsurance within the healthcare sector and the potential future impact this could have both in financial and human terms.

According to healthcare.gov, the aim of the act was to make healthcare more "affordable, accessible and of higher quality". It was also recognised that enabling the legislation was only the first step in that process and encouraging more citizens to take out healthcare insurance or increase cover for those currently underinsured were key elements in delivering a positive outcome.

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2012 15% of the population did not have health insurance. By June 2014, 10.3 million adults age 18 – 64 had gained health insurance coverage since the first open enrolment period in October 2013. The uninsured rate among this age group had fallen by 26% by June 2014 (in comparison to the January 2012 - September 2013 baseline period).

In autumn 2015, estimates indicated that there were up to 10.5 million people eligible for the scheme, but who were still uninsured. Data also indicated that almost half of those uninsured were between 18 and 34 years old, and that many in this group would qualify for financial help towards their monthly premium.

By using email and SMS messaging sent via the GovDelivery Communications Cloud, the US Department of Health & Human Services was able to drive up public engagement with the healthcare. gov website and this accounted for over 18 million site visits during the 2016 open enrolment period (November 2015 – February 2016). Through direct response outreach activity, hundreds of thousands more people have been able to gain the health insurance they need.

Sheffield City Council

Sheffield City Council's Big Switch Campaign uses email to encourage residents to sign up to an energy saving scheme. Increased signup maximises the community's collective buying power and increases the chances of securing a cheaper tariff from suppliers.

Previous campaigns using more traditional communication channels hadn't produced huge results – there had been just 1,800 scheme registrants in 2014 - leading to an average saving of around £220 per household.

Switching tactics to an email-driven campaign increased registrations to over 4,000, and last year secured an average saving of £303 per household - an increase in the average saving of 38% on the previous year, and a £1.3 million overall saving for local people.

This is an important contribution to residents at a time when household incomes are under pressure and, according to Department of Energy and Climate Change figures for 2014, 10.6% of households in England were in "fuel poverty".

EMERGENCIES
...AND MAJOR INCIDENTS

"Nigel could soon be laying waste to the shores of Britain and Ireland"
was one newspaper headline when the Met Office published a new list of
storm names for autumn winter 15/16.

Storm Abigale would hit the UK in early November 2015 and the New Year storms of Desmond and Eva would leave over 16,000 homes flooded, according to estimates.

In the US, over 50 million people were advised to stay at home in late January 2016 during what was nicknamed #snowmageddon - a huge snowstorm that paralysed the east coast of America.

Irrespective of the cause, natural or otherwise, emergencies often come with little warning, but with the requirement for public services to respond quickly and often at scale. Most public sector organisations have responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act and many will be category 1 responders.

> Communication is a key part of any emergency and/or major incident strategy - getting the right messages, to the right people and at the right time can be a matter of life and death.

GovDelivery's cloud-based communications platform has been supporting agencies in both the UK and US to manage their civil contingency responsibilities, providing the capacity to send

out mass communications to help keep the public informed and safe.

At GovDelivery, scalability and resilience are at the heart of operations. Cloud networks ensure conditions on the ground don't impact the ability to get messages to citizens at critical moments, and capacity within the system provides for increased message volumes at the time of greatest need, including warnings, reassurance and storm progress messaging.

During the weekend of US storm Jonas, over 550 different messages were sent to millions of US citizens; weather updates, safety messages, transport messages and calls for volunteers all featured in the response by government agencies.

Being able to target by location and by community is also an important part of the process. Targeting appropriate messages, to the appropriate audience, ensures the broader community is not unduly sent less relevant messages - keeping the channel clear for priority interventions.

Not all incidents are of the scale and magnitude of storms Abigale or Jonas, but the need to communicate quickly and authoritatively with residents and businesses is critical to any incident management plan.
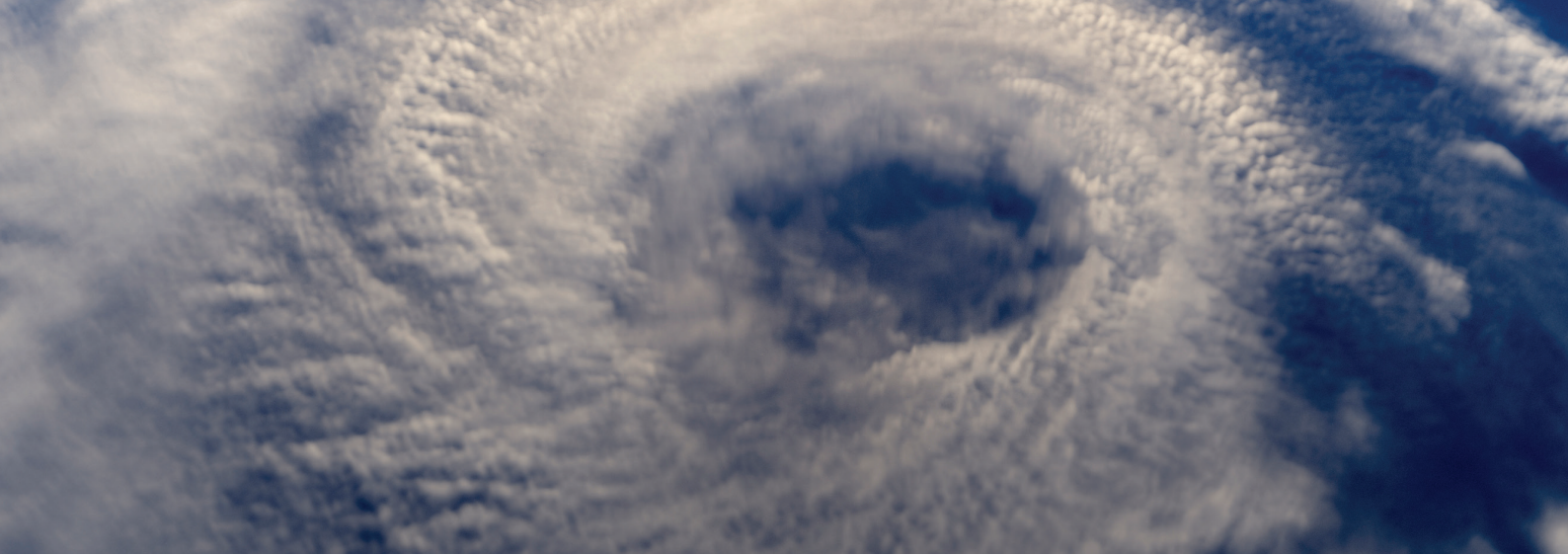
In the UK the weather outlook is a constant source of conversation, but sometimes it requires actions rather than just passing comment. In 2011, the Met Office used the GovDelivery Communications Cloud to send over 20 million email messages including over 4 million email messages in a 24-hour period during one particular storm.

Subscription rates typically rise before a storm hits. West Sussex County Council experienced a similar increase before the floods of 2013. This is a clear indication that the public considers this means of communication a direct, reliable and authoritative channel during times of potential crisis. Whether it is schools closed due to bad weather, a fire at an industrial estate or in the case of one council, a possible chemical leak – where over 30,000 email messages were sent, with an open rate of nearly 50% - compared to a Facebook audience of around 7,000 followers - the right message to the right audience at the right time is imperative.

Similarly, travel advice alerts issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office remain some of the most popular links issued through the GovDelivery Network. Recent advice on Egypt received over 200,000 clicks.

Sometimes emergency messaging isn't just about information, it is also about assurance and reassurance and the importance of being a trusted voice.

"When we went through Hurricane Irene, the town was heavily criticized for lack of communications, even though we were pushing out communications through many channels. Still, our residents and property owners didn't get the information they needed. With GovDelivery, after Hurricane Sandy, we saw very little criticism of our communications. Honestly, we felt people were thrilled with the communications after the storm, which was a huge win for us in gaining back the trust of our stakeholders.

- Jessica Waters, Communications Manager, Ocean City, Maryland

Cumbria County Council

The winter storms of December 2015 and January 2016 caused widespread damage across the UK, with areas like Cumbria particularly badly affected.

Damage from Storm Desmond included a key section of the A591 between Keswick and Grasmere. The road had to remain closed until early May and caused significant disruption to traffic in the area.

During this period, Cumbria County Council used the GovDelivery platform to help keep residents updated not only on the immediate impact of the storm – road and bridge closures - but also on the extensive and lengthy clean-up operations. Long after the flood waters had subsided residents were still following traffic advice from road closure e-bulletins.

Local Flood Recovery e-bulletins also kept locals informed of funding and support schemes for both residents and businesses, council tax and business rates support schemes, alternative schooling arrangements for those damaged in the flooding, including temporary shuttle bus arrangements, advice on infectious diseases, emotional support and details of Flood Resilience Grants.

The Met Office helps to protect lives, property and infrastructure from the impacts of weather through the delivery of the National Severe Weather Warning Service.

We typically reach about 80% of the public in regions at risk of severe weather through our digital services and working with media partners. Ensuring digital proximity and a pervasive digital eco-system are essential to our core mission in helping to protect the UK from the impacts of disruptive weather.

- Richard Orrell, Deputy Head Public Weather Service, Met Office

10 THE VALUE OF ENGAGEMENT

Granicus communications, data and learning platforms have been supporting the business of government for over 16 years.

With roots in the US and working with organisations from the city of Louisville, Kentucky, to agencies at the highest level of federal government, plus the European Parliament and European Space Agency in Europe, the GovDelivery platform has, for the past 12 years, also been serving customers across the UK, including central government, unitary and county councils, district councils, fire and rescue services, and public sector housing providers.

Working with over 180 UK organisations, GovDelivery's citizen engagement technology now serves over 9.5 million email subscribers in the UK and 120 million worldwide. This network of subscribers is what makes the GovDelivery platforms unique in the government technology sector.

Working with such a varied spectrum of organisations has provided the opportunity to learn a huge amount about how the business of government works and understand how, in recent years, the platforms have increasingly been used to help deliver major transformation and change programmes - programmes driven by the financial pressures of reduced public sector funding and increased citizen demand, particularly in areas such as health and social care.

From this understanding of the current financial pressures, it is recognised that there are no simple solutions and efficiency savings alone will not meet the scale of the financial challenges being faced by those providing public services.

Whatever business outcomes are being delivered, internally or externally, there is now a need, more than ever, to connect and engage with people. Connection and engagement rely primarily on two key things – the number of people being reached and the likelihood that they will read and take action on the strength of that connection.

While social media still grabs the communication headlines for the right, and sometimes for the wrong reasons, email and SMS messaging remain among the most effective channels for communicating and engaging people, and prompting them to take decisive action.

You could have the best strategy in the world but if it doesn't connect with an audience it's like a tree falling in the forest.

- Scott Burns, Founder of GovDelivery (which has become Granicus)

11 THE POWER OF THE NETWORK

The GovDelivery Communications Cloud has seen email subscriber rates climb to more than 9.5 million users in the UK. In some areas of the country, the London Borough of Havering for example, subscriber numbers are equivalent to 49% of the population. HMRC now has over 1 million registered business subscribers.

Last year's GovDelivery whitepaper "Measuring the Financial Value of a Subscriber", by Guy Dominy, focused on identifying the financial value that could be placed on each individual subscriber and is a recommended read.

GovDelivery engagement technologies help organisations maximise the value of their subscribers through generating increased subscription numbers.

Southampton City Council can reach the equivalent of 45% of the city's population via its "Stay Connected" digital updates service delivered through the GovDelivery Communications Cloud. Engagement rates often in excess of 60% further demonstrate citizens' appetite for digital content and online access to services. Each subscriber and their subscriptions to different "topics" are of huge potential value to councils.

Hertsmere Borough Council doubled their subscriber numbers after implementing the GovDelivery platform, and on average over the last 12 months, UK organisations using GovDelivery's Communications Cloud gained 38,000 new subscribers from within the GovDelivery Network a month. From all sources, the UK network grows by 405,000 subscribers a month.

Organisations who offer email and text messaging services as part of their default "My Account" functionality have also found that using the GovDelivery platform can further boost subscription rates.

For example, research by London Borough of Havering Council indicates that using GovDelivery has increased the number of registered My Account users. Increasing reach and citizen engagement are key to delivering successful channel shift initiatives and can help to broaden the subscriber base beyond the council tax bill payer. There's also the opportunity to engage a much wider community,

> While it is relatively easy to build a new website, introduce a CRM, or deploy a multitude of online transactions, it's much more difficult to build an audience. Your investments are only fully realised or of any real benefit when people use the services you've built. And only when they do so in large numbers.
>
> *- Dave Worsell, Managing Director of GovDelivery Europe*

including families, carers, students, tourists, employees, businesses and many more audiences - locally and further afield.

GovDelivery provides the unique opportunity to be part of a much wider "network", allowing organisations to benefit from subscribers who are signed up to updates from other agencies in the network.

The principle is simple – subscribe to one organisation's digital updates and you'll be offered the opportunity to subscribe to other relevant organisations' updates – a "you may also be interested in" style of cross-promotion. Such recommendations can be based on interest or geographic location.

This is one of the cornerstones of the GovDelivery community and has helped organisations who don't necessarily have high visitor numbers – the Office of National Statistic (ONS) for example – experience massive subscriber growth of 554%.

The number of subscribers gained through the network can in some cases represent the majority of an organisation's subscriber base – 90% for the UK Space Agency, for example.

The contribution that the wider GovDelivery Network makes in building organic growth on this scale is not usually associated with standalone products or self-build platforms. On average, growth from the wider GovDelivery Network represents a "network impact" of 77%.*

*Network impact = "network subscribers" (people subscribing to an organisation's updates via the GovDelivery Network) divided by "direct subscribers" (people subscribing directly via the organisation's web properties).

The Government Digital Service (GDS) – which is leading the digital transformation in UK government – emphasises the need to move away from assumption-based decision-making to a more robust and data-driven decision-making process when designing and building digital services. In its recent guidance to service designers, GDS published a poster with the title "find what works, not what's popular".

While email and SMS messaging may not make the headlines the way some social media channels do, research undertaken by North Lanarkshire Council found that 11% engage through the council's social media channels (likes/shares/clicks) as opposed to 29% of subscribers opening emails sent through the GovDelivery platform. The number of email subscribers is approximately equal to the council's combined Twitter and Facebook following.

For Southampton City Council and the London Borough of Havering, their social media following – both Facebook and twitter combined - represents around only 25% of their email subscriber numbers.

But measuring success – i.e. "what works" - shouldn't simply be seen as a numbers game, and sending a message (even if it's to 9.5 million people) has little value if nobody reads it.

The GovDelivery Communications Cloud measures both breadth and depth of engagement – breadth, in terms of subscriber numbers and depth in relation to engagement analytics, including open rates and click-through figures. Unique identifiers allow every interaction to be tracked and measured. The analysis of each communication's performance - available via user-friendly dashboards and reports - enables organisations to refine their activities and improve campaigns in-motion, to help maximise engagement rates.

Reliability

Deliverability is vital. Being a platform used by both US and UK governments, an email sent through the GovDelivery Communications Cloud must arrive in inboxes. Work behind the scenes ensures that emails are "whitelisted" and therefore far less likely to be caught by spam or junk filters. Guaranteed delivery is very important particularly for messages such as food safety alerts and weather warnings, and can be critical during emergencies and major incidents.

Real-time analytics present data on what is being read, by whom and when. During one emergency incident a local authority sent 30,000 emails through the GovDelivery Communications Cloud. Ninety-eight percent of those emails were delivered and 10,000 opened. Being able to target subscribers by location and retarget those who have not engaged with an email can be critical to ensuring the message reaches the right people, and is as widely received as possible. Functionality that's useful for day-to-day communications may, in some cases, be a lifesaver during an emergency situation.

Clearly, when a story does go viral on social media, it is the most powerful way to spread information and quickly. But much social media content doesn't naturally gain a high degree of traction. There can be many reasons for this – the volume of content can make timeline discovery more difficult; the increasing use of "pay-to-play" (charges to increase the reach) and the introduction of algorithmic timelines – where complex mathematical equations decide what content should appear within a user's timeline - may well contribute to a lack of engagement.

Engagement rates through GovDelivery, as seen for organisations like the Office for National Statistics (ONS) can be as high as 69%. 2015 data from Ofcom on "weekly online communication activities" suggests that use of email is, overall, still around 15% higher than social media use – in the over-65-age-group this increases to 34%.

A survey of Southampton City Council's subscribers revealed that 94% said they feel more informed about the council and its work. Similarly, Nottinghamshire County Council asked the same question of its subscribers and found that 90% of respondents felt more informed about the work of the council as a result of receiving regular updates via email – helping not only to build trust and credibility, but also supporting the necessary engagement as a driver for real and lasting change.

Space may still represent the final frontier, but according to newspaper reports, astronaut Tim Peake emailed his Aunty Sue from the International Space Station.

While not everyone's received an email from space, the UK and European space agencies used the GovDelivery platform to keep over 240,000 subscribers up-to-date with Tim's 6-month stay on the International Space Station.

> "
>
> The more subscribers we have, the more we will increase awareness of our outputs and traffic to the website, which goes a long way to managing our reputation.
>
> *The Office For National Statistics (ONS)*

UK SUBSCRIBER MAP
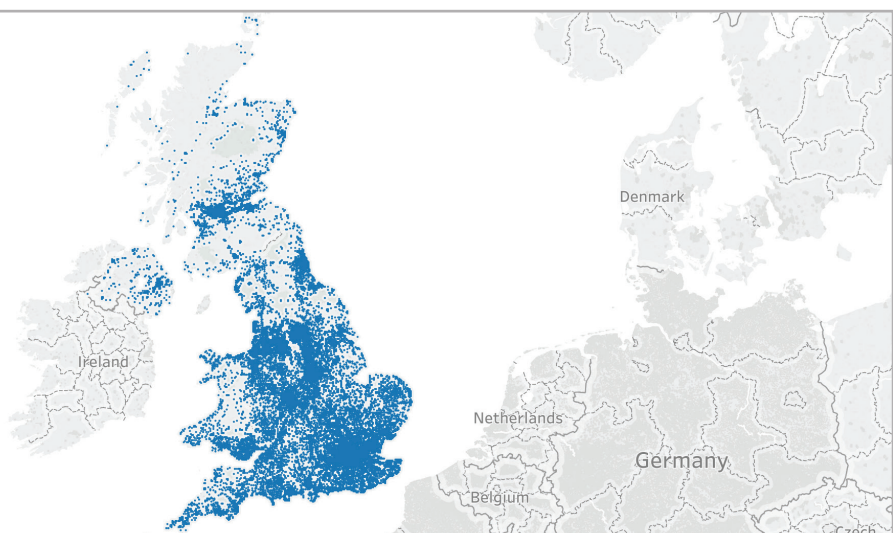
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nigel Bishop has over 20 years of experience working in the public sector.

In his last role as Head of Customer Involvement at Shropshire Council, he was responsible for a diverse range of services, including IT, customer services, communications, web, digital, print, branding and welfare reform.

Nigel is passionate about boosting society's engagement in digital content and online services. He has a keen interest in how technology can be used to improve the way citizens access public services and also support the voluntary sector.

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uk.granicus.com