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Making life better by design

# Pioneering the use of design in public services.

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## What's the challenge we've identified?

Design is still underused by many local government professionals as they seek to develop and deliver complex public services with fewer resources

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## What did we do and what have we achieved?

Demonstrated the value of a design through national Challenge programmes

Built design capability among public sector service providers and showed the importance of putting people at the heart of services

Created advocates for design approaches within the public sector

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## What have we learnt?

Public service teams may need additional and ongoing support to implement service redesign

Getting senior leadership engagement is critical

There is a need to think systemically and deeply about challenges

## Our key achievements over the last 15 years

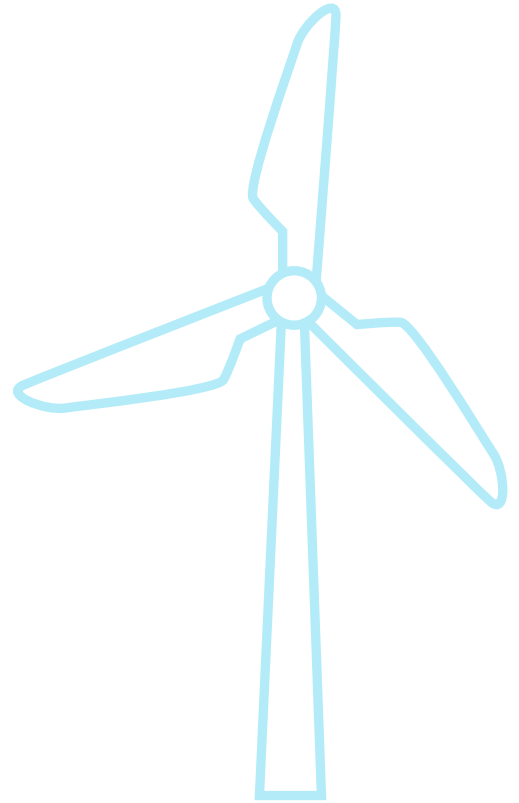
# Pioneering the use of design in public services

# 70

**local authorities  
supported to use design**

Since 2015, we have been working in partnership with Local Government Association to deliver our Design in the Public Sector programme.

We have helped these local authorities address a range of issues, including: preventing social isolation, taking local action on climate change, and improving pathways for domestic violence and abuse services.



# £400,000

**in public  
funding  
secured**

We have been instrumental in helping these local authorities secure almost £400,000 in public funding to work on local social challenges, achieving outcomes such as: increasing the number of vulnerable children into supportive services, increasing digital access to healthcare, and making the planning process more efficient.

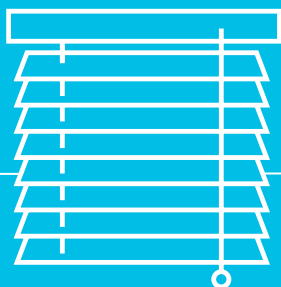
## 60 cross-sector teams in 10 Challenge programmes

We enabled over 60 cross-sector teams to develop new products or services through our Challenge programmes. Key outcomes from these programmes included:



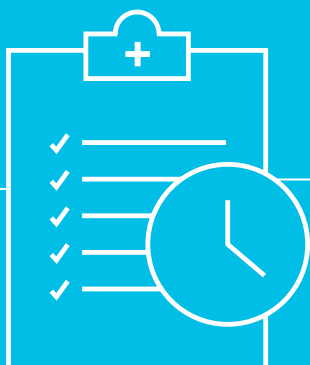
**25%** reduction in parent stress

Families feeling more connected to their communities and a 25% reduction in parent stress (Knee-High Challenge).



**15** new dignity related products

Fast-tracked development of 15 new privacy and dignity related products in six months (Design for Patient Dignity programme).



**£3** worth of benefits for every £1 spent

Improved A&E patient waiting experience and a return on investment of £3 worth of benefits to £1 spent on design solutions. (Reducing violence and aggression in A&E programme).



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## Treatment

### Resuscitation

For people with  
life-threatening  
injuries or illness

### Major Injuries/Illness


For people with  
very urgent  
injuries or illness

### Tests


We may need  
to find out more  
about your injury  
or illness

### Minor Injuries/Illness

For people with  
less urgent  
injuries or illness



You will  
be treated  
in order  
of urgency



You may have  
to wait while  
we process  
test results  
to decide on the  
best treatment

Your journey



## What's the challenge we've identified?

Increasingly, the public sector is being asked to deliver complex services with fewer resources. This is the context of significant societal challenges – the range of social, cultural, political, economic, commercial and environment factors that impact on health inequality and personal wellbeing in the UK being one example. There is a need to support new ways of working and delivering services with a focus on prevention and empowering local citizens.

Achieving these efficiencies will require a long-term shift away from delivering remedial services tackling challenges as they arise, and towards designing a more preventative approach. An effective public sector that delivers value for money is one with a clearly defined mission and outcomes, which also empowers citizens to shape the design and delivery of their local services. It requires thinking not just about individual services, but across systems and sectors. Design as a skillset and a mindset can support this transition.

In the public sector there has been an awakening in recent years to the value of design. As a result, service design is becoming a key part of local authority provision, making many key public services more responsive and better able to deal with the challenges of the modern world. But there is still significant untapped potential for expanding design methodologies and skills into our public sector, particularly in the planning space. Resource constraints are a constant struggle for central government and local authorities, but people's needs can often be met through innovation and the willingness to re-frame challenges and focus on the service users.



# 01 What did we do and what have we achieved?

## Demonstrated the value of a design through national Challenge programmes

Working closely with national government departments, from 2008 to 2016 we ran ten Challenge programmes aimed at demonstrating how a design approach could be used on complex social challenges, such as health and wellbeing, crime and employment. Our first challenge was 'Design Bugs Out' in 2008 with the Department of Health and the NHS, with the aim to identify an innovative, workable and sustainable solution to reduce patients' exposure to transmittable diseases during their stay in hospital.

A Challenge programme typically involved:

1. Deep user research and ethnography to better understand the issue, and often reframe the challenge.
2. Designers supported with funding, expert mentoring and access to target end-user groups to develop testable prototypes of their design-led solutions.
3. After development, shortlisted projects invited to pilot and showcase how design, with great innovation and minimal risk, can effectively confront complex social challenges.





Independent evaluations have demonstrated the positive impact of these design-led approaches, such as:

- The [Knee-High Challenge](#) produced innovation that led to families feeling more connected to their communities and a reduction in parent stress.
- Our [Working Well Challenge](#) resulted in young people gaining transferable skills, building confidence and finding employment.
- [Design for Patient Dignity](#) supported the development of 15 new privacy and dignity related products that were easy to use, empowering for patients and protected their dignity, modesty and confidentiality.

Over 60 teams developed new products or services, many of which are still in the market, such as:

- [Buddi band](#) (Living Well With Dementia). Buddi got to prototype stage during the challenge, and now supports service users across more than four-fifths of UK local authorities, as well as Government clients around the world.
- [PlantLock](#) (Design Out Crime). This can be seen safely and beautifully demarcating bike lanes across London, the United States, Europe and even in a bike shop in Melbourne, Australia.
- [Pearson Lloyd's A&E Guidance Solution](#) (Reducing violence and aggression in A&E). Now implemented in seventeen hospitals in the UK and Australia.



## 02

## Built design capability among public sector service providers and showed the importance of putting people at the heart of services

From our learning with Challenge programme, we knew that the first part of the design process, in which stakeholders should come to a shared understanding of their challenge and their user needs, was too often rushed or overlooked.

Our Design in the Public Service (DiPS) programme was developed in 2013 with the specific aim – in addition to developing better public services for local communities – of developing the design skills of those developing, commissioning and delivering local services. There was a focus on the first phase of the Double Diamond: encouraging a step back to explore the challenge, redefine the challenge and take forward ideas to prototype, test and iterate.

- Since 2015, DiPS has been delivered in partnership with the Local Government Association, in more than 70 Local Authorities throughout the UK.
- Together, they have received almost £400,000 in public funding to work on local social challenges.

This is done through a series of five-day workshops and ongoing mentoring with our Design Associates, where the participants (who can range from local councillors to nature conservationists, planning officers to policemen) are guided through the Framework for Innovation and taught design techniques including user research.

As one participant told us: “Until now, we have always done work that is delivered ‘to’ families. They were never engaged at the beginning of the programme. From now on, the collaborative approach will always be an essential part of the work I do”.

We have used this model as part of many public sector innovation programmes. The figures below show our success in the last year.

Some 86% of participants considered design approaches ‘very relevant’ to the public sector after the programme.



9 in 10 participants felt that the programme helped clarify their challenge, making it easier to move forward.

Participants gained specific design skills, such as confidence in challenge exploration, increased by as much as 40%.



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“Working in local authority settings in a demanding, resource-limited role can often make you very reactive. This means that whilst you deliver (something), it is not always the best or the most necessary solution. This [Public Sector Innovation programme] taught me to take a massive step back and really understand the problem before even considering the brief.”

Public services innovation programme participant, Haringey Council

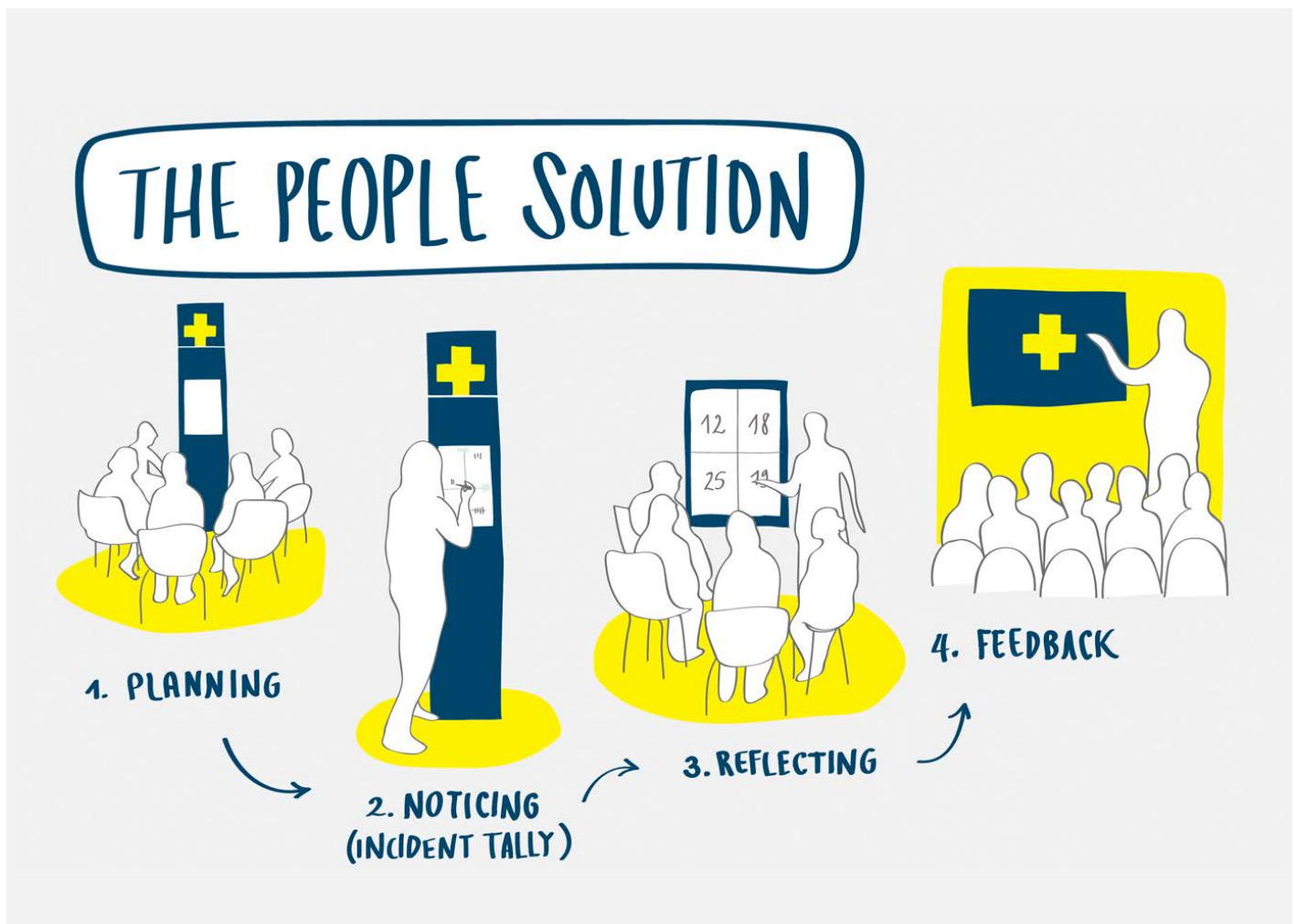
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## Case study

### Reducing violence and aggression in A&E

Violence in our A&Es costs the NHS at least £69m a year in staff absences alone, with as many as 59,000 physical assaults on staff a year, a figure which continues to rise. A normal response would have been to install glass screens and security guards at reception. But by using the Double Diamond approach and spending time with patients in A&E to understand their experiences, they realised that the real issue is lack of information about what is going on, which is exacerbated when patients are worried about themselves or loved ones. This led to solutions around better signage which reduced the number of incidents of aggressive behaviours from patients by 50% in the three hospitals where it was trialled and led to improvements in patient experience. To date, 17 NHS Trusts have installed the solution with warm leads in implementing this system in countries across Europe and beyond.







## Minor injuries

In Minor Injuries we treat people who are not in immediate danger from their injury or illness.



We aim to treat you as quickly as possible. If you would like an approximate waiting time, please ask.

Please be aware that it can be difficult to predict waiting times accurately, as some patients take longer to assess and treat than others.



You will be seen by a doctor or an emergency nurse practitioner. Please ask if you do not understand anything they discuss with you.

You may then have to wait for some tests or treatment, or to be seen by a specialist doctor.



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# 03

## Created advocates for design approaches within the public sector

As well as adding value to specific challenges in the public sector, our programmes also create advocates for design approaches within the public sector, who can apply their design skills and mindsets to further challenges.

In 2019, in our public sector innovation programmes:

- 2 in 5 participants came to us with only a limited knowledge of design.
- Some 93% of participants in our public sector innovation programmes shared approaches they learnt through the programme with colleagues.

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“Bringing together colleagues from across health, adult social care and the voluntary sector has been really powerful in its own right... the shared experience of going through [the programme] will enable us to continue to use the tools and techniques long after the programme has ended, because we’ve all had a stake in it.”

Participant, East Sussex coastline programme

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“We genuinely believe that public sector leaders need to acquire design skills if they are to stand a reasonable chance of reshaping and refashioning the services for which they are responsible. Design offers a fresh approach to rethinking policy, redrawing professional practice and reshaping service delivery.”

Barry Quirk, Chief Executive of Lewisham Council, London

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“This was a brilliant ‘gamble’ for me professionally to bring this together (not really a gamble though as I knew the methods and approach would gain traction).”

Darrel Gale, East Sussex County Council

## Case study

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### Increasing uptake of health checks in Southwark

In 2018, Design Council supported Southwark Council to increase the uptake of its free NHS health check – designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. At the time, around half of those invited for the check did not attend. As a part of our Design in the Public Sector programme with the Local Government Association, we helped the council look into the reasons behind this and engage people in different ways. The following year, Southwark became the first local authority to offer a digital version of the check, saving people the need to book face-to-face appointments. Since the trial launched in January 2019, over 300 people who had not taken up a face-to-face check went on to complete the digital version. Some 10% of participants were found to be at high risk of cardiovascular disease and have since been advised to contact their GPs.

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## Case study

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### Helping reinvent Amble

Design Council worked alongside Northumberland County Council, Amble Development Trust and the design agency TEAM, with the community of [Amble](#) after it lost the last of its major employers in 2010. With help from one of our experienced Design Associates starting in 2012, residents worked together to redesign their existing services and reinvent the fishing port as a major tourist destination, creating new jobs and opportunities. In 2015 Amble won the High Street of the Year award (Coastal Community Category) and in 2019 it was listed in the Sunday Times as one of the top places to live by the sea. Today, more than £8m has been invested in Amble's regeneration with a further £10m earmarked for future projects.



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# What have we learnt?

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## Sometimes a helping hand is needed through development

Our work in the public sector has primarily been in the first diamond in the Double Diamond. We see gains in various design skills from public sector participants, with slightly less development in confidence around testing and prototyping. There can be a real difference in understanding in principle how to take forward ideas to test and prototype, and navigating the development stage, where teams can face additional challenges around support to continue development or secure follow-on funding given the pressures on public sector resources. We know that design involves continuous feedback and iteration of the service. Providing interim care and mentoring could give security and additional benefits to teams moving into the second diamond.

## Public service teams may need additional and ongoing support to implement service redesign

Taking a design approach can be a leap into the unknown for those that have not used similar approaches before. It requires confidence to invest the time and resources in a process that will challenge understanding of local need and what should be done. While this takes time in the initial stages, it can reap wider benefits in the long run. Advocates for design at a senior level, to ensure the necessary resources are allocated and that there is long-term commitment, are critical to achieving positive results. This is the reason leadership is one of the key components of our Framework for Innovation, as it can act as an important enabler or barrier to design projects.

## There is a need to think systematically and deeply on challenges

The projects we see in our public sector innovation programmes are often complex, interlinked and require more than one answer. Increasingly, there is a need to work systematically and deeply on challenges. We have been looking at this particularly on issues relating to the wider determinants on health and wellbeing, undertaking work with the Health Foundation and Local Government Association. We need to look beyond individual sectors, and explore the value in convening public, private and third sectors to explore innovative solutions, as we have done on Transform Ageing.



Our *Making life better by design* series tells the story of Design Council's impact over the last 15 years. It shows how design has contributed to three major areas of the economy – business innovation, public services and places – as well as how Design Council has helped to clarify what design is and champion its use.

This chapter shows the role Design Council has played in helping local and national government to use design to reshape key services and develop new products.

To find out more visit:

**[designcouncil.org.uk/our-impact](https://designcouncil.org.uk/our-impact)**



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