

# Citizen communication and information management

A new approach to reducing  
cost and increasing public  
satisfaction





## The challenge

With the UK dealing with the fallout of the biggest financial storm since the 1920s, it's no surprise that local authorities are having to work through profound knock-on effects. On a macro scale, the government is faced with the challenge of having to stimulate growth and slash investment as the tightest fiscal controls for a generation are imposed. The implications for local government are similar. Faced with dramatically slashed budgets, they must deliver savings at the same time as driving up levels of service, engagement and openness. The challenge is vast: find a way of negotiating this apparent contradiction and emerge the other side of the crisis leaner, fitter and more efficient. Doing things in the same old way for less spend is not an option: while that might offer savings, it will not deliver the radically upgraded service improvements. It is clear that a fresh approach based on innovative thinking and new technology is required.

While the public sector focus is on 'more for less' other drivers, particularly around communications and information management, cannot be ignored. The coalition government has defined increased public engagement and improved transparency as key aims alongside public sector savings. The squeeze on spending is right at the heart of economic policy and its impact on communications and information management is likely to be huge.

The 'right to data' is a key platform in the Government's Big Society agenda. Local government in particular has been set tight deadlines to publish all new items of spending over £500 and all new local government contracts and tender documents over £500 by January 2011. The Public Sector Transparency Board has set out the principles of publishing that data in an open, linked way.

The Race Online 2012 initiative aims to enable more of the public to engage with government online. At the same time the proliferation in digital platforms opens up opportunities to deliver services through new channels.

Local government has no alternative but to meet the challenges head on and make sure they swim, rather than sink. So what is the answer? To find out, it's worth standing back and trying to gain an overview of the situation from a fresh perspective.

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## Squaring the circle: redefining information

Given the pace of change in information *technology*, it is perhaps not surprising that information *management* in the public sector has struggled to keep up. All solutions need to be underpinned by technology to make them efficient but they also need to be managed effectively. For example, call centres are underpinned by IT but unless the information is properly managed, a service that should be adding value can become a fire-fighting operation and a considerable overhead. The same can apply to billing services. If the information on a bill isn't managed, a bill itself can easily become a problem, raising customer dissatisfaction levels, adding to the workload of call centres and damaging the reputation of the product or service provider.

For local government, management issues are compounded by the astonishing volume, and variety, of information flows it deals with. From school admissions to care packages, council tax to voting registration, housing benefit to tourism guides, planning permissions to food safety regulations – all require managing and processing. Given the sheer size of this data tsunami, it is hardly surprising that managers find it difficult to step back and explore more efficient ways of managing information, cutting costs and engaging better with the public. What is more, each type of communication is traditionally handled by a different department. Again, this makes it hard to look at the issue as a whole and make root and branch reforms.

What local government needs then is a new approach that changes the game. In the face of political and economic realities, this new approach could and should stimulate local and central government to look at information in radically new ways that make full use of the technology available and lead to costs savings and greater citizen engagement. In other words, the need to engage better with end users becomes the *key* to finding savings, rather than a barrier.

This radical solution does exist but it requires a shift in thinking. Just as finance and HR have been brought together, so too can these communications and information management activities in all their variety and complexity. And by considering outsourcing, there are clear additional benefits. Non-core operations that may have suffered from a lack of investment are overhauled and transformed, delivering savings at the same time as boosting service levels. But before we go into the actual process, it is worth examining the whole area of communications and information management to see how it can be reconfigured.



Managing the communication lifecycle more effectively delivers benefits for local government and citizens

## Changing the game: a new look at communications

In the private sector, businesses such as Williams Lea have specialised in using an array of management tools and technology to re-engineer communication flows, reduce costs by up to 30%, and improve engagement with end users.

The first stage of the process is to identify the different types of information and communications that flow through an organisation. These can be defined as *individual* communications such as street parking permits and council tax notifications that may need a high level of personalisation and need to be processed efficiently, and *broadcast* communications such as announcing recycling initiatives, where it is important that the right channel is used to gain the best results. Communications can be broken down further into *proactive* communications to generate a result and *reactive* communications driven by an event.

Successful communications depend on how information is managed as it flows through an organisation. We can look at this process as a series of stages within a lifecycle, all of which can benefit from good management.

- 1) Stage one puts systems in place to capture and process data coming into the organisation, ensuring that information flows are as simple as possible. This can involve scanning all printed and written material on receipt, indexing it automatically and distributing it directly to the right person.
- 2) Stage two concentrates on the control of data, ensuring it is structured properly and that checks and processes are put in place to ensure personal data is secure.
- 3) Stage three puts systems in place that enable information to be shared across the organisation and opens up public information for re-use in line with the Public Sector Transparency Board principles.
- 4) Stage four focuses on information channels, offering choice to end users, enabling increased self-service and easier, faster access to public information, at the same time reducing cost by enabling a channel shift online.
- 5) Stage five is about creating communications that deliver results, improving the quality, clarity and consistency of information.
- 6) The final stage completes the circle by streamlining inbound and outbound processes to deliver fewer reasons for complaint and higher trust and confidence in the council.

The process is transformative. To take one example, faulty billing systems and confusing bills not only damage an organisation's reputation and create a barrier to engagement, but also lead directly to increased overheads by driving people to a call centre or through a complaints process – the sort of engagement all organisations seek to avoid. By way of contrast, rigorous analysis and a complete overhaul of the system will result in communication becoming simpler and more effective, with information presented for maximum clarity and impact and through the most appropriate channels for the end users. Going further, when fully exploited it can be a highly effective communications tool – all the more important when councils face restrictions on their ability to send out publicity material.

Williams Lea is the world leader in delivering Business Process Outsourcing for information management and communications.

## Outsourcing: a viable proposition

Once the movement of information through an organisation is defined as a series of stages, or transactions, it becomes an end-to-end, manageable process that supports managers, professionals and councillors. In most cases, this is quite separate from the core activity of an organisation and so becomes a viable outsourcing proposition.

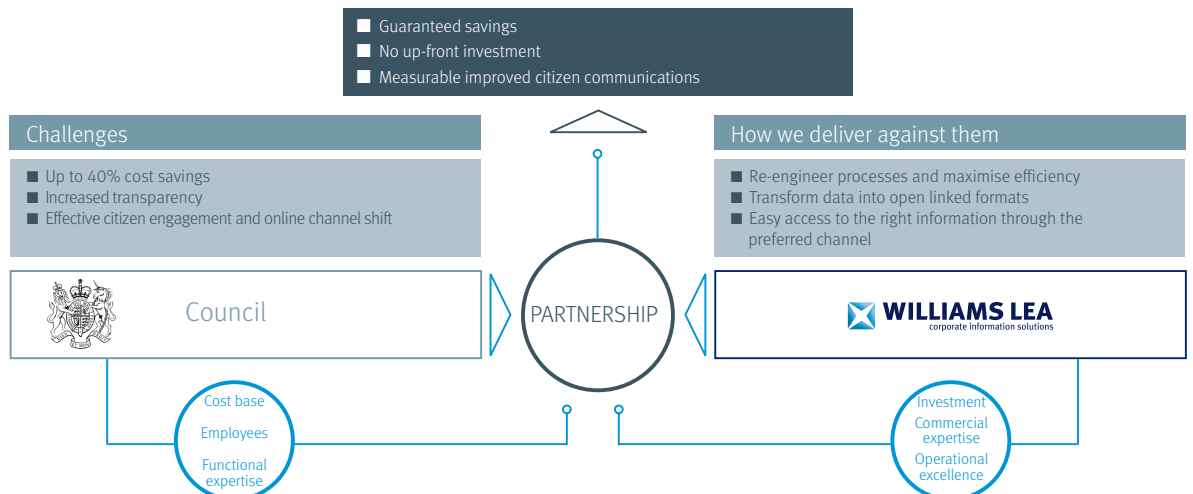
Williams Lea is the world leader in delivering Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) for information management and communications. We have an outstanding record of successfully transforming our clients' transactional communications, delivering massive savings and revolutionising their management of information. As part of the Deutsche Post DHL Group, we can draw on global resources and expertise, while in the UK our TSO division has unrivalled experience in delivering publishing solutions for the public sector.

Relieving organisations of non-core activities brings three main benefits. In the first place, it allows councillors, managers and professional staff to focus on and invest in the actual delivery of services to the public. Secondly, it can boost performance as state of the art technology, specialist knowledge and experience are applied to these activities, which have often escaped rigorous analysis because they are non-core, without upfront investment. Thirdly, it can have a massive impact on costs. These are partly brought down by the efficiencies but also by economies of scale: for example, Williams Lea is the largest purchaser of print in the UK.

There are of course issues other than cost, particularly when public sector workers are asked to redefine themselves as private sector employees. We have found that Williams Lea can offer not only security but a clear career path and professional development framework as communication specialists. Within the outsourced business, staff respond to the challenge of working in a commercial environment, as opposed to being seen as contributing to overheads.

In summary, outsourcing communication and information management activities is a largely untapped area that can help to deliver cost savings and improved citizen engagement. Outsourcing to Williams Lea enables local government to focus on delivering service priorities while Williams Lea designs, builds, delivers and manages solutions that re-engineer processes and deliver economies of scale and operational excellence.

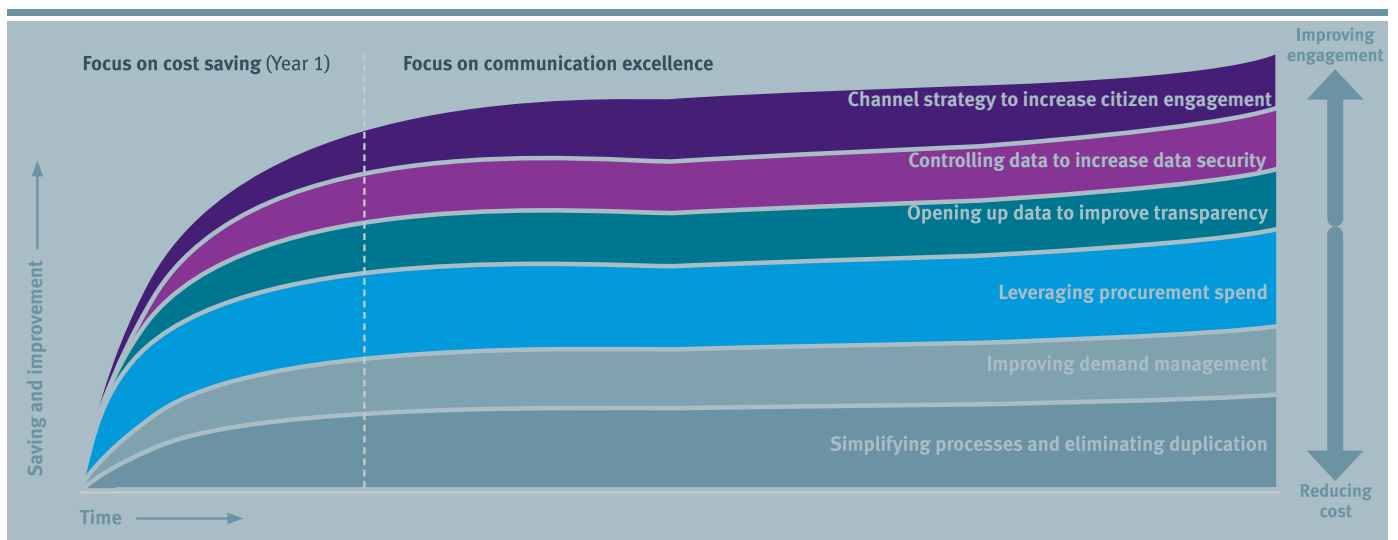
Partnering with Williams Lea will deliver reduced cost and improved citizen engagement



## Outsourcing: the impact

Williams Lea's outsourcing proposition has both immediate impact and long-term effects. In the first year, clients will experience the most dramatic cost savings, as processes are simplified, duplicated activities are eliminated, better demand management is put in place and the cost of materials is dramatically reduced through Williams Lea's unrivalled print spend leverage.

As the relationship develops, new savings become apparent as engagement improves through opening up and encouraging the re-use of public data, controlling personal data better to reduce errors and opening up new channels matched to user needs.



Williams Lea's outsourcing proposition has both immediate cost-saving impact and long-term positive effects on engagement

## Summary

The challenges faced by local and central government are stern but by no means insuperable. With outsourcing, as offered by Williams Lea, communications and information management activities are examined and re-engineered, so that costs can be brought down by as much as 30%, service information is better managed, the public are better informed and local government can meet public engagement targets.

As costs are taken out throughout the process, it may be possible to achieve targets without cutting frontline services. And relieved of handling non-core activities, local government authorities can focus on facing up to the very real challenges of the next few years and beyond.



## Evidence for success

Williams Lea has built up a proven track record in delivering savings of up to 30% and is a trusted partner to a portfolio of high profile clients. These examples show how technology, expertise and experience can transform the way organisations communicate.

### Aviva

- £25m savings over six years and £4.5m investment programme creating three 'centres of excellence'
- TUPE of 1,000 employees over 12 locations
- Collaborative build of strategically aligned, cost-effective customer communications solution including transactional print, warehousing and on-site office document services; inbound mail and scanning; marketing print management and creative services.

### Carphone Warehouse

- Provision of the outbound communication services, from the receipt of raw data to the delivery of 2.4 million bills – 59% reduction in overall cost of bill production
- Focus on changing customer behaviour and maximising the impact of every customer contact by evolving the bill to a dynamic, revenue generating communication tool
- Innovative bill design reduced call centre bill queries by 15%, increasing customer satisfaction.

### Capital One

- Focus on the entire customer communications lifecycle to support strategic objectives
- £19m savings in the first three years with additional savings of £4.3m pa through recognising synergies and integrating services
- Strategic partnership focused on transforming the power of the client's marketing activity through multiple channels.

### Gazettes

- Applied Resource Description Framework (RDF) to more than 250,000 Gazettes notices, creating a platform for publishing official notices in open linked data format and complying with the Public Sector Transparency Board requirements
- London Gazette data now published in a range of formats including print, PDF, XML and RDFa
- Gazette data can be re-used in combination with other data to create new, more useful information sources.

## About Williams Lea

Williams Lea is the leading global provider of Corporate Information Solutions. As a BPO organisation, we combine consultancy, unique expertise and the latest integrated technology to develop solutions that transform the way organisations communicate and exchange their printed and electronic information. Williams Lea employs more than 9,000 staff across Europe, the US and Asia Pacific with key centres in London, Dublin, Paris, Frankfurt, Bonn, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Sydney, Hong Kong, Beijing and Chennai. We work with many world leading organisations in sectors such as financial services, investment banking, legal and professional services, retail, telecoms, automotive, energy, utilities and pharmaceuticals. Since 2006, Deutsche Post DHL, the world's leading logistics group, has held a majority stake in the company. With the long-term backing of Deutsche Post DHL, Williams Lea will continue to invest in and evolve its Corporate Information Solutions proposition that represents the future of the BPO space.

Having achieved great results for some of the world's leading private sector organisations, we are now using our expertise and unique range of solutions to reduce cost and improve customer and citizen experience in local government.

Outsourcing your communications processes to Williams Lea enables you to focus on delivering your council's service priorities while we design, build, deliver and manage solutions to streamline and improve the management of all the printed and digital information you share with your internal and external audiences. By doing this we can make cost savings of up to 30%.

## Contact us

To find out more about how Williams Lea's solutions can help your council to reduce cost and improve citizen engagement, please email us at [publicsector@williamslea.com](mailto:publicsector@williamslea.com)

[www.williamslea.com](http://www.williamslea.com)

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corporate information solutions