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# Citizen management; helping the public sector with CRM

## Introduction

In November 2012 the government set out its strategy on how it will become 'digital by default'. The strategy will change the way that citizens interact with public sector services, providing them with a greater number of straightforward and easy-to-use online and digital facilities. It is estimated that the transition will help the government save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion a year.

Around 83% of the UK's population is online, however, few of us choose to interact with public sector services through the available digital channels. Of the 650 transactional services offered by the public sector only a handful of them are available online. Therefore, the implementation of the 'digital by default' strategy's is likely to involve a lot of change and organisations will be required to adopt new practices and processes while ensuring that the 17% of citizens who do not have access to the digital world are still catered for. At the same time, many of these organisations will have suffered spending cuts and so are dealing with a greater volume of citizen interactions, with fewer resources.

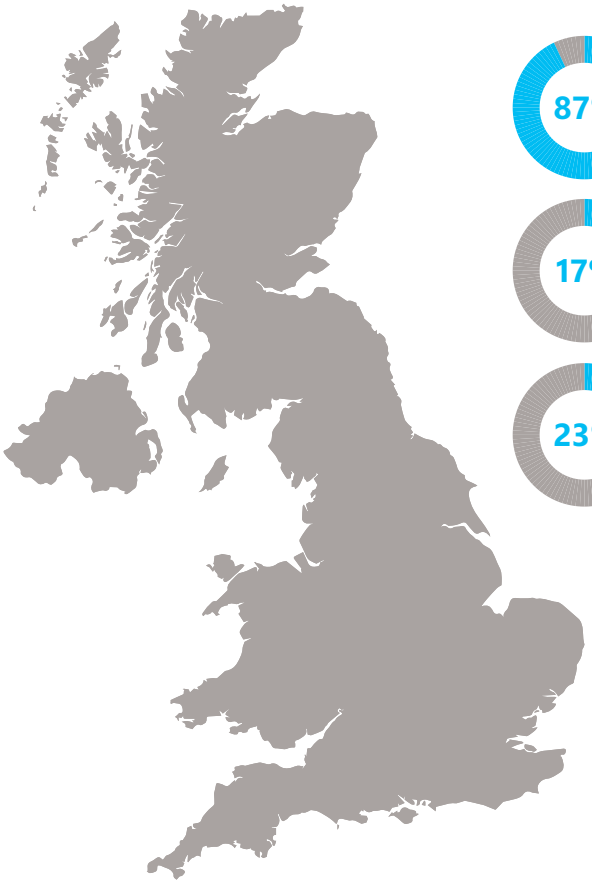
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions have a key role to play in helping public sector organisations manage interactions with those in need of their services across a number of different channels. A CRM solution can help organisations to automate time-intensive processes, streamline administrative tasks, encourage collaboration between teams and most importantly, improve citizen experience by providing case-workers with one consistent live view of the public's needs.

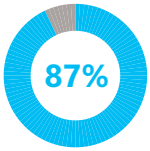
With IT spend coming under greater scrutiny, organisations need to be sure that every penny is being made to work for each area of the public sector and the citizens they serve. Solutions that can be tailored to fit specific institutions and have been developed with an understanding of the unique needs of the sector are likely to herald greater success rates. Additionally a clear and inclusive pricing structure will be imperative in order to avoid escalating costs.

£1.7

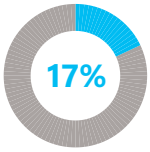
The transition to digital by default will help the Government to save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion a year

£1.7

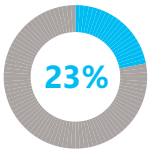





of the UK's population is online




of all UK citizens are not online




in low-income groups the figure rises to 26%

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## Understanding the unique needs of public sector

CRM solutions were initially developed to help commercial businesses to manage their relationships with their customers. The public and commercial sectors differ greatly and while CRM in the public sector serves the same purpose, to manage relationships, the context of those relationships is fundamentally different.

In the world of commerce, CRM solutions manage customer relationships with a view to driving greater value from them. Essentially the customer is viewed as an opportunity. However, the core aim of most public sector organisations is to serve its citizens and ensure that every penny spent is done so with the community's interest at heart. If, for example, the organisation is a health or social services provider, those services could be the difference between life and death.

Many vendors still structure their CRM systems with a nod to the world of business, viewing each interaction as a potential sales lead. Microsoft Dynamics CRM has been developed with a keen understanding of public sector end users. Microsoft has a strong heritage of working with a range of public sector organisations, from local and central government, through to education, health and social care. Microsoft's considerable experience of working with the public sector has helped it to develop a person-centric CRM suite that helps organisations to deliver better services to the community and reduce costs.

Microsoft has over 450 public sector customers in the UK.

Of the 3m users of Microsoft Dynamics CRM globally, a third (1m) are estimated to be in the public sector.

### The Royal Borough of Kingston

Offers 600-800 services to a community of 160,000 residents. They receive 85,000 calls a month. Since introducing Microsoft Dynamics CRM to support their call centre operation 81 per cent of those calls can be dealt with in the first short telephone call. They have also reduced council tax call waiting times by 90 per cent, with a 75 per cent reduction in citizens hanging up during the call.

160,000 Residents to offer services to.

85,000 Calls per month

### Kent Fire and Rescue

Introduced Microsoft Dynamics CRM to help manage its home safety visits. It serves a community of 1.6 million people and comprises 2,000 members of staff. Last year Kent Fire and Rescue carried out 1,500 home safety checks. This year, since introducing Microsoft Dynamics CRM, it has been able to carry out 4,000 home visits, a productivity increase of 266 per cent.

4,000 Successful home visits carried out

266% Productivity increase

### Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust

Deployed Microsoft Dynamics CRM to help manage stakeholder engagement with its 7,000 members and help it introduce more targeted communications. Since introducing Microsoft Dynamics CRM it has seen a 50 per cent reduction in its mailing costs.

7,000 Members

50% Reduction in mailing costs

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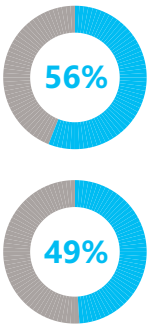
## Giving the public sector choice

CRM is usually offered in two methods: in the cloud or on-premise. CRM in the cloud brings with it many advantages, most notably accessibility, flexibility and cost which for the public sector is particularly attractive. An organisation, such as a healthcare provider, with a large number of remote workers can provide 24/7 access to CRM regardless of whether workers are at home, in the office, or out visiting patients in the community. Cloud solutions also enable organisations to instantly add users as their operations grow, ensuring that they do not waste money on unused licenses.

Cloud computing is an exciting area, but brings its own concerns around access, security and citizen-information. In particular some public sector organisations, by their nature, are required to store sensitive data regarding the public on servers that remain onsite at the organisation. Those that provide critical services are also required to store data locally to ensure that they are able to access information in the event of a connectivity outage.

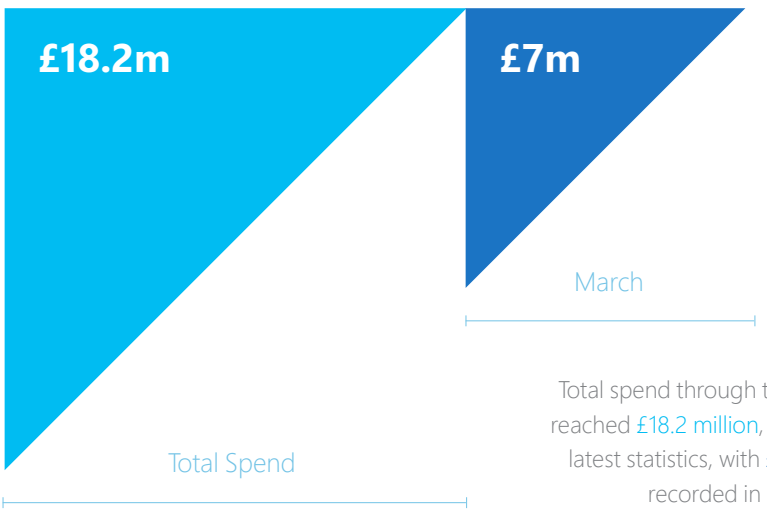
Solutions such as Microsoft Dynamics CRM, that offer customers a choice in deployment – either on-premise or online – provide the public sector with technology that can be tailored to their specific needs and gives them the best of all worlds. For example, users can access offline data through Microsoft Outlook and keep an entire copy of their CRM information locally on their computer, allowing them to be productive when they're working without internet connectivity.




### Flying high; cloud adoption rates

While the private sector continues to lead the way with a 56% adoption rate, in the public sector adoption has now hit 49%. This is only likely to accelerate with the publication of the government's programme to accelerate adoption of cloud within the public sector – known as G-Cloud.

Source: Cloud Industry Forum




Total spend through the G-Cloud has reached £18.2 million, according to the latest statistics, with £7 million sales recorded in March.

The majority of public sector organisations have yet to make any moves to cloud.

of organisations are still reliant on full on-premise cloud solutions.

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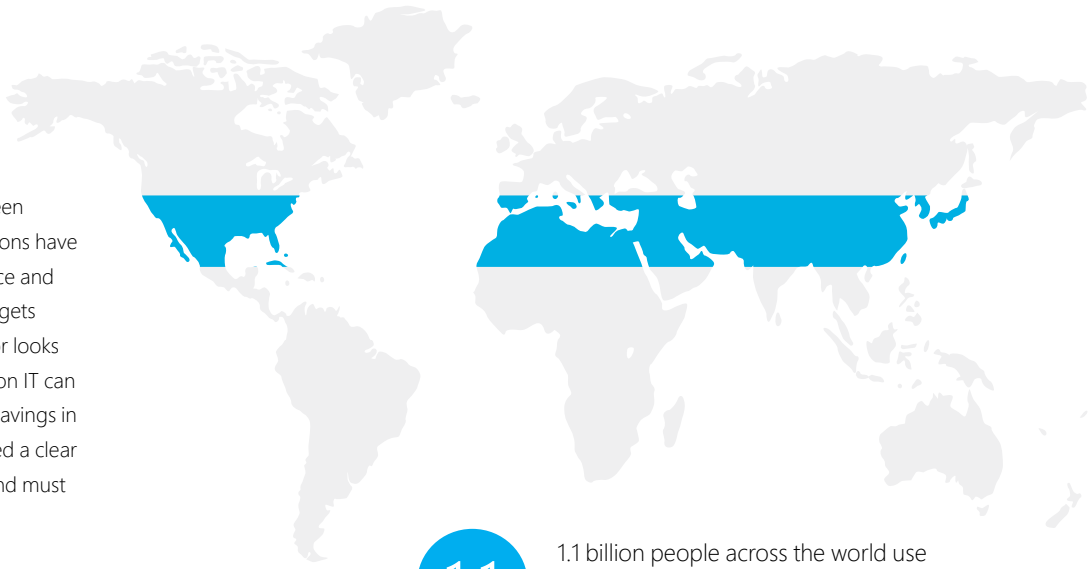
## Controlling costs

Cuts in government spending have not been limited to IT spend alone. Many organisations have been forced to make cuts to their workforce and streamline their processes. Therefore, budgets have to be carefully managed as the sector looks to do more with less. Money spent wisely on IT can help organisations to make considerable savings in the long term. However, organisations need a clear view of the total cost of implementation and must be sure of expectations from the outset.

Cloud-based CRM vendors have made it relatively easy to evaluate, compare and subscribe to CRM solutions. However, some customers have found that the projected versus actual costs of using these services increases their total cost of ownership far more than the published subscription fees. Many solutions lack critical functionality and organisations that need to add additional features or third party products can find themselves paying unexpected, and significant, extra charges in terms of deployment, application support and user productivity.

Public sector organisations need to be sure that the technology they introduce will be used by the workforce it is designed to help. In some cases expensive solutions can become simply shelfware, as users find them inaccessible and are unable to realise full benefits from them. Microsoft users intuitively know how to use Microsoft Dynamics CRM because of its interoperability with, and functionality within, Microsoft Outlook. As a result, users are able to adopt the software more readily and institutions can quickly capture value from Microsoft Dynamics CRM deployments. The technology also includes process driven interfaces that simplify the user experience. For one such function, for example, the number of clicks required has been reduced from over 200 to 19. As well as ensuring that technology is not wasted, this focus on usability can result in further savings because less time is spent training staff to use the product.



**1.1** 1.1 billion people across the world use Microsoft Windows and are familiar with the Microsoft product portfolio

## Conclusion

As the Government's strategy opens up digital channels for citizens to access services, CRM solutions have a crucial role to play in helping public sector organisations to manage interactions with their citizens. However, organisations need solutions that have been developed with a deep understanding of the unique needs of the public sector and that provide them with choice around deployment methods, pricing and functionality. Confidence in costs and expectations regarding feature set and training should also be considered, to ensure costs don't spiral out of control further down the line. Ultimately, the outcome of a CRM deployment in helping to develop and provide better citizen services, should be understood by the CRM supplier.