Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) strategy 2024-2029

We provide Digital, Data and Technology products and services that underpin the delivery of NHSBSA objectives.

Contents

Introduction

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is a forward-thinking organisation focused on delivering business service excellence for the NHS. We help the NHS to run efficiently by providing platforms, systems, and services to support the NHS workforce, primary care, and millions of UK citizens.

Our Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) directorate provide the digital and technical solutions which underpin these services and enable our users to complete tasks and transactions from devices across the world, as and when they need to. We aim to be the digital train track on which national and at scale business services operate driving productivity and efficiency. This is complimented by our user centred approach to service design which ensures we put users at the heart of what we do, put in place accessible solutions, assisted digital and non-digital routes to ensure our services are available to anyone and everyone who needs them and drives positive customer experience.

The importance of data across our organisation is profound and due to the national, at scale services we provide, we produce, collate and curate a vast amount of diverse and invaluable NHS data. Our data is critical to how we run and continuously improve our services but can also benefit the wider health and care system.

While the Digital, Data and Technology departments have been a fundamental part of our organisation for years, they only came together as a single directorate in 2022. This merging aimed to support closer working, remove duplication and deliver efficiencies across three areas which are inextricably linked. While the coming together of the three areas into a single directorate has already delivered benefits, we recognise that we have further to go in establishing a one DDaT culture and embedding the consistent ways of working which will help optimise our approach to delivering for our customers and ensuring that each and every one of our colleagues feel equally valued and supported within the directorate.

This strategy sets out, for the first time, our vision, principles and priorities as a single DDaT directorate, and outlines key steps and opportunities to optimise and leverage our invaluable skills and capabilities in alignment with our organisational strategy and goals.

We are also committed to openness and transparency. We collaborate and innovate with partners and stakeholders to drive and support improvements in the NHS workforce, patient outcomes, patient safety, and taxpayer value.

Who we are and what we do

Who we are

Today our DDaT directorate is comprised of more than 500 colleagues and is structured around seven key functions. Colleagues from across these functions come together to form the multidisciplinary teams who deliver for our organisation and the wider health and care system.
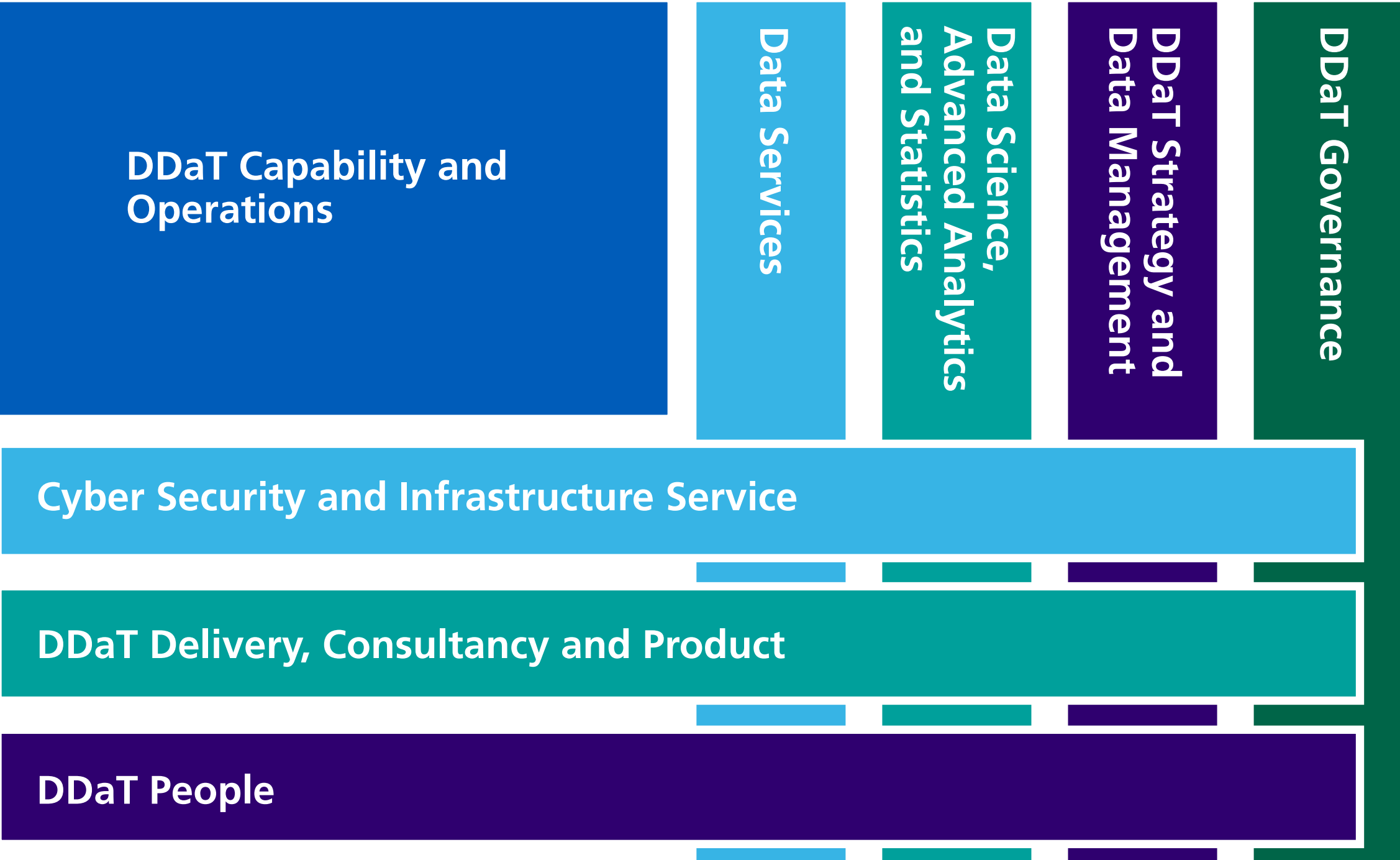
Our 2023 achievements

Delivered across the lifecycle of our products and services:

- delivered **57** service wrappers
- successful migration to NHSBSA email
- conducted **16** operational readiness reviews
- implemented **18** early life support programmes
- launched NHS Jobs 3 enabling NHS Jobs 2 to close
- closed public access to COVID Pass
- published the Healthcare Inequalities and Child Health Insights reports
- launched the Carbon Impact Dashboard
- supported **22,793** assets, **4,300** windows and Mac devices, **1,700+** servers
- closed **1,475** changes and **59** problem records
- service desk handled **87,760** incidents, **26,418** service requests
- resolved over **16,500** data services cases

Supported, recognised and rewarded our **people**

- appointed Principle DDaT People Lead
- published our DDaT People strategy
- **64** colleagues (12%) progressed into more senior roles
- **6** DDaT finalists at the annual We CARE Awards
- welcomed **150** new starters and held **12** DDaT wide inductions

### Put our **customers** at the heart of what we do

- **950** research participants, 581,000+ user feedbacks, **32 million** items of data to help improve our services
- produced **53** accessibility reports
- **4,518** design iterations to prototypes based on user research
- data product training for **1,022** users

Our 2023 achievements (continued)

Met **standards** and developed new ones

- launched our DDaT playbook and community
- established our data architecture team and launched our data architecture standards
- NHS Healthy Start passed beta assessment
- Immigration Health Surcharge reimbursement passed live assessment
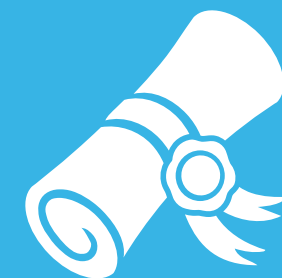
Developed and supported our **professions**

- established Head of Software Engineering role and Professional Lead roles for Design, Research and Delivery Management
- grew our data communities
- held **24** design and **20** UR communities
- had **80** test community attendees and **630** attendees at data bytes and coffee & coding meets
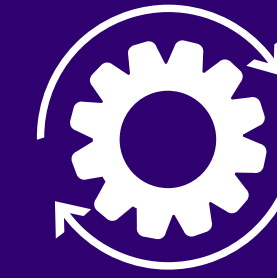
Delivered **automation and efficiencies**

- removed **3,000** hours a year of manual effort
- automated the community pharmacy assurance framework survey saving **£5,000** a year
- automated the supply shortage protocol
- replaced manual claims in the blood pressure checking service in MYS with an API
- built in automation to balanced business scorecard production
- saved **7** man hours per major release with new test report
- cloud migration to deliver estimated **35%** reduction in operating cost
- Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) onboarded to MYS

Continued our journey to working in the **open**

- launched the FOI responses area on the open data portal
- pharmacy quality scheme open data published and accessed over **1000** times
- Immigration Health Surcharge our first team to use coding in the open

DDaT purpose and vision

Our purpose

Our purpose is to provide Digital, Data and Technology products and services that underpin the delivery of NHSBSA objectives.

We do this by working collaboratively with the wider NHSBSA ensuring that we understand the business priorities and challenges they are facing so that we can align our delivery to meet these needs. We also bring our technical expertise to the table, influencing where necessary, to ensure that NHSBSA DDaT services and products deliver for our customers and end users while providing value for the taxpayer.

Our DDaT activities provide the tools and technologies that enable our colleagues to perform their roles from office sites and home bases across the country. Meanwhile our platforms and products enable our services to reach millions of users across the world 365 days a year. As such, our purpose is in direct support of the wider NHSBSA purpose "to deliver business service excellence to the NHS to help people live longer, healthier lives".

Our vision

Our vision is to deliver commercial standard Digital, Data and Technology services.

This vision is an ambitious one, setting a high bar for a public sector organisation to meet the same standards as our commercial sector counterparts. We strive to deliver value for taxpayers in the same way that a commercial organisation strives to provide returns for their investors. This vision drives us to keep up to date with new developments across the DDaT arena, to explore opportunities for innovation and to keep pace with changing user expectations. If we can achieve these high standards, we can offer a genuine alternative to commercial delivery partners for our Sponsor and for colleagues across the health and care system while supporting the NHSBSA vision "to be the provider of national, at scale business services for the health and social care system, transforming and delivering these services to maximise efficiency and meet customer expectations."

In 2024 we will be taking our first steps to delivering a DDaT shared services model, acting as a DDaT delivery partner for another ALB. We hope to build on this over the coming years sharing our expertise and driving efficiencies through delivery at scale.

Our DDaT principles

Our principles are our constants. They are important to us and we believe that they are the things we need to focus on to be a successful and healthy DDaT operation. We do not expect them to change over time, they will always be a priority for us.

Delivery
The strategy is delivery

People
Our people are our greatest strength

Profession
We recognise skills and experience

Delivery The strategy is delivery

Delivery is our first principle for a reason, it is crucial that we deliver for our customers and for our users if we are to consider ourselves successful.

This does not mean simply 'getting things out the door' or trying to fulfill every want. Instead, it means leveraging our DDaT expertise, agile principles and delivery practices to ensure that we balance speed, value and quality. We aim to deliver value early on, iterating to provide improvements and further value resulting in high quality services and products which represent value to taxpayers, meet user needs and policy requirements, and do so on time and within budget.

Our commitment to delivery across the lifecycle of our products and services is central to this. We do not just build new services and hand them over. We make informed build or buy decisions and put a focus on reuse to deliver more efficiently. We provide the DDaT capabilities and service wrappers that run these services day in day out ensuring they are there when people need them. Beyond this, we monitor customer feedback and service data and dedicate teams to the continuous improvement of our services throughout their lifetime ensuring they keep pace with the changing landscape and remain safe from emerging threats. Where we work with third parties, we place a focus on supplier management to ensure that we get the most out of these relationships. Finally, we retire, replace, or transform our services when the time comes, enabling us to leverage new technologies and ensuring that we spend our time maintaining only those services that are still needed.

People Our People are our greatest strength

Just as the NHSBSA strategy recognises that our people are crucial to the overall success of the NHSBSA, within DDaT we recognise that our people, who design, build, maintain and run our services are central to our delivery. Our people are the corner stone to our reliability and the driving force behind our innovations. They are more than just a resource, they are our people and they are our greatest strength.

Our people principle supports the NHSBSA goal to be the best place any of us have worked, where everyone matters and colleagues can contribute, influence and flourish. We recognise that our people need to feel safe, valued, and motivated if they are to be able to bring their whole authentic selves to work and to bring their best in delivering our collective ambitions. We place a high value on the wellbeing of individuals and strive to be an inclusive workplace that is welcoming to everyone. Beyond this, we recognise how much our people give to our business and we seek to repay this by supporting them in achieving their own personal ambitions alongside providing opportunities for colleagues to enhance our organisation through our colleague networks. We already support our people to give back to our local communities through volunteering and fundraising, moving forwards we will promote

these opportunities and actively support the NHSBSA target of donating 50,000 hours of volunteering.

In 2023 we launched our first DDaT People strategy setting out our priorities for continuing to support our people in the years to come. This will be followed up in 2024 with a comprehensive delivery plan aiming to enhance colleague experience across the colleague lifecycle. In line with our corporate People team, we will continue to focus on attraction and retention of colleagues. The professional capabilities of our people are invaluable but so is their understanding of our business and how we work so we seek to retain our colleagues wherever possible.

Profession We recognise skills and experience

While our people are vital to our success, the skills and experience they bring to our organisation are also critical. Our directorate is one which cannot survive without the technical skills and capabilities of architects, developers, analysts, researchers, statisticians, designers, delivery managers and governance specialists and many others.

For this reason, we invest in colleagues' development in their relevant professions, we provide them with professional as well as personal leadership and ensure they have time to attend and contribute to communities or practice. In addition, we strive for a 'flat' structure within our delivery teams recognising the importance of individuals feeling respected for the specialist knowledge they bring to our teams no matter their pay band.

Our priorities

As we continue to build and develop our DDaT directorate, three key areas have been identified that we need to focus on to prepare us for any opportunities and challenges in the future, these are our priorities.

Our priorities are not stand alone, they overlap, supporting each other. If we operate efficiently from a stable base, we will be more agile and better able to meet changing demands. By maintaining our agility, we will be able to redirect our focus from delivering new developments to ensuring the stability of our services and looking to enhance efficiency when needed.

Agility

Efficiency

Stability

Agility

Agility is not simply about following agile methods in delivery, it is about being truly agile in the way that we work. We operate in a constantly changing environment, whether it be emerging technologies, changes in customer expectations, new threats to our cyber security or changes to our countries' leadership.

This level of change is not going to go away but rather, with the exponential growth in the technology arena, the future will bring with it increased levels of change. We therefore need to move from being reactive to responsive, positioning ourselves to be able to flex and adapt to change.

For us, change fatigue cannot be an option so we will focus our efforts on how we can establish the culture and processes that enable us not only to manage change, but to welcome and be energised by it.

In line with our ambition to work in the open, we are committed to ensuring that our work is visible both within our directorate and beyond, enabling customers and colleagues alike to understand what we do and how we do it. This will start with the development of a DDaT roadmap of activities

and the communication of this strategy to ensure that all DDaT colleagues understand our overarching purpose and vision. Even in a changing world our destination won't change but what we do to get there might, and that is ok.

We also need to enhance our understanding of our people, their skills, capabilities and the work they are assigned to, so that we can pivot the right people at the right time when priorities change. In the longer term this also supports us in ensuring we develop our workforce in the right way to meet the challenges of the future. In line with the NHSBSA strategy we will develop and embed an effective workforce plan.

We will continue to enhance our agility by maintaining and managing relationships with strategic delivery partners enabling us to rapidly increase our delivery capacity at short notice and to supplement our existing teams with individuals who bring specific skills and capabilities.
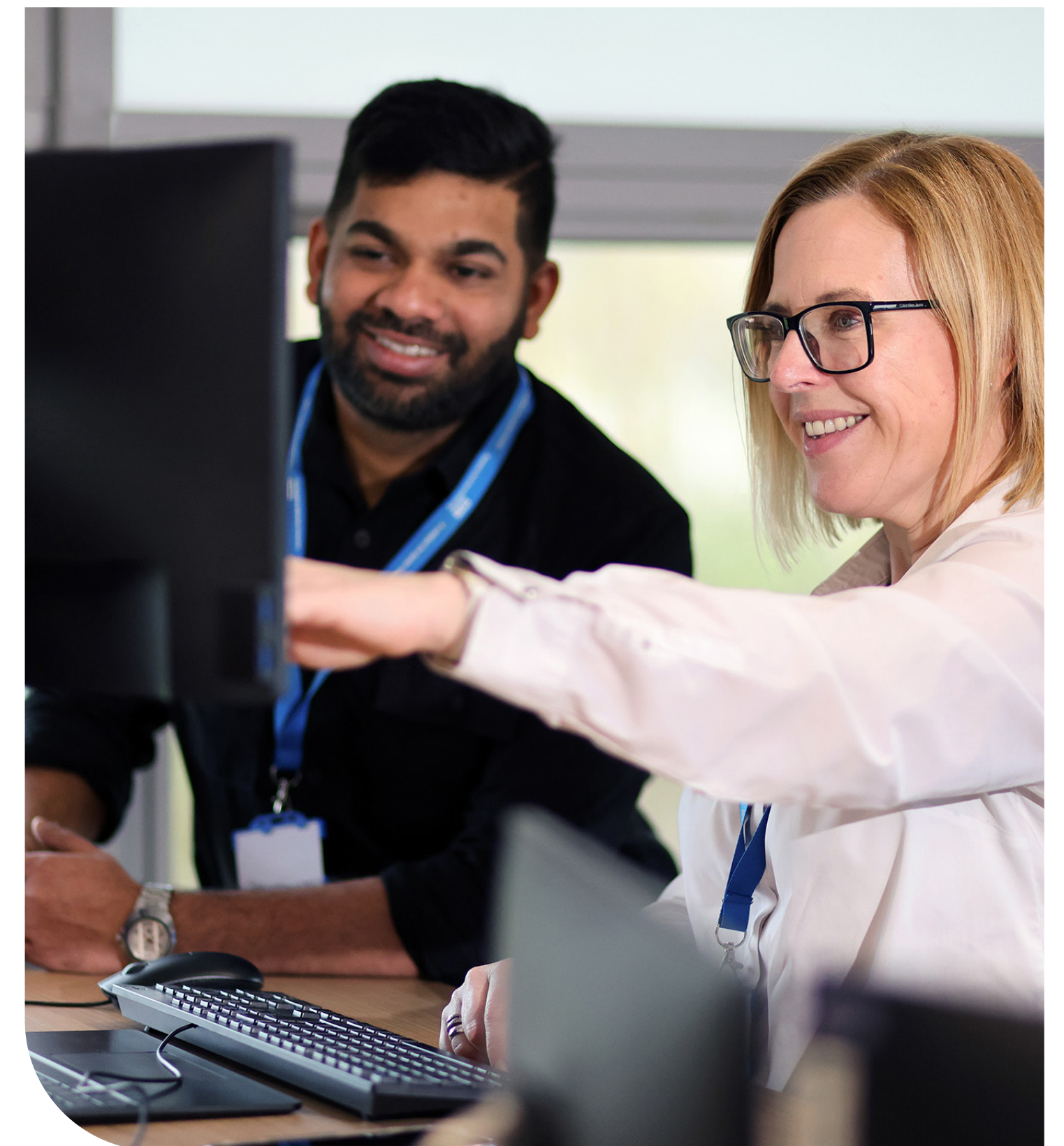
Stability

As a provider of DDaT services and products, stability is central to delivering for our customers and users. For us though, stability goes beyond just ensuring our services are available to people when they need them.

In order to adapt quickly to change we need reliable, steady foundations that help us to grow and evolve in a safe and secure environment. Stability for DDaT does not mean standing still, it's creating consistent conditions to encourage innovation and creativity.

We strive to provide a safe and secure environment for our colleagues where they feel empowered to fail fast, learn from it and share that learning with others, enabling them to get it right first time.

By embedding consistent delivery and governance frameworks across our directorate as well as ensuring we have clear standards, processes, and principles in place we will ensure that everything we do is done to the same high standards, supporting us to deliver great customer experience. This level

of consistency will also minimise the change when colleagues need to move from supporting one service to another, enabling such moves to happen seamlessly.

Monitoring and managing systems debt is also critical to our stability. Unmanaged systems debt can have far reaching consequences including: leaving systems vulnerable to threat; increasing the number of issues and outages which draw colleagues focus and drive down customer experience; make it harder to attract and retain colleagues with the required skills and experience; perpetuate inefficient processes and ways of working. We will support the organisation to reduce systems debt and ensure our own processes support this aim.

Working with and assuring the performance of our strategic suppliers is critical to us delivering stability across our services. The management of these relationships, including arrangements such as service level agreements and performance targets, enable us to ensure that our infrastructure is operational, secure, and performant supporting stability across our services.

Efficiency

As part of a publicly funded organisation it is paramount that we deliver efficiently. This is not just about making cost savings or cuts but finding ways to do more, more quickly and with less. By minimising waste and optimising our processes we will be able to divert resources (and funding) to be able to deliver greater value.

We play a pivotal role in ensuring that colleagues across the organisation have the tools and technologies they need to do their jobs well. As part of this we strive to recognise and prioritise the needs of our internal customers alongside our external ones ensuring that we deliver great customer experience and meet our users' needs in a way that enables them to work efficiently every day. We also regularly review the DDaT tooling we have in place to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation and that tools are retired or replaced when appropriate. We've recently established a DDaT service catalogue to support this and will continue to maintain this moving forwards.

Emerging technologies provide further opportunities for us to deliver efficiencies across the organisation and the wider system. In 2023 we committed to exploring the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to understand where it can best be deployed to deliver value for money efficiencies. As we look to the future we will focus our innovation efforts on areas that can deliver efficiencies and will continue to deploy automation where it can deliver both cost and time efficiencies. We've already demonstrated the value of technologies such as APIs in enabling more efficient service delivery. Moving forwards, we will also seek to deliver social value through technologies and service design, working with stakeholders to make it easier for our customers by implementing proactive entitlement (digital first) for our help with health costs services, enabling customers to gain automatic entitlement to exemption services.

Our recently established Financial Operations (FinOps) capability enables us to better understand the costs and cost drivers of deploying modern technologies. Delivering efficiently can also help ensure we progress towards being an environmentally sustainable organisation as it can reduce the emissions produced by the technologies we rely on.

Moving forwards, we will continue to mature our FinOps capability and expand to cover Green Operations (GreenOps) so that we can deliver financial efficiencies at scale as well as minimising our impact on the environment.

Being efficient also means doing what we can to protect our services from fraud and loss. We will continue to collaborate with colleagues in our Fraud and Loss team to build services which reduce these risks, act where vulnerabilities are identified and support work to recover losses where appropriate.

In addition, we recognise that to be successful here we need to increase our focus on our use of data and measures across the directorate, continuously improving our financial and performance measurements enabling us to better identify opportunities to deliver efficiencies and to quantify the benefits when we deliver them.

Our strategic commitments

To achieve our purpose and vision, progress our priorities and continue to live and breathe our principles we have set six strategic commitments.

1. Revise and streamline our governance processes

Goal: We have streamlined governance processes which enable us to deliver at pace and pivot when priorities change while still providing the required assurance.

Commitments:

- mature our DDaT Governance function, working to embed streamlined governance with sufficient and appropriate controls in place for the level of change

- establish the necessary DDaT Governance framework to enable quick decision lines and streamlined paths across delivery

- embed a comprehensive delivery framework that standardises our approach across the full lifecycle of products and services

2. Improve communication and visibility

Goal: We have clarity of purpose, vision and priorities across the directorate. Key messages are communicated meaningfully and consistently ensuring all colleagues are aware of important decisions and changes. Colleagues are easily able to find the information they need when they need it.

Commitments:

- publish and communicate this strategy

- place a focus on transparency of priorities, decisions and changes

- ensure our DDaT roadmap is visible and current

- ensure service plans are visible and current

3. Make things repeatable and predictable

Goal: We deliver consistently high-quality outputs efficiently and enable colleagues to move from one delivery to another seamlessly by making our processes repeatable and predictable.

Commitments:

- create clear and defined strategies including enterprise architecture, data, people, technology and communications

- expand our playbook to include all appropriate standards and best practices

- enhance our focus on documentation ensuring critical knowledge is not lost

- create well defined, tested and repeatable processes

- implement defined KPIs and measures across all services and report on them

4. Design and embed strategic workforce planning

Goal: At any given time we can see who our people are, what they are working on and when they will be available to begin something new. We have the workforce we need for today, the capability to scale it quickly and are continuously developing and growing new talent to be able to meet the challenges of the future.

Commitments:

- ensure the DDaT establishment is known and visible within a workforce management tool, identifying our people, the skills they have, what they are working on, and when that work will be complete

- design and adopt processes to be able to quickly scope, size and shape work/team(s) needed when new work comes in

- introduce a seamless process to book and bring in teams

- ensure every colleague has a comprehensive Development Plan in place which speaks to their personal as well as their professional development

- continue to invest in growing our own talent through development opportunities such as apprenticeships, student placements and work experience

- develop and embed a succession planning framework for DDaT

5. Deliver efficient, value added DDaT services

Goal: We focus on delivering value for our customers as quickly as possible, we know what our services cost and promote a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to deliver efficiencies and add value wherever possible.

Commitments:

- enhance our use of measures and metrics to drive excellence across our services and enable evidence-based decision making

- increase transparency around what services cost us so that we can invest to improve the efficiency of those services

- streamline our delivery processes with a focus on reducing duplication, waste and error

- stop work at the right time when it is clear the benefits or the project is not right for the business anymore

- continue to invest in reliable, modern technologies and provide expertise to the organisation to help deliver wider efficiencies using technologies

- scale appropriate training around agile mindset, creativity, fail fast, etc. for colleagues at all levels across the directorate

6. Support the organisation to reduce system debt

Goal: We know where systems debt exists and have a forward plan to address it. Our delivery approach minimises new debt and empowers us to regularly review and revise where necessary.

Commitments:

- establish a Technical Debt Steering Group

- establish a Technical Debt Programme

- establish a continuous approach to identifying and addressing system debt across our estate to deliver efficiently and consistently across the service lifecycle

- ensure our delivery approach includes time to review and, where necessary, enhance what has already been delivered, reducing the level of debt being built into services

Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) strategy on a page

Purpose

To provide Digital, Data and Technology products and services that underpin the delivery of NHSBSA objectives.

Vision

To deliver commercial standard Digital, Data and Technology services.

Principles

Delivery

The strategy is delivery

People

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Profession

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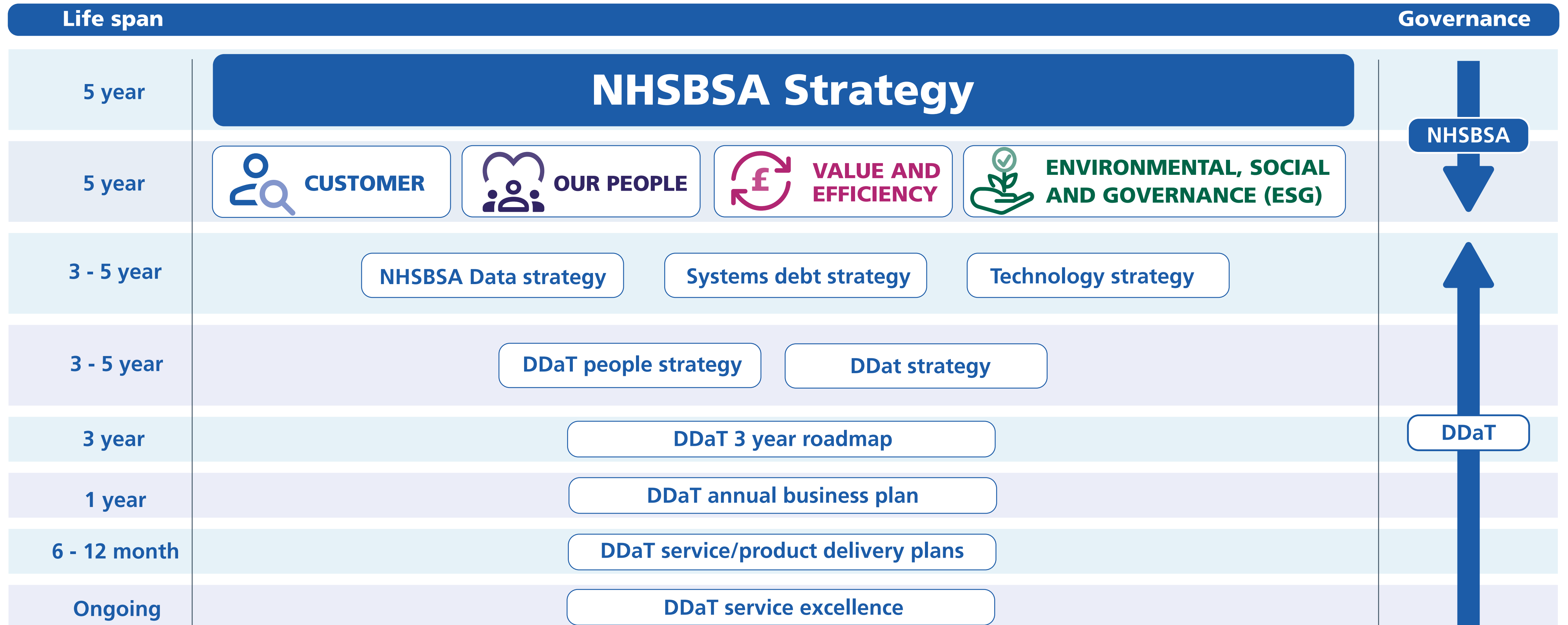
Priorities

Agility

Efficiency

Stability

Commitments

- revise and streamline our governance processes
- improve communication and visibility
- make things repeatable and predictable
- design and embed strategic workforce planning
- deliver efficient, value added DDaT services
- support the organisation to reduce system debt

Our strategy landscape

Life span					Governance
5 year	**NHSBSA Strategy**				**NHSBSA**
5 year	CUSTOMER	OUR PEOPLE	VALUE AND EFFICIENCY	ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE (ESG)	
3 - 5 year	NHSBSA Data strategy	Systems debt strategy	Technology strategy		
3 - 5 year	DDaT people strategy	DDat strategy			**DDaT**
3 year	DDaT 3 year roadmap				
1 year	DDaT annual business plan				
6 - 12 month	DDaT service/product delivery plans				
Ongoing	DDaT service excellence				

2024
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2029

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