



The Scottish Approach to Service Design

How to design services for **and** with users



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About this resource

Thank you for taking the time to read this short explanation of what you need to know about designing public services in Scotland.

This document will cover:

- **how a shared set of principles and some basic tools will help us design around the needs of people (and not around how the public sector is structured)**
- **how thinking about people's 'life events' helps us embed that way of working**
- **what we mean by services, design, and users**
- **how you design with, as well as for, your service users - and how to do this in an accessible and inclusive way**
- **how you can assess the maturity of the Scottish Approach to Service Design in your organisation**
- **how to contact us for more information and to provide feedback**

This is a framework to guide how we design user-centred public services and not an attempt to create a template/toolkit for designing any service. It's about how we all agree on and support the set of core ideas and intentions we need to build into our organisations to ensure we design the right thing, before designing the thing right.



Foreword

“This is not solely a matter of fiscal necessity but a once-in-a-generation opportunity to implement radical reforms that will provide improved public services that are better focused on the needs of the people they seek to support.” - Christie Commission

The publication of Campbell Christie’s ‘Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services’ in 2011 was considered the beginning of a radical roadmap to better public services.

This described:

- empowering individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use
- collaboration between public service providers, to integrate service provision
- prioritising spend on public services with a focus on early intervention
- reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible, across public, third and private sectors

Engaging citizens in the delivery of services is a fundamental part of what Christie talked about, and is of course integral to public sector reform: Changing the way an organisation delivers by putting

a focus on users, introducing new ways of working and using technology as an enabler for change.

However, all too often we can see the challenges are present much earlier in the process of service delivery - and the current make-up of the public sector does not readily provide an environment to allow the design of public services around user needs. Service transformation may work for an organisation, but how does that extend to a public sector which has a collective responsibility to deliver services in a holistic and joined-up way?

A Scottish Approach

The ‘Scottish Approach to Service Design’ describes design as a way of exploring the problem space openly, collaboratively and with users, before a solution or service is decided. A method of exploring problems that remove organisational or sectoral boundaries. A way of working that should be present at the very heart of government policy, bringing otherwise disparate parts of the public sector around a common goal.

There must now be an ask of senior leaders within Scotland’s public sector to rethink the role they play in this ecosystem, to embrace the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design, and to be bold in creating the conditions for design thinking in government.



The Scottish Approach to Service Design

How to redesign services around the needs of users

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Introduction

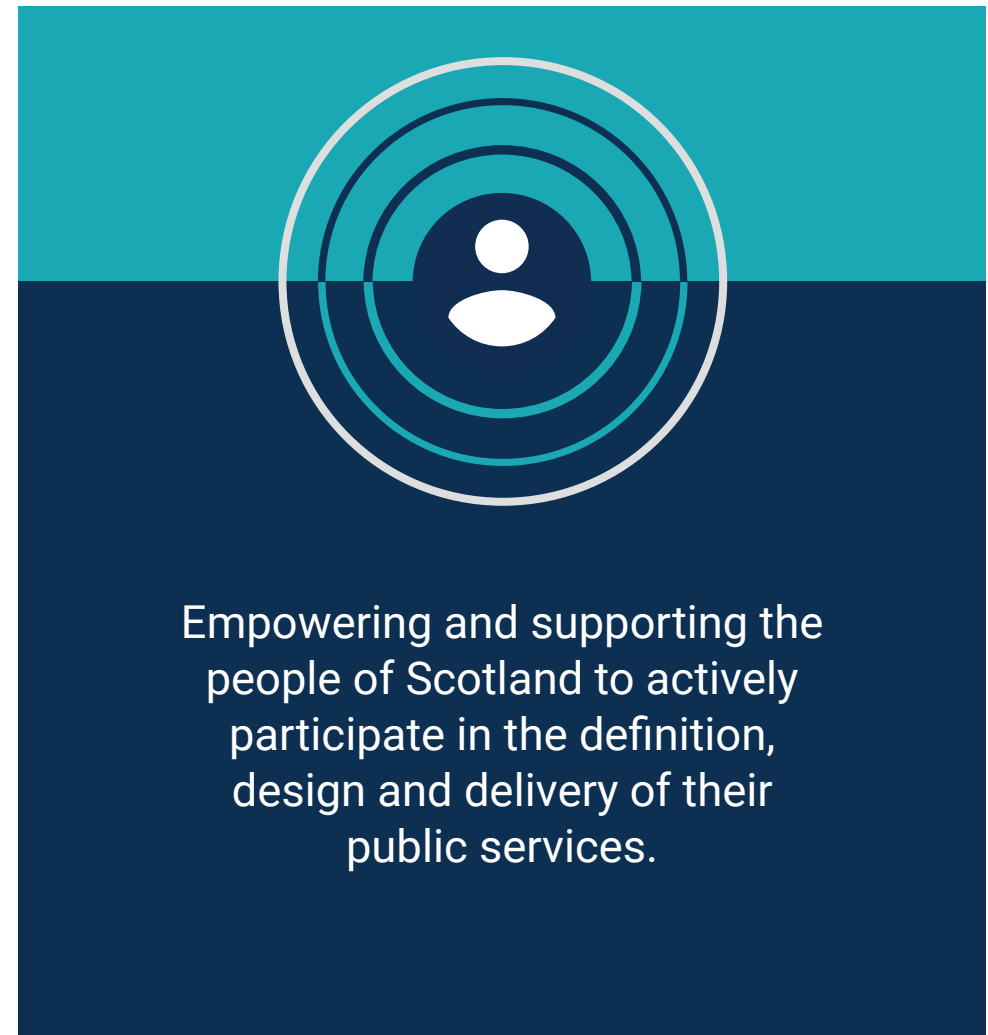
The vision for the **Scottish Approach to Service Design** is that the people of Scotland are supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of their public services (from policy making to live service improvement).

This brings together national and local government, health, public bodies, charities and third sector, as well as the private sector.

It's important because we need to:

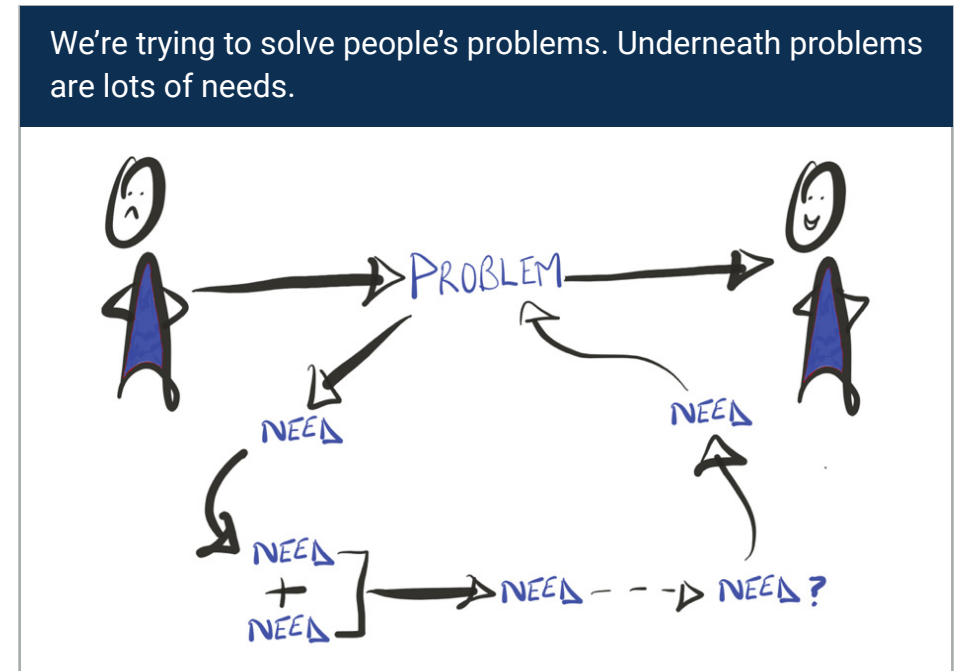
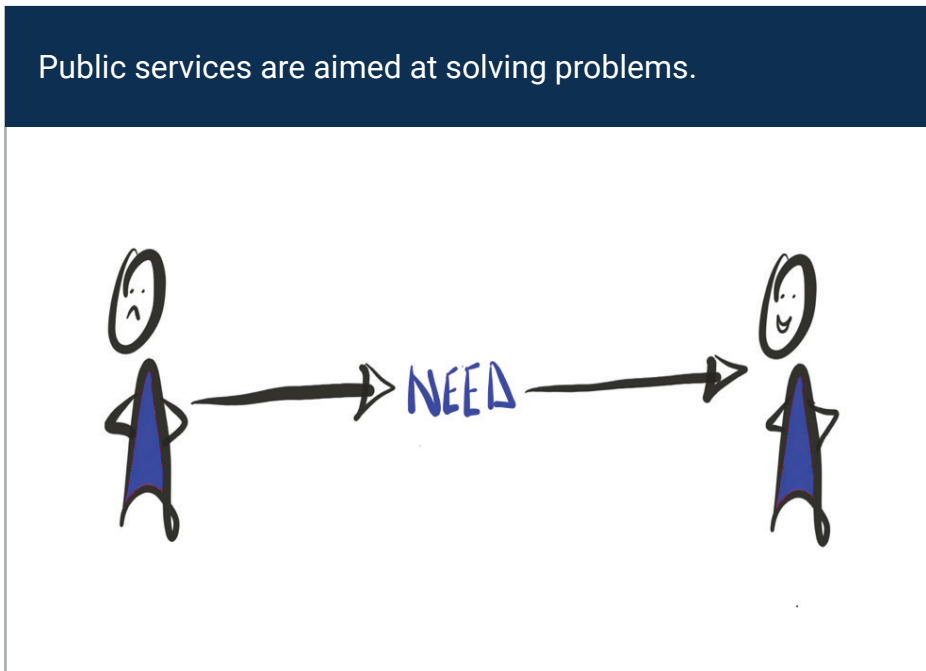
- collaborate to deliver end-to-end service journeys for citizens
- work together to create the right conditions and a shared language
- make sure our design methods are inclusive and accessible for everyone, so that we encourage, empower and enable all citizens to participate in designing the services they need

This publication aims to describe design in the context of ensuring that we don't just design services in the right ways, but that we design the **right** services.



Why we need a new approach

Designing services in the public sector is not just about satisfying user needs.



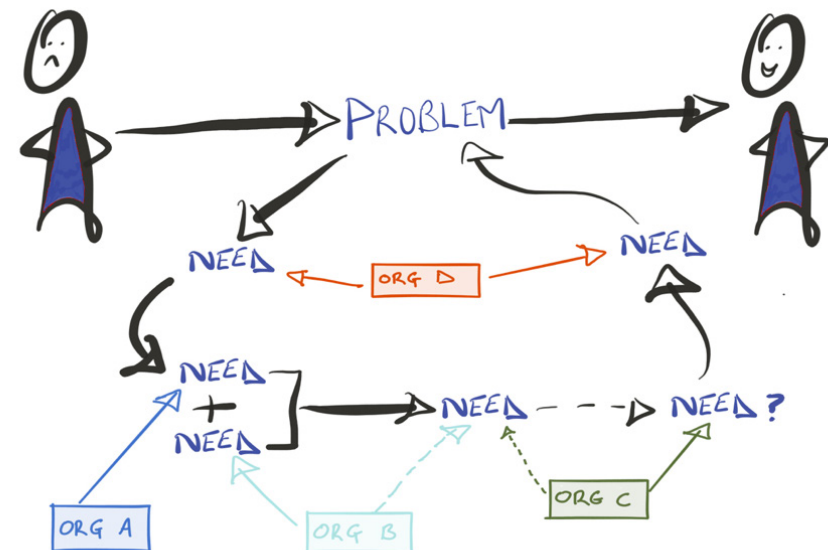
Why we need a new approach

Public services are provided by lots of organisations, and because of that it can often be difficult to get the right parts of someone's 'service journey' aligned well. Although individual organisations might be doing a good job of meeting user needs for their part of the service journey, if all the organisations involved can't see and align to the whole journey it can lead to problems. Making sense of this as a public sector organisation can be hard.

Sometimes these problems can cause a huge amount of stress and may involve making big decisions at a time when making decisions becomes even harder. For example, an injury can lead to time off work, possibly even loss of employment, and can spiral into bigger issues, such as debt or losing a home.

When people move into crisis, it's more difficult to solve their problem, causes more distress and uses more government funding.

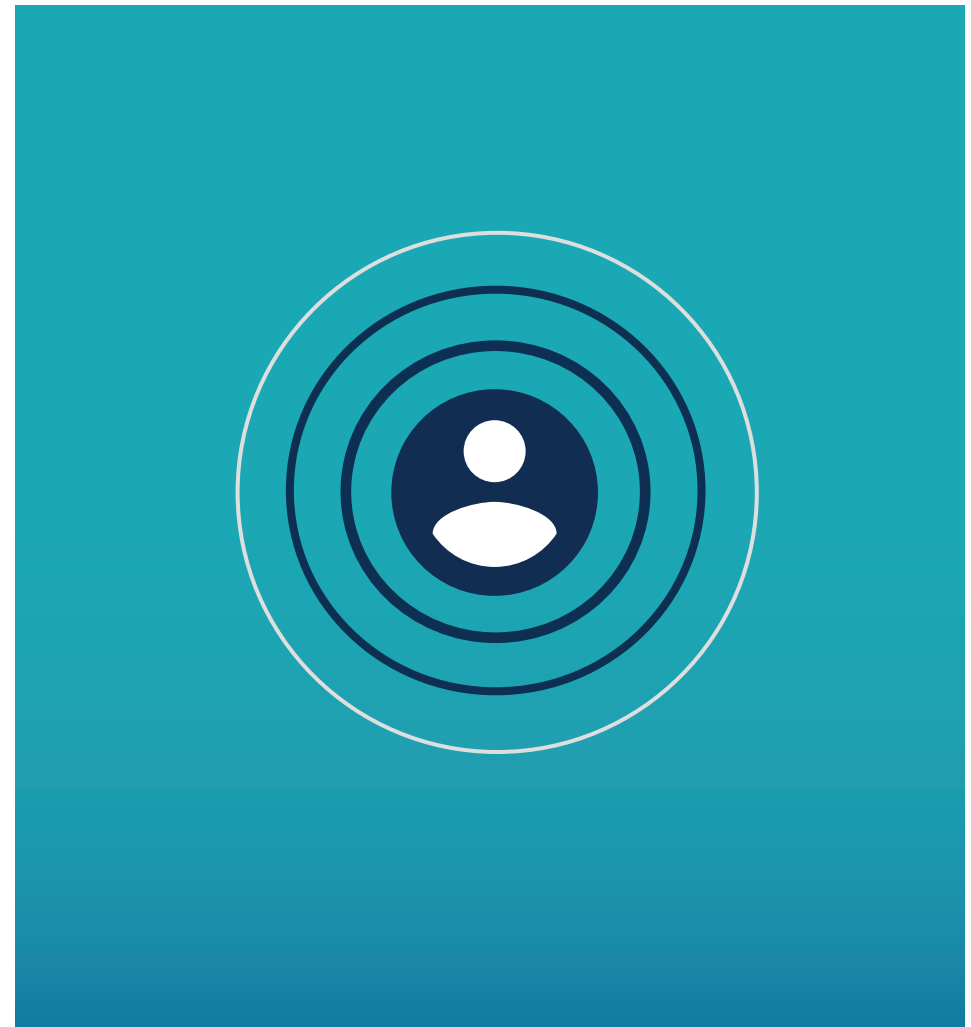
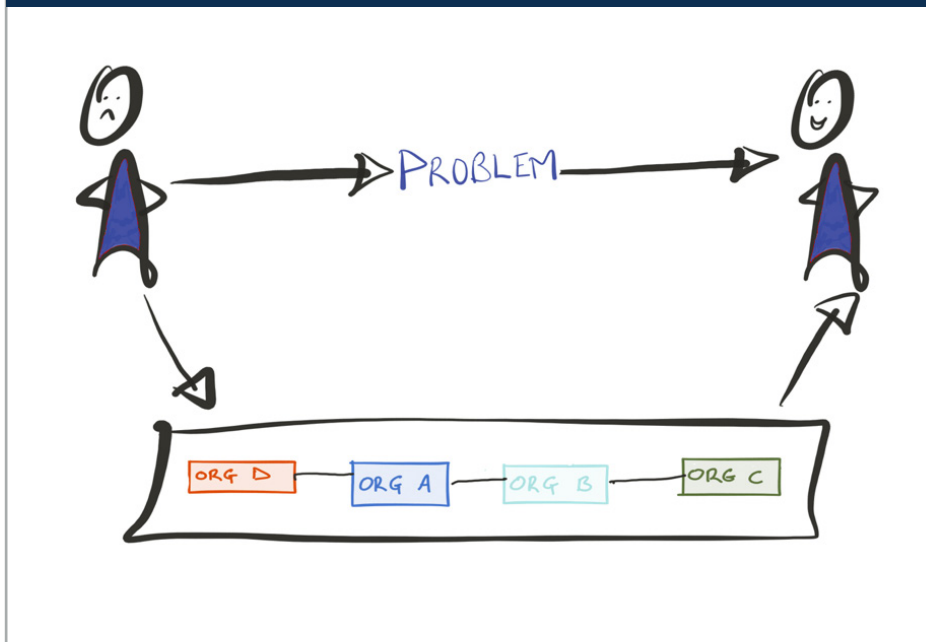
We often make things worse by expecting people to know where to find help for all the things they need in order to get over the problem they're facing.



Why we need a new approach

We need organisations to work together to understand problems. By working together in a common way, we can design effective service journeys that help people out of a difficult situation as efficiently and effectively as possible.

We need to build user and service focused thinking into all public sector organisations in Scotland so service design can be delivered across organisational boundaries seamlessly.



What would good look like?

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing democratic engagement, and there's a requirement to reflect this in the design of services. That engagement is also key to building services around users and their lives.

Major life events, such as birth, education, unemployment, marriage, separation, retirement, serious illness and death require multiple interactions with a variety of government services, which currently makes working across organisations or sectors to integrate services difficult.

The Scottish Approach to Service Design provides an opportunity to redesign services around the user by applying the lens of 'life events'.

Better outcomes for users

We can design more responsive user-centred services by looking at the whole spectrum of needs created by life events, understanding different pathways and emotional contexts. This not only improves the quality and efficiency of the services, but improves outcomes for people who are trying to access services during stressful periods of change.

Providing targeted assistance at times of greatest need – and delivering the very best user experience - will lead to more positive and trusting interactions between citizen and state.



What if...?

We applied this approach to a relationship breakdown as one of these life events.

A couple are married. The relationship is violent and the separation isn't amicable. They have children. The situation is difficult and stressful.

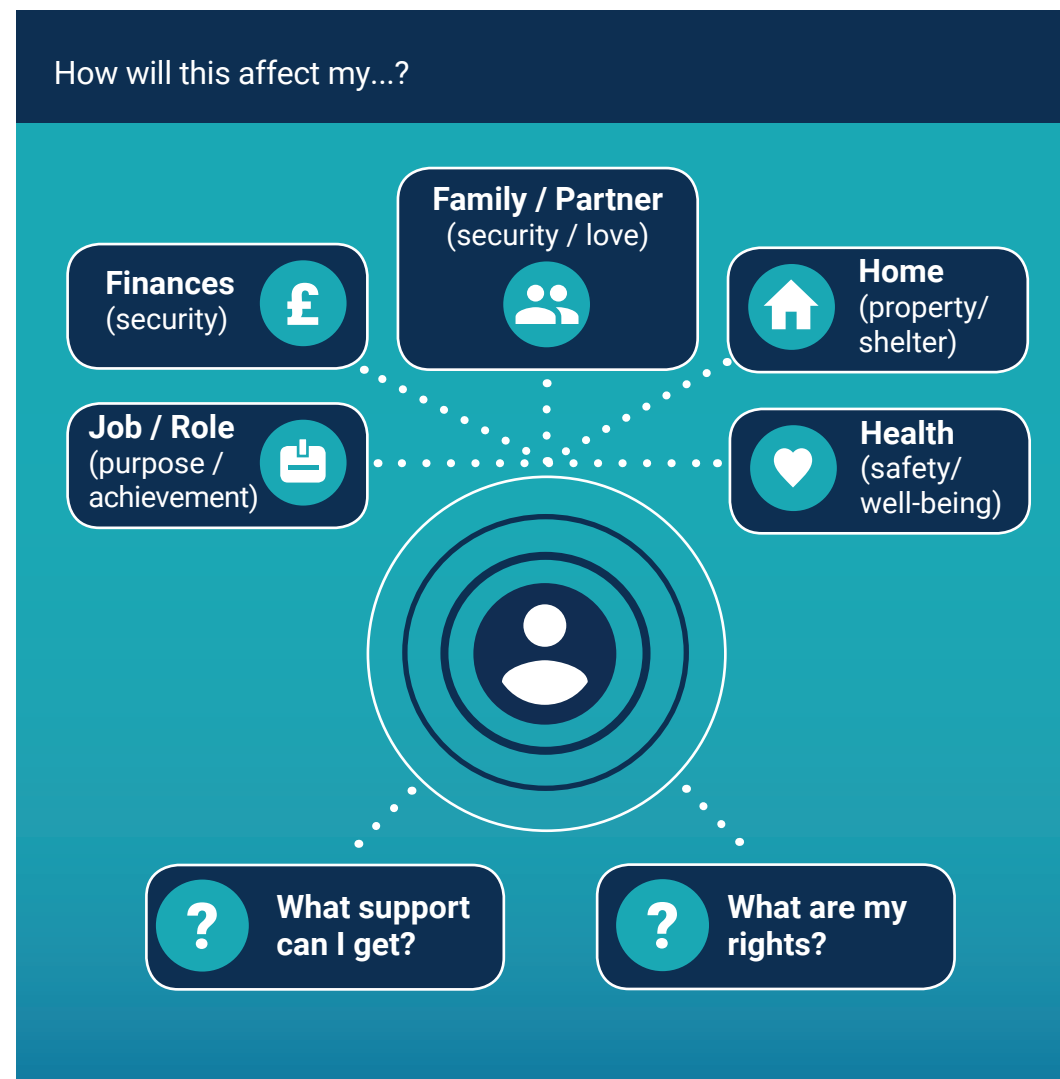
Or

A couple are not married but live together. They want to agree on dividing their assets and selling their home. The separation is a joint decision and they are keen to move on quickly.

These are very different scenarios but both require access to public services, complemented by very different support. Mapping this user journey shows that these users could receive services by more than 40 organisations across the public sector – but how could they know that?

What if those organisations worked together to understand these interactions and complex user needs and designed their services around these user journeys?

What might this look like for these users?



The 7 principles of SAtSD

So how do we do this?

While we don't have all the answers, we think we should start with a set of founding principles and build from there.

1

We explore and define the problem before we design the solution.

2

We design service journeys around people and not around how the public sector is organised.

3

We seek citizen participation in our projects from day one.

4

We use inclusive and accessible research and design methods so citizens can participate fully and meaningfully.

5

We use the core set of tools and methods of the Scottish Approach to Service Design.

6

We share and reuse user research insights, service patterns, and components wherever possible.

7

We contribute to continually building the Scottish Approach to Service Design methods, tools, and community.

What we mean by design

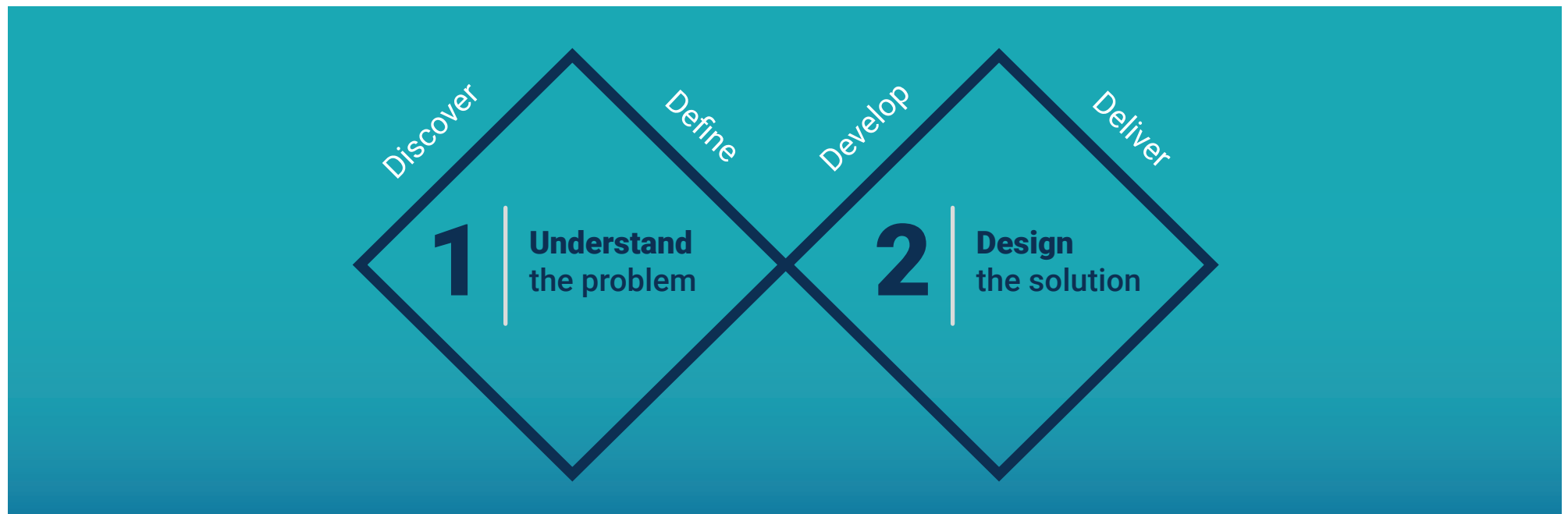
There are lots of different kinds of design - for example, graphic design, content design, interior design and product design.

What they all have in common, is that people who work in these fields take time to understand the problem they're faced with from a range of perspectives, before they create a solution. The Design Council's Double Diamond model is a visual diagram showing these design stages.

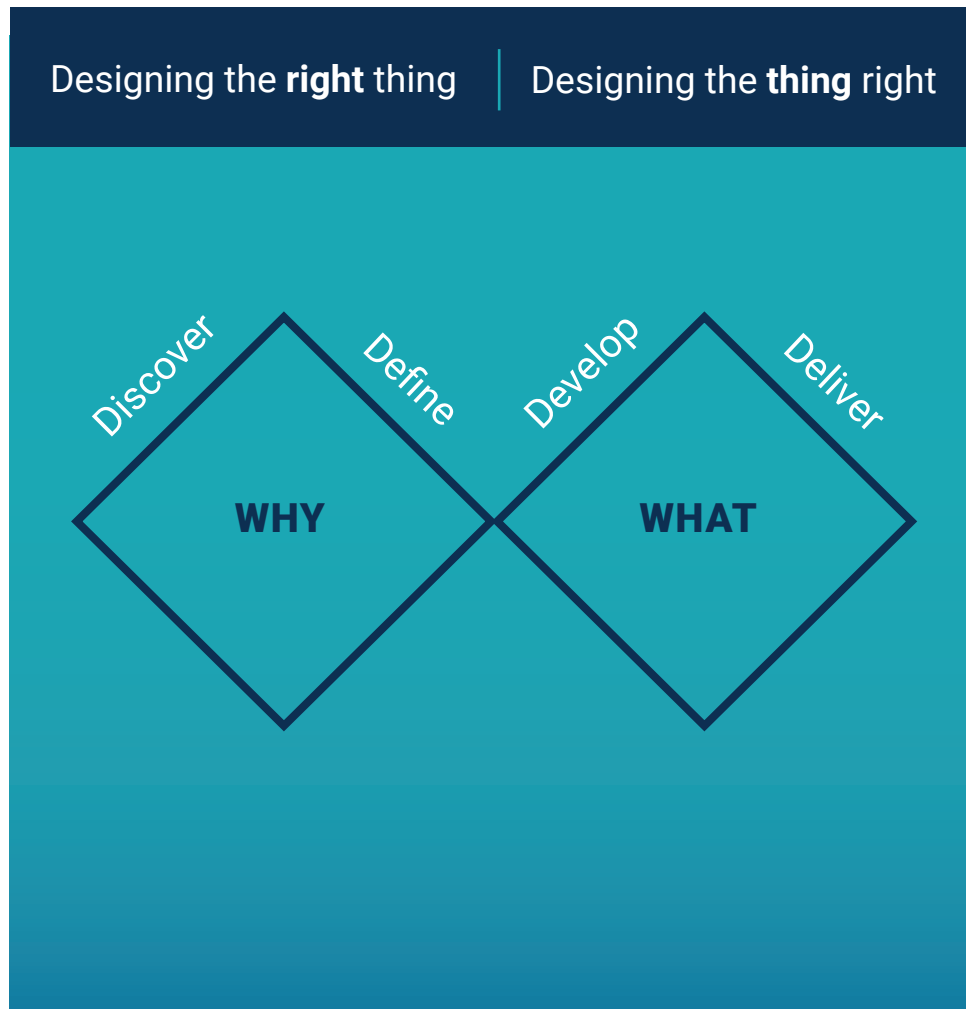
The Double Diamond shows the importance of taking time to understand the problem before designing solutions.

Each diamond shape illustrates the process of creating or exploring many possible ideas before refining these to the best idea.

The first diamond does this to confirm the problem, and the second to design the solution.



The design process



The design process reminds us that we have to be sure we're creating the right thing before we can design something that's fit for purpose and meets the needs of users, staff or organisations.

We do this by taking time to understand the problem before designing solutions. This can be hard. People tend to try to solve problems – and often this means building something tangible. This means we sometimes jump too fast.

It's not a linear progression and design fails if we jump into solving the problem too quickly. Until we spend time understanding the problem, we can't be confident how the project should progress.

For example, we might find out that we need to do further research, or that we're ready to develop ideas to test, or that there is no value in doing further work. These outcomes are all valid and can stop us delivering something that people don't need or won't use.

How does this apply to public services?

The principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design means that organisations responsible for services work together in the problem space to define the problems (engaging fully with users) before moving to solutions.

Users

When designing public services, it's not systems and organisational structures that are hard to get our head around, it's people.

To really understand the problems that people face when accessing public services, we need to understand their lives, the contexts in which they are accessing these services – whether that's at home, at work, or while trying to deal with everyday life.

To understand this, we engage users. A user is any person that the service/product is designed for use by.

We have two high level categories which support planning in who we engage with:

- **Citizens (personal capacity)** - the people who are either existing recipients of the service, are currently eligible for the service but not yet in receipt of it, are impacted by but not in receipt of service, or are eligible to receive the service in future
- **Staff (professional capacity)** - the people who are involved in the delivery of a service, such as agency staff or third sector staff

User research connects the people designing a service with the people who will use it.



It's important that:

- users are involved at every stage of the design, and not just at the start or the end
- we do research in a way that protects those participants
- we take time to understand and make sense of research insights

Research methods

When engaging with users, it's important to remember that we're dealing with people - their lifestyles, their livelihoods, their lives. Through user research we gather a lot of information about our users and these insights will likely benefit the design of government services beyond an organisation's immediate perspective.

At the moment we're not consistent in how we research or how we share insights for re-use. The tools and methods outlined in the Scottish Approach to Service Design will promote a consistent way of managing and sharing the insights across organisations. However, to ensure participation of users is accessible to all, our research and design methods must be:

Inclusive

There are 5.4 million people in Scotland. We want to create services that are appropriate for all of them.

We strive to make our services solve the needs of citizens and improve their lives. If we use our own abilities, opinions and experiences as a baseline then we make things easy for some but difficult for everyone else that doesn't have the same needs as us.

Diversity is a resource for better design as it opens up research to more citizens with a wider range of abilities. It reflects how people really are and what Scotland really is. We want our design to reflect our diversity.



Inclusive



Ethical



Collaborative



Ethical

Doing research in an ethical manner ensures that:

- participants are safe
- researchers are safe
- research is valid (objectivity and integrity)
- research is lawful and transparent
- research is inclusive and respectful

Collaborative

We want to increase our collective understanding of users by:

- ensuring that results are used and shared
- making participation voluntary and ensuring users understand how their data will be collected, stored, and used
- increasing participation, not just in being researched, but having users drive research and participating in making sense of the data

Creating the right culture

Designing with, not for, is the basis of our approach. This means giving citizens, service staff, and public sector organisations the opportunity to be involved in designing the services, and making them part of the design team.

This includes staff working day-to-day in the service, and also the people who make decisions about how the service is designed and delivered.

We know we need to look beyond organisational boundaries if we want Scotland's public services to work for users. By enabling collaboration with staff and citizens alike, we can gain a richer understanding of organisational needs (in addition to user needs), and uncover actionable insights that help foster effective links between different organisations involved in delivering a service.

Collaborative decision making

Designing collaboratively involves taking the needs of stakeholders into account at all stages - from how you plan your time to how you deliver your service. It's about modelling, and embedding, a culture of collaboration in projects.

As well as designing with users, it's also about empowering them to be part of the decision making process.



Having an active design mindset means understanding how the individual decisions you make about parts of a service can influence the overall design of a service.

Your design process should make it as easy as possible for all users to:

- understand the problem or current service, so everyone can decide how best to approach solving the problem together
- work with staff, other service users and other members of the public
- invest their time, knowledge and skills in engaging design activities

Maturity assessment

The principles and methods of the Scottish Approach to Service Design describe an aspiration for a shared, participatory approach to designing public services in Scotland with, and not only for, the people of Scotland.

Different organisations will be at different places in their ability to deliver on the Scottish Approach to Service Design, and what is proportionate and achievable will vary depending on the size of an organisation or the need for service design or redesign. So how do you know how your organisation is doing, and what things you should change or introduce in order to fully embrace the Scottish Approach to Service Design at the right level for your organisation?

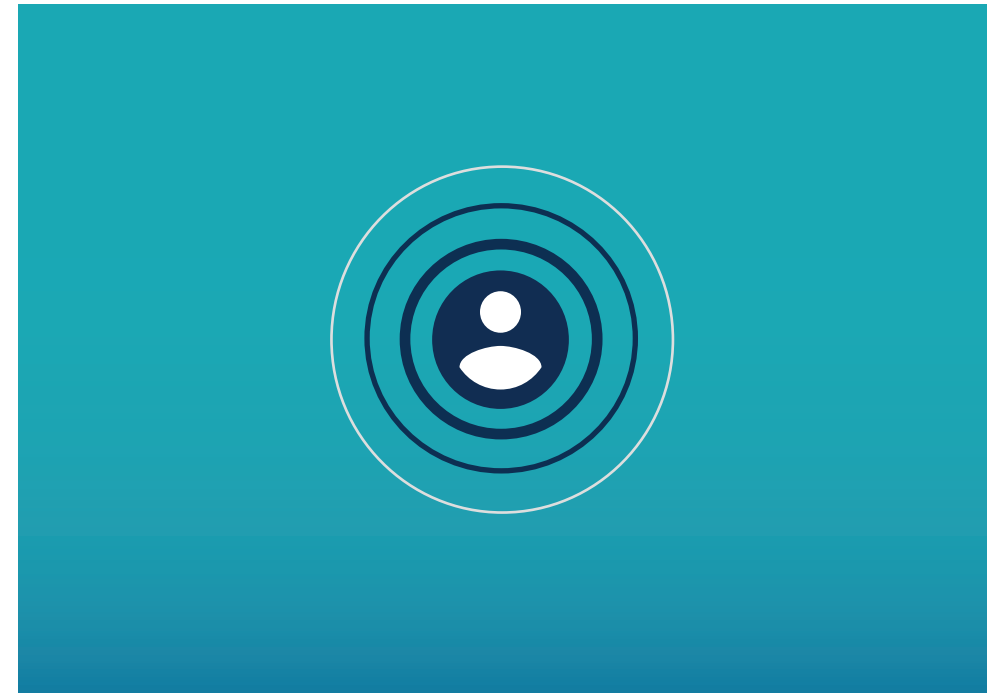
This matrix provides a set of prompts you can use to diagnose how your organisation is doing. It is organised along a scale of 'maturity levels' covering:

- practices
- process
- conditions

You can use it to identify key areas for action to improve your Scottish Approach to Service Design maturity and to give a general

indicator of where you are on the scale, from 'not evident' though to 'fully embedded'.

It is important to note that the SAAtSD is an approach to design, not a project delivery methodology like Agile or Prince. It works with and alongside a variety of delivery approaches.



Maturity assessment matrix

Engagement with SAtoSD principles, tools, methods and community:

Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening	Embedded
No evidence of engagement with design methods and tools or community. Limited evidence of service design thinking or user-centred design practices.	Some limited evidence of service design and/or user-centred design practices. Limited awareness of the Scottish Approach to Service Design principles or engagement with the community.	Awareness of user-centred design growing in parts of the organisation, though services are still designed for more than with their users. Some in the organisation are challenging non user-centred design practices. The organisation has good engagement across the community.	Awareness and support for user-centred design and the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design is evident at many levels of the organisation. The organisation is regularly engaged with the community, contributing to and testing design methods and tools.	The Scottish Approach to Service Design principles are understood at all levels of the organisation. The organisation is heavily engaged in contributing to the a shared set of design methods and tools, as well as the community.

Maturity assessment matrix

Capacity and capability for SAtoSD:

Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening	Embedded
<p>Heavy reliance on external capacity and capability to undertake user research and service design. Very limited ability to procure and manage service design projects that align to the principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design or user-centred design in general.</p>	<p>Heavy reliance on external capacity and capability to undertake user research and service design. Limited ability to procure and manage service design projects.</p>	<p>Limited in-house capacity to undertake service design, though procured projects do specify aligning to the Scottish Approach to Service Design and are well managed.</p>	<p>Growing capacity to undertake service design. This includes procuring and managing projects that embrace the Scottish Approach to Service Design. Larger organisations may have a number of user-centred design professionals in house.</p>	<p>Strong internal capacity to manage and / or undertake service design projects. For larger organisations this might include having a full user-centred design team or teams in house. Design leadership is present in the executive team and / or board.</p>

Maturity assessment matrix

Focus on users and the life events / problems they need the service to solve:

Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening	Embedded
<p>Services are designed around organisation needs rather than user needs. Projects have very limited or no focus on understanding 'the problem' before and during designing the solution. No awareness of related services.</p>	<p>Users and their needs are less well attended to/understood than organisational needs, technology options, etc. User needs often lack robust user research to back them up. Awareness of related services.</p>	<p>Projects start with a focus on understanding 'the problem' as well as designing the solution. However that initial understanding of the problem is not continuously challenged and improved. Limited collaboration across related services.</p>	<p>Projects have a good focus on understanding 'the problem' as well as designing the solution. Typically the problem definition stage takes a good proportion of the overall project lifetime and is continuously challenged and improved. Good engagement and collaboration across related services.</p>	<p>Projects have an early and strong focus on understanding 'the problem' as well as designing the solution. This understanding is continuously improved and challenged. Strong focus on related services, with shared view of user needs and alignment across the user experience.</p>

Maturity assessment matrix

User participation in project research and design activities:

Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening	Embedded
<p>User engagement in designing services is limited to consultation, and some or no user research or usability and accessibility testing. Little user engagement in live service improvement. Engagement with users is heavily focused on engagement with stakeholder organisations and direct involvement of service users is rare.</p>	<p>User participation in design is limited and is mostly in the form of being researched upon, invited to test prototypes late in the solution design phase etc. Users have little or no engagement in ongoing improvement of live services beyond being asked to participate in 'satisfaction measuring'. There is some effort to directly engage service users as well as via stakeholder organisations.</p>	<p>Users are engaged in some stages of projects from inception to problem and solution definition through to live delivery. Participation tends to be more evident around designing and evaluating prototypes. Users participate in some of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designing research agenda framing 'the problem' making sense of user research and defining both the problem and possible solutions prototyping and evaluating solutions ongoing improvement of live services. 	<p>Users are fully engaged in some or most stages of projects from inception to delivery. Participation in different activities and phases may not be consistent. Users participate in most of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designing research agenda framing 'the problem' making sense of user research and defining both the problem and possible solutions prototyping and evaluating solutions ongoing improvement of live services. 	<p>Services are fully designed with and not just for their users. Users participate in all of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designing research agenda framing 'the problem' making sense of user research and defining both the problem and possible solutions prototyping and evaluating solutions ongoing improvement of live services.

Maturity assessment matrix

User inclusion and accessibility needs for participation in design:

Not Evident	Limited	Growing	Strengthening	Embedded
<p>Little or no attention to ensure that design activities undertaken with users are accessible and inclusive.</p>	<p>Design and research methods and tools are sometimes or often not accessible and inclusive for all design participants, both end users and organisation staff / teams. The importance of diversity in both user and staff team memberships is poorly understood. Encouragement for all users to participate is rarely or never backed up by accommodations.</p>	<p>Design and research methods and tools are inclusive and accessible for some design participants, both end users and organisation staff / teams. The importance of diversity in both user and staff team memberships is limited or inconsistent. Encouragement for all users to participate is not always backed up by accommodations.</p>	<p>Design and research methods and tools are inclusive and accessible for most design participants, both end users and organisation staff / teams. The importance of diversity in both user and staff team memberships is understood, though encouragement may not always be backed up by accommodations.</p>	<p>Design and research methods and tools are inclusive and accessible for all design participants, both end users and organisation staff / teams. The importance of diversity in both user and staff team memberships is well understood and accommodated.</p>

Next steps / feedback

We want your feedback so we can get better at describing the Scottish Approach to Service Design.

This publication has been created to make sure we have a common understanding of the problem we are trying to solve. Have we described the aspirations and principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design in a way that you can relate to – and support? Will this document help you to build a SAtSD culture in your organisation?

We want your feedback so we can bring together the tools, methods and support to help teams deliver in this way.

Whilst this resource sets out the key elements and principles of SAtSD, we also have a practitioner focussed resource in development for sharing tools, guidance, case studies and ideas.

The next phase of work is to produce a community platform to help teams who are designing and delivering public services. What do you think is the best way to do this? What are the key things delivery teams need?



Contact us at design@gov.scot to send us your feedback.





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