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NFON  
Cloud Telephone System

## Smarter Working in Local Authorities

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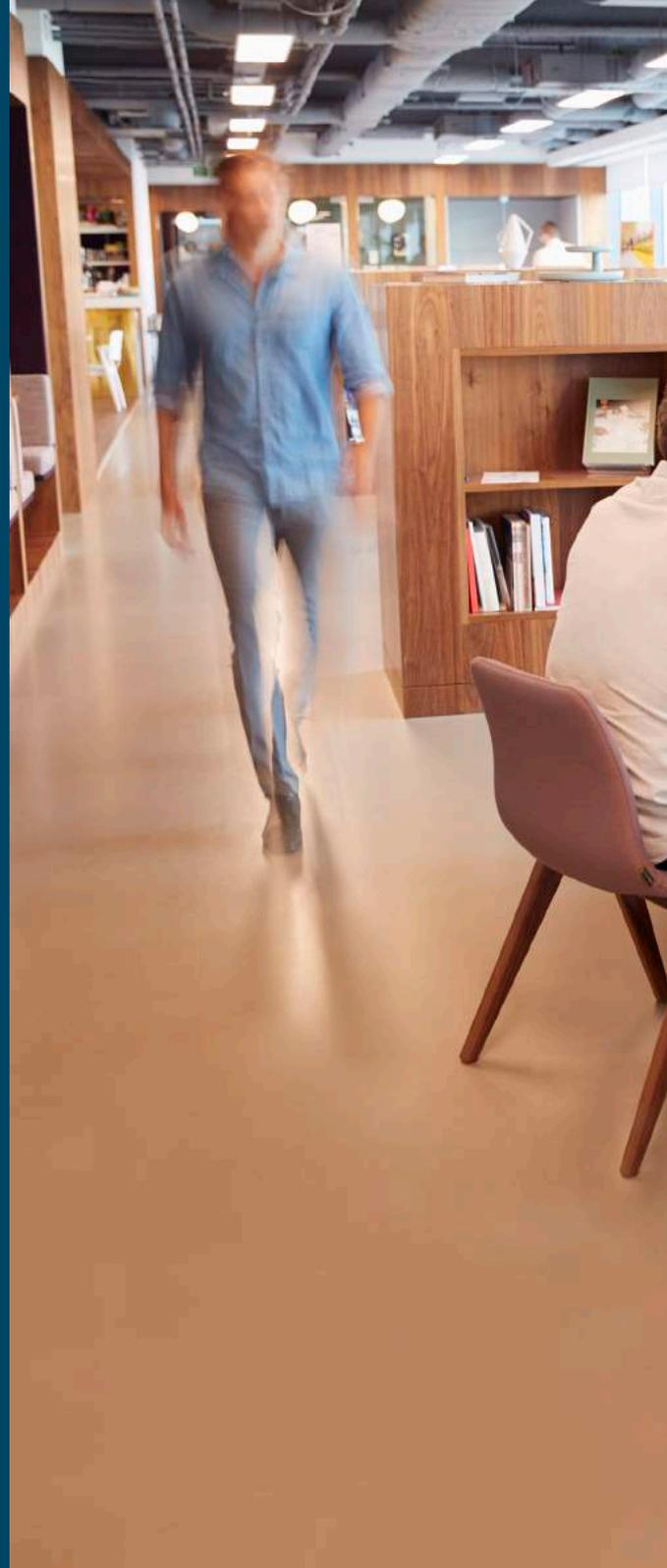
**Digital transformation is now formally embedded in Local Government's approach to improving services, with initiatives like the Local Digital Declaration setting out a collective ambition for councils to realise the full potential of digital tools to reshape the future of public services.**

Driving that change is a vision of better, easier, more efficient ways for users to access services, and for councils to operate more intelligently and more cost effectively in the face of reduced funding and increased demand.

Linked to the benefits of full digital maturity for service users are the many improvements it delivers for Local Government workers, too. Better internal communications, enhanced data search, analytics and the easier integration of resources all help to improve the day to day efficiency and fulfilment for employees.

But it is the potential for remote working and collaboration through unified communications that is having perhaps the most lasting impact on working patterns.

Flexible work practices such as job shares and shifts that support working parents have always been a feature of Local Government employment policies, attracting those who value the work/life balance over the more material rewards of the corporate world. Now, aided by remote working technology that gives employees control over when, where and how they carry out their duties, that flexibility has expanded to include almost every role and every aspect of local government working life.





In fact, the council office of the future is starting to look increasingly like one in which permanent workspaces and structures give way to a more fluid arrangement of open air seating, informal hub spaces and homeworking, as employees take advantage of advances in mobile networking technology and cloud based unified communications.

Perhaps inevitably, these dual drivers for remote working – the gradual erosion of the 9 to 5 desk-based culture and the rise of enabling technology – have found common ground in the concept of smarter working . This doctrine for more efficient, flexible working was adopted as official policy in all Whitehall departments some years ago and has since been widely embraced across the public sector.

# The Four Pillars of Smarter Working

Smarter working is an all-encompassing commitment to creating the best possible working environment. With the help of technology, it is an approach to work that brings flexibility, collaboration across teams and productivity. Following the smarter working model, staff technology moves beyond the desktop computer towards the utilisation of a range of devices and software that we are all accustomed to using outside of work.

**Smarter working happens where IT, workplace and culture all align to meet the needs of staff and is embedded by 4 key pillars:**



Workplace & Workspace



People / Culture / Leadership



Technology



Processes

**When these 4 pillars of smarter working are considered, new dynamics of work across the entire Local Government infrastructure can be realised.**





## Towards a New Way of Working for Local Government

Smarter working was born out of The Way We Work, (TW3) a proposal for Civil Service reform published in 2013. It is a concept that has evolved considerably over the years as technology has developed and learnings are embedded as best practice. Nevertheless, it remains central to the journey towards more modern ways of working and the core around which new many new public sector hubs are conceived and built.

At the heart of its technology pillar is a promise that 'Technology will enable a digital workplace that is mobile and accessible, enabling collaboration, document sharing and communication'

That means the focus for Local Government IT must be on empowering employees wherever and whenever they work with technology, tools and access to systems and data that are fit purpose and equipped to accommodate an ever-faster pace of change.

Even in 2013, TW3 was predicting that *'The 'device of the future' for government users will increasingly be the same as the devices people use in everyday life – easy to use, flexible and almost 'invisible'*<sup>1</sup>. Smartphones and tablets, remote server access and web conferencing were all identified as technologies likely to play a more and more important role.

Today, the divide between personal and work IT is so indistinct as to be practically non-existent with video conferencing platforms, VOIP applications, social media channels and networked mobile devices all an integral part of our private and professional lives.

It is those councils who make the best use of such technology that will create the most agile and adaptable workforce, able to understand and respond effectively to customer needs while increasing their own sense of professional and personal fulfilment.

<sup>1</sup> Local Government Association Improvement and Innovation Board. One Public Estate and Land Release Fund report – 22nd March 2018

# Smarter Working as a HR Tool

**While advanced digital platforms and technology are integral to smarter working, it should be noted that smarter working, in itself, isn't technology driven. Primarily, its capacity to transform is a cultural one; smarter working is about changing the way Local Government thinks and acts about work and organising its working environment.**

Only once these cultural adjustments are complete can the technology that enables smarter working be fully leveraged, allowing individuals and teams to be every bit as effective working from home, on the move or in collaborative online platforms as they can in the office.

Neither are the benefits limited to existing employees. In fact, the flexible working systems smarter working promotes, enhanced by advanced communications, can be seen as critical in overcoming problems in local government recruitment and retention.

Remote working is an ideal way of reaching out to parents, carers or those with mobility or mental health issues who may otherwise struggle in a traditional 9-5 office environment.

Often, these are the very people who appreciate the value of public services the most, and in whom passion and commitment for helping others is at its strongest.

Indeed, even though the employment landscape has changed radically over the last decade and half – rocked by austerity, job cuts and ever increasing pressure on services – the two biggest motivators for working in local government, according to latest research, remain the Public Service Ethos, and the Work Life Balance.

By offering the tools and a working environment to mobilise otherwise marginalised groups, Local Government has the means to recruit in greater numbers for areas where shortfalls are most marked, and to create a more dynamic, diverse workforce in which these professional and personal goals are satisfied.

Local Government employees valued the flexible working provision, such as job shares and flexible shift patterns. Newer recruits were more likely to say that the work-life balance attracted them to the sector. This is in keeping with a study of millennials' attitudes to work which found that they value development and work-life balance more than financial reward.

**Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace. PwC**

# Smarter Working & The Local Government Estate

**Smarter working and its enabling technologies not only have far reaching effects on working patterns and communication between Local Government teams, they can also be fundamental in realigning how local authorities manage and plan the future of their public buildings.**

At a time of prolonged financial strain on local government organisations, many are looking to rationalise their property estates to release value, reduce overheads and increase efficiency from a smaller number of council buildings.

The One Public Estate (OPE) programme, delivered by a partnership between the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association, seeks to do this by helping councils integrate services into fewer workplaces. Allowing teams to work more efficiently and making it easier for the public to access the services they need.

The rise of online council services has no doubt helped this process. But so too has the adoption of unified communication channels, particularly telephony services, that mean employees no longer need to maintain a physical presence at work for services to be delivered.

Why maintain, heat and light an entire building when employees are just as likely to be working from home or in a coffee shop? Or retain staff car parks that are barely occupied when they could be sold off to build much needed new homes?

The shift in public sector IT from on premise servers and systems to cloud-based infrastructure has further helped streamline local authority property estates. Physical data centres and servers take up valuable floor space and contribute significantly to the running costs a building. By moving to cloud services, these spaces can be repurposed and reassigned to deliver better value or to generate rental income that can contribute directly to front line services funding.

Through measures such as these, it's expected OPE projects across the country will raise £165 million from sales of council assets in 2019-20, releasing land for 25,000 new homes, generating 44,000 new jobs and cutting running costs by £158 million<sup>2</sup>.

By allowing employees to work more flexibly and effectively offsite, advanced digital systems that unify voice, data and analytics have a significant part to play in delivering these results.

# Creating More Value from Microsoft Teams

## Nvoice For Microsoft Teams

As communication and collaboration tools gain wider adoption, Microsoft Teams is fast becoming a single hub for teamwork, delivering a high-quality user experience for the workforce. Microsoft Teams brings people together to enable natural team working.

Many users of Microsoft Teams, however, have come up against some limitations. Although there is call functionality through the Microsoft Phone System, telephony is not at the core of Microsoft Teams.

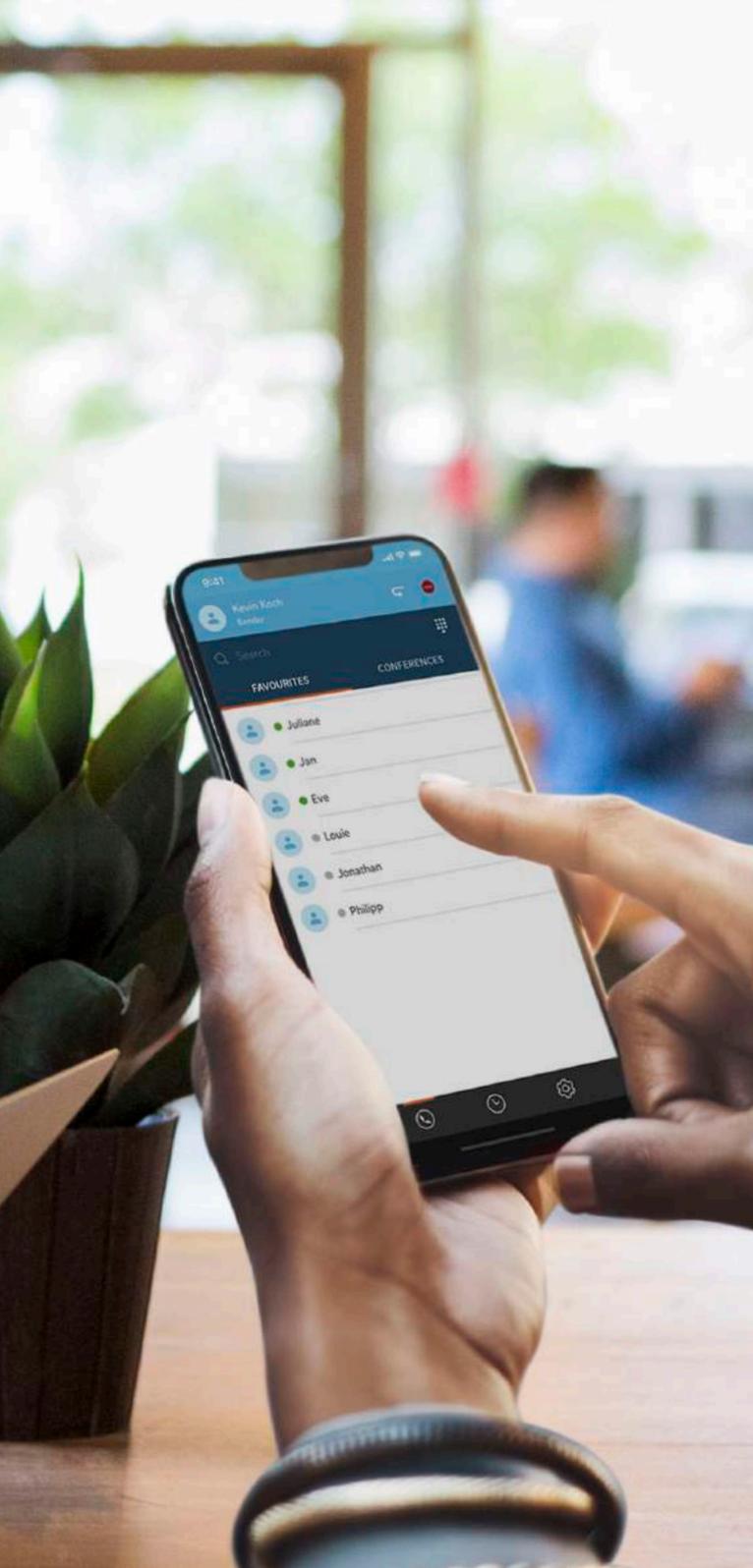
It is essential for Local Government organisations to have high-functioning voice features for all communications between teams and with citizens, so having a telephony solution that works in alignment with Microsoft Teams brings about an invaluable advantage.

NFON, experts in cloud telephony, offer a suite of telephony solutions, all designed to match any type of government organisation as the mobile workplace becomes commonplace. Developing upon the capabilities of Microsoft Teams, they have used their experience and expertise in cloud telephony to add value to Microsoft Teams.

With Nvoice for Microsoft Teams, government employees benefit from a host of intelligent telephony features, within the familiar Microsoft environment, accessible from any location and any device, bringing better collaboration and improved productivity.

Nvoice also brings a high-quality user experience into Teams, meaning staff can derive even more value from Teams as meeting, chat and calling can all happen in one place.

Nvoice for Microsoft Teams leverages the enterprise PBX features of Cloudya – NFON's best ever cloud telephone system – to provide a fully immersive communications capability that can rival face-to-face communication and liberate staff from constraints of time, speed and space. Microsoft Teams already provides the benefits of cloud communications, but with Nvoice, significant cost efficiencies can be gained.



# The Customer Experience and the Smarter Contact Centre

## **Ncontactcenter**

An increasing number of public sector organisations are committing to optimising the customer journey. They are identifying the different ways customers interact with them and mapping out their preferred channels for communication in order to improve the customer experience.

NFON'S Contact Centre Solution, Ncontactcenter, offers a universal customer interaction platform that is feature rich and enables customer-centric communications across different channels.

With a user-friendly web interface, it provides the flexibility needed to meet the needs of the Local Government contact centres. Integrating across diverse channels – social media, web chat, email, SMS, Ncontactcenter provides innovative functionality for intelligent public sector contact centres for the delivery of personalised public services.

Integration and the capability to quickly merge existing virtual ecosystems is key to operational success. With Ncontactcenter, organisations can eliminate high-maintenance, legacy on-site infrastructure and benefit from cloud technology to facilitate the integration and merging of existing virtual ecosystems, such as CRM solutions and other common tools and platforms.

Hosted in the public cloud, Ncontactcenter can be accessed anytime, anywhere and with any web-enabled device. It requires no physical space nor hardware or software investments or deployment, helping customer service agents deliver superior customer experiences, at minimum costs and yet with maximum scalability.

# Advancing Internal Communications

## Cloudya

With numerous telephone numbers, inboxes and communications tools, it's easy for staff to miss important calls and messages.

NFON's Cloudya solution makes communications simple and intuitive as it only requires a single telephone number and inbox for reaching every member of staff in any team. With fewer missed calls and messages, interactions are immediate, more responsive, maximising productivity.

Cloudya overcomes the issues that frequently come with complex communications solutions that are difficult and expensive to deploy and maintain. Cloudya simplifies deployment, management and support, reducing the workloads of technical staff. As no physical infrastructure is needed to manage, and with simple tools for adding and managing users, IT can focus on more value-added work.

Cloudya connects staff wherever they are working and on any device. This leads to quicker communications, better collaboration opportunities and cost efficiencies.

## Unifying The Smarter Working Landscape

Advances in IT and integrated cloud networks that combine telephony data, applications and analytics in a unified suite of resources are having an impact on work patterns as profound as any in the industrial revolution.

Local government is no more or no less susceptible to these changes than any other organisation. Failure to embrace their potential would be a failure to meet the expectations of citizens. On the other hand, getting it right means a more productive, more socially and economically beneficial and far more sustainable Local Government infrastructure.

From a slow start a few years ago, when the cultural resistance and the persistence of legacy systems hampered progress, Local Government is now becoming steadily more agile and responsive, aided by unified communications tools that are helping to power the smarter working revolution.

NFON's Cloudya, Nvoice for Microsoft Teams and Ncontactcenter can support the fostering of innovative, connected, collaborative cultures, all central to local government's ambitions. Raising the dialogue between the public sector and the citizens, these industry leading solutions bring new levels of collaboration opportunities for staff and personalisation for deeper, richer relationships with citizens.

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# NFON

NFON simplifies communication. Every day we offer companies across Europe intuitive communication solutions to improve their business. NFON was founded in 2007 with the aim to revolutionise communication. In order to deliver the best customer experience and accelerate our growth, we have a very strong partner network across Europe, with over than 1,000 partners – from small IT experts to large system integrators.

# GovNewsDirect

This paper was built in partnership with GovNewsDirect. GovNewsDirect specialise in facilitating innovative and engaging partnerships between the private and public sector.



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