



Mobility as a Mindset

Public sector leaders are finding new ways to transform their communities



We live in a world where we're always connected. We think nothing of checking our email on the train or ordering a taxi at the tap of a button when we arrive at the station. These digital tools are part of the fabric of how we live. And the shift to 5G will only accelerate this way of life further.



I'm Simon Haston, BT's Principal Technology Partner for the Devolved Governments. I spend a lot of time talking to the UK's councils and devolved nation governments about their mobility strategies. And every day I see exciting opportunities for the public sector to take advantage of these sorts of technologies.

Whether it's caring for the most vulnerable or making it easier to recycle, I think the shift to what we call a "mobility mindset" will be transformative. We're living at a moment where we can dramatically transform not just the work we do, but the digital fabric of our communities too.



The mobility opportunity

Mobility is more than just a phone. It's about being able to work more effectively, with all of the information you need and without being tethered to a single location.

Much of our public sector workforce is already mobile. They work within communities and across our cities, towns and rural areas. And now advances in connectivity and mobile technology mean that they can carry in their pockets all of the same information to do their day to day jobs as if they were sitting at a desk.

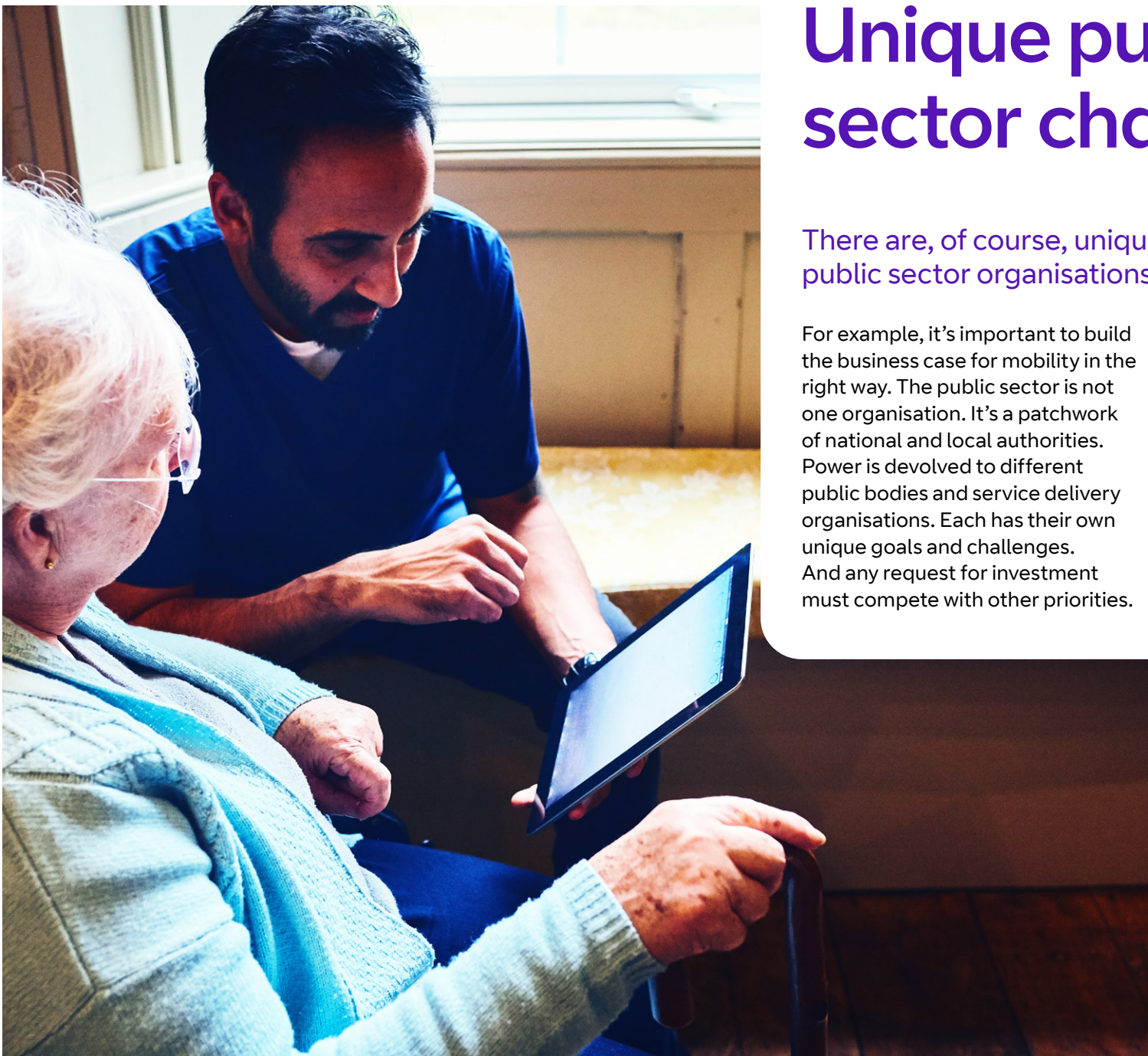
I'm proud of the work that we've been doing with Police Scotland. Over the last couple of years we've rolled out thousands of mobile devices across the entire force. The new phones connect officers working in their communities with a wide range of systems without the need to return to the station and log on to a computer. Police Scotland say it has saved their officers 400,000 hours in just one year. It means that they can spend more time in their communities, dealing with incidents and focusing on crime prevention.

I'm excited by the prospect of similar transformations in other parts of the public sector too.

This could be giving health and social care workers better information on their patients when they visit them in their homes, or using sensors on our roads to help keep traffic flowing. There's even opportunities to transform how we handle flooding and other emergencies. And there's scope for improving how agencies communicate with each other, and talk to individual citizens.

The technologies we need to make this a reality are not something for the future. They are already here today, it's all about embracing them.





Unique public sector challenges

There are, of course, unique challenges when it comes to public sector organisations embracing a mobility mindset.

For example, it's important to build the business case for mobility in the right way. The public sector is not one organisation. It's a patchwork of national and local authorities. Power is devolved to different public bodies and service delivery organisations. Each has their own unique goals and challenges. And any request for investment must compete with other priorities.

There's also the skills challenge. New digital tools will always be greeted with variable levels of enthusiasm. So it's important to ensure that everyone across the organisation has the support they need to take advantage of the new capabilities. And in my experience, this is not always generational. We could give everyone a powerful new mobile device. But without the right training and support they may not benefit from the efficiencies it can enable.

And then there's the ever-present challenge of technology itself. Given how quickly technology evolves and sometimes stringent regulations, it can be difficult for public sector organisations to make critical decisions. What platforms and standards should you use? How can you be confident that the choices you make today will still hold up in five or even ten years time?

Transforming communities with our digital fabric

Though there are challenges we know what the solutions are, and what the ultimate goal is.

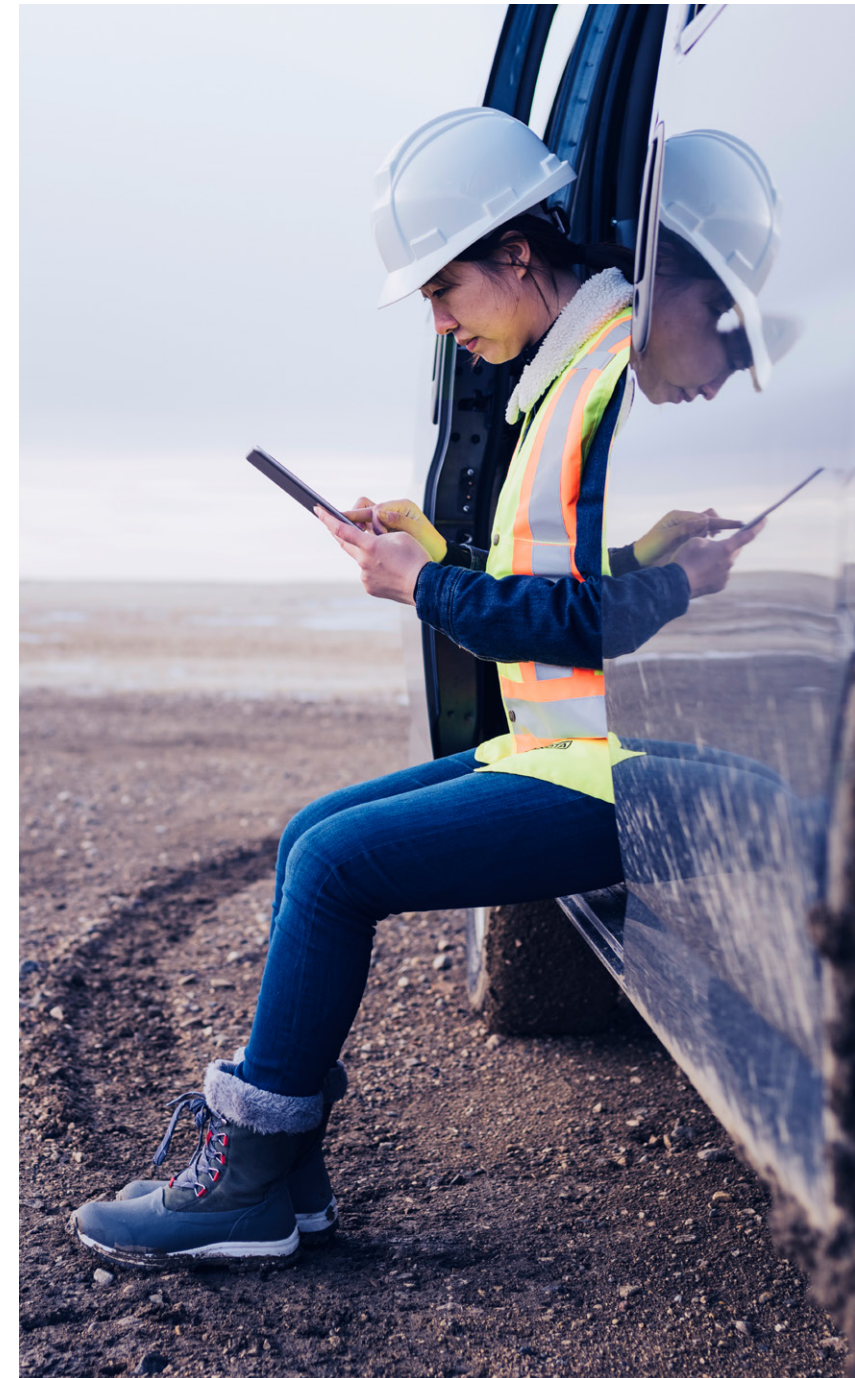
Take the business case question, for example. The answer is to tell a converged, strategic story about how investing in mobility enables wider transformation across communities. The argument can be made that by saving organisations time, the capacity to deliver a better experience for both customers and employees increases - even as other resources stay the same.

Or on the technology question, one strategy is for organisations to find a trusted technology partner to all their mobility needs. That way, public organisations can concentrate on what they do best: Serving their communities.

In my view, the public sector has a unique opportunity, with the scale and the remit to treat mobility as a strategic opportunity for whole places. This goes beyond the transformation of internal services. It becomes an opportunity for whole places, communities and businesses.

The public sector can use its buying power, its strategy and its own infrastructure to drive change across entire regions. Investment in 5G to support public service also means investing in the skills and infrastructure - the digital fabric - capable of transforming our communities and economies.

And how will we know when we have succeeded? It will be when the mobility mindset is simply how business is done. When the question asked is not whether to use WIFI or 5G, but how we can improve our schools or our social care, where mobility is already assumed to be part of the answer.





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