MOBILE TECHNOLOGY FOR CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING SERVICES WITHIN A DIRECT SERVICES ORGANISATION: A UK OPERATIONAL SYSTEM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract
The UK's government mission to modernise government is a significant step forward in what is a long-term programme of reform. The central government is committed to promoting continuous improvement in local government services through electronic service delivery (ESD). The vision is to modernise the way the public sector delivers policies, programmes and services. The aim being to look at how services can be built around customer needs and not the organisational structures of service providers. All levels of government are being encouraged to make full use of the potential for ESD to improve the responsiveness and quality of services. This paper looks at one direct services organisation (DSO) in the UK that is embracing the use of mobile technology in connection with its construction and building services provision. The objectives of the system are outlined, together with system design and functionality. The interface and operational requirements of the system are also covered in addition to details of a pilot implementation. Key findings are also discussed based on feedback from operation of the systems and a customer satisfaction analysis.

Keywords
e-government, direct service organisations, mobile technology, construction and building services

INTRODUCTION
During the late 1990s many countries worldwide embraced the concept of e-government and strove for its speedy implementation. The UK government, in particular, is committed to promoting continuous improvement in local government services through ESD. This will enable different parts of the public sector to work together seamlessly to deliver services more effectively and efficiently (Cabinet Office, 1999).

However, the implementation of new technology should not replace personal contact entirely, but should enhance and make it better supported (Kirkman-Page, 2002). The purpose of proposing the development of local targets and benchmarks (DETR, 2000) is to stimulate change, measure progress, and to promote consistency across local government. Many local authorities are using the Internet imaginatively to provide a community information service, and to develop community access and engagement with council decision making. Many authorities have developed or are planning a major information and communication technology (ICT) based revolution in information and service delivery, often associated with a comprehensive redesign of existing delivery platforms around call centres or unified and electronically based back office support systems for public enquiry points dealing with a range of services (Wimmer and Traunmueller, 2000). Clearly, this also has implications for DSOs delivering construction and building services to their communities.