# E-GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT 'INVISIBLE' TO THE TAXPAYER

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Survey reveals that 73 per cent of the public had not noticed the impact of the current investment in the UK's e-Government initiative

A survey undertaken by Transversal (www.transversal.com), the eService software provider, has revealed that the majority of people have a poor perception of e-Government.  Almost three quarters of the respondents said that they hadn't noticed the impact of the investment made in e-Government and 50 per cent of them were unhappy with the current level of customer service.

The survey investigated how the public contacts local authorities and government departments; one of the objectives of e-Government is to make public services more accessible to citizens by investing in more effective web and call-centre based services. Communication by phone was still the favourite medium for 58 per cent of respondents, compared with only 32 per cent opting to use e-mail or the web. This suggests that local authorities and government departments have yet to establish an effective way to deal with enquiries electronically.

This is certainly supported by the fact that when asked about ways to improve public sector websites, the most popular answer from respondents (32 per cent) was: the 'ability to answer questions from the public'. Furthermore, 88 per cent said they would be more likely to use these websites if their questions were answered immediately and correctly.

Gerard Buckley, CEO of Transversal, said: "Our survey suggests that more needs to be done to raise the current perception of e-Government. The public clearly hasn't noticed any improvement in public sector websites. While significant public funds have been ploughed in to content management and CRM systems, there are few public sector websites that allow us to ask a question and receive an intelligent answer in return.  Not only is it highly frustrating; it increases our dependence on public sector call centres, many of which have been criticised for poor and slow service.   If the government is really serious about e-Government, they must go back and do some basic things to ensure the public can easily access information and have the ability to ask and receive answers to their questions efficiently online."

Transversal also believes the public sector is misguided in its tendency to implement limited static FAQ (frequently asked questions) lists which are not interactive and don't give Government an insight into public needs or concerns. According to Transversal, simple, but dynamic web self-service solutions hold the answer.  Transversal's own solutions are driven by interactive knowledgebases that respond to online customer queries efficiently and more cost-effectively. They also use a dynamic Q&A process to build an up-to-date, self-organising knowledgebase of information that the public actually needs.

Public sector organisations such as FastTrack Teaching (www.fasttrackteaching.gov.uk) and the British Army (www.army.mod.uk/careers) are amongst the first to implement such technology on their websites.

For further information please visit www.transversal.com.

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Notes to editors

Summary of survey results (sample 200 people):

- 73% of respondents have not noticed the impact of the £billions invested in e-government

- 58% of respondents still used the phone to contact a local authority or government department.  Only 32% used e-mail or the web

- Council Tax, Refuse Collection, Planning and Building were the issues people were most in contact about

- Half of the respondents were not happy with the level of service

- 39% of respondents thought technology that automatically answered questions on websites would improve their experience of using public sector websites

- 88% of respondents would be more likely to use a public sector website for accessing information if their questions were answered immediately and correctly

- 32% of respondents thought public sector websites could be improved if they had the ability to answer questions from the public.  26% cited more contact details as an improvement.


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About Transversal
Founded in 1998 by two PhDs from Caltech and Cambridge University, Transversal is based in Cambridge, England. Transversal provides knowledge-powered eService and call centre knowledge management solutions that enable organisations to achieve key sales, customer service and efficiency goals.  Transversal's eService solution increases online sales and reduces the volume of call and email enquiries to contact centres by automatically answering customers' questions online.  Transversal's Intrafaq solution for call centres, delivers information to agents in a unique way from a dynamic natural language knowledgebase.  Powered by Transversal's proprietary Memory Engine software, Intrafaq is able to understand complex sentence structures and process questions in the same way as human memory. Simply by typing a question, in their own words, agents can access answers to customer questions enabling them to provide fast, accurate and consistent responses – even when they don't know the
 answer. Current customers include Sony, Direct Line, MFI, Fujifilm, TDK Systems, JP Morgan Chase, DfES, Proctor & Gamble, Triton and the British Army.

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