open digital planning

Digital Planning Maturity Assessment

Question guide

Prepare and agree your authority's responses before repeating the DPMA

October 2026

What this guide includes

Use this guide to prepare and agree your authority's responses before completing the Digital Planning Maturity Assessment (DPMA) for the first time.

Using this guide

What the DPMA is for 3
How to use this guide 4
Who to involve 5
Prepare and agree your responses 6

Assessment questions

Digital and design skills 8
Technology and products 12
Data and insights 18
Procurement 25
Leadership and governance 30
Culture and ways of working 34
Citizen engagement and working with others 40

Submit the assessment and next steps

Describe your authority's digital planning strengths and challenges 44
Submit the assessment 45
What happens after submission 46
Get help with the DPMA 47

What the DPMA is for

The Digital Planning Maturity Assessment (DPMA) helps your authority understand how digital tools, data and ways of working support its planning service.

It includes 30 questions across 7 areas of digital maturity. Your authority may need input from colleagues in planning and other teams to answer them.

Base your responses on how the planning service works now. There are no right or wrong answers.

The DPMA is an internal reflection tool, not a performance assessment. Repeating it helps your authority review its progress and understand what has changed since the previous assessment.

How the DPMA helps your authority

Repeating the DPMA can help your authority:

- understand its current digital strengths and challenges
- review progress since the previous assessment
- identify where further change may be needed
- agree realistic priorities
- update its action plan for the next 6 to 12 months

How to use this guide

Use this guide to review the questions and agree your authority's responses before the DPMA lead opens the online assessment.

Before you start, find your previous results pack and action plan. Review the progress made, what has changed and any challenges that remain. If you cannot find them after checking with colleagues, contact your community manager.

For each question:

1. Review your previous score and evidence.
2. Read the 5 current response statements.
3. Choose the statement that best reflects how the planning service works now.
4. Record your proposed response and any useful evidence or context.
5. Discuss and agree the response with relevant colleagues.

Not everyone needs to review the whole guide. Ask colleagues to contribute to the questions they can help answer.

The DPMA lead will use the agreed responses to complete the online assessment. The form must be completed in one session and usually takes around 40 minutes.

Who to involve

Your authority should confirm who will act as the DPMA lead and coordinate the repeat assessment.

The DPMA lead will:

- find and share the previous results pack and action plan
- identify colleagues who can help answer the questions
- bring their responses together
- make sure responses are agreed
- complete and submit the online assessment

One person is unlikely to know every answer.

Depending on how your authority works, contributors may include colleagues responsible for:

- planning policy and development management
- digital services, IT or transformation
- data and GIS (geographic information systems)
- procurement and commercial services
- workforce skills and development
- leadership and governance
- consultation, communications or community engagement

Not everyone needs to review the whole guide. Ask colleagues to contribute to the questions they can help answer and involve people from different teams where responsibilities overlap.

Prepare and agree your responses

Give colleagues time to review the questions they can help answer. They can contribute separately or discuss the questions together.

Use this guide to:

- record a proposed response to each question
- identify questions that need input from other colleagues
- discuss any differences in how colleagues understand current practice
- agree one response for each question
- record any useful evidence or context

Evidence and context are optional, but they can help explain why you selected a response.

The DPMA lead should make sure all responses have been agreed before starting the online assessment.

Assessment questions

The DPMA includes 30 questions across 7 areas of digital maturity:

1. Digital and design skills
2. Technology and products
3. Data and insights
4. Procurement
5. Leadership and governance
6. Culture and ways of working
7. Citizen engagement and working with others

Each question has 5 response statements. Choose the statement that best reflects how your planning service works now.

The question pages include space to record a proposed response and any useful evidence or context. Each assessment area also suggests colleagues who may be able to contribute.

1

Digital and design skills

This section has 3 questions.
Suggested contributors: planning service managers and head of planning

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

1

Question 1 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes the in-house digital and design capabilities in your planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	A small team in the planning service focuses on buying, implementing and maintaining systems. There are no dedicated capabilities in design, research, agile working or data analysis.	☐
2 - Emerging	In-house digital capabilities are at an early stage. Staff are developing them through training and early-stage digital projects.	☐
3 - Learning	The planning service has a moderate level of in-house digital capability, with a good foundation and access to essential tools. Digital capabilities are increasingly integrated into planning workflows.	☐
4 - Developing	In-house digital capabilities are advanced. Staff use a range of tools and digital practices proficiently and actively look for new ways to support change.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Dedicated digital roles cover areas such as design, change, product and agile management. Existing staff have developed the skills needed to move into digital and design roles.	☐

1

Question 2 of 3 in this section

How easy is it for your planning service to bring additional resources into the team when needed?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Significant barriers make it very difficult to bring additional resources into the team.	☐
2 - Emerging	Adding resources to the team is difficult and requires effort to overcome obstacles.	☐
3 - Learning	The process of adding resources is neither particularly easy nor difficult. It does not present significant challenges.	☐
4 - Developing	The planning service can bring in the right resources through a straightforward process with few barriers. This allows the team to add the resources it needs efficiently.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Resources are readily available and can be brought into the team through clear, efficient processes with few obstacles.	☐

1

Question 3 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service invests in developing its staff's digital and design skills?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	The training programme is outdated. There is no investment in digital or design skills.	☐
2 - Emerging	Investment in digital and design training has begun, but the available training is at an early stage and may need to expand.	☐
3 - Learning	Adequate programmes and resources are available to help staff develop their digital and design skills.	☐
4 - Developing	A range of advanced learning and development opportunities effectively builds staff's digital and design skills.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Leading learning and development opportunities are supported by advanced resources for developing digital and design skills.	☐

2

Technology and products

This section has 5 questions.
Suggested contributors: Digital and IT team and planning officers

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

2

Question 1 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service manages and governs its IT infrastructure?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Updates and fixes are carried out manually. Monitoring is limited and issues are usually addressed after they occur.	☐
2 - Emerging	There is some automation or central monitoring, but it is not applied consistently across systems.	☐
3 - Learning	Most systems follow standard, documented processes for updates, monitoring and backups. Issues are usually identified early.	☐
4 - Developing	Most updates and deployments are automated. Monitoring is centralised, alerts are clear and recovery processes are tested.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Infrastructure management is highly automated, including security checks. Teams can deploy changes easily, and processes are reviewed and improved regularly.	☐

2

Question 2 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes whether staff in your planning service can access the devices, tools and software they need?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Staff cannot access essential devices or software for key tasks. The authority cannot integrate its systems to improve the service.	☐
2 - Emerging	Access is limited and processes are beginning to be defined and documented. The planning service plans to replace outdated software but still relies on older systems.	☐
3 - Learning	Staff can access several tools that meet their needs. The planning service actively works with suppliers to buy software that meets user needs.	☐
4 - Developing	Most staff have access to tools that support them well. Procurement processes incorporate open data and The Technology Code of Practice. Staff help define requirements for the tools they use.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Staff have access to modern devices and user-friendly software. The authority can prototype and release digital services easily. Processes work together to support continuous improvement in how staff work.	☐

2

Question 3 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes how residents benefit from your authority's digital planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Planning services are difficult to use and outdated. Many rely on paper forms or require residents to contact staff to complete applications.	☐
2 - Emerging	Some aspects of the digital planning service receive a positive response, but substantial work is still needed to improve residents' experience.	☐
3 - Learning	Basic needs are met and residents receive some benefits from the digital planning service. There is room to improve by introducing new processes.	☐
4 - Developing	A coordinated digital planning service provides well-received features and high levels of engagement. It meets residents' needs in more than 70% of cases.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Residents receive an excellent online experience. At least 80% of cases are completed without unnecessary follow-up or additional paperwork. Only a few cases require non-digital handling.	☐

2

Question 4 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes whether staff in your planning service have the skills and training they need to use tools and software?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Staff lack the skills and training needed to use tools and software effectively. These gaps reduce efficiency.	☐
2 - Emerging	There are significant gaps in the skills and training needed to use tools and software. Considerable improvement is needed.	☐
3 - Learning	Overall staff have a moderate level of skill in using tools and software. They are generally competent, but there is room to improve.	☐
4 - Developing	Good skills and training enable staff to use tools and software effectively and complete tasks to a satisfactory standard.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	High levels of proficiency mean staff are well equipped to use tools and software and complete tasks efficiently and effectively.	☐

2

Question 5 of 5 in this section

How easy is it for your planning service to train staff to use the tools they need?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Complex tools and staff reluctance or resistance make training difficult.	☐
2 - Emerging	Staff training needs more attention. Some staff resist using tools or find the tools and related concepts difficult to understand. Better training and resources are needed to support change.	☐
3 - Learning	Training staff to use new products presents moderate challenges. With adequate resources, staff can adapt without significant difficulty.	☐
4 - Developing	User-friendly tools and supporting resources make training straightforward and help staff develop skills easily.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Proactive, well-structured staff development supports successful outcomes and has a positive effect on staff's daily workload.	☐

3

Data and insights

This section has 6 questions.
Suggested contributors: Data and GIS colleagues

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

3

Question 1 of 6 in this section

Which statement best describes how effectively your planning service collects and standardises data?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Data collection is limited, with no standardised processes in place.	☐
2 - Emerging	The need to collect and standardise data is recognised. Some work has started, but approaches remain inconsistent.	☐
3 - Learning	Active data collection is supported by increasingly consistent processes and improving standardisation.	☐
4 - Developing	Established, standardised procedures support effective and efficient data collection.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Highly effective data collection and standardisation enable the planning service to use data for strategic planning and decision-making.	☐

3

Question 2 of 6 in this section

Which statement best describes how effectively your planning service stores, processes and shares data?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Accessing and retrieving data is often difficult.	☐
2 - Emerging	Some datasets are stored digitally but are spread across several systems. Access is limited to a few trained staff and arranged case by case.	☐
3 - Learning	Data storage tools allow wider sharing within the authority. Staff without specialist knowledge still need support, and reporting provides only limited insights.	☐
4 - Developing	Staff can share data internally using storage tools, although some tools do not meet users' needs. Staff without specialist knowledge can access reports and insights without support.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Clearly organised data and insights are easy for staff to find, view and use. Available information includes historical data and information about the public's needs.	☐

3

Question 3 of 6 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service manages data ownership, access and publishing?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	By default, data is available only to one person or team, which discourages sharing. Planning data is rarely published on the authority's website or a similar service.	☐
2 - Emerging	Data is gradually shared within the authority, either verbally or through reports. Sharing is not encouraged or promoted across teams.	☐
3 - Learning	Specialist users can access and share some data internally, but access remains limited. Some relevant planning data is published on the authority's website.	☐
4 - Developing	Ways to access and share data are clear, although staff without specialist knowledge may need help. All internal users and some external users can access data.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Internal and external users can easily access and share data without support. Online data is published when needed.	☐

Question 4 of 6 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service uses data to make decisions and design services?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Decisions rely on professional judgement rather than data. The planning service has no data specialists, and its data does not show whether the service meets users' needs or achieves its intended outcomes.	☐
2 - Emerging	Data is beginning to inform decisions, but its use remains limited. Problems with the data and decision-making culture prevent wider use.	☐
3 - Learning	Some decisions and service design are informed by data, but this is inconsistent. Gaps must be addressed before data can be used more consistently.	☐
4 - Developing	Good use of data supports effective decision-making, the design of new services and ongoing improvement.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Data is central to decision-making. It is used to monitor policies and services and inform future decisions.	☐

3

Question 5 of 6 in this section

How easy is it for your planning service to publish data?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Publishing data is extremely time-consuming and depends on manual processes.	☐
2 - Emerging	Significant effort is needed to publish data, which often causes delays.	☐
3 - Learning	Some planning and coordination is needed to publish data, and the process still takes a noticeable amount of time.	☐
4 - Developing	Data can generally be published with little effort, although occasional problems arise.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Publishing data is quick and forms part of normal business processes.	☐

3

Question 6 of 6 in this section

Tools you use

Which tool does your planning service use to extract and transform geographic data?

Which GIS software does your planning service currently use to manage planning data?

4

Procurement

This section has 4 questions.
Suggested contributors: Finance and procurement colleagues

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

4

Question 1 of 4 in this section

Which statement best describes how your authority gets value for money when buying software for its planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Good prices or contract terms are rarely secured. There is little consideration of the total cost of ownership or return on investment.	☐
2 - Emerging	Discounts or additional services are sometimes secured, but the authority does not consistently assess the total cost of ownership.	☐
3 - Learning	A more structured approach to analysing costs is being developed. The authority is beginning to consider the long-term financial effect of software purchases.	☐
4 - Developing	Regular negotiation secures good contract terms. The authority actively manages the total cost of ownership and clearly understands the financial benefits.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	The authority consistently secures the best possible prices and contract terms and understands the total cost of ownership. Purchases support its strategic financial objectives and provide a strong return on investment.	☐

4

Question 2 of 4 in this section

How easy is it for your authority to buy or commission new software and start using it in the planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Buying or commissioning software involves a long and complicated process.	☐
2 - Emerging	Some steps in the procurement process are defined, but the process is often inefficient and inconsistent.	☐
3 - Learning	Increasingly consistent and structured processes support procurement, although there are occasional delays or problems with defining requirements, sourcing or purchasing software.	☐
4 - Developing	A well-defined and generally efficient process is in place, with only minor areas needing improvement.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Clear internal processes make it easy for the authority to buy or commission software and start using it.	☐

4

Question 3 of 4 in this section

Which statement best describes your planning service's relationships with suppliers and service providers?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Limited supplier relationships result in poor communication and cooperation and make joint working inefficient.	☐
2 - Emerging	Relationships are beginning to develop. Communication, cooperation and efficiency are improving, but considerable work is still needed.	☐
3 - Learning	The quality of relationships varies across suppliers. Communication and efficiency have improved but remain inconsistent.	☐
4 - Developing	Well-developed relationships support advanced communication and cooperation. Collaboration is regularly successful.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Strong, lasting relationships with suppliers and service providers support excellent communication, cooperation and collaboration.	☐

4

Question 4 of 4 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service manages contracts with suppliers?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Contract management is at an early stage, with little structure for maintaining supplier relationships.	☐
2 - Emerging	The contract management process is developing. More work is needed on compliance, performance monitoring and relationship management.	☐
3 - Learning	Moderately developed practices allow the planning service to adapt how it monitors and manages contracts. These practices are being refined to improve compliance, supplier relationships and performance monitoring.	☐
4 - Developing	Active contract management supports compliance and performance monitoring. It plays an important part in helping the authority meet its objectives.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Strong processes ensure contracts are monitored and managed to a very high standard. They support successful outcomes and effective problem-solving.	☐

5

Leadership and governance

This section has 3 questions.
Suggested contributors: Planning officers and head of planning

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

5

Question 1 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes whether decision-making in your planning service is clear, effective and inclusive?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Teams are not encouraged to make changes. Decisions are made by senior leaders or people outside planning and often lack clarity and transparency.	☐
2 - Emerging	People affected by or involved in decisions are increasingly included, but decision-making could still be more collaborative and efficient.	☐
3 - Learning	The planning service has a balanced decision-making process, with a moderate level of transparency and collaboration. This leads to satisfactory outcomes.	☐
4 - Developing	Leaders at all levels can make important changes to culture, practices and processes. Teams made up of people from different professions identify and solve problems.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Decision-making is shared across the planning service. People can make important decisions in the areas they are responsible for.	☐

5

Question 2 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes whether governance in your planning service is effective, has clear accountability and supports your authority's goals?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Basic governance arrangements are missing or poorly designed. Accountability for changes is often unclear.	☐
2 - Emerging	Improving governance is a priority. Accountability remains complex and making changes is still difficult but work to improve both has started.	☐
3 - Learning	Governance is in place where needed, but the level is not always appropriate. At times there is too much or too little governance. Overall, the arrangements are moderately effective and manageable.	☐
4 - Developing	Well-designed governance supports new initiatives and allows changes to be made efficiently. Accountability is clear, with a focus on the authority's goals.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Efficient and responsive governance helps staff work effectively. Accountability is clear, and the level of governance is usually appropriate for each project or initiative.	☐

Question 3 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes how leadership supports innovation in your planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Planning processes rely on traditional, proven methods, with little exploration of new approaches.	☐
2 - Emerging	Leaders recognise the importance of innovation but find it difficult to make it part of the planning service's culture. Some initiatives explore new approaches, but this is not widespread.	☐
3 - Learning	Active leadership supports innovation, experimentation and new ideas. The planning service is becoming more open to new approaches, and some initiatives are producing positive results.	☐
4 - Developing	A consistent culture of innovation allows leaders to seek and introduce new approaches. This helps the service adopt more advanced planning processes.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Innovation is central to the planning service's culture. Leaders set standards for the sector, continually explore new possibilities and use innovation to change and improve planning practices.	☐

6

Culture and ways of working

This section has 5 questions.
Suggested contributors: Planning officers and head of planning

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

Question 1 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes how openly and collaboratively people work in your planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	The culture favours working alone. Feedback is not often requested before a final version is presented. Learning is not usually recorded or shared.	☐
2 - Emerging	Collaborative ways of working are still developing. Work is under way to improve transparency and information sharing, but greater openness is needed.	☐
3 - Learning	A moderate level of transparency, collaboration and information sharing creates a reasonably open working environment.	☐
4 - Developing	A clear commitment to transparency and collaboration supports an increasingly open and inclusive working culture.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Strong collaboration and regular feedback are part of the culture. Staff talk openly about what they are learning and the challenges they face. Sharing learning with other teams is normal practice.	☐

6

Question 2 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes how people in your planning service ask for, give and receive feedback?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	People find it difficult to give and receive constructive feedback safely.	☐
2 - Emerging	A culture of asking for feedback is developing. Giving and receiving constructive feedback safely remains difficult, and greater openness is needed.	☐
3 - Learning	The planning service is working towards an open feedback culture. Receiving constructive feedback remains difficult, but there is a focus on continuous improvement.	☐
4 - Developing	Staff actively ask for feedback. There is a commitment to creating a safe environment for feedback and supporting continuous improvement.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	There is a clear culture of giving and receiving feedback. Openness is valued, and staff actively support continuous improvement and learning.	☐

6

Question 3 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes your planning service's approach to risk and innovation?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	A reluctance to take risks means proven approaches and existing knowledge are prioritised over new ideas.	☐
2 - Emerging	The approach to risk and innovation is cautious. Proven approaches and existing knowledge are highly valued, although there is some interest in new ideas.	☐
3 - Learning	Risk and innovation are balanced. The planning service is open to trying new approaches while continuing to value proven approaches and existing knowledge.	☐
4 - Developing	Innovation is increasingly embraced. Staff value proven approaches and existing knowledge but are willing to take calculated risks and explore new solutions.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	A highly innovative culture encourages experimentation. Proven approaches and existing knowledge remain valued alongside taking risks and continuously improving the service.	☐

6

Question 4 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes how well your planning service responds to change?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Long-standing practices and processes are inflexible and difficult to change.	☐
2 - Emerging	The approach to change is developing. Adaptability and resilience are improving, but the planning service still finds change difficult to manage.	☐
3 - Learning	Some change is happening, but significant improvements are still needed. The service has a moderate and improving ability to adapt, remain resilient and manage periods of change. Greater use of agile ways of working could help.	☐
4 - Developing	Advanced capability allows the service to manage change effectively. Agile approaches are frequently used to improve adaptability and resilience in projects and other work.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Change is treated as an opportunity to grow and improve. The service is highly adaptable and resilient, and agile working is central to how it operates.	☐

6

Question 5 of 5 in this section

Which statement best describes the sense of team and community in your planning service?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	There is a limited sense of team and community. Problems with collaboration and mutual support make it difficult for people to feel part of a team.	☐
2 - Emerging	Work has started to build a stronger team and sense of community. Challenges remain around collaboration, support and shared purpose.	☐
3 - Learning	Moderate efforts are being made to strengthen the team ethos, but challenges remain around collaboration, mutual support and shared purpose.	☐
4 - Developing	The planning service actively builds a shared sense of purpose and community. There is a strong commitment to collaboration and mutual support.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	There is a strong team and community spirit. Collaboration, mutual support and a shared sense of purpose create an effective working environment.	☐

7

Citizen engagement and working with others

This section has 3 questions.
Suggested contributors: Planning officers and head of planning

Evidence or context (optional)

What has changed in this area since your authority last completed the DPMA?

If your scores have changed, how, if at all, did the previous DPMA or your authority's involvement in the Open Digital Planning programme contribute to the change?

7

Question 1 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes how well your planning service prepares local plans that meet the needs of the community?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	The planning service relies on consultants to prepare its local plan. Consultants retain the related data and knowledge. Consultation is carried out only by email, and the final plan is published as a PDF.	☐
2 - Emerging	A simple document explains how officers work together to prepare the plan. Consultants produce most evidence base studies, although these are clearly organised. The local plan is published as a PDF and as web pages, alongside a static policies map. The public can read the main text but has no interactive way to explore the plan.	☐
3 - Learning	The team produces more evidence base studies internally and reviews the plan occasionally. However, the local plan is still published as a PDF and as web pages, alongside a static policies map. The public can read the main text but has no interactive way to explore the plan.	☐
4 - Developing	The public can explore the local plan using an interactive policies map and respond through digital consultation platforms. Contracts for evidence base studies require suppliers to provide raw data in standardised formats.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	The authority produces most evidence base studies internally using its own data and systems. Well-designed and documented processes enable internal experts to identify sites and develop policy. Digital consultation is easy for the public to access.	☐

Question 2 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes how your planning service engages residents and the local community?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Engagement relies on newspapers, letters and physical notices. Residents find it difficult to locate planning information and are not involved in shaping planning services. Their needs are largely based on assumptions.	☐
2 - Emerging	Work is under way to improve residents' online planning experience. Proposed improvements are tested with residents through isolated, one-off user research.	☐
3 - Learning	The authority's website is the main way it communicates with residents. Mailing lists or customer relationship management systems provide updates about planning services and consultations. Accessibility varies, and PDFs are still widely used.	☐
4 - Developing	Purpose-built websites and tools help the planning service communicate with residents. Planning information, maps and drawings are easy to access online.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	Planning information is easy to access on any device and through physical site notices and plans. Frequent user research informs every stage of the design process.	☐

7

Question 3 of 3 in this section

Which statement best describes your planning service's relationships with other organisations in the planning sector?

Select one response. Base your answer on how the planning service works now.

Maturity level	Response statement	Select
1 - Beginning	Relationships and collaboration with external organisations and other local planning authorities are unclear. The planning service does not consider the wider context.	☐
2 - Emerging	Work is under way to build stronger relationships between the planning service and the wider planning sector. The service is beginning to connect and collaborate with others.	☐
3 - Learning	The planning service actively develops relationships with other organisations in the planning sector. Collaboration and communication remain challenging and require significant effort to maintain and strengthen.	☐
4 - Developing	The planning service maintains or is developing structured partnerships covering policy and service delivery. Partners actively work together to address challenges.	☐
5 - Exemplifying	The planning service prioritises a strong network of organisations focused on shared outcomes. Working with other organisations or local planning authorities to deliver services or policy outcomes is normal practice.	☐

Describe your authority's digital planning strengths and challenges

Agree responses to both questions before the DPMA lead stars the online forms.

How, if at all, has taking part in the Open Digital Planning programme changed your planning service's approach to digital planning?

Describe what works well now. Include examples or evidence.

What are the main challenges to improving digital planning in your planning service?

Describe the barriers or problems that make improvement difficult. Include examples or evidence.

Submit the assessment

The DPMA lead must submit one assessment on behalf of your authority. It usually takes around 40 minutes and must be completed in one session.

Submission checklist

Before opening the online assessment, make sure you have:

- an agreed response for each of the 30 assessment questions
- agreed answers about what has changed since the previous DPMA
- agreed answers about your authority's digital planning strengths and challenges
- any evidence or context your authority wants to include
- your authority's 9-character Office for National Statistics (ONS) code

Find your authority's ONS code

1. Go to Explore local statistics.
2. Search for and select your authority.
3. Copy the 9-character code shown with its name.

Complete the online assessment

Complete the DPMA online

Enter the agreed responses and check that you have answered every required question before submitting the assessment.

What happens after submission

Your authority will receive a personalised results pack by email within 10 working days.

The results pack will include:

- a summary of your results
- suggested actions and supporting resources
- an action-plan template
- a benchmark based on the anonymised average for authorities that have completed the DPMA

The benchmark provides context for your results. It does not rank authorities or compare individual authorities.

Bring relevant colleagues together to review the new results alongside your previous results and action plan. Consider what has changed and the progress made against existing actions.

Choose up to 3 priority areas and agree up to 2 actions for each area. Use the template to update your action plan for the next 6 to 12 months.

Save the new results pack and updated action plan in a secure location that relevant colleagues can access.

Get help with the DPMA

If you have questions or need support:

- contact your community manager on Slack
- email the team at DigitalPlanningTeam@communities.gov.uk

Contact us as soon as possible if your authority is having difficulty completing the DPMA or expects to miss the submission deadline.

Find more DPMA guidance

ODP members can find more guidance about preparing for the assessment, understanding their results and creating an action plan on the ODP Hub.

Read the DPMA guidance on the ODP Hub

If you cannot access the ODP Hub, ask your authority's DPMA lead to share the guidance you need.