

A Practical Guide for Planning Service Change

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What is a service design roadmap?

A service design roadmap helps you answer one simple question:

"What needs to happen, in what order, to create better services?"

Unlike a project plan, a roadmap doesn't list every task. Instead, it shows the most important improvements, when they should happen, and how they contribute to better outcomes for customers, staff and the organisation.

Step 1 – Where are we trying to get to?

Before discussing projects, agree on the destination.

Questions

- What service are we improving?
- What experience do we want people to have?
- What would success look like in three years?
- What problems are we trying to solve?
- Why is this important now?
- What would customers say if we got this right?

Output

A short vision statement.

Step 2 – What do we know today?

Use evidence rather than assumptions.

Questions

- What research have we completed?
- What does customer feedback tell us?
- Where do customers struggle most?
- What frustrates staff?
- What data supports these findings?
- Which journeys perform well?
- Which journeys perform poorly?

Output

A shared understanding of the current service.



Step 3 – What needs to improve?

Identify the biggest opportunities.

Questions

- Which problems have the greatest impact on customers?
- Which issues create the most work for staff?
- Which changes could prevent problems happening in the first place?
- What are the biggest barriers to delivering a good service?
- Which opportunities are quick wins?
- Which opportunities require longer-term investment?

Output

A prioritised list of improvement opportunities.

Step 4 – What outcomes are we trying to achieve?

Focus on outcomes rather than activities.

Questions

- What will be different for customers?
- What will be different for staff?
- What will improve for the organisation?
- How will we know we've been successful?
- What measures will we use?

Examples might include:

- shorter waiting times
- fewer repeat contacts
- higher customer satisfaction

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- improved accessibility
- lower operating costs

Output

A small number of agreed outcomes.

Step 5 – What changes are needed?

Now begin thinking about solutions.

Questions

- What improvements would help customers most?
- What changes to processes are needed?
- What technology changes are required?
- What policy changes might be needed?
- What staff training is required?
- What partnerships need strengthening?
- Which improvements depend on other changes happening first?

Output

A list of initiatives.

Step 6 – What should happen first?

Not everything can happen at once.

Questions

- Which improvements deliver the greatest benefit?
- Which improvements are easiest to deliver?
- Which initiatives reduce risk?
- Which initiatives unlock future improvements?

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- Which initiatives depend on others?
- Are there any legal or policy deadlines?

A useful question is:

"If we could only deliver three improvements this year, which three would make the biggest difference?"

Output

A prioritised sequence of work.

Step 7 – When should each initiative happen?

Group work into broad time periods.

Instead of creating detailed project plans, think about:

Now (0–6 months)

Questions

- What can we start immediately?
- What foundations need putting in place?
- What evidence is still needed?

Next (6–18 months)

Questions

- Which improvements can now be delivered?
- Which services can be redesigned?
- Which digital improvements should be introduced?

Later (18 months+)

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Questions

- What longer-term transformation is needed?
- Which improvements rely on organisational change?
- What should we revisit once earlier work has been completed?

Output

A phased roadmap.

Step 8 – Who needs to be involved?

Successful roadmaps involve the right people.

Questions

- Who owns the journey?
- Who will sponsor the work?
- Which teams need to collaborate?
- Which partners should be involved?
- How will customers continue to influence decisions?

Output

Clear ownership and governance.

Step 9 – How will we know we're making progress?

Build learning into the roadmap.

Questions

- Which measures will we review?
- How often will we review them?
- What customer feedback will we collect?

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- When will we revisit priorities?
- What would tell us the roadmap needs changing?

Remember:

A roadmap is a living document, not a fixed plan.

Output

A review and governance process.

Step 10 – Bring it all together

Your completed roadmap should answer these ten questions:

Question	Answer
Where are we going?	Vision
Where are we now?	Current understanding
What needs improving?	Priorities
What outcomes do we want?	Success measures
What changes are needed?	Initiatives
What should happen first?	Priorities
When will things happen?	Phases
Who is responsible?	Ownership
How will progress be monitored?	Measures
When will we review the roadmap?	Governance



Step 11 – How will we keep the roadmap relevant?

Instead of asking, "Is the roadmap complete?", ask:

- What new evidence might change our priorities?
- What customer insights are we expecting to collect?
- Which measures will tell us that we're on track—or not?
- What assumptions are we making, and how will we test them?
- When will we formally review and refresh the roadmap?
- Who has the authority to reprioritise work based on new evidence?

Checklist

Before agreeing your roadmap, ask:

- ☐ Is it based on customer evidence?
- ☐ Does it improve outcomes rather than simply deliver projects?
- ☐ Have customers and staff helped shape it?
- ☐ Does it focus on the biggest opportunities?
- ☐ Are dependencies understood?
- ☐ Are responsibilities clear?
- ☐ Are success measures agreed?
- ☐ Is there a plan to review and update it?
- ☐ Is the roadmap understandable to everyone, not just specialists?

Service Design Roadmap

Improving the Housing Customer Journey (2027-2029)

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Vision

Create a housing service that is simple to access, easy to navigate, proactive in communication and designed around customer needs, resulting in better outcomes for residents and more efficient service delivery.

Strategic Objectives

- Improve customer experience.
- Reduce avoidable demand.
- Shorten housing journey times.
- Increase digital inclusion.
- Strengthen collaboration across housing, social care and voluntary sector partners.
- Improve staff experience and capability.

Year 1 – Understand and Stabilise

Theme 1: Understand the Current Journey

Initiatives

- Conduct customer research and interviews.
- Develop personas representing key housing needs.
- Map current-state housing journeys (e.g. homelessness, housing repairs, allocations).
- Create service blueprints identifying frontstage and backstage activities.

Expected outcomes

- Shared understanding of customer pain points.
- Baseline journey performance established.
- Priority opportunities identified.

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Theme 2: Improve Customer Communication

Initiatives

- Rewrite customer letters using plain English.
- Introduce SMS and email updates for housing applications.
- Develop a customer communication standard.

Expected outcomes

- Fewer inbound enquiries.
- Improved customer confidence.
- Higher satisfaction with communication.

Theme 3: Build Design Capability

Initiatives

- Train housing teams in service design.
- Establish a Housing Journey Community of Practice.
- Introduce Journey Owners.

Expected outcomes

- Increased organisational capability.
- Greater ownership of customer journeys.

Year 2 – Redesign and Integrate

Theme 4: Simplify the Housing Journey

Initiatives

- Redesign housing application forms.
- Introduce a single digital application process.
- Remove duplicate information requests.
- Streamline assessment processes.

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Expected outcomes

- Reduced application time.
- Fewer incomplete applications.
- Faster assessments.

Theme 5: Improve Cross-Service Working

Initiatives

- Integrate housing, benefits and customer services.
- Develop shared referral pathways with adult social care.
- Introduce multidisciplinary case reviews for complex cases.

Expected outcomes

- Fewer hand-offs.
- Better support for vulnerable residents.
- Improved continuity of service.

Theme 6: Digital Service Improvements

Initiatives

- Launch online housing portal.
- Introduce appointment booking.
- Enable customers to track application progress.
- Implement digital document upload.

Expected outcomes

- Reduced telephone demand.
- Increased digital self-service.
- Improved transparency.

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Year 3 – Optimise and Transform

Theme 7: Proactive Housing Services

Initiatives

- Use predictive analytics to identify households at risk of homelessness.
- Introduce proactive tenancy support.
- Develop targeted prevention programmes.

Expected outcomes

- Reduced homelessness presentations.
- Earlier intervention.
- Improved tenancy sustainment.

Theme 8: Journey Intelligence

Initiatives

- Implement live journey dashboards.
- Monitor customer satisfaction by journey stage.
- Track operational performance in real time.
- Introduce quarterly journey reviews.

Expected outcomes

- Data-informed decision-making.
- Continuous service improvement.
- Early identification of emerging issues.

Theme 9: Continuous Improvement

Initiatives

- Embed regular co-design sessions with residents.

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- Review and refine services based on feedback.
- Update the roadmap annually using performance data.

Expected outcomes

- Services remain responsive to changing needs.
- Strong culture of continuous improvement.
- Sustainable service transformation.

Governance Milestones

Time	Governance Activity
Quarter 1	Approve Housing Journey Vision and establish governance board
Quarter 2	Complete customer research and current-state journey maps
Quarter 3	Agree future-state service blueprint and prioritised opportunities
Quarter 4	Publish first Housing Service Roadmap and Balanced Scorecard
Year 2	Review progress against OKRs and update roadmap
Year 3	Evaluate outcomes, identify lessons learned and develop the next three-year roadmap
Domain	Example Measures
Customer Experience	Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), Customer Effort Score (CES), Net Promoter Score (NPS), complaints, compliments
Operational Performance	End-to-end journey time, first-contact resolution, processing time, repeat contacts

Time	Governance Activity
Financial	Cost per case, cost avoidance through prevention, value for money
Staff Experience	Employee engagement, confidence in new processes, training completion
Digital	Percentage of applications completed online, portal adoption, digital accessibility
Equity	Outcomes by protected characteristic, digital inclusion, accessibility compliance
Prevention	Homelessness prevention rate, tenancy sustainment, early intervention uptake

Systemic Service Design Roadmap Canvas

Using this illustrative example:

Creating a Preventative Housing Support Ecosystem

1. Strategic Vision

Where are we trying to get to?

Our ambition

Create a connected, preventative housing ecosystem where people can access the right support at the right time, enabling safe, secure and sustainable homes and reducing avoidable housing crises.

Why does this matter?

Currently 'As is':

- People experience housing support as fragmented.

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- Support often begins when problems have escalated.
- Different organisations hold different parts of the journey.
- Residents have to navigate complexity themselves.

Future state 'To be':

- People receive earlier support.
- Services work around people's lives rather than organisational boundaries.
- Communities and people with lived experience influence decisions.
- Partners share responsibility for outcomes.

2. System Challenge

What are we trying to change?

Current system patterns

- Reactive rather than preventative support.
- Multiple assessments across organisations.
- Limited sharing of insight.
- Different eligibility rules create gaps.
- Success is measured by organisational activity rather than housing stability.

Root causes

- Fragmented accountability.
- Incentives focused on individual services.
- Limited understanding of end-to-end journeys.
- Lack of shared outcomes.

3. Desired System Outcomes

What does success look like?

For residents

People:

- ✓ Find support earlier.
- ✓ Experience less effort and uncertainty.
- ✓ Have their circumstances understood holistically.
- ✓ Achieve stable housing.

For communities

Communities:

- ✓ Are involved in shaping solutions.
- ✓ Have stronger prevention networks.
- ✓ Are able to support local solutions.

For organisations

Organisations:

- ✓ Work towards shared outcomes.
- ✓ Reduce avoidable demand.
- ✓ Use resources more effectively.

4. Priority Journeys

Which experiences need transformation?

Journey	Current challenge	Future ambition
Preventing homelessness	Support often starts too late	Earlier identification and intervention
Finding a home	Complex applications and repeated information	One connected housing access journey

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Journey	Current challenge	Future ambition
Maintaining a home	Reactive repairs and support	Preventative support and empowerment
Moving through housing	Poor coordination between services	Joined-up transitions

5. Roadmap Pathway

What needs to happen and when?

NOW (0-6 months)

Build the foundations

System change

- Establish a cross-system housing journey board.
- Agree shared outcomes.
- Develop common understanding of the housing ecosystem.

Capability change

- Build service design and co-design capability.
- Train teams in journey thinking.
- Introduce systems mapping approaches.

Intelligence change

- Establish baseline measures.
- Combine customer insight, operational data and lived experience.

Key question:

"Do we have the shared understanding and governance needed to begin transformation?"

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NEXT (6-18 months)

Redesign priority journeys

Journey transformation

- Co-design homelessness prevention journey.
- Redesign housing access experience.
- Test integrated support pathways.

Operating model change

Move from:

"Each organisation manages its own service"

to:

"Partners collectively manage the resident journey."

Behaviour change

Using COM-B:

Capability

- Staff understand new approaches.

Opportunity

- Governance enables collaboration.

Motivation

- Measures and incentives support shared outcomes.

Key question:

"Are we changing the conditions that create the current experience?"

LATER (18-36 months)

Embed and evolve

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System transformation

- Scale successful approaches.
- Strengthen community partnerships.
- Embed prevention approaches.

Intelligence-led improvement

- Use journey analytics.
- Continuously identify opportunities.
- Adapt priorities based on evidence.

Key question:

"How do we continue improving as the system changes?"

6. Enabling Conditions

What needs to be true for this roadmap to succeed?

Governance

Need:

- ✓ Clear journey ownership.
- ✓ Cross-organisational decision-making.
- ✓ Shared accountability.

Capability

Need:

- ✓ Service design skills.
- ✓ Systems thinking.
- ✓ Co-design capability.
- ✓ Change and implementation skills.

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Data and Intelligence

Need:

- ✓ Shared measures.
- ✓ Customer insight.
- ✓ Operational intelligence.
- ✓ Learning loops.

Culture

Need:

- ✓ Collaboration over control.
- ✓ Learning over blame.
- ✓ Experimentation over perfection.

7. Behaviour Change Roadmap

What behaviours need to change?

Behaviour required	COM-B barrier	Intervention
Leaders collaborate across boundaries	Motivation	Shared outcomes and leadership commitment
Teams use journey evidence	Capability	Training and coaching
Partners share information	Opportunity	Data-sharing agreements
Staff involve residents in decisions	Capability + confidence	Co-design support

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8. Measures and Success Indicators

How will we know it is working?

Journey Balanced Scorecard

Customer experience

- Customer effort
- Satisfaction
- Trust
- Feeling heard

Service performance

- Waiting times
- Repeat contacts
- Successful resolution

System outcomes

- Prevention of homelessness
- Housing stability
- Reduced crisis demand

Workforce

- Confidence
- Collaboration
- Ability to resolve needs

Equity

- Outcomes across different groups
- Accessibility
- Inclusion

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9. Governance and Decision Cycle

How will we steer the roadmap?

Monthly

Operational review:

- What is happening?
- What barriers exist?

Quarterly

Journey governance:

- Are outcomes improving?
- Are priorities still right?

Six-monthly

Strategic review:

- What have we learned?
- What needs to change?

10. Adaptive Learning Loop

How does the roadmap evolve?