Digital 'quick wins' for MPs

These interventions introduced by our mentors can help MPs and their teams work more effectively.

Helping MPs and their constituents understand each other better

Focus	What was done	Why it was done
Emails	Updated email automatic responses to make them clearer	Good email auto responses should have an appropriate approachable tone, check that the enquiry is from a constituent of the MP, give an indication of response times, who else can help and give information or links that can answer common queries.
Emails	Analysed MP correspondence and campaign contacts using data visualisation tools to explore patterns	Data visualisation tools such as Tableau can be used to analyse data and share findings with constituents.
Newsletters	Created guidance for email marketing	Email newsletters are a good way to keep constituents informed. We helped teams to know what a good email newsletter looks like with guidance and support.
Social media	Audited each MP's current social media activity to identify areas for improvement	Social media can be an effective tool to reach new audiences. We suggested improvements such as adding video and image content, and polling constituents to get feedback.
Social media	Showed staff unfamiliar with Facebook how the MP was using the site	Not all staff were familiar with Facebook and how it was used by the MP to engage with constituents.
Social media	Used the live broadcasting tool, Periscope, to interact with constituents	Live broadcasting tools can be used to share an MP or the party's views on an issue, increasing the an MP's reach on social media and to other audiences, encouraging interaction. We set up a live Q&A with Norman Lamb MP and promoted it with the Twitter hashtag #AskNorman. We then created guidance on how live broadcasting tools such as Periscope and Facebook Live can be used effectively.

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Social media	Used social media management tools to schedule tweets keeping constituents up to date on the MP's activity	Social media management tools such as Buffer can be used to set up and schedule tweets in advance so that staff are able to keep constituents updated about an MP's activities during busy periods. This can also free up the MP to provide more personal responses when time allows.
Social media	Uploaded Parliamentary videos to social media channels to share the MP's activities with constituents	Video content from Parliamentary activities can be a good way to keep constituents informed about an MP's views and activities. We uploaded videos to the MP's Facebook page so that interested constituents could see the MP's contribution to a debate.
Social media	Used Facebook advertising to extend the reach of a campaign	Facebook advertising can be used to target particular constituents or groups in any campaign. We trained staff in creating Facebook adverts and worked with a councillor to use advertising to increase his profile in a local election.
Social media	Trained staff to use Twitter as an additional news source	Twitter can be a useful source of news, keeping teams updated on local issues and events. We trained staff to use the Twitter search to find useful information.
Social media	Developed teams' overall social media strategy	Having an overall social media strategy can ensure constituents are engaged and informed effectively. We created guidance for using social media and helped teams develop their overall strategy across channels.
Social media	Created a social media content calendar to help organise social media planning	A social media content calendar helps teams to think through the content they'll need to create, and the best times to share it, to make their social media activity more meaningful for constituents.
Social media	Trained staff to use simple graphic design software	Graphic design tools like Canva can be used to create images for social media to improve traffic at very low cost. We helped staff find images licensed for reuse on Flickr and add text and basic design elements.
Social media	Used polling to understand constituent views	Polling tools such as doopoll.co can be useful to gather constituency views and engage in debate. We helped staff set up a poll to capture views of constituents regarding the party leadership contest and present the findings back to constituents.

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Social media	Created recommendations for future use of video on social channels	Video can be useful on social media channels and on an MP's website. We made suggestions for future video content.
Social media	Trained staff in effective use of Twitter and Storify for updates, conferences and events	Twitter can be useful for promoting forthcoming events, and gathering questions from constituents to answer during or afterwards. Storify is used by Hannah Bardell MP for constituency updates. We trained staff on how and when to use Twitter and Storify for event promotion and engagement.
Social media	Set up Twitter and Facebook notifications so that staff can follow their MP's social media activity	Twitter and Facebook notifications can keep staff informed about their MP's social media posts as they happen.
Social media	Trained staff to use video editing software	Simple video editing capabilities can help teams to create clips and share footage from campaign events. We showed teams how to make edits to videos, add captions and publish clips.
Website	Audited and/or redesigned the MP's current website to identify areas for improvement	MP's websites are an important information source for constituents. We looked at analytics and overall design and content to suggest ways in which the website could inform constituents, link to social media activity and encourage constituents to sign up for newsletters. In one case we redesigned the website to show its potential.
Website	Showed staff how to update the map on an MP's website to keep constituents informed	Maps are important for showing the constituency office location and sometimes need updating. They can also be used to show the MP's activities. We showed office staff how to change details on maps and add further information, and use new tools such as WhereApp.
Website	Showed staff how an MP's calendar can be made visible to the public	An MP's calendar can be opened up so that their activities are transparent to constituents and available on their website. We showed staff how this can be done.
Website	Trained staff to create infographics to share with constituents	Infographics can be used to increase engagement and share an MP's work or findings in an easy-to-understand way. We looked at good examples of infographics and helped staff to create them.
Website	Analysed page statistics in detail	Website statistics can indicate poorly performing pages, helping to identify problems with links and content that can be improved to enhance how useful a page is to viewers.

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Website	Trained staff to use their website's content management system	We helped to develop the team's understanding of their website content management system so that they could add and change features more easily.
Website	Trained staff in simple HTML/CSS coding	With some basic understanding of HTML and CSS, staff can edit and create basic web pages in the MP's website content management system. We did some initial training, and pointed staff to codecademy for ongoing skills development.
Website	Explored setting up online surgery appointment booking	Having surgery booking appointments available online could increase an MP's availability to constituents. We explored whether online widgets could be used to do this.

Allowing MP teams to work more efficiently to free up time for their constituents

Focus	What was done	Why it was done
Collaboration	Used messaging apps to set up groups and support communications between teams	Communication between Parliamentary and constituency offices was improved by setting up WhatsApp groups. This increased the level of informal communication between teams and allowed staff to see when important messages were read and received by the MP.
Collaboration	Set up password managers so that teams could use a shared repository for passwords	Password managers such as LastPass and 1Password can be used by teams to store shared passwords securely. They can help to ensure that stronger passwords are used, and prevent passwords from being lost or forgotten.
Collaboration	Set up Microsoft OneDrive for teams to work more collaboratively	Cloud-based shared drives such as Microsoft OneDrive are useful for collaborating on documents, accessing work from anywhere and sharing work more easily. We helped staff to set up OneDrive, migrate content from existing local drives and use it more effectively.
Collaboration	Set up Google Drive to share documents with external organisations	MP teams can use Microsoft OneDrive to share their documents with each other, but a Parliamentary account is needed for access. We set up Google Drive as an additional way to share and collaborate on documents with external organisations.
Collaboration	Set up Office365 cloud syncing capability	In one team we set up Office365 cloud syncing to improve the usage of Office365.
Collaboration	Set up a digital system for contact details	A digital system for contact details makes them more accessible to the team and remotely. We stored contact details digitally that were previously found on business cards.
Collaboration	Trained staff to use calendar tools	Online calendars allow staff to share calendar invites and events with each other.
Collaboration	Trained staff to use video conferencing tools	Simple video conferencing tools like Google Hangout and Skype for Business can be useful for team communication. We helped teams to start using video conferencing software for interactive collaboration and screensharing.
Productivity	Trained staff to use the iPad and its peripherals more effectively	iPads have a wide range of functionalities and peripherals that are helpful to MPs and their teams. We helped staff to develop their skills in using the iPad and its peripherals.

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Productivity	Introduced digital tools for task management	Digital tools like Trello can be used to manage, assign and track tasks. We introduced digital tools to help manage the office's priorities.
Productivity	Created a single store for constituent data	It is important that staff can see the history of communication with constituents when new cases arise. In one office, constituent data was held across three different platforms making it hard to find details of previous contacts. We created a single, secure and searchable store for this data.
Productivity	Trained staff to use keyboard shortcuts	Knowing keyboard shortcuts can significantly reduce the amount of time to do things. We showed staff common shortcuts to save time.
Productivity	Set up email filters to help manage inbound communication	Email filters can be set up to direct emails to folders or recipients. We helped staff to set up filters and manage the emails coming in.
Productivity	Sent details of bugs and feature requests to the casework software developer	Software developers are happy to hear from users about problems and areas for improvement. Bugs in the caseworking software for one team were affecting productivity so we contacted the developer with details and suggestions for new features.
Productivity	Set up printing capability from the case working software	One team was copying and pasting casework information to a document for printing. We connected the caseworking software to the printer for easy access.
Productivity	Created a workflow diagram for casework to identify issues and improvements	Mapping out workflow processes can help to identify pain points and improvements to processes. We created a workflow diagram and suggested changes to resolve issues.
Productivity	Set up a tagging system for casework to make it easier to find similar and related cases	A good tagging system in a database can help users to find similar and related cases. In one team, over 3,500 tags were used in the caseworking software. We simplified the tagging to make it easier to find cases and support proactive data sharing.
Productivity	Trained staff to analyse data in their caseworking software	We showed staff how to use their caseworking software's map functionality to explore how cases mapped to location. This helped them to see areas with low numbers of cases, where targeted outreach could be of value.

Putting in place core building blocks for technology

Focus	What was done	Why it was done
Security	Set up two-factor authentication on all Parliamentary accounts	Two-factor authentication can be used to add extra security to an online login. We added two-factor authentication to all Parliamentary accounts to protect sensitive data.
Security	Audited a caseworker's online presence to make sure she was safe	Unfortunately caseworkers and MPs can occasionally be at risk of trolling and threatening behaviour. We audited a caseworker's online presence to reassure her that her digital footprint did not reveal her personal details and place her at risk.
Security	Updated security certification for the website domain	We added DMARC certification to the website domain to protect staff from phishing.
Phones	Fixed the phone system so that calls could be transferred.	IT systems should be set up correctly to enable staff to work effectively. We fixed the phone system in one office to enable staff to transfer phone calls directly.

Supporting digital work in Parliament and beyond

Focus	What was done	Why it was done
Campaigning	Created guidance on digital approaches to campaigning	Most MPs are involved in campaigns that reach the public beyond their constituency. We created guidance for MPs on how to implement a "digital first" mindset for campaign planning.
Research	Trained staff to use data sources for research	A wide range of data sources can be useful to research tasks undertaken by MPs' staff. We showed staff a range of available data sources and created guidance on use of data.