[A look back at DVLA and Amazon Web Services (AWS)'s knowledge-sharing event](#)

At DVLA, we're always looking for ways to improve our digital services. We recently brought together Welsh Local Government and public sector colleagues to share how Amazon Web Services (AWS) is supporting our digital transformation.

We also talked about investing in people through digital skills training and career development. It was a great opportunity to share what we've learnt over the years with others who have the same mission: delivering better and faster public services.

I was proud to speak at an event full of insightful discussions and practical takeaways. In this blog, I'll share some of what we learnt during the day — the positive impact of cloud technology, the importance of giving back to the community, and how to develop digital talent.

It kicked off with Tom Brewer, Head of DVLA's IT Service Creation, who took us back to 2015.

Taking control: how cloud technology transformed our IT services

Tom shared a turning point from 2015, when DVLA reduced our need to hire outside IT companies by developing our own digital skills and capabilities. Alongside our legacy platforms and other serverless systems, we've used the AWS cloud platform to deliver digital public services quicker and more efficiently ourselves.

Today, our platform handles 5 billion online interactions a year — things like renewing a driving licence or answering automated enquiries. Shared standards and automation mean less hands-on work, faster results, and simple tools for everyone to use.

The impact? Tasks that once took months now take minutes, and we produce more than 500,000 software builds every year.

It was fantastic to see attendees consider how these solutions can be adapted to speed up and simplify services across the public sector.

Investing in people and giving back to our communities

Next, I shared how we're developing our people and giving back to our community through outreach activities.

I spoke through examples like our volunteer-led Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) programme, which inspires young people to build their digital skills. Another great example is our Digital Voices advocacy group, which promotes digital development and career opportunities for colleagues of all backgrounds.

My presentation also mentioned our support of the Digital Inclusion Scheme and the UK government's 'IT Reuse for Good' charter. Through this, we've donated more than 1,600 laptops to schools and charities across Wales, enabling young people to have access to the technology they need to succeed.

These initiatives sparked excellent discussions on how building a strong employer reputation, with the backing of senior leaders, can help to support local communities and attract the next generation of talent to the public sector.

This led us on nicely to the final talk, where our Capability and Talent Lead, Craig James, shared how we're helping to develop our people through our Centre of Digital Excellence (CoDE) development programme.

CoDE offers 18 schemes and has helped more than 200 people start their digital careers, regardless of whether they have a background in technology. People often arrive from other professions bringing transferable skills that work brilliantly in technical roles. In some of our teams, half the staff are CoDE graduates!

So, what did our attendees gain from this discussion? Investing in people is just as important as investing in technology, and if they help their own teams grow, they can bring success to their organisations.

Working together for better public services

What truly made the day special were the conversations we shared with attendees. Every organisation has unique circumstances, but a lot of common themes came up — embracing new technology, balancing competing priorities, and the ongoing mission to attract and develop digital talent.

Our experience has taught us that success doesn't happen overnight — it takes persistent effort, meaningful investment in people, and the courage to embrace change.

I'd like to thank AWS for organising this event with us, and everyone who attended. Seeing everyone sharing their knowledge, experiences and ideas reminded us why events like this are so powerful!

Interested in joining us on our digital journey? Learn more about DVLA's digital professions and read our collection of digital blogs.

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[Homegrown talent: How DVLA is](#)

developing the next generation of digital experts

In 2018, we launched the Centre of Digital Excellence (CoDE) development programme to attract people to work and develop their digital skills at DVLA. The programme is part of our long term strategy to train people in the digital capabilities we need most.

Several years later, CoDE has delivered significant results, with more than 200 people joining the programme since it began. Many of our engineers and analysts are graduates from the programme, with some teams now comprising up to 50% CoDE graduates!

In this blog, I want to answer some of the questions you may have and offer practical advice for future CoDE students.

Talking to past and present students at Code Connect 2025.

Are all CoDE apprentices school leavers?

Not always. While we welcome school leavers, we also recruit people seeking a career change. They often bring valuable life and work experience.

We run a range of different programmes each year — master's, graduate schemes, and apprenticeships — with varying qualification requirements. Some go to university, while others prefer not to. We want to offer opportunities to the right people, regardless of the route they've taken.

Can you train people from non-IT backgrounds?

Absolutely! For example, our Master's in Software Engineering programme accepts applicants with any degree in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

We've maintained a 50/50 split between non-IT and technology degree participants, with non-IT graduates showing a slightly higher success rate in securing permanent roles.

Can you only succeed with a degree?

No. Many of our apprentices have progressed to become senior engineers. We focus on what applicants do in their own time to develop their skills, which can be a stronger indicator of future success and lead to excellent outcomes.

What advice would you give to future cohorts?

1. Say yes to opportunities and don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone.

Whether it's a task for your team, a speaking opportunity, or writing your own blog, every opportunity you take builds your skills, network and experience. These experiences will set you apart.

2. Never turn down small opportunities.

If someone asks if you want to see code they've written, look at a new testing process, or help with a ticket, try to prioritise it. These small gestures show people want to share their knowledge with you.

3. Be proactive and ask questions.

Write down anything you can't ask immediately and follow up afterwards. There are no stupid questions, and curiosity shows engagement!

4. Take advantage of your unique environment.

You're likely working with other current students or previous graduates. Since we run annual programmes, you're never alone in this experience. Ask them what helped them succeed and make notes of what works for you to share with future cohorts.

5. Keep learning.

We probably hired you because you told us you enjoy learning about new technology or building things in your spare time. Don't stop now. Nothing demonstrates your commitment like showing you've been reading up on topics discussed and want to get more involved.

Looking ahead

With the right support, people from all backgrounds can build successful digital careers. Each new group brings fresh perspectives that strengthen our teams and enhance our capabilities.

We're committed to continuing this programme's development, learning from every year, and expanding opportunities for future students. As we celebrate the arrival of the 2025 CoDE cohort, we're already laying the groundwork for 2026.

Keen to find out more? Check out our development programmes and sign up to Civil Service Jobs to be the first to hear about future opportunities.

Follow DVLA on X, follow us on Facebook and connect with us on LinkedIn. You can also subscribe to the DVLA digital services blog.

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From placement to professional: my DVLA software engineering journey

DVLA has several Centre of Digital Excellence (CoDE) programmes to support career development in the digital profession.

If you're looking to start a digital career, or simply improve your digital skills, DVLA is a great place to work. I started at DVLA as a Year in Industry student before joining the master's degree programme and becoming a Junior Software Engineer.

This is my journey.

Becoming a CoDE student at DVLA

I applied for DVLA's Year in Industry scheme as I saw it as a great opportunity to improve my programming skills and gain valuable industry experience in a supportive environment.

During the placement, I worked as a Software Development Engineer in Test (SDET), which gave me a great insight into the world of testing. This hands-on experience also gave me a significant advantage when I returned to university, as I was already familiar with concepts that were being introduced in my studies.

My main responsibility was writing functional tests, which involved learning and working with languages and frameworks such as Ruby, Cucumber, and Gherkin. I also really enjoyed working in an Agile environment by participating in biweekly sprints, daily stand ups, sprint reviews and retrospectives.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to attend careers events to help promote the Year in Industry scheme, which allowed me to develop my communication and networking skills.

I received plenty of support throughout my placement. The SDET community is very close-knit, and they're always there to offer guidance when needed. My squad were incredibly welcoming and patient, allowing me to develop my skills at my own pace, which made my experience enjoyable as a new starter.

Returning on the Software Engineering MSc programme

After my Year in Industry, I was eager to return to DVLA. I really enjoyed the work environment — both the pace of work and the people were great! I had a consistent workload to keep me engaged without the pressure of stressful deadlines, which made for a balanced and enjoyable experience.

I applied for the MSc programme, which I'm still working on. It's given me the opportunity to continue progressing my career at DVLA, while allowing me to earn a master's qualification. It almost felt too good to be true! As part of the programme, we have a university day every Friday, which allows us time to focus on our studies without it interfering with our work at DVLA.

During my Year in Industry placement, I primarily focused on testing, but now I'm working as a developer. This shift has allowed me to expand my knowledge of software engineering from a developer's perspective, learning new languages and frameworks along the way.

The MSc programme has been really helpful for my development. Not only has it helped me improve my practical coding skills but, through my university studies, it's also allowed me to dive into the theory behind it. This mix of hands-on experience and deeper knowledge means I can take what I'm learning and apply it to different roles in software engineering, carrying that knowledge with me wherever I go.

Working at DVLA

It's a lot of fun! I've really enjoyed getting to know everyone and the squads have been very supportive. They're always happy to offer their time and provide feedback on my work, which has really helped me grow as a developer. There are a few former master's degree students in my squad, who I've become good friends with, and they've been especially understanding whenever I've needed advice.

With the way technology is evolving, it's an exciting time to be part of DVLA, and I can't wait to see what's next! Once I complete the MSc programme, I hope to have the opportunity to continue my career here as a software engineer. And who knows, maybe one day I'll work my way up to Senior Software Engineer!

There are so many things that make DVLA a great place to work. The people, career opportunities, technology, and support all contribute to a great experience. If you'd like to pursue a career in digital with us, find out more about DVLA digital professions and development programmes and visit Civil Service Jobs for all the latest career opportunities.

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[Gone in 60 seconds: On the road with our vehicle tax evasion enforcement team](#)

We recently joined DVLA's wheel-clamping partner, NSL, to find out how they're tackling vehicle tax evasion in the Liverpool and Midlands regions.

Our visit was part of a wider campaign targeting locations of the UK where vehicle tax evasion is highest. In 2024, we took enforcement action – which includes fines and clamping – on more than 120,000 vehicles in the Liverpool and West Midlands areas.

NSL operate across the UK and work closely with local authorities and police forces who are able to use [devolved powers to remove untaxed vehicles](#) from our roads.

So, what does a typical day on the road with NSL look like? Our team travelled to DVLA's Widnes and West Brom vehicle pounds to find out…

First stop: Widnes pound

We arrived at the pound where Enforcement Manager, Paul Davies, gave us a guided tour of the facility and the low down on the new fleet of state-of-the-art Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) vehicles.

After learning about how the team operate, we were taken to the vehicle storage facility which featured a remarkable collection of vehicles of all shapes and sizes. Some of the more unusual ones included a 1984 mobile library that had been converted into a camper van, a Subaru Impreza from the 90s complete with rally stickers, as well as various newer luxurious brands such as Mercedes, BMW and Audi – all impounded for having no tax.

Park and hide

We hit the road with the enforcement team on one of their daily patrols where we received reports of an untaxed van that had been attempting to park and hide down a side street. Our campaign slogan felt appropriate here: 'hard to hide, easy to tax'. The van was clamped within 60 seconds and the owner had to tax the van and pay a release fee – a cost that could have been avoided if the vehicle keeper had kept their vehicle taxed.

Next, we recruited the work of NSL's low loader lorry for some heavy lifting to pick up and impound an untaxed MINI in Warrington. This 20-year-old car had been abandoned on a residential street and the lift drew a small crowd of intrigued residents who were all too happy to see it gone. The car was in great condition for its age (except for its vehicle tax status), and so off it went on a MINI adventure to the pound.

Lights, ANPR cameras, action

Day 2 saw us on patrol again, but this time in West Bromwich and in one of the ANPR vehicles. Fitted with cameras on the roof, these vehicles can rapidly read vehicle registration plates and detect an untaxed vehicle instantly.

As we made our way around the Midlands market town, it appeared that all vehicles were taxed as they should be – good work West Brom! We also noticed countless [personalised registration](#) plates featuring the letters WBA, what better way to pay tribute to the local football team West Bromwich Albion FC!?

However, there was no added extra time for this next vehicle. As we drove into a local industrial estate, thoughts of a fully taxed town were dashed when the ANPR camera detected an untaxed pick-up truck outside a mechanic's workshop.

The team got to work immediately adding a new eye-catching accessory to the vehicle – a bright yellow DVLA clamp. As we were about to leave, the owner emerged from the yard with no one to blame but himself. As he paid his tax online on the spot plus a release fee, it was clear that he'd be taxing it, rather than risking it in the future!

The debrief

After an eventful 2 days, it was time to leave West Brom and head back to Swansea, but not before a debrief back at the pound. The visit gave us a real appreciation of the essential and sometimes difficult work undertaken by the enforcement team to crack down on vehicle tax evasion.

While more than 98% of vehicles on UK roads are taxed correctly, a small minority continue to break the law which costs HM Treasury millions of pounds every year – vital funds which would otherwise go towards public services.

It's never been easier for motorists to tax their vehicles and there are a number of ways to do so from using our 24/7 online service to spreading the cost with Direct Debit options.

So remember, it's important to make sure you tax your vehicle before using it on the road. It's quick, easy and guarantees your vehicle avoids any yellow accessories or vehicle pound adventures! Tax it, don't risk it.

How I became a Trainee Software Engineer in just 4 steps!

Before becoming a Trainee Software Engineer, I had worked in various enjoyable roles within DVLA. However, digital had always been my passion and it was a discipline I really wanted to pursue.

So in 2023, with a view to beginning a new career, I joined DVLA's digital advocacy group, Digital Voices, which promotes digital careers and opportunities within DVLA. This provided the initial spark to help me take the first step to becoming a Trainee Software Engineer.

In this blog, I want to share with you the 4 steps that helped me get my dream digital role!

1. Becoming a digital advocate

My first step was to find out how to get involved in all things digital at

DVLA. Joining Digital Voices gave me the chance to meet new people and build my confidence speaking to senior colleagues. I really appreciate the inclusivity of the community; the group is open and welcoming to anyone, regardless of their role within the agency.

It's an amazing opportunity to network with colleagues who you might not normally work with. I still try to attend as many activities as possible to learn more about digital careers and skills. Now that I've started my digital career, I hope to continue advocating for others who want to follow a similar path.

2. Finding a mentor

Through the new connections I made, I learned about DVLA's mentorship programme. I joined the programme and was paired with an Agile Delivery Manager in the agency's Information and Technology Services directorate. My mentor gave me advice on digital careers and shared relevant skills like Agile methodologies, project management and service delivery. By observing her work, her squad, and seeking her advice, I gained a deeper understanding of the skills needed to succeed in a digital career.

Her mentorship helped to build my confidence and navigate challenges with support and practical advice. For example, my mentor worked with me on improving my interview skills, particularly in tailoring my responses to specific job requirements.

I aspire to become a mentor myself and help others navigate their career paths. Mentorship has been crucial to my development, and I'd love to give back in the same way.

3. Attending ethical hacking workshops

Last year, I joined an 8-week ethical hacking programme, which taught me how to find weaknesses in IT systems and protect them from threats. The workshops were a fantastic experience. They not only equipped me with new technical skills but also provided me with a deeper understanding of the importance of ethical hacking.

Hearing directly from the ethical hacking team was a highlight. Their passion for protecting systems was inspiring, and I left with a greater appreciation for how ethical hacking supports organisational security.

My positive experience inspired me to apply for the Software Engineer Apprenticeship, a 2-year programme focusing on Microsoft Dynamics, a suite of cloud-based business applications that we use at DVLA.

4. Applying for the Software Engineer Apprenticeship

I took the plunge and applied for the Software Engineer Apprenticeship in October 2024. The programme offers staff with an interest in software

engineering a chance to develop the skills they need to become a Software Engineer. It was a proud moment when I was told that my application was successful and I could start my role as Trainee Software Engineer, learning skills on the job.

The first few weeks of the programme were a whirlwind! At first, I felt self-doubt as the only woman in my group, but I soon gained confidence. It was exciting to meet so many talented developers. I've already successfully passed the Power Platform Fundamentals exam and I'm now focused on preparing for the next certification. My goal is to apply my knowledge to practical projects which will help improve the user experience of DVLA systems and services.

As I reflect on my career journey so far, every experience has helped me grow. The challenges I've faced have made me more resilient, and the successes I've achieved have boosted my confidence. I'm excited to continue my career in digital and encourage others to take the first step towards theirs.

Start your digital career!

If you're thinking about [starting a career in digital](#) at DVLA, go for it! There are lots of opportunities for growth and development and you'll be fully supported in your role.

If you're considering a career in digital, make sure you:

- stay curious and explore new technologies
- build relationships across teams and seek mentorship
- volunteer for projects and show enthusiasm for your work
- take advantage of training and development opportunities
- see setbacks as learning opportunities

View our current vacancies and our upcoming development programmes at [Civil Service Jobs](#). Good luck!

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