

Nikolaos Gkionis

Principal Service Designer & Digital Transformation Leader

Location: Greater Manchester, UK (Open to Manchester base + London travel)

Email: nikolaos@hey.com | Mobile: 07510 564320 | Portfolio: <https://ng-dsgn.com/>

Executive Profile

Accomplished digital leader and principal practitioner with extensive experience steering large-scale public sector service transformation, governance frameworks, and multidisciplinary teams. Deep, practical expertise applying the GDS Service Standard and leading formal assurance processes across central government departments including HMRC and DfE. Proven ability to bridge the gap between ministerial policy, service strategy, and programme delivery, evolving compliance-driven standards into actionable ecosystems that enable modern, user-centred public services. Skilled in cross-government stakeholder engagement, cultural change, DesignOps, and mentoring senior UCD cohorts to deliver measurable outcomes at pace.

Core Leadership Competencies

- **Service Standards & Governance:** Extensive hands-on experience applying, assessing, and evolving the GDS Service Standard and Service Manual patterns across complex transactional and operational systems.
- **Whole-Service Transformation:** Leading ecosystem mapping, service blueprints, and target operating models to modernise legacy processes beyond individual front-end transactions.
- **Senior Stakeholder Coalition Building:** Facilitating alignment between senior civil servants, policy leads, operational directors, and commercial partners across departmental silos.
- **Multidisciplinary Leadership:** Direct line management, capability building, and mentorship for large cohorts of service designers, interaction designers, and user researchers (up to 35+ practitioners).

- **Delivery at Pace & Assurance:** Directing agile programmes through Alpha, Beta, and Live gated service assessments within highly regulated, compliance-driven environments.
- **Public Service DesignOps:** Establishing shared design systems, quality assurance rubrics, and repeatable assessment frameworks that scale capability across federated programmes.

Leadership Experience

HMRC via Stealth IT - Head of Service Design ***January 2026 - September 2026***

- Led the overarching service design strategy for a mission-critical Internal Intelligence Management System serving thousands of operational HMRC personnel within a secure, high-compliance environment.
- Developed end-to-end service blueprints, comprehensive ecosystem maps, and user journey frameworks to modernise legacy casework operations into an integrated internal service platform.
- Partnered with senior stakeholders, policy owners, and digital delivery directors to embed whole-service thinking, shifting the team focus from isolated interface fixes to systemic operational reform.
- Facilitated high-level strategic alignment workshops across departmental boundaries, securing consensus on service vision, delivery milestones, and governance gates.

CCS via PSR - Multi-Product Design Lead ***May 2025 - December 2026***

- Directed end-to-end design strategy across three concurrent digital service streams, establishing unified governance, quality benchmarks, and rigorous service assurance practices.
- Implemented structured design reviews, transparent decision logs, and formal audit frameworks that improved multi-team delivery cadence while maintaining 100% WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility compliance.

- Aligned operational outcomes with regulatory policy requirements through regular cross-functional consensus workshops with legal, policy, and technical leadership.

DBT via Hays - Design System & Component Lead

April 2024 - November 2025

- Architected, governed, and scaled a centralized design system framework adopted across distributed delivery teams to drive consistency and accelerate time-to-market.
- Standardized component architectures and compliance criteria, eliminating pattern fragmentation across complex user journeys.
- Embedded collaborative pair-design practices, design critiques, and accessibility remediation standards that elevated craft quality and delivery maturity.

HO via Allen Lane - Design Team Lead & Principal Consultant

February 2023 - April 2024

- Line managed and mentored a multidisciplinary team of 12 designers and user researchers delivering across a portfolio of complex public sector digital programmes.
- Established a comprehensive capability framework, professional development pathways, and DesignOps rituals that significantly improved retention and output quality.
- Instituted shared quality assurance frameworks to ensure all outputs complied with service standards, accessibility mandates, and digital spend controls.
- Reported design readiness, strategic risk, and transformation outcomes directly to client senior leadership and programme boards.

HMRC via Jumar - Senior Interaction Design Lead

April 2021 - September 2022

- Oversaw service quality, user experience, and design consistency across 12 product teams comprising over 35 user-centred design (UCD) practitioners in a high-visibility, national-scale delivery environment.

- Introduced structured DesignOps rituals, common component patterns, and shared review boards adopted across multiple regional delivery hubs.
- Steered multidisciplinary teams through strict regulatory and accessibility compliance checks to meet ministerial delivery timelines.

Department for Education (DfE) - Lead Interaction Designer
January 2017 - April 2021

- Led user-centred design operations across 4 digital delivery teams (10–12 practitioners each), embedding GDS principles and agile methodologies from Discovery through Live.
- Co-created an internal UX assessment and quality assurance framework designed to prepare teams for formal GDS service assessments and assure WCAG compliance.
- Facilitated design sprints, stakeholder alignment sessions, and continuous user research cadences to validate product roadmaps directly against ministerial policies and user needs.

PJH — Process Design & Research Lead
August 2012 – January 2017

- Redesigned a legacy, high-volume case-handling service journey within a heavily regulated environment, successfully reducing end-to-end processing time from 90 days to 28 days.
- Aligned frontline operations, internal workflows, and customer communication channels into an integrated, efficient operating model.

Earlier Career

Sunshine Ltd (Corfu) Service & Visual Design Lead
2005 – 2012

- Delivered user-centred redesigns and visual communications that supported significant commercial and organizational growth.
- Managed design engagements end-to-end, establishing strong foundations in visual layout, systems thinking, and clear user communication.

Education & Professional Development

- **BSc (Hons) Psychology** (In Progress) — *The Open University* (Specialising in cognitive ergonomics, human decision-making, and behavioral systems)
- **QCF Level 3 Web Design & Development**
- **NVQ Level 3 Customer Service Operations**
- **Diploma in Graphic Design**