Making life better by design

Communicating the value of design.

What's the challenge we've identified?

Misconceptions and confusion around design are often the biggest barriers of getting people to use it

What did we do and what have we achieved?

We developed one of the most recognised explanations of design: the Double Diamond

We evidenced the financial value of design and design skills to the UK economy

We brought design to new audiences including those less familiar with design

What have we learnt?

There is a difference between the simplicity needed to explain design and the complexity needed to implement it

Design practice constantly evolves and we need to take advantage of the new opportunities it brings

A combination of statistics and stories can encourage people to use design more widely, according to our experience

Our key achievements over the last 15 years
**Communicating the value of design**

10,000 online visits

We saw our Double Diamond – which is widely acknowledged as the simplest way to explain design to a non-design audience – translated into multiple languages and used across the globe.

There are over 10,000 online visits every month to our Double Diamond and the Framework for Innovation that it sits within.
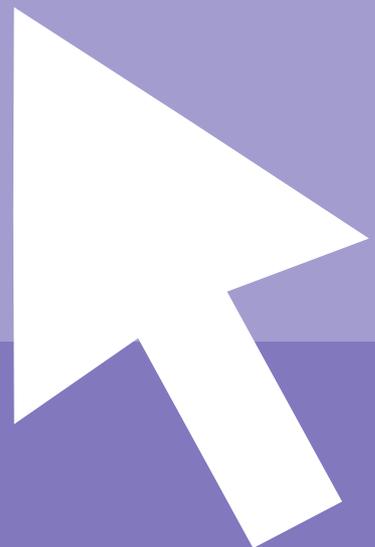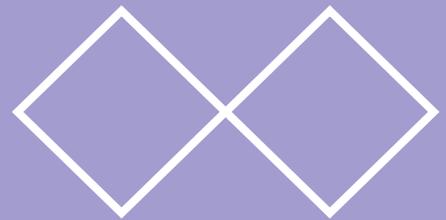
2 world first reports published

We published Design Economy and Designing a Future Economy, demonstrating the value of design and design skills to the UK economy.

The evidence and statistics in these reports have been used and quoted extensively by government, both in the UK and overseas, influenced the inclusion of design in government policies and been the impetus for numerous further pieces of research and initiatives.

Designing a Future Economy

1 Design Action Plan for UK supported

We supported the development of a forthcoming Design Action Plan for the UK (2020) to increase strategic use of design in the public and private sectors for societal and economic benefit.

The Design Economy 2018
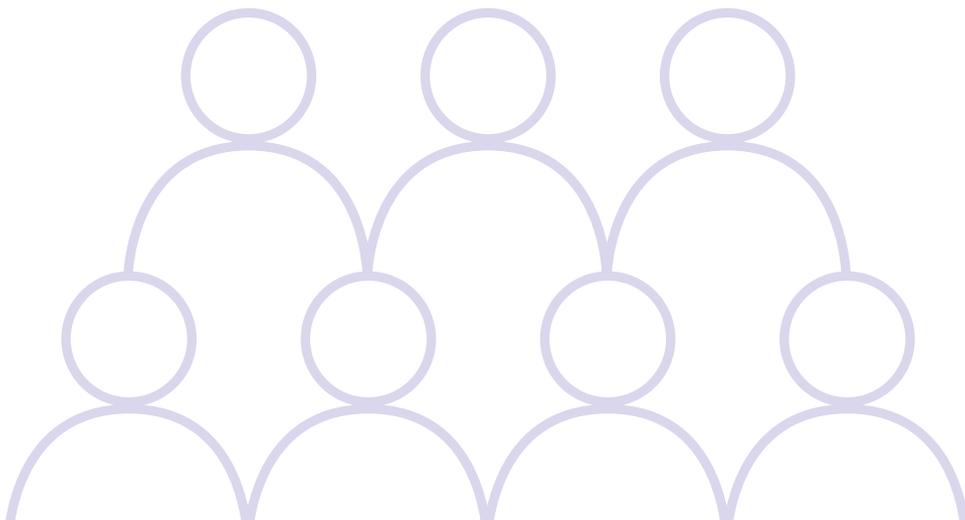
What's the challenge we've identified?

Design isn't always easy to explain. Inevitably, misconceptions and confusion around design are often the biggest barriers to getting people to use it.

- Design is commonly assumed to be about just aesthetics or refining an end-product.

- But design is not simply an outcome; it is an entire mindset and skillset. This means that much of the design process and its value can seem 'hidden' and unquantifiable.

- A lack of shared language around design or common data to pool the impact of design contributes to the challenge of communicating what design can do (better) and why people should use it.

The complex nature of design and associated difficulties around communicating it creates a barrier to it being used as widely as it should be. Insights from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded research carried out by Manchester Metropolitan University and PDR Cardiff Metropolitan University in 2019 has shown that design is still poorly understood or recognised by senior leaders, which limits organisations' capacity to use design strategically within their work. Evidence from the same research indicates that explaining what design is through the effective use of stories and evidence could play a significant role in enabling design to be more widely used through the development of a UK Design Action Plan.
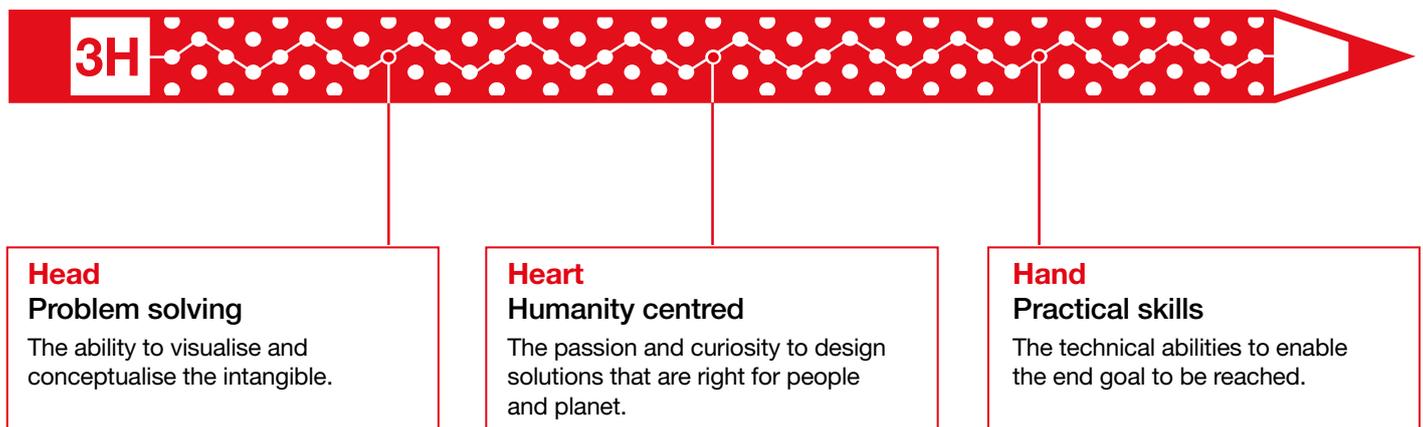
Head
Problem solving
The ability to visualise and conceptualise the intangible.

Heart
Humanity centred
The passion and curiosity to design solutions that are right for people and planet.

Hand
Practical skills
The technical abilities to enable the end goal to be reached.

01

What did we do and what have we achieved?

We developed one of the most recognised explanations of design: the Double Diamond

In 2004 we developed the Double Diamond to help non-designers understand the design process. It originated from examining what approaches designers were already using and finding a simple way to communicate this process visually. It was based on looking at how organisations are using design to create innovative products and services, as well as Design Council teams experimenting with design methods in areas such as education and technology research.

Since its launch, it has become among the most recognised and applied design processes in the world, translated into multiple languages and taught within higher education design courses across the globe.

A recent call for evidence on the use of the Double Diamond showed how widely it is used across different sectors – from health systems to retailers, museums to regulators.

"A drive to demystify design process and make it accessible to a non-design audience of policy makers, manufacturing CEOs, technologists and educators. What was nice, though, is that the design world embraced the model as well."
- Anna White, one of the original team (with Chris Vanstone) that worked on the Double Diamond.

Over the years, it has also been adapted hundreds of times, commonly to highlight complexity, overlapping outcomes and emergent thinking as the process unfolds. Designers around the globe have shared their own modified and expanded Double Diamond such as IBM's infinity loop, and the triple diamond. As it is free to use and open-source, other groups, like Extinction Rebellion, are adopting it as a democratic tool to cooperatively re-design our future.

There are 58 million Google search results on 'Double Diamond

The Design Council website receives 10,000 hits every month on the Double Diamond and the Framework for Innovation that it sits within.
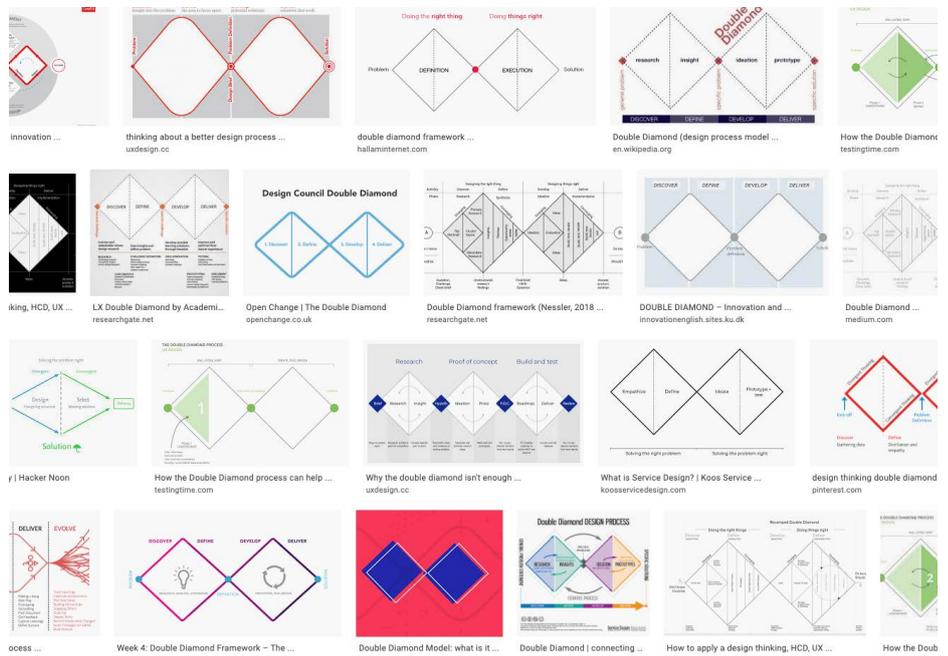
02

We evidenced the financial value of design and design skills to the UK economy

Design Council has been growing the evidence base on the value of design and mapping its use across sectors of the economy for decades.

Our Design Economy (2015 and 2018) reports that we produced on behalf of government were world-firsts, detailing the state of design and its value to the UK economy. For the first time ever, we were able to show how design contributes across all economic sectors, not just within design industries. In fact, 68% of design's £85.2bn GVA in 2016 was created by people working in industries such as aerospace, automotive and banking. Our research report, Designing a Future Economy (2017), focused specifically on design skills. This research uncovered that 2.5 million people use design skills in their work, contributing £209bn to the UK economy.

Our research is cited globally and is regularly used as a blueprint for cities and countries around the world looking to evidence the value of design. For example, in 2019 we were asked to participate in the international Design Declaration Pre-Summit Metrics Project, sharing learning from our Design Economy methodology on how global metrics on the value of design could be developed. We can also see direct action as a result of the research:

- Design Can are taking action on the lack of diversity we found in design to develop initiatives aimed at better inclusivity and representation.

- Our research is regularly cited by design researchers and other disciplines as a key reference and starting point for further research.

03

We brought design to new audiences including those less familiar with design

We are committed to communicating this to the widest audience possible, in particular to those that are less familiar with design.

Our research and experience show that people need evidence to value design, but also powerful stories to understand how it works. Storytelling is a key piece of our work. Over the last year alone:

- We produced short films documenting the difference design can make. These included stories of the transformation of the seaside town Amble (see page 58), and the reduction of violence and aggression in A&E (see page 54).

- Our Chief Design Officer presented the third series of BBC Radio 4's The Fix, which explores how design can solve difficult social problems. This was downloaded 60,000 times on BBC Sounds in its first two months, as well as being scheduled for the Radio 4's 7 million listeners.

- We have also looked to showcase the work of individual designers, particularly from groups that are less represented in the design community. Our Leading Women series, developed for the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, profiled 12 female designers.

We also recognise the role that design can play in policy making. We aim to influence policy decisions, ensuring that design-use is built into decision making and practice.

- Following our recommendations, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) features significant changes, with design now placed at its heart.

- We submitted evidence to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, much of which is reflected in its final report.

- We are continuing to ensure that design in the public and private sectors in the UK is fully utilised for maximum societal and economic benefit, and have been supporting AHRC funded work by Manchester Metropolitan University and PDR Cardiff Metropolitan University to develop a Design Action Plan for the UK (set to be launched in 2020).

What have we learnt?

There is a difference between the simplicity needed to explain design and the complexity needed to implement it.

"I think you can use the Double Diamond to tell all sorts of design stories in really helpful ways – part of its beauty is its simplicity." Jonathan Ball (Design Associate). But there is a difference between the simplicity needed to explain design, and the complexity of implementing a design process that creates significant value. Over the years, we have learnt better ways of explaining the process. These increasingly inclusive, collaborative, thoughtful and effective approaches and tools have been translated into a new iteration of the Double Diamond, our Framework for Innovation (2019, see annex on page 86) and also the development of our new design principles as set out in our 2020-24 strategy.

Design practice constantly evolves and we need to take advantage of the new opportunities it brings.

Definitions of design and focus have shifted over the last 75 years from product only, to recognising the value it has to offer services and places, and now policies and wider systemic challenges. This presents a good opportunity for Design Council to ensure that we are evidencing and promoting the latest that design can offer the UK. Rather than a focus on individual user needs, we need to make sure we're thinking about wider societal and environmental needs. Rather than a focus on an individual innovation, we need to be more resourceful and collaborative. And when we create and implement products and services, we should re-design what happens post-consumption, thinking through how materials and resources can be reused and recycled. In 2020, we are conducting research into future methods of leading design practitioners, which we will bring together and share.

A combination of statistics and stories can encourage people to use design more widely, according to our experience.

Our research and experience show that people need evidence to value design, as well as powerful stories to understand how it works. Partly, this is because people can have their own preferences about how they receive information and what they find convincing. It is about what type of evidence is needed when making decisions. When we consulted on our next Design Economy (planned for 2021), respondents indicated that while quantitative evidence of value for money often sparks initial interest among decision-makers, it is through sharing examples about how design has worked that enables people to understand better how to make the most of design.

Our *Making life better by design* series tells the story of Design Council's impact over the last 15 years. It shows how design has contributed to three major areas of the economy – business innovation, public services and places – as well as how Design Council has helped to clarify what design is and champion its use.

This chapter looks at vital work we have done to increase understanding of design and encourage its use across public, private and third sectors.

To find out more visit:
designcouncil.org.uk/our-impact