

# Transforming local services through digital

One of four linked reports:  
a digital vision for local government

# Foreword

As Chairman for the Improvement and Innovation Board at the Local Government Association (LGA), I am delighted to introduce these four interlinked papers which set out the sector's position and priorities on maximising the opportunities of digital.

The imperative for local public services to fully exploit the potential of modern digital tools, technologies and approaches in order to improve delivery and save money has never been greater. We face rising citizen demand, needs and expectations at a time of severe spending and resource constraints.

Councils have a long history of investing in digital information and communications technology for the benefit of their localities, from the traditional finance and housing repairs systems that began to emerge in the 1970s through to the 'apps' and social media of today.

There are also many outstanding examples of radical IT-enabled service innovation – such as online school admissions or tele healthcare – being adopted across the sector, successfully transforming the citizen experience and reducing costs.

However, comprehensive improvement and development does not happen by chance in a sector as diverse and locally-responsive as local government. It requires close collaboration between central and local government and other partners, including the voluntary and private sectors and communities themselves, carefully targeted and managed investment in both local 'exemplars' and national infrastructure, a well-coordinated programme of support and communication, and – perhaps most important – leadership at all levels.

The first of the attached papers, 'Delivering better local online transactional services', highlights the specific opportunities to use digital tools and techniques to improve the ways in which citizens find information or carry out online transactions with local government while saving public money. It draws on research by the Society of IT Management and the Local Authority Contact Centre Benchmarking Group, as well as data from a range of individual councils, to demonstrate how councils have been increasingly interacting online with citizens with a particular focus on digitising 'top tasks'.

The paper makes a case for exploiting and promoting more effectively the assets and good practice already available in the sector as well as for designing and implementing some key pieces of common digital infrastructure from which all councils could benefit.

Our second paper, 'Transforming local services through digital', explores the wider potential of digital tools, technologies and approaches to support 'transformation' – that is the fundamental redesign of local services so that they deliver better outcomes, in a more targeted and timely fashion, at less cost. The paper argues that in a landscape where public service delivery is increasingly fragmented across different organisations, but in which joining up services around residents in a locality is essential, councils have a vital role to play as ring holders, 'place shapers' and community leaders. Technology too offers massive potential not just to make individual organisations and transactions more efficient, but to support innovative, collaborative

and transformative work to redesign services and to act as the 'glue' linking disparate service providers.

The paper concentrates on highlighting ways in which existing, place-based national programmes of public service reform in areas such as health and social care integration, the benefits system and troubled families could be substantially accelerated by greater digital innovation.

Our third paper, 'Developing local digital leadership skills and capacity', examines the vital topic of how the leadership skills and capacity required in local government can best be developed and supported, thereby enabling councils and their partners to apply appropriate digital solutions, deliver better outcomes, improve the experience of their shared customers and workforces and reduce costs. Leadership will also be essential if digital knowledge and assets are to be systematically shared and mainstreamed and 'exemplars' scaled up to the benefit of the whole sector.

The paper sets out a series of very practical steps for developing local digital leadership at councillor, senior officer and practitioner level, building on the work and models already in place in the sector.

Our fourth and final paper, 'Implementing programme leadership and support for digital', draws on the learning from previous successful national programmes of change. It proposes a set of operating principles and identifies a small number of practical options for establishing the coordinated programme required to drive forward the take-up of relevant digital tools, technologies and approaches across the local government sector and to tackle cross-cutting issues such as data sharing and procurement.

Taken together, then, the four papers set out a high-level case for investing in a well-structured and comprehensive programme of support to enable local government to maximise the citizen benefits and costs savings that can be generated from fully exploiting the potential of digital in the public services.

We look forward to working with government on this important and timely initiative.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Simmonds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Councillor David Simmonds CBE**  
Chairman, Improvement and Innovation Board  
Local Government Association

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# 1. Purpose of document

The purpose of this paper is to explore the wider potential of digital tools, technologies and approaches to support ‘transformation’ – that is the fundamental redesign of local services so that they deliver better outcomes, in a more targeted and timely fashion, at less cost – building on existing exemplars.

The paper is one of a linked set of submissions to inform Spending Review 2015 that will also address:

- how councils can use digital tools and techniques and exploit digital platforms to improve their online transactional services, so that citizens and businesses can find information or complete their dealings with their local authority in ways that are convenient to them and also save public money
- how the necessary leadership skills and capacity to understand and apply digital approaches successfully in local public services can be developed across local government at all levels – including members, senior officers and staff
- the options for delivering the coordinated programme leadership and support, built on tried-and-tested programme management and invest-to-save principles, required to provide the necessary links between local, regional and national initiatives, to maximise the mainstreaming of learning and good practice across the sector and to tackle cross-cutting issues such as data sharing and procurement.

Local Government Digital Programme Strategic Operations Unit:  
senior programme leadership  
cross cutting issues including data sharing and procurement

Transactions/Platforms

Transformation/Exemplars

Skills and Capacity

Taken together, therefore, the four papers set out a high-level case for investing in a coordinated and comprehensive programme of support to enable local government to maximise the customer benefits and cost savings that can be generated from exploiting the potential of modern digital tools, technologies and approaches in local public services.

## 2. The context

The context in which such transformation needs to take place is one of both constraint and opportunity. Between the Coalition Government's first budget in 2010 and the end of the 2015/16 financial year, councils will have seen core funding from central government reduced by 40 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The forthcoming autumn Spending Review will continue to put pressure on local government expenditure. Already central government departments have been asked to draw up plans to help deliver £20 billion of financial consolidation over the next four years, based on modelling two scenarios of 25 per cent and 40 per cent savings in real terms by 2019/20.<sup>2</sup>

These financial pressures have accelerated a trend already visible for many years in local authority service delivery – the move from monolithic, council-dominated provision towards a much more varied landscape involving private, voluntary sector and mutual suppliers, innovative joint ventures and partnerships and even resident-run operations, with councils increasingly focusing less on direct provision and more on commissioning and collaborating with partners.

Improving every council's ability to transact online with its residents is an important step towards reducing costs and improving efficiency, as outlined in our complementary paper 'Delivering better online transactional services in local government'.

At the same time, it is clear that no single organisation working on its own can achieve the financial savings required over the coming years while maintaining services at the levels residents expect.

We have already seen the benefits of multi-agency working and collaboration from the place-based working led by councils and underway in many parts of the country. However, the really significant benefits will arise when the many different providers in an area come together to fundamentally redesign and integrate their services around the needs of users, in the places where these services are 'consumed' (typically a locality), and with a focus on intervening early, heading off demand, reducing duplication and promoting user self-help.

Recent research supports such an approach, which some commentators and councils are now calling 'place as platform'. For instance, Ernst & Young's report *Whole Place Community Budgets: A Review of the Potential for Aggregation*, published in January 2013, concluded that 'Community Budgets have the potential to deliver better outcomes and to realise substantial financial benefits.

As such they represent the most significant opportunity to achieve wide-scale public service reform.' The report identified the potential five-year net benefit of Community Budgets as between £9.4 billion and £20.6 billion, around 20 per cent of which would fall to local government and the remainder to the wider public sector.

1 See the Local Government Association's On-the-day briefing for the Budget 2015 [www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/On+the+Day+Briefing+Budget+2015+FINAL.pdf/0f2530e0-78d4-4f09-8121-3b0e300efb15](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/On+the+Day+Briefing+Budget+2015+FINAL.pdf/0f2530e0-78d4-4f09-8121-3b0e300efb15)

2 See *A country that lives within its means* Spending Review 2015, HM Treasury, July 2015

In practice, the Government's own radical programme of public service reform reflects just such a move towards a future in which power is devolved and public services are enabled to join up around communities in a locality. The programme builds upon the place-based approaches to delivering outcomes piloted by many local authorities in recent years in which services are 'co-produced' by a range of local partners, including citizens themselves. This direction of travel will be given further impetus by the Government's commitment to devolution, which will be a major theme for the public services in the coming years and is discussed later in this paper.

Reform is being supported by a series of national programmes, such as Universal Credit, Troubled Families and Integrated Health and Social Care, all of which once again have at their core the need for different public, private and voluntary sector organisations to join up around their shared customers, to eliminate duplication and to share both knowledge and resources.

This paper therefore makes four main arguments:

- first, in a landscape where public service delivery is increasingly fragmented across different organisations, but in which joining up services around residents in a locality is essential, councils have a vital role to play in acting as ring holders, 'place shapers' and community leaders, drawing on their democratic legitimacy and extensive involvement in every aspect of their areas
- second, digital tools, technologies and approaches offer massive potential not just to make individual organisations and transactions more efficient, but also to support innovative, collaborative and transformative work to redesign services locally and to act as the 'glue' linking disparate service providers
- third, the potential of digital is so wide that there is a need to focus our efforts, the most obvious initial target being the major areas of public service reform already identified by the Government, such as health and social care integration, benefits system reform and troubled families, where existing place-based programmes (all of which have an existing digital component) could be substantially accelerated by greater digital innovation
- finally, the most effective vehicle for making rapid progress will be a properly funded, tried and tested 'invest to save' approach with a strong focus on digital leadership skills and capacity, user-led service redesign, and partnering/co-production with central government, the wider public, private and voluntary sectors and communities themselves.

# 3. The potential of digital

Giving citizens and service users the ability to transact effectively online with their local service providers is an important element of public service reform. But modern digital technologies offer a much broader range of 'transformational' possibilities, which councils are already exploiting to redesign local services and to support collaborative, place-based activities.

'We will make greater use of digital technology to modernise Britain's public services and give people greater choice in the decisions that affect them and their communities.' A country that lives within its means – Spending Review 2015, HM Treasury, July 2015

Among other things, digital tools and approaches can:

- link processes within and between organisations, providing customers with a smooth and consistent end-to-end experience of a service, with feedback and updates at each stage, while avoiding rekeying of data by staff
- capture ongoing and up-to-date insight about how services are being used, helping service providers to monitor performance, share this information with customers and continuously improve service design
- enable organisations, with appropriate customer consent, to share information early, online and in real time for both operational and strategic purposes. This is vital not just for seeing individual customers or families 'in the round' (thereby facilitating the targeting of scarce resources and early intervention) but also for understanding local markets and patterns of need and

service provision (therefore underpinning 'intelligent commissioning')

- provide infrastructure and capabilities that can be built once and used many times by different organisations, reducing costs and risks, facilitating quicker deployment and achieving greater reliability and consistency.<sup>3</sup>

To cite a practical example, some councils have built electronic 'platforms' that connect individuals to each other via social media or to a range of public, private and voluntary sector service providers. The aim is to address issues such as social isolation, mental health or dementia by developing fundamentally different models of provision for certain locality-based services, such as social care, in which individuals, families and communities are encouraged and enabled to share information, to self-help and to resolve their problems with as little as possible direct intervention from the council and other local public bodies.

Cheshire East Council, working with Age UK Cheshire, Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT and Opportunity Links, has developed an online social media and information site (DemenShare) for people living with dementia, from those diagnosed to their families and carers. The site offers 24-hour access to information and enables users to share resources and build networks of support. As well as offering peer support, better outcomes and a reduction in the need for hospital-based services, the site has provided local GPs and commissioners with better insight into and connection with their customers.

<sup>3</sup> The approach has been dubbed 'Government as platform'. The Government Digital Service has started initial discovery work on online payments as an exemplar of what could be achieved. In principle, a 'platform' such as this could be made available to all organisations involved in public service delivery, including voluntary and mutual bodies.



The Staffordshire Marketplace is an online directory of local care, support and wellbeing services, activities and events across Staffordshire aimed at the whole family. Launched by Staffordshire County Council, the Staffordshire Marketplace makes it easier for people to find and access support and wellbeing services from hundreds of organisations operating locally, all in one place.

Where direct public service delivery remains essential, councils are exploiting the potential of digital technology to generate customer insight, share information with partners, support community-based frontline workers and reduce costs in ways that are radically reshaping services.

In the face of severe budget constraints, Leeds City Council has shifted its policy focus onto delivering outcomes rather than services. Citizens' needs are being met through an approach involving the different organisations in the city, supported by the Leeds Data Mill, a collaborative open data platform. The council talks in terms of 'place as platform'.

Tell Us Once is a cross-government initiative developed by a partnership of local government, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), DVLA and Passport Services to provide a service where people can inform government just once of a birth or death.

The scheme operates within a national model but with local variations to reflect the needs of different localities. Technology plays an important role in allowing citizens to use the service online or through assisted support by council staff and this has resulted in efficiencies being achieved in back-office processing. Estimates from 2014 suggested that Tell Us

Once is delivering total benefits of £22 million annually, with councils reporting fewer benefits overpayments, quicker termination of services and return of equipment or parking blue badges, and faster closure and reassignment of tenancies for example.

Blackburn with Darwen has been developing its approach to telecare and assistive living technology since 2008. A number of pilots were undertaken with different groups, including clients with learning disabilities who were on very high dependency packages and people living in several residential and nursing homes. An evaluation of the impact of the assistive living programme between 2008 and 2012 showed net savings of £2.2 million, while an evaluation of preventative/early intervention approaches in conjunction with assistive living technologies for the period 2013/14 showed a reduction of some £1.2 million of direct budget costs. The council is keen to extend its approach to a wider local customer base as it has evidence of the benefits of early, appropriate use of the technology in reducing falls, hospital admissions and the general prevention of deterioration in well being.<sup>4</sup>

There are many more examples, some of which we highlight later in this document, of how leading councils are already deploying digital tools and approaches to deliver local services in innovative ways – from using better geographical information and global positioning technology to route waste collection vehicles to providing local community champions and neighbourhood staff with mobile devices and software with which to report environmental issues such as fly tipping.<sup>5</sup>

All of these initiatives are helping to transform the relationship between local public services, their customers and the frontline staff who are serving them. Clearly, however, innovation such as this requires new thinking and 'digital leadership' not just from councils, but also from their partners, including the suppliers of digital tools and technologies. It is also important not to forget the need to assist those who are less digitally able or confident. We return to these issues at various points in the paper.

4 For a detailed case study, see [www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/productivity/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7161900/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/productivity/-/journal_content/56/10180/7161900/ARTICLE)

5 For an in-depth discussion and set of examples, see *Transforming local public services: using technology and digital tools and approaches*, Local Government Association, June 2014.

# 4. Focusing our efforts

There is almost limitless potential to apply digital tools and technologies to specific local services – from customer-facing services such as planning or trading standards to back-office services such as procurement and human resources – as well as to underpin wider work on transformation. To accelerate progress, therefore, and to deliver national and local outcomes quickly and efficiently, a highly focused approach will be required, applying digital tools and approaches to an agreed set of priority projects and programmes.

It is clear that on current trends most council spending by the end of the decade will be directed at core statutory functions, in particular services for adults and children. Not only does this indicate where efforts around digital transformation can best be directed, it also highlights the danger that, by the end of the current Parliament, councils may not have the funding required to redesign these services. There is a strong case therefore for investing in a programme of support now, thereby helping to improve outcomes and reduce operational costs in the future.

This paper therefore argues that the most obvious place to focus support is on a small number of current priority national programmes where a range of partners are already involved in co-designing place-based approaches, where much of the ground work above (including some initial work around digital) has already been done and where a greater focus on applying digital tools and technologies could rapidly accelerate progress.

In particular we have identified:

- health and social care integration
- troubled families
- reforming the benefits system.

In each case we briefly summarise below the potential opportunities and challenges of taking a digital approach and highlight some of the work already underway locally.

The move towards devolution within England will of course encompass these and other priorities. Our paper therefore includes a short discussion on how devolution should give added impetus to place-based approaches to local service provision, supported by digital.

Two concluding sections then summarise the common themes emerging from the paper – including the need to promote digital leadership at various levels, to support greater dissemination of existing practice and learning and to accelerate progress on key elements of technical infrastructure – and discuss potential models for a programme to mainstream local digital innovation and generate significant savings.

# 5. Health and social care integration

The increasing pressures on health and social care services added to the recognised funding gap facing the system (estimated at £12.3 billion) are making health and social care integration an ever greater priority. A recent report by Ernst and Young, commissioned by the Local Government Association (LGA), highlighted the need for urgent and radical change to the way in which we provide care for the elderly and disabled and argued for a further £5.2 billion investment in prevention to overhaul health and social care.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, over the last few years, councils have been transforming services in line with phase one of the Care Act – improving information and advice about all care support services, not just those provided by the council, and also ensuring that needs assessments are carried out for carers, not just for people receiving care.

The application of digital tools and approaches will be fundamental to realising these ambitions. The more effective use of data and technology is already being promoted at national level by the National Information Board (NIB) and NHS England.<sup>7</sup> This arose from the publication of Personalised Health and Care 2020 in November 2014, which sets the ambition for how information and technology can support the delivery of health and care, and is critical to the

achievement of the Five Year Forward View. There is now an appetite to avoid the top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches of the past (for example Connecting for Health) in favour of an approach that focuses on collaborative work with localities to deliver integrated, place-based health and social care services.

In practice, the Integrated Health and Social Care Pioneers,<sup>8</sup> as well as many other councils, have begun to exploit digital technologies to meet these challenges. Work in local government includes:

- collaborating with partners in health to bring together health and care records to support direct care and to explore citizen access to information
- developing online self-service portals to enable residents to purchase health and social care support and equipment (see the Staffordshire example earlier in this paper)
- promoting self-care and supporting prevention through the development of appropriate technologies including assistive technology and social care apps
- exploring the potential to move contact with citizens online, in particular triage activity for social care assessments including trusted assessors and third parties
- collating cross-agency intelligence to support more integrated commissioning.

6 Creating a better care system, Ernst and Young, June 2015 [www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/Creating+a+better+care+system+June+2015/0692d75a-5c26-4b85-a2b5-9e7dd59b455](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/Creating+a+better+care+system+June+2015/0692d75a-5c26-4b85-a2b5-9e7dd59b455)

7 Established by the Department of Health, the National Information Board brings together national health and care organisations from the NHS, public health, clinical science, social care and local government, together with appointed lay representatives. It is charged with developing the strategic priorities for data and technology in health and care to deliver the maximum benefit to citizens and patients and to make appropriate recommendations for investment and action.

8 Fourteen localities were selected in November 2013 as integrated care pioneers to develop innovative ways to coordinate care around people's needs. The programme was expanded to include a further group of wave 2 Pioneers in January 2015. The programme's Annual Report 2014 is available at [www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6927502/Integrated+Care+Pioneer+Programme+Annual+Report+2014/76d562c3-4f7d-4169-91bc-69f7a9be481c](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6927502/Integrated+Care+Pioneer+Programme+Annual+Report+2014/76d562c3-4f7d-4169-91bc-69f7a9be481c)

For example, Kent County Council's public health team is running a programme called 'Integrated Commissioning', enabled by integrated intelligence. The goal is to understand citizen journeys across health, social care and other services and includes modelling how the benefits of integrated care could be realised.

Four areas of work are particularly significant in our view and offer potential for further, targeted support:

**Exploiting the potential of technology to facilitate self-care and support people to remain in their home for longer:**

Councils have already deployed a wide range of telecare, telehealth and assistive living technologies, to enable people to live independently and safely at home and to support the remote delivery of care. Developments in smart devices, wearable technologies, avatars and even robotics are offering new opportunities, while there are valuable links to housing through the adaptation of existing homes, building specialised houses or developing 'homes for life' – houses which can be adapted easily.

The wide evidence base on telecare costs and savings suggests that significant efficiencies can be generated if the use of the technology is carefully targeted and forms part of a wider care plan and balanced package of support, as our earlier Blackburn with Darwen example demonstrates. However, the main savings are not likely to come from the cost of delivering care itself, but from helping people stay at home longer – thereby reducing expensive residential fees – or from reducing hospital admissions, therefore benefiting health service budgets rather than the care authorities making the initial investment. A Deloitte report published in 2015 found that a telehealth hub across 210 care homes reduced hospital admissions, use of A&E and hospital bed days.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, although many councils have implemented these technologies, there remains scope to further develop their use,

9 Connected health: How digital technology is transforming health and social care, Deloitte, April 2015

for instance by integrating telecare and telehealth more effectively, extending their scope to encompass new groups (eg people with mental health issues) and investing where appropriate in emerging technologies, including links to social care 'apps'.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Jointly app (supported by Carers UK and currently used by 500 people) is a new service that supports carers to make caring easier, less stressful and more organised. The app combines group messaging with features including 'to do' and medication lists.<sup>11</sup>

An Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) survey, published in October 2014, found that almost 75 per cent of councils were part of a regional network or forum related to assistive technology/telecare. However, only 24 per cent currently operated integrated telecare and telehealth, although 48 per cent were considering it.<sup>12</sup> This suggests there are significant opportunities for further roll-out and savings.

Work by Paul Clifford et al. published in 2012 found that very substantial savings are achievable through the widespread targeted use of telecare. Potential savings lie in the range of £3 million to £7.8 million for a typical council, or 7.4 to 19.4 per cent of total older people's social care.<sup>13</sup> A more recent study based on evaluations in 41 English councils and covering 3,303 people who used telecare during 2010-2014 found annual average savings of £1,151 per person for adult social care. However there were wide variations across the areas surveyed and telecare provided for 'prevention' or 'reassurance' purposes represented an additional cost whose value was difficult to quantify.<sup>14</sup>

10 See for instance the work underway in Kent <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/jun/17/business-case-councils-risk-money-internet-of-things>

11 See [www.jointlyapp.com](http://www.jointlyapp.com)

12 Better Care Technology Survey 2014 Report, ADASS, October 2014  
<http://www.adass.org.uk/better-care-technology-survey-2014>

13 See <http://www.scie.org.uk/prevention-library/getdetailedresultbyid?id=a11G000000180KpIAI>

14 See Telecare: Outcomes and Cost Effectiveness, Care Performance Partners Ltd., March 2015  
<http://capp-ltd.co.uk/resources/TelecareOutcomesEfficiency20150423.pdf>

Developing integrated care records and giving citizens access to their information: Shared integrated digital care records allow care professionals to have access to the same high-quality, comprehensive and up-to-date information about an individual. This gives the partners a clear picture of the person's needs and enables them to act quickly and effectively to support them, for instance sharing information across a multi-disciplinary team to plan for hospital discharge.

At a strategic level, shared intelligence allows organisations to develop improved patient pathways and services. However securing agreement to share data remains challenging and there are practical issues to resolve, such as how a care record would follow a person who moved to a different part of the country. System suppliers (including those involved in social care) need to be encouraged to adopt open interfaces that allow automated information sharing in a safe and secure way. This supports the national commitment to have a paper-free health and care system at the point of care by 2020.

As part of the Pioneer programme, both Leeds and Cheshire are working on integrated digital care records. The Cheshire integrated care pioneer covers two unitary councils and four clinical commissioning groups. The pan-Cheshire integrated digital care record was the first major priority that the Cheshire partners realised would achieve significantly improved outcomes and value for money. Leeds recognised that a real-time, citizen-centred care record was needed to support more personalised and joined-up care. Rather than making a disruptive and costly attempt to introduce a single IT system, the partners opted for a digital care record where key information from separate IT systems would be integrated into a web-based application view.

### **Digitising transfers of care and**

**communications:** There is still significant use of fax and other paper-based mechanisms for administering transfers and discharges to and from various care settings.

This increases the risks of information going astray, of delaying discharges and increasing costs. Digitising these processes and mainstreaming them would enable all relevant parties to be informed simultaneously, while the information would automatically form part of the individual's digital care record. However, there remain issues over communication standards and processes can be complex, for instance in two-tier local government areas.

The Adapter project is funded by the Department of Health's Common Assessment Framework Demonstrator scheme and managed by the Health and Social Care Information Centre. The aim is to develop a means of sending patient-identifiable information, including GP referrals, hospital admissions and discharges, assessments and care plans (often currently sent by fax or in paper files), electronically between health and social care agencies in a format that meets Interoperability Toolkit messaging standards. Five London Boroughs are currently involved as well as a range of NHS Trusts, GP practices and software suppliers. The Adapter is a piece of 'middleware' that enables applications to send messages to other applications when they do not have the same interfaces. When there is a requirement to send to a new application, the middleware is changed not the applications, reducing the cost and time involved in delivering integration. The business benefits include reductions in the length of hospital stays, cost savings through greater staff efficiency and less use of paper and fax, and improvements in communication, the governance of personal data and data accuracy.

### **Supporting mobile working at the frontline:**

Providing frontline staff with mobile working solutions, including appropriate software and client information, should allow professionals to spend more time with their clients in the community, as well as speeding up data capture and decision-making and reducing transcribing errors.

The Deloitte report mentioned earlier found that mobile working could significantly reduce the time spent on paperwork. There are potential ancillary benefits such as savings in office space, travel time and CO2 emissions. Meanwhile seemingly simple improvements in access to shared calendars, address books and service directories could also be important – particularly where the emphasis is on health and care integration, supporting connectivity between teams across organisations. The evidence suggests however that the use of mobile technology in the social care workforce remains relatively limited and significant investment and cultural change is required.

In recent years, frontline social workers and occupational therapists from Southend-on-Sea's adult social services department have been issued with laptops that can be used to conduct self-directed support assessments at a client's home. An online link to the council means that the information is fed straight into the council's care management system, where an automatic resource allocation system calculator works out a personal budget score. The social worker can do all of this on the move, without having to travel back to the office. The result has been a significant reduction in bureaucracy and paperwork.<sup>15</sup>

There is already therefore a great deal of digital innovation underway in local councils, backed at national level by bodies such as the ADASS, and much learning that could be shared with the wider health and social care system, complementing the work that the NIB, Department of Health and NHS England are doing around the digital agenda.

However significant barriers to progress remain – many involving infrastructure (which has historically been designed for health rather than health and care) as well as the complicated arrangements for data sharing. They include the complexity of knitting together the wide range of initiatives already underway, the challenges of balancing costs and benefits across different public bodies, difficulties with linking the PSN and N3 networks, issues with the Information Governance Framework for health and social care, and wider concerns around information sharing and governance.

The challenge therefore is to continue developing a shared understanding of the current landscape of digital innovation in health and social care and to identify the key priorities for investment, building on the national work on health and social care informatics and technology that local government is already supporting.

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/blogs/adult-care-blog/2013/09/social-work-on-the-move-how-mobile-working-can-improve-care-management/#sthash.QaVNiPXq.dpuf>

# 6. Troubled families

The Troubled Families Programme recognises that a small number of families place a disproportionate burden on local public services, particularly where services are delivered in self-contained silos. Supporting the 10 highest cost residential addresses in Bristol between June 2013 and June 2014, for instance, cost the police, probation and prison services and the CPS alone £490,000 or almost £50,000 per address per year.

Early and coordinated intervention across a range of agencies can therefore save significant sums, as well as improving people's lives. A social return on investment in Bristol carried out by a local university showed that for every £1 spent on family intervention, the local public services saved £1.68. Statistics for the city show decreased demand for police services, reduced antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse and improved school attendance.

Portsmouth Council and its partners have developed a programme of 'early help and intervention' at the earliest point of concern, the catalyst for the initiative being their Troubled Families programme. The city's multi-agency Public Services Board wanted to understand why families became 'troubled' in the first place and to test the hypothesis that a focus on earlier points of intervention could prevent families reaching this point. A team gathered a wide range of information to plot the journeys of eight families and found that the additional cost to the multiple agencies involved could reach as much as £0.5 million per family. Some families were actively asking for help but failing to reach current intervention thresholds (meaning they would later reach crisis point); others who needed support were not being recognised

early enough. The prevalent culture was to 'refer and assess' rather than to provide support that would bring about genuine change. As a result, the service has been redesigned in one area of the city. The new service, branded Positive Family Futures and supported by DCLG's Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods programme, aims to use 'wobbles' or triggers from the information held in current systems to proactively identify at the earliest opportunity families who require help. A 'navigator' then acts as the single case holder for the family and pulls on a range of services as required. Intervention typically occurs at a point well below normal thresholds. Portsmouth is currently developing a cost-benefit analysis model but initial work suggests the savings could be significant. There have not been any major difficulties in sharing data across agencies, mainly because the families have given consent and there is an effective data sharing protocol in place. But current ICT systems have proved a barrier and the team would like to further develop two digital solutions: a system to gather information at the point where a family moves into an area (at the moment collated on a spreadsheet); and a tool to support a cost-benefit analysis that will help staff to understand the cost of their current interventions.

A Government statement issued in March 2015 claimed that the Troubled Families programme as a whole had already saved taxpayers an estimated £1.2 billion, from a maximum government investment of £448 million, an average gross saving to the taxpayer per troubled family of £12,000.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-105000-troubled-families-turned-around-saving-taxpayers-an-estimated-12-billion>

In the Queen's Speech of May 2015 and in subsequent announcements, the Government has committed to extending the programme to 400,000 more families by the end of the current parliament.

The effective use of information, supported by digital tools and approaches, has been a core element of the Troubled Families initiative, with Manchester for instance using a customer-designed data warehouse and now working to extend access to its database via secure web log-ins to a wider range of local partners. The initial work to identify families eligible for the programme has typically been expanded to create a much more complete and strategic picture of the social issues that families face, offering the potential for improved demand management, resource profiling and service design. As a report on Bristol stated, 'the Troubled Families Programme has managed to build the most complete social picture of the city ever available'.<sup>17</sup>

The work in Bristol is a good example of both the potential of the programme and the way in which information and digital technologies can be exploited. Bristol was an early adopter of the Expanded Troubled Families Programme, starting in September 2014. This expanded phase of the programme significantly increased the number of families engaged in the initiative to 4,200 as well as widening the scope of the issues addressed to encompass domestic violence and children needing help.

The process of bringing together over 30 datasets securely and in a timely manner has proved pivotal to the programme's success in Bristol. The value of the consolidated data cannot be underestimated – it facilitates significantly improved analysis, aligns needs to resource deployment and informs the development of future services.

In practical terms, the collated datasets have allowed for the in-house development at notional cost of a Troubled Families database, which can be searched by address or name to bring up a summary of the family and is available on a day-to-day basis to a range of local agencies.

<sup>17</sup> Bristol Troubled Families Hindsight to Foresight, 2015.

Where appropriate, the family's data can be used to create an electronic Family Workbook that is allocated to a member of staff. The workbook (also developed in-house at notional cost) not only contains details of family members and the organisations with which they are in contact, but can also be used to monitor the Troubled Families outcomes towards which the staff member and the family are working and the actions they have jointly agreed. Updates are passed regularly both ways between the database and the workbook.

Overall, the programme in the city has helped to:

- break down barriers to data sharing, both internally within the council and with other partner agencies including the police
- underpin a move from a reactive to a proactive approach to prioritising families for early intervention based on predictive modelling that identifies families at risk
- provide decision makers within the Early Help structure with evidence to support effective and more timely allocation of families to their teams
- give practitioners access to the most up-to-date information on their families
- predict the vulnerability of domestic abuse victims, young people at risk of being involved in street conflict and vulnerable victims of antisocial behaviour
- supplement with additional indicators and fundamentally review the 'risk of NEET index' that local schools compile
- identify the costs and demand placed by families on the criminal justice system, demonstrating the potential to expand this analysis to other public bodies in the future.

The wider Troubled Families programme has not been without its challenges or constraints. Many councils, for instance, had to spend more time than anticipated collating and matching data on families in the early stages of the programme.



The extended scope of the Expanded Troubled Families Programme in Bristol involved renegotiating with existing partners to develop more in-depth data sharing, as well as engaging new agencies to work with the programme.

At a more technical level, current council systems often cannot cope with family groups (as opposed to individuals) and the movement of people in and out of families. There may be a need to develop better information and system architectures, operating in real time, and more robust platforms – at the moment, Bristol for instance relies heavily on Access and Excel, which are at their limits, and on periodic data updates.

After using a variety of software over the past three years, Nottinghamshire County Council has now fully switched over to FME Safe Software as the integration platform for all its data matching processes for Troubled Families. The data systems are fed into FME and, in turn, many of the outputs feed into mapping solutions, other databases etc. This enables partners to see at a glance what ‘triggers’ are met for family members within Nottinghamshire. FME is also used to manage the county’s other community safety datasets and some of this information is placed on the Nottingham Insight website – on the whole a fairly automated process. Future plans include expanding the data sets that are fed into the data hub, allowing internal teams to check progress via auto-filled performance dashboards. The county intends to use databases to manage key strands of its business, including prioritising and tracking families and checking eligibility for payment by results. Sharing health data remains challenging, but the team is now receiving details of attendances at A&E for assaults and is hoping to receive data on obesity, substance misuse and dementia in the next few months. Over the first two years of the Troubled Families programme the county has achieved savings of around £2 for every £1 spent. It hopes to see this figure improve over the next three years as it moves towards transformation.

However, the potential for this sort of intelligence-led, place-focused approach to delivering public services is enormous, particularly if combined with other council-led digital initiatives aimed at enabling multi-agency working.

Patchwork is an innovative digital tool designed by FutureGov in collaboration with a number of local authorities, including Staffordshire County Council. It allows frontline care professionals quickly to log in and see which other agencies are supporting their client and how to get in touch with them, meaning that members of staff spend less time at their desks searching for contacts and more time with their clients. The system is designed to mimic familiar social media sites and, by giving a full picture of how clients are interacting with the public services, it reduces the risks of different services working in a disconnected way around the same person.

# 7. Reforming the benefits system

Within the Government's wider programme of welfare reform, a major objective of the DWP is to create a benefits system that is fit for the twenty-first century.

There is therefore a strong emphasis on exploiting digital approaches and technologies. Indeed Universal Credit was designed from the outset as a 'digital by default' initiative, in which the bulk of activity by claimants and staff would be carried out online. The Universal Credit Service Directive for instance requires (among other things) that service providers can transact electronically with regulators and that application forms, plus any supporting documents and fee payment, must be able to be processed electronically, while local authorities must be able to notify an applicant of success or failure electronically.

The most challenging aspect of the changes is how to enable people with complex needs and vulnerable clients to interact with a digital system. Local government has the important role of supporting claimants in their dealings with the DWP and of joining up local (sometimes face-to-face) support with the digital offer.

Councils involved in the Universal Credit pilots have used digital in a number of ways to develop their services.

Buckinghamshire is a wealthy county but has pockets of real deprivation. With more jobs available in the area than people looking for work, the introduction of Universal Credit offers an opportunity for advisers to move away from a traditional conversation about maximising benefits towards one focused on helping welfare claimants into employment. Collaborating closely with its

four district councils and other partners including Jobcentre Plus, local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and other voluntary agencies, the county initially worked with the socially-focused company Policy in Practice to develop a web-based version of the company's Universal Benefit Calculator tool, tailored to the local circumstances in Buckinghamshire. The tool is primarily used by advisors to support intensive 'better off in work' conversations with clients. However, as a rural area, Buckinghamshire can suffer from poor broadband connections, while the partners also realised that the practical help given to clients often depended largely on the personal knowledge of advisers. The county therefore bid successfully for £100,000 of funding from O2's Local Government Digital Fund to support two further developments: a mobile/offline version of the Universal Benefit Calculator (allowing it to be used on tablet computers in many different locations); and an 'action app' called My Next Steps. This app can help advisers in multiple ways, from prioritising applicants' problems and searching for local organisations that can offer specific support to formulating action plans and making referrals/appointments with other partners. Both solutions are expected to go live in September 2015. The county's active participation in Universal Credit may seem unusual, as welfare services are primarily a district council responsibility and most of the financial benefits from the work will flow either nationally or to local districts. However the county sees its involvement in the project as part of its overall leadership and preventative role in the area, ensuring vulnerable residents are protected and given the best possible service.

- As an integral part of its Universal Credit pilot, Birmingham City Council introduced a personalised web portal (the Digital Log Book), which all new tenants are encouraged to use. It incorporates modules that help individuals in relation to personal budgeting, my work journey that helps people get back into employment by addressing the barriers, and an online Service Directory Referral System, which holds detailed information about third sector agencies or organisations and their service offerings and enables online inter-agency referrals. Meanwhile frontline staff have also increasingly been given additional training to improve their digital skills so that they can deliver basic digital skills training to members of the public.
- Northumberland County Council has developed a data sharing system and protocol to allow caller data to be collected and shared, enabling claimants who are often distressed or lacking in confidence to gain access to specialist support without having repeatedly to recount their story.
- Rushcliffe Borough Council has worked extensively with partners to provide the necessary support to their customers, which included collaborating with organisations offering training in literacy and ICT skills. The council also launched a user-friendly website to assist customers in self-service for their universal credit, while running a marketing campaign with the strap line 'Don't stand in line, get online'.

As part of its Universal Credit pilot, Derby City Council is delivering coordinated case management with a range of partners using an innovative cloud-based system (E-CINS) supplied by a social enterprise. The system incorporates a common needs assessment in the shape of an electronic form that has been designed to be filled in by either professional staff or volunteers. From the assessment, the system recognises which organisations need to be involved and generates a secure task and email to an appropriate team or individual. The partners, who currently include council teams, Jobcentre Plus, local RSLs and a range of advice and support

agencies, can see what other organisations are doing (based on an agreed set of access levels) and tailor their services accordingly, adding their own notes and feedback. The system is used by a number of police forces for issues such as domestic violence, but this is the first time it has been deployed in welfare services. The benefits have been significant. The partners are able to track an applicant's journey towards work in a comprehensive way and staff can see how their service fits into the wider picture. There has been a real improvement in partnership working, particularly at the front line, and a reduction in duplication for both the partners and their clients. Meanwhile the fee structure for access to the system will allow the partners to deploy the system without additional cost in other areas of public service. The project team is now working towards a full cost model for the initiative, supported by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, while the information and cost models from all the Universal Support trials are likely to form part of the DWP's spending review submission to HM Treasury.

Further innovative uses of digital technology and approaches are emerging from the other Universal Credit pilots. The opportunity now is to consolidate the learning across the programme, evaluate the benefits and costs of the different digital approaches and share the results in a coordinated way across the full range of relevant councils, promoting in particular digital approaches that support joint action at local level to meet the challenging ambitions of the Universal Credit programme.

Lewisham Council is part of a partnership with the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, as well as other local partners including Jobcentre Plus and the CAB, delivering one of 11 Universal Support – delivered locally trials. The trial has now been extended beyond its original August end date until November 2015 and includes a strong digital strand. The partnership is keen to incorporate the learning from earlier stages of their US-dl initiative into the extended trial. For instance, they have recognised that the offer

to claimants assessed as requiring digital support was previously too general, which (combined with other factors) led to patchy attendance at courses. In the new phase, people will be assessed against a series of digital competencies at an initial meeting and as part of a 4-6 week action plan will then be allocated to sessions focused on developing specific competencies, with weekly progress checks from US-dl staff. The partners are also continuing to work on the digital support for the programme's multi-disciplinary teams, who are located at different points across the boroughs. Team members from the different organisations now have access to clients' records and other supporting resources via a shared Office 365 system that is hosted by Lewisham's ICT department. There have been significant challenges here in ensuring system access to support co-location for the multi-disciplinary teams, leading to some manual transfer and rekeying of information across systems. The partners' experiences suggest, therefore, that to be fully effective, co-location and multi-disciplinary working needs to be supported by integrated data and systems.

# 8. The impact of devolution<sup>18</sup>

Devolving power and responsibility to regions and localities remains a Government priority, building on the place-based initiatives of recent years. The aim is to make better use of the collective public expenditure in an area and to deliver better outcomes – devolution for a purpose. The Greater Manchester partners, for instance, are heavily focused on driving forward economic regeneration and growth.

While devolution may appear like a seismic shift, in many ways it reflects the same principles as the national programmes we have discussed above – it is in effect the next phase of multi-agency, place-based working. But whereas the programmes around health and social care integration, troubled families and benefits system reform have all concentrated on particular services or customer groups, devolution potentially encompasses everything and, by being open to local interpretation, will enable local public service organisations to agree which local priorities to focus on.

Successful devolution will therefore depend to an even greater extent on different organisations being able to share information about their common customers across a range of service areas more effectively, to analyse local citizens' needs in the round, to target services better, to work more collaboratively (rather than in silos) and to reduce the duplication that is costly for both the public services and their users.

There will now be a single Troubled Families programme across 10 authorities in the Manchester area, recognising that people's lives are not always contained within administrative boundaries.

Underpinning the ambitions above will be a need to exploit the potential of digital tools, technologies and approaches to the full. The Greater Manchester partners for instance recognise that their approach will involve:

- bringing together sets of data at the Greater Manchester level, improving their understanding of demographic shifts and supporting service planning at scale
- working with government to support the identification and evaluation of benefits delivered through existing devolution commitments
- publishing open data that supports and stimulates digital innovation that in turn supports the growth agenda
- empowering individuals to own, manage and use their information to enable more effective and joined-up services
- enabling frontline employees to gain access to relevant information held collectively on individuals and families with whom the different organisations work, supporting integrated service delivery, safeguarding and more efficient ways of working.

Although the context is very different, there are often important lessons to be learnt from examples from abroad, particularly as the UK moves towards greater devolution.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the benefits of devolution, see English Devolution – Local Solutions for a Successful Nation, Local Government Association, May 2015.

New York, for instance, made major strides in harnessing the city's data to improve policy making and transform services under the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg whose business career had been built on exploiting information. Meanwhile countries such as Estonia have demonstrated the value of publishing an agreed set of open data and messaging standards and protocols to allow easier communication between systems (where appropriate).<sup>19</sup> The learning from these approaches could help those devolved regions where the geography and population are similar in scale.

For many different reasons – operational, contractual, political – it is unrealistic to expect all local partners, even in the public services, to implement the same systems. However, digitally-enabled devolution could be accelerated in practical terms by:

- enhancing network connectivity and protocols, for instance to create more effective bridges between the Public Service Network (PSN) and the Health N3 network
- finding better ways of identifying individuals, families and households, whether by focusing on a common identifier (such as the NHS number) or through the use of 'fuzzy logic' as is the case in cities such as New York
- creating more effective systems interoperability, for instance through the development of a framework of application program interfaces that all organisations must adhere to when dealing with local public services
- developing greater shared technical expertise across the public services in areas such as information management and architecture and data analysis
- promoting a more sophisticated understanding of the issues around data sharing, including trust and cyber security, and greater flexibility in the practical application of data sharing principles

- applying a 'platform' approach, where appropriate, and collaborating to develop solutions that will work across different systems and localities.

The Greater Manchester partners are considering a proposal to create a Greater Manchester Information Hub. This would be an inclusive decision-making authority, aligned with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and supported by a dedicated cross-functional team. The hub would work with and alongside localities to provide added value and capacity.

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<sup>19</sup> See for instance <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2013/10/31/government-as-a-data-model-what-i-learned-in-estonia/>

# 9. Common themes and priorities

Some common themes and priorities emerge from the discussion above.

## Developing digital leadership skills and capacity

Without leadership at political, organisational and community level, many of the opportunities offered by digital will be lost. The emphasis needs to be on orchestrating the user-centric redesign of services across localities in collaboration with the full range of partner organisations and communities themselves, building relevant skills and capacity among politicians, staff and service users and promoting a collective approach to developing and sharing assets.<sup>20</sup> We examine this issue in more detail in a separate but complementary submission *Developing local digital leadership skills and capacity*.

Work to develop digital leadership skills and capacity at local level is already underway through bodies such as the LGA, Solace and Socitm, but could be extended with appropriate support. For instance, digital thinking could increasingly feature in the LGA's peer review processes and the curriculum of the National Leadership Academy.

One option currently being developed by the LGA would be to create a cross-sector Digital Academy following the successful model of the Commissioning Academy.

The aim would be to develop the digital skills and capacity of senior managers across the public sector (including senior council officers and civil servants), promoting a collaborative approach to the digital transformation of public services and supporting the national agenda. A series of modules covering key digital issues and focused on outcomes-based approaches would be delivered over a five or six-month period by experts and peers who have already implemented proven solutions. The LGA is keen to work with DCLG and Cabinet Office on this proposal and would be willing to consider funding a pilot to test its viability.

However, leadership is also required at a national local government level to develop a coherent approach to what the sector wants overall from digital and to encourage the culture change required for innovation, as well as to join up, coordinate and support different initiatives. Such national leadership will enable the sector to collaborate more effectively with central government and other public and voluntary sector partners around our shared customers, while at the same time allowing local government to engage at a more strategic level with the supplier community around issues such as sustainable product development, open application interfaces and standards, and new business models and commercial arrangements.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile it will be vital for central government to involve local authorities and other partners in the development of any cross-government platforms, such as the online payments facility mentioned earlier.

<sup>20</sup> Local 'assisted digital' support will continue to be important. An ONS survey, published in 2014, found that 6.7 million adults (13 per cent of the UK total), over half of whom were disabled, had never used the internet. See [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_353031.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_353031.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> This, of course, will present a leadership challenge to the private sector to move beyond its traditional product and service offerings.

It also remains essential to build digital thinking into existing and emerging policy initiatives across government that affect localities, so that the potential offered by intelligence-led, digital approaches to public service redesign is fully realised. Too often in the past, information and technology considerations have been 'tacked on' at the end of the policy development process rather than being an integral part of any thinking from the outset.

Finally, the experience of successful programmes of transformation such as Tell Us Once demonstrates that before any technology is deployed it is essential to have undertaken significant preparatory work and in particular to have:

- carried out in-depth customer insight work to understand current needs, behaviours and patterns of service use
- taken account of the variety of local circumstances in which a national programme may have to operate, including variations in demography and geography or between urban and rural areas
- created a true partnership of equals and secured these partners' commitment to 'co-producing' a solution
- developed both effective formal governance structures and good informal working relationships
- begun the process of cultural and organisational change that any real transformation involving digital will require, typically by testing out different options in a number of pilot or pathfinder sites.

The various national programmes discussed earlier in this paper are therefore in an excellent position to benefit from further digital investment.

## Sharing and scaling up the work of 'exemplars'

As we can see from the excellent and innovative work underway in many places, councils and their partners are already collaborating, thereby creating a series of 'exemplars' that respond to national policy issues, address complex customer groups and provide models for how local services can be redesigned to achieve better outcomes at less cost for communities. Digital tools, technologies and approaches are an integral part of this work, demonstrating that 'digital' is fundamental to transformation.

A major priority therefore is to invest in capturing and analysing the leading-edge practice in these exemplars and sharing it with the wider local government community in a coordinated and accessible way. In order to mainstream successful approaches and avoid isolated silos of innovation, it will be essential to back up any activity with the necessary resources and practical mechanisms to provide (peer) support for implementing and scaling up solutions. At the moment, bodies such as the DCLG itself, the LGA, Solace, Socitm, iNetworks, the CIO Council and the Public Service Transformation Network are all involved in promoting and supporting digital innovation, but the current efforts are often ad hoc and under-funded.

An important element of this work will be to map and link with the wide range of initiatives involving councils that continue to emerge from different central government departments. Doing so will enable us to build a picture and make better connections, capture existing learning and assets, and agree the key areas for focus.



For example, as noted earlier in this paper, the Department of Health is already working with some local authorities on projects to support the integration of health and social care through the application of digital tools and approaches. But there is still much to be done to mainstream this work and enable other councils to take advantage of it. The health sector also shares many of the challenges facing local councils around developing effective digital leadership skills and capacity. It will therefore be important to build closer links with the Department and others both during and after the Spending Review process in order to ensure that our respective submissions complement each other.

## Building the digital infrastructure

Finally, there are a number of more technical areas where in many cases activity is already underway but where additional focus and support could speed up progress. The paper has highlighted for instance:

- the development of more effective links between different public sector networks and alignment of compliance regimes
- the creation of a framework of application programme interfaces for interfacing with local public services
- the building of a set of reusable and widely available cross-government 'platforms' to support a common approach to tasks such as making online payments.

Other issues include the poor broadband and mobile connections in some parts of the country, particularly rural areas. Meanwhile the pilots in the key national programmes discussed above should be able to identify the major technical constraints they have faced in developing their projects.

Data sharing and system interoperability remain particular challenges. Here a new approach may be required, with a focus on delivering specific user journeys. This approach is being taken in some of the health and social care pioneer projects and recognises that attempts to develop generic data sharing standards in the past have typically become bogged down in detail and have failed to make the progress required.

A senior manager at Bristol commented that the work on Troubled Families has highlighted the limitations of the current data protection legislation. The legislation allows data sharing for defined purposes, but often the most useful insights often only come after bulk data has been shared and analysed.

The difficulties around information sharing sap energy and limit the ability to make progress. Commenting on the wider challenges of data protection and information sharing, a senior officer from another authority argued that the current regulations do not always reflect operational need and while councils are working their way through this, respecting the appropriate legal frameworks, the legislation as it stands is a significant barrier to developing truly integrated digital approaches and systems.

# 10. Developing a programme approach and next steps

The programme of digital innovation outlined above will not happen by itself – it will require the commitment of time, energy and resources.

Fortunately, we can draw on a history of successful ‘invest to save’ programmes where leading-edge practice including digital (often at an early stage and therefore difficult to cost-justify with hard figures) has been mainstreamed, at the same time providing compelling evidence of savings. These programmes include:

- the Local Government Online (LGOL) programme, which helped local councils in England to beat the 2004 Spending Review efficiency challenge by making £4.3 billion total efficiency gains<sup>22</sup>
- the Customer-Led Transformation Programme, which invested £7 million between 2009 and 2011 to embed the use of customer insight and social media tools and techniques in local government and delivered over £331 million of financial benefit to the public and public services as a result<sup>23</sup>

- a £15 million programme for the Children’s Improvement Board delivered between 2010 and 2013 by the LGA in collaboration with the Department for Education with the aim of improving non-educational children’s services for safeguarding, adoption and early years.<sup>24</sup>
- £25 million of programmes delivered by the LGA on behalf of the Department of Health over the last three financial years, aimed at helping councils to improve adult social care, implement legislation and develop systems leadership in health and wellbeing boards<sup>25</sup>
- the One Public Estate programme developed by the LGA and the Cabinet Office’s Government Property Unit. Since 2013, the programme, which receives more than £7 million of support per annum, has developed plans that will result in over 20,000 jobs, almost 9,000 homes and over £129 million of property sales more than if the partners had operated separately.<sup>26</sup>

Other programmes cited earlier in this paper, including Tell Us Once, Community Budgets and the Troubled Families initiative, have taken a similar invest to save approach.

22 The Local Government Online (LGOL) initiative ran from 2000 to 2005. Built on a partnership between national government, national local government bodies and individual councils, and backed by a central government investment of £670 million, the programme supported a major investment in councils ICT capabilities, both customer-facing and internal. For the impact of the improved use of ICT, see Back to front efficiency of back office functions in local government, Audit Commission, October 2008.

23 For more details of the Customer-Led Transformation programme, see [www.local.gov.uk/productivity/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/3510959/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/productivity/-/journal_content/56/10180/3510959/ARTICLE)  
For an independent evaluation of the programme, see [www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11417/L13-840+CLT+evaluation+report+V5.pdf/0bbea5f9-0914-4690-b92d-8f48a7d75d12](http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/11417/L13-840+CLT+evaluation+report+V5.pdf/0bbea5f9-0914-4690-b92d-8f48a7d75d12)

24 The LGA supported local agencies managing highly confidential child protection issues and worked with Children’s Safeguarding Boards to strengthen their work, approach and response to serious case reviews.

25 In a number of cases, the LGA operates joint teams and programme offices to support Programme Boards across government. The Association’s work on supporting the DoH to implement the Care Act has recently been praised as a good example by the National Audit Office and the Cabinet Office’s Major Projects Authority, while its work on the Better Care Fund was praised by the Public Accounts Committee.

26 In July 2015, the Chancellor announced an extension of the OPE programme which will see the LGA team expand from four to 11 posts.

It is therefore a tried and trusted method of achieving both widespread change and significant savings.

In order to complement this submission, we have produced an options paper, circulated separately, which outlines and evaluates a number of models that would provide the coordinated and sector-wide support required for the transformation of local public services within an invest to save framework. Briefly the options include:

1. providing grant directly to all councils 'ring fenced' for digital investment
2. setting up a digital investment fund and inviting councils to bid
3. funding a programme to oversee and provide direct support to the sector to drive digital innovation, take-up and implementation nationally, regionally and locally
4. creating a joint integrated national and local funded programme with GDS.

It will be essential that the structure of any programme supports both local collaboration and innovation and national coordination, promotion and roll-out. Options 3 and 4 above are therefore likely to offer the most productive opportunities for progress.

In the short term, practical next steps would include local government, DCLG, the Government Digital Service and other relevant departments working together to:

- Commission a short piece of research to review and evaluate the digital initiatives emerging from key national programmes, with a focus on both the tools, technologies and approaches that offer the best opportunities to accelerate progress and the main barriers to overcome. A good starting point would be to interview the pilot councils in each of the major programmes discussed above, working with them to identify specific digital projects to take forward as a priority as well as to understand better the resources required to do so.

- Identify a few key areas of technical infrastructure, skills development or governance where additional support would make the most impact.
- Review the wider digital initiatives already underway in both local and central to agree how these could be further developed and accelerated and how greater 'digital leadership' can be encouraged at all levels.
- Consider how a process for engaging more effectively with the supplier community on current and future requirements for digital products and services could be developed and implemented.

The LGA and its partners in the sector look forward to working with DCLG, HM Treasury and other departments on these important tasks.



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