

IMPACTFUL DEVOLUTION 02

Local government for the digital era

About this deck

Data, digital and emerging technologies have huge potential to drive efficiencies and deliver modern, user-centred public services for residents. However, despite pockets of good practice, capacity problems and a fragmented local digital landscape is holding back change across the sector.

Published by The Future Governance Forum in partnership with Public Digital and with the support of Amazon Web Services, *Impactful Devolution 02: Local government for the digital era* sets out how data and digital could sit at the heart of how we develop policy and reform local services.

Drawing on insights from over 50 doers and thinkers from across the sector, we have mapped out the main challenges and opportunities of local digital transformation in a way that has never been done before.



Project kick-off event, June 2024.

This deck highlights the key findings from our research before setting out a blueprint for transforming digital in local government by 2030. For the full report, you can access the online reader here:

https://www.futuregovernanceforum.co.uk/resource/impactful-devolution-02/



CHALLENGES ACROSS THE SECTOR



It is not clear 'who' should be doing 'what'; leading to high levels of duplication & fragmentation across the system.

There are a large number of organisations and bodies (i.e. Local Government Association; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government; Department for Science, Innovation & Technology; Government Digital Service) who each have a formal or informal stake in the game around 'digital' in government. Currently there is a sense of little political or strategic coordination or agreement on mandate or responsibilities from the centre or importantly what support is available from where to councils.

- A huge amount of duplication and fragmentation across service and organisational delivery - both across central and local government
- Little coordination around shared and common challenges, missing opportunities to 'solve a problem once' (or at least fewer times) on behalf of the sector
- Confusion around what the 'offer' is for local government, what is mandatory and what is a nice to have/do
- Large degrees of inconsistency in services for residents and lack of standardisation

There is a 'missing middle' in our government digital infrastructure; leading to a lack of systematic and structured learning or coordination happening across the sector.

We don't currently have a **fit-for purpose infrastructure** that supports the sharing of learning, practice and what works both within local government at a more local or regional level; and between local and central government.

- Good practice and the things that are working within individual councils aren't being shared or replicated in a way that could benefit the whole sector
- Opportunities to act collectively as a 'sector' (i.e. shaping the software market or influencing national policy) aren't realised; as it's too hard to align and collaborate at any sense of scale
- We aren't connecting up effectively at a regional place-level; limiting the amount of place-based and local innovation that can take place or data exchange beyond single organisations

Siloed organisations, professional practices, service cultures and existing ways of working are making it near impossible to link effectively, port and use data.

Local authorities hold huge amounts of data about places and people. However the quality of this data is still hugely varied and contains significant gaps. There is a risk currently that councils see Al and Large Language Models as a silver bullet to many of their challenges; however there is still a huge amount of foundational work to do (both cultural & technical) before councils are able to make the most out of the opportunities of emergent technology or forms of artificial intelligence within their existing tech stack. Lastly, as many organisations (and services within councils) operate with their own standards, regulation, ethics and ways of working around data; we shouldn't underestimate the work there is to be done to build trust across silos.

- Data capture and quality is hugely varied across different services/ professions
- Hugely risk averse attitude toward data sharing and exchange between services yet alone organisations or other parts of the sector
- Little way of making use of big data at a population level

- Lack of consistent or enforced data standards
- Confusion across organisations of whose responsibility data is, with data capabilities often sitting outside of service delivery teams



There is still a lack of (and hugely varied) understanding of 'digital' beyond the 'tech' amongst corporate, service & political leadership.

Despite over 15 years of 'digital' rising up the local government agenda, amongst many organisational and political leaders, digital is still regarded as 'the tech'. With digital not being seen as of strategic importance and pivotal in organisational change or reform.

- A stagnated digital and reform agenda and 'digital skills and expertise' sidelined or not prioritised in the same way as statutory services
- Digital is still seen as an 'add-on'/ nice to have and not thought of as a fundamental way of reforming how we do things in order to save money & improve experience for residents
- Accountability for digital being 'pushed down' the chain in organisations and not held tightly by chief executive or senior leadership teams

- Not enough capacity or budget put around the 'change work required' around technology implementation, iteration and maintenance
- Limited or lack of opportunities for people with a digital background to progress into influential leadership roles (i.e. chief executives)

There is a lack of a long-term, coordinated approach to growing and sustaining a sector wide talent pipeline or workforce plan that is fit for the future.

The sector struggles to attract and retain the right talent, and skills are not evenly distributed amongst those outside of urban centres or cities - having an impact on economic growth of areas. Beyond this though, as a sector we don't have a structured or coordinated approach to how we are addressing the significant under-representation in our workforce of women, people from global majority backgrounds and those from other underrepresented backgrounds. In addition we don't have clear or varied enough pathways for people to enter or transition into digital careers within government.

- A lack of representation across all levels of digital roles and professions across the sector - particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity and disability
- Challenges in growing and developing people with digital expertise into leadership (corporate & political) roles
- Limited routes of entry into the sector or opportunities to transition from within the sector into digital roles

- Local government not being seen as an appealing career route for those earlier on in their career
- Lack of equity in the geographic distribution of talent across local government leading to varied service experience and stagnated economic growth
- Difficulty retaining talent and skills over a longer-term period of time, meaning high degrees of turnover and limited amounts of people 'seeing change/reform through'



Standards
Challenges

There is very little standardisation of 'what good looks like' in relation to public service innovation, change, data interoperability and technology implementation across the sector.

Across the sector there are few consistent standards applied around digital in a local government context. As well as no real playbook for how the sector should go about using digital as a means to drive organisational or sector wide reform or transformation. Although, this work would look different dependent on the political, cultural, demographic and geographic context of an individual council or place, there is a lack of consistent standard setting and oversight across local government around digital.

- Hugely varied and fragmented service experiences for residents when they are interacting with different parts of a council or wider system
- Huge amounts of duplication in work across individual councils, despite tackling similar problems - particularly across more transactional services
- Services working individually to their own ways of working, standards, technology stacks and products rather than towards end-to-end service transformation
- Confusion for local government on what is mandatory outside of regulatory bodies and standard setting agencies for statutory services
 in relation to digital



The software and technology market isn't fit for purpose for either councils or SME suppliers, with the 'big tech corporates' holding disproportionate influence over what gets built and sold.

Currently there are limited ways to coordinate, and use the collective power of local government to influence what is being built/sold by the big suppliers and ultimately 'shape the market' so it better meets their needs and reduces cost. On the flip side, local government is deemed as a challenging and risky market to enter and to continue operating in for suppliers (particularly SMEs) due to burdensome and costly procurement processes, increasingly complex and competing requirements', reducing budgets and complex, political stakeholder environments.

- Opportunities around market shaping, collective buying / negotiating aren't realised as it's too hard to effectively align and collaborate
- It being hard for SMEs to compete or 'break' into the market and over reliance on larger providers, piecemeal customisations to legacy tech and locked in contracts (as they appear less 'risky for local government)
- Procurement and budgeting processes aren't aligned to more agile/ iterative ways of delivering solutions, meaning councils are creating specifications for the wrong things
- (In many places) the sector continues to buy based on technical 'wish list' rather than around service outcomes

OPPORTUNITY AREAS & RECOMMENDATIONS



Priority recommendations

In addition to addressing 'the missing middle', the top five priorities we would recommending addressing are:

- 1. Develop a sector-wide workforce plan (for local government) that addresses digital skills and systemic issues around diversity and representation; as well as creating clear routes to bring in new talent into the sector including national digital apprenticeship schemes
- 2. Create structured pathways for digital practitioners to progress into key leadership roles that traditionally aren't held by those with digital backgrounds (i.e. Chief Executives)
- 3. Create the infrastructure, incentives and aircover for councils to **de risk innovation** and **shape the software market** via collective buying, sandboxing and shared procurement frameworks across appropriate footprints
- 4. Bring together multi-disciplinary teams to develop appropriate digital service standards and incentivise (rather than penalise) their adoption
- 5. Make data sharing & exchange a default rather than the exception by providing coordinated training, support and guidance to address both the technical and cultural issues that prevent it



Opportunity areas

and recommendations

Summary of recommendation areas

Infrastructure, learning and collaboration

By 2030... we have tested regional and place-based approaches to innovation and learning through the set-up of five Centres of Service Innovation spread geographically across England. As well as establishing a single institution responsible for spreading learning, standards and practice across the sector

Test out a regional place-based innovation model aligned with existing Combined Authorities or new Strategic footprints

Create a single, coordinating 'institute' to support sector wide collaboration, innovation and modernisation

Building & growing a library of 'common components' and develop the infrastructure for councils to adopt them

Organisational and political leadership

By 2030... there are at least ten new individuals from 'digital practitioner' backgrounds in local government 'Chief Executive' positions AND there are at least ten individuals with direct LG experience placed into influential CG/ALB roles (secondment or perm)

Coordinated leadership development activity/ programmes for 'non-digital' leaders

Structured L&D routes for digital practitioners into leadership roles (with an explicit focus on equity & diversity)

Grow understanding & awareness of digital amongst political leaders

Capacity, capability and skills

By 2030...we have a shared workforce plan for the sector which includes digital skills, an inclusive apprenticeship scheme; and have achieved a 20% increase of those from an underrepresented background in the 'digital workforce'

Address short-term and long term challenges of diversity of representation across the sector

Create a sector wide, coordinated future workforce plan (inc. a national apprenticeship scheme)

National digital skills and careers strategy with a focus on emerging and established technology



Summary of recommendation areas

Standards

By 2030... there are a set of established and trusted service standards & patterns that are being used and adopted by 70% of councils; with rewards and incentives offered to those who are actively adhering to them; with a suitable audit regime in place to assess levels of compliance

Codesign of service, technical and quality standards

A measuring function to check on progress against standards

Align standards with other regulation and audit regimes

Procurement, contracts and market shaping

By 2030... we have best in class procurement and contract mgmt capability and process in the sector; making it easier to invest in innovative solutions, encouraging more SME entrants to the market, and holding suppliers to account for delivering outcomes

Improving 'buyer' side behaviour, culture and ways of working

Supporting and shaping the 'right' supplier ecosystem to emerge

Collectively influencing and shifting 'big supplier' behaviour - i.e. vendor lock-in

Data exchange and maturity

By 2030... we have 15 successful examples of effective standards-enabled, crossinstitutional data exchange/ sharing; with learning and process effectively turned into established practice for the wider sector to adopt; overseen by a sector-wide governance approach

Addressing issues of trust & transparency related to data sharing & exchange

Support local government to move towards responsible data sharing using a test and learn approach

Support to increase overall data literacy and maturity across councils



By 2030...

We have tested regional and place-based approaches to innovation and learning through the set-up of five Centres of Service Innovation spread geographically across England. As well as establishing a single institution responsible for spreading learning, standards and practice across the sector.



Infrastructure, learning and collaboration

Opportunity areas and recommendations

From what is...

- Huge amount of duplication and fragmentation
- Little coordination around common challenges, missing opportunities to 'solve a problem once
- Confusion around what the 'offer' is for local government and what is mandatory

- Lack of standardisation leading to inconsistency in services for residents
- Good practice isn't being shared or replicated in a way that could benefit the whole sector
- Opportunities to move collectively as a 'sector' aren't realised; as it's too hard to align and collaborate at scale

To what if...

What if... we took a national sandboxing approach to solving the most common shared challenges?

What if... we incentivised and rewarded individual councils for re-use of common components and 'what works'?

What if... we had a more structured and coordinated way of learning, sharing and moving as a sector?



Infrastructure, learning and collaboration

Opportunity Areas & Recommendations

Test out a regional place-based innovation model aligned with existing Combined Authorities or new Strategic Footprints

Create a single, coordinating 'institute' to support sector wide collaboration, innovation and modernisation

Building and growing a library of common components and develop the infrastructure for councils to adopt them

Must do (High priority)

Set-up and test 8 regional Centres of Strategic Innovation, geographically spread across England. Set-up to focus on both place-based innovation & data exchange and sector wide sandboxing across common local government challenges

Set-up a light touch, coordinating Institute of Local Government Innovation, Modernisation and Collaboration Develop more local gov common technology components and make them easily accessible and implementable in existing local government technology stacks

Could do (Lower priority)

Offer secondments into Centres of Strategic Innovation for those in digital, service delivery and finance roles to drive development and spread of sector wide solutions

Use new regional Centres of Strategic Innovation to not only explore 'technical challenges' but to test (and spread) new collaboration approaches and agreements with a strong focus on data exchange & portability Leadership of a new Institution should be made up of LG & CG secondments, with a focus on bridging the knowledge, information and learning gap between local and national government

Work with councils to develop a set of approaches that provide 'cover' for councils innovating with emerging or exploratory technologies, solutions or ways of working

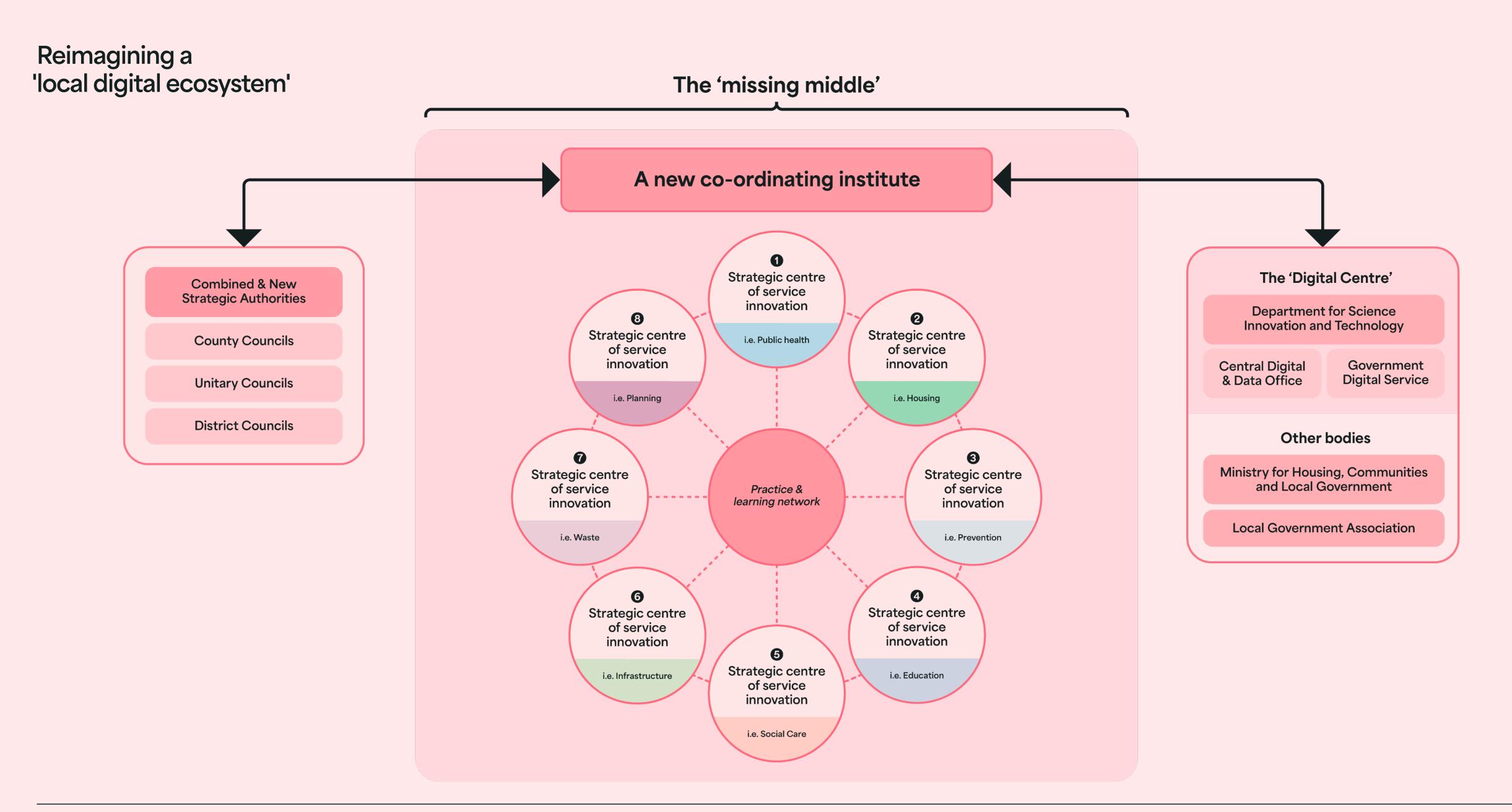
Incentivise the adoption and reuse of common components and service patterns through training and strategic support

Make GOV.UK components (i.e. PAY) more local gov relevant and applicable to common services

We believe that the question to be answered in relation to the 'missing middle' is:

What is the right approach to building and sustaining the connective tissue that connects all parts of the whole government eco-system? What infrastructure and type of governance model can support the sector (and those adjacent to it) to more easily collaborate, standardise (the right things) and act collectively as a whole; whilst being able to adapt and flex to the specific make-up and needs of a place, region or footprint?







Reimagining a 'local digital ecosystem'

New co-ordinating institute

Would be responsible for:

- Convening local government to identify shared and scalable challenges
- Interfacing with central government on behalf of the sector to influence and agree standards setting processes and protocols
- Collective market shaping on behalf of the sector
- Acting as a procurement centre of excellence
- Coordinating the work of Strategic Centres of Service Innovation and making sure learning is shared and spread
- Housing all reusable resources, service patterns, training and learning.



Is aligned to...

Either previous local government regional footprints OR new strategic authorities.

Has a dual focus:

- 1. Place-based innovation; working to solve local challenges across geographic boundaries
- 2. Is a representative practice area; working as a sandbox to find common and scalable solutions around a shared sector challenge.

I.e. Housing, Prevention, Education, Social Care or Waste Services



By 2030...

We have best in class procurement and contract management capability and process in the sector, making it easier to invest in innovative solutions, encouraging more SME entrants to the market, and holding suppliers to account for delivering outcomes.



Data exchange and maturity

Opportunity areas and recommendations

From what is...

- Public trust in data sharing is low
- Hugely risk averse attitude toward data sharing and exchange between services yet alone organisations or other parts of the sector
- Little way of making use of big data at a population level

- Data capture and quality is hugely varied across different services/ professions
- Lack of consistent or enforced data standards
- Confusion across organisations of whose responsibility data is, with data capabilities often sitting outside of service delivery teams

To what if...

What if... we have a coordinated approach to increasing data trust and transparency?

What if... local government took a more active role in the development of the national data library and national service data platform development?

What if... data standards were more heavily enforced across the sector?

What if... we helped people better understand the art of the possible around data and data interoperability?

What if... we offer data interoperability as a service into local councils?



Data exchange and maturity

Opportunity areas and recommendations

Addressing issues of trust & transparency related to data sharing & exchange

Support local government to move towards responsible data sharing using a test and learn approach

Support to increase overall data literacy and maturity across councils

Must do (High priority)

Data & trust training delivered 'at scale' across the sector to senior leaders and members

Use current Test, Learn & Grow pilots to proactively address data sharing challenges; including issues with data asymmetry between organisations within a footprint, and how to assess trustworthiness of other parties

Develop a clear set of data standards for local government

Could do (Lower priority)

Build and disseminate examples of successful data sharing that can be used by councils to build the case locally and regionally - both cross service and cross organisation

Develop a trust and transparency data sharing playbook for local government

Incentivise more data sharing by addressing the increased cost and capacity implications in cross organisational/ sector data sharing for individual councils

Coordinated and consistent support to local government data teams to explain long-term benefits of data sharing investment with service teams, leadership and members

Training and support directly into service teams to test new ways of working; with a focus on increasing collaboration and reducing data hoarding Help councils understand the art of the possible with emerging technology, including what is signal and what is noise; and support to derisk responsible adoption of it

Develop an ONS Data Science Campus offer tailored and available to local government officers and members

Openly share (and make accessible) learning from Government Incubator for Ai pilots and work

Use the national data library to develop national data platform (similar to planning); that brings together data across complex local service areas By 2030...

There are at least ten new individuals from 'digital practitioner' backgrounds in local government 'Chief Executive' positions AND there are at least ten individuals with direct local government experience placed into influential central government/Arm's-length bodies roles (secondment or permanent).



Organisational and political leadership

Opportunity areas and recommendations

From what is...

- A stagnated digital and reform agenda with 'digital expertise' not prioritised in the same way as statutory services
- Digital is still not thought of as a fundamental way of reforming how we do things in order to save money & improve experience for residents
- Accountability for digital being 'pushed down the chain' in organisations

- Not enough capacity or budget put around the 'change work required' around technology implementation, iteration and maintenance
- Limited or lack of opportunities for people with a digital background to progress into influential leadership roles

To what if...

What if... we had a structured approach to helping those with digital backgrounds move into senior leadership roles within organisations or services?

What if... we developed specific digital leadership programmes/activity for leaders of critical or acute services?

What if... we moved towards favouring multidisciplinary team leadership rather than individual and siloed services?

What if... we helped leadership to reduce the risk associated with digital, as well as developing knowledge, skills & understanding?



Organisational and political leadership

Opportunity areas and recommendations

Must do (High priority)

Could do (Lower priority)

Coordinated leadership development activity/ programmes for 'non-digital' leaders

Structured L&D routes for digital practitioners into leadership roles

(with an explicit focus on equity & diversity)

Grow understanding & awareness of digital amongst political leaders

Consolidate existing leadership development offers into one single, cohort based programme and scale it across the sector so that non-digital leaders can learn collectively

Convene existing Chief Executives or other senior leaders with a 'digital' background to codevelop a sector wide strategy for supporting the next gen leaders of digital practitioners into service & organisational leadership roles

Create a named Minister for local government innovation, data & technology within MHCI G

Develop 'off the shelf' learning modules that can be dropped into existing leadership and professional development initiatives within individual councils

Use existing local government events and conferences to introduce more digitallyfocused content & learning (via i.e. Solace, County Council Network)

Embed 'digital understanding' as a core, demonstrable competency into council SLT hiring processes & include digital expertise on a hiring panel

Create 2 way secondment opportunities between, central and local government (as possibly into adjacent sectors such as health) to spread to build shared understanding

Focused effort in developing a diverse pipeline of digital leaders from underrepresented backgrounds including gender, ethnicity and disability

Create a paired mentoring and matching service between digital and non-digital leaders to facilitate learning exchange and knowledge development

Develop & run a cohort based leadership development programme specifically to support digital practitioners into leadership roles

Digital-focused learning sessions and opportunities to be created specifically for cabinet members - either standalone or integrated into existing political leadership development activity

Develop & run a cohort based learning programme for political leaders across councils/ geographic boundaries

By 2030...

We have a shared workforce plan for the sector which includes digital skills, an inclusive apprenticeship scheme; and have achieved a 20% increase of those from an underrepresented background in the 'digital workforce'.



Capacity, capability and skills

Opportunity areas and recommendations

From what is...

- A lack of representation across all levels of digital roles and professions
- Challenges in developing people with digital backgrounds into leadership roles
- Limited routes of entry into the sector or opportunities to transition from within the sector into digital roles

- Local government isn't seen as an appealing career route for those earlier on in their career
- Lack of equity in the geographic distribution of talent across local government
- Difficulty retaining talent and skills over a longer-term period of time

To what if...

What if... we had a sector wide, longer-term strategy to address the systemic issues we have as a sector on the diversity of the digital workforce?

What if... we thought more collectively about workforce planning and how we develop talent & skills as a sector?

What if... we had different ways of pooling or crowding in talent regionally that isn't a shared service?

What if... we reintroduced apprenticeship programmes nationally as routes to enter the workforce or transition into 'digital roles'?



Capacity, capability and skills

Opportunity areas and recommendations

Address short-term and long term challenges of diversity of representation across the sector

Create a sector wide, coordinated future workforce plan (inc. a national apprenticeship scheme)

National digital skills and careers strategy with a focus on emerging and established technology

Must do (High priority)

Collect data on the diversity of staff in digital roles to build a picture of the diversity of the digital workforce across the sector and monitor progress

Create a new national apprenticeship programme that supports those at differing career stages to develop skills and experience to transition in digital roles across local government

Develop a sector wide national workforce plan for local government (similar to the NHS) - with a strong focus on analysing the impact of established and emerging technologies on service delivery models, capabilities and skills

Could do (Lower priority)

Create a 'What Works' style centre in one of the strategic centres of innovation to share and promote effective EDI practice for use across the sector

Encourage mentoring for digital professionals from under-represented backgrounds in early career roles and sponsorship for digital professionals from under-represented backgrounds in mid-career roles

All councils should use inclusive recruitment practices across all digital, data & technology roles

Work closely with educational institutions and national careers services to promote local government' as a rewarding place to develop a career

Create structured opportunities for those in service delivery roles to develop digital knowledge, skills and expertise through multidisciplinary team ways of working

Explore routes for councils to provide training opportunities for digital careers, directly through their local communities

Open up and make accessible any national workforce analysis or data for all councils to use and integrate into their current or future workforce plans locally

Work with regional footprints to jointly review and develop place-based digital skills and talent pipelines

Identify appropriate retraining opportunities for those in roles that may be impacted by current and emerging technologies in the next three - five years By 2030...

There are a set of established and trusted service standards & patterns that are being used and adopted by 70% of councils; with rewards and incentives offered to those who are actively adhering to them; with a suitable audit regime in place to assess levels of compliance.



From what is...

- Hugely varied and fragmented service experiences for residents when they are interacting with different parts of a council or wider system
- Huge amounts of duplication in work across individual councils, despite tackling similar problems particularly across more transactional services
- Services working individually to their own ways of working, standards, technology stacks and products - rather than towards endto-end service transformation
- Confusion for local government on what is mandatory outside of regulatory bodies and standard setting agencies for statutory services - in relation to digital

To what if...

What if... there was a mandated digital service standard for all council services?

What if... exemplar councils collaboratively developed standards for others to adopt?

What if... digital service standards had to be embedded in procurement processes and contracting agreements?

What if... we rethought the role of the regulator or they became a core part of any sector wide innovation work?

Standards

Opportunity areas and recommendations

Codesign of service, technical and quality standards

A measuring function to check on progress against standards

Align standards with other regulation regimes

Must do (High priority)

Bring together groups of multi-disciplinary teams, made up of representatives from across different parts of local government (i.e. finance, procurement, services, strategy, IT, digital) to co-develop digitally-focused local government service, technical and quality standards

Suitable governance, guidance and process to support adherence with co-designed service, technical & quality standards Guidance developed to help councils integrate new standards into existing regulation and standard setting - in particular across statutory services

Could do (Lower priority)

Develop specific standards to strengthen and possibly mandate multidisciplinary working across councils

Use regional centres to test service standards in practice and consider the support required to implement and integrate them

Suitable governance that allows the sector to iterate standards as practice develops/ evolves

Guidance that clearly outlines what is fundamental and mandatory, and what is nice to have

Create a peer review-type process (or integrate into existing) for councils to support and drive digital service delivery and change efforts

Give reserve power to a Secretary of State for local government and digital to step in when standards aren't being met

Review of existing standards and regulation around 'less transactional services' to be done by a more centralised body (i.e. a new institute) to make sure new service, technical and quality standards support existing service specific regulation

Specifically work with regulators to integrate digital standards into the setting of new regulation for the sector

By 2030...

We have best in class procurement and contract management capability and process in the sector, making it easier to invest in innovative solutions, encouraging more SME entrants to the market, and holding suppliers to account for delivering outcomes.



Procurement, contracts and market shaping

Opportunity areas and recommendations

From what is...

- Opportunities around market shaping, collective buying / negotiating aren't realised
- Hard for SMEs to compete or 'break' into the market and over reliance on larger providers, piecemeal customisations to legacy tech and locked in contracts (as they appear less 'risky for local government buyers)
- Procurement and budgeting processes aren't aligned to more agile/ iterative ways of delivering solutions, meaning councils are creating specifications for the wrong things (and being locked in to them)
- The sector continues to buy based on technical 'wish list' rather than around service outcomes

To what if...

What if... we thought more collectively about risk in relation to buying and procuring from the market?

What if... we worked more closely with the market to shape common needs for customisation of existing software?

What if... we held more power and influence over the software market in relation to what gets brought?

What if... we focused more heavily on improving buying behaviours amongst leaders across the sector?

Procurement, contracts and market shaping

Opportunity areas and recommendations

Improving 'buyer' side behaviour, culture, processes and ways of working

Supporting and shaping the 'right' supplier ecosystem to emerge

Collectively influencing & shifting 'big supplier' behaviour

Must do (High priority)

Either through regional bodies or one single body, create Centre(s) of Procurement and Contract Management excellence Coordinate a shared pipeline of common issues and challenges across the sector, and openly publish to support more SMEs to align products and services

Use regional bodies to aggregate common challenges with 'big tech suppliers'; and develop an influencing plan/ strategy for change the sector needs to see

Could do (Lower priority)

Develop shared procurement frameworks across sensible regional footprints to drive more aligned buying

Develop open data tools that can help councils compare and contrast spending and quality of third party suppliers

Develop a sandbox specifically around procurement and finance to test new ways of budgeting within existing processes

Review spending processes to integrate 'digital' spend into service budgeting (i.e. capital rather revenue expenditure)

Derisk SME procurement by using 'regional or economic growth area footprints' to collectively buy or procure more innovative products or services that may be 'deemed' too risky for individual councils

Test and scale different procurement and budgeting approaches and processes to de risk SMEs entering the market (i.e. efficient payment contracts and incentives) Develop a set of harder levers for central government intervention with big tech suppliers

Central government to convene big supplier CEOs regularly for open conversation about how we make the current software market more fit for purpose

WHO MIGHT BE DOING WHAT?



Roles and responsibilities	Infrastructure, learning and collaboration	Data exchange and maturity	Organisational and political leadership:	Capacity, capability and skills	Standards	Procurement, contracts and market shaping
Individual councils	Using Learning and Development work to embed digital knowledge & expertise	Leadership, manager and team development around data innovation and exchange	Capturing and sharing 'what works' via Institute and other informal forums	Using individual learning & development work to embed knowledge/ expertise	Co-development of standards and adherence with them	Shaping and implementation of procurement best practice at a regional level
Strategic Centres of Service Innovation	Share learning from place-based innovation work; and connect up learning with other centres	Focus on data exchange across a region or place, sharing what works with others in the sector via Institute	Development of place-based leaders and ensuring that 'Centres' are staffed representatively	Bring together multidisciplinary teams to sandbox specific sector-wide issues	Implementation of agreed standards, set by the institute and central government alongside local government	Consider collective buying/influencing across specific service problems (not just technology solutions)
A co-ordinating institute	Aggregating learning from 'Strategic Centres' and supporting wiser sector to adopt learning	Aggregate learning from centres of service innovation, developing tools, approaches and best practice	Leadership development of digital practitioners and leaders	Develop a shared and joined up workforce plan for the sector	Convene the sector to develop appropriate standards and act as implementing body	Represent the sector to influence the software market and develop a procurement centre of excellence
Local Government Association	Support to convene existing leaders and local government groups to align on set of shared and common challenges to address	Support with the roll out of appropriate data training and guidance	Integration of digital content developed by the Institute into existing leadership development programmes	Shared development and roll out of training content, and shared development of workforce plan with Institute	Supporting the roll out and supporting training in relation to standard setting	Co-producing procurement best practice guidance and training with the Institute
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government	Development of shared leadership content & training - including cyber security	Develop relevant guidance, tools to unblock data challenges	Fund and support national learning infrastructure	Support with national workforce planning and gap analysis	Implementing relevant audit regime & offering support directly to councils to implement	National level market shaping - working with Institute to use power of national govt. to influence
The 'Digital Centre'	Provide access to central government learning opportunities and communities of practice to local government staff	Standard setting around data & data exchange	Push out central government training, making it applicable to local government	Tailor and reshape existing Government Digital Service skills training; and support in national workforce planning	Work with local government to develop suitable and appropriate standards	Legislation setting. Where appropriate, underwriting risk around innovation/ technology



STEPS STEPS



Where to start...

Immediate things we think should happen next include:

- 1. Take a test & learn approach to developing a new apprenticeship programme that brings new talent into the sector
- 2. Bring representatives together from across the sector to challenge and refine some of these recommendations; including highlighting learning where some of these things have been tried before
- 3. Convene relevant parts of the system to agree and align on roles and responsibilities now the dust has begun to settle on the Digital Centre see detail later in this report
- 4. Co-develop a concise digital local government blueprint and 'north star' that aligns into (and provides challenge to) the Digital Centre's plans
- 5. Convene current council leaders with digital background to develop a plan and strategy to support others to follow in their footsteps
- 6. Dig into the work of Open Digital Planning and understand which parts of the work, process and learning is replicable into other complex, local government policy or service areas
- 7. Create a funding pot to further test and (de)validate the concept of the 'missing middle'; alongside current local government Test, Learn & Grow work, as well as wider devolution plans and strategic footprints

