



Do more with your data and drive better citizen outcomes

How UK Local Government can harness the power of data, with valuable insights that drive faster, more informed decision making.

A new digital era for local government

For today's local authorities, innovation has fast become the new norm. Ever-evolving citizen and employee demand, ongoing budget cuts, and data that's expanding at an exponential rate are just some of the challenges driving the need for change. Added to that, the UK's aging population is putting increasingly more pressure on public services. To rise to these challenges and continue providing essential community support, local authorities must embrace advancing technology that enables them to evolve into a digitalised council of the future.

This white paper sets out to explore the impact the pandemic and other pre-existing challenges have had on the UK's local councils, with a focus on operations. We discuss how the right technology can enable your organisation to do more with limited resources. And how harnessing your data can enhance critical decision-making and improve responsiveness for the benefit of your community - and the future of your council.

Build, Back, Better

Digital services provide tremendous opportunities to cut costs and transform the daily lives of UK residents. Since the UK Government began digitising 25 major services in 2013, £1.7 billion year on year savings have been netted thanks to the development of faster, more efficient services.¹

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In spite of this, 71% of government IT leaders cite a lack of vision and leadership a barrier to transformation. Budget constraints and the cost of integrating legacy IT systems have also prevented many councils from going digital. That is until now. The impact of the pandemic has been a catalyst for change, fundamentally altering our lives and the role that technology plays within it. In its wake are long-standing public sector challenges that have been compounded by COVID-19, serving to accelerate digital transformation plans for councils across the country.

Annual tech spending in local government exceeding £1bn in 2020.

Innovation is now an integral part of many roadmaps, with annual tech spending in local government exceeding £1bn in 2020 despite what was a challenging year.² For most councils there is a huge drive to support remote working as well as provide digital services, with **the majority of government departments reporting at least 90% of staff working from home last year.**³ With more and more points of entry connecting to business-critical apps and data from outside the network, IT leaders must provide secure anytime access, from any device. And with a nation continuously adapting to ever-changing requirements, council leaders have a compelling case to review the effectiveness of the quick-fix solutions deployed during the first lockdown.

But while these solutions may have enabled organisations to pivot and adapt to overnight changes, how secure and sustainable are they in the long run? Are they able to drive efficiencies and unlock hidden savings by providing visibility across multiple services? And how well are they coping with the need for need for digital access, better support for the vulnerable, and the rising cost of doing business?

The growing role of real-time data

Being able to investigate, monitor, analyse and act on your data has the potential to be genuinely transformational for frontline community services. It also has the ability to drive cost savings at a time when councils are facing discretionary income losses due to reduced public carpark, leisure, and tourist attraction use. The ability to understand how effectively your new systems are running is therefore critical and without this visibility, spotting opportunities, challenges and outages becomes difficult.

From council tax billing to housing and planning services, social care to waste collection, the disruption of any service has the potential to result in negative citizen experiences and drive costs up in a bid to improve delivery. This is where the use of real-time data plays an essential role in delivering and transforming public services, to improve outcomes and drive efficiencies within current financial constraints. It's by providing more visibility and secure access to the data your people need, that your council can continue providing citizen services 24/7 and supporting the most vulnerable in society. With this in mind, we've identified four key focus areas to achieve sustained improvement.



Four areas for sustained improvement

1. Secure data access

With 15,000+ malicious campaigns being COVID related in 2020⁴, never has there been a greater need to understand risk, respond faster to breaches, and remain compliant. One single visualisation across your entire council estate, regardless of where your employees are working or on which device, enables data to be instantly and securely accessed. For front line social workers this could be the difference between spending hours searching for sensitive information and helping more of your most vulnerable citizens.

2. Predictive insight

In July 2020 over 12,000 job losses were announced in 48 hours.⁵ Imagine the stress and anxiety that may have arisen if the Gov.co.uk financial support page or the Universal Credit application system had crashed. With greater visibility across your services it's easier to spot outages and disruption, and therefore predict and prevent issues before they happen. In doing so your council can enable early intervention or identification of needs, which in turn can reduce emergency interventions – both during and beyond the pandemic.

70% of citizens wanting improved reliability and security of digital services.⁷

3. Systems service performance

The COVID-19 funding gap is estimated at £3 billion⁶ (at time of writing), placing great pressure on every council to do more with less. Being able to track platform ROI in real-time enables you to unlock hidden savings, by arming you with a clearer understanding of how well your digital services are performing. With 70% of citizens wanting improved reliability and security of digital services⁷, knowing how services are being consumed and ensuring optimal performance, uptime, and availability is critical to meet and exceed expectations. Closing any visibility gaps across your environment puts your council in a better position to improve the effectiveness of public services and create a lasting and positive impact on service user outcomes.⁵

4. Rapid intervention

Today's councils face the dual challenge of reacting to seasonal or situational events - while simultaneously dealing with wide-ranging and still-unfolding difficulties of the pandemic. For the National Domestic Abuse helpline, this triggered a 66% rise in UK calls during lockdown⁸. Emergency responders, support staff, and call centre agents need as much support as possible, which is where providing real-time data access to inform responses and coordination can be a game-changer. Predictive insights, when combined with real time data feeds, create opportunities to deploy preventative help in time-critical situations. Real-time alerts that immediately flag any service issues or interruptions empowers your teams to react quicker and deploy rapid intervention, such as scaling up the call centre or re-deploying staff to support front line services.



Future-ready your council today

With the right tools, your data can be used to inform digital tools and services, and you're your council greater insights into how to improve the citizen experience. In turn this promises faster, more efficient services that drive citizen satisfaction. By knowing where and how to save cost, your council can focus on reducing rates and taxes, and re-allocate time and resource on improving digital service access and providing a higher level of support.

For council employees, using technology that harnesses the true potential of your data enables them to work smarter and free up time to help more citizens - especially those most vulnerable. Staff can be better supported for remote working, with secure any time data and systems access that enables them to spend more time with citizens and less time travelling to and from the office.

And for your organisation, a better understanding of how to enhance and save money across services enables you to drive a culture shift: from a traditional council to the council of the future. Providing staff with the ability to work securely with greater flexibility not only reduces travel costs and carbon footprint; it helps drive efficiencies and keeps services running 24/7. Offering secure data access from anywhere, on any device, can also facilitate faster more informed decision making, by making information instantly accessible to the right people.

93% of professionals believe digital technology changes their working lives for the better.⁹

From a recruitment perspective, 93% of professionals believe digital technology changes their working lives for the better. . By taking the opportunity to embrace technology, drive efficiencies, and transition to more flexible working models, your council can strengthen its ability to compete for top talent and inspire younger workers to serve your community. Which all goes full circle, back to feeding the benefits for your citizens.

Looking ahead, improving visibility across multiple services can give local councils the potential to design services around the needs of the citizen, and better promote economic and social growth through the innovative use of data. It's essential that each organisation is able to account for each and every penny, in order to continue providing for their community - in spite of a resource shortage. With the right use of data, local governments can be empowered to make fast decisions based on the facts, and remain confident even in times of uncertainty.

About Splunk

The Data-to-Everything Platform from Splunk provides online service performance, consumption, and usage visibility with digital eyes across your local authority infrastructure. Powered by the AWS cloud our solution tracks platform ROI in real-time, enabling you to quickly identify and unlock hidden savings with a better understanding of how your digital services are paying off. Should your authority have limited IT resource, we'll manage all upgrades and resource requirements leaving you to simply use the system – not run it.

With online service disruption alerts, we reduce the time needed for manual intervention, enabling you to deploy rapid intervention such as bracing the call centre for additional calls. Nothing gets dropped as you flex your infrastructure to meet citizen demand, with a solution that helps elevate additional costs, lightens the call centre burden, and helps boost confidence in digital channels.

¹ Open Access Government - <https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/overcoming-digital-transformation-barriers-in-the-public-sector/90407/>

² Tech UK - <https://www.techuk.org/resource/future-gazing-where-next-for-local-gov-tech-in-2021.html>

³ Institute for Government - <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/digital-government-coronavirus.pdf>

⁴ Nscs.gov - <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/annual-review/2020/index.html>

⁵ BBC - <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-53247787>

⁶ Local GOV - <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Mobilising-the-social-care-workforce/51691>

⁷ Accenture - <https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/public-service/citizen-survey-2019>

⁸ CBS News - <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/uk-domestic-violence-charity-huge-spike-calls-for-help-as-coronavirus-lockdown-continues/>

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