

Councils awarded £500,000 for digital technology innovations

Seven digital technology projects have received grants of up to £100,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Local Digital Fund.

The digital research and development projects will look at improving the efficiency of the planning system, predicting demand in children's social care and enabling better information sharing to drive improvements in local services.

Local Government Minister Luke Hall MP said:

Councils across the country are working to embrace digital technology to adapt, innovate and drive improvements in public services for their residents.

I'm delighted to announce we're investing over half a million pounds from our Local Digital Fund into seven more collaborative projects to boost public services for all.

For the projects, lead councils partner with at least 2 others to share knowledge and ideas. This collaborative approach is an important part of the government's Local Digital Declaration to coordinate public bodies seeking digital solutions.

Different stages of projects have different names. Discovery projects explore problems and propose possible solutions, those called 'alpha' build prototypes and test solutions, and the 'discovery' stage builds a working service for public testing.

The fund is also paying for in digital skills and leadership training for council staff.

Projects funded and the local authorities involved:

1. Improving data and evidence on children in care; Greater Manchester Combined Authority – £100,000. A project to eliminate errors in statutory data returns to provide better, evidence-based decision making.
2. Reducing invalid planning applications; led by Lambeth Council, with Wycombe District Council, Southwark Council, Lewisham Council, and Camden Council – £98,500. Developing a system to limit the number of incomplete or invalid digital planning applications.

3. Researching what data early help children's services heads need to analyse performance; led by Richmond and Wandsworth Councils, with West Berkshire Council, and Croydon Council – £80,000. A project to explore how data can be used to improve the quality of early help children's services.
4. Improving code sharing between councils; led by Croydon Council, and Brighton & Hove City Council, Bracknell Forest Council, and Oxford City Council – £75,000. The project is will improve how computer code is shared between councils, making it easier for them to collaborate.
5. Predictive modelling to understand future demand for children's social care; led by Suffolk County Council, with Cambridgeshire County Council, Norfolk County Council – £74,000. The project will help councils to anticipate demands on their services.
6. A new system for processing revenue and benefits data; led by Teignbridge District Council, with East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Basildon Council, and Brentwood Council – £71,000. The project will explore the development of a cost-effective system focused on residents' needs.
7. Cross-local government user research; led by Croydon Council, with Hackney Council, Kent County Council, and Hertfordshire County Council – £25,800. The project will look at how one council can use another council's user research to improve statutory services.

See [more information](#) on the Local Digital Fund, projects previously funded and how to apply.

Only councils in England are eligible to lead on applications; councils in other parts of the UK are still eligible to partner on applications.