

# Press release: Government injects £7.5 million into council digital agenda with launch of new sector pledge

A new “digital pledge” backed by £7.5 million of government funding has been launched today (4 July 2018) to help councils transform their online services.

[Speaking at the Local Government Association Annual Conference](#) in Birmingham, Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak said the new initiative would change the way councils invest in technology, share expertise and ensure members of the public are receiving the best quality digital services.

Over 50 local authorities, government departments and partner organisations have already signed up to the pledge, called the [Local Digital Declaration](#), agreeing a common vision for the future of local services.

They are now calling on the wider sector to also make the public commitment.

Local Government Minister, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

Whether it’s an app to report fly-tipping, or slick online services to pay your Council Tax, many local authorities are at the forefront of digital innovation.

But there’s much more to do. Digital doesn’t belong in the basement, it belongs in the boardroom.

I want councils and partners across the country to sign up to this declaration. By supporting each other and building on each other’s work we can revolutionise services for our residents.

While many councils already have excellent online offerings, the digital declaration is about sharing the best innovation across the public sector to benefit people.

For example, the school nursing service in Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland worked with young people to help them get health advice by text – Chat Health. It’s engaging them in ways that suit their lives and preferences and has worked so well it’s now been rolled out to 30 areas and a million people.

As part of the initiative, local authorities across the country will also be able to bid for a share of a new £7.5 million innovation fund to help develop common solutions to their shared challenges.

The pioneering new approach will also see a new course developed to train

senior local authority staff in digital leadership skills.

Alongside this, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will establish a new team to work with councils to help them deliver on their declaration commitments.