THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA REVOLUTION
Why Data Visualisation is the key to Digital Transformation

Gain unique insight into the data visualisation revolution underway in local government and learn how to use data to accelerate your Digital Transformation

A survey of local authorities in England investigating their use of data for developing and shaping efficient and effective services.

2019
REAL-TIME DATA IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

"At the same time, the means and ways to grasp this golden opportunity, the very data that every council has amassed and continues to amass, have remained largely untapped.

"Our study shows that 89% of councils struggle to access the data they collect, and only 19% admit they are making effective use of that data.

"However, it’s incredibly encouraging to see that 97% of local authorities recognise that improved data visualisation tools would be of value to their council, whilst 92% believe that real-time data is either important or very important to running improved and cost-effective services.

"Unquestionably, councils are starting to act, with 95% either already or looking to invest in data visualisation tools in the next 12-18 months.

"Data Visualisation tools like Microsoft Power BI are now affordable, easy to use and incredibly powerful. Working with the right partners there is now a forward way for leadership teams and departmental heads to define data governance rules, harvest data across legacy systems, set up robust data warehouse architectures and use simple data visualisation tools so that real-time data use becomes accessible to all.

"Councils highlighted in this report, and others, are making great strides in accessing and understanding the information we have can give us the insight we need to work smarter and make better decisions. By making that data as open as possible, people can see it and come up with their own thoughts, questions, challenges and even solutions that we might not have thought of. That’s really empowering for communities."

Anthony Peake
MD, Software Solved

"The report shows that 89% of councils struggle to access the data they collect, and only 19% admit they are making effective use of that data."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA SURVEY FINDINGS

Software Solved undertook surveys with 38 unitary, city, county and district councils across England into the needs, value and barriers to better real-time data and data visualisation. This is what we found...

92% of councils feel that real-time data is either important or very important, whilst a further 5% feel it is quite important

Upwards of 97% feel that improved data visualisation tools and training would significantly add value to their council

95% are already using or looking to invest in data visualisation tools in the next 6-18 months

89% feel that it is difficult or not easy to access the data they collect

Less than 19% feel they are currently effective at using data

Only 21% find it easy to access their data

Disparate legacy IT systems, departmental silos, lack of skills and tools are seen as the main barriers to better use of data.

CASE STUDY
DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Devon County Council use data visualisation to make various topics accessible to the public including road safety. This public dashboard, with data from Devon and Cornwall Police, is accessed by the likes of the Road Safety Team, Transport Planning, Highways Maintenance, Highways Development Management and Public Health, as well as to build evidence-led education campaigns.

"Good data and intelligence is absolutely crucial to the County Council to enable us to serve the people of Devon in the best possible way. Analysing the information we have can give us the insight we need to work smarter and make better decisions. It’s key to ensuring we are a more effective and efficient organisation. By making that data as open as possible, people can see it and come up with their own thoughts, questions, challenges and even solutions that we might not have thought of. That’s really empowering for communities."

Dr Virginia Pearson, Devon County Council’s Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment, and Prosperity

ABOUT SOFTWARE SOLVED

Software Solved are experts in software development, support and data visualization, successfully delivering over 1000 projects over the last 20 years to large corporations, local government, charities and SMEs.

Local Government Data Survey Findings

Software Solved undertook surveys with 38 unitary, city, county and district councils across England into the needs, value and barriers to better real-time data and data visualisation. This is what we found...

92% of councils say that real-time data is either important or very important, whilst a further 5% believe it is quite important.

Importance of real-time data for your councils
- Very important, 70%
- Important, 22%
- Quite Important, 5%
- Not important, 3%

19% of councils say they are currently effective at using data.

How effective are councils at using data?
- Very effective, 5%
- Somewhat Effective, 14%
- Effective in some areas, 38%
- Not Very Effective, 35%
- Not Effective, 8%

76% of councils admit that it is difficult, somewhat difficult or not easy to access the data they collect.

How easy is it to access the data that you collect?
- Very Easy, 5%
- Easy, 16%
- Not Easy, 41%
- Somewhat difficult, 30%
- Difficult, 5%

Across the 420 councils in the UK, there are increasing needs for real-time data to:
- Support council members to manage with interactive reports
- Develop leadership dashboards for executive teams to better manage performance
- Provide department dashboards for customer services, social care, education, transport and highways, finance, refuse collection, planning, libraries and other key service departments
- Deliver citizen engagement portals for sharing real-time insight and showing how the council operates and where money is being spent
- Share open data with the third sector to ensure they are fully integrated in supporting the elderly, poor and vulnerable in accessing essential services.

Case Study

Lancashire County Council use a variety of dashboards across many service areas. In Adult Social Care, the council’s data visualisation of delayed transfers of care allows people to compare trusts, explore the length and reasons behind delays in different parts of the county.

Other dashboards provide insight into service users based on their support needs and specific client category, meaning anyone can easily gain a county-level overview or use the interactive dashboards to get specific detail based on a wide range of different factors including location, age, gender and service type.

"There are powerful software packages that are easy to use and can have a huge impact. Councils are starting to use these to analyse areas where inefficiencies remain and where insight is lacking. The reality is, all the slack has been cut, and so it makes perfect sense to go to that next level of understanding across departments."

Nick Hill, Founder of Public Sector Customer Service and Digital Transformation Forums, and organiser of LocalGovCamps.

Lancashire County Council
CASE STUDY

"Part of my role is to look at new technologies and where they might be appropriate for us. There is a very strong business case for better use of real-time data. We've captured 150 processes and using real-time data visualisation have realised there are a raft of ways to refine and improve services. Now we understand what is causing issues in different processes, we can reboot, be more efficient and truly put the customer first."

Mike Ward, IT Community of Practice Lead at South Hams District and West Devon Borough Council

Software Solved’s expertise in data has seen the company selected by Innovate UK to lead a two-year research programme into machine learning and advanced data analytics.

Together with Plymouth University, Software Solved will be researching and developing ways to use Machine Learning to intelligently automate the integration of large volumes of data, predict future risks using open data, and to analyse large volumes of data to model the interactions between implementing risk mitigation programs and reduced ongoing claims.

95% of councils are either planning to invest in data visualisation tools in the next 6-18 months.

Council Strategy on Data Visualisation

- We are currently using data visualisation, 21%
- Currently using data visualisation but not getting the best results, 28%
- We are currently investigating data visualisation solutions, 26%
- Don’t use data visualisation but included in our plans for the next 6 months, 10%
- Don’t use data visualisation tools but plan to in next 6-18 months, 10%
- No plans for data visualisation tools, 5%

97% of councils feel that improved data visualisation tools and training would add value to their council.

How valuable would Data Visualisation be to your council?

- Very valuable, 49%
- Valuable, 37%
- Quite Valuable, 11%
- Not valuable at all, 3%

92% of councils face the barrier of data stored in multiple disparate systems.

Departmental Silos preventing access to data: 65%

Lack the technical skills within the organisation: 38%

Complex data structures that make it difficult to use data: 38%

Our current reporting tools are very limited: 32%

Don’t have budget to invest in data visualisation tools: 30%

95% of councils are either planning to invest in data visualisation tools in the next 6-18 months.

97% of councils feel that improved data visualisation tools and training would add value to their council.

How valuable would Data Visualisation be to your council?

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- Not valuable at all, 3%
We are always happy to discuss councils’ data requirements and potential projects. Talk to us about our free half-day insight-packed workshop for local authorities looking to:

- Run streamlined real-time data projects that get results
- Drive real and measurable value through data visualisation
- Make use of the latest software for optimum real-time insight for Leadership teams, Members and Officers
- Set up data warehousing to overcome the problems of disparate legacy systems
- Improve services, become more efficient and make better-informed decisions using real-time data.

To talk to Software Solved about your data needs, call 01392 453 344 or email info@softwaresolved.com

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The barriers identified in the research, like disparate legacy IT systems, departmental silos and the lack of in-house skills and tools, are the issues that councils are coming to us to help them overcome. The potential is vast because the tools are now readily available, affordable and easier to use than ever before.”

Anthony Peake, MD, Software Solved
Innovative councils are finding the right partners to build data warehouse architectures, harvest data across legacy IT systems, set up data visualisations and create interactive dashboards. Whether it’s providing economic data for local businesses or portals for citizens, interactive reports for elected members, or performance insight for leadership teams, local authorities are starting to make good progress.”

Anthony Peake, MD, Software Solved

CASE STUDY
CAMDEN COUNCIL

Richard Olszewski, Camden Council’s Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, said:

“Camden Council is a democratically accountable public body that believes residents have a right to access data that does not compromise people’s privacy. In 2015 the council became an open-by-default council, with a charter displaying the council’s commitment to the publication of open data.”

“The Open Data Camden platform (https://opendata.camden.gov.uk) hosts over 400 different datasets, features up-to-date information on everything from planning applications, housing stock, road accidents, to council finance and freedom of information responses.

“Residents, businesses, community groups and others can access the data in several ways, depending on their need.

“Open Data allows residents to hold the council to account for its decisions and policies, it creates value for the council by reducing the time spent providing data for different audiences and by forming the basis of new apps and website functionality, and it creates value for businesses by making data available in formats that they can reuse for economic and social benefits.”

CASE STUDY
DONCASTER COUNCIL

“"It is fundamental to the work that we do as a local authority that we have a strong evidence base for the decisions we make to inform strategy, service design and to transform our services. A key component to this is maximising the data assets we own and using them to derive insights.

“Data visualisation in infographics and easy to use dashboards can ensure that complex data can be more easily understood by everyone, which therefore makes the evidence base accessible, easier to understand and more useful to all.”

Jon Gleek, Head of Service, Strategy and Performance Unit

METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out between August 2018 and September 2018, with 38 unitary, county, city and district councils responding, including Heads of Service Delivery, Heads of Business Change, Contact Centre Managers, Digital Analysts, Planning Officers and IT Managers. The survey involved a mix of approximately 50% face-to-face interviews, together with 50% online surveys.

Councillors taking part in the survey included:

- Tower Hamlets
- London Borough of Croydon
- Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk
- Lichfield District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Birmingham City Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Craven District Council
- Coventry City Council
- South Bucks
- Coventry City Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Barnsley Council
- Royal Borough of Kingston
- Sandwell MBC
- Lambeth Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Coventry City Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- Calderdale Council
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Wirral Council
- Kingston and Sutton Council Shared IT Service
- Plymouth City Council
- South Hams District Council
- West Devon Borough Council.
ABOUT SOFTWARE SOLVED

At Software Solved we’re more than just a software development house. We’re a Microsoft Gold Partner and experts in data visualisation and integration. With 20 years of experience, we’ve worked on more than 1000 projects, integrating systems and helping organisations get better information right across their organisation.

We provide exactly the level of service you need, from helping set up PowerBI and other Data Visualisation tools in both large and small businesses, right through to developing and maintaining tailor-made business intelligence solutions, data warehouses and customer portals.

Contact SOFTWARE SOLVED today, on 01392 453 344 to discuss your data needs.

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