

*The 'go to' organisation for Local
Government improvement in Scotland*



Prospectus for Local Government Partners

Key Products and Services



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Foreword



Sarah Gadsden
Chief Executive

Since we were established in 2005, the purpose of the Improvement Service has remained consistent: to deliver improvement support that helps Local Government and its partners provide effective community leadership, strong local governance, and high quality, efficient local services.

These are unusually testing times for Local Government, even for a sector well used to challenges and change. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, financial challenges and increasing demand for services were already necessitating change in service delivery and new ways of working. Now, the impact of Covid-19, together with other issues such as withdrawal from the European Union and climate change, are driving a renewed focus on re-thinking and re-imagining public service delivery in radical ways.

The products and services outlined in this prospectus are designed to help organisations face their challenges and achieve their goals within this new environment. We have listened to the Local Government family to understand their priorities and the type of improvement support they will need over the coming years. Our own strategic priorities and the support we offer have been shaped by these conversations.

Above all, we aim to be flexible and responsive to your needs. We are happy to discuss how we can support your organisation's improvement journey so please take a look at what we offer over these pages and get in touch.

Introduction and Context



The Improvement Service (IS) is the ‘go-to’ organisation for Local Government improvement in Scotland.

We are a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, which uses all grant funding and income to pursue the delivery of our objectives.

We actively seek opportunities to generate income over and above our core and Digital Public Services grants, in pursuit of delivering Local Government priorities, building shared capacities and bringing additional resources into the Local Government sector. This includes hosting, joint resourcing and match funding arrangements, specific grants and commercial income.

Our Board approved our new Business Development and Growth Strategy in September 2020. This sets out how we will build on our success to date and continue to grow our business, building on our

reputation as a responsive, trusted and agile organisation which can quickly organise and deliver programmes of work, products and services that benefit Local Government and its partners.

The development of this Prospectus is a key element in the implementation of our Strategy. It provides details of the products and services available to Local Government partner organisations in the wider Scottish public and third sectors.

Charges for accessing these products and services will be agreed on an individual basis with organisations requesting support, based on their specific needs.

Our Purpose



As the 'go to organisation' for Local Government improvement in Scotland, our purpose is to:

- Provide leadership to Local Government and the wider system on improvement and transformation;
- Develop capability and capacity for improvement within Local Government;
- Deliver national improvement programmes for Local Government and partners and support councils to improve at a local level;
- Provide research, data and intelligence to inform Local Government's policy-making and decision-making and to drive improvement;
- Deliver national shared service applications and technology platforms; and
- Broker additional resources from outwith the sector to support the delivery of Local Government's priorities.

This prospectus is aimed at Local Government partner organisations in the wider Scottish public and third sectors, to raise awareness of the key products and services available from the IS.

87% of people are very/fairly satisfied with the Improvement Service as an organisation.

(2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)

What makes us unique?

We are the improvement arm of Scottish Local Government and a key member of the Local Government family. Since 2005, we have been delivering improvement support that helps Councils to provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and deliver high quality, efficient local services.

We provide services to Councils and their partners on a not-for-profit basis motivated by purely public policy objectives, supporting them to improve the quality and efficiency of the public services for which they are responsible.

We are open and transparent about what we do, and accountable to Local Government through a Board of Directors comprising highly skilled and experienced members from our partner organisations, COSLA and Solace.

We understand Scottish Local Government and actively engage with, listen to and learn from our Council colleagues. Each Council has an IS Relationship Manager and the insights gleaned from Councils through relationship management meetings, combined with feedback from our annual stakeholder survey, helps us continue to improve and evolve our products and services, and develop new ones to respond to emerging needs.

We are independent, impartial and apolitical. We have considerable expertise in working with officers at all levels within Councils, and across partner organisations, as well as with Elected Members across Scotland.

We have expertise in delivering national shared services and technology platforms, and working with Scottish Government and

Local Government to deliver national improvement programmes for Local Government and their partners in key policy and outcome areas.

We are flexible and agile, creative in developing responses to challenges. We tackle issues by experimenting, learning, adapting and by collaborating. We have developed a range of flexible and mobile working practices, and can deliver products/services in person or remotely.

“Excellent service provided by the IS overall and are recognised as the important link and voice of the Councils and stakeholders with COSLA and Scottish Government.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)

We have a strong base of transferable experience as proven influencers and experts in improvement, transformation, data and intelligence and in delivering digital public services nationally. We deliver a wide range of products and services in these areas, many of which can be adapted and tailored to meet the specific needs and requirements of organisations that we work with. We also provide bespoke improvement support to Councils and partners where we have the skills, capacities and expertise to do so.

We play an important role in the overall landscape of an integrated public service improvement ecosystem and are well connected and networked. We recognise the importance of working with other improvement bodies and innovators to provide holistic whole system improvement support, with individuals, families and communities at



the centre, to assist public services to transform and deliver on the ambitious outcomes set out within Scotland's National Performance Framework.

We have strong partnerships in place across the Local Government family, including a formal partnership in place with COSLA. We also work closely with Scottish Government and are funded to deliver a range of programmes in critical policy areas. We have a Strategic Alliance in place with the Accounts Commission and we are in the process of developing a formal partnership with Public Health Scotland.

We partner with a wide range of organisations, including national improvement bodies to deliver collaborative improvement support to integration authorities. We also work with academia and think tanks in Scotland, UK and globally, and broker access for Local Government to academics and researchers in Higher Education.

Our People

93% of people are very or fairly satisfied with the support they received from IS staff.

(2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)

Our people are our biggest asset, many of whom have first-hand experience of working in Councils or wider public services. We embrace collaboration, leveraging opportunities to transfer and trade experience, skills, expertise and capacity, wherever it resides.

Our people have substantial experience in their specialist fields, including the following key areas:

- Strategic planning
- Organisational development, including facilitation, coaching and workforce planning
- Change management
- Self-assessment and improvement planning
- Knowledge management, including facilitating online collaboration
- Communications, including video development and facilitating webinars
- Working with elected members and supporting their personal development
- Research and evaluation
- Data analysis and reporting, including developing dashboards
- Performance management
- Spatial information
- Digital identity
- Developing and delivering end-to-end digital services

Our people also have a range of subject matter expertise in key policy and outcome areas including place based approaches, employability, economic development, planning, tackling inequalities (including the Fairer Scotland Duty), child poverty, violence against women, trauma informed practice, early learning and childcare expansion and climate change.

These policy areas are clearly interlinked, with decisions being made in one policy area sometimes impacting on, or having unintended consequences for, another policy area. Our programme leads therefore work closely together to connect the improvement work

they are delivering and to learn from each other. They also support colleagues they are working with as part of their programme to connect with relevant colleagues from across public services.

“Being relatively new to the role of Lead for my VAWP [Violence Against Women Partnership], I found the support from the IS staff incredibly helpful and welcome.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)

Principles

Our vision, purpose and values inform our guiding principles for business development and growth:

- We will only pursue opportunities to grow our business and generate income in line with our core purpose, strategic priorities and Local Government priorities.
- We will focus on ethical and values based business growth and income generation activities, which have clear social impact, to support the delivery of our strategic priorities.
- We are a non-profit organisation and we will reinvest all income that we generate in providing improvement support to Local Government.
- We will continue to provide our improvement offer to Councils as part of our core and grant funding, with Councils and their partner organisations being able to purchase additional services on a full cost recovery basis.
- We will ensure our people are equipped with the right skills to enable us to adopt a more 'commercialised' mind-set and some of the positive culture and behaviours that are associated with commercial organisations.
- Our priority is to support improvement in areas of priority to Local Government, and we will only provide services to partner organisations where it will not have a detrimental impact on Local Government.

Our Key Products and Services



Consultancy, Advice & Bespoke Support

We delivery consultancy, advice and bespoke support in a range of areas, including:

- [Change management](#)
- [Organisational development](#)
- [Workforce planning](#)
- Business analysis
- Data analysis
- [Self-assessment and improvement planning](#)
- Strategic planning
- Performance planning and reporting.

We work with organisations on a short-term basis to develop their internal capacity in the range of areas outlined. We can also deliver more intensive support to those organisations that require it.

“PSIF enabled us to capture our learning from our COVID experience for cross service improvement and evidenced our agility, resilience and capacity to change to improve outcomes for our community.”

(Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council)



Facilitation, Training and Development

We provide facilitation, training and development support covering the following areas:

- Coaching
- Facilitation skills
- Scenario planning analysis
- Knowledge management
- Self-assessment

We also deliver facilitation services to assist organisations with, for example, workshops, strategic planning, etc. We have a number of experienced facilitators across the IS and we can also draw on our Associates Framework to provide this service.

We work with organisations on a short-term basis to develop their internal capacity in the range of areas outlined. We can also deliver more intensive support to those organisations that require it.

“The Change Team at IS provide an important role in bringing together/connecting colleagues from across Councils all working in the business of changing and improving our services across the country.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)



Evaluation

We deliver a range of chargeable evaluation services which include, but are not limited to:

- Social value analysis
- Cost/benefit analysis
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Outcomes and process evaluations
- Policy/programme reviews
- Social audits

“I work with IS across a number of areas... I have at all times found them to provide an excellent service and the events always well constructed and using technology to keep them fresh even during these times where in person attendance is impossible.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)



Business Support Services for Professional Associations

We currently provide a funded secretariat and business support function for a number of national professional organisations, for example, the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group (SLAED), Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) and the Society of Chief Transportation Officers in Scotland (SCOTS). Service Level Agreements underpin these arrangements and clearly define the level of support we will deliver.

We can deliver business support services to other professional associations, using the current Agreements as a basis for negotiation.

Services we can deliver for professional associations include (but are not limited to):

- Administrative and secretariat support for meetings
- Performance reporting
- Preparation of written communications
- Preparation of responses to consultations
- Effective engagement with stakeholders via social media
- Event management service.

“Support from IS is extremely useful, particularly in relation to the SLAED Employability/People Group”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)



Research

We deliver a range of chargeable research services which include, but are not limited to:

- Designing, issuing and analysing surveys and reporting survey findings
- Data analytics
- Undertaking literature reviews
- Delivering bespoke pieces of research and preparing a research report

“I take part in the Instrumental Music Services survey annually and feel well supported by the support and understanding from Improvement Service.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)



Better Use of Data

We provide a range of services in relation to the collection, governance, standardisation, usage and improvement of [Local Government data](#).

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Advice and guidance on any data matters and data strategy development
- Organising and running training courses to support the better use of data
- Delivering webinars and events on data matters
- Technical data infrastructure options (aligned with our core data project offerings).

“Angus Council uses the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) extensively in improvement and performance management processes. The LGBF sits at the centre of many other data and benchmarking tools that services use to diagnose and identify areas for improvement and to develop improvement actions.”

(Angus Council,
‘How Councils are Using the Local Benchmarking Framework’)



Digital and Data: Products, Services and Programmes

We offer a diverse range of products, services and programmes that enjoy high levels of adoption, bring multiple benefits and contribute towards creating lasting impact. To find out more on each, and about how you can go about benefiting from them, please get in touch or click on links for each one:

- [Mygovscot \(myaccount\)](#)
- [Getyournec.scot](#)
- [Parentsportal.scot](#)
- [Bisaccount.scot](#)
- [Data Hub](#)
- [Issecure](#)
- [Spatial Hub](#)

- [One Scotland Gazetteer](#)
- [National Entitlement Card](#)
- [Young Scot Membership Platform](#)





New Products, Services and Support

We gather feedback – formal and informal - from service providers, the public and the business community to distil user need or identify gaps.

We scan the horizon to identify market and technology trends, and interpret how we should respond to them.

We place a high degree of importance on bringing innovative solutions to public service delivery in ways that meets customer and service provider need.

An ability to react with agility and with flexibility are among our key drivers.

Through collaborative approaches and joint funding, where appropriate, our services include:

- Developing new product strategy
- Idea generation and brainstorming
- Screening
- Concept testing
- Business Analysis
- Product and service development
- Market testing
- Commercialising



Tailoring our Products & Services for Others

We deliver products and services developed in response to an identified set of requirements and aimed at distinct audiences or markets.

Some of the products and services developed by us, and designed to address particular needs and audiences, are reusable - through white-labelling - for other customers, client groups and other markets. These include the following:

- Customer reward and experience platform
- Self-assessment toolkits
- Smartcard services
- Public notices and alerts

“Fantastic service and a great team providing assistance.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)



Manage Services on Behalf of Third-Parties

We already manage, operate, support and maintain several national shared service business applications, products and services aimed at service providers (for example, Councils), members of the public and businesses.

These help Councils and partners deliver high-quality digital public services, generating cost and efficiency savings, providing sustainable frontline local services and delivering better customer experiences.

Our experience and expertise is available to other public bodies and third sector organisations on a cost-recovery basis, including but not limited to:

- Managing, supporting and maintaining public-facing business applications
- Undertaking threat modelling
- Supporting business continuity and disaster recovery planning
- Providing managed security operations

“A very approachable organisation.”

(Comment from 2021 IS Stakeholder Survey)

Contact Details



If you would like to discuss any of our products or services in more detail, or are interested in accessing them, please contact **business.support@improvementservice.org.uk** with your details and we will get in touch with you.

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