

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

is.
improvement **service**

Knowledge Management Strategy



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1. Introduction and context

Connecting people with people, and people with information

1.1 Introduction

The Improvement Service was established in 2005 as the national improvement organisation for Local Government 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;

- Broker additional resources from outwith the sector to support the delivery of Local Government's priorities.

Knowledge Management is at the heart of what we do, though it may not always be expressed in those terms. Promoting learning and knowledge sharing is woven through every part of our purpose, therefore the means by which knowledge can be managed and used in a practical sense, i.e. knowledge management, must be at the heart of the way the Improvement Service operates.

This strategy sets out how we will improve the exchange of knowledge across the Improvement Service. It aligns with our strategic priorities and values, sets out our vision for knowledge management, and develops a series of outcomes with supporting objectives.

Our earlier approach to knowledge management focused on facilitating working across Scotland's 32 Councils and establishing the digital infrastructure to enable knowledge sharing and collaboration primarily through our website and the development

of the Scottish Network on Knowledge Hub. Whilst we remain committed to this aim, this new strategy establishes how we will approach organisational knowledge management within the IS.

Since its establishment, the Improvement Service has grown from seven employees to over 80 and the number, range and complexity of projects has increased. Accordingly, many of our employees are now highly specialised therefore, if we are to continue to offer a holistic approach to improvement, we need to facilitate an environment where knowledge is exchanged between individuals and teams. We also need to develop the processes of capturing knowledge to ensure it is retained within the organisation.

A key outcome of this strategy will be the development of a knowledge framework for the organisation following the best practice set by the International Knowledge Management System Standard ISO 30401. We will develop a customized framework which is appropriate for implementation within the Improvement Service. ISO 30401 will help our performance by specifying repeatable steps to achieve our goals and objectives. Creating an organisational culture that engages in self-evaluation, correction and improvement of operations and processes through heightened employee awareness and management leadership and commitment.

We will also develop a corporate Knowledge Management action plan, which will underpin the delivery of this strategy.

The new IS Knowledge Management Strategy will underpin our efforts to develop a more pro-active relationship management service. One of the areas of need specifically identified by senior management is horizon scanning and intelligence for relationship management purposes. Essentially, this focuses on what do relationship managers need to know to support their engagement with local authorities, both in terms of general trends and issues, but also what are the specific issues facing a council and what is the context for this.

As part of this, we are currently exploring how we can produce a dashboard of key information that will help relationship managers develop their understanding of a Council, to enable them to consider how best we can provide support and the types of knowledge, information and research that might be of most interest to a Council. This will include drawing on audit and inspection findings, performance information from the LGBF, updates from IS programmes on engagement with the Council, key news items in LGIU daily updates etc.

What are knowledge and knowledge management?

Knowledge is not information. Rather it is the facts, information and skills acquired through education, training and lived experience, and is constantly being changed in the light of new understanding. Most knowledge resides within individuals. We constantly acquire and exchange knowledge in our personal and working lives: asking family and friends for advice, sharing our experiences with colleagues, or seeking help in an online discussion forum. The challenge is in finding and sharing the knowledge relevant to our work, and in making this part of our everyday working life. That is where knowledge management comes in – it is a means of unlocking the potential value of knowledge.

For the purposes of this strategy, we will use the definitions of knowledge and knowledge management used in ISO 30401 (see Appendix 1).

Why does knowledge management matter?

Good exploitation of knowledge brings real benefits. The benefit of underpinning our work with effective knowledge management approaches will be demonstrated by our programmes delivering enhanced outcomes for our stakeholders and by how much people within Scottish Local Government have:

- Saved time, money and effort by learning from the experiences of others and adopted leading practices more quickly

- Made better decisions or avoided reinventing the wheel by using the best evidence, knowledge, expertise and information available
- Improved services or achieved breakthroughs by working in collaboration to achieve innovation
- Changed their perspectives or broadened their expertise as a result of collaborative working and considering a wider diversity of perspectives
- Focused on developing their own skills and supporting the development of others

1.2 Context: Drivers for change

Internal drivers

Our [Strategic Framework 2020-22](#) sets out the IS vision:

“To be an agile organisation that supports and mobilises resources for our partners to manage the challenges they face in improving outcomes and reducing inequalities.”

In response to the particular demands and challenges faced by Scottish Local Government, the framework focuses on four strategic priorities.



1. We will support Local Government to live with Covid-19
2. We will support Local Government to re-build after Covid-19
3. We will support Local Government's contribution to the delivery of Scotland's National Performance Framework.
4. We will support Local Government, working with their communities and partners, to deliver place-based approaches

The delivery of our strategic priorities will only be achieved through collaboration and sharing good practice underpinning our activities

In addition to the IS Strategic Framework there are several other strategy documents that are relevant to this one including the [IS Business Plan 2021-22](#), Improvement Service [Values, Communications Strategy 2020-22](#) and Learning and Development Framework 2020.

External drivers

These are testing times for Local Government. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, financial challenges and increasing demand for services were necessitating change in service delivery and new ways of working.

The arrival of the pandemic early in 2020 forced many organisations into ways of working that they had not deployed at scale before, created a need for communication and collaboration without

physically meeting and demanded rapid responses to implement new processes with shorter decision cycles. Our adaption and response were to listen closely to what councils' and partners' needs and wants were, revise our strategic priorities, examine our core values and pivot to working from home.

As we move into the 'recovery' phase of the pandemic, councils are dealing with the impact of Covid-19, together with other drivers such as the UK's withdrawal from the European Union and climate change. These are driving a renewed focus on re-thinking and re-imagining public service delivery in ways even more radical than thought possible.

Within this context, adopting approaches which help us to capture and share know-how and ensure that key learning, expertise and experience – internal and external - is shared and applied across Local Government, can help to deliver accelerated, efficient and sustainable improvement.

2. Vision and approach

Our knowledge management vision is:

Learning together with our partners, sharing experiences, approaches and tools to help connect people and ideas in managing the challenges faced by the Scottish Local Government community.

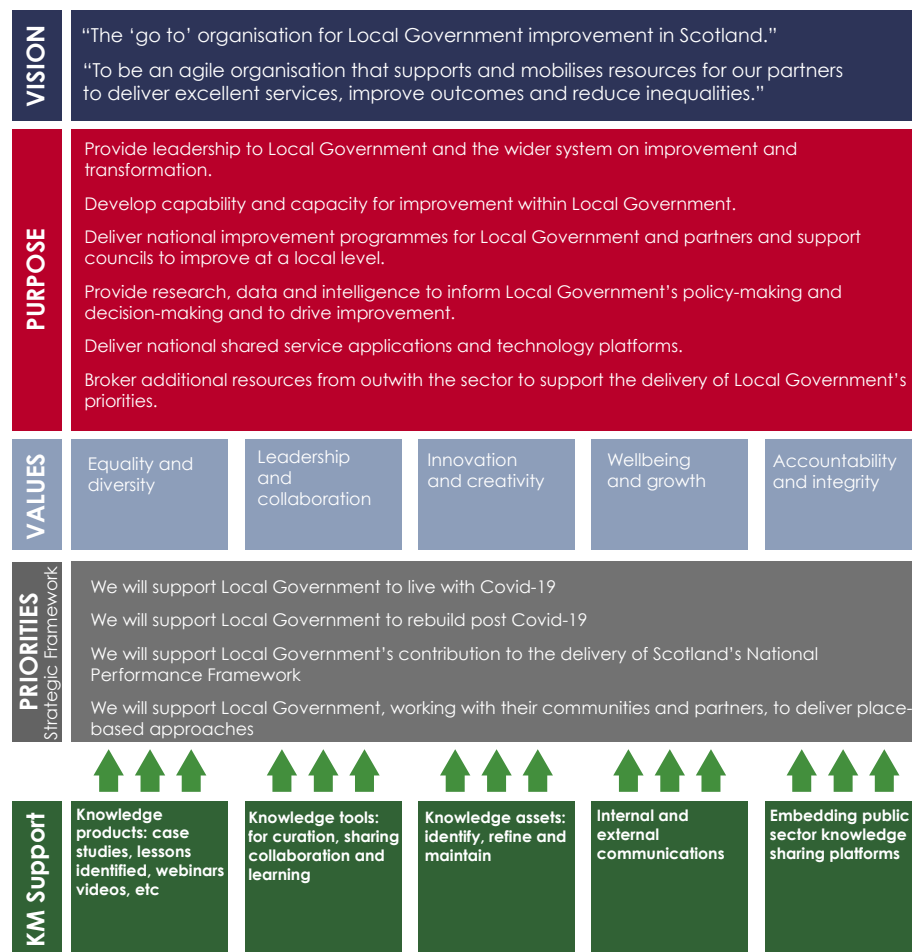
In delivering this vision our approach to knowledge management will be:

- To seek to improve connections between teams and individuals both within the IS and with external partners,
- To recognise that knowledge is ever changing and is context-based,
- To locate expertise, develop communities and wider networks
- To ensure this strategy helps underpin the delivery of our Strategic Framework and annual Business Plans
- To support good employee relationships, wellbeing and our organisational values
- To encourage looking to good practice, regularly reviewing and learning from our actions.

This Knowledge Management strategy takes the Strategic Framework as its starting point, in accordance with the international standard on knowledge management which states that a strategy should focus on serving “organisational objectives, strategies and needs”.

It is also rooted in our values. We recognise that while you can’t truly manage knowledge, you can manage the environment in which is created, shared and used. This is another key element in meeting the international standard (“fostering organisational values which enhance trust”).

The Improvement Service’s vision, purpose, values, strategic priorities and objectives are a series of interconnected layers, and knowledge management underpins them all; providing a layer of support consisting of activities, technologies and knowledge products that feed into our programmes and projects.



2.1 Knowledge Principles

The strategy is also situated in a set of knowledge principles for UK government. These principles, developed for the Civil Service provide a framework for considering knowledge sharing issues.

1. Knowledge is a valued asset.

Knowledge needs to be seen to have value and to achieve this, needs to be well managed. Our action plan aims to highlight how we take knowledge within the Improvement Service and manage it so that the organisation can realise its true benefits.

2. Knowledge needs the right environment in order to thrive.

Promoting behaviour changes and developing a culture where knowledge gathering can flourish is crucial. The action plan will put in place systems and messages which help these changes take place within the organisation.

3. Knowledge is captured where necessary and possible.

Robust processes need to be put in place to capture knowledge from internal and external sources. Our action plan will outline methods to capture information from both of these areas.

4. Knowledge is freely sought and shared.

Conversations and discussions around learning and experiences need to be captured. Our action plan will suggest ways to effectively use communities of practice and technologies such as O365 and Knowledge Hub to effectively record and store this information.

5. Knowledge increases in value through re-use.

Once recorded knowledge needs to be made available for others to adopt and use. Our action plan will suggest methods of achieving this reuse, such as the development of case studies and the repackaging of information to suit the IS' very varied audiences.

6. Knowledge underpins individual learning.

Knowledge is the cornerstone for the individual learning and needs to be tailored to suit the individual and their role within the organisation. Our action plan will provide guides and training materials suits to individual needs based.

7. Knowledge underpins organisational learning.

Collecting and curating the collective knowledge of individuals within the organisation through training, procedures and policies, ways of working and collaborative technologies should help the organisation be more effective and efficient. Our action plan will help bring these areas together to realise these ambitions.

Knowledge Principles

6. Knowledge underpins individual learning

7. Knowledge underpins organisational learning

4. Knowledge is freely sought and shared

5. Knowledge increases in value through re-use

3. Knowledge is captured where necessary and possible

2. Knowledge needs the right environment in order to survive

1. Knowledge is a valued asset

3. Outcomes and objectives

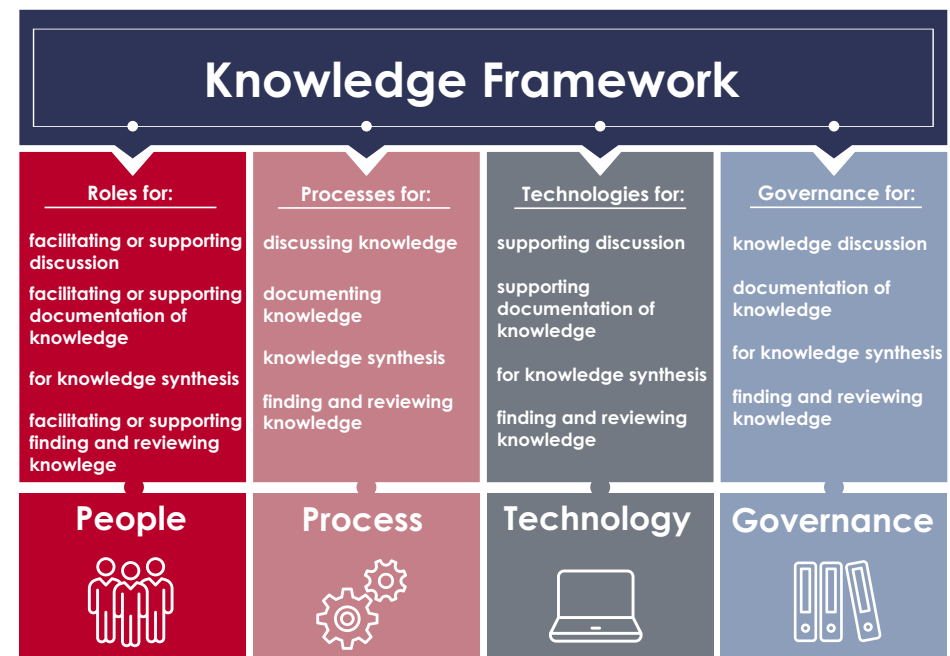
This section details the outcome and objectives of the strategy which drive the action plan outlined in section 6.

3.1 Outcomes

Our Knowledge Management Outcomes are:

1. A knowledge framework for the organisation built around people, process, technology and governance. Guided by ISO 30401
2. Knowledge capture, transfer and re-use is optimised
3. Knowledge is seen as underpinning individual and organisational learning
4. Knowledge assets are valued and recognised
5. A knowledge sharing culture is maintained and supported across all levels of the organisation
6. A mapped knowledge ecosystem for Local Government communities and partners

Objective 1.1: Develop a knowledge framework based on interviews with senior managers and staff surveys to identify critical knowledge and gaps



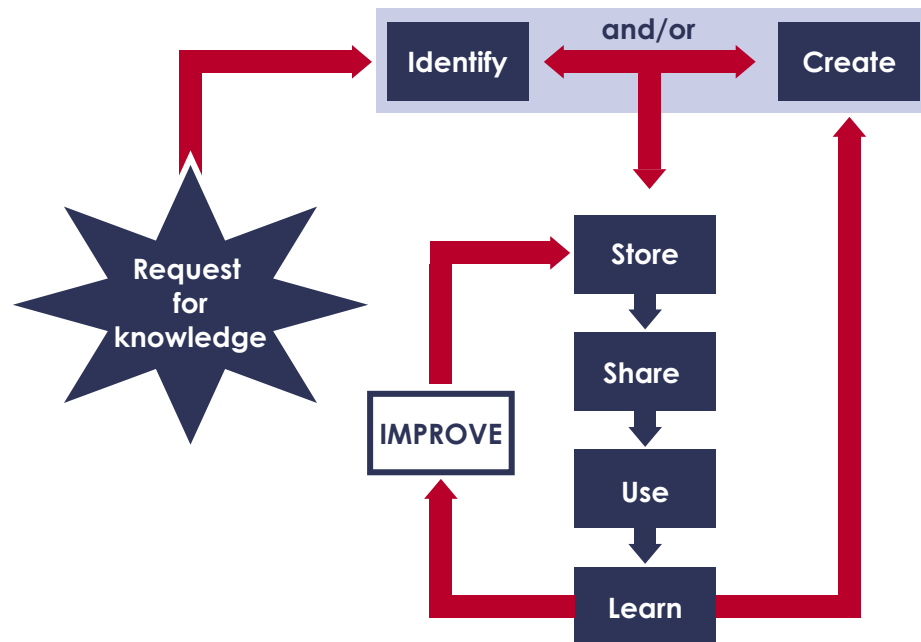
3.2 Objectives by outcome

Outcome 1: A knowledge framework for the organisation built around people, process, technology and governance

Objective 1.2: Assess initiatives/activities and technologies in the knowledge management lifecycle to determine opportunities and gaps, following development of the knowledge framework

All knowledge goes through a series of transformations in an organisation and these can be summarised into a knowledge management lifecycle which will have associated initiatives/activities and technologies at each stage (see Appendix 1).

The Knowledge Management Lifecycle



Objective 1.3: We will develop our knowledge framework to enable the organisation to be assessed against the Knowledge Management systems standard, ISO (30401)

Knowledge Hub (Khub), a powerful digital platform for public servants to collaborate, communicate and connect.

Relevant to: Outcomes 1 and 6

The Knowledge Management Team runs and facilitates the Scottish Public Services Network (SPSN). It enables its 22,000 members to drive significant efficiencies and tackle important social issues. 15,000 members are based in local authorities and 5,000 in the Scottish Government. There are around 600 communities covering a variety of subjects, including business transformation, organisational benchmarking, performance, sustainability and climate change, reducing re-offending and delivering excellent childcare and education. A number of professional associations, including the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland, the Society of Personnel and Development in Scotland, Heads of Planning Scotland and Trading Standards Scotland, utilise the platform for online collaboration.

Collaborative Technology Support

Relevant to: Outcome 1

A skills audit for Office 365 has been issued to all staff, there will be a further short questionnaire issued around good data practices. Information from these will help build a picture of current skill levels and will inform future training and support available.

The Knowledge Management Team have run sessions on other collaborative technology including webinars, online facilitation and accessibility legislation.

SharePoint Development

Relevant to: Outcome 1

The Knowledge Management Team have developed and designed a number of SharePoint sites to focus as an informative intranet for the company. Popular sites include Information Security, the Staff Group and Covid Support. It is proposed the IS jointly works with COSLA to build joint sites.

Outcome 2: Knowledge capture, transfer and re-use is optimised

Objective 2.1: We will identify critical knowledge for the organisation

Objective 2.2: We will determine what knowledge, both documented and not, is vital to the organisation and what is not, to identify where efforts might be directed

Objective 2.3: We will collaborate with Improvement Service Staff on the assessment of different knowledge capture techniques and encourage innovation, but will seek to ensure there are a common set of tools available throughout the organisation

Objective 2.4: We will assess existing approaches to the discovery and promotion of re-useable knowledge

Case Studies

Relevant to: Outcome 2

The Knowledge Management Team has developed a case study template, created a repository of Local Government case studies and are currently building a series of case studies for police/local authority interaction and also for early learning and childcare.

Thought Leadership Series**Relevant to: Outcomes 2, 3 and 5**

The Knowledge Management Team will continue to support the Thought Leadership Series, publishing output around a range of topics, with contributions from across the public sector and academia. We will explore opportunities to connect internationally with Local Government organisations focused on improvement to embed international learning and good practice in our work.

Areas we are currently exploring for future pieces include Climate Change and The Future of Local Government.

Outcome 3: Knowledge is seen as underpinning individual and organisational learning

Objective 3.1: We will facilitate knowledge to underpin our approach to organisational learning

Objective 3.2: We will explore international knowledge exchange opportunities

Lunch and Learn**Relevant to: Outcome 3**

The Knowledge Management Team have supported and developed informal learning sessions. A lunch and learn event is an opportunity for co-workers from different teams to meet and share their skills and expertise. It offers a platform to promote life skills like wellbeing and to engage with outside experts.

Outcome 4: Knowledge assets are valued and recognised

Objective 4.1: We will encourage references to the importance of knowledge and knowledge management to the organisation in our policies and practices

Objective 4.2: We will seek to identify what knowledge is held within the organisation, and by whom, and ensure it is maintained and managed

Horizon scanning and intelligence for account management purposes

Relevant to: Outcomes 2 and 4

This focuses on what relationship managers need to know to support their engagement with local authorities, both in terms of general trends and issues, but also the specific issues facing a Council and the context for this.

As part of this, we are currently exploring how we can produce a dashboard of key information that will help relationship managers develop their understanding of a Council, to enable them to consider how best we can provide support and the types of knowledge, information and research that might be of most interest to a Council. This will include drawing on audit and inspection findings, performance information from the LGBF, updates from IS programmes on engagement with the Council, key news items in LGIU daily updates etc.

Outcome 5: A knowledge sharing culture is maintained and supported across and at levels of the organisation

Objective 5.1: We will develop an approach to monitoring which supports knowledge sharing but does not seek to police it

Objective 5.2: We will encourage and support all staff to share what they know

Objective 5.3: We will encourage leaders and managers to support and endorse a knowledge sharing culture within the organisation

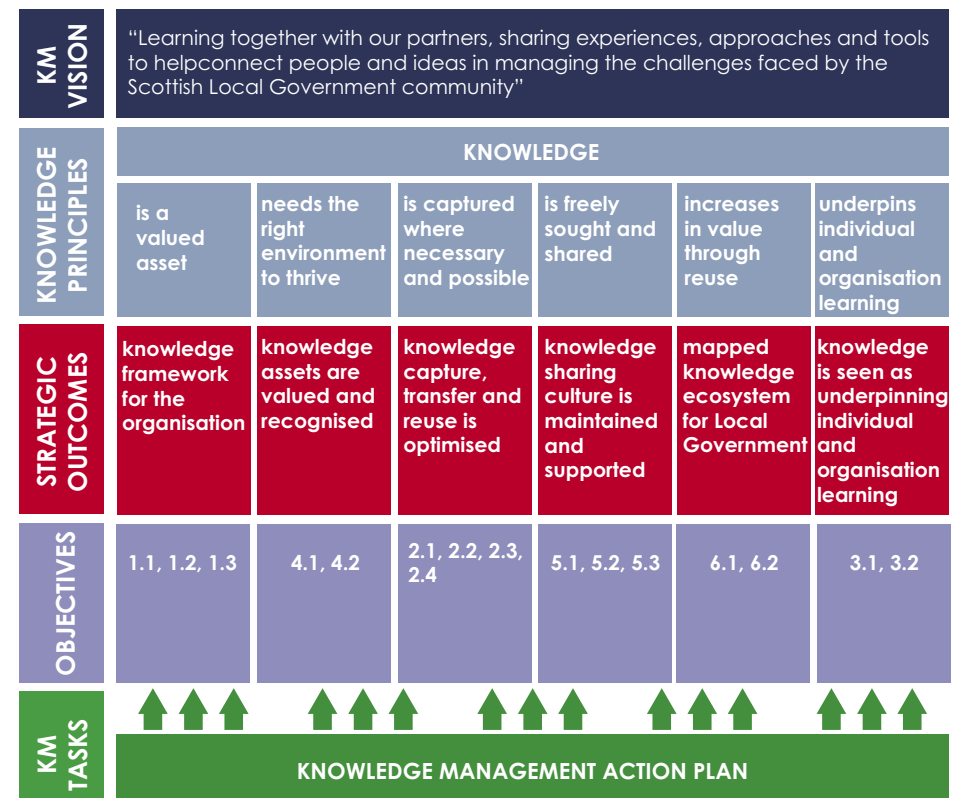
Outcome 6: A mapped knowledge ecosystem for local government communities and partners

Objective 6.1: We will support the development of a mapped knowledge ecosystem for Local Government communities and partners

Objective 6.2: We will undertake stakeholder engagement and communications which will be linked with the IS Communications Strategy

The IS Knowledge Management strategy elements and how they relate to each other can be seen below:

Knowledge Management Strategy Elements



5. Monitoring and Evaluation

We will monitor and measure our knowledge management activities in order to:

- Know where to support and intervene
- Report the status of knowledge management to the Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis
- Evaluate the benefits and impact of Knowledge Management to the organisation
- Identify any changes to the framework that might be needed as the work of the organisation evolves.
- Number of Case Studies documented and shared from collaboration projects. With monitoring of the adoption of the promoted ideas.
- Training sessions hosted covering Knowledge Management tools and techniques.
- Annual staff satisfaction with knowledge management services
- Satisfaction with quality/relevance of knowledge products

Measures will include, but not be limited to:

- Participation in community of practice activities by community members and staff facilitators.
- Provision and adoption of knowledge management solutions for Improvement Service programmes.
- Number of ideas adopted or adapted from others.
- Amount of content provided, viewed or commented on via collaborative and social media.
- Number of presentations from across the Improvement Service provided for sharing.
- Number of external knowledge management ideas incorporated/ shared/implemented and reported to the SLT.

6. Next Steps

6.1 Action Plan

The Knowledge Management Strategy will be underpinned by a corporate plan, which sets out the actions needed to achieve each objective. Actions will be tackled in phases, which will be developed concurrently and describe in detail what they aim to achieve, stage of development, and how they relate to the knowledge management strategy which will be mapped to the international standard on knowledge management systems, ISO 30401.

Initial phases will be as follows.

Phase	Timescale
Phase 1: Horizon scanning for relationship management	September 2021
Phase 2: Development of a knowledge framework	December 2021
Phase 3: Knowledge lifecycle gap analysis	February 2021
Phase 4: Maintaining and sustaining a knowledge sharing culture	Ongoing

7. Governance and reporting

This strategy will be managed by the Knowledge and Collaboration Manager. Progress on it will be reported quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team.

Appendix 1: Knowledge, knowledge management and the knowledge management life cycle

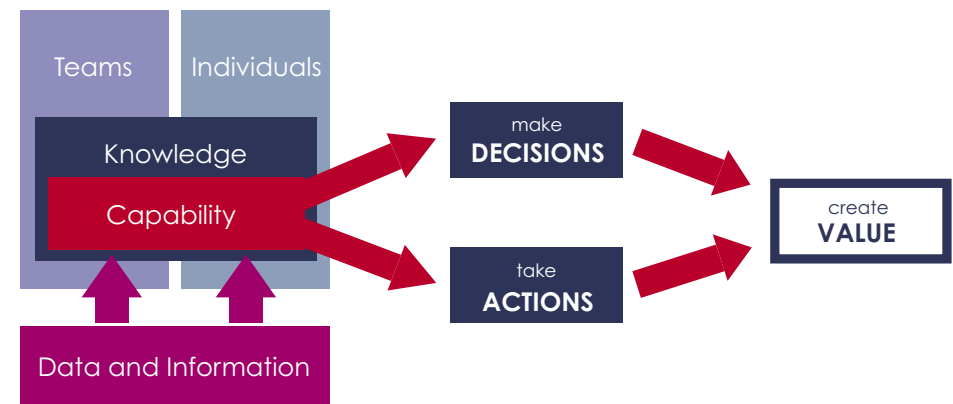
There are various definitions of both of knowledge and knowledge management, but we have used those primarily from the international knowledge management systems standard (ISO 30401) as the basis for our approach.

Knowledge (extracts taken from ISO 30401)

- Knowledge is intangible and complex; it is created by people.
- Knowledge is a key source of value for organisations to meet their objectives.
- Knowledge is a human or organisational asset enabling effective decisions and action in context.
- Knowledge can be individual, collective or organisational. Examples of knowledge include insights and know-how, acquired through learning and experience.
- A knowledge culture depends on the behaviours of seeking, sharing, developing and applying knowledge.

One way of conceptualising knowledge is, sustaining the capability for teams (organisations) and individuals (employees) to translate and process data and information, in context, to make better decisions and act accordingly and, ultimately, create value. The following diagram provides a useful way of portraying this.

What is knowledge?



Having access to training and information is insufficient
Skills, without experience and application, quickly decay
Routine-based value creation destroys your response-ability

**Only when we see capability to process new information,
AND responsively create value, do we consider knowledge to exist**

Source: DeltaKnowledge, 2020

Knowledge management (extracts from ISO 30401)

- Knowledge management is a means of unlocking the potential value of knowledge.
- Knowledge management serves the organisation's objectives, strategies and needs.
- For shared understanding, knowledge management should include interactions between people, using content, processes and technologies where appropriate.
- Knowledge is not managed directly; knowledge management focuses on managing the working environment, this nurturing the knowledge lifecycle (see below)

So, knowledge management can be seen as sitting at the intersection of people, process, technology and governance.

Knowledge management life cycle

Each stage will have associated initiatives/activities and technologies.

Knowledge management lifecycle stage	Characteristics
Identify	• Identified from existing relevant knowledge assets (eg codified in documents) or from tacit knowledge held within the organisation (who knows what)
Create	• A new knowledge asset needs to be created (perhaps through interview, workflow analysis, process mapping...)
Store	• Storing of the knowledge asset (identified or created) in the organisational memory, normally in a structure way, for future retrieval and sharing
Share	• Sharing of knowledge assets retrieved from the organisational memory • Shared through communities of practice or, for more tacit forms of knowledge, through activities such as coaching, mentoring and apprenticeships • Shared via communication and collaboration technologies

Knowledge management lifecycle stage	Characteristics
Use	• knowledge assets are extracted and applied to solve problems, make decisions, improve efficiencies or promote innovative thinking • activities include communities of practice, workshops and tutorials
Learn	• foundation for creating new and refining existing knowledge assets • if valuable to the organisation this enables movement to the improve stage • if not valuable loop back to the identify and/or create stage • activities include, benchmarking, best practice, lessons learned and knowledge gap analysis
Improve	• further refinement of the knowledge asset • new value identified or created from or updates made to keep them current • decision point for the asset to be archived, retired or transferred outside the organisation • activities include After Action Reviews and adapting lessons learned

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