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improvement **service**

Data and Intelligence Strategy

2023—2027

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Introduction

Data and intelligence are important levers for enabling transformation. High quality and timely data, evidence and intelligence are fundamental to informing local decision-making, improving and transforming services, achieving better outcomes and driving efficiencies within current financial constraints.

Progress in this area has accelerated in recent years, with the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting the critical need for good timely data and intelligence to inform decision making. However, even before these times of unprecedented uncertainty, there has been growing recognition within public services that the effective use of data and intelligence is critical to the development of effective and sustainable responses to complex challenges. Questions such as how we deliver better care for an ageing population, how we support improvement in outcomes for some of the most vulnerable in society, and how we restrict the damage we're doing to our environment will continue to challenge us, in an even more challenging financial environment.

Our Strategic Framework 2023 – 27 sets out four strategic priorities, which are all inextricably linked. One of our priorities is specifically focused on data, with a commitment 'to support local government to deliver digital and data enabled transformation'.   This recognises the critical role that the Improvement Service plays in Scotland's developing data ecosystem. Data and intelligence are a fundamental contributor to the delivery of our other three strategic priorities,

alongside our policy, service and improvement expertise, enabling us to deliver a holistic improvement offer:

- We will assist local authorities to transform and transition to new models of service delivery.

- We will support local government to deliver sector-led improvement in a range of policy and service areas.

- We will provide leadership and facilitate collaboration to enable a more preventative, integrated approach to tackling poverty and inequality.

Aligned to our Strategic Framework, this four-year strategy sets out our vision and purpose for our work on data and intelligence, how we will deliver this and what we aspire to achieve.

We have deliberately focused our strategy on data and intelligence, recognising that the value of data lies in the meaningful insights that can be extracted from it to help make decisions, improve services, achieve efficiencies and so forth. We also understand data not just to be quantitative in nature (i.e. numerical), but to also include qualitative data, which covers non-numeric information such as interview transcripts, diaries, field notes, answers to open-ended survey questions and so on.

As we developed our strategy, we undertook an organisational-wide Data Maturity Assessment, to help us continue to develop our own understanding and use of data and intelligence. We believe that this will enable us to better assist and support local authorities as they progress through their own data and intelligence journeys. It will also challenge us to continue to evolve our products and services in ways which support evidence-informed decision-making, that ultimately improves outcomes for citizens and communities.

Whilst we have a number of employees in the Improvement Service specialising in the data and intelligence field, we recognise that data and intelligence cuts across, and is critical to, the effective delivery of all our products, services and work programmes. To help ensure the successful delivery of this Strategy, we are establishing a cross-Improvement Service Data and Intelligence Network to share practice and learning and to continue to build our skills and capacity.

Data and Intelligence - Our Vision

To provide leadership to Local Government and partners to improve the quality and use of data, evidence and intelligence to inform local decision-making, improve and transform services, drive efficiency and deliver priority outcomes.

Data and Intelligence - Our Purpose

Our aspiration for the Improvement Service is to be recognised as the 'go-to' organisation for Local Government improvement in Scotland. It therefore follows that our aspiration for our work on data and intelligence is for the Improvement Service to be recognised as the go-to organisation for improvement in data and intelligence for Local Government in Scotland.

We recognise the skills, capabilities and assets we have across the Improvement Service in relation to data, evidence and intelligence. In this regard, our purpose is to:

- Support local authorities in their efforts to develop the culture, systems and processes to unlock the insight and full value of their data and intelligence.

- Deliver a range of research, evidence, data and insight to inform policy-making, decision-making, improvement and transformation in local authorities and partners.

- Provide leadership to local government and the wider system on improving data management, quality and standards.

- Deliver national shared service applications and technology platforms which support Local Government to take a collective approach to managing its data and intelligence.

Data and Intelligence - Our Principles

These principles will help improve the quality and consistency of our behaviours around data and intelligence and underpin the delivery of this strategy. We will:

- ensure that our data and intelligence is FAIR – Findable; Accessible; Interoperable; and Reusable.

- apply, where relevant, the high standards for statistical rigour set out in the three pillars of the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice – trustworthiness, quality and value.

- ensure that our data and intelligence is managed, used and valued as a vital asset.

- maximise the value of our data through reuse and linkage wherever possible.

- ensure strong data governance.

- promote the reuse of technology and solutions to enhance our data and intelligence services.

- Invest in our staff to ensure the continuous development of data and intelligence skills, knowledge, and expertise.

- Ensure the highest possible standards of Data Security are adhered to at all times.

Data and Intelligence -
Our Improvement Architecture

Within our Strategic Framework, we have provided an overview of our improvement architecture which can be deployed and flexed to support sector-led improvement across different policy and service areas. Our improvement architecture is comprised of a range of tools and approaches which are integral to our work to support local authorities with sector-led improvement.

Our Data, Evidence and Intelligence architecture is comprised of the following tools and approaches:

- Quantitative and qualitative research

- Survey design, hosting, analysis and insights

- Social return on investment analysis

- Process and outcomes evaluation

- General evaluation support and guidance

- Hosting, cleansing and updating local authority datasets

- Data analysis and insight

- Data visualisation and presentation

- Benchmarking

- Delivery of data management systems

- Information and Cyber Security

- Knowledge Hub

- Develop and publish good practice and case studies

- Produce briefings, guidance and toolkits

Data and Intelligence -
Our Priorities

We will support Local Government to develop a data and intelligence culture, capacity and capability

How we will deliver

We will:

■ Strengthen our own and local authorities' data and intelligence capabilities and skills through the transfer of skills and learning and provision of training.

■ Continue to develop skills and resources including in utilising programming languages and advanced analytics tools and techniques. Examples include use of R and Python for data analysis, employing machine learning and statistical techniques, such as natural language processing, and presenting data in easily accessible formats using tools such as PowerBI and Shiny.

■ Explore opportunities around the development and potential for a shared research, data analysis and evaluation service for Scottish local government.

■ Help to build a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of data and intelligence in informing local decision-making, improving and transforming services, achieving better outcomes and driving efficiencies. at all levels across the Improvement Service and within Local Government.

■ Deliver development opportunities for elected members to help them understand their role in developing a data and intelligence culture and the value this brings to local authorities.

■ Provide tailored support to local authorities to help them develop the plans, strategies and investment required to ensure data and intelligence is viewed as a major organisational priority to drive improvement.

■ Utilise our relationships and networks to inform the national conversation about data innovation, data maturity and data transformation.

What we aspire to achieve

By March 2027, we will have strengthened and developed our own data and intelligence capabilities and skills across the organisation, and we will evidence this be re-doing the data maturity assessment and benchmarking our results against those achieved in 2023. We will also be able to evidence work we have delivered to upskill local authority colleagues. We will be providing more research, data analysis and evaluation services to councils on a shared basis, and will be able to evidence the cost-savings these are achieving for local government. We will be able to better define the contribution we are making to Scotland's developing data ecosystem.

We will provide research, data, evidence and insight to inform policy-making, decision-making and to drive improvement and transformation.

How we will deliver

We will:

- Improve the way in which Local Government uses data, evidence and insight to: inform decision-making; design services around people's needs; deliver efficiencies; improve and transform services; engage and empower citizens; and be transparent and publicly accountable.

- Make Improvement Service data, evidence and insight more visible and accessible, including via a range of self-service visualisation tools and resources (e.g. dashboards).

- Provide open data access to geospatial datasets in our Spatial Hub.

- Continue to deliver and develop the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) to support councils' own improvement journeys through access to rich and timely comparative data and analysis, bespoke support for councils and peer events to share practice and learning.

- Use LGBF data to work with Solace and the LGBF Board (and professional associations) to identify and agree areas where there could be an opportunity for Local Government as a sector to focus its improvement architecture on where our improvement support could be targeted.

- Work with Solace and COSLA to ensure that our research, evidence, data and insight services are targeted in areas that will help to inform Local Government policy-making and sector-led improvement.

- Ensure that we utilise research, evidence, data and insight in the delivery of all Improvement Service programmes.

- Strengthen connections between Improvement Service colleagues specialising in data and intelligence and those leading other Improvement Service programmes of work, to ensure that they get the benefit of data and intelligence expertise and capacity.

- Develop our skills and capabilities in predictive/analytical modelling, enabling us to introduce new products and services that will help local authorities leverage data and intelligence to plan for the future needs of communities, target services and maximise impact.

What we aspire to achieve

By March 2027, we will be able to evidence how our research, data, evidence and insight has informed local government policy-making and sector-led improvement. We will have evidence of increased usage of a wider range of Improvement Service self-service data, evidence and insight tools and resources. We will be successful in continuing to secure funding to keep providing open data access to

geospatial datasets, and we will be able to evidence increased usage year-on-year of our open data. We will also have successfully launched new products and/or services on predictive/analytical modelling.

We will support Local Government and partners to improve the management and quality of their data and intelligence, including co-chairing the Local Government Data Standards Board, which should be the path for the adoption of new data standards and facilitating better data sharing within and beyond local government.

How we will deliver

We will:

- Work with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, local authorities and partners to provide collective technical leadership for the adoption of data standards within Scottish Local Government, including co-chairing the Local Government Data Standards Board.

- Continue to improve how our data is stored, moved, accessed, shared and quality assured.

- Work with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, COSLA, Solace, Public Health Scotland and Scottish Government to deliver ambitious plans to create one Data Platform for Scottish Local Government.

- Develop new use cases for IS Datapipeline.scot, which is a 'digital sorting office' that enables secure, seamless data exchange amongst multiple parties.

- Continue to support Local Government to take a collective approach to managing its geospatial data and deriving a financial value from this data.

- Continue to develop the usage and functionality of Improvement Service Data Hub, which facilitates the matching and cleansing of datasets.

- Host, cleanse and update a range of local authority datasets, particularly geospatial data.

- Support all Improvement Service employees and local authorities to identify, join up and share relevant data across services and systems.

What we aspire to achieve

By March 2027, Local government will have successfully launched a Data Platform that we will have been integral to developing. We will be able to demonstrate that our joint work with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government on data standards has resulted in the increased adoption of data standards across local government in key policy areas. We will be able to evidence increased usage of our Datapipeline.scot service which enables the secure transfer of data between organisations. We will be able to evidence our contribution to supporting local authorities to better share data with each other and with other public services, across a range of policy areas.

PRIORITY

We will ensure that we continue to have a robust Information Security Management System in place.

How we will deliver

We will:

- Maintain an information Security Management System, which represents a set of policies, procedures and various other controls that set the organisation's information security rules.

- Maintain our ISO27001 accreditation, which provides high levels of confidence to our customers and partners that we safeguard their data.

- Ensure that data is used legally and ethically within the Improvement Service and we will help guide local authorities where possible.

What we aspire to achieve

By March 2027, we will have continued to successfully maintain our ISO27001 accreditation year-on-year. We will be able to evidence that we have continued to safeguard our customers' and partners' data and there have been no security breaches.

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