CCN
COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK

COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

Technology and digital

Embracing technology to revolutionise services and power up productivity

About County Spotlight

At the County Councils Network (CCN) one of our core objectives is to showcase the innovative work our councils are doing on a daily basis to provide vital frontline services, support local economies, and create thriving communities.

This regular publication seeks to shine the spotlight on the most recent best practice and innovative solutions being put forward by our member councils across a range of different policy areas. Alongside this, it provides an update on the national policy landscape and commentary from our lead members and strategic partners.

To find our more about future themes, or to recommend a case study, please contact ian.burbidge@local.gov.uk.

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CCN View

The expansion in digital technology and AI over the last two decades has been remarkable, and county and unitary councils have embraced these new innovations.

Going back to the 2010s, many local authorities went 'digital first' by moving many of their services online, making them not only more cost effective but easier to access for residents. Since then, we've had the advent of telecare services, the widespread use of apps, and latterly, the growth in artificial intelligence (AI). In each of these diverse and developing industries county and unitary councils have been passionate and willing to try different approaches.

Local authorities have transitioned – mostly under the radar in many circumstances – to widespread use of technology and digital across their services and they will be at the heart of delivering on the new government's aspiration to create a modern, digital country. Councils are a big player in digital: spending £5bn a year in this area.

Whilst growth in technology and digital has been exponential, we must also remember that has been uneven across the country and that is directly linked to councils' spending power. Those who are able to spend the most will be able to invest more in technology and improving services for residents. The government must consider the resources and distribution of funds if it wants all four corners of the country to prosper.

This *County Spotlight* aims to recognise the great work from county and unitary councils and what has been achieved through digital and emerging technologies. It is split across four different themes: AI, technology in people-based services, technology to boost economic growth, and data and analytics.

We have also sought views from our members on arguably the most notable and fastest growing technology at the moment: AI. We hope our survey's findings on benefits, drawbacks, and barriers to adoption will be useful to CCN member councils and policymakers.

This report recognises the speed of advances and as such the vast majority of the case studies profiled are from the last 18 months. Considering the sheer depth of different technology out there, this report aims to focus on developments in the most notable and impactful areas, or those which have made public services better and more efficient for residents.

Cllr Richard Roberts
CCN Economic Growth Spokesperson

Latest Policy Landscape

We are living in an era of rapid expansion in the breadth of technology and digital tools available to local authorities. For years councils have had to adopt new ways of working, partly due to funding pressures and ensuring that public money goes as far as possible but also due to new inventions. The sector moved towards a 'digital by default' approach in the 2010s, ensuring many services went online, and allowing councils to transform their back-office.

As we reach the mid-point of the 2020s, digital innovation is continues to drive change in local authorities, with the types of technology available still as significant as the those on offer a decade ago. As important as this is the timeframe within which these changes are taking place: even five years ago many examples of the technology and software profiled in this edition of the *County Spotlight* had yet to be invented, showing the speed in which the digital sector moves at and the willingness of county and unitary councils to embrace new ways of working.

Artificial Intelligence

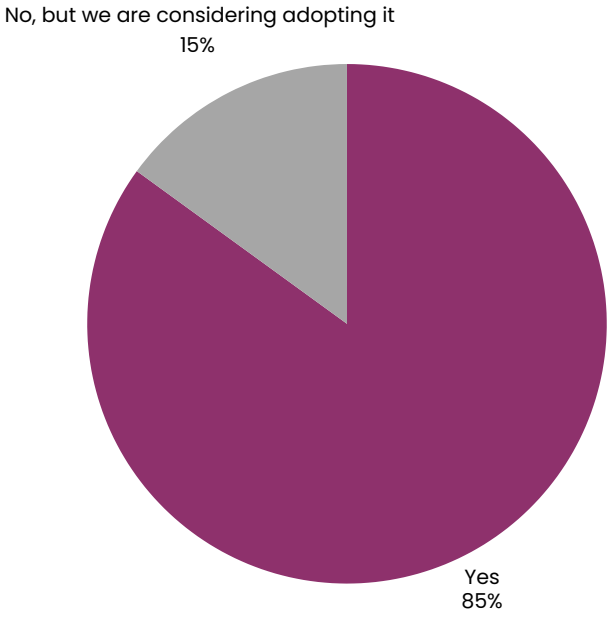
Perhaps no digital advance in the last decade ia as remarkable as artificial intelligence (AI). It was not too long ago that AI was caricatured as out of control robots in *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*, but even a simple Google search is now powered by generative AI (which uses large language models to create text).

According to official estimates, the UK is the third-largest AI market and last month the government published its *AI Opportunities Action Plan* which the Prime Minister said would 'turbocharge' AI usage across the UK. [1]

As part of that announcement, the government pledged the country's first-ever 'AI growth zones' where development will be focused. These zones will be areas with streamlined planning processes for rapid build-out so they can attract investment and good access to the energy grid.

The government then subsequently announced an 'overhaul' of digital technology in the public sector, with an aspiration to increase AI usage and digitalise more services, such as the registration of births and deaths. [2] To gauge CCN member councils' usage of AI, the network ran a short survey of its members in early 2025.

Figure 1: CCN survey - Is your council currently using AI?



1. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Prime Minister sets out blueprint to turbocharge AI
2. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Shake up of tech and AI usage across AI and other public services to deliver plan for charge

Councils are clearly ambitious to utilise this technology, with the overwhelming majority of county and unitary councils now using AI. A total of 85% of respondents said they had begun using AI and the remaining 15% said they had not adopted AI but were considering doing so. There was not a single council that said they *were not* considering adopting AI, or had not done so.

In terms of the departments where AI is being used, administration was where this tech was most commonly being rolled out (76% of respondents) and over two-thirds (69%) said they were using AI within adult social care. Half (54%) of councils said they were utilising AI within children's services.

Figure 2: CCN survey - If your council is using AI, in what departments it is currently being used? (Tick all that apply)

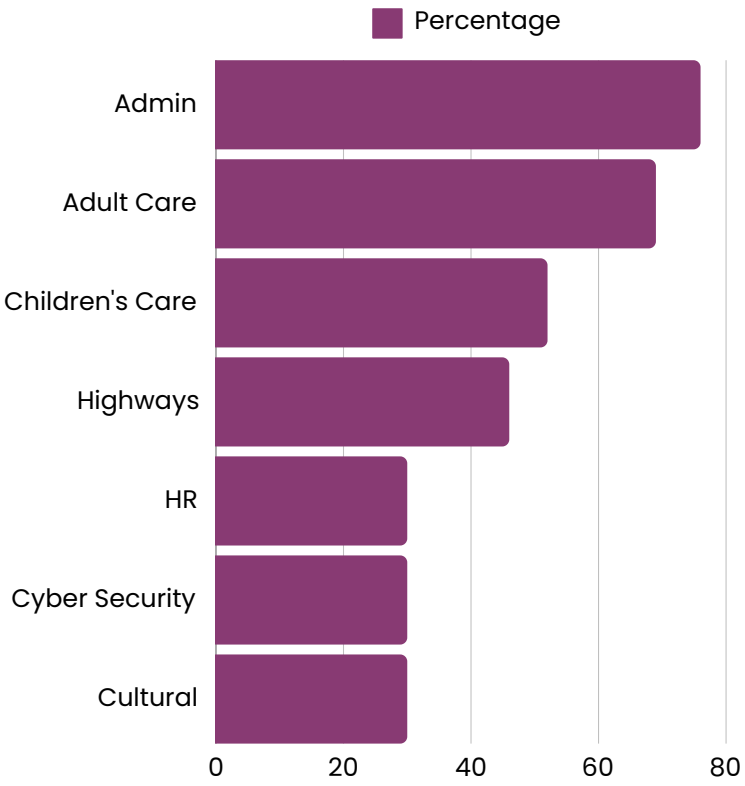
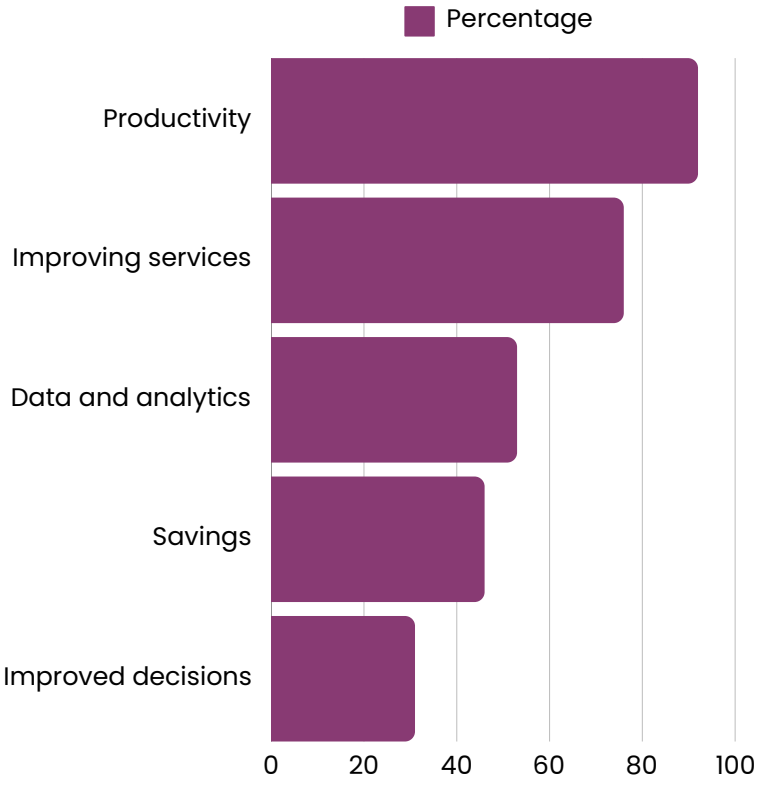


Figure 3: CCN survey: If your council is using AI, what are the benefits of using this technology?



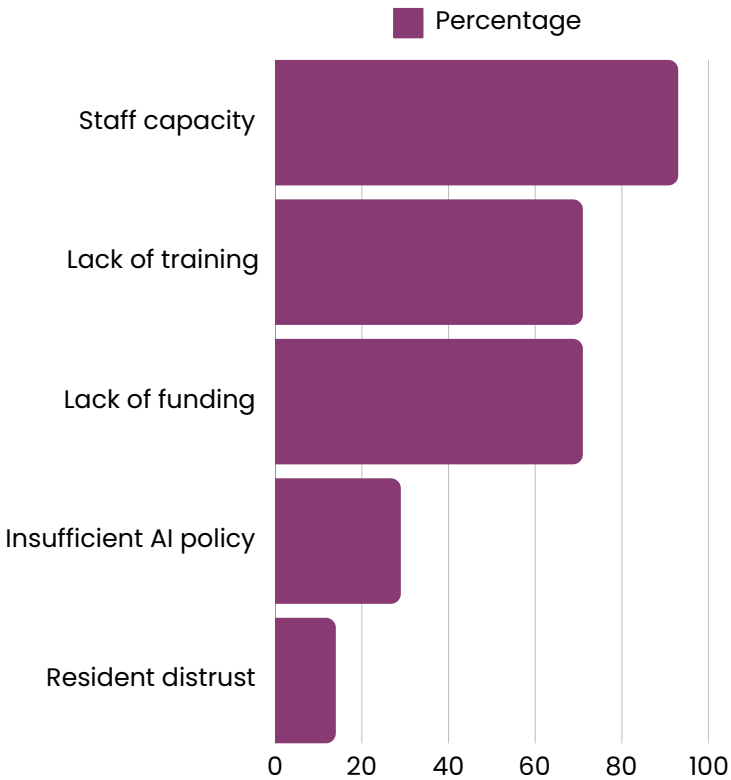
The survey asked respondents to list what they believe were the benefits of using AI. Virtually every CCN member said that AI has improved staff productivity (93%) and three quarters (76%) said they believed its use has improved services. Over half said AI has created better data and analytics (54%) for their authority, and 46% said AI had resulted in cost savings.

Many respondents said that their AI usage was still in its relative infancy and are exploring and quantifying its benefits, including long-term cost savings. However, there is real potential here to streamline workflows and free up staff to do higher value work alongside improving public services.

In terms of concerns around AI, ethical considerations came out top, with 93% of respondents concerned with compiling and using personal data. More than two-thirds (71%) of respondents said they had a lack of capacity within staff to deploy and develop AI and 57% said they were concerned by AI deepfakes and disinformation. Interestingly, not one council said a concern was staff redundancies as a result of using AI.

In a similar vein to the previous question, both staffing capacity and training were cited as the two biggest barriers to rolling out AI within councils. A total of 93% of respondents said employee capacity was an issue, and 71% said staff lack the necessary training. The same (71%) cited a lack of funding was a barrier to deploying AI. A total of 16 councils responded to the survey, which is a 45% response rate.

Figure 4: CCN survey: Irrespective of whether your council is or isn't using AI technology, what are the barriers to deploying AI?



As such, government will need to consider these issues if it wants local authorities to roll out AI more widely as part of its public service reform programme. With the government making it clear that it sees AI not only as a tool to boost the country's productivity but also to make public services work more effectively, it is vital that councils are given the resources to adopt AI more widely across their local authorities, and with the recognition that some of this software will have to be trialled initially.

The CCN's Workforce of the Future report showed that local authority workforce levels in county areas had seen the biggest decline since 2012.[3] With a survey carried out for the report revealing over nine in ten CCN members saying that workforce capacity is a barrier to rolling out AI, the government will have to address training capacity concerns as well as setting out national conditions to help recruit staff (such as pay and pensions) alongside councils' own recruitment campaigns. There is certainly the willingness from employees: a survey conducted as part of the workforce research found a majority want to have more training in their roles.

Looking ahead, the CCN will continue to highlight to government these AI barriers, particularly in terms of resource and workforce capacity. The government's AI Opportunities Action Plan did not detail how councils can be enabled to ramp up their usage nor provide any clarity on future infrastructure funds. It will be imperative that county and unitary councils are

3: County Councils Network and PwC: Workforce for the Future (February 2024)

resourced to roll out AI more widely and this should be a consideration for government in the upcoming Spending Review and councils' fair funding review.

Tech in the care sector

It is important, though, that the debate on new technology looks beyond just AI. County and unitary councils have been ambitious to trial, develop, and deploy other new technologies and this is particularly true for adult social care services. This service area has a long track record of integrating new technologies, for example through pendant alarms.

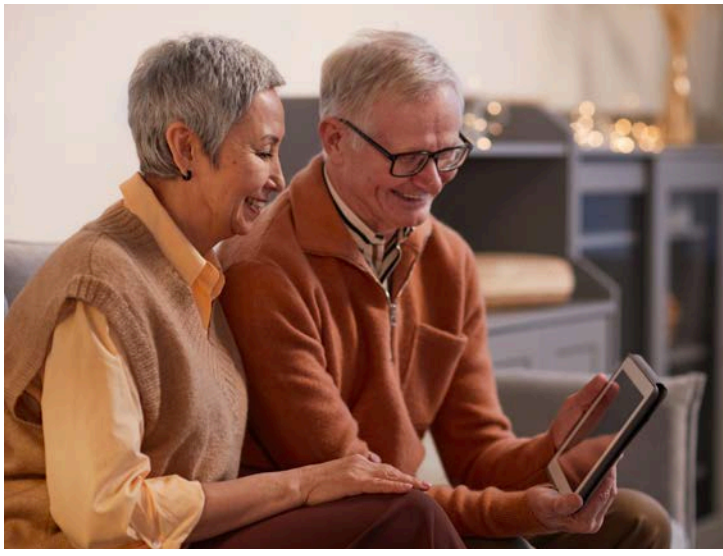
The continued deployment of smart and telecare technology to support peoples' independence has become an increasingly key part of councils' adult social care strategies since the CCN first profiled this fledgling sector back in 2021.

These include fall sensors, predictive analytics, wearables to help people go out, and video devices so care users can speak to their carers without both physically being in the same room. In recent years, it has expanded to the likes of robo-pets that help individuals with dementia, loneliness and anxiety. More widely it is clear that with ageing demographics the smart use of technology is essential to councils being able to deliver services in the future – which is why the new government has made 'analogue to digital' one of the three central planks of its new strategy for health and social care.

The CCN has produced two reports on[4] assistive technology within social care with the prime objective of this technology focused on supporting individuals with their housing, health and care: allowing residents to maintain their independence for longer.

Technological advances also allow for councils to use data and predictive analytics in social care (and other services) in order to better predict demand going forward to make more informed budgetary decisions. And with ethical considerations (particularly on data compiling and usage), county and unitary members have set up governance boards to oversee decisions and policies, alongside being transparent over data usage.

Even four years ago when such advances were still in relative infancy, 94% of CCN members said they had an assistive technology strategy. However, over-two thirds believed that it was more difficult to roll out such technology in county and rural areas due to poor mobile and broadband connectivity in some areas.[5]



4. CCN and Tunstall: Employing Assistive Technology in Social Care (2021) and Adopting The Right Technology To Transform Social Care (2023)
5. CCN and Tunstall: Employing Assistive Technology in Social Care (2021) pg 15

That 2021 report recommended a national strategic framework for assistive technology in social care. As we head into a period when social care reform is again on the radar with the announcement of the Baroness Casey Commission ahead of the introduction of a National Care Service, the commission should consider the barriers to rolling out technology, the resource required to boost delivery and the education and training workforce requirements to do so.

In an era of financial and workforce challenges, it is likely that this sort of technological innovation will need to be a key element of the National Care Service in order to meet predicted care demand over the next few years. As such, it will be vital that county and unitary councils are resourced and empowered to invest in this technology.

Boosting local services

Outside of people-based services, county and unitary councils have a proven track record of using the latest technology and innovations to make public services better for residents. This ranges from widely used technology such as QR codes to scan for information, to less familiar examples such as 'vacuum excavators' to avoid hitting pipework when doing construction work.

Incorporating telecare services and back-office functions, local government was estimated to have spent £5bn on digital technology in 2023, which is five times more than the police and rail services. [6]

Building on this, the new government has recently committed to greater digitisation of public services across the country, including the launch of a Digital Commercial Centre of Excellence which ministers say will overhaul how the public sector delivers technology and how it can be scaled further. [7]

The government has said that this review will look at how local authorities can negotiate contracts together rather than individually. This chimes with its current reform agenda for councils, particularly reorganisation of local authorities. Having fewer local authorities in two-tier county areas will allow new authorities to scale their purchasing power when it comes to digital contracts, but the CCN has argued that economies of scale only really kick in when new authorities cover a population of 500,000 or more.

Funding was also highlighted in the government's review as an impediment to rolling out digital technology even further. Whilst progress has been very good from county and unitary councils, county areas remain historically underfunded and many do not have the same level of resource to invest as other parts of the country. To prevent a digital gap from opening up between local areas, the government must be mindful of the impact of any adverse redistribution from county areas in the forthcoming fair funding review.

6. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: State of Digital Government Review (Jan 2025) pg 34
7. Department for Science. Innovation and Technology: Shake up of tech and AI usage across the NHS and other public services (Jan 2025)

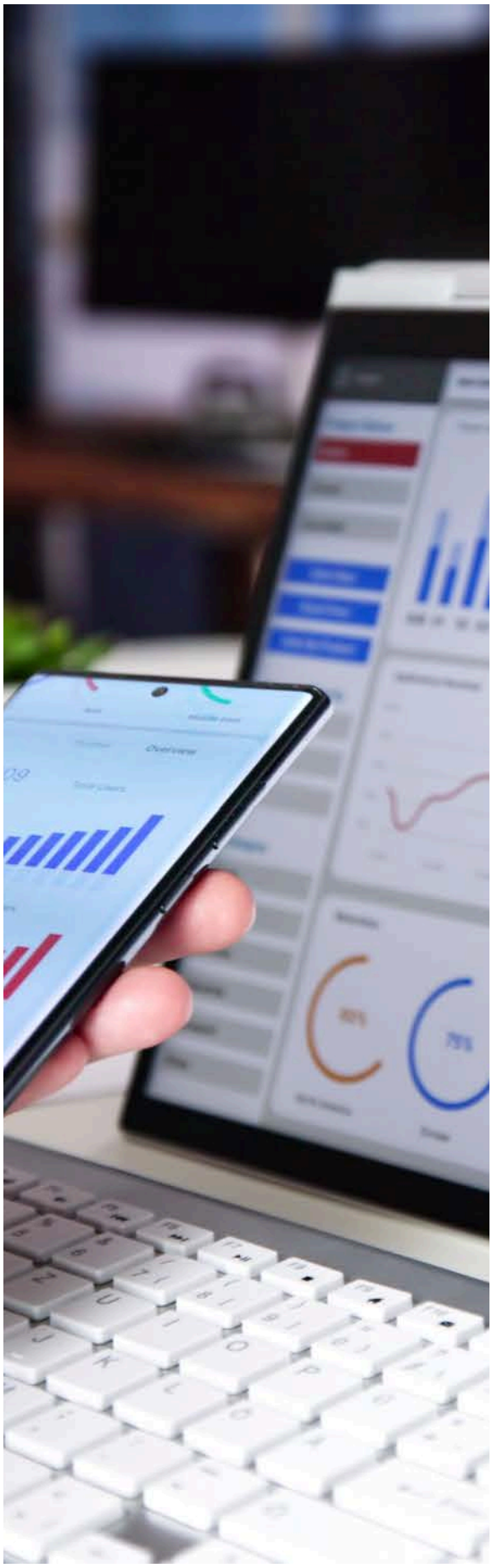
Data and analytics

This also applies for data and analytics, where it is increasingly important for local authorities to have strong capabilities to drill down into data and use it to improve services or focus policy and resource.

With estimates that only 2% of local government's workforce are dedicated digital and data employees, this has led to a reliance on outsourcing. More will need to be done to improve recruitment and skills as the trend of increased digitalisation, AI, and data analysis is likely to continue.

With county areas having specific recruitment challenges, such as attracting specific workers to rural areas, more consideration will need to be given to county and unitary councils from national policymakers.

However, the government is planning on setting up a 'Mayoral Data Council' as part of its devolution plans in England,[8] which will include senior data leaders from the regional combined authorities to provide input into central decision making on data issues that affect them. With several CCN areas still yet to progress a mayoral devolution deal in their areas despite local willingness, it is important that government moves quickly to agree more devolution arrangements with county areas, to ensure they are not locked out of what could be an important forum.



8. Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government: Devolution White Paper (December 2024)

COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

Theme 1

Breaking new ground in AI

The press release to announce the government's AI Opportunities Action Plan cited an example of AI being able to spot potholes as one of things this bourgeoning technology can do to improve public services.

But as this chapter will show, in practice CCN member councils have been ahead of this particular curve for a long time. They having been experimenting with AI for a number of years, rolling it out within departments where trials have been successful.

Equally it is not just in public services directly where AI is being deployed. Councils have embraced this technology across their back-office functions to improve productivity so staff can deal with more requests or devote more time to higher-value tasks.

These case studies show the potential of AI, and provide a fascinating snapshot of things to come as this technology becomes more and more widely available.

But councils will have to tread carefully, taking on board ethical and workforce capacity considerations.

Above: Hertfordshire's 'pothole preventing' robot

Surrey County Council

Moving from manual pothole inspections to AI checks

Surrey County Council is the first local authority in the UK to begin moving away from manual pothole inspections and solely use video and AI to log and programme road repairs.

From January this year, the county council is starting to fit computer vision cameras inside highways inspection vehicles which will spot and photograph potholes. These are then automatically recorded for repair. Future enhancements will see other defects such as missing signs and foliage overgrowth also programmed for repair.

As a result of the AI, highways staff will no longer need to step onto the road to manually carry out inspections, enabling them to track more defects across what is one of the country's busiest highway networks. Potholes that don't need immediate attention will also be regularly tracked to ensure they are dealt with when needed. The council has been trialling AI usage to track potholes since 2021 and is now rolling it out more widely, in partnership with Route Reports.

Read more here

Buckinghamshire Council

Saving staff 90 minutes a day using the latest AI

Buckinghamshire Council stands out as a pioneer in adopting Microsoft's AI tool, Copilot, and the authority has said there is evidence that staff are saving up to 90 minutes a day using the technology.

Copilot uses large language models to draft and summarise documents, analyse data, and streamline administrative tasks. First rolled out in 2023, the council asked departments to 'pitch' to use Copilot in their areas, and it was first rolled out in the authority's customer contact centre, which deals with around 8,500 calls a week. Early results suggesting its transcribing and summarising features have reduced time spent on calls.

The council set up an AI governance board in 2023 to oversee this Copilot rollout and other AI endeavours, meeting as regularly as every fortnight. This enables to officers to not only monitor progress with Copilot, but to highlight any issues and challenges with the software to try and refine it. The software is currently in a trial phase at the unitary.

Read more here

Hertfordshire County Council

Deploying the 'world's first' pothole preventing robot

An autonomous machine that uses AI, dubbed the world's first pothole preventing robot, was deployed in Hertfordshire last year.

The Autonomous Road Repair System (ARRES) robot uses AI to identify cracks in roads and then fills them to stop water getting in. This in turn prevents the crack worsening and developing into a pothole.

Hertfordshire County Council's engineers have worked on the technology with company Robotiz3d and the University of Liverpool, and tested it on a road in Potters Bar for the first time last March.

It is the first piece of kit of its kind in the world, and could revolutionise how potholes are fixed, saving time and money.

Read more here

Durham County Council

Helping with residents' cost of living with AI recipes

Durham County Council has been using AI to help feed families facing the impacts of the increased cost of living.

The unitary authority partnered with FareShare North East last winter to hand out free meal kits to identified families. The kits were made up of surplus and unused food that would have otherwise gone to landfill. These included vegetables and food with a long shelf life.

To help families create meals with the food they receive, the council provided instructions to download an AI system where they could receive a recipe and cooking instructions by inputting the ingredients they had.

The council says this has the dual impact of cutting down on food waste and helping with the increasing costs of living for families in the county, with the AI tool assisting families to cook specific meals and recipes.

Read more here

COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

Theme 2

Using tech to improve residents' lives

Alongside AI, CCN member councils have been enthusiastically adopting other forms of technology as a means to both improve residents' lives and make services work better.

This is especially true in adult social care services, where there has been a rapid expansion of telecare products made available over the last few years, such as falls sensors, wearables, and video calling devices.

This theme highlights how technology such as those above have been embedded into CCN members' adult social care departments, saving money and helping care users stay independent for longer.

With more and more products becoming available, technology such as virtual reality headsets are also used in other people-based services such as special educational needs and disabilities, to try and improve services and experiences for young people.

Suffolk County Council

Pioneering assistive technology and saving £30m

Suffolk County Council launched its county-wide digital assistive technology service *Cassius* back in 2021, with the likes of remote sensors, communication devices and falls aids receiving high levels of satisfaction from residents and delivering significant savings for the local authority.

With over 12,000 digital care support items ordered to date, the authority has saved £29.4m since rolling out the technology, via reduced planned growth in its social care budget. *Cassius* has resulted in a reduction of 180,000 care hours per year, 1.5m hospital days saved, and 463 people are now living at home with the technology rather than in residential care. With 19.6% of those receiving adult social care in Suffolk now supported with a *Cassius* device, the council says it has enabled people to live more independent yet connected lives.

This has been done by installing technology such as room sensors to track activity, smart speakers for reminders, video phones to enable calls with care workers (instead of them visiting homes), and wearables to help people go out and access support if they require it.

Read more here

Somerset Council

Technology to help people stay at home for longer

From Alexa devices that open curtains to 'robo-cats' that help people manage dementia and anxiety, to mechanical birds that encourages people with limited mobility to sing whilst they walk, Somerset Council's Independent Living Centres offer a range of equipment and technology which can help people live independently at home for long.

Based in three locations across the county, on-site occupational therapists conduct free, bespoke appointments which are bookable on the council's website and teach Somerset residents how innovative at home technology and equipment can help people to live more safe and independent lives.

These living centres are one of the ways the council is helping people with health and care needs to live independently for longer by managing their conditions, reducing the potential for falls, and making daily tasks easier. The council says this improves the lives of residents as well as freeing up council care workers to focus on residents who have more intense needs.

Read more here

West Northamptonshire Council

Using virtual reality headsets to improve pupils' confidence

West Northamptonshire Council has used virtual reality technology to help students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to improve their confidence and support them in travelling independently to school.

The council partnered with VR Therapies to trial the technology at Billing Brook School in Northampton last summer for the project, where pupils with autism used the technology to reduce their anxiety and improve their memory using interactive games. They then practised their real-life journey to school and were tested on activities such as remembering to lock their front door, navigating their way to the bus stop and feeling confident catching a bus.

Following the successful trial, the unitary council is working with the University of Northampton to create a travel training programme to help improve pupils' independence in the county, and the authority is also exploring work with BT.

Read more here

East Sussex County Council

Researching how tech can improve residents' happiness

A research project to see how technology can help with the happiness and wellbeing of older residents in social care is underway in East Sussex.

East Sussex County Council launched the Living Lab project last summer at a sheltered housing facility in Peacehaven. This included the installation of an interactive digital table, where residents can play games with each other, virtual reality headsets where they can go on 'day trips' and heat sensor fall monitors installed in their apartments.

The pilot project is being delivered in partnership with NHS Sussex and the University of Brighton, with the university evaluating how effective this tech is in improving the wellbeing, health and happiness of elderly residents.

Separately, the council rolled out mechanical 'robo-pets' in 2023 to help people with early-stage dementia. These automated pets help to reduce anxiety and provide companionship.

Read more here

COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

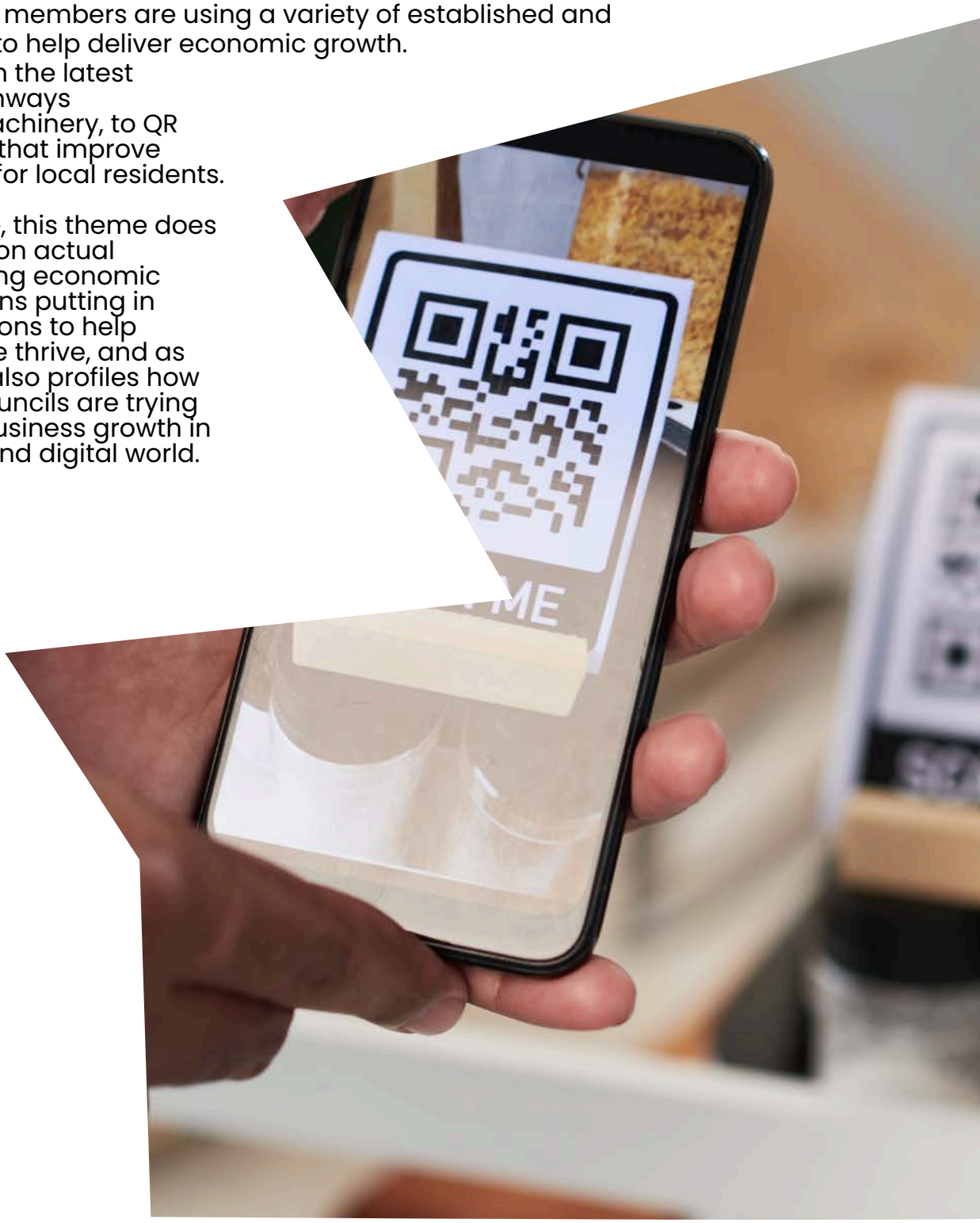
Theme 3

Tech-driven economic growth

Whilst the people-based services in the previous theme consume the largest proportion of local authority budgets, economic growth remains a vital responsibility for county and unitary councils. Raising local productivity not only boosts local growth and prosperity, but in turn powers national growth.

To that end, CCN members are using a variety of established and new technology to help deliver economic growth. These range from the latest inventions in highways maintenance machinery, to QR codes and apps that improve services directly for local residents.

At the same time, this theme does not focus purely on actual technology. Driving economic growth also means putting in place the conditions to help private enterprise thrive, and as such this report also profiles how CCN member councils are trying to nurture new business growth in the technology and digital world.



Cumberland Council

Transforming residents' libraries experience with an app

A new app for library members was launched in Cumbria by Cumberland Council last year, with the authority saying that it could 'transform' residents' libraries experience.

The library app, which has also been rolled out by neighbouring Westmorland and Furness Council, allows users to access their library card digitally. This allows them to renew and reserve items from anywhere without having to go to a library, and search the council's catalogue for books, e-books, newspapers and magazines to read for free. In addition, people can scan books in shops to check their availability at their local library.

Thanks to funding from LibraryOn, a national grants programme, as well as the mobile app, immersive virtual tours of libraries have also been created of libraries in Carlisle, Whitehaven and Workington. These virtual tours offer residents a sneak peek into the layout of the library building before visiting.

Read more here

Herefordshire Council

Knowing when a Herefordshire bus is coming in real time

QR codes have been rolled out at over 500 bus stops across Herefordshire, so passengers can receive instant information on when the next bus will arrive.

By scanning the code using a phone at bus stops, residents are then taken to a website that has real time information on when the next vehicle will arrive at that stop, with the information communicated directly from a locator on the bus. It will then count down the minutes until it arrives at that stop.

Once scanned, residents can access the webpage in future so they can check when the next bus is coming without actually being at the bus stop as long as it less than an hour before scheduled departure. Herefordshire Council says that it hopes this technology will enable people to get around the county easier and encourage people to travel using public transport.

Read more here

Westmorland and Furness Council

Adopting cutting edge technology in road maintainence

Cutting edge technology has been used by Westmorland and Furness Council to ensure that roadworks do not disrupt services for residents and to fill in potholes more effectively.

Contractors working for the unitary council used a giant vacuum excavator in Holme in late 2023 on a flood alleviation project to safely work around buried services such as water and gas pipes, sewers and telecommunications. The machine acts as a giant vacuum cleaner, and identified a gas pipe that was not on initial mapping because it was buried so deep. The machine helped the council avoid almost 75 services whilst laying 280 metres of pipework.

The authority is also using several innovative 'jet patching' machines to repair potholes, which can make up 150 permanent repairs every day in a fraction of the time it takes for more conventional methods.

Read more here

Cheshire East Council

Nurturing digital and technology startups in Cheshire

A 'technology and digital innovation campus', designed to nurture the fast growing digital and technology sectors is being built in Crewe, in a multi-million pound project led by Cheshire East Council.

The council secured funding from the previous government's Future High Streets Fund to covert Crewe's Municipal Buildings Annex into flexible working space for start-up and growing businesses. Once built, the campus would be operated by a specialist workspace provider who will manage the services it offers, including tailored business support.

The unitary authority hopes this office space will bring new types of business to Crewe, and it hops that its focus on digital and technology sectors could promote innovation and help small and medium businesses to connect and collaborate.

Read more here

COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

Theme 4

Data-driven decisions and support

The final theme of this *County Spotlight* moves away from digital and physical technology to a separate but related topic: data and analytics.

It is not only important to have tools at your disposal, but CCN member councils are adept at analysing results and using this data to inform decision-making.

An innovative example in this chapter includes a CCN member installing devices in its lorries in order to measure phone signal strength, with the resulting data analysed to better target support.

In addition, other CCN members are analysing their own local data to see where they can make improvements. Others have begun ambitious training for their staff so they become proficient in analysis and data, enabling better officer decisions and recommendations.

Recognising that data is a useful local resource, this theme also highlights how CCN member councils have set up their own data resources so residents, businesses, and the public sector can look up a variety of local metrics.

Shropshire Council

Surveying phone signal strength using waste lorries

Shropshire's waste lorries were fitted with equipment to check mobile signals street by street in a what was the UK's largest independent study of real-world connectivity last summer.

The novel way of surveying signal was achieved by installing the devices into Shropshire Council's fleet in the Shropshire area of the study which was commissioned by the River Severn Partnership Advanced Wireless Innovation Region, which is managed by the unitary council. Data was independently accrued and based on actual on-street measurements, rather than estimated measurements from phone companies. Now live, the data allows residents to see which mobile phone operators offer the best signal with 30m outside their home, and Shropshire Council says that this data will also help to inform planning consents when applications are made for more masts in areas.

The on-street survey will extend across the River Severn catchment area and will provide results for Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire once completed.

Read more here

Essex County Council

Ambitious plans to become a data-led local authority

Essex County Council has recently launched its 'Data Academy': training for 50 of its staff as part of its ambitious plans to become a data-led organisation.

The county council's goal is to enable more staff to become proficient in data and analytics, strengthening the council's data capabilities, boosting productivity and decision-making. Funded by the Apprenticeship Levy and with training provided by Multiverse, programmes include 'Data Insights for Business Decisions' to equip commissioners working within ECC with the technical skills and knowledge for data.

The 13-month 'Data Fellowship', a level-4 apprenticeship, will upskill data professionals, while the degree-level 'Advanced Data Fellowship' will give graduates the tools to build data analytics capabilities within the organisation and use data to support decision-making. Programmes advance from an introduction to data to analytics, ethics, working with AI and even mentoring.

Read more here

Worcestershire County Council

Analysing data to boost tourism

Worcestershire County Council is analysing data to try and boost tourism – and economic growth – in the area.

County and unitary authorities play an important role in encouraging tourism and the councils data will allow it to make even more improvements, including aspiring to become a £1bn tourist economy. In 2023, tourism's annual value to Worcestershire reached £961m.

Latest analysis from the county council reveals that Worcestershire saw a 2% decrease in overnight trips compared to the national trend which was down 5%, but number of nights visitors are staying has increased from 3.2m to 3.6m which is up 11% on 2022 and up 4% on 2019. Visitors now stay an average of three nights per trip, surpassing pre-pandemic levels and has translated into an 8% rise in expenditure by overnight visitors. In addition, the council's analysis shows tourists now spend an average of £170 per trip.

Read more here

Nottinghamshire County Council

Nottinghamshire Observatory brings together county data

A new data resource for councillors, residents and businesses was launched last year by Nottinghamshire County Council.

The Nottinghamshire Observatory brings together a variety of data on the county, from county-wide figures to district, ward and neighbourhood data. Topics include environment, deprivation, health, crime and employment and allows users to create high quality graphs, charts and maps.

As well as providing residents and businesses with localised data, the county council said that it will use Nottinghamshire Observatory to help with research and funding bids to attract more investment to the county, by evidencing the areas most in need of resource and focus.

But the local authority hopes it the data will be used not just by itself in securing grant funding, but by other public organisations such as universities, charities and health services.

Read more here

CCN

THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

Founded in 1997, the County Councils Network is a network of 20 county councils and 17 unitary authorities that serve county areas.

The network is a cross party organisation, expressing the views of member councils to the Local Government Association and to the government.

To discuss this document in more detail, please contact:

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COUNTY SPOTLIGHT