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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

VCS and Council Data Exchange

Final report

November 2020

Introduction

Project Purpose

During the COVID-19 crisis councils and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations have collaborated to provide vital support services to those in need. This work has demonstrated the value of these partnerships but also highlighted some of the barriers to more effective working.

A partnership of London Borough of Camden and Central Bedfordshire Council alongside LOTI and the GLA successfully won funding from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government's (MHCLG) COVID-19 Challenge to take forward a project to run discovery research to:

- Identify barriers and opportunities to data exchange between VCS and councils
- Co-design a solution based on the research findings which could be prototyped and tested during the ongoing pandemic response and shared openly with the wider sector

Delivering the work

The partnership appointed FutureGov to deliver the work over the course of 8 weeks starting in September 2020 and concluding on 30th October 2020.

This report summarises the findings of the research, describes the prioritised solution and outlines the next steps to begin prototyping and testing.

The research focussed on exploring the experiences and perspectives of the people involved in COVID-19 response from March 2020 onwards. The research combined interviews, workshops and desk research to identify findings and opportunities. All research was conducted remotely due to the ongoing pandemic.

In each of the eight weeks, sponsors from the Partnership and FutureGov held a session to review emerging findings and prioritise next steps. The project held three online, open invite "show and tell" sessions to share progress and gain input from a wider audience.

The partnership and FutureGov warmly thank everyone who shared their time and opinions.

The Brief

How can we **overcome the data sharing challenges** between councils and the voluntary community sector (VCS) that stop organisations being able to **find and provide residents the right support when they need it?**

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Executive Summary

Quality of relationships shapes the quality of data

Keeping pace with a pandemic

Our research initially set out to find more effective ways to share vital data about vulnerable residents between partners. Yet, whilst there is clearly still room for improvement in the data sharing that is happening, **we observed people becoming increasingly concerned about the data sharing that is not happening.**

Incredible progress was made in the first months of the pandemic as VCS and councils put data at the heart of the emergency response. However, local partners now need to plan for how to address the longer term impacts of COVID-19 on local communities.

This requires spotting emerging patterns and supporting newly at risk residents about whom little may be known. **More sophisticated data sharing that is sharing necessary to inform effective local responses is not yet routinely taking place between Councils and VCS**

Reframing relationships

Our research highlights the importance of building mutual trust and understanding to unlock more valuable local data partnerships.

We have identified three opportunity areas that encourage local partners to harness both the best elements of the pandemic response and each others unique skills to reimagine what's achievable with data.

Together with VCS and council staff from both councils, **we have codesigned the concept of community insights projects as a way to build new relationships and bring the power of qualitative and quantitative data together.**

For Camden this means establishing a new way of working. For Central Bedfordshire it represents the next evolution to existing relationships.

We hope for both areas, as well as others in the wider sector, the ideas in this report will help provide a framework to create increasingly open, equitable and ambitious data sharing partnerships.

What we learned

Finding 1: Lack of understanding is a bigger barrier than a lack of technology

Opportunity 1:
New relationships before new tools

Finding 2:
'Data' is a limiting term

Opportunity 2:
Reframe what data can be to unlock the way forward

Finding 3:
Pragmatism is creating progress

Opportunity 3:
Scale small solutions for big gains

Prioritised solution

Community insights projects

bring together VCS staff and council data experts to explore how different types of quantitative and qualitative data can be used to deliver better support to residents during the pandemic and beyond. Combining their strengths, skills and capacity to address shared 'blindspot' issues. Planning, interpreting and responding as one.

Why?

- Build relationships and trust
- Develop new insights to plan vital services
- Find new ways to share and use stories and data
- Improve forward planning
- Help residents and communities at risk

From ideas to action



I'm really fearful for at-risk groups of residents out there about which we have almost no information. Right now, we're simply guessing and reacting using our own instincts and numbers...together we must surely have different pieces of the puzzle to help us be smarter?

-VCS

Getting started

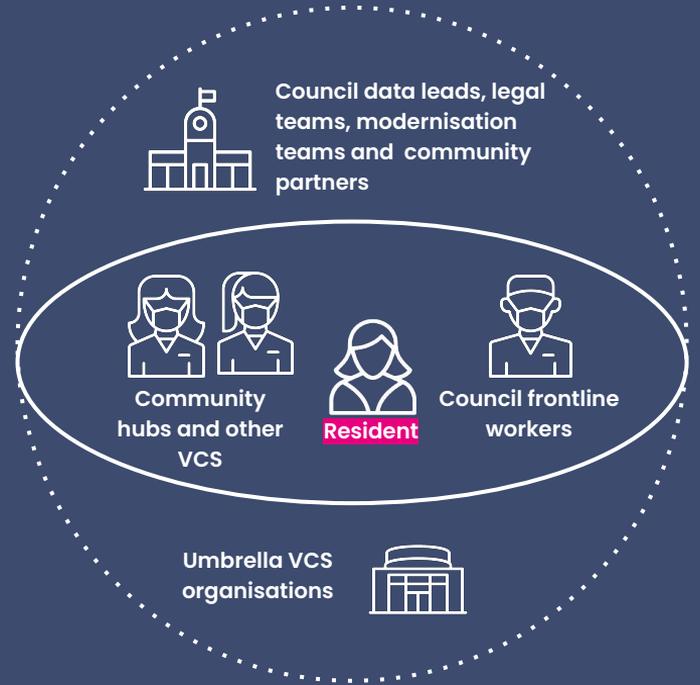
- Camden to setup first community insights project team in winter 2020/21.
- Initial ideas and participants identified
- User manual and learning framework created.
- Partnership of Central Bedfordshire, LOTI, MHCLG will continue to support and publically share updates.

Approach & considerations

How we worked together

Working remotely, FutureGov's multidisciplinary team of design researchers, service designers and data consultants ran interviews, desk research and workshops together with staff from both councils and local VCS organisations, ranging from one person groups, through to national organisations.

Through a weekly call with the two councils, LOTI, MHCLG and FutureGov, we evolved the brief, opportunities and ideas together leading us to understand the solution needs to go beyond supporting data sharing. Instead, it should promote novel ways of working paving the way for a new future between VCS and councils.



What we set out to learn

Culture

- The relationships and ways of sharing data between VCS and councils
- What data meant to the VCS and councils

Process

- To what extent data played an active role (or not) in informing behaviours and decisions
- To what extent VCS and councils perceive and understand one another's data information priorities and where they overlap

Governance

- What real (and perceived) barriers to sharing data exist?

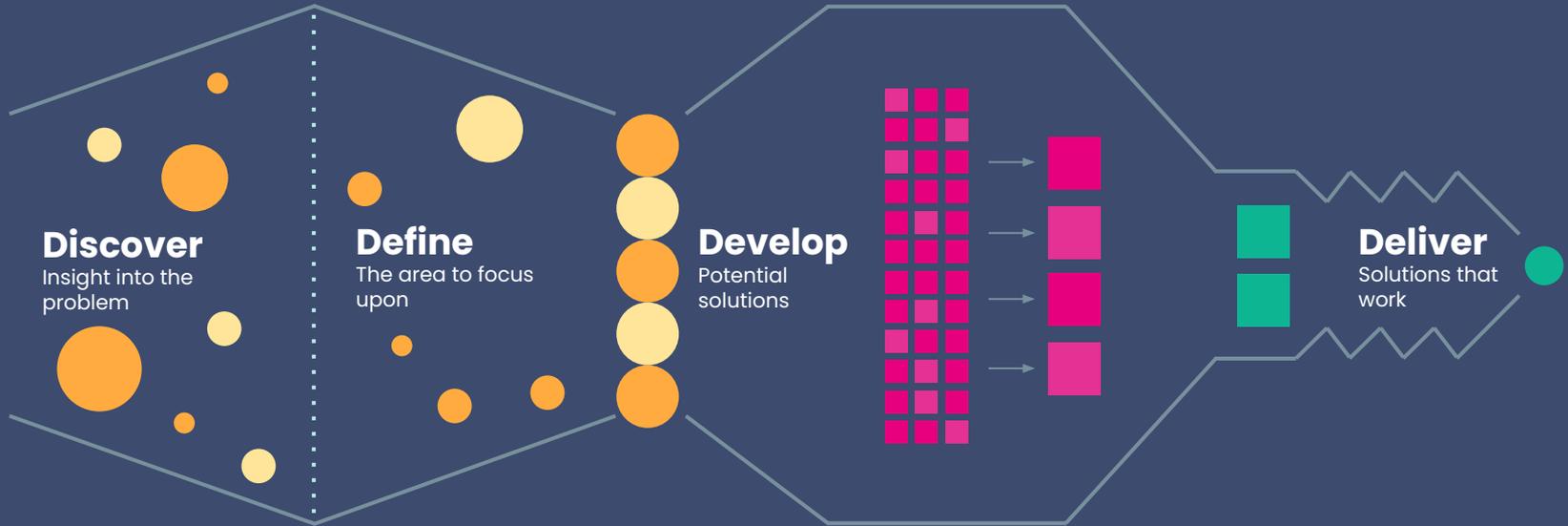
Tools

- What tools would actually be required to support data sharing?

Lessons from recent months

- To understand what worked well in wave 1 and should continue and what didn't work well and needs to be improved upon when sharing data

Approach: 8 weeks to get to a solution to pilot



Sprint 1

- Aligned on the brief
- Desk research on data/information sharing to date
- 20+ 1-1 stakeholder interviews to understand the last 6 months, and their needs and pain points

Sprint 2

- Workshop with VCS and council members across Cbeds and Camden to understand the problem we wanted to solve for

Sprint 3

- 20+ 1-1 VCS, council and data lead interviews to understand solutions to address prioritised problem
- Workshop with VCS and council members to prioritise the solution to develop

Sprint 4

- Developed a detailed concept and User Manual for implementation
- Worked with Cbeds and Camden to set up a pilot in each borough

Pilot

- Cbeds and Camden have each prioritised an initial community insights project that they want to solve for during wave 2 and have put forward the resources to pilot this new way of working after FutureGov leaves

Comparing Central Bedfordshire and Camden

Our research focussed on exploring how two very different council areas approached the shared need for effective local data exchange. Exploring their collective reflections and ideas aided the project in identifying common themes and developing new ideas informed by a range of different perspective and contexts.

Central Bedfordshire Lower data capacity, higher trust

Predominantly rural county made up of market towns and villages. Response looks different in each.

Small in-house team of centralised analysts. Other data roles tied to service areas

Internal data sets, with some access to paid for resources and visualisation tools.

Characterised by long standing relationships, trust, clear organisation and communications. Limited competition between VCS organisations

Culture of collaboration across partners and will look to design processes together. Reliant on spreadsheets and email to share information.

Work closely with other regional and public sector partners, with established governance.

Geography

Council Capacity

Data Assets

VCS and council relationships

Data Sharing Processes

Local Support

Camden Higher data capacity, lower Trust

Major London authority with huge diversity and disparity in local communities

Well resourced data team with data scientists and individual departmental data teams

Use sophisticated data management platforms with access to multiple data sources including paid for third party resources and visualisation tools.

Relatively low trust relationships with a fragmented approach to collaboration. Competition and overlap between VCS organisations.

Limited history and characterised as risk averse. New digital systems recently rolled out between VCS and council to improve data sharing,

Connected into pan London networks but more siloed arrangements with other public services.

Research findings & Opportunities

We have identified and summarised three summary findings which link to three opportunity areas drawn from emerging themes common to both regions.

We aim to focus people's attention on aspects of data sharing which based on our research we believe have potential to unlock progress but which are currently being overlooked or undervalued at a local level.

What we learned

Finding 1: Lack of understanding is a bigger barrier than a lack of technology

Opportunity 1:
New relationships before new tools

Finding 2:
'Data' is a limiting term

Opportunity 2:
Reframe what data can be to unlock the way forward

Finding 3:
Pragmatism is creating progress

Opportunity 3:
Scale small solutions for big gains

Finding 1: Lack of understanding is a bigger barrier than a lack of technology

“

We made what seems to me like a reasonable request to compare known people to find out if the people we support are also on the vulnerable lists, the ones we're already sharing details from between partners. But the council said no. The disappointing bit is there wasn't really a conversation about it.

VCS

Sharing a specific type of data at unprecedented scale, as in COVID-19 wave 1, should not be mistaken for a wide scale change in data sharing culture. Data about vulnerable residents was primarily shared from the top-down and the council outwards. Despite technology being challenging it didn't prevent it successfully happening.

Many VCS we spoke with felt there is value in sharing other types of data which would support them to deliver specialised services to residents in the pandemic but believed this was unlikely to happen as they felt the council still doesn't truly understand how they work. The relationships they rely on with residents, the pace at which they respond to need and the rich anecdotal knowledge and understanding they possess.

On the flip side, whilst VCS staff had hunches about the type of data and support the council could potentially offer, they had limited visibility of what was possible. The two cultures share the data together but rarely had the chance to interpret it together and benefit from each others experience.

Changing data sharing processes is hard and risky and as such relies on a great deal of trust. The lack of direct contact between community leads and council data decision-makers makes building understanding hard. Without truly knowing each other's needs and capabilities, data collaboration may remain narrowly focussed and relatively slow moving..

Opportunity 1: New relationships before new tools

Lack of understanding is a bigger barrier than a lack of technology... fostering new relationships before new tools is truly where we should be focussing our efforts.

Creating the conditions for more direct connections between data experts and VCS staff could unlock new possibilities for data sharing in a way technology alone can not. People need to come together to interpret data together not simply share it one one another.

Caution needs to give way to curiosity. Through our work, we've seen a genuine enthusiasm from both groups to understand one another's worlds better and recognition of where their interests align.

VCS staff see the opportunity in using data to help bolster their own instincts and to help them decide where to effectively target their limited resources. Meanwhile, council data teams are keen to move beyond data sorting and reporting towards more analysing and problem-solving.

This requires a rebalancing of the relationship with the council adopting a more facilitative and enabling role to spot the opportunities to support the VCS in answering questions through quantitative and qualitative data.

“

Coming through something like this together builds a bond. They (VCS) have stepped up in a big way and if I'm honest it's opened our eyes to the things that communities and charities do much better than us. People open the door to them who would never talk to us.

Council

Finding 2: 'Data' is a limiting term

“

I'm not sure I'll have much to offer as I'm not a data person. Our work is about people and what I'm interested in is knowing about the people who need us.

VCS

An obvious but important observation is that talking about data feels unapproachable for many of the very people who need to be involved in designing how it's used. Talking about the need for data sharing starts from an inherently council-centric view of the challenge and creates barriers.

'Data' brings a lot of baggage. It feels like a technical topic suitable only for experts. It is associated with increased reporting to the council. It sends alarm bells ringing about GDPR and risk. It confirms fears about people being reduced to numbers and statistics.

Don't mistake this reaction for a lack of capability in working with data itself as VCS organisations of all sizes have people who bring together human stories and hard numbers in their everyday work.

We need to ensure people recognise rich qualitative information as data and that we don't restrict the scope of exchange to numbers and words alone.

Opportunity 2: Reframe what data can be to unlock the way forward

Data is a limiting term...let's understand how we can reframe what data can be to unlock the way forward

Move beyond using data to delegate tasks and share referrals, making space to collectively explore how combining quantitative and qualitative information can be used to answer complex pressing questions.

Focussing on how data can be used to forecast need, not just respond to it, can help move beyond fixating on improving what we already know to define what new datasets we might need. This information could help VCS groups secure much-needed funding for services.

Data sharing can too often be a case of all or nothing for the sake of preserving resident privacy but often anonymity can be preserved while still sharing data required to unlock real insights.

Foster trust and open up new conversations by increasing transparency about existing data. For instance providing VCS with opportunity to find insights and value in aggregated views of the data they already report to council teams. Providing clear explanations about how data is used to make decisions as part of the COVID-19 response also creates the opportunity for the VCS to improve processes with different data points.

“

It's been great getting to hear first hand about the types of things the VCS groups are interested. The nagging frustration has always been that we have this data but are we really making the most of it?

Council

Finding 3: Pragmatism is creating progress

“

We started off sharing heaps of details but the spreadsheets got too unwieldy...in the end we agreed to just start sharing a smaller list of attributes and that stuck. It actually ended up being better if I'm honest as it made us think about what it was we really needed.

VCS

Since the pandemic, taking a more practical and less prescriptive approach than usual for data sharing is paying off. Processes have come a long way in a short space of time and people are rightly proud of the success achieved. Partnerships have worked more like the VCS in hours and days rather than the familiar council pace of weeks and months.

Necessity has proved to be the mother of invention as local partners have continuously improved on hastily created processes. They've made good use of new regular forums to share feedback and prioritise actions, as well as looked to repurpose existing, familiar systems where possible.

The main critique from those involved is the lack of shared view of data, but both authorities have testable ideas for how to provide this using off-the-shelf collaboration technology with access controls. Much of the other data-sharing pain points we heard are more a reflection of the challenges at the start than the reality of the present.

With finite capacity, partners should weigh up the added value of making big investments for time and money to improve existing data-sharing processes as compared to focussing effort on establishing completely new data-sharing systems.

Opportunity 3: Scale small solutions for big gains

Pragmatism is creating progress...so let's embrace that and scale small solutions for big gains.

With data sharing processes that are trusted but clunky, the biggest gains are likely achieved by identifying solutions which save time or lower the difficulty of recurring tasks. Rather than pursuing wholesale new systems and technology, there are multiple examples of potential solutions to discrete issues which could have an outsized impact:

- Adopting common approaches to informed consent
- Using data deduplication tools and spreadsheet simplifiers
- Agreeing on common local conventions for tagging and categorising data
- Creating template Data Privacy Impact Assessment 'Lite' agreements
- Documenting, publishing and collectively maintaining referral pathways
- Repurposing open-source data governance agreements for new types of data sharing from other regions

Furthermore, with the whole world facing a common challenge, it is important to purposefully look outside the partner organisations and regions to build on the work of others tackling the same challenges.

“

The process is almost as off putting as the risk to be honest. If we could develop a standard way to approach the things we always need like privacy impact assessments and I think it would make people more open to change

Council

Prioritised solution

Community insights projects

Our research findings and opportunity areas provided the basis for us to develop ideas for potential solutions together with VCS and council staff.

We ran codesign workshops to review and refine initial ideas. Our aim was to identify one solution to develop further with a view to being trialled in the next phase of Covid response.

This section introduces and explains the prioritised solution: community insights projects. The idea was selected by the project sponsors for its potential to address the finding and opportunity areas.



I'm really fearful for at-risk groups of residents out there about which we have almost no information. Right now, we're simply guessing and reacting using our own instincts and numbers...together we must surely have different pieces of the puzzle to help us be smarter?

VCS

The prioritised solution

Community insights projects

bring together VCS staff and council data experts to explore how different types of quantitative and qualitative data can be used to deliver better support to residents during the pandemic and beyond. Combining their strengths, skills and capacity to address shared 'blindspot' issues. Planning, interpreting and responding as one.

Why?

- Build relationships and trust
- Develop new insights to plan vital services
- Find new ways to share and use data
- Improve forward planning
- Help residents and communities at risk

Solution Overview

Addressing the findings and opportunities

Community insights projects are founded on the idea that by purposefully creating the conditions for VCS and council to come together and think creatively about shared problems it will help make progress against all three opportunity areas identified in our research:

- Forging new relationships and understanding between people who can turn data into action
- Reframing the way data is used and exploring new ways to release it
- Working through real projects together to swiftly create new insights and value.

One research participant framed it as “things that are common sense but not common practice”. For Camden it means establishing a new way of working. For Central Bedfordshire it represents the next evolution to existing relationships.

Features

- External facilitator supports a small joint team of VCS and council data staff on projects
- Running one project at a time. Timeboxed to 8 – 12 weeks to balance time for discovery with the need for defined scope.
- Project ideas come from the VCS
- Focused on creating new insights about issues which are likely to worsen as a result of Covid.
- The team will help identify actionable opportunities for different data sharing arrangements.

Project ideas shared by VCS during research

“ We have real pressing issues like understanding the digital divide, spotting the invisible residents who don't show up on the books (no GP, etc)...I'd love to frame the questions together not just get sent some data to interpret.

“ We know hidden domestic violence is a big risk...a ticking time bomb really... and it that takes a relatively long time to stand up the right support for. That's an issue I'd love to get data about to help us decide what type of support to put where.

“ Our own data is telling us that people aren't seeking help for debt issues at the rate we'd expect. The evictions are on hold and the bailiffs have stopped but soon there's going to be an explosion and we need to all know how we prepare for that.

“ I have no idea what's happening for our twenty somethings who are now out of work and out of school. That's not historically been our focus area but I really fear they're going to slip through the cracks.

Themes

- The digital divide
- Domestic violence
- Bereavement support
- Food poverty
- Youth education and employment opportunities
- Supporting people in private rented accommodation
- Mental health and loneliness
- Ease of access to green spaces

Benefits of this solution to VCS & councils

VCS

Gain new, practical knowledge about the communities they serve to help improve the support they can offer.

Help gather evidence to identify needs and opportunities which can be used to secure new funding.

Join the dots between existing work in the region to spot opportunities for cooperation and joint working.

Improve council understanding of how VCS organisations operate and the value it provides to the region.

Have a direct voice in shaping emerging policy decisions and responses.

Enable small specialist VCS organisations to have access to information usually reserved for bigger organisations.

Council

Make more effective use of taxpayer money by using a better understanding of what is happening in the region to inform response to Covid-19. Less guessing.

Figure out how to combine and share qualitative and quantitative information effectively. Create opportunity for greater use of non identifiable information sharing.

Unlock the full value of investment in data and data tools. New competence and confidence of staff can also benefit other council initiatives.

Improve effectiveness of existing relationships between councils, VCS and partners. Build on the success of last 6 months to take collaboration and sharing to a new level.

Increase legitimacy and trust with residents and community organisations providing a platform for more impactful work.

How this solution delivers value

We believe that...



will lead to...

Greater awareness of priority issues in the local area

Shared understanding of what is achievable with data

Trust-based relationships created across councils and VCS organisations

Better understanding of current data sharing policies and platforms for exchanging information

to support us to achieve our goals of...

Spotting and understanding emerging needs promptly

Better quality data sharing agreements and data usage agreed

Upskilling local authority and VCS staff in using data to create impact

and help improve the system.

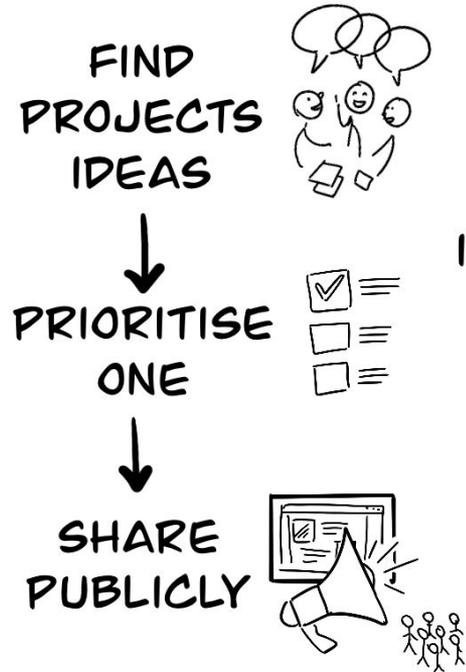
Targeted and joined up use of local capacity to support communities

Increasingly proactive responses to address emerging issues

The community insights project approach becomes the reference point for cross-organisation data-led collaboration

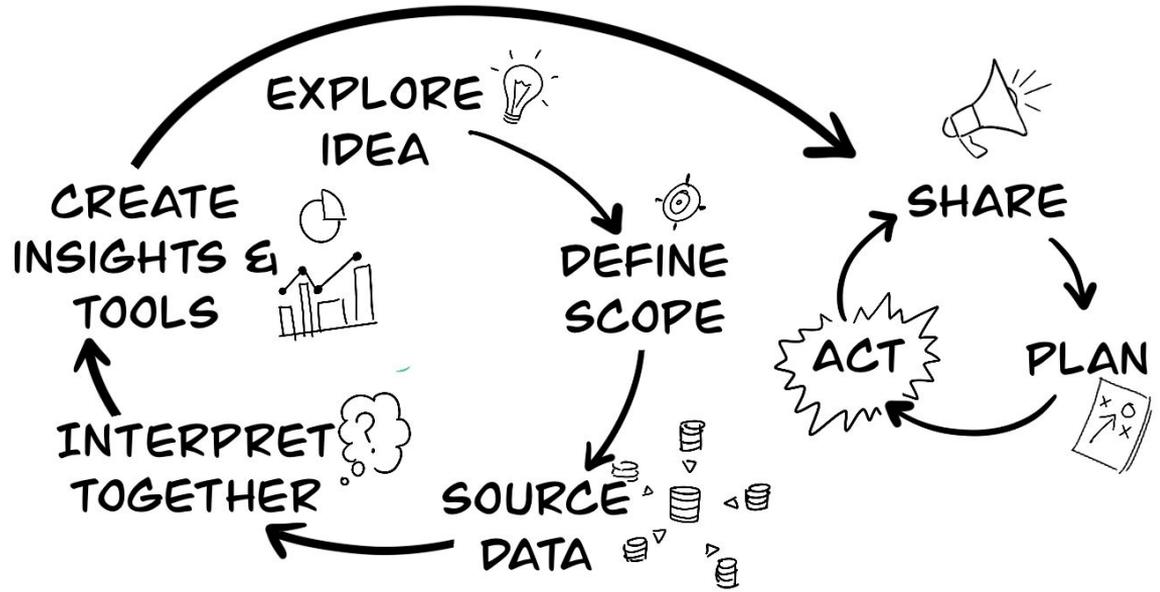
How community insights projects work

BEFORE

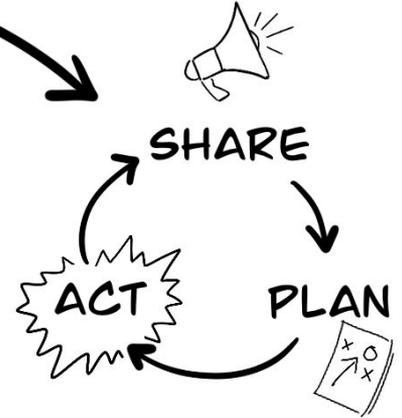


DURING

1 PROJECT
8-12 WEEKS
6-10 PEOPLE



AFTER



This solution is an opportunity to foster more of...

More of

Conversations – people with practical experience working through problems together

Direct access – put people with the knowledge in first hand contact

Continuity – strengthen relationships and trust with each project

Outside sources – actively investigate the work of other organisations and repurpose locally

Show the thing – provide feedback and develop on real examples, not abstractions

Open communication – share work for others to add to and make use of

Outcomes – what change is needed? Why?

Less of

Handoffs – reduce upfront specifications, email exchanges, hierarchical decision making

Intermediaries – reduce the barriers to deeper investigation and relationships

Delegation or outsourcing – provide opportunities for local teams to retain local knowledge

Reliance on in-house data – focus on what we need to know rather than just using what we have

Big and slow – less emphasis on getting it right first time but instead on making it less wrong

Data secrecy – move away from the focus on proprietary data to shared insights

Outputs – dashboards, visualisations, reports

Collaboration principles

Community insights projects

Purpose around a common goal

The projects need to feel meaningful to enough community members for a core team and rotating cast of participants to mobilise behind each project.

Dynamic and time-bound

Having a time-bound and more formal structure allows for more accountability. Yet make this structure feel dynamic by promoting experimentation and flexibility for how we come together to collect these insights.

From the ground up

Local agendas not council-led agendas are the core mechanism for bringing forward project ideas. Frontline community members are well placed to see and intuit what is worth prioritising.

Stronger through our differences

Value each other's differences: the community brings their knowledge of residents and the challenges on the ground to the forefront, while data and legal experts provide the guidance required to make the project happen.

Just enough data but be bold

Only share and gather new personalised data when necessary and proportionate, but be bold and curious when considering your insights: look to broader, non-local data sets, historical data and to futuring.

A spark for further collaboration

Don't stop at the insights. These shared insights can become the starting point for shared action. Publishing these findings or the process for aggregating this data can also support and catalyse other projects across the country.

Roles on a project

Core of 6 – 10 people in each region supported on a project-by-project basis by additional members. (days per person per month)

Project Team:

Facilitator (2–3 days per week, 18 – 25 days per project)

Independent person with a solid knowledge of what's possible with data, and agile ways of working. Helps translate between the groups, joins the dots and spots opportunities. Role explored in more detail on the next page.

Delivery lead (1–2 days per week, 15 – 20 days per project)

Council staff member to help coordinate product and delivery management, ensuring insights projects are delivered on time and meet the requirements

Data scientist or analyst (6 – 12 days per project)

2 – 4 staff from local councils and partners. Essential role is data analyst, supported by additional analysts, engineers and processors.

VCS Member Leads (5 – 10 days per project)

2 – 3 orgs who act as leads for a specific project and shape the work and have a remit to act on the insights.

Communities Representative (3–6 days per project)

1 council community partner who is involved as needed to support accessing certain VCS or council subject matter experts as required

Advisory panel (3 – 6 days per project)

6–12 VCS and data representatives with knowledge and access to specific subject matter expertise on a project by project basis (e.g. social worker, domestic violence data reporter etc)

Complimentary Team (as needed in each project):

- Specialist council officers
- Legal, Risk and IG representatives
- Policy representatives
- External data specialists

The value of a skilled facilitator

Our research points to the need for a role that is commonly overlooked or undervalued as part of initiatives to develop sustainable and successful teams. **Engaging a skilled facilitator is a critical success factor for community insight projects which will help foster productive relationships and unlock data possibilities.**

Why

It's vital not to underestimate the barriers to bringing together two groups from different contexts and cultures to form an effective partnership. In their differences lie strengths but also inherent tension. Each person must become familiar not only with one another but also with both how they compliment each other, and how to get the most out of their data and expertise.

An independent facilitator who is familiar with building teams, exploring data and working in an iterative way can help impartially broker relationships and raise skills.

What

A facilitator supports the community insights project team throughout the full life cycle of a project with:

- Creating the conditions for collaboration
- Advising on how to use, interpret and action data
- Reflecting upon and improving the process

Who

Securing a third party is important in different ways. For councils in a low trust environment (like Camden) an independent person helps provide crucial legitimacy and challenge. In a low data capacity environment (like Central Beds) a facilitator skilled in creating value through data will open up new possibilities and perspectives for the team and support with skills development.

There is a growing community of professional 'data consultants' who bring expertise in both data and facilitation who are well placed to help deliver value.

Where

Independent organisations such as the [Open Data Institute](#) and [Data Kind](#) and [LARIA](#) are well placed to help identify suitable facilitators. Professional data community groups on LinkedIn are also a good way to find and contact specific individuals.

Next steps

The community insights project is an idea that has had lots of enthusiasm and input from both VCS and council representatives. The next step is to put this idea into practice, taking a pragmatic approach to implementation.

This section details steps to get started and what questions to ask once up and running.

Creating the conditions to launch, test and learn

Testing and learning with early adopters

Over the last few weeks we have been engaging members of the VCS to understand what they need to stand up community insights projects and identify early adopters who are passionate about the work and willing to be part of the first iteration. Starting this work will look very different to the ideal state we have described and that is to be expected. Now it is time to test and learn through practical application and continuing to build relationships.

Piloting with an evolving user manual

The user manual was co-designed with VCS representatives who identified the need to better understand how they might come together with data, change and technology experts. The framework is based on activities that have worked well in the past and positions the VCS as owning and shaping the work, rather than being council-led. The purpose of the user manual is to guide us through the necessary steps for running community insights projects. It was written with an iterative focus; although it is a well-documented first approach, it will need to evolve and be modified as the team learns through delivering.



/Community Insights Projects

How to better exchange information between councils and volunteer organisations

October 2020

What we think is important in getting started

The partnership have agreed Camden are in the best position to take the lead in trialling the first community insights project. Starting this work in the midst of COVID-19 wave 2 when resources are stretched will be hard and requires a pragmatic approach. The enthusiasm from existing staff is there, strong sponsorship and facilitation is now required to balance the need for formal status but informal operations. We need to create the conditions for the psychological safety required for the team to build trust and work effectively together. Steps to getting started:

Priming participants

4-6 people from the VCS have expressed interest to be involved as either leads or panel members. We have also lined up representatives from data teams. These people are passionate about the work and have ideas they've sourced to get started.

Finding a 3rd party facilitator

Finding a suitable facilitator to bring the team together, guide the process and play a brokering role is critical.

Securing council staff time

Securing commitments of council staff time. We appreciate in the current climate there are competing priorities, however the value of this initiative will come from the ability to run alongside more tactical covid response work.

Sourcing initial projects

Initial project ideas such as food poverty, domestic and youth violence have been identified. At this stage it is not important what idea is selected, it is about trialling the approach and working together in a different way.

Confirming legal and risk approvals

Confirming what "just enough" legal and risk buy-in looks like and secure approval at the outset to start building relationships between organisations. The types of data sharing required will become clearer as work is underway.

Setting up communications

Setting up a basic web page to tell people about the work, provide an opportunity for interested parties to get involved, share progress and insights.

What we want to learn and how

Once the community insights projects are up and running we want to understand the value of the structure and way of working. We recommend an iterative approach to evaluation, building in deliberate time for regular reflection. We have been working closely with a researcher and project lead from Camden who will be responsible for maintaining documentation including feedback and changes from testing the user manual and evaluating the first round of community insights projects.

The value of the concept should be judged by the extent to which it:

- Builds a greater understanding between the council and VCS of how data can be used
- Leads to new data sharing arrangements between the council and VCS
- Leads to new insights about the local area which participants use to inform the design of their services
- The participants and project sponsor find value in participating

Measuring success

This is a whole new way of partnership working and the expectation is that it will take a few project cycles for community insights project teams to find their feet. Therefore, we recommend that the concept is monitored over the course of a full year (so presumptively a 4 projects cycle). With participants surveyed before and after after each project (every 10 - 12 weeks).

Learning goals for each cycle

If done right, after a year, the first cycle will look very different from the fourth. These questions should be used to reflect at the end of each cycle on the different elements of the community insights projects e.g. timelines, frameworks, rhythms and rituals.

- Which are the elements that helped achieving the overarching outcomes?
- Which are the elements that need reviewing to better support them?
- What are new constraints that haven't been taken in consideration by CIP?
- How would you address any of the elements that need reviewing or are new?

Following progress

The partnership are committed to sharing lessons with the wider sector. You can follow ongoing work and progress via the project [web page](#) and through social media.

Please get in touch with the Project Sponsors Emma McGowan, Jay and Ed Garcez if you are interested in getting involved or learning more.

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Interested? Here are some questions to consider

If you are looking for a way to start to understand opportunities to improve data sharing between your VCS and council, here are a set of questions based on our experience that can help surface barriers and insights:

Questions to answer together:

- What data, beyond vulnerable residents' data, are you sharing together?
- Reflecting on ways of working since the beginning of the pandemic, what's worked well and what's not worked well around data/information sharing?
- How much time do the council and VCS spend interpreting data and finding meaning together?
- How much follow through is there on the data insights you leverage? Why or why not?
- Have you jointly made a case to your Data Protection Officer or legal team for information to be shared?
- What issues do you feel are blindspots?

Questions to answer as a council

- How much time does your team spend to understand what the VCS need and why?
- What role do the VCS play in influencing the information collected?
- How often do your data experts meet with VCS leads?
- How well are you leveraging qualitative and quantitative data from the VCS?
- How many times have you taken an idea from another area or council and build upon it and repurposed it?
- How tightly coupled are data skills and precision to your local support plans and initiatives?

Appendix

Consult this section if you want to understand the hypotheses and theory of change behind this solution.

Hypotheses and Theory of Change (Overview)

| BECAUSE WE THINK | WE BELIEVE THAT | IN THE SHORT TERM WILL MEAN | IN THE LONG TERM WILL MEAN |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Data sharing is led by council needs, and VCS organisations receive limited visibility of council knowledge and insight</p> | <p>CIP will enable a more collaborative and transparent way of working together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * collaboratively prioritising projects based on CIP interest will enable a rationale-based decision making process that will foster trust * the publication of the shortlisted projects and the sharing sessions will enable transparency and create additional opportunities of collaboration | <p>New and better relationships created across councils and VCS organisations - beyond the existing ones</p> <p>New collaboration opportunities at the end of a CIP cycle</p> <p><i>KPI: new connections LAs x VCS organisations, quality of the interaction (survey before/after), number of opportunities for collaboration created at the end of each CIP cycle</i></p> | <p>A new way for councils and VCS organisations to work together.</p> <p>The CIP approach becomes the reference point for cross-organisation data-led collaboration.</p> |

Hypotheses and Theory of Change (Detail)

| BECAUSE WE THINK | WE BELIEVE THAT | IN THE SHORT TERM WILL MEAN | IN THE LONG TERM WILL MEAN |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Setting up a new way of working across organisations is a slow-burner that will require effort to build trust and get settled ways of working</p> | <p>An initial pilot with at least two projects (6 months in total) is the minimum duration to assess the likely success of this initiative</p> | <p>At least one pilot run from November to January 2021.</p> <p><i>KPI: Pilot number 1 completed</i></p> | <p>A new way of working together across organisations</p> <p><i>KPI: number of projects run as CIP, number of VCS organisations involved, number of initiatives kick-started as result</i></p> |
| <p>Trust-based relationships are the foundation to enable better data sharing across councils and VCS organisations</p> | <p>A degree of continuity in the core group participants from projects will ensure lessons to be carried over and relationships to develop</p> | <p>Better relationship will unlock proper understanding of what information people want and why and will enable more informed decisions about data sharing</p> <p><i>KPI: participants stats (how many, for how long)</i></p> | <p>Better quality data sharing agreements and data usage, move risk team along, more accurately appraised.</p> |
| <p>Council data specialists staff are interested in engaging in more detailed analytical work but will struggle to find capacity and struggle to</p> | <p>The role of the facilitator as the commitment of ring fenced time from sponsors will be crucial to enable the required capacity and skill set to sustain the programme</p> | <p>Data specialists staff will be able to join the programme using their current capacity</p> <p><i>KPI: hours dedicated to CIP by council data specialists</i></p> | <p>Data specialists staff will be upskilled in analytical analysis beyond reporting</p> <p><i>KPI: skills mapping analysis before/after</i></p> |

Hypotheses and Theory of Change (Detail)

| BECAUSE WE THINK THAT | WE BELIEVE THAT | IN THE SHORT TERM WILL MEAN | IN THE LONG TERM WILL MEAN |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Organisations involved in the CIP struggle to interpret data in an actionable way to help shaping a shared plan for action</p> | <p>External experts and data visualisation will help in moving on from findings to actionable insights, supporting VCS organisations and council staff to design solutions together</p> | <p>Members will embrace and facilitate the blending of frontline experience and qualitative research and quantitative data to generate more actionable and robust insights together, trusting the overall approach</p> <p><i>KPI: number of actions taken as result of CIP collaboration (new project started, new support to citizens, impact on overall support received by citizens...)</i></p> | <p>Members will move naturally into a solution-focused space, inspired by previous CIP projects, to create a plan to address emerging insights.</p> <p><i>KPI: skills and attitude analysis before/after</i></p> |
| <p>The official guidance around data sharing continues to change and it is difficult to interpret. We will need to engage in new conversations about what information can be shared, in what ways and under what conditions</p> | <p>Ready access for CIP to legal, risk and information governance staff within the council will ensure they get better understanding on data sharing policies and what's recommended to achieve their goals.</p> | <p>Better understanding of current data sharing policies and platforms for exchanging information.</p> <p><i>KPI: number of sessions with Legal Teams to sort out data sharing, outcomes of sessions with legal team (changed/unchanged)</i></p> | <p>Upskilled CIP members in data policies and built trust of legal, risk and.</p> |

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Thank you



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