Digital two: Transforming how our services work for residents

A key principle of our Digital Strategy is that it's not about technology, it's about great service design, utilising the tools of the internet age to make it easier, faster and a more fulfilling experience when residents and businesses work with us.

This is what unites our Digital Strategy with our Deal principles – working alongside our residents and businesses not doing things to them. Therefore active listening, user-based design, testing and iteration are fundamental to our service transformation approaches, enabled by this Digital Strategy.

We will not implement new systems and approaches without fully understanding residents and their needs. We want our future transformation to carry out effective user engagement and testing in the design process so that we can create a seamless 'customer' journey and experience when you access our online services.

Under this strategy, we will outline a core set of design and delivery principles to safeguard our digital transformation across the organisation.

100% Digitally Enabled

This does not mean that we only provide digital ways of engaging with us. We know that telephone and face to face contact is vital for some of our residents. For those that can, we will ensure our digital service offer is a fantastic, connected offer that makes their lives easier. We want as many people as possible to be able to benefit from that. That is why we launched our #TechMates service that connects digitally skilled volunteers with residents who need support to get online. It has proven to be an incredibly valuable service during the pandemic when many of our face-to-face services had to close.

It is vitally important that we provide definitive support in the heart of our communities that people can access, and we will continue to grow this service during the period of this Digital Strategy.
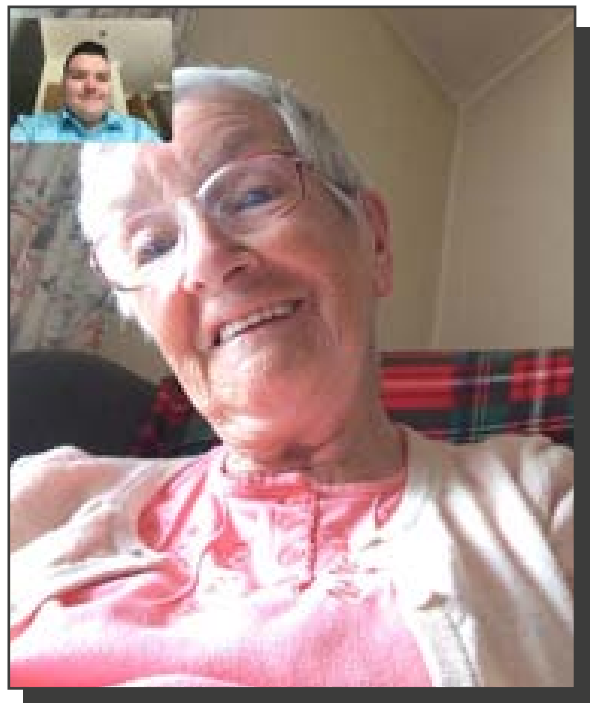
Case Study – TechMate for Pete and Kath

Pete and Kath, a local family from Shevington, had little experience with digital devices. Now, they are thriving in the world of technology thanks to the TechMates initiative, a digital mentor service run by volunteers and council staff to prevent isolation for the borough's most vulnerable residents.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the country went into a national lockdown, Kath could no longer access the services she enjoyed at Shevington Library. Getting online was no longer a choice, but a necessity for the couple to help them stay connected to the outside world and avoid feeling isolated whilst being unable to leave their home.

Wigan Council's TechMates programme, which provides residents with one-to-one basic digital support over the telephone, helped Pete and Kath to gain the skills needed to confidently access digital devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones and laptops and engage with online resources.

The support Pete and Kath have received from their TechMate, Sam, has opened up a world of possibilities for digital technology to improve their daily lives over the course of lockdown and beyond.

Pete said: **"We've had a lot of support from Sam who has done a tremendous job for us. He's teaching us things we didn't even know about!" "Now I can log onto my computer and play a game of snooker and watch old films from the forties!"**

"I have been able to connect with my friends at the library on Facetime, send emails and listen to music" Kath added.

"Before, my opinion was that computers should remain in the office and not at home!" Pete admitted. **"Since getting the iPad and the help from TechMates, we've now invested in a smart television and Amazon Alexa which has been brilliant"** Kath revealed. **"Everything is running superb—thank you Wigan Council!"**

Pete and Kath are now able to look forward to advancing their digital skills even further with help from their TechMate, Sam.

Sam said **"when I first met Kath and Pete, they were nervous to get online as they had never done anything like this before. I helped to build their confidence, did everything at a time and pace that suited them and after a few weeks Kath was able to email friends, family and get in touch with the local library which helped with social isolation. Pete exceeded my expectations as every week he learned something new such as booking a holiday, watching films, shopping online and even selling items on Shpock. I am extremely proud of Kath and Pete and what they have achieved, and I love seeing the joy and benefits this has brought to their lives".**

Our key service systems

To successfully transform our services, we need to ensure that our systems are fit for purpose and match our service business processes, capturing the right data, in the right way, at the right time to achieve.

Our My Account platform is transforming to improve the single and connected user experience for our residents with complete transparency for cases raised with the council. When residents access the platform, they will have their own unique account view focusing on what they want and need, see updates to their cases, track the progress of cases as well as receive ongoing updates on the status of their requests.

One of the biggest benefits of our new online account is that it will be notifications driven, which means that a customer does not need to call or email us for updates on what is happening with their service request and allows all involved to receive real-time progress updates, which provides a richer, seamless, and hassle-free experience for our residents, removing the need to make phone calls to check on progress.

We are remodelling and improving our online service delivery offer. We want to allow residents access to more ways of self service, meaning they can make choices and engage with us on any device. The new platform gives more flexibility around future design, and we want engage with our residents and businesses as part of the future design, making sure we develop delivery processes and utilise their feedback which allow us to respond and improve the customer experience and journey, ensuring we delivery better outcomes for all.

We will also continue to work with our partners through the Healthier Wigan Partnership to join up and enhance our collective digital offer to residents. Our joint ambition is to bring our digital platforms together and provide a 'no wrong door approach' – so that residents can access key health and civic data, processes and services in the same way across all partners.

MyAccount
Manage and access your services

Wigan Council

Sign up today at www.wigan.gov.uk/MyAccount
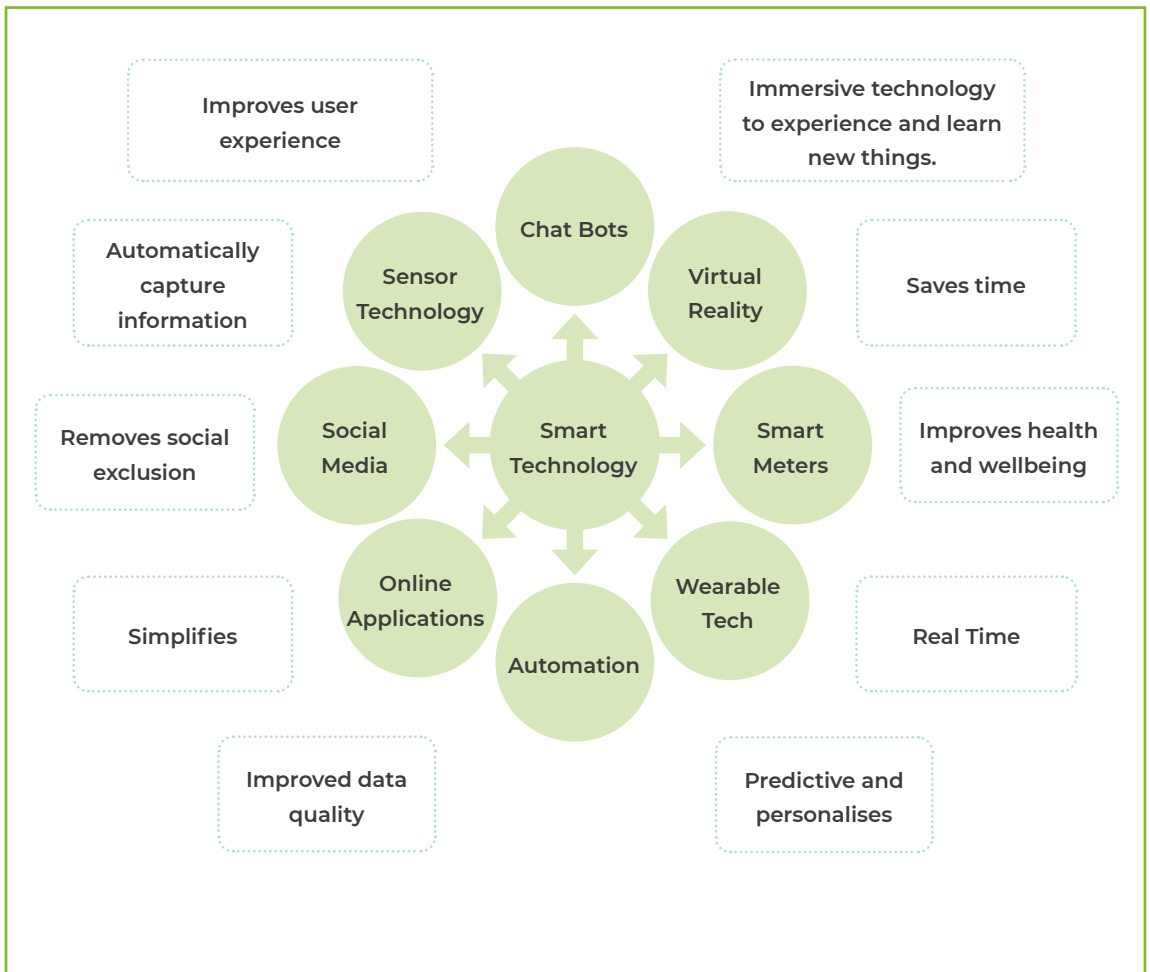
Innovation and Emerging Technology

Local Government continues to experience a very challenging financial environment and we have significant savings to make to continue to balance our budget. Digital Transformation offers a wide number of opportunities via technology to achieve some of these savings.

We are committed in finding Digital Solutions which;

- Save time and money!

- Provide meaningful change!

- Improve the customer and user experience!

- Provide a digital legacy which can be reused!

In 2021, we will begin our journey to become a hub for Greater Manchester Social Work Academy Centre of Excellence (GMSWA) for use of Digital Technology within Children's Social Care. The pandemic highlighted more than ever the vital importance of effective digital services and digital inclusion as well as importantly helping us to understand where technology needs to be in the background whilst skilled professionals do what they do best.

We want to leverage new emerging 'SMART' technologies as they enter the digital market and understand how they can support our vision to improve our delivery going forwards across all our services.

Improves user experience

Immersive technology to experience and learn new things.

Automatically capture information

Chat Bots

Sensor Technology

Virtual Reality

Saves time

Removes social exclusion

Social Media

Smart Technology

Smart Meters

Improves health and wellbeing

Simplifies

Online Applications

Automation

Wearable Tech

Real Time

Improved data quality

Predictive and personalises

What is SMART Technology?

As individuals we are probably using a lot of Smart Technology in our everyday lives. How many of us have Smart watches or devices at home, who we ask about the weather or to set reminders, or use our smart phones to do daily shopping as well as communicate with our families and friends?

Within the Council, we have started our journey to see how this type of technology can help us provide the best public service to you.

Our employees are and continue to be our greatest asset. But we do see significant value in the use of Artificial Intelligence and automation to enhance the skill and capacity of our workforce.

By adopting these technologies, where suitable, we can save time and eliminate repetitive tasks and processes. It will allow us to increase the speed and accuracy at which we complete work, and free up our high skilled teams time to focus on providing enhanced support to the service and delivery to our residents & families.

We will make positive health impacts to our residents' care, our People Powered Technology Team like within Adults Social Care who have already allowed us to see the benefits of existing consumer technology.

At Heathside, our council-owned care home in Leigh, we have residents living with dementia. They were able to experience the virtual world when Leigh Centurions Rugby Club provided virtual reality headsets. The residents thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and were able to safari in Africa, ride in hot air balloons, swim under the ocean and fly aeroplanes.

By using sensors in the place we can find out more about where we live and help to shape and redesign our neighbourhoods & homes.

Gathering intelligence around our economy and environment, such as how busy the roads are, the air quality, areas of traffic congestion or how busy areas of the borough are by measuring pedestrian footfall, can help us to move towards a predictive design approach. We can use this information to make improvements that change and impact in the right way.

Imagine being able to predict potholes in roads before they happen or know how long the queue is for the tip – this type of knowledge would allow us to make better informed decisions around how we best spend our money where, only delivering things as and when needed – with easier and more sustainable ways of obtaining the insight.

Already our Highways teams have placed drainage sensor technology out in the field to test and find out the benefits. The sensors capture real time data and intelligence. We are expecting this to help us to understand the condition of drains and if they are damaged earlier than planned manual inspections may reveal.

Another of our key aims is to understand if this additional intelligence can help us predict and limit flooding in areas. We are hoping over the next 12 months that we will know if we can adopt these in a wider area.

Together We Will:

Key Pledges	Timeline
Rollout our improved My Account offer for residents providing a single digital platform to transact, get help and support and report issues to the council.	2021-22
Formalise a SMART Technology delivery plan which invests in SMART solutions as deployable tools within all services. Apply digital solutions which improve accuracy, increase efficiency, remove repetitive tasks and support data processing to free up resources and support service delivery.	2021-2022
Leverage existing systems to maximise our existing usage of them where we can make sure we are working and adopting best practice.	2023
Continue to invest in Open Data Wigan to increase the number of open datasets for residents and businesses, making data accessible for our residents and communities.	By 2025
Build on our existing People Powered Technology programme and identify scalable opportunities across the Council and our Healthy Wigan Partnership, which will actively improve service delivery, resident's wellbeing, improve our neighbourhoods as well as contribution to making efficiency savings.	2025