[Press release: Innovative digital projects to improve public services win funding](#)

Councils have been awarded almost £1.3 million to find solutions for how digital technology such as chatbots, artificial intelligence and one-stop shop websites can improve services for the public.

Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP today (7 December 2018) announced winning applicants receiving money from the first round of a £7.5 million fund aimed at harnessing digital technology to improve their work.

Some 16 projects across the country were awarded grants of up to £100,000, with 57 councils working in teams to shape new digital services and explore the potential of modern technology.

Projects include exploring how virtual assistants like Amazon's Alexa can improve the lives of people in need of care, improving online tools for reporting social home repairs, and using data analytics and artificial intelligence to produce education plans for children with special needs.

Other areas of research include giving frontline social workers better access to information to make crucial decisions and improving software used by council planning departments.

Minister for Local Government, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

> Embracing digital technology can revolutionise public services. Within local government, I firmly believe it has the potential to improve a range of services in a host of different ways.
>
> Ultimately, our aim is to make services better for users but it is likely to reduce costs for councils too. This could be by improving the experience of someone in care, streamlining the admin that comes with the stress of moving home, or offering a simpler way to license taxis.
>
> And these are just some of the successful ideas which I am delighted to announce government funding for today. I'm excited to see these projects come to fruition.

Lead councils across the country are partnered with other councils to share knowledge and ideas. This collaborative approach is a key pillar of the government's [Local Digital Declaration](#), launched in July, to better coordinate public bodies seeking digital solutions.

The government's new Local Digital Collaboration Unit will also work with

LocalGov Digital, an organisation made up of people who work on digital solutions in local government, to create a place to see details of all the digital transformation happening in the sector.

This announcement is a further demonstration of the commitment by the government to help create communities that are fit for the future, including through the Brexit Deal.

More information on the Fund is available at www.localdigital.gov.uk

Projects receiving funding are to:

- Investigate how the use of virtual assistants or chatbots, such as Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri, could improve the provision of care for people in need. Birmingham City Council and 2 partners were awarded £69,300 for the project.
- Look at how the government's free online payment service for government and public sector organisations — Gov.uk Pay — can be used better across councils. North East Lincolnshire Council and 4 partners were awarded £52,103 for this project.
- Discover a better way for people in socially rented homes to report housing repairs online. London Borough of Southwark and 3 partners were awarded £80,000.
- Research how analytics and artificial intelligence can help the writing of education, care and health plans — currently a complex and time-intensive process — for children with special educational needs. Ealing Council and 2 partners were awarded £99,000.
- Unlock a transformation of town planning by working to understand problems with software and by encouraging more small and medium enterprises to support innovation. London Borough of Southwark and 3 partners were awarded £78,000.
- Improve decision making in council's children's services departments by improving inefficient and costly processes. Greater Manchester Combined Authority and 3 partners were awarded £80,000.
- Understand the best way to enable people moving into an area to have to only contact the council once to set up all services — such as council tax, bin collections, and benefits. Sunderland City Council and 4 partners were awarded £77,000.
- Help frontline children's services workers access the information they need to assess what support to offer and judge safeguarding risk by building a prototype to view the information easily. Stockport Local Authority and 3 partners were awarded £100,000.
- Provide better and more up-to-date information for planning departments by improving data collection. Greater London Authority and 4 partners were awarded £100,000.
- Look at how registration data for births, deaths and marriages can be securely and ethically shared to improve services and reduce costs. Worcestershire County Council and 14 partners were awarded £57,500.
- Fix complexity in taxi licensing applications, saving time, reducing costs and improving public safety. Gateshead Council and 2 partners were awarded £75,865.
- Ask whether chatbots and artificial intelligence can improve the design

of public services, and look at the possibility of creating a place for councils to share solutions for using such technology. Oxford City Council and 12 partners were awarded £80,000.

- Discover how local directories in councils, health bodies, police forces and the voluntary sector can be better coordinated. Adur and Worthing Council and 2 partners were awarded £78,400.
- Develop a prototype system for managing Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests that makes it quicker and easier for enquirers as well as staff. London Borough of Hackney and 3 partners were awarded £80,246.
- Simplify the process of doing data protection impact assessments, which are a requirement in some work, by using digital and sharing the method across the country. Greater Manchester Combined Authority and 10 partners were awarded £74,900.
- Create a way of gathering information on problems and successes of waste collection services to solve local problems, educate, enforce, and improve customer satisfaction and efficiency. North East Lincolnshire Council and 1 partner were awarded £69,178.

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Councils awarded almost £1.3 million to find solutions for how digital technology can improve services for the public.

[Press release: Charity regulator welcomes Financial Action Task Force report](#)

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the inter-governmental body that sets the standards for Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Counter Terrorist Financing (CFT) and Counter Proliferation of the Financing of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CPF) has today published its Mutual Evaluation Report of the United Kingdom. The report can be accessed [here](). A team of international assessors evaluated the UK's technical compliance with the FATF standards as well as the effectiveness the United Kingdom's AML and CTF regime.

The UK has achieved the highest rating of any country assessed as part of this round of evaluations – this includes achieving the highest ratings, for both technical compliance and effectiveness, relating to protecting charities and the UK's wider non-profit sector from abuse for terrorist financing. The UK secured a compliant rating for Recommendation 8 and a highly effective rating for Immediate Outcome 10 – the best ratings available. FATF's evaluation of the UK identified no deficiencies in its approach relating to charities and non-profit organisations and has made no recommendations on this issue in the report published today.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

> The Commission welcomes the report published today and in particular the ratings and findings of the FATF assessors relating to the UK's approach to the protection of charities and other NPOs from terrorist financing. We're pleased to see that the report recognises the effectiveness and importance of the work of the Commission as civil regulator – including our outreach and collaborative engagement with charities and those who work with and support them, as well as our investigative and partnership working with law enforcement agencies and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

> The sad reality is that a number of people who have supported or engaged in terrorism have used and abused charities, including for the resourcing and financing of terrorism. The report published today recognises that the Commission's approach to tackling terrorist abuse and supporting charities to protect themselves against it, is firmly a layered, risk based approach. We have led the way in making clear that this risk of abuse is not shared equally across the charitable and not for profit sector, but is of

serious concern where it does arise. The UK has a good understanding of those risks and the Commission's response is proportionate to that risk, with both targeted and robust interventions where needed, along with support and tools to make charities more resilient to such abuse. This enables legitimate charitable work to thrive. Charities and their work is a vital part of our society and we are working to ensure that public trust can continue.

Published 7 December 2018

[Press release: Charity regulator welcomes Financial Action Task Force report](#)

FATF report recognises the effectiveness of the Commission's work as a civil regulator in protecting charities from harm

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[News story: Local Charities Day 2018](#)

Local Charities Day returns this year on Friday 14 December, celebrating the fantastic work that local charities do to build thriving communities across the country. The Day builds on the work of our recently published [Civil Society Strategy](#), where we committed to enhancing relationships between businesses, charities and local areas, to help communities grow.

On [Local Charities Day](#) and in the run up, we'll be taking to our social media channels to showcase the amazing work of charities and volunteers that make a

real difference and we want you to do the same to show your support.

Get involved

On the day

- Show your support using the #LocalCharitiesDay hashtag on your social media channels:
- From 9am: Share your stories, images, links, videos, pledges and champions to show your support
- Has a local charity helped you? Use the day to tell us about their work and how they've supported you. Volunteer with or support a local charity? Champion your work and the causes it supports.
- 10-11am: Head over to [Foundation for Social Improvement's (FSI) Facebook page](#) to watch a live training webinar for charities wanting to learn more about community & events fundraising. You can also follow them now for latest news and updates.
- 12-1pm: Take part in our lunchtime Power Hour and #pledgeYOURtime to show your support for a local charity We want to make this your day, to hear about the great work being done up and down the country. However you're involved, make your voice heard and celebrate local charities with us on 14 December by posting about, sharing, liking and retweeting your favourite local charities in action.

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