

Shaping the Future of the Local Government Workforce: Key Insights from techUK's Skills Group Survey

December 2024

Introduction

The landscape of talent acquisition and staff retention within local government is undergoing significant changes, driven by shifts in technology, diversity initiatives, and evolving work environments. A recent survey conducted by techUK's Local Public Services Committee (LPSC) Skills Group offers a deep dive into the current challenges and opportunities faced by local authorities in attracting, retaining, and developing technology talent. Here, we unpack the key findings and what they mean for the future of public sector employment.

At its core, techUK's Local Public Services Committee (LPSC) aims to be the trusted voice of the tech sector for local government. By opening channels for collaboration, the committee seeks to understand and address pressing challenges faced by councils, leveraging the power of technology and data. The Committee's central theme is "digital ambition," with a focus on helping councils realise the full potential of digital transformation to tackle critical business and community issues. The LPSC is comprised of four workstreams: skills, innovation, influence and procurement. The skills workstream is focused on working with the sector and industry to overcome the skills gap and provide insight on the skills of the future to ensure councils are equipped for future tech and data jobs.

The high-level recommendations as a result of this survey, take into account the current challenges and opportunities local government face, in attracting, retaining, and developing technology talent and aim to create a starting point for fostering skills, talent and retention in digital careers at a local government level.

Recommendations:

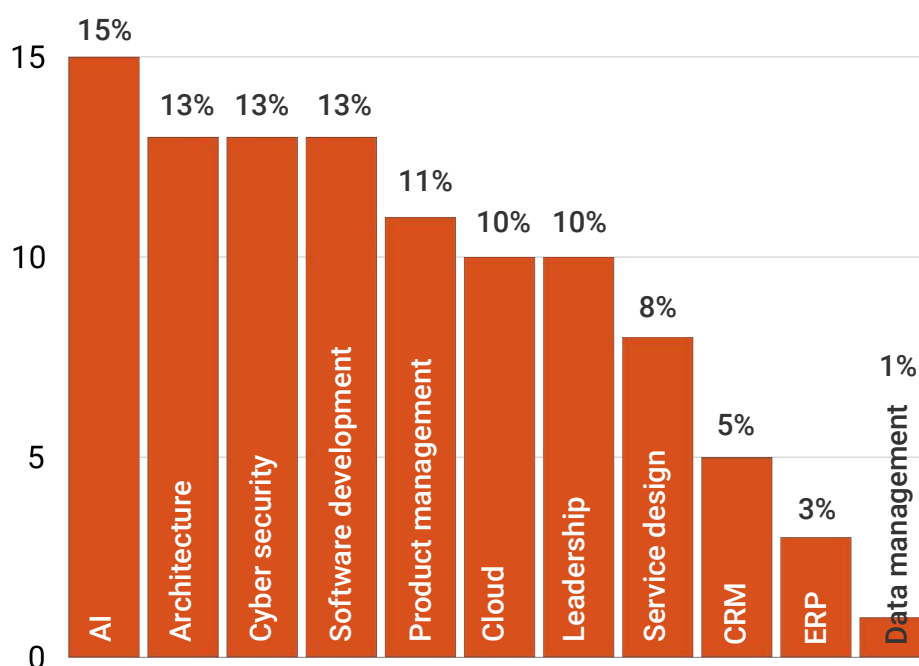
- Establish an employee value proposition
- Invest in training and developing employees
- Focus on the candidate experience



The Changing Face of Talent Acquisition

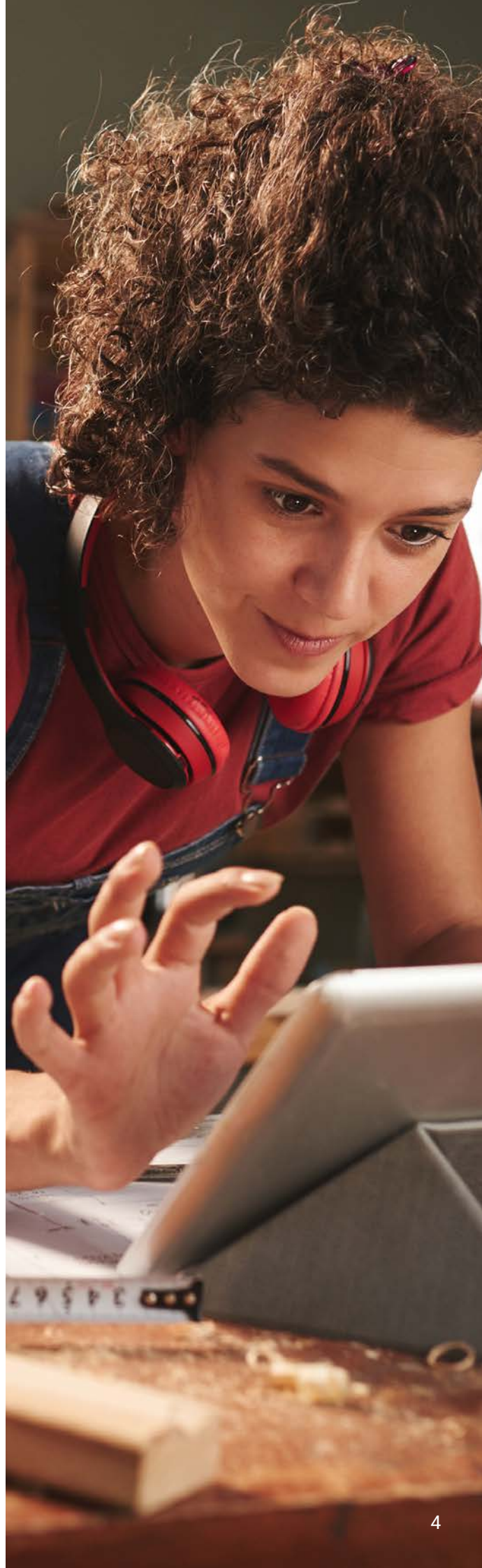
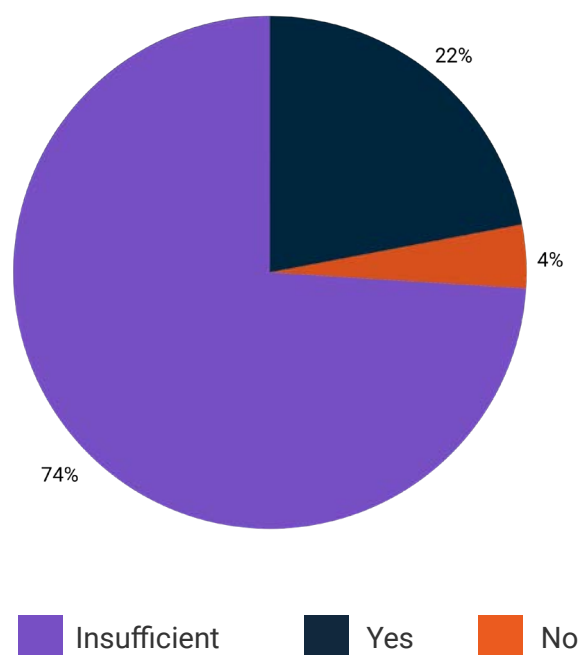
Technology continues to evolve and how organisations grapple with innovation and acquiring the skills needed for the future is driving the anticipation of new roles in emerging technologies such as AI. With 15% of respondents expecting to recruit for AI roles in the next 12 months, and 13% respectively looking to fill positions in architecture, cybersecurity, and software development, local authorities are clearly gearing up to meet the demands of an increasingly and evolving digital and futuristic world. This shift aligns with broader industry trends, where these occupations are becoming top choices for engineering graduates across the UK ([Ipsos Report, 2023](#)).

Anticipated areas for recruitment in next 12 months



As organisations across Public Services innovate, talent retention is becoming a key challenge with competition for skilled workers remaining the biggest barrier, with 29% of respondents identifying it as a key impact on retaining talent. Additionally, the shortage of suitable applicants and the cost of qualifications or training were cited by 18% and 12% of respondents, respectively. This highlights a growing need for local authorities to not only attract but also nurture and retain talent through comprehensive training and development programs. When engaging with employees over 74% of staff felt they didn't have the support and training they needed to excel and evolve their skills, so in a competitive landscape reshaping your training and upskilling across staff communities will be key.

Availability of support and training you need to develop your skills

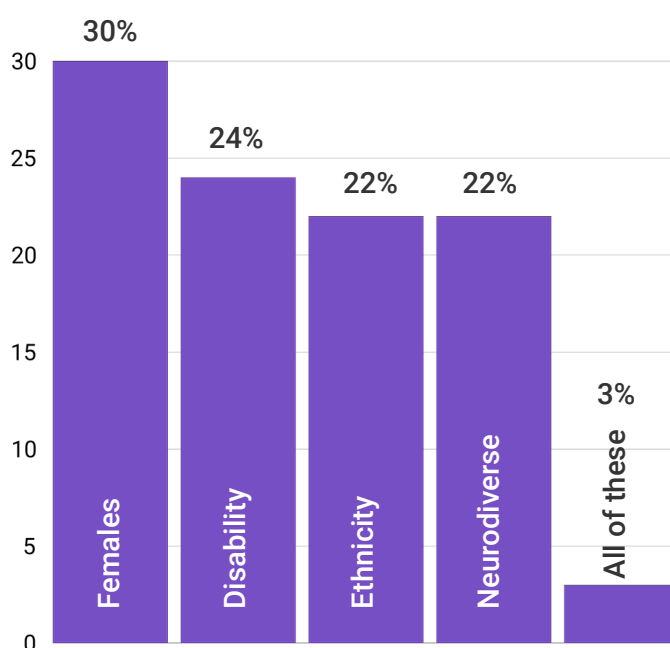


Diversity: A Core Focus but Challenges Remain

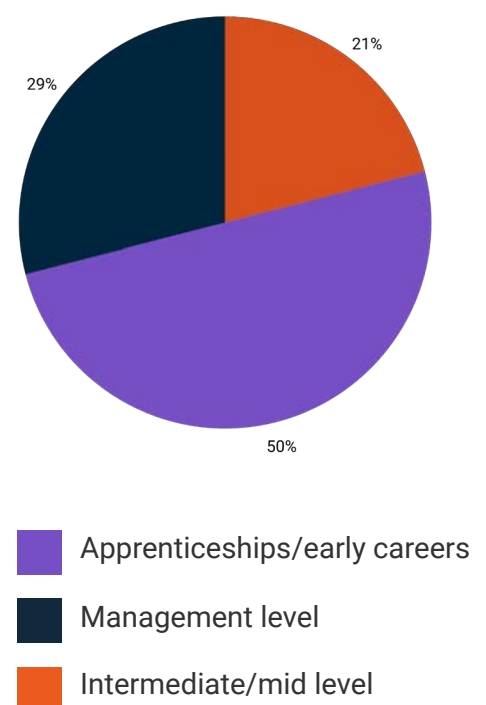
Diversity remains a central theme, with 89% of respondents emphasising its importance. Yet, the survey reveals significant challenges, particularly in gender diversity, with 30% of respondents finding it difficult to attract female talent. Despite these challenges, there is a clear commitment to building diverse pipelines: 88% of respondents are already implementing or planning to set up processes to ensure diversity at various career stages, although these efforts are most concentrated at the entry-level and management stages.

Apprenticeship programs also play a crucial role in this diversity strategy, with 83% of local authorities currently offering such initiatives. These programs are essential for creating a more inclusive workforce, providing opportunities for individuals from varied backgrounds to enter and progress career paths within the public sector, however its key to consider not just new entrants to Technology but how we can progress career paths within our organisations

Challenging areas to attract tech



Career stages covered in the pipeline



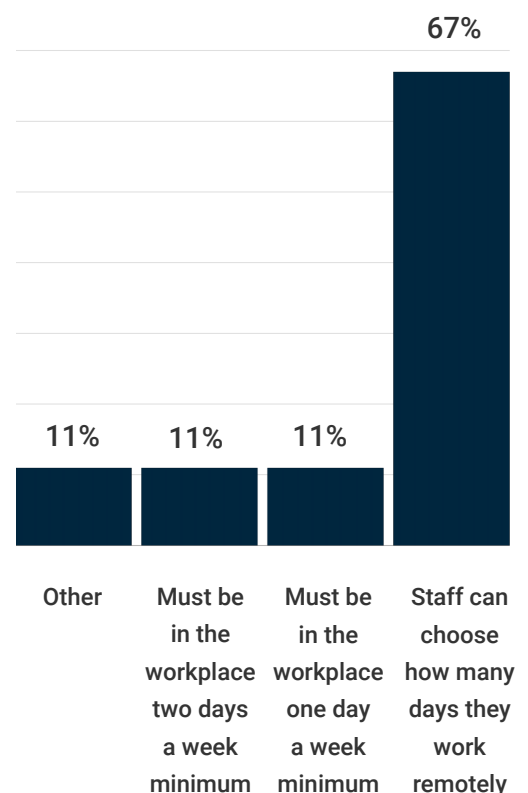


Hybrid Working: A New Norm with Mixed Reviews

The pandemic has permanently altered the way we work, and hybrid working has certainly become the new norm in local authorities, with all respondents confirming its availability. While 73% of participants agree that hybrid working adds value to their roles, the survey also sheds light on some of the downsides. Increased video meetings, blurring of work-life boundaries and lack of interaction with colleagues were cited as the three most significant negative aspects, highlighting the need for the better management of remote working.

Interestingly, 59% of respondents indicated that their hybrid working arrangements were flexible, allowing staff to choose how many days they work remotely versus being office-based. Clearly evident that this flexibility is crucial in maintaining employee satisfaction and productivity in a post-pandemic world.

Hybrid working offering to staff



Employment Benefits: A Mixed Bag of Perks and Pensions

Employee benefits continue to play a vital role in staff retention. Health insurance or private medical cover was highlighted as the top benefit in adding value to working life, followed by additional days off for wellbeing and eye care vouchers. However, the survey also reveals some dissatisfaction with the current benefits landscape. For instance, only 50% of respondents felt that they could clearly see the value in their pension plans, with 100% expressing a desire for more flexibility in their pension contributions depending on their circumstances at the time.

The findings underscore the importance of aligning employee benefits with the evolving needs and expectations of the workforce. As local authorities compete with other sectors for top talent, offering competitive and relevant benefits will be crucial.



Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

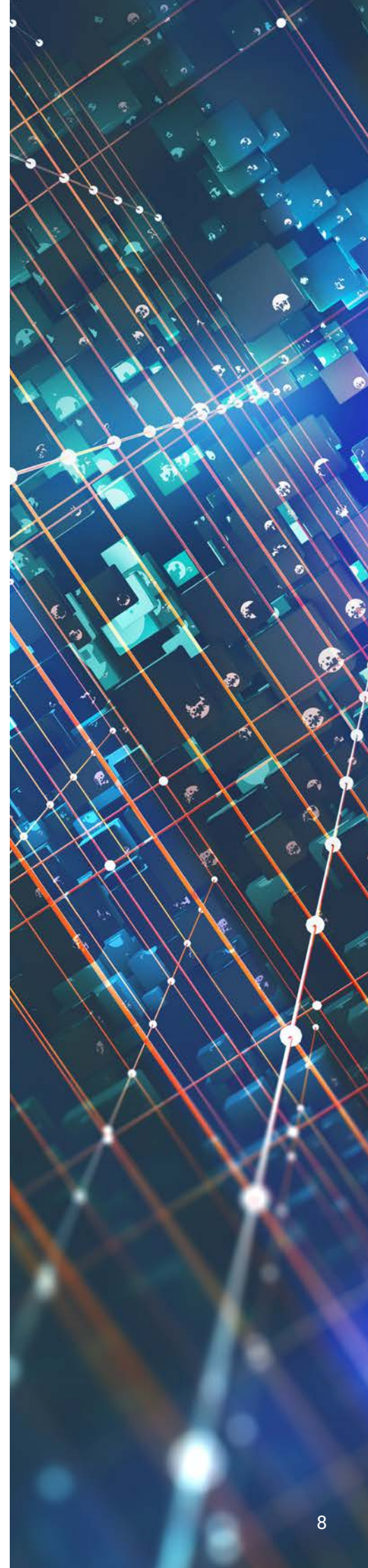
techUK's LPSC Skills Group survey paints a picture of a sector in transition. Local authorities are facing significant challenges in talent acquisition, particularly in high-demand areas like AI and cybersecurity. At the same time, they are striving to build more diverse and inclusive workforces while adapting to new ways of working in a hybrid environment.

To navigate these challenges and seize the opportunities ahead, local authorities need to take proactive steps. Articulating the employee value proposition more effectively is key to attracting and retaining talent. By clearly communicating the unique benefits, workplace culture, and long-term growth opportunities available, local authorities can stand out in a competitive job market.

Growing talent from within is also essential. Investing in reskilling programs and expanding access to apprenticeships will help local authorities nurture in-house talent and create a loyal workforce. By offering pathways for career advancement, they can address skill gaps while supporting employees' professional development.

Driving social mobility is another important step in building a diverse and inclusive workforce. Local authorities should focus on promoting initiatives that allow individuals from all backgrounds to access opportunities. This will not only foster diversity but also ensure that their workforce reflects the communities they serve.

As local authorities continue to evolve, addressing these challenges — improving talent acquisition, enhancing diversity efforts, and refining employee benefits will be critical. By focusing on their employee value proposition, nurturing internal talent, and driving social mobility, local authorities can position themselves as employers of choice in a competitive job market. The road ahead may be challenging, but with these strategies in place, the future of public sector employment in the UK looks promising.



Recommendations

This report outlines some of the live challenges facing all tech employees with specific data around those areas impacting local government, what this demonstrates is that Local Authorities are innovating and driving change but the key to success will be the skills and talent you hold. We have created a set of recommendations that may enable you to start impacting the challenges you face and enable you to attract and retain diverse technology talent in a competitive landscape.

Establish your employee value proposition

Having a clear employee value proposition (EVP) is key to attracting new talent, as well as

- Establish and promote a technology-specific proposition to job seekers, in addition to your organisation-wide EVP.
- Your proposition should clearly define your roadmap for digital transformation and what sets you apart from the competition.
- Clearly define all elements of your EVP, beyond just the salary. Hybrid and flexible working policies, holiday allowance, learning and development opportunities, career development pathways, and pension contributions are all important benefits to consider.
- Create videos and employee testimonials that can be used to communicate details about your EVP, including your company culture and benefits, to an external audience in an engaging way.

Invest in training and developing employees

Tech professionals value continuous learning and development and are looking for clear and structured career pathways. Therefore, in order to retain tech professionals and build a sustainable pipeline of talent, it's essential to invest in training and developing your current employees.

- Offer your tech employees the opportunity to enhance their skills and invest in their own development, through formal accreditations, in-house training, and programmes provided by external learning and development partners.
- Audit your training programmes frequently to ensure they're focused on developing the niche skills that are currently in demand, as well as the skill sets needed for the future.
- Communicate your learning and development offering to your employees and provide them with regular updates on available training courses. Be sure to give your employees the opportunity to suggest additional training they would benefit from.
- Implement structured development plans for your tech employees, which explore their potential career progression into different technology roles, as well as leadership roles.



Focus on the candidate experience

- Candidates' expectations of the recruitment process have changed in recent years, especially with the introduction of new channels of corporate communication. To drive successful outcomes during the recruitment process, providing a positive candidate experience is a must.
- Invest time and engage with candidates at each stage of the process, from the application phase to onboarding. Engaging with applicants through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, video calls, and email communication is key to providing a great overall candidate experience.
- Conduct regular audits of your tech candidate journey and refine the process accordingly.
- With candidates' expectations constantly changing, it's important to ensure you're offering a positive experience and attracting a diverse range of applicants for your tech roles.
- Create a personal experience for applicants by giving them insights into your company culture and working environment, through the sharing of testimonials and employee stories for example. Although this is key during all stages of the recruitment process, it's particularly important during onboarding.

The LPSC is committed to tackling the pressing digital skills gap in local government, ensuring councils are equipped to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. By working closely with the tech industry, the committee aims to identify the skills needed to navigate emerging technologies, such as data analytics, AI, and digital service delivery. This includes providing councils with actionable insights on workforce development and upskilling to meet future demands. Through workshops, guidance, and partnerships, the LPSC seeks to empower local authorities with the tools and expertise required to innovate, adapt, and deliver better outcomes for their communities.

The Local Public Services Committee calls on local government to connect and collaborate with us to drive innovation and solve critical challenges together.

Our mission is to be the 'voice' of the technology industry—an essential partner for local government to share insights, discuss pressing issues, and find solutions through meaningful collaboration. We want to support local government and the LPSC is committed to supporting tech and innovation skills to help the sector flourish and continue to support the work local government deliver day to day.

To make this mission a success, we need the input and engagement of the broader local government ecosystem, so please get in touch with techUK and the committee to present your challenges or share digital strategies and ideas in a space to collaborate, partner and address challenges. Together, we can shape a more innovative, digitally empowered future.

Get in touch: [techUK Local Public Services Committee contact details](#)



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