



Connected Devolution

**Digital systems for
successful, holistic
reorganisation**



**Turning structural change into
smarter, stronger authorities**

Abridged insights from the Localis
Connected Devolution report

technologyⁱ

Driving Local Government Reorganisation with Insight and Technology

Local Government is engaged in generational reform intended to position the sector to meet the needs of UK citizens through and beyond these most challenging times.

TechnologyOne believes that adaptable digital systems, capable of responding to evolving community expectations, will be central to the councils that navigate this reform most successfully. To contribute to the debate and offer guidance to the sector, we commissioned independent research from Localis, one of the UK's most respected think tanks, to examine experiences across the UK and internationally, identifying lessons and examples of successful transitions to new operating models.

We believe this report, *Connected Devolution*, which explores how councils can manage Local Government Reorganisation

(LGR) through integrated digital systems, effective governance, and socio-technical reform, is a timely and valuable contribution to the national conversation.

The report incorporates perspectives from senior leaders in councils, central government, public sector organisations, and digital innovation experts. It explores how integrated digital systems, robust governance, and strategic change can turn structural reform into measurable public value.

Connected Devolution is authored and produced by Localis, with Callin McLinden as lead author, guidance from Jonathan Werran, and research support from Joe Fyans. Localis provides independent, evidence-based insight, ensuring the report reflects the real-world experiences and expertise of those leading local government transformation.

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TechnologyOne thanks Localis and all contributors for their invaluable insights, which shape our approach to helping councils deliver integrated digital platforms, robust governance, and transformational LGR outcomes.

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Transforming Local Government, Together

The English Devolution Bill presents a historic opportunity for councils to reshape services, boost productivity, and deliver greater public value.

Connected Devolution highlights how councils can navigate Local Government Reorganisation successfully through integrated digital systems, robust governance, and strategic change.

LGR represents the most significant restructuring of local government since the 1970s, creating new unitary authorities to streamline governance and enhance public services. The report finds "systems integration cannot be treated as an afterthought: it is fundamental to delivering public value, raising productivity, and strengthening long term resilience".

Bringing multiple councils together, however, presents substantial logistical and technological challenges, particularly when integrating diverse back-office systems that underpin day-to-day operations.

Digital integration should be treated as socio-technical reform, not merely a system replacement or contract transfer. By embedding cybersecurity, data ethics, and interface-first design from the outset, councils can standardise processes and deliver seamless, citizen-focused services with significantly improved productivity.

TechnologyOne's OneCouncil 'adopt-not-adapt' strategy enables councils to transition from bespoke, heavily customised systems to proven, out-of-the-box technology. Coupled with our SaaS+ model, councils gain the full benefits

of Software as a Service with enterprise-grade support, continuous upgrades, and the scalability to evolve without the risks and costs associated with traditional implementations.

This approach empowers councils to unlock lasting, measurable public value through fully connected digital solutions, unwinding legacy technology and transforming how they operate for the future.

Explore the full Localis whitepaper on the TechnologyOne website to see how research-driven insight supports successful local government transformation.

Key themes for Successful Local Government Transformation



1

Sub-optimal digital readiness

Councils are constrained by legacy systems, fragmented processes, supplier lock-in, and limited budgets. National frameworks provide guidance, but true LGR requires end-to-end integration delivered by a fully connected, modern platform.

2

Capacity is the critical constraint

With only ~2% of staff in digital and data roles, councils face a skills gap threatening successful systems integration.

3

Leadership and governance

LGR outcomes depend on unified leadership. Leaders must align political and executive sponsors around an interface-first, rails-enabled vision, embedding cybersecurity and data ethics from day one.

4

Data integration unlocks preventative services

Integrating data from multiple organisations into a governed analytics spine enables proactive, preventative, and coordinated cross-agency services.

5

Commercial strategy mitigates risk

Turn legacy risk into a disciplined transformation pathway. By leveraging aggregated demand, authorities strengthen their position with suppliers, while smart commercial strategies - such as open APIs, data portability, and standardised contracts - ensure future-proof digital transformation.

6

Collaboration is essential

Regional collaboration is a key operating model. Networked administrative structures or community consortia enable shared expertise, standards, and scalable solutions.

Connected Devolution in Action

Realising the Benefits of Local Government Transformation

LGR offers a rare opportunity to rapidly accelerate productivity and efficiency. It enables councils to serve communities in smarter, more responsive ways, spending far less time on low-value operational tasks and far more on high-impact community outcomes.

Technology sits at the centre of this transformation. "Fewer, stronger" institutions need integrated digital estates that standardise processes and data across organisational boundaries while supporting cultural change.

Capacity constraints must be addressed by upskilling staff and creating boundary-spanning roles to break silos and embed digital capability. Leveraging council-ready technology helps mitigate skills shortages and accelerates adoption.

From a commercial perspective, authorities can reduce legacy risk by prioritising configuration over customisation, enforcing open standards, and embedding portability into contracts. Maintaining heavily customised systems is no longer viable. Off-the-shelf, council-ready platforms offer a major

opportunity to secure faster time-to-value within LGR transformations.

This is ultimately about investing in running organisations more efficiently and effectively, while learning from inefficiencies of the past.

Looking ahead, success relies on a disciplined benefits framework, with clear measures for productivity, resource efficiency, and public value to ensure fair, accessible digital services for every citizen.



Recommendations at a glance

Central government	
Governance & Oversight	Embed 'rails-first', interface-led governance requirements into guidance for LGR projects.
	Mandate cybersecurity and data ethics as core components of LGR bids.
	Measure success by public value, not just cost savings.
	Treat digital inclusion and affordability as core to service delivery.
	Include digital leadership at executive level in new authorities.
Capacity & Investment	Fund councils to build onboarding and digital skills.
	Support multi-year convergence plans with staged milestones.
	Establish regional hubs for training and capacity development.
Standards & Market Guidance	Mandate national digital standards and frameworks.
	Set procurement rules for open standards, portability, and exit rights.
	Issue sector-wide AI, supplier monitoring and business continuity expectations.
	Encourage the use of shared data and intelligence platforms for preventative public services.
Strategic authorities	
Capacity & Skills	Address the capacity gap by building professionalising digital roles and cross-boundary positions.
	Work with partners and suppliers to create skills pathways.
Market & Collaboration	Coordinate procurement to improve openness and portability.
	Facilitate regional and cross-sector collaboration, including NHS partners, housing bodies, and other arms of the local state.

New unitaries & local authorities	
Governance & Leadership	Embed cybersecurity and data ethics into governance from day zero.
	Publish and enforce a clear decision-rights matrix for digital integration.
	Ensure digital leaders are part of cabinet-level and chief executive-level decision-making for LGR.
	Produce a contract map before vesting to plan novation and exits.
	Consolidate core systems through a disciplined principle of 'adopt-not-adapt', then iterate.
Procurement & Commercial	Treat procurement as portfolio management, not simply contract-by-contract.
	Embed portability, security, continuous improvement, and transparency into all contracts.
	Include AI and analytics in mainstream commercial assurance.
Public Value & Inclusion	Track benefits of digital projects and communicate outcomes to residents.
	Make inclusion and assisted access a core service principle.
	Embed ethical transparency into all LGR digital programmes.
Efficiency & Integration	Follow adopt-not-adapt for core platforms.
	Use national or regional registers and services where they exist, instead of rebuilding locally.
	Collaborate with neighbouring authorities to standardise workflows and interfaces.

Delivering Connected, Future-Ready Councils

At TechnologyOne, we help councils turn structural change into lasting public value. Our approach ensures that authorities can optimise service delivery, improve operational efficiency, and create citizen-focused services that provide real benefits for residents and communities.

TechnologyOne's OneCouncil platform unifies core council systems into a single, integrated environment, enabling streamlined workflows, consistent data governance, and seamless service delivery across newly formed or reorganised authorities.

Partnering with Localis, TechnologyOne combines research-driven insight with proven digital solutions to help councils navigate the complexity of Local Government Reorganisation. By embedding integration, cybersecurity, data ethics, and interface-first design from day one, councils can unify legacy systems, standardise processes, and unlock preventative, citizen-focused services. Our approach follows the principle of 'adopt, not adapt,' focusing on configuration before customisation to accelerate value realisation and reduce implementation risk.

Learn more about how TechnologyOne supports councils in transforming LGR into sustainable, citizen-focused outcomes



Read the full Localis whitepaper here





About TechnologyOne

TechnologyOne is a global Software as a Service (SaaS) company. Our enterprise SaaS solution transforms business and makes life simple for our community by providing powerful, deeply integrated enterprise software that is incredibly easy to use. Over 1,300 leading corporations, government departments and statutory authorities are powered by our software.

For UK local government and higher education, we invest heavily in R&D, providing complete responsibility for marketing, selling, implementing, supporting, and running our solutions. This reduces time, cost, and risk while enabling councils to deliver tangible public value.

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About Localis

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. Localis carries out innovative research, holds events and facilitates an ever-growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

localis.org.uk