

Briefing

# Top Talent Cardiff 2020

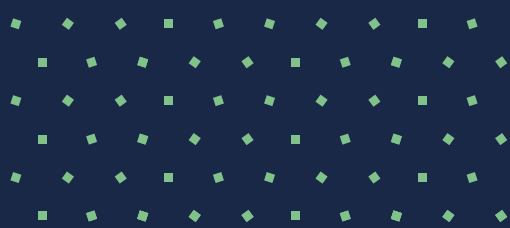
Developing people in a pandemic,  
Group C

October 2020



# Table of contents

Introduction	04
Project brief: the challenge	05
Group C members	05
Working	06
Findings	06
A zero-trust model: never trust, always verify	07
Outcomes	08





## At Socitm, we are passionate about harnessing and nurturing talent

We are committed to taking an active role in encouraging and empowering individuals to reach their potential and become the innovative, collaborative, bold and imaginative leaders the public sector needs to thrive in these disruptive times.

That's why we created Lead, a growing community where members are afforded a pathway towards continuing development and personal growth. Lead has been designed to attract, develop and retain the talented people the sector needs within a framework that is supportive, altruistic and authentic.

We are creating a new paradigm of leadership that values empathy, communication and collaboration. Public sector leaders need to be excellent communicators with a rich understanding of how listening, learning, sharing and challenging can improve lives and communities. Lead brings together a range of initiatives and opportunities designed to build confidence, develop resilience and inspire passion among a diverse talent pool with the ability to affect positive organisational and cultural change.

As part of Lead, we offer development programmes through our unique, in-house Leadership Academy. Devised and delivered in partnership with QA Training, Empowering Women (EW), Top Talent (TT) and Senior Leaders are initiatives that develop people both personally and professionally. These specialist programmes are each CPD accredited and – together with regular webinar sessions – harness, stretch and promote the skills and talent essential to effective contemporary leadership.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'N Hussain'.

**Nadira Hussain**

*Leadership development and  
research director, Socitm*

# Introduction

The Socitm Top Talent programme which started in Cardiff in February 2020 was, like almost everything else in the world, affected by the coronavirus pandemic. It began with face-to-face meetings in February but participants presented their findings to the society's online President's Week conference in June, rather than a physical audience.

However, the pandemic made the cohort's focus – the security of flexible and homeworking – into perhaps the most significant current issue for public sector IT. The challenge (see next page) had been set by Socitm partner IP Performance based on the idea that employers might eventually be required to offer flexible working, rather than that people across the world would be forced to do so. "Covid-19 wrote the business case for us," marketing director Gareth Williams told President's Week.

The Cardiff cohort was split into three groups, each of which chose a different aspect of the issue to examine. This Inform briefing covers the experiences and findings of Group C.



# Project brief: the challenge

“To support this new legislation\* and enable the rise in flexible, mobile/roaming and homeworking, public sector organisations must guarantee and secure the availability of suitable technology to allow workers to perform their roles regardless of location or device and without impacting productivity or user experience.”

*\* In July 2019, Conservative MP Helen Whately introduced a bill to Parliament that would make flexible working the default for employees, although it was not adopted by the government and did not become law.*



## Group C members

### **Lee Owen**

ICT programme manager,  
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

### **Gari Rowlands**

Sharepoint technical lead,  
Gwynedd Council

### **Dave Sanderson**

Regional director, Socitm

### **Peter Thomas**

Senior online engagement manager,  
digital learning division,  
Welsh Government

*Some members of the group work for organisations that do not allow them to be quoted.*

## Programme format

1. **An initial two-day group workshop, held in Cardiff in February, at which the challenge project was announced. This was just one element of the workshop, which also included a range of management training, discussion and networking.**
2. **A one-to-one professional coaching session lasting an hour, delivered by telephone or video-call.**
3. **Work on the group's challenge project, which took place virtually.**
4. **Two concluding days which took place online, the first of which was focused on training but also included discussion of the presentation, the second finalising the presentation and delivering it virtually at the President's Week conference on 12 June.**
5. **Participants attended a virtual graduation ceremony on 16 July.**

## Working

Several members of Group C enrolled on the recommendations of their managers, as well as because they wanted to improve their managerial skills. Lee Owen has been managing staff for a number of years and was looking to see how he was performing. He says that much of the content of Top Talent's initial two days in Cardiff reinforced management training courses he had done previously. "But there was a lot of things that were new," he adds, as well as a welcome focus on putting good management techniques into practice.

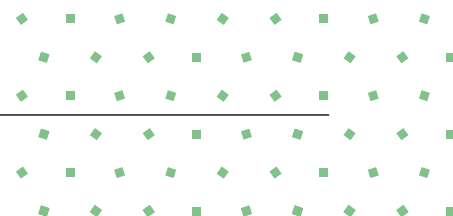
Those initial two days were also valuable in forming the group. "We bonded well," says Dave Sanderson, with discussions on everyone's strengths and weaknesses which helped the group to decide it would focus on a less technical topic. "We had to deliver a presentation that played to our strengths," says Lee Owen, adding that identifying these "would have been difficult without those two days".

Apart from some use of email the group relied on Microsoft Teams for almost all of its online collaboration, including video and audio calls and a Teams channel which the members of the group plan to continue to use. Although face-to-face meetings were ruled out by the coronavirus pandemic, members feel that Teams allowed better collaboration during the research phase than would have been possible if they had met physically, as it let them share files and track changes to documents easily. It also let them research topics independently, then have a group call to discuss what they had found. However, ideally they would have met face to face to complete the presentation, the usual model for Top Talent courses.

## Findings

Group C focused on zero-trust security (see next page). This model is well-suited to remote and homeworking as it checks everything regardless of location, as opposed to 'castle perimeter' security which focuses on a border between an organisation's systems and the outside world.

Lee Owen said that his council was not planning to reopen its offices until the end of August 2020 and everyone who can is working from home. This has led to improved productivity with much less travelling and waiting in reception areas. Systems need to be secured, but in ways that do not cancel out these productivity gains: "We need a fine balance of user productivity and user compliance," he said in the President's Week presentation.



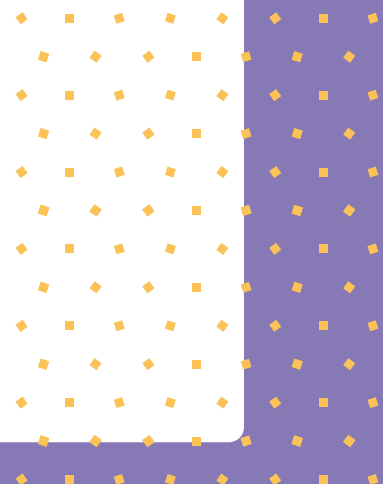
# A zero-trust model: never trust, always verify

*Adapted from Group C's presentation to President's Week*

- › **Organisations should not trust anyone or any device by default:** this should apply regardless of where the request originated from. Every access request must be fully verified before allowing access to their network.
- › **Verify the user:** this could involve the use of enhanced username and passwords or multi-factor authentication (MFA), irrespective of type of user or resource accessed.
- › **Validate the device:** is it registered, is it the user's normal device, does it meet minimum security requirements?
- › **Limit access and privilege:** prevent lateral movement, introduce 'micro perimeters' for higher security areas, increase use of MFA for critical applications and data; create role-based access controls and policies for all applications.
- › **Learn and adapt:** create visibility of devices and users on the network, what's being accessed and from where; define risky behaviours and highlight anomalies; use detailed logs and reports to generate threat-detection alerts.

The group said that an organisation planning to use a zero-trust model should consider factors including asset management and rationalisation, the tracking of end-user devices, skills gaps, what has changed as a result of the pandemic, legacy applications and systems and automation. There will be a cost for the introduction of such security, as well as staff resources.

It also considered how a phased implementation would work, starting with tracking who accesses corporate systems with what devices and how they behave; moving to verification of identity, role, device and security profiles; developing protection so there is a seamless access user experience and with mobile devices are secured; and finally, scaling the work.



# Outcomes

Group C covered their personal experiences in their presentation to President's Week, highlighting improved perspectives, skills, focus and confidence; greater trust in their own abilities; gathering vital insights; and developing a more strategic network of contacts. "Fear, uncertainty and doubt did creep in, but working as a team helped eliminate this for us," said Dave Sanderson during the President's Week presentation. "We all leave as credible leaders."

Speaking later, he adds that the process has helped members of the group improve understanding of their leadership style and gain confidence, boosted by the fact they had to shift rapidly from face-to-face to virtual collaboration during the course.

Lee Owen says he was pleased to hear he was already doing some things right: "I don't have to reinvent everything." He also found valuable the idea of focusing on what he can influence, as well as helping to put together a professional presentation.





## About this briefing

### Author

SA Mathieson - Analyst and writer

### Editor

David Ogden - Communications manager

### Designers

Magdalena Werner - Senior creative designer

Benjamin Hughes - Graphic designer

## Have your say

We always welcome feedback and discussion on the contents of our publications.

### Martin Ferguson

Director of policy and research

[martin.ferguson@socitm.net](mailto:martin.ferguson@socitm.net)

### Nadira Hussain

Director of leadership development and research

[nadira.hussain@socitm.net](mailto:nadira.hussain@socitm.net)

## Get in touch

Website: [www.socitm.net](http://www.socitm.net)

Email: [inform@socitm.net](mailto:inform@socitm.net)

Tel: 01604 709456



Join the conversation...



@Socitm



Socitm