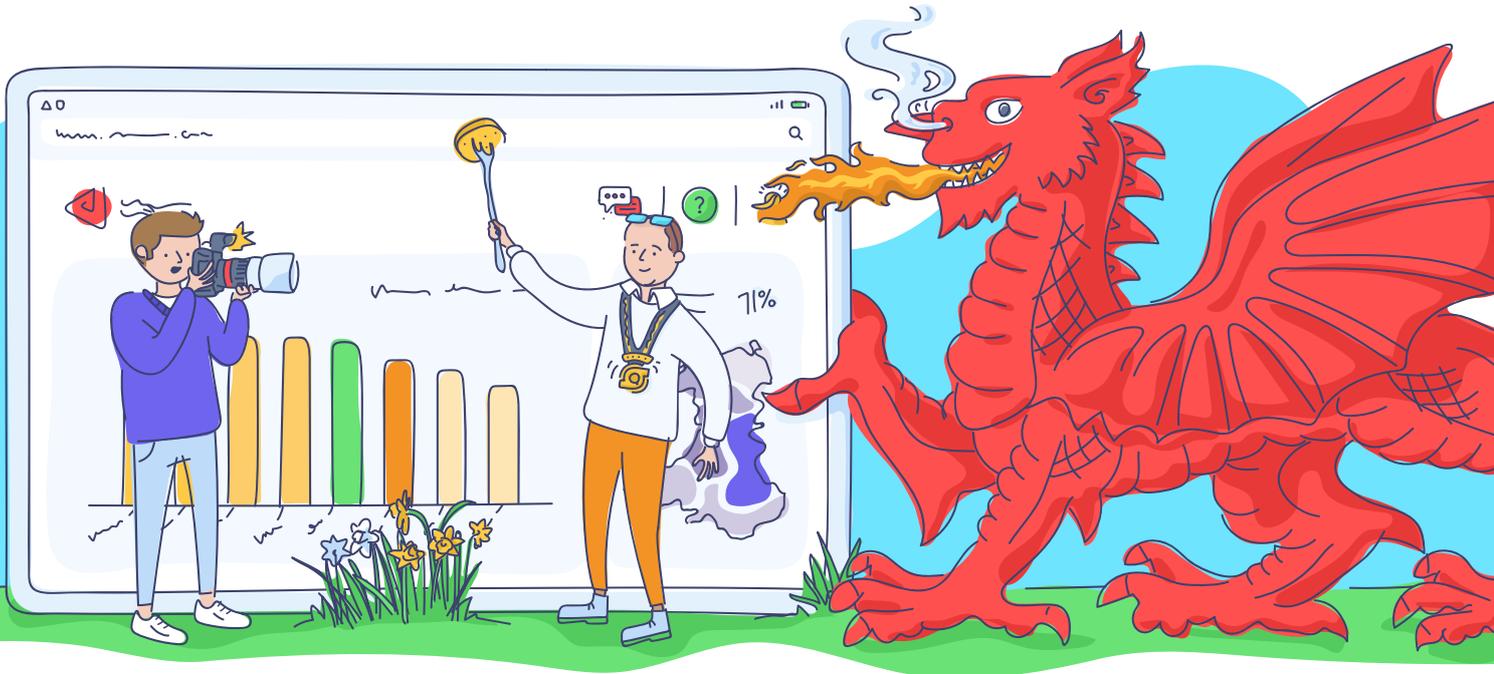


In Our View *Focus*



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FEATURING COVERAGE OF



President's Conference, 14-15 June 2022

THEME

Service design and
transformation

President's welcome | 2 >

Day one: Digital got us through
Covid says Cardiff leader | 3 >

Day 1: DLUHC works to
simplify planning applications | 4 >

Day 1: Shared service sees
talent drain from senior jobs | 5 >

Day 2: Wales tackles food
poverty with data | 6 >

Day 2: Empowering Women
cohort rethinks DDaT recruitment | 7 >

Change Agents - free training
programme launched | 8 >

Events calendar | 9 >

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

It's cool to be Welsh, but I will represent everyone



Croeso, welcome, to the president's dinner but also welcome to Wales. If I lapse back into Welsh now and then, I'm sorry – well, I'm not sorry – because it is my first language. It's the land of Anthony Hopkins, Richard Burton, Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, Aneurin Bevan, Kate Roberts, Ian Rush, Max Boyce, Alun Wyn Jones. We have qualified for the World Cup, we are going to face England and we are going to sort them out like we did at the Euros. It's cool to be Welsh at the moment.

My background was not in local authorities but utilities and pharmaceuticals, then I got this excellent role in Conwy to be head of IT and digital transformation. I started attending the Socitm regional meetings and they were really good – I was accepted and drawn in by the people there, many of whom are here today. We've developed that group with strong connections to the Local Government Association and the Welsh Government, so it's hugely powerful with such potential to transform. We have Sam Hall, the chief digital officer funded by the Welsh Government but located in the Welsh LGA. It's an exciting, exciting time for us here in Wales. I wanted us to have a President's Conference here so we could share some of those successes and the energy and passion we have.

Since I became a vice-president, I have noticed how Socitm itself has transformed from where we were three or four years ago. The relationship with Socitm Advisory is superb and the working partnership is excellent. We now have the fabulous Nadira as chief executive, who leads by example such as on empowering women. She really is an icon for many of us, she walks the

talk. And while many people will not see it, we also have this hugely professional organisation – things like tonight don't just happen.

I did want to mention my president's charity. Both of my parents were really active in supporting Tŷ Gobaith children's hospice, an amazing facility in north Wales, with Hope House over the border in Oswestry. It was really close to my mum's heart and she'll be looking down and saying good on you for following in my steps. It needs to raise £7.5 million every year and the people working there are true angels.

I am honoured to be the president. It's not just Wales, although I'm really proud of Wales, it's representing everyone in the UK. To follow great leaders like Sam and Sandra, who were fabulous presidents, is a tall order for me but I'm going to do my best.

Huw McKee
Socitm president

This is an edited version of Huw McKee's speech at his president's dinner in Cardiff on 14 June. A collection and charity auction during the dinner for Tŷ Gobaith and Hope House raised more than £4,000. Anyone who was not there on the night and would like to donate can do so through hopehouse.org.uk/appeal/donate

In Our View

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Digital got us through Covid says Cardiff leader

Local public services relied on the work of their technologists during the Covid-19 pandemic and will need them to develop further, Cardiff Council's chief executive Paul Orders told day one of the President's Conference.

"I'd like to say, on behalf of the wider sector, a thank you to all Socitm members for the shift that you've put in over the last two years," he said. "The public service response to the pandemic has relied crucially on ICT managers being on top of their game."

Cardiff Council's contact centre provided the region's Covid-19 test, trace, protect (TTP) service, which also hosted the national surge team. The council worked with the local NHS and other parts of the public

sector to provide the TPP service's technology platform and made much greater use of data to make decisions than previously, including through dashboard services.

"In Cardiff and elsewhere, public service technology professionals were absolutely pivotal to the emergency response," Orders said. "As public service leaders, we've become more data-literate and more demanding of the evidence, which needs to be as close to real-time as possible to support decision-making." The TPP team is now supporting refugees from Ukraine.

Orders told the event that before the pandemic he thought Cardiff was already a digital council,

with an excellent website, an app covering 18 services and a bilingual chatbot. But he would not have believed an organisation as complex as a local authority could have been led remotely in normal times, never mind in a crisis.



"Thank you to all Socitm members for the shift that you've put in over the last two years"

*Paul Orders,
Cardiff Council*

In-home sensors save four lives in Sutton

Telecare sensors that monitor activity in homes run by Sutton Housing Partnership have helped save four lives by detecting when vulnerable residents have changed their behaviour, the conference heard. The sensors, provided by IoT Solutions Group and monitored by telecare provider Careium, were introduced by Sutton Council during the pandemic. To avoid anyone having to enter people's homes, residents self-installed the devices by pulling out a tab to connect the battery.

David Grasty, corporate head of digital strategy and portfolio for the London boroughs of Kingston

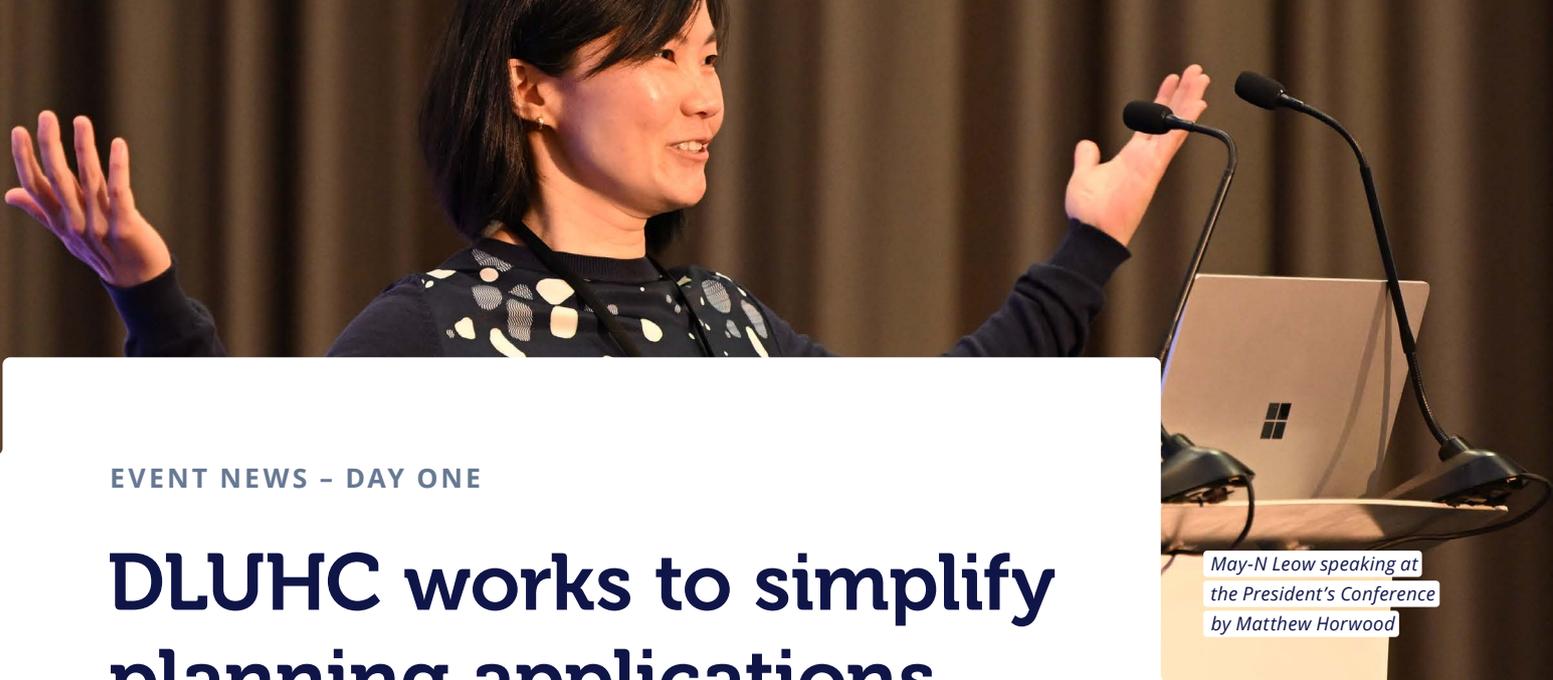


and Sutton, said that the four life-saving cases had all involved residents getting up at night to use the toilet without putting on a detector wristband then being unable to reach emergency pull-cords. The ambulance crew for one, on the coldest night of the year, believed the individual would have died about an hour later. "It's not often in IT in local government you can say you have saved somebody's life," he said.

Sutton's use of home sensors: bit.ly/3HHIQml

Now, the council is working to become a hybrid organisation with significant use of remote working. "Staff prefer it, managers are reporting to me greater productivity and improved well-being of staff, and citizen satisfaction with public services has remained pretty high," he said. Councillors too have accepted hybrid arrangements and Cardiff has adapted its governance accordingly.

Orders said that the council will rely in future on the culture of innovation using digital technology developed in response to Covid-19. "The pandemic has acted as an accelerator."



May-N Leow speaking at the President's Conference by Matthew Horwood

EVENT NEWS - DAY ONE

DLUHC works to simplify planning applications

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is developing simpler online planning application services for local authorities in England, building on work with Buckinghamshire Council and the London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, a panel discussion heard.

May-N Leow, the department's head of product for digital planning, told delegates that about half of planning applications are currently invalid when first submitted, for reasons such as north not being indicated on site plans. "Those invalid applications then have to be corrected and resubmitted, which leads to an average of 34 days of delay," she said. "If some of you have tried submitting a planning application, you'll know the real pain of doing so. It's really inefficient, not only for local authorities but for users applying as well."

The department is also working to digitise local plans and increase public engagement in planning through digital methods and has funded 46 councils to explore the latter. Leow, who until April was head of the department's local digital collaboration unit, said that it has been sharing what it has learnt with colleagues in Scotland and Wales.

The local digital collaboration unit's Rachel Downs added that the department bid high at the most

recent funding review and has £85 million to spend in this area over the next three years: "There's a much greater interest in how cyber and digital can support levelling-up ambitions," she said. Key areas of work include assessing and managing local authorities' cybersecurity risks, including reducing disruption when attacks take place; ensuring councils have the skills and tools to design and deliver digital public services, including meeting the Technology Code of Practice; and working with councils to improve usability, accessibility and security of services.

Giorgio Prister, president of the Major Cities of Europe IT Users Group, noted that the department's main aim of levelling-up regions has been a key policy of the European Union for many years. The EU is borrowing money to fund national and local governments in carrying out transformational work on sustainability, although he said that some authorities are bidding because they feel blackmailed into doing so.

He added that Covid-19 has changed citizens' expectations of local government. "Citizens know that things can be done, the experience of Covid showed that things can be done, so do it," he said. However, it isn't clear that local authorities can act like businesses and treat citizens as customers, given that for the public sector success is not just measured economically.

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"If some of you have tried submitting a planning application, you'll know the real pain of doing so"

*May-N Leow,
Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities*

Prister added that gathering data then extracting intelligence from it is an important task for local governments, but many do not have the skills to do the latter. He added that data-handling presented ethical challenges, with the EU having funded DataVaults, a smart cities project through which citizens can share their personal data and get a financial return for it.

See more

DLUHC modernising planning software: bit.ly/3b46OL9

Digital Land local plan project: digital-land.info

Major Cities of Europe: majorcities.eu

EU DataVaults project: datavaults.eu

Shared service sees talent drain from senior jobs

Senior local government technology staff in Wales can earn tens of thousands of pounds more by moving to other employers, chief operating officer of shared service SRS Wales Matt Lewis told the event.

Matt, a Socitm vice-president, said his service has lost half of the people in its architects group in the last month to employers typically offering £15,000 to £20,000 more: "I can't compete with that," he said. Recruiters have told him he will not be able to fill some roles for what SRS Wales is able to offer, with the service bound by local public service pay-scales.

"We are losing senior staff," he said. "We are coming to a crisis point where other sectors are able

to evaluate technical and digital skills at a much higher level than we can in local government."

In some cases, senior technologists can earn as much as £30,000 or £40,000 more elsewhere. This sometimes involves leaving the UK or travelling over the bridge to Bristol, but increasingly people are offered the chance to work from home, with one rival employer offering London weighting to someone who would continue to live in south Wales.

Matt said that in some cases SRS Wales can recruit people with less experience than a role requires and provide training so they meet the requirements over time. However, this isn't possible if too many experienced

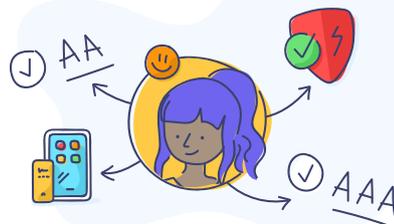


"We can't pay as much, but if you come here the job is far more rewarding"

Matt Lewis,
SRS Wales

Treat accessibility as essential in procurement

Public sector procurements should make accessibility an essential requirement rather than include it as a percentage of scoring, Kevin White, the Scottish Government's head of digital accessibility and usability, told the event. "You wouldn't expect to accept a product that didn't care about cyber[security], but had all your functionality," he said, adding that some people still didn't understand that accessibility means providing equivalent user experiences for those with disabilities rather than translating text into other languages.



White, who is also a non-executive director of Socitm, said that Covid-19 meant the Scottish Government was publishing life-saving information, making accessibility critically important and leading to him working to make services accessible on very short deadlines. He has shifted the training his service offers towards bite-sized material on specific topics so people can take it as required and created a champions network to amplify messages on accessibility across an organisation of 18,000 people.

people leave at once: "You need to be able to retain a core of people."

He added that public services need to highlight the chance to serve the public in job adverts, mentioning an example headed 'stop chasing invoices and fees, start chasing purpose'. "We know we can't pay as much as everybody else, but if you come here the job is far more rewarding than most," Matt said. In 2010 he moved from the private sector to SRS Wales, something he has written about both for Socitm's In Our View magazine and in a LinkedIn article.

See more

Matt Lewis' Personal View, p22, In Our View issue 31: bit.ly/30jNhW4

Article on LinkedIn: bit.ly/3HHhefY



EVENT NEWS - DAY TWO

Wales tackles food poverty with data

National and local governments in Wales are increasing their use of data, including by sharing information between organisations to tackle food poverty and using geospatial data across the country, a panel session on day two of the conference heard.

Sam Hall, chief digital officer for local government in Wales, discussed the Merthyr Food Poverty Project, a project the Welsh Local Government Digital team she leads and Merthyr Tydfil Council are running to identify people sliding into food poverty.

"Local authorities sit on a wealth of data," Hall said, with some of this open to mining to indicate who is moving towards poverty, allowing authorities to offer help earlier. The discovery phase of the project has involved collaboration with other public services, the Welsh Government and food banks, and it has now moved to an initial alpha



"If we could be the first nation without food poverty, wow, isn't that something Wales would want to be?"

*Sam Hall,
Welsh Local Government Digital*

stage with the aim of developing a model that can be used across Wales. "If we can work out how we can intervene quicker, intervention is way better," said Hall. Data should also help locate services, with food banks currently in buildings available to the volunteers such as church halls. Data shows some would be more accessible if sited nearer or in areas with high levels of poverty, given users are less likely to have access to a car.

"We're a small nation, we can take control of this," said Hall. "If we could be the first nation without food poverty, wow, isn't that something Wales would want to be? I think it is."

Glyn Jones, the Welsh Government's chief digital officer, discussed DataMapWales, a project which grew out of the Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys using geospatial data to help potential employers better understand that area.

DataMapWales is now used by local authorities across Wales to create active travel routes for walking and cycling, which they have a duty to do under a 2013 act of the Welsh Senedd, and to pilot a national underground asset register. It can also be used in emergencies such as to help plan evacuations during storms.

Jones added that the Welsh Government has recently collaborated with local authorities, including through Welsh Local

Government Digital, to support Ukrainian refugees as part of the country's work to become a nation of sanctuary. "It's been quite an exhilarating few weeks of cross public sector working," he said.

The national programme of digital work also includes researching a national minimum digital living standard for households, a Data Nation Accelerator project with Cardiff University, work with Bangor University to develop broadband in rural areas and funding for the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) which was established in 2020.

Harriet Green, CDPS joint chief executive, said that its work includes 'nation building' work that strengthens Wales' devolved approach such as on bilingual service design and delivering catalyst projects that help demonstrate digital change.

See more

Welsh Local Government Digital: bit.ly/3QH9L4N

Interview with Sam Hall in main feature, p16, In Our View issue 31: bit.ly/30jNhW4

DataMapWales active travel routes: bit.ly/3QUvbf1

Centre for Digital Public Services: bit.ly/30iVwBv

Empowering Women cohort rethinks DDaT recruitment

The Welsh Government should highlight its working policies, change the language it uses in job adverts and promote women as role models, according to a cohort of Socitm's Empowering Women programme that focused on persuading more women to apply for technology jobs.

Danielle Davies, a content creation officer for the Welsh Government, told the event that early stereotyping and few female students taking qualifications has led to women in government digital, data and technology (DDaT) jobs being less likely than men to have joined with a qualification or previous DDaT experience. They are also less likely to have gained their job externally and are more likely to work part-time.

"The Welsh Government's smart working policies need to be highlighted more effectively, including ability to work remotely and flexible working hours, as well as part-time and job share opportunities," said Jane Rickard, a digital support officer at the government who moved to DDaT mid-career through an apprenticeship.

The profession needs promoting to women already working for the government, according to research by other members of the cohort: "They found that many women had stumbled into their DDaT careers," she added.

The group proposed overhauling job adverts so as not to put women off applying. Rickard said that words including 'driven', 'decisive' and 'assertive' seem masculine and the overall language of adverts is often cold and unenticing when it could highlight culture, impact and opportunity. In a statement, Welsh Government chief digital officer

Glyn Jones said that it needs to make advertising more attractive to women and that the cohort's work has fed into an action plan.

In an earlier session for Empowering Women graduates, Denise Weaver discussed her career from starting on a market stall when aged 13 to working as a delivery manager for Neath Port Talbot Council. She said that women can fail to achieve their potential because of society's expectations or not being aware of potential role models. But she added that across her cohort: "I think we all agree that our biggest obstacle is our own self-belief."

Socitm Empowering Women programme: bit.ly/3xGJniM

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“I think we all agree that our biggest obstacle is our own self-belief”

*Denise Weaver,
Neath Port Talbot*

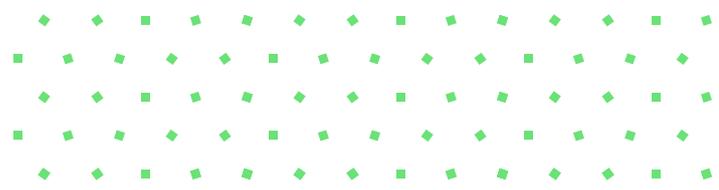
Councils need to balance savings and user experience

Local authorities need to focus their digital efforts, Socitm Advisory's service lead for digital and data Kate Lindley told the event. "We want to create an Amazon-like experience' is what we hear from every chief executive we work with," she said. But this has to be done on tiny budgets across hundreds of poorly-linked systems while implementing corresponding culture changes: "Balancing the needs of delivering savings while delivering an optimised user experience is quite a difficult ask."

Socitm Advisory is helping Walsall Council with digital



transformation by working with services individually on changes they want to make. Carol Williams, the council's director of transformation and digital and a Socitm vice-president, said this has shown the importance of setting foundations first, finding repeatable approaches and realising such work is not primarily about technology. "We've got some very bright people, frustrated people, who I think now feel they are being listened to," she said. "If we can give a better service to our customers, we are all going to be happier."



Socitm and Microsoft launch free Change Agents training programme

Socitm and Microsoft have developed a free five-day training programme to support the evolution of public services.

The Change Agents programme, which is free for the majority of Microsoft Enterprise Agreement customers, will support organisations' transformation through training on a range of skills and technology opportunities to maximise innovation, along with sharing best practice and experiences. It has been trialled with Coventry, Norfolk and Walsall councils.

The first cohort will take the course online from Monday 27 June to Friday 1 July, with future dates to be announced. Socitm and Microsoft hope to run five cohorts each year, with 20-30 staff and lower managers from 20-25 councils in each. Training will be delivered by Aidan Matthews, Socitm's learning programme manager, and Andrew Boxall, a client technology lead at Microsoft. A complementary two-day course has been developed for senior managers.

Socitm and Microsoft are aiming to train at least one person in every public sector service to be a catalyst for change, connecting them with others in similar roles to innovative create communities of practice. The training is designed to work alongside existing change efforts, with some authorities planning to use this as their main catalyst for change.

The programme focuses on areas relevant to transformational activity such as change management, leadership responsibilities, a growth mind-set and learning styles. Attendees will be introduced

Programme details	
Day 1	Skills to change – Learn a range of skills from expert tutors at Socitm on how to understand, introduce, manage and lead change. Topics include learning styles, growth mind-set, leadership, the human side of change, change management and design thinking.
Day 2	Productivity and communication – Understand the opportunities with Microsoft Teams, including apps and services, SharePoint, including compliance features, and a range of apps and services that can support transformation.
Day 3	Apps and automation – Introducing the Power Platform and opportunities of automation with Power Platform and Power Automate.
Day 4	Tech to transform – Look to the future, learn new features, or get to grips with the basics of a range of products to support your digital transformation, including Power BI, BOTs and the art of the possible.
Day 5	Time to change – Learn how to apply some of your new skills in a practical way. This session will also introduce you to further resources and support. Topics include an introduction to agile, requirements gathering, further training opportunities, introductions to Socitm services and to dedicated communities of practice.

to a range of Microsoft technology and trained on familiar services such as Teams and SharePoint. Delivery partners will demonstrate how technology is being used to transform public services.

“The Change Agents programme brings together two often separate considerations (people and technology) and challenges attendees to consider how these capabilities can be used in a complementary way to improve working practices and re-imagine services,” said Socitm chief executive Nadira

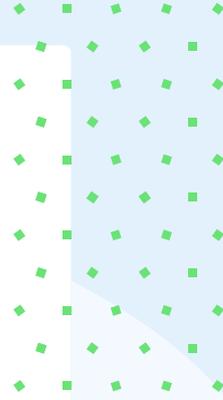
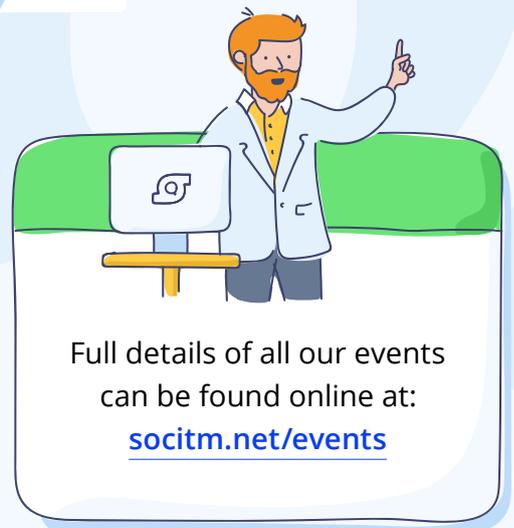
Hussain. “The blend of lessons worked well and it was fantastic to see attendees learn how they might tackle change programmes in their specific teams, for their services and foster a more transformative approach organisationally.”

See more

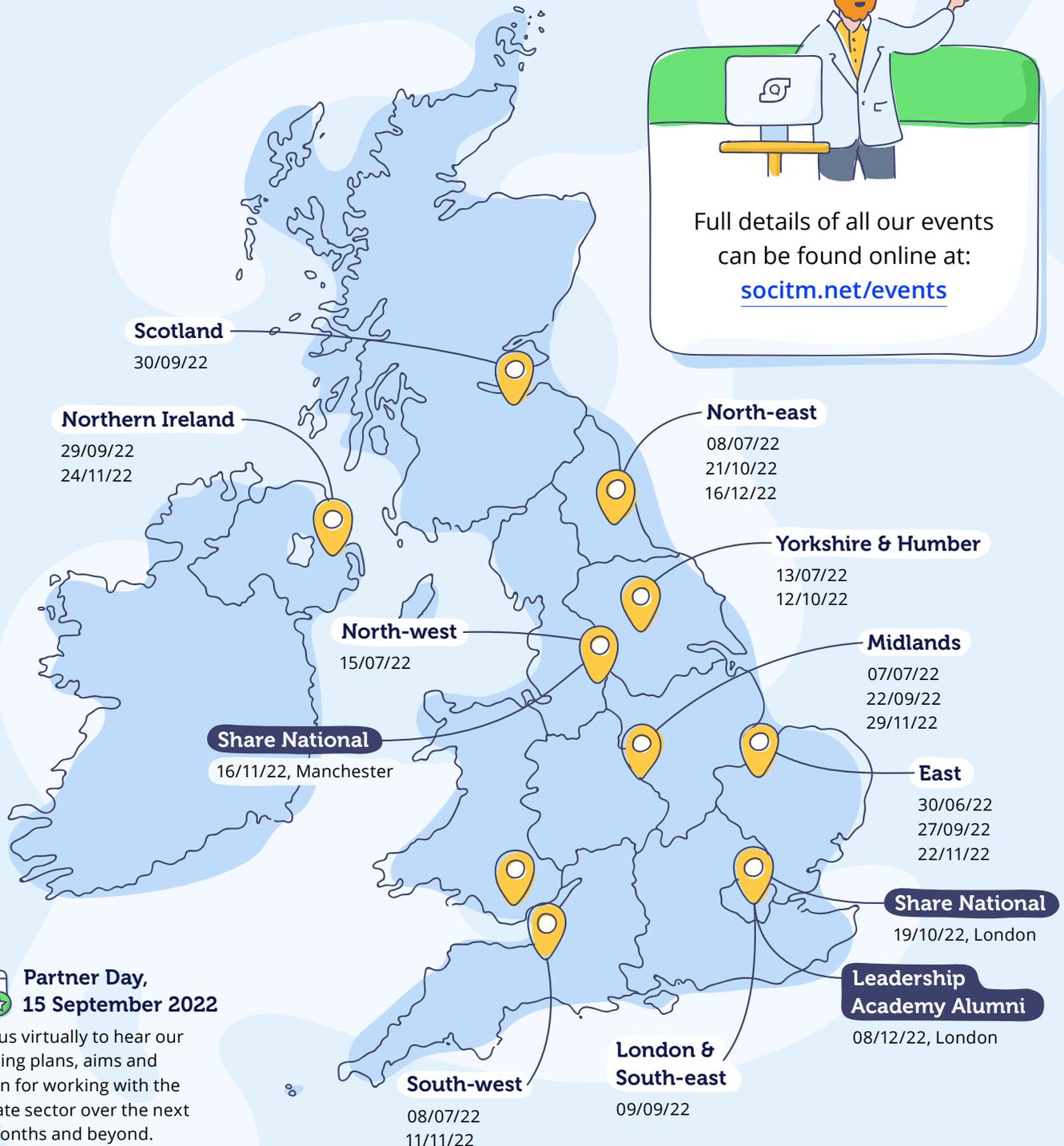
Details of programme: bit.ly/socitm-change-agents

Dates and booking: bit.ly/3y3b5HW

Local and national events calendar

Full details of all our events can be found online at: socitm.net/events




Partner Day, 15 September 2022

Join us virtually to hear our exciting plans, aims and vision for working with the private sector over the next 12 months and beyond.

Step into another world.

Join Glasgow City Council, Midlothian Council
and South Ayrshire Council
**and start your digital transformation
journey with us.**

In the last 6 years, Socitm Advisory have provided £1.1m to our sister membership organisation: **Socitm**.

This has been re-invested into local government initiatives, training and development, and products and services.