

Policy briefing

Socitm Connects

Socitm's 2022-25 strategy to support
resilient people, communities,
organisations and places

July 2022



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Introduction

We are excited to present this policy briefing that sets out the rationale, scope and key elements of our future **Socitm Connects** policy and research programme. The programme is designed to address what has been described as a '**critical juncture for public services**'.¹

The Covid-19 pandemic forced local public services to change the way they work to address the pressing challenges being faced by their communities. Whether it was developing effective local test and trace systems, identifying and supporting the vulnerable, or undertaking data analysis to fill the gaps in knowledge about specific localities and communities, local public service leaders were asked to re-think the 'art of the possible' in relation to where and how they should harness technologies and data to achieve better outcomes for their residents, businesses and communities.

The impact of the pandemic is compounded by climate change, cost of living, digital poverty and a host of other issues now facing people, places and communities. Our challenge is to address the critical juncture for public services, a once in a generation opportunity to deliver lasting reform of public services to address these complex issues and to enable and empower Socitm's members to play their role in supporting and transforming the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places they serve.

Over the last two years, we have been engaging with our 2,500 members and a wide cross section of partners about how we need to focus not just on the post-Covid future but also the wider environmental, social, economic and technological challenges that impact on people's everyday lives and the places they live and work. Through our Socitm Lead and Research programmes we have been focusing on nurturing wisdom and empowering our members skilfully to navigate unprecedented change.

Our Share, Improve and Include programmes backed-up by a range of national and regional events have shared knowledge on the key hot topics of the day and brought practitioners and innovators together to help shape local futures. Likewise, our Digital Trends² and Integrated Care³ analysis and international partnering have provided unique and ground-breaking insights into the emerging world of digital, technology and data.

All this has been underpinned by the ongoing capability building work of Socitm Advisory and its "No reverse gear – Revolutionising public services" offerings that inform continuous improvement across local public sector regeneration, sustainability and connectivity plans and initiatives.⁴ These activities are complemented by our wider work with research partners such as Bradford University's Senior Leaders Apprenticeship Programme, the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGPP) established by the University of East London and St George's House (SGH), Windsor.

As a result of the insights generated from our members, our partners and wider activities across the local public sector, we have seen the emergence of the following strategic priorities:

- The need to build upon the phenomenal response of local authorities and the wider public sector to Covid-19.
- The need to sustain the step changes that local public service providers have taken.
- The need to harness digital – cultures, capabilities, technologies and data – to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places.

This policy briefing addresses what each of these priorities means in practice, and the challenges and opportunities that our members face in adopting them. It then outlines how, building on our extensive leadership, policy research, conference and advisory offerings, we plan to deliver our new, strategic Socitm Connects programme. The programme will help our members deliver the professional leadership and technological solutions to transform place-based outcomes for their organisations and communities for the better.

Nadira Hussain, Chief Executive Officer
Martin Ferguson, Policy and Research Director

Purpose and audience for this policy briefing

Socitm produces policy briefings on behalf of those working in the public sector, in particular local government. This briefing will be of interest to senior policy-makers, decision-makers and managers involved in the delivery of local public services.

Further reading

Resilient people, communities and places – Socitm’s St George’s House consultation report



Our special report outlines more background around the challenges and opportunities we have identified for the support and development of place-based regeneration, sustainability and connectivity.

The report brings together insights from with our network of local practitioners, draws on the work of Socitm’s leadership, research and Advisory programmes, and wider findings and reflections from the public, private and academic sectors. It concludes with shared reflections on what works, what needs to change and the next steps that Socitm and its members need to address through innovation, technology and modernisation to help people, places and communities to thrive.

These together have informed the development of Socitm Connects strategy which is outlined in more detail in this policy briefing.

Download the St George’s House consultation report on the resource hub: bit.ly/3y9YfGs

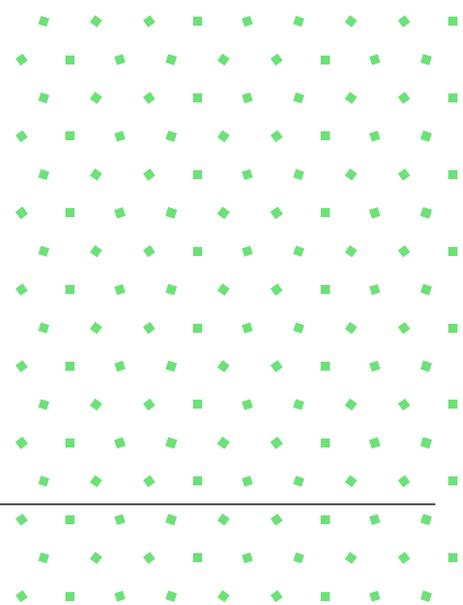
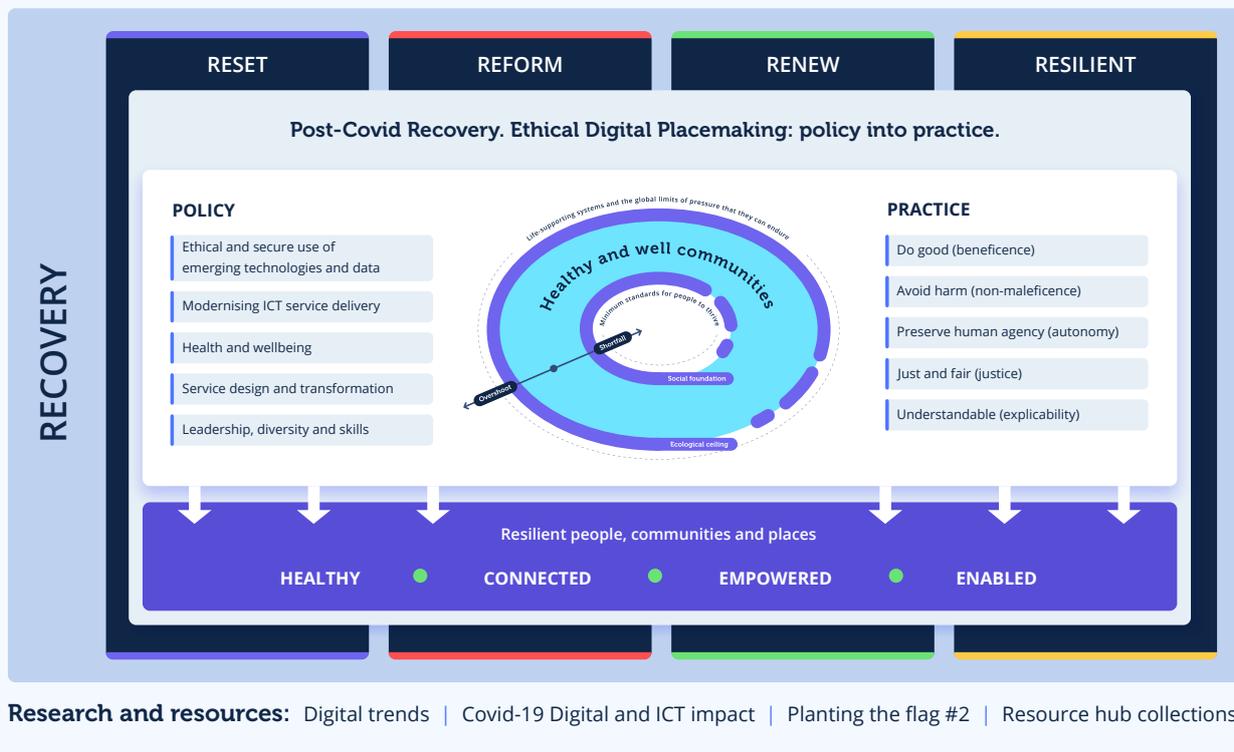


Figure 1. Recovery and resilience model



A critical juncture for public services

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge to the United Kingdom's public services. The circumstances of last two years also constitute what has been described as '**critical juncture for public services**', in effect a once in a generation opportunity to deliver lasting and transformative reform of public services. As a result, the true value of a local authority led, place-based approach has come into sharper focus. Not only has the pandemic impacted directly on the health and wellbeing of people and places, it has also imposed unprecedented shocks on the wider civil society and social-economic life of people and their communities as a whole.

Insights from Socitm's work with our network of 2,500 local practitioners has enabled us to capture an emerging picture drawn from over 200 local authority recovery and regeneration strategies about how they are developing the means to move from a front-line response, via local post-Covid recovery initiatives,

towards community focused regeneration. Our findings identify four common 'pillars', the '4Rs' of Reset Reform Renew Resilient⁵ that broadly characterise place-based recovery and regeneration approaches across the various tiers of local government (see Figure 1).

These four pillars constituted a strategic framework that helped address the issues of place-based recovery through a range of online conferences, webinars and regional workshops and the development of our place-based recovery prospectus, digital equalities policy briefing⁶ and an associated Championing place-based recovery infographic.⁷

Moving on from this perspective, our place-based regeneration infographic⁸ (see Figure 2) highlights how the focus of our members has moved rapidly from initial recovery onto issues of regeneration, sustainability, connectivity. These include the wider issues of digital services, integrated care, cyber security and digital identity, as local authorities orchestrate place-based resources and assets to address the most pressing needs of their residents and communities.

Alongside this is an emerging set of central initiatives, including: Levelling Up; health and care integration; secure, connected places; community preparedness and resilience; Net Zero; and housing and planning reforms, all of which impact on how local public services are funded and operate in the future.

Taking all these factors together, they point to a rapidly changing and complex environment that needs to be navigated with vision, skill and determination if we are to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places.

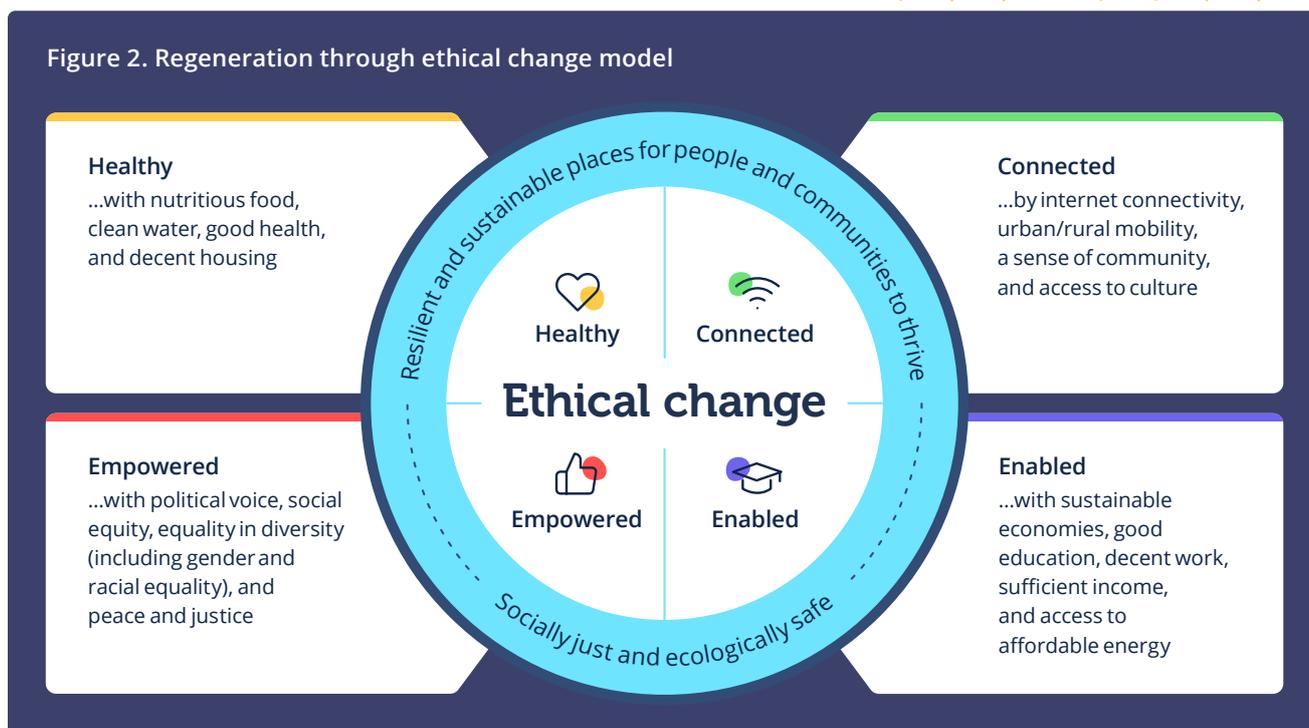
In order to help us draw these strands together, in November 2021 we hosted a St George's House consultation at Windsor Castle.⁹ We assembled an expert group of academics, public sector leaders and figures from business to discuss the lessons learned to date, to identify key, emerging strategic priorities and themes and, most importantly, how we could strengthen and broaden our support to members going forward into the future.

Our discussions at Windsor reiterated what we had heard from our members and partners that, working together, we need to build rapidly on the response, knowledge skills and experience of local public sector to Covid-19.

Our Share Scotland 2022 event¹⁰ highlighted the three **strategic priorities** identified by our work at Windsor:

- **The need to build upon** the phenomenal response of local authorities and the wider public sector to Covid-19.
- **The need to sustain the step changes** that local public service providers have taken.
- **The need to harness digital** – cultures, capabilities, technologies and data – to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places.

We explore what each of these priorities means in turn below. We then set out how the six components of our new **Socitm Connects** strategic programme can help our members to deliver the professional leadership and technological solutions that can help transform place-based outcomes for their organisations and communities for the better.



Strategic priorities

We will now consider each of the three strategic priorities in turn and the key areas of focus that are shaping their application and adoption across the sector.

Strategic priority 1: Building on the phenomenal response of local authorities and the wider public sector to Covid-19

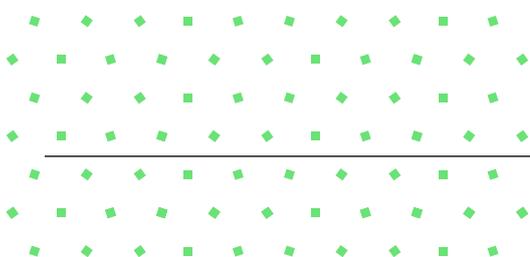
Socitm's earlier work mapping over 200 cases of local government responses to Covid-19 highlighted the critical role in delivering 'what works' and tackling 'what needs to change' at the heart of supporting place-based recovery, resilience and regeneration. The task now is to take the four pillars of recovery and transform them into the means of underpinning and future proofing the way place-based public services address the needs and requirements of their citizens and communities. In particular, the 4Rs approach can be extended as follows:

- › **Reset** the collective mindset to ensure adherence to ethical principles, respecting social foundations and ecological constraints locally and globally.
- › **Reform** public services by embracing innovation and modernisation.
- › **Renew** communities by collaborating across place and encouraging self-sufficiency in ways that enable them to thrive.
- › **Resilient** to disruptive changes, to enable better, sustainable and inclusive outcomes for the diverse people and places throughout the UK.

Strategic priority 2: Sustaining the step changes that local public service providers have taken

Responding to Covid-19 brought the need to sustain the key step changes achieved during the pandemic into sharper focus. It highlighted how 'place-making', building regenerative capacity, is shifting from a needs-led approach to public services, to one that works with people before they get into crisis; a prevention rather than cure philosophy. For this approach to work it means that professionals and practitioners will need to be conversant with evolving community-focused requirements and be equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by 'working across place'. **Developing connected strategic partnerships** will gain added momentum, working across places and organisations that provide unique insights, intelligence and situational awareness, together with educational/learning and development opportunities on local public sector innovation, technology and modernisation.

- › **Championing leadership and development** – providing (in partnership with keynote academic and training providers) leadership, professionalism, qualifications, accredited vocational/experiential learning and development interventions, career pathway frameworks, diversity, inclusivity and skills development, all built around leading-edge digital, data and technology research, capabilities and tools.
- › **Advocacy and advisory** – creating bespoke research, innovation learning and development interventions and assets, underpinned by leading edge advocacy and advisory support, all focused on what works, what can be replicated and more specifically customised to meet localised need and the development of supporting resources, tools, capabilities and techniques.
- › **Stimulating innovation through data** – providing access to a wide range of data sets to help innovate and explore opportunities using data, through facilitating its sharing among different local organisations, all underpinned by helping to map and champion social and economic opportunities for local public services and the people, communities and places that they serve.



Strategic priority 3: Harnessing digital – cultures, capabilities, technologies and data – to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places

This priority is founded upon the emerging interplay between ethical, inclusive and secure design of place-based digital, data and technology solutions. These are underpinned by scalable innovation to create ‘smart’ local public services and ‘connected places’ that are socially just and ecologically safe, that uphold civility in public life and services, and that enable people and communities to thrive, as follows:

- **Championing connected places** through connecting and growing local business, public services, infrastructure and people in places so that, together, they inclusively create social and economic wealth; improve productivity and employment; and increase the health and wellbeing of all.
- **Enabling infrastructure and public services** by better integrated, efficient and more effective health, care, welfare, emergency, crime prevention and education services, combined with good and affordable housing, modern premises, connected transport and digital tools and solutions.
- **Empowering business and enterprise** with a commercial culture that fosters entrepreneurship, enables investment and innovation to flourish; attracts, develops and retains talent, creates good jobs and enterprise, reduces unemployment, increases pay, raises household income levels and drives local investment.
- **Supporting people and communities** by engaging people with political and economic processes and decision-making that affects their wellbeing, ensuring everyone has a meaningful stake in the future of their place and community; and equipping people with the skills and confidence to remain resilient and adaptable in a changing work environment.

Our strategic response: Socitm Connects

Helping our members and partners respond to these strategic priorities is at the heart of our **Socitm Connects** strategy, which is based around our mission¹¹ to provide local leaders, policy-makers and practitioners with leading-edge public sector research, innovative thinking, professional development and strategic consultancy supporting place-based innovation, technology and modernisation. In support of this renewed mission, we will continue to:

- Help maximise the effective use of technologies and data in delivering services and improved outcomes for public benefit.
- Help members develop professionally, share best practice and deliver their organisation’s technology and data-enabled transformation objectives.
- Provide a range of resources and services to help public service organisations and communities deploy technologies and data for public value.

In building our strategic response, Socitm is looking to broaden its support offer to members, stakeholders and external contacts as follows:

- **Members** through championing development – providing (in partnership with keynote academic and training providers) leadership, diversity, inclusivity and skills development, built around leading-edge digital, data and technology research, capabilities and tools.
- **Stakeholders** through connected partnerships – building strategic partnerships that provide unique insights, intelligence and situational awareness, into local public sector innovation, technology and modernisation.

Figure 3. The six components of Socitm Connects



- > **External contacts** through advocacy and advisory – bespoke policy and research development, underpinned by leading edge advocacy and advisory support, focused on what works, what can be replicated and the development of supporting resources, tools and techniques.

In order to help address post-Covid strategic priorities, challenges and opportunities, Socitm is strengthening the development, policy, research and advisory capabilities so that they can help its members' partners and stakeholders to deliver place-based innovation, technology and modernisation. Under our new **Socitm Connects initiative**, we are developing an asset based on six core components (see Figure 3) that will work together to share knowledge, nurture wisdom and build capabilities around the place-based use of technology and data for public good.

Socitm Ecosystem – awareness, advocacy and advisory

The idea of a 'Socitm Ecosystem' has emerged over the last two years, as we have adapted and grown our response to Covid-19 and its impact on local public services and practitioners. It is a way of describing an enabling environment of Socitm services that are focused on empowering people and communities to use digital technology to access services, engage with each other, and pursue economic opportunities. Building on this concept, Socitm has created a practical framework (see Figure 4) that can support local leaders, policy makers and practitioners.

Figure 4.

Socitm Ecosystem

The Socitm Ecosystem comprises three pillars that combine to form an environment, system, and culture supported by Socitm's policy themes, services and solutions

Pillar 1: Awareness: nurturing wisdom. This pillar focuses on nurturing wisdom through the building up of leadership and skills alongside understanding what it takes to move from policy thought leadership into front-line practice through a combination of focused research and developing good situational awareness as the fundamental basis of decisions making.

The **Awareness** pillar is supported by the following Socitm Ecosystem services and solutions.

Socitm Lead:¹² its mission is to create a community of leaders, who support, learn from and teach each other. Through its Leadership Academy, it equips members to be able to lead the transformation of public service delivery and is building a network of people who are motivated to deliver better outcomes for their organisations and the communities they serve.

Socitm Inform – Policy:¹³ building on five core policy themes, Socitm's policy programme focuses on shaping places that make a positive difference to people's lives and identifying the right policies and the right implementations for better outcomes and a better society.

Socitm Inform – Research:¹⁴ delivering a range of strategic insights into the challenges faced by members. Our resource hub, supported by an extensive publications library, provides members with insightful, impactful and accessible thought leadership, advice, guidance, news and features relevant to the local public sector, building up wider situational awareness.

Pillar 2: Advocacy: sharing knowledge. This pillar focuses on sharing knowledge about what works and what needs to change by tapping into the lived experience of others. This includes citizens and service users, and local public service leaders and practitioners, so that our members and their organisations can continuously and inclusively, improve and design and advocate their services to citizens and communities.

The **Advocacy** pillar is supported by the following Socitm Ecosystem services and solutions.

Socitm Improve:¹⁵ providing a unique benchmarking service, specifically designed for the public sector, that measures ICT performance to identify what is working well and what needs investment and attention, helps members enhance their ICT services, and shapes ongoing digital and technology strategy in an environment of constant change.

Socitm Include:¹⁶ offering the thought leadership and tools to support and strengthen members' understanding and organisations' strategic capabilities around the vital work of accessibility, diversity and inclusion, diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, and unlocking different perspectives that enable faster problem solving.

Socitm Share:¹⁷ providing a wide-ranging programme of national, regional and virtual knowledge sharing events and underpins peer networking across the UK and our international partners. Share strengthens relationships, inspires innovation and provides a platform for sharing best practice.

Pillar 3: Advisory: building capabilities. This focuses on building capabilities that can support transformation through the implementation of high-quality programmes of work and trusted solutions, based on methodologies crafted from its unparalleled network of public sector connections, first-hand industry experience and an extensive portfolio of successfully implemented programmes.

The **Advisory** pillar is supported by the following Socitm Ecosystem services and solutions.

Smarter working:¹⁸ helping organisations to transform internal operations through the co-design and implementation of efficient internal processes that seek to reduce manual intervention, to improve productivity, placing 'people' effort where it adds greatest value. Our holistic approach to change covers people, processes and technology ensuring sustainable and cost efficient internal service delivery.

Digitally enabled front-line services:¹⁹ co-designing and implementing end to end, customer focused services, leveraging data and both existing and new technologies to enable better preventative, sustainable and scalable services that improve outcomes for everyone.

Integrated care:²⁰ supporting current operations and future change through the adoption of digitally enabled integrated care, including assistive technology, integrated care hubs, care technologies, and data and insights.

Policy-into-practice framework

Underpinning Socitm's strategic approach, our policy work is focused on five key themes. These each address issues that shape and drive change in public service policy concerning digital technology, data and information. For each theme, Socitm works collaboratively with members, our Local CIO Council, and with our strategic and international partners. In this way, we develop evidence-based policy thinking based on best practice around what works and what needs to change. In turn, this allows us to highlight a wide range of case studies and create practical guidance for successful local policy implementation.

Taking each theme in turn, we set out how they address the challenges and opportunities facing local public service professionals and their organisations in a 'policy-into practice framework'. The framework is built on the emerging lessons from local responses Covid 19, the positive step changes underway and how to successfully harness digital, data and technology as ways of delivering successful place-based innovation and transformation. It outlines the key challenges, strategic opportunities and key areas for action under each theme:



Regeneration, sustainability and connectivity

Supporting post-Covid recovery, sustaining the positive changes that have been achieved and building economically sustainable, socially just and ecologically safe places.

Key challenges

- Amongst the extraordinary impacts of Covid-19 on organisations and local, national and regional economies, local authorities have been forced to change the way they work to address the needs of their communities.
- Looking to the future, the challenge is how can we successfully champion and stimulate place-based regeneration, sustainability and connectivity to overcome these impacts and live with Covid-19?

- Central to our interest will be to connect and embed local public sector innovation, technology and modernisation, aligning with Socitm's ambition to support the growth and development of resilient people, communities, and places.

Key opportunities

- **Supporting regeneration:** By building on the four pillars of Reset, Reform, Renew and Resilient to deliver improved place-based systems, services and solutions that will underpin post-Covid recovery and enable resilient people, communities and places to thrive.
- **Championing sustainability:** By encouraging the local public sector to support the establishment of economically sustainable, socially just and ecologically safe places in which people and communities can thrive.
- **Enabling connectivity:** So that Smart and Digital places are truly connected places where internet connectivity is designed in collaboration with citizens, and other stakeholders. Public agencies interaction with citizens is accessible, understandable and inclusive.
- **Develop placed-based "what works outcomes":** to help create social and economic wealth; improve productivity and employment; increase the health and wellbeing of all; and deliver resilient, sustainable and connected places - improving the quality of life for people and communities.



Service design and transformation

Supporting innovative design and transformation in the delivery of public services that meet the needs of people and communities.

Key challenges

- To support leaders in co-design, co-creation and co-delivery of public services that achieve better outcomes in the communities they serve. This will include maximising the potential of digital

opportunities within a dynamic environment, using service design principles to consider end to end service design service requirements.

- The approach needs to be a holistic one, focusing on all the core components, stakeholders, organisations and users that combine to facilitate the establishment and delivery of service outcomes in any given ecosystem.
- It needs to 'bridge to digital' – to embrace the role of new digital technologies and effective use of data insight in delivering better services, to make the best use of systems and to realise the full benefits of technology investments.

Key opportunities

- **Design digital:** an understanding of service design and digitally aware leadership within public service organisations, as well as partners, businesses and communities, to co-design, co-create and collaborate with everyone who touches the ecosystem.
- **Deliver digital:** an appreciation of the importance of governance, standards and agile practices in translating service design into systems.
- **Make the right use of digital, data and technology:** the use of appropriate technology platforms and solutions to fulfil the service design, to enable people to access systems and to ensure robust data management.
- **Enable transition:** so as to help deliver more mature digital outcomes, by embracing new and totally different ways of collaborating and working to improve place-based local services for the benefit of our citizens.



Modernising ICT service delivery

Supporting the effective use of technologies and data in delivering services and improved digital outcomes for the public good. Modernising ICT service delivery: supporting the effective use of technologies and data in delivering services and improved digital outcomes for the public good.

Key challenges

- ICT service delivery is no longer business as usual. We need to modernise and to make decisions about how we manage and resource our operations in different ways.
- To do this, we need to make sense of emerging technologies to underpin new service patterns while recognising ongoing funding challenges to meet the increasing expectations of service users.
- How do we make this happen seamlessly and effectively?

Key opportunities

- **Support Innovation:** through the creation of scalable solutions that enable place-based, smart and sustainable local public services.
- **Enhance technological change:** through advocating the ethical, inclusive and secure development, design, and adoption of place-based digital, data and technology solutions and services
- **Champion modernisation:** through developing leading-edge thinking, skills, policy and research into to what works and what needs to change to support place-based ICT service delivery and data systems.
- **Empower place-based change:** through making sense of emerging technologies to underpin new service patterns that will enable the development of inclusive, resilient and sustainable places for people and communities to thrive.



Ethical, responsible and secure use of technologies and data

Supporting the responsible and secure use of digital technology in pursuit of the common good, fairness, transparency and environmentally friendly.

Key challenges

- › How do we understand and promote the ethical, responsible and secure use of technologies?
- › This includes the data generated and stored, and the public service designs, processes and interactions they enable. It also extends to the outcomes they generate.
- › All this while ensuring public benefit and minimising unintended consequences. In practical terms, what do we mean by ethics and how do we apply them?

Key opportunities

Champion ethical use of technologies and data so that they do good not harm, are used fairly and operate transparently.

- › **Promote the five traits of responsible use of technology and data:** technical knowledge, social responsibility, foundation of trust, ethical deliberation and leadership commitment.
- › **Align, in partnership** with the Cyber Technical Advisory Group (C-TAG), local public sector technology and data security with the wider aims and objectives of the National Cyber Security Strategy and Secure Connected Places programme.
- › **Advocate the wider adoption** and application of ethical and security practices in accordance with the Seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty²¹ and Leadership and the local public service senior managers: code of ethics.²²



Leadership, diversity and skills

Supporting members to develop professionally, share best practice and deliver their organisation's technology and data-enabled transformation objectives.

Key challenges

- › As our Modern Leadership guides 'Leadership in a Digital World – a perspective from the Socitm Leadership Academy' articulates the pace at which technological advancement is happening. It describes the fact we are all experiencing the impact of digital technology on our lives.
- › If we are to consider this phenomenon and respond to it positively and proactively from our sector's perspective, there are several issues and challenges to address around supporting members to develop professionally and share wider leadership and development best practice.

Key opportunities

- › To enable the development of **digital leadership** across the local public sector. Supporting leaders and managers to have the strategic vision, professional capabilities, and ethical frameworks to effectively champion innovation, technology, and modernisation in support of the people, communities, and places they serve.
- › To champion **diversity and inclusivity** through the creation of a culture that promotes and recognises the importance of diverse leadership and teams, including the improved representation of women, for the design of services and products that work for everyone.
- › To equip staff with the **appropriate skills**, attitudes and behaviours to enable more mobile, agile and efficient local public services.

- › To ensure through offering **targeted advice and guidance** that all practitioners impacted by these challenges, have a better understanding of what needs to be done to respond.
- › To promote steps to build a **digitally capable workforce** and to address gaps in leadership, diversity, and hard and soft skills.

Leadership and professionalism

Socitm already offers learning and development programmes through our unique in-house Leadership Academy; initiatives that develop people both personally and professionally. These specialist programmes are each CPD accredited and together with other interventions and capabilities, harness, stretch and promote the skills and talent essential to effective contemporary leadership.

Building on the success of the current capability, Socitm is establishing a new partnership model for **Socitm Lead** so as to diversify the learning and development portfolio even further. This enhanced suite of interventions will enable a more proactive and agile response to the issues and challenges faced by the sector through exploiting opportunities of working with other strategic partners and alliances to co-design and co-create niche and targeted collateral.

The aim is to soft launch a new **Socitm Academy** by end of 2022 that will be a market-leading, high-profile experiential focussed learning and development institution, which will build on the success that the society has already realised in terms of the personal and professional development offer for its members. The new Socitm Academy will be uniquely focused on:

- › The psychology of people and managing change effectively
- › Leadership and skills
- › Delivering place-based outcomes
- › Supporting personal and professional development

Bringing together in one place the learning and development, skills and expertise available across the Socitm family, with strong links to Socitm research and Advisory capabilities it is our ambition to:

- › Diversify the learning and development portfolio to be more holistic, comprehensive and offer practical insight to the issues and challenges faced by the sector.
- › Exploit opportunities of working with other strategic partners and alliances to co-design and co-create niche collateral pertinent to the sector.
- › Enable access to customised interventions for organisations and clients.
- › Support workforce development activity and access to career pathways.
- › Strengthen the existing Alumni community of interest.
- › Strengthen our approach to diversity and inclusion for under-represented members/communities.
- › Formalise the opportunity to create a talent pipeline of future leaders for the sector.
- › Development and support of an online portal and communities of practice to enable the sharing of best practice.

Strategic research and resources

Socitm's Inform service enables access to our publications and wider resources to provide insightful, impactful and easy to consume thought leadership, advice, guidance, news, and features relevant to our sector. We generate case studies, share best practice and gather practical widespread insight through our Advisory service, which supports the creation of our research and development capability.

We plan to extend this service to establish a more holistic and targeted research capability developing a 'what works' research centre programme,²³ with outputs that will form the basis of wider membership services and learning and development programmes, and will inform Socitm Advisory consultancy

offerings. The aim is to strengthen Socitm's policy, research, data and innovation capabilities built around the five key policy themes, so that they can:

- › **Generate** evidence on what works in a defined policy area.
- › **Translate** evidence for specific user groups in a user-friendly format.
- › **Encourage** the adoption and intelligent use of evidence, as well as contributions to the evidence base in the relevant policy area.

The service will be aligned with Socitm's horizon scanning on digital trends, integrated care, regeneration through ethical change, levelling-up, community wealth building and civility in public life, healthy and well communities and ethical, digital place-making. The service will:

- › **Identify:** Work with local public service leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and leading policy experts and academic networks to mobilise evidence and meet evidence needs; horizon scan policy developments so we can anticipate future evidence needs.
- › **Convene:** Act as a bridge between evidence producers and policy makers/practitioners through working with policy experts to synthesise the best available evidence; look to bring experts and policy makers together to discuss how to apply the evidence and support local practitioners in accessing 'what works' best practice.
- › **Communicate:** Share evidence in user-friendly formats that can speak to a broad audience; communicate evidence that supports better place-based policy making and public services; publish evidence reviews, reports and policy briefings and disseminate evidence through events, blogs, and social media.
- › **Advance:** Conduct research on how evidence can inform policy and practice through evaluating how our work makes a difference so we can keep improving what we do; partner with and study how other evidence centres work; proactively disseminate what we learn through the Socitm Ecosystem of awareness, advocacy and advisory.

- › **Advocate:** Promote the use of 'what works' evidence by showing how it can support policy makers and practitioners; enable researchers to engage with the local public service community; partner with Socitm Academy and Socitm Advisory to nurture wisdom, share knowledge and build capabilities amongst policy makers and practitioners so that they use evidence to support resilient people, places and communities underpinned by place-based innovation, technology and modernisation.

Socitm Advisory – thought leadership

Socitm Advisory seeks to provide practical insights and leading edge thinking about how to build on lessons learned and step changes taken during the pandemic to help local public services transition towards a 'new normal'.

Our briefings include:

- › **Digital design:**²⁴ The pandemic has seen a widespread channel shift in service provision, with many public services moving online. Leaders within public services are keen to maximise the opportunities this brings, planning for reduced office space and for further digitalisation. Public service leaders may not want to reverse digital services stood up in a hurry, however, for the public to fully engage digitally some of the solutions may need revisiting, using design principles often skirted over during the pandemic.
- › **Technology Enabled Care:**²⁵ The pandemic saw a marked increase in the uptake and use of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) and remote monitoring. An increasing trust and acceptance of these tools, by both people and those involved in their care, presents opportunities for health and care systems, which we must now look to take advantage of.

- **Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and its possible applications in adult social care:**²⁶
RPA offers a range of potential business benefits. These include: higher quality and compliance, improve service responsiveness and customer satisfaction, and more flexibility to deal with peaks and troughs in demand, without the need to find additional temporary workers or, conversely, risk staff being under-utilised in 'slow' periods.

These briefings underpin Socitm Advisory's expertise in delivering transformation through the implementation of high-quality, change programmes. Each use methodologies based on an unparalleled network of public sector industry experience and an extensive portfolio of successful implementations.

Place-based transformation – connected places

The sixth Socitm Connects area we address is how we can support our members to successfully harness the digital cultures, capabilities, technologies and data and thereby enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places. Drawing on our St George's House consultation discussions (November 2021), in which we hosted a select group of academics, public sector leaders and figures from business to discuss what is required to build 'resilient people, resilient communities and resilient places', Socitm, in partnership with the LGA and Solace, has developed a joint framework of 12 local government digitalisation outcomes (see Figure 5).

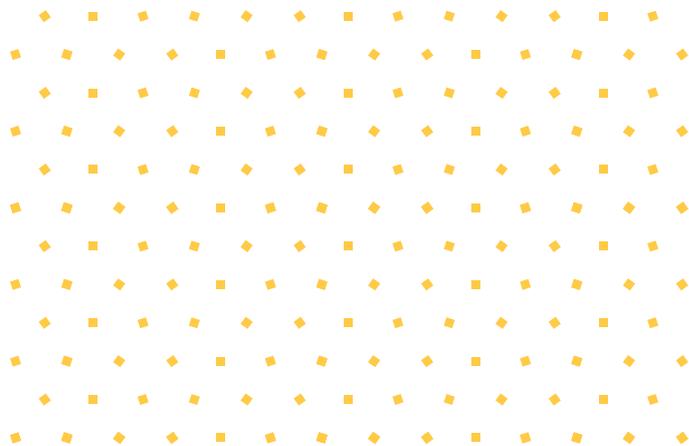


Figure 5. **Local government digitalisation outcomes**

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Connectivity – Residents, council officers and organisations can access both the internet and council services uninterrupted, wherever they are in the community.</p> |
|  | <p>Data – The council's data practices are focussed on improving services, facilitating innovation and informing policy making. The council uses recognised data standards,²⁷ meets data security requirements, protect residents' rights and ethically manages data as it works toward more efficient and effective data collection, access, use and reuse, sharing and linking, and maintenance.</p> |
|  | <p>Democracy – The council makes maximum use of digital technology to improve councillor attendance, increase community engagement and collaboration, improve transparency, and optimise democratic decision making.</p> |
|  | <p>Ethics – The council uses digital technology in pursuit of the common good and does no harm; it preserves human agency, is fair, transparent, and environmentally friendly.</p> |
|  | <p>Inclusion – The benefits of the internet, digital technologies and digital services are available and accessible to everyone.</p> |
|  | <p>Leadership – The council's leaders drive the use of digital technology to achieve both strategic and operational goals, create conditions which facilitate organisational transformation, and are mindful of the opportunities and risks that digital technology brings. They lead an organisational culture that is open, digitally aware, and resident-focused.</p> |
|  | <p>Local productivity – The council supports the use of digital technology by local businesses, partners and third sector organisations, and ensures they can access the internet and the capability to benefit from the engagement it enables.</p> |
|  | <p>Organisational capability – The council puts digital technologies at the heart of the way it works and trains its workforce in how to use them. It has a culture that values, incentivises, and expects digital ways of working from every member of its workforce. It actively develops its workforce's expertise within the digital, data, technology and cyber professions and has talent pipelines to benefit retention and relieve pressure on recruitment.</p> |
|  | <p>Partnership – The council works with public, private and third sector partners to ensure an integrated, cohesive, and resident-focused approach to public sector digital transformation and digital service provision.</p> |
|  | <p>Security and resilience – Cyber security risk is minimised, and the council is resilient to cyber attack. The council's networks, infrastructure and services are as secure as possible from the moment of first implementation to decommission. The information and data on them, and located elsewhere, is appropriately confidential, available and of sufficient integrity, and the public can use the council's digital services with confidence and trust.</p> |
|  | <p>Services – The council's services are designed around the needs of residents and users, and prioritise them over professional, organisational and technological silos. Services are guided by the government's ten design principles,²⁸ the Service Standard,²⁹ the Technology Code of Practice,³⁰ and the Digital, Data and Technology Playbook.³¹</p> |
|  | <p>Value – The council targets its resources effectively. It harnesses the opportunity of digital, data and technology solutions to ensure they provide efficiencies and savings for local people and public sector budgets.</p> |

The intention of this joint framework is to support local authorities and their partners to design and deliver modern public services, operate effectively as a digital organisation and champion the digital needs of their community. Building on this, Socitm has created a Socitm Connects – Connected Places model (see Figure 6) covering the key areas of focus for enabling place-based digital transformation.

The aim being for Socitm to build a set of resources that take a harnessing digital approach and support the development of connected placed-based, **'what works outcomes'** to help create social and economic wealth; improve productivity and employment; increase the health and wellbeing of all; and deliver resilient, sustainable and connected places - improving the quality of life for people and communities.

From smart place to connected places briefings

As the last two years have shown, local public service modelling and planning can no longer be confined to single or even groupings of public sector organisations with a 'producer-led' mentality; they need to start with people, locations and communities, with a strong focus on the outcomes deemed important by citizens, businesses and politicians. This is harnessing digital at its best, helping to deliver regional economic, social and public sector ambitions at the same time. It needs more than a 'smart city' (or a 'smart places') label. It needs practical action and a change in approach.

In the post-Covid world, we need to co-create connected places with the people and communities that give places their meaning, harnessing technology and data to connect them in ways that were previously impossible, improving economic and social wellbeing and transforming public services.

The focus of this project will be about how technology and data can be used to make more and better connections, not about the technology itself. The project will outline how Socitm members can play a key strategic and leadership role in making this happen in the places where they work supported remodelling Socitm's thought leading smart places briefings to produce a series of connected places briefings covering the following areas:

- › **Imagining Connected Places**
- › **Health and Wellbeing**
- › **Travel and mobility**
- › **Democratic renewal**
- › **Economy and business**
- › **Environment, sustainability and energy**
- › **Education, skills & jobs**
- › **People and communities**

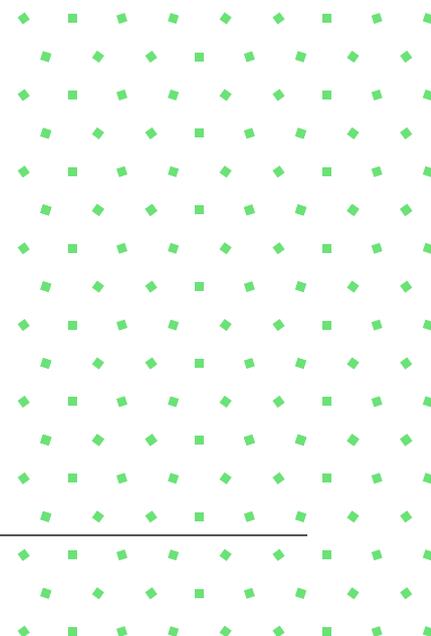
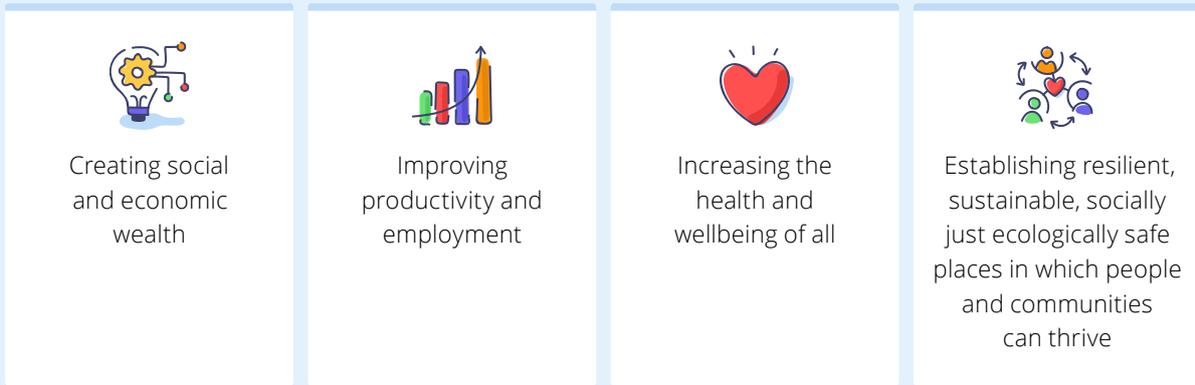


Figure 6. Socitm Connects – Connected places model



Socitm Connects – connected places model

Regeneration, sustainability and connectivity – Championing place-based regeneration, sustainability and connectivity to address the impact and ongoing challenges of Covid-19. Embedding local public sector innovation, technology and modernisation at the heart of post-Covid recovery so that it will enable the growth and development of resilient people, resilient communities, and resilient places by:



Infrastructure and public services

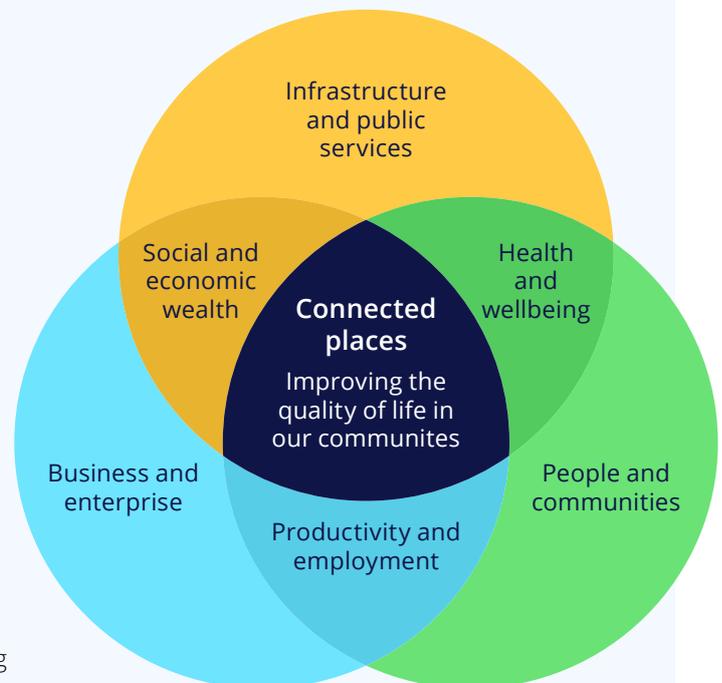
Better integrated, efficient and more effective health, care, welfare, emergency, crime prevention and education services combined with good and affordable housing, modern premises, connected transport and digital tools and solutions.

Business and enterprise

Stimulating a commercial culture which fosters entrepreneurship, investment and innovation to flourish. Attracting, developing and retaining talent, creating good jobs and enterprise and reducing unemployment. Increasing pay, raising household income levels and driving local investment.

People and communities

Engaging people with political and economic processes and decision making that affects their wellbeing ensuring everyone has a meaningful stake in the future of their place and community. Equipping people with the skills and confidence to remain resilient and adaptable in a changing work environment.



Connected Places Observatory

Linked to the Socitm resource hub, we are looking to build a Connected Places Observatory built around the above set of “From smart to connected places” briefing papers and background research.³² The aim is to provide Socitm members with a multi-faceted collection of resources that covers:

- › **Briefings:** Expert analysis, case studies and opinions focusing on the latest and most topical issues affecting place-based public sector ICT.
- › **Reports:** Deliver easily digestible reports and guides provide you with clear and concise information and practical guidance.
- › **Policy papers:** Explore emerging topics of interest and examples of how they are being addressed in our wider policy themes.
- › **Media and magazine materials:** Blogs, magazines published to coincide with each national conference, major events that focus on aspects of the connected place agenda.

Added to this we are looking to incorporate the key outputs from:

- › Socitm’s **regeneration through ethical change model** and case study examples of emerging place-based recovery planning that are actively supporting local and community regeneration through the key ethical change and connectivity outcomes.
- › Socitm’s strategic research partners at the **University of East London**³³ covering the policy-into-practice activities of its three research institutes:

- **Institute of Government and Public Policy**³⁴ leading influencer and informer in the ongoing public policy development and debate. Covering – health and social care, criminal justice and safer communities, construction and built environment, central and local government, housing and education.

- **Sustainability Research Institute (SRI)**³⁵

UEL’s centre of excellence for environmental research. Covering Green infrastructure - Resource Management energy efficiency and the circular economy and Sustainable Society re adaptive governance and community engagement and asset management.

- **Institute for Connected Communities**

(ICC)³⁶ focussing on connected offline and online communities exploring contemporary issues including harms, cyber crime, safety, security, health and wellbeing.

- › The **DCMS**³⁷ and **NCSC**³⁸ **Secure connected places – guidance** around the design, procurement, implementation and management of connected places technology, as well as organisations using the resulting data to deliver local services.
- › **Connected Places Catapult**³⁹ the UK’s innovation accelerator for cities, transport, and places that provides guidance for mobility and built environment businesses, infrastructure providers and public institutions to catalyse step-change improvements in the way people live, work and travel.
- › **PETRAS National Centre of Excellence**⁴⁰ for IoT systems cyber security – and its extensive research and case study materials on how the Internet of Things (IoT) is being applied an adopted across public services and how this relates to the social and technical issues relating to the cyber security of IoT devices, systems and networks.
- › The work of the **National Preparedness Commission**⁴¹ to promote better preparedness for a major crisis or incident. Outlining how people, communities and places can be better prepared to withstand, recover and ‘build back better’ from major disruptions.

Conclusion

Socitm Connects pledge

The Socitm Connects strategy looks to:

- › **Build** on the phenomenal response of local authorities and the wider public sector to Covid-19.
- › **Sustain** the step changes that local public service providers have taken.
- › **Harness** digital – cultures, capabilities, technologies and data to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places.

In support of this we pledge to:

- › **Commit** to nurturing wisdom, sharing knowledge and building capabilities that supports place-based innovation, technology and modernisation that enables and empowers resilient people, communities and places to thrive.
- › **Connect** our members with leading-edge research, innovative thinking, professional development and strategic consultancy that will help public service organisations and communities deploy technologies and data for public value.
- › **Champion** what works outcomes and the tackling what needs to change through extending our strategic policy programme, commissioning innovative research and empowering a new paradigm of leadership.

Share your recovery and resilience story with us

If you have been involved in working on the local post-Covid recovery, resilience and regenerations agendas, Socitm would like to learn more about your experiences, views and insights as to what works and what needs to change so that together, we can help build resilient and sustainable places for people and communities to thrive. Please do offer your experiences and ideas.

Contact Martin Ferguson at martin.ferguson@socitm.net or Nadira Hussain at nadira.hussain@socitm.net

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About this briefing

Author

William Barker – Associate director
and digital ethics lead

Editor

Martin Ferguson – Director of policy and research

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

Nadira Hussain

Chief executive officer (CEO)
nadira.hussain@socitm.net

Get in touch

Website: www.socitm.net
Email: hello@socitm.net
Tel: 01604 709456



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