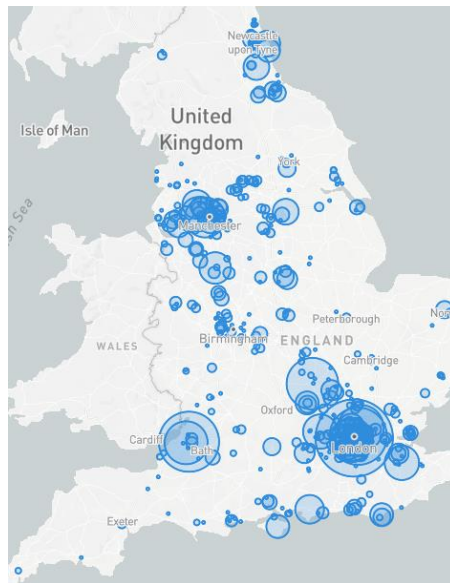




## Data to Insight: Annual Report to Colleagues

April 2021 – March 2022



*Locations of D2I website users (England only), mid-2021*



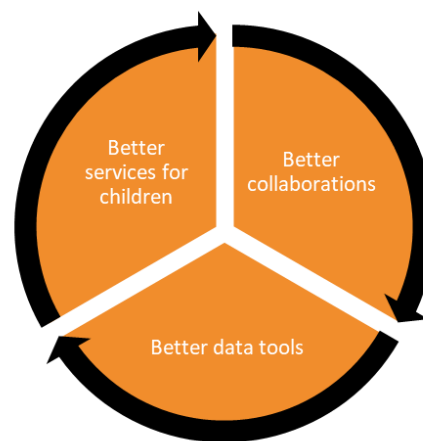
*"Data for Good Initiative of the Year 2022", British Data Awards*

## What is Data to Insight?

Data to Insight (D2I) is a national project designed by local authorities and supported by the ADCS, DfE, DLUHC and Ofsted, helping local authorities make better use of data. With a primary focus on children's social care and ambition to extend support to other targeted children's services, D2I support a national community of data professionals in designing, developing and maintaining useful data tools, connecting like-minded people, and helping good practice spread across regional boundaries. We want every local authority to have great ways of working with data, because high quality data work is crucial in enabling our services to effectively support children.

D2I, the Children's Services National Performance and Information Management Group (CS-NPIMG) and the regional groups enhance a proven partnership of LAs working together for the sector, which has delivered sector-defining tools, successfully delivered on funded projects, and shaped the work of colleagues while growing an enthusiastic and effective community.

Especially in areas with little standard practice, our depth and breadth of expertise and community reach gives data projects the best chance possible of succeeding in producing meaningful insight.



## What is this report?

Our Annual Report to Colleagues is an open document outlining our work over the previous year and our intentions for the near future. We review our goals and achievements, point out key learning, and gauge overall performance and value for money. We do this so colleagues, whatever their role, can feed back on our strategic direction.

The report has several audiences, among them the D2I board of directors, our partners in regional groups and other networks, and those government organisations who have contributed funding to our recent work. The most important audience is the community of children's services data professionals who are the reason D2I happens.

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## Overview of recent progress

In September 2020 we set out a vision for our first year, and we reported on this in September 2021's *First Year Retrospective* report, covering our first year of funded delivery. This noted, among other things:

- The community has developed, and we provided support through the pandemic
- A project manager was appointed in Sept 2020
- We established a new website and other infrastructure, as part of work to further establish and engage a broad community of local authority data colleagues
- We introduced significant and well-received new functionality to existing tools for benchmarking, data quality, and operational reporting in LAs
- We set up a financially self-sustaining apprenticeship which now has 70+ learners enrolled

The ChAT is now considered essential by Ofsted and LAs for inspection preparation, and by many LAs for their regular performance monitoring. We have also developed our advocacy role to help foreground LA perspectives in national conversations, for example with DfE around data collections, and with the national review of CSC.

Since that interim report in September 2021, we've also:

- Launched the CLA Data Quality Tool, our first browser-based data tool
- Launched the Placement Demand Modelling Tool, reaching a new audience of commissioning managers
- Contributed LA data/digital perspectives to the national Review of Children's Social Care
- Kicked off a project with five regions to introduce a standard data collection for Early Help
- Won funding to develop our CLA Data Quality Tool into a browser-based Python environment for LA analysts
- Won further funding to develop our Placement Demand Modelling Tool into a regional placement sufficiency service, supported by regional commissioning networks
- Expanded the core team from 1.2 FTE to 3.2 FTE until early 2024, using our new project funding
- Won the "Data for Good Initiative of the Year" award at the British Data Awards!

## Specific deliverables

In our First Year Retrospective we updated our initial goals to cover the full financial year. We said we'd focus on the following work streams, looking to maximise the value of our short term funding while we found a long term home.

<i>We said we would...</i>	<i>Are we?</i>	<i>For example...</i>
Continue to maintain the core toolkit	✓	Rapid benchmarking updates, constant ChAT support, and careful attention to user queries
Further develop the core toolkit	✓	New ChAT and BMT functionality; CLA Data Quality Tool for SSDA903; CLA Placement Modelling Tool
Support implementation of revised RIIA dataset	✓	Drafted new RIIA quarterly measures and framework in consultation with ADCS and focus groups
Secure interim funding for 2022-23	✓	Secured funding via regional DfE COVID Recovery Fund
Continue to support learning and skills transfer across our community	✓	70+ apprentices nationwide; major collaborative coding project in Python with 20+ LAs; sharing good practice
Improve community "reach" and engagement levels compared to last year	✓	Collaborative projects and great feedback, a growing mailing list, and encouraging regional metrics
Arrive at a workable long term resourcing and funding model	...	Work in progress on long term governance, structure, and funding via regional arrangements

While it can be frustrating to work with short term funding, we're confident we're pursuing the right approaches, as evidenced by this year's funding agreement success. With the above work we know we're delivering value for money. The challenge, as always, is to balance our competing priorities and focus in on areas of maximum impact.

## Check-in: what did we do for the core toolkit this year?

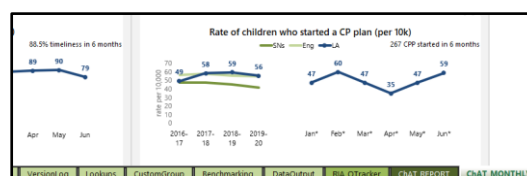
Most of our core tools have a version log embedded in the tool itself. Browsing these, or the shared Trello boards we use for task management, particularly for the ChAT and Benchmarking Tool, will give an idea of the kinds of work we do “behind the scenes”, which often only the requesting LA will know about but which benefits all LAs as users of the tools and data. For example:

### ChAT:

We introduced a new “ChAT Monthly” operational report to supplement the main report’s Ofsted focus with a more local view, and introduced Cut the ChAT, a new automation tool which saves analysts time and helps them identify errors and significant changes between ChAT runs.

We made a lot of changes to fix minor bugs reported by users and maintained a “credits” section in our newsletter to acknowledge when LAs helped us keep things running well.

Measure quarter	Measure ID	Measure name
2023	2	2021 Initial contacts
2023	2	2022 Referrals
2023	2	20202 Referrals (Source: Individual)
2023	2	20203 Referrals (Source: Schools)
2023	2	20204 Referrals (Source: Education Services)

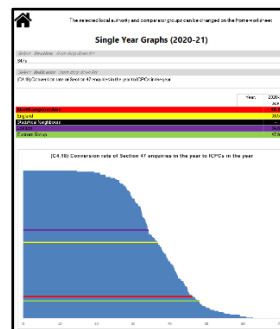
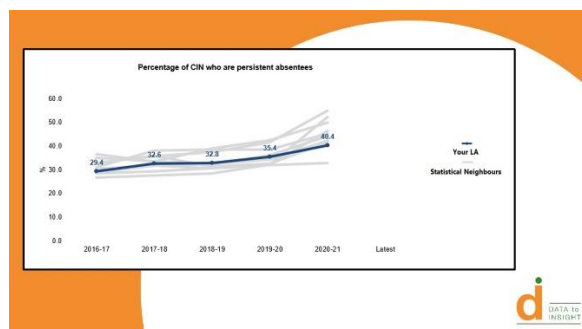


We’re currently working on incorporating RIIA quarterly dataset calculations into ChAT, and important but boring changes to reduce file size and improve responsiveness as the tool has grown in size over the years.

### BMt:

Benchmarking updates were rapid in 2021-22, with the most important releases happening on the same day as the DfE’s data publication. This was possible through use of D2I’s dedicated resource, good planning, and invaluable support from colleagues within DfE’s statistics teams.

Besides these, we introduced some new visualisations – a ranking chart to show relative position of each LA alongside performance for key measures, and a set of comparator reports to highlight an LA or region against individual members of the appropriate comparator family.



We’re currently thinking about how best to play back the new standard RIIA quarterly measures across regional boundaries – we think the Benchmarking Tool offers a useful model for that kind of work.

### Others

The CLA Data Quality Tool represents a major addition to the core toolkit and we hope that our further work on this project will develop it into a wider platform for D2I and LA colleagues alike to work with Python code in a safe environment. It’s already helping LAs complete their SSSA903 returns this year; next year CIN census will be included, and more analytical options as we develop them. This should also speed up our benchmarking data work and reduce duplication of effort across our toolkit.

Besides this, we had valuable contributions of community tools like the Disproportionality Calculator, the Ofsted Inspection Results Dashboard, and we’ve begun work towards a code library for LAs to share code snippets.

## Measures of engagement – regional and national

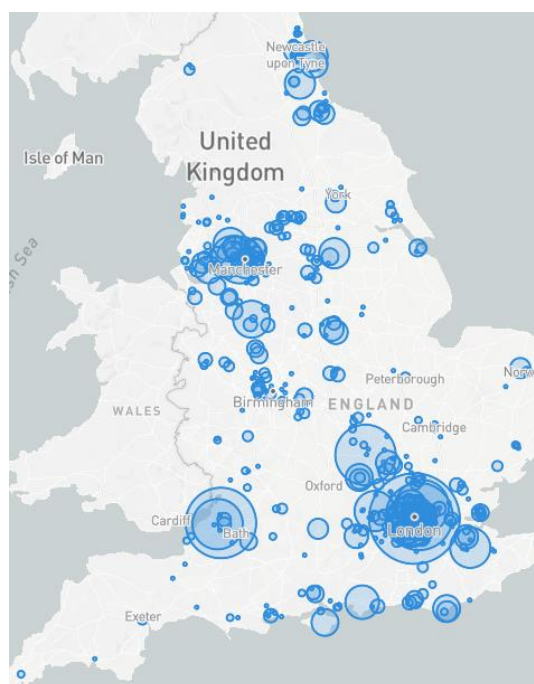
Through continued maintenance of the ChAT, Data to Insight supports every local authority in England with their Ofsted inspection readiness. Other tools support local operational reporting, benchmarking, performance management, forecasting, and thematic analysis.

Part of our mission is to help local excellence diffuse within and across regional boundaries, and our projects tend to pick up collaborators from broadly distributed local authorities. With a small central resource in place, we can help local authorities and regions maximise the value of their own staff – and provide those staff with opportunities to develop skills, share their best work, become better analysts, and help others do the same.

We can see how well that kind of engagement is working in a few different ways. Below we provide some ways of looking at this generally, including region-specific views.

### Website user locations during 2021:

### Examples of positive feedback from LA colleagues:



## Regional engagement in key workstreams

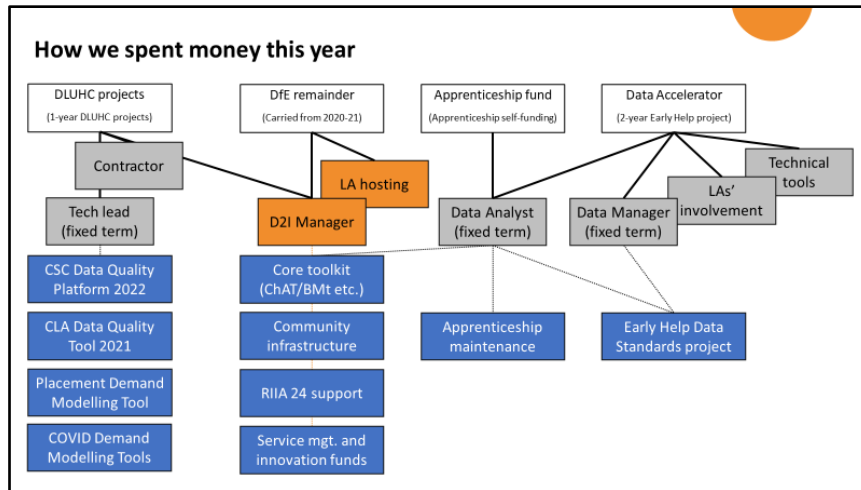
Almost all the below workstreams are still in progress – many will pick up more collaborators or users as they proceed. However, the below gives a useful presentation of just how much engagement we've seen across regions.

D2I activity / region	East Mids	East	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Mids	Y & H
ChAT users / Website membership (LAs)	9	11	33	12	23	19	15	14	15
Early Help Data Partnership research contributors (LAs)	3	2	1	2	3	5	4	1	2
Apprenticeship take-up by region (people, 2 cohorts)	5	9	17	8	5	9	6	3	9
Newsletter credit for tech. engagement (instances)	8 Last year: 2	11 Last year: 2	60 Last year: 25	18 Last year: 6	33 Last year: 10	73 Last year: 29	20 Last year: 6	21 Last year: 11	21 Last year: 7
Unusually positive email feedback (instances)	9 Last year: 3	4 Last year: 2	11 Last year: 8	4 Last year: 2	13 Last year: 6	11 Last year: 8	4 Last year: 2	4 Last year: 3	5 Last year: 5
Slack development community (members)	12 Last year:6	20 Last year:9	52 Last year:26	12 Last year:8	24 Last year:15	27 Last year:19	12 Last year:6	16 Last year:13	15 Last year:6

## Money Matters

D2I was established with a grant from DfE of £80,000 to support 1.2 FTE of resource for one year. Roughly speaking, this covered core team costs (including overheads and contingencies) from September 2020 to August 2021.

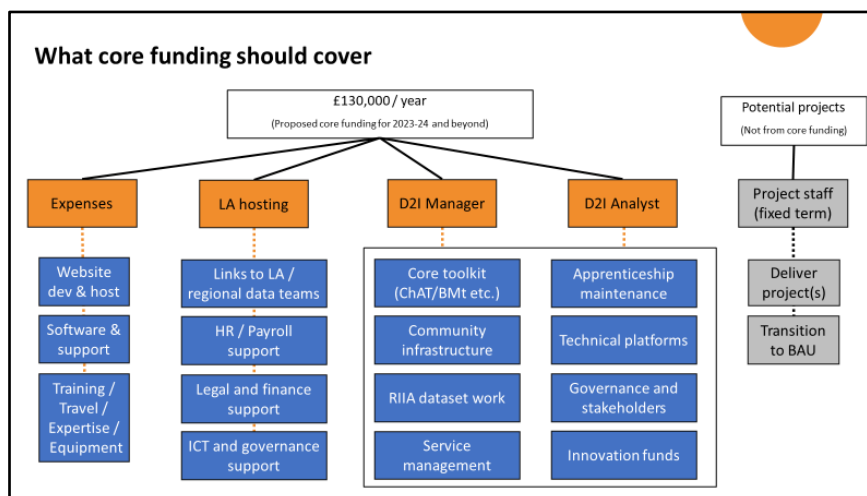
During that period we won project funding from DLUHC's Local Digital Collaboration Unit which enabled us to stretch our core funding through to the end of March 2022 – at the expense of necessitating a split focus for the existing resource between the core D2I work and the new project work.



From April 2022 D2I's core resource is funded for a further 12 months via the regional COVID Recovery Fund, with the purpose being to continue the core work and to support the improvement of the quarterly RIIA dataset. This takes us through to March 2023. We are currently negotiating a further funding agreement with DfE via the regional improvement alliances, to define the work and funding beyond March 2023. Securing this agreement is a key goal for 2022-23.

This means that we can now dedicate appropriate time to the core D2I workload of data tool management, community support, and advocacy for LA perspectives in national conversations. Where we have funding for specific projects, we are now looking to spend those funds on short term employment contracts to expand to team to accommodate additional work. We will use this time to deliver key projects and define our ideal future structure.

Our vision for long term operation is of a 2FTE core team with capacity to expand and contract around key projects, in line with LA colleagues' priorities. We are working through this currently with colleagues in RIAs and at DfE. Our vision expands the core resource by one supporting post, to acknowledge the increased breadth of our work:



We retain the original vision to keep the central resource at the heart of D2I as small as possible. We want to ensure we can operate even during "lean" periods and keep our core services running. It may be that further discussions with regional and national colleagues lead us to a different structure to the above proposal, but we will work to ensure that the core service remains stable.

## Future roadmap

In *Current Toolkit and 2021 Deliverables* we provided a vision statement outlining the things we wanted to be true of Data to Insight:

*“Our tools reduce the routine data work performed by individual local authorities”*

We produce and maintain data tools which not only add value but free up time at a local level. If something needs to be done by every local authority, we look for and deliver ways of meeting the bulk of that need once, at a national level, for local implementation. Regardless of the funding model at which we eventually arrive, our tools benefit our users.

*“Our approach starts to add insight which wasn’t previously there”*

Both through innovative developments of our own, and through working to help share best practice between local authorities, we help service leaders see things about their services which they wouldn’t necessarily have seen. We help excellent analysts share their findings beyond the borders of their own base LA, and we help resource-constrained local authorities – and novice analysts – benefit and learn from the work of external colleagues.

*“Our community is beginning to work together”*

Best practice spreads, and the tools improve, and the whole community is involved. We plan our future work as openly as possible. We let stakeholders know what to expect, and when. We have open channels for feedback, feature requests, planning and prioritisation. Our community helps define what we do with our time. We act as an effective convening point for collaborations and opportunities to benefit services nationally.

We have delivered against these objectives and retain them as core values. We propose the following key objectives for 2022-23. We will provide updates on these goals via our mailing list, and via regional groups, as the year proceeds.

<i>We want to...</i>		<i>Progress updates to arrive via mailing list...</i>
Continue to maintain and develop the core toolkit in line with LA priorities		
Support implementation of “RIIA ’23”, including cross-regional benchmarking mechanisms		
Inaugurate an Early Help Data Partnership with regional partners developing data standards		
Establish self-sustaining delivery models for our Demand Modelling and Quality Data projects		
Embed Data to Insight as an ongoing “service” which the sector can rely on into the long term		
Continue to deliver and improve our tailored CSC data analyst apprenticeship programme		
Develop a formal reporting framework to keep stakeholders aware of activity and impact		

We know that the world will undoubtedly change, and some of our plans may change as a result. We want to make D2I a valuable mechanism for LAs to leverage time savings, service improvements, and collaboration opportunities to benefit their local work. We welcome feedback on all aspects of this report, both now and as the year progresses, and hope to continue developing ways for colleagues to feed into our work.

## Overview of 2022-23 key outputs

The above expands on our “We want to...” table of goals (above). As a small team working in a complex environment, we will look to remain flexible in how we prioritise our work. However, this shows what we currently intend do over the coming year. We welcome and any all feedback about these intentions, now or later.

### *Core toolkit*

- We will continue to update Benchmarking Tool and ChAT with new national datasets as they are published
- We will continue to support analysts with bug fixes and minor improvements by request/collaboration
- We will work to reduce file sizes, and improve responsiveness, of key tools
- We will explore web-based approaches from other projects as routes to increasing core toolkit capabilities

### *RIIA '23*

- We will support the development of national standard data definitions and quarterly collection mechanisms
- We will collate regional quarterly datasets and produce a national quarterly dataset for regional use
- We will explore the potential for dedicated national analysis of these datasets to benefit regional groups

### *Apprenticeships*

- We will design and offer a third cohort of our L4 Data Analyst tailored apprenticeship (subject to take-up)
- We will design and offer a new L3 Data Professional tailored apprenticeship (subject to take-up)
- We will continue to support apprentices in enrolment and continuous learning on their apprenticeships
- We will continue to monitor course quality and further tailor our courses to best meet analyst needs

### *Early Help Data Partnership*

- We will collaborate with LAs to develop and share an accepted set of standards for Early Help data
- We will facilitate LAs to develop exemplar approaches to meet data standards (by 2023-24)
- We will develop infrastructure for collecting and managing data, and provide a platform for collaboration
- We will implement a national LA-level Early Help dataset, with collection and reporting to LAs (by 2023-24)

### *Demand Modelling*

- We will refine our placement demand modelling tool to make it easier for LA analysts to use
- We will develop the tool into a regional modelling tool to support regional commissioning
- We will explore long term support and maintenance options via regional commissioning networks

### *Quality CSC Data*

- We will expand our SSDA903 Data Validation Service to also incorporate CIN Census validation checks
- We will use this as an opportunity to further develop Python/programming knowledge in LA data teams
- We will use this as an opportunity to develop generic data ingest and analysis methods for LA re-use
- We will develop approaches for open-source development and maintenance within our community

### *Community support*

- We will develop a formal governance and reporting framework for our work to keep all partners informed
- We will continue to maintain and support users in accessing our website, email links and Slack community
- We will continue to seek opportunities to advocate for LA data interests in national conversations
- We will explore possibilities for further engaging colleagues in co-design and sharing good practice

## Contact

To get in touch about anything to do with Data to Insight, email [datatoinsight.enquiries@gmail.com](mailto:datatoinsight.enquiries@gmail.com)

To find out more, or to connect with our work in other ways, please visit [www.datatoinsight.org](http://www.datatoinsight.org)