



CSC data and digital Centre of Excellence

A walkthrough of our draft recommendations

Spring/summer 2026

CSC Data and Digital Centre of Excellence



The objective of the CofEx is to **grow the data and digital maturity** of the Children's Social Care sector by bringing together the desire, knowledge, skills and resources needed to drive continuous improvement.

Our wider data and digital programme will provide technical and legal solutions to improve the use of data and digital to safeguard children.

The CofEx will seek to build the **leadership, culture, skills and collaboration in the sector** to enable the success of these solutions.



- Department for Education

What is it?



- Initiated by the Department for Education
- Launching in 2026-27
- A multi-team support organisation working in cross-sector collaboration
- Designed for integration with existing sector institutions
- Focus on the ways we do data and digital work in CSC, and how we can do better and improve services for children



- The D2I consortium

Phase 1 (understand and scope) is almost done

Deliverable

Deliverable 1: **Scope** the activities of the centre of excellence; and collaboratively develop an **action plan** for the centre of excellence to address the highest priority data and digital challenges CSC faces.


Deliverable 2: Design and deliver a data maturity survey for LAs to build on the data maturity survey previously delivered as part of the Supporting Families programme.

Deliverable 3: Trial user-centred case management systems support and LA burden reduction.



Outcome: A plan enabling DfE to begin phase two, to deliver the support offer itself.

Progress overview

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- ✓ Sept 25: Project Start
 - ✓ Oct 25: Engagement Paper Published
 - ✓ Nov 25: Survey Launched
 - ✓ Dec 25: Survey Closed - 73% response rate
 - ✓ Dec 25: Interim Report & First governance forum
 - Mar 26: Reports from each strand of project
 - May 26: Final scoping report
 - ✓ Jun 26: Project Close
 - ✓ Oct 26: Appoint Phase 2 Delivery Partner

Draft specification
and
recommendations

coram DATA TO INSIGHT ICT REVOLUTIONS Local Government Association SOCIAL FINANCE

[Drawing]

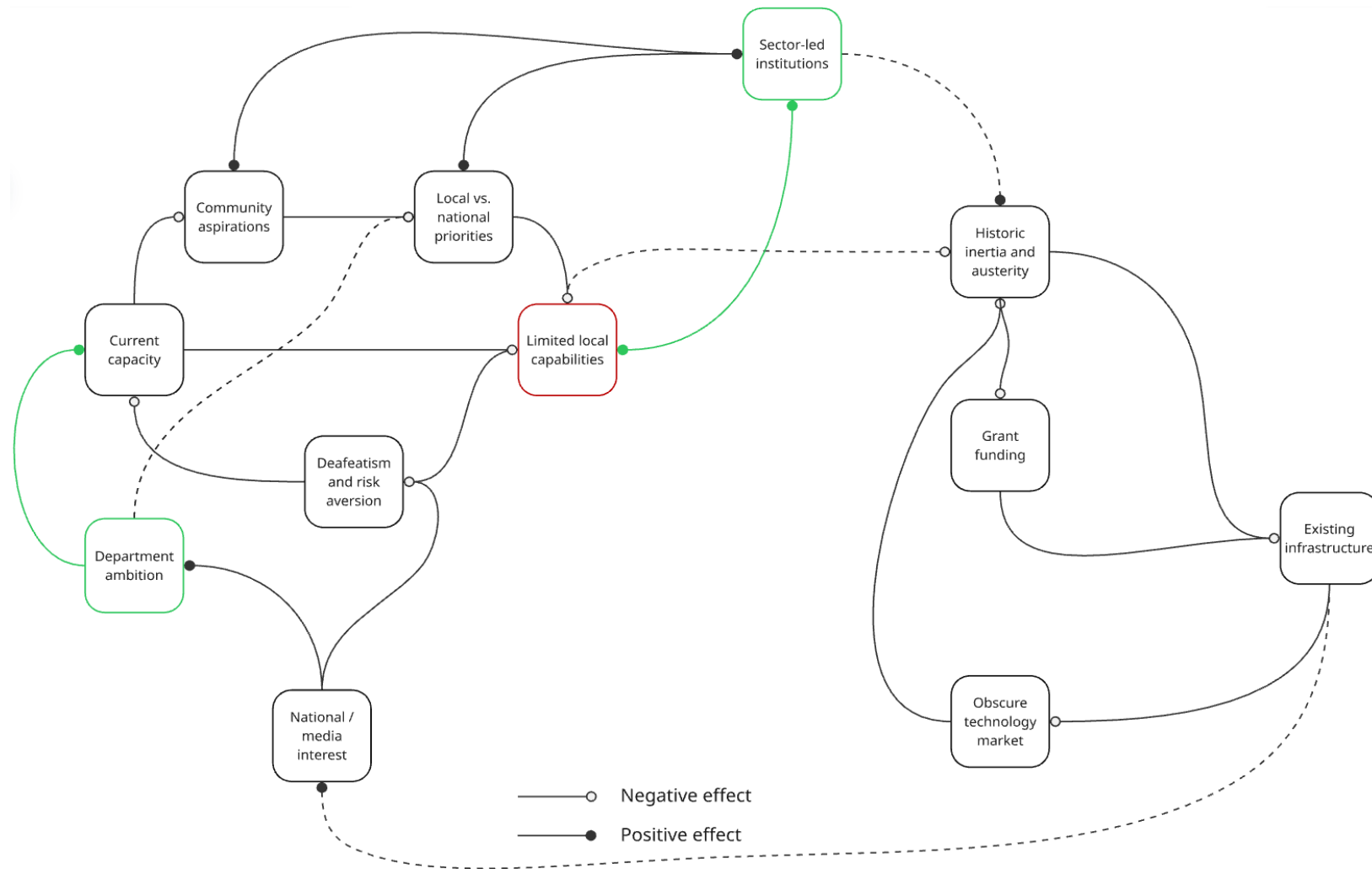
**Recommendation for
a CSC DDaT
Centre of
Excellence**
The D2I Consortium
March 2026

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**Delivery Plan for a CSC
DDaT Centre of
Excellence**
The D2I Consortium
March 2026

We've thought a lot about system dynamics

By understanding how specific **key elements of our sector** affect each other, we can identify **effective ways to improve** our core capabilities - for example, by aligning DfE ambition with sector-led support to generate **local capacity and capability**.



Key design principles to underpin success

Adaptive by design

Multi-level support offer

Genuine sector interaction and expertise

Flexibility and extensibility

Prioritisation

Success measurement

Relationships with DfE & OGDs

Core Ways of Working

Establish a clear, distinct **identity** with reputable **leadership**

Be a distinct and **sustainable** organisation rather than a temporary programme team

Be credibly '**of the sector**' with a strong base of existing relationships

Habitually '**work in the open**' for example through open-source licensing

Hold **niche expertise** that blends deep sector knowledge with technical capability extending beyond the sector

Five key aims for the centre, for three teams

Maintain and improve shared sector resources

Improve technology markets

Facilitate information sharing

Develop organisations and their people

Connect partners to enable change

Technologies: shared resources, technical support, information sharing, and market-shaping

Organisations: leadership support, maturity definition, and technical development/training

Collaborations: convening/co-ordinating across the sector, responding to large scale change

Deliverables are specific for the first 12 months, but allow for future testing, learning, and spending effort on the things which actually work

1. Establish and evidence core capabilities and relevant activity
2. Centre of Excellence launch
3. Months 1-12 delivery towards key aims (see right)

Maintain and improve shared sector resources:

Provide tools, support offer, community spaces, and usage statistics, adapt tools to FFP, develop sector-owned backlog, launch network map

Develop organisations and their people:

Options testing for leadership and technician development, refresh data & digital maturity survey, direct AI support, baseline AI policy materials

Improve technology markets:

CMS change board, market intervention tests, support/signpost documentation

Facilitate information sharing:

Expert MAIS support to LAs, network events, reference material

Connect partners to enable change

Options testing for collaboration approaches, sharing FFP learning, test niche support delivery to LAs, test skills sharing, share "what works" docs

To achieve impact sooner, we are also proposing two interim deliverables

- Support the sector to develop a **shared, prioritised backlog** of CMS improvements to strengthen system management. The aim is to test whether local authorities can collaborate and reach agreement.
- Develop and support a **Community of Practice focused on the use of AI** at the frontline of social work. This will meet the urgent need to share learning on technology being adopted at pace across the sector.

And we're working on feasible "extend or simplify" options, and mapping interdependencies

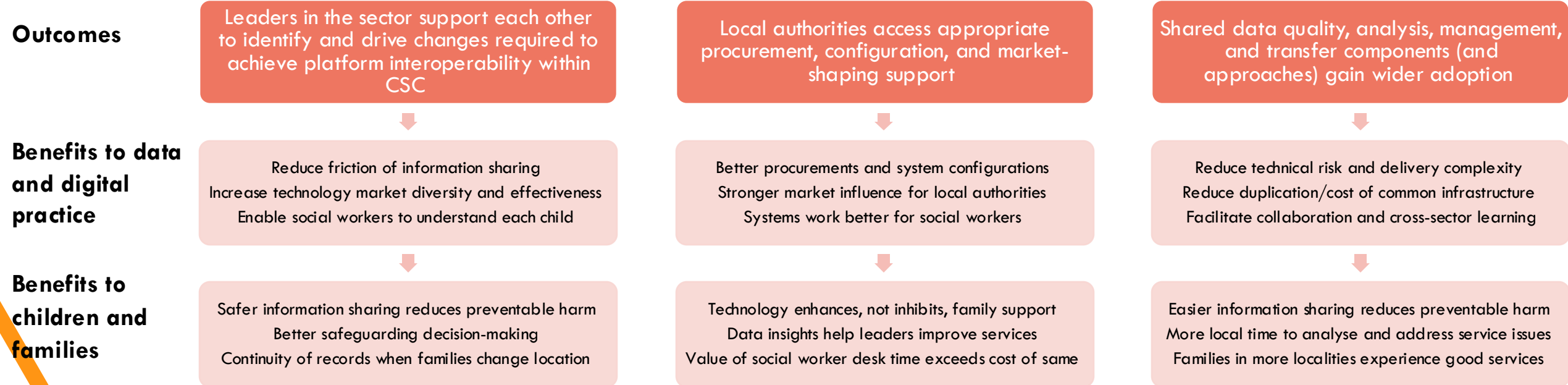
To ensure confidence that the Centre will succeed, we're mapping the interdependencies between recommended activities, and developing a range of **options for adjusting the offer** without destabilising its ability to deliver.

We're looking in particular at:

- The right scale and timing for **initial procurement support**, to align with the market's capability to respond well
- The Centre's role in optimising **national data collection activity**
- The wide range of options around **IT systems and tech products**, particularly around case management, information sharing, and integrative AI tools
- The potential for a **dedicated transformation team** to help introduce best practice to the least mature local authorities

This will be accompanied by cost/benefit/impact analysis.

Outcomes and benefits: technologies



Outcomes and benefits: organisations

Outcomes

Technologists and analysts in the sector access appropriate development opportunities

Leaders in the sector facilitate effective, secure, and appropriate local data and digital services

Benefits to data and digital practice

A more capable, sustainable workforce
Better support for social workers and local leaders
Faster problem-solving closer to the front line

Leaders are more confident delivering technical change
Local technical functions are appropriate to need
Leaders make better strategic decisions

Benefits to children and families

Technical experts work to improve front line services
Children and families experience better services
Technical problems are understood and resolved

Impact of technical change on social work is minimised
Analysis and technology responds to local need
Children and families experience better services

Outcomes and benefits: collaborations

Outcomes

Strong cross-organisational networks and communities of practice facilitate excellent technical practice

Sector leadership aligns effectively around shared challenges, including in cross-sector partnership with the department

Benefits to data and digital practice

Faster adoption of what works in specific situations
Empower local analysts to lead local improvement
Lead national discussions towards shared innovation

More local authorities have good technical services
Stronger collective response to shared issues
Greater local confidence in technology decisions

Benefits to children and families

The data which individuals provide is well-used
Services are improved by analysts' expert input
Citizens see a sector which works to improve itself

Families in more localities experience good services
Citizens see government policy respond to needs
Local innovation succeeds in keeping children safe



Discussion

Discussion of recommendations

- What is resonating for you in how we've described the work?
- How will we define and protect the 'core infrastructure' the centre provides while it also supports emerging policy projects?
- Delivering, in part, via existing organisations risks incoherence of approach. On balance we accept that trade-off. What do you think?
- We want a CofEx to establish a distinct identity and find a path to sustainability. Can this be achieved through likely delivery mechanisms? i.e. a delivery partner contract.
- Which bits of this do you think will work for you? Which might not? Why?



Thank you

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www.datatoinsight.org/coe