

# Delivering a strategic approach to social care data in Wales

August 2022 update and next steps



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



# Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
Our opportunity	3
Our vision for social care data in Wales	4
Our strategic objectives	5
How will a strategic approach to data support better outcomes?	6
What will a co-ordinated approach to data provide?	7
Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales	8
Building on our strengths	15
Which key competencies do we need to develop?	16
What's next?	17

# Foreword

The world is being shaped by data as never before. All around us, a new information revolution is underway, driven by advances in technology and massive increases in the volume of data generated and stored. With this comes new challenges and responsibilities, particularly around maintaining public confidence and complying with regulatory expectations for how this information is used. But as the amount of available data increases, it offers us the chance to transform how we deliver critical services.

We now have an opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to define the new role data can play, how potential benefits can be achieved, and how these will be communicated to the public.

A great deal of discussion has already happened, some of it prompted by our discovery report, [A strategic approach to social care data in Wales](#). There was already some excellent work taking place, which we outline in this report. We then set out the direction for a data strategy in the [Statement of Strategic Intent](#).

Data practices in social care in Wales are still only at the beginning of a long journey. One that will need collaboration and partnership, a unified approach, and incremental, evidence-based progress.

We will, together with partners, put data at the heart of social care in Wales, transforming how we collect, manage, store, analyse and use it -including information from other sources such as health. And in the process, we will make services ever more effective for the public.

Over the past few months, we have consulted with stakeholders on how best to progress the data strategy. This document brings their feedback and ideas together, along with what happens next.

**Sue Evans**  
Chief Executive, Social Care Wales



# Our opportunity

**Across the social care sector, social care staff and local authorities have always played a vital role in supporting our communities. In the wake of COVID-19, the importance of the social care sector has never been more recognised.**

The wider care sector in Wales, whether social care or healthcare, has a unique opportunity to change the way it harnesses the power of social care data to best meet the needs of people and communities now and into the future. This will include digitally enabling people and communities to support their understanding of data and develop their trust in how the sector uses it.

Every organisation involved will need to invest in insight to allow services to become more outcome-focused, holistic and collaborative. By investing in data, we can build the seamless vision envisioned in A Healthier Wales and move toward a system more aligned to the needs of individuals and the professionals who support them.

Our programme of work on the strategic use of data in social care has delivered a number of products so far:

- a [discovery report](#) on the current position of data in social care in Wales
- a [Statement of Strategic Intent](#), that serves as the vehicle to bring organisations who provide social care in Wales together as a community to consider our collective ambitions to use our data more effectively in order to improve the experiences and outcomes for the people in Wales
- a series of ‘quick win’ alpha projects that explored some of the most pressing challenges highlighted by the discovery report
- continuation of projects from the alpha phase, looking more in-depth at data analysis skills in the social care sector in Wales, engagement opportunities with the public and professionals, establishing data standards in social care in Wales, information governance process efficiency and the redevelopment of the social care data portal for Wales.

**For the first time, we are seeing how working together as one nation can advance the way care data is used. Together, we have the chance to improve the way we manage information and make decisions in care, working hand in hand with our partners in health to deliver better services and help the people of Wales live happier, healthier and more independent lives.**

# Our vision for social care data in Wales

## Personalised, co-designed care

Care and support are tailored around the individual receiving them. People understand and trust how their data is used and can see how effective the services they receive are and make sure they are able to achieve the well-being outcomes that matter most to them. They don't need to provide the same information repeatedly.

## Better, integrated outcomes

Social care data can be linked to health, housing, voluntary sector data and more, creating one seamless service user journey and enabling organisations across the system to tailor their support to the whole person.

## A focus on prevention

Local and national organisations will be able to identify trends and patterns, and to gather and use evidence to provide support to people and families before issues escalate. Trends can be used to model future scenarios, so that services can adapt to changing needs.

## Consistent data, trusted decisions

Standardised, comparable, high-quality data will support decision-making at all levels. We understand what's happening and where, and how well things are working across the system, which will help to prevent or detect issues.



## A data-enabled workforce

People working in social care know what data to collect, how to use it for maximum impact, and where it's safe and acceptable to share it. Our workforce data helps us to understand the people who deliver care and support and helps us plan. Organisations use data in combination with the experiences of care professionals, to answer the questions that matter.

## Informed decision-making supported by the evidence

Local and national organisations use up-to date data to develop evidence-driven business cases, understand challenges and target their investment in data wisely.

## Stronger research capability

Datasets will be better integrated, managed and stored across Wales, allowing researchers, regulators and policymakers to see the 'bigger picture'. They can make informed recommendations on how to improve care and support and future needs.

## Defined ownership and accountability

We know which agencies lead and support each part of the data strategy. We have informed leadership making purposeful decisions about how we use data.

# Our strategic objectives

The Statement of Strategic Intent published in March 2021 set out core areas where the strategy should focus its impact:

- 1** **Discussing with the public** to understand their views about the use of data and increasing their understanding about data.
- 2** **Supporting better decisions around data priorities** to achieve the best outcomes for people in Wales.
- 3** **Building a strong data culture and sponsoring leadership** that appreciates and clearly states the value of social care data, and uses the insight it provides to drive innovation and take decisions.
- 4** **Providing support for improving the use of our data in research and analysis**, so that all organisations with an interest in care can work together more closely, conducting and sharing analysis so we all understand what can work.
- 5** **Enabling safe and ethical data sharing and collaboration.** This could include identifying sharing opportunities, reducing the burden of providing and collecting data by encouraging its reuse, unblocking barriers to sharing, and addressing concerns or worries. It could also involve working together in different ways and making sure the systems we use work together well.
- 6** **Increasing and improving the data we need to identify and address inequalities in social care**, in when and how people with the full range of protected characteristics receive care and support, and to ensure that social care is a safe and fair place for all to work in.
- 7** **Adopting the same standards and design principles** in how we collect, use and maintain data. If we do things in similar ways, our data will be more consistent, higher quality, and easier to use and compare.
- 8** **Improving data skills across social care** by identifying and encouraging the skills that matter and helping everyone who works in social care to use data and other types of evidence more effectively in their work.

# How will a strategic approach to data support better outcomes?

The Discovery Report and the Statement of Strategic Intent highlighted the ambition and the need within the Welsh care sector to develop a coordinated, strategic approach to social care data. A strategic approach will provide technical and data specific benefits, such as new systems and common data standards. It will also support the implementation of an inclusive culture and leadership approach across the sector.

The goal is to achieve better outcomes, through the delivery of effective services. Four supporting benefits areas are outlined below.

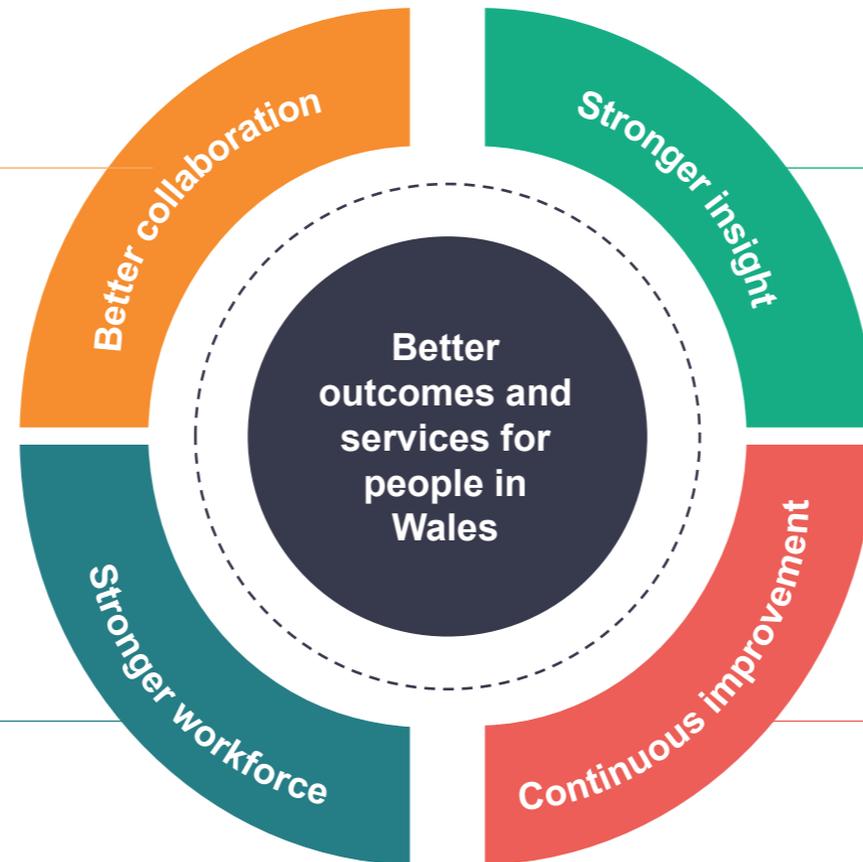
## Better collaboration

Working together based on shared values knowledge and benefits. It enables the right services to be delivered, in the right way at the right time for citizens. **Promoting a more effective use of resources by doing the right activities for the person who is at the centre.**

This means that organisations work across boundaries, such as housing, leisure, health and education.

## Stronger workforce

Better access and use of data will help organisations plan their workforce requirements and the skills or training they need. **It will also allow the workforce to develop the skills to use data and insights more effectively to help them to help others.**



## Stronger insight

Decision making will be led by evidence. This will drive improved care decisions and planning (at individual and collective levels) because we can understand and plan for current and future needs. **We will have a better understanding of what the public think about data sharing, and how that might influence what we do.**

## Continuous improvement

We will work with people with lived experience, and those working in the system, **to make sure our strategy reflects and responds to their priorities and builds on strengths.** By working in this way we can build on what's good, and quickly respond when things need to change.

# What will a co-ordinated approach to data provide?



Better data is better for everyone – it means that we make the right decisions about where to put resources and that we communicate well, with a shared understanding. This puts people at the centre of everything we do. The benefits of sharing data are different, depending on who you are. Below are some of the perspectives of people within Wales and how we might expect them to talk about what has changed once our strategic approach is in place.



I know who to contact about my care and I know that they know my history through my records as I don't have to repeat my story over and over. If something changes, I can decide who hears my story. My carer can access the information that I have chosen to share.

Person with lived experience



When I start supporting someone new, I now have access to a more detailed care history, which helps me build our relationship. Systems and data help, rather than hinder, how easy it is to work with the person I support, so we can work together on their long-term outcomes. I know what needs to be recorded can be captured and understand how it's used.

Practitioner



I have access to better data tools which means I can automate more mundane tasks. I now spend more time providing deeper insight on trends and exceptions, developing and using evidence, and using data to support business cases for change improvements.

Data analyst



It's much easier for me to understand the quality of social care in Wales, because I can trust the comprehensive data available to me and I know that it's comparable between places and providers. This allows me to focus on supporting innovation and improvement, such as by developing and sharing best practice.

Regulator



There is a named lead organisation for social care data in Wales, that acts as a broker, expert and champion. I can now model and predict future trends and use this to help the sector plan and deliver seamless, place-based care that's digitally-enabled and responsive to people's needs.

Policymaker



I feel confident in the data I can access, and it looks right – it corresponds to the strengths and challenges we face. I can more easily use these insights to plan and budget effectively, and I now know where I need to invest to achieve the greatest improvement.

Director of social services

# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

These activities and use cases were identified throughout our stakeholder engagement.

## 1. Engaging with the public and people who work in social care

### What's been completed or is underway ?

- in Quick win 3, *Citizen and practitioner engagement*, we developed principles for co-design and engagement with people with lived experience to ensure they are meaningfully involved throughout the development and delivery of the data strategy.

### What will we do next?

We'll implement the recommendations of Quick win 3, by:

- establishing a baseline of opinion and attitudes about how health and care data should be used. We'll do this our partners in Welsh Government and Digital Health and Care Wales
- having a meaningful discussion with citizens in Wales about how we share and use data for their care and support and for research. We'll use a 'deliberative' model (such as citizens juries) where there is the time and support for people to consider an issue carefully and contribute their views
- creating a workforce data group to seek the views of people who work in social care
- build a good practice library for engaging meaningfully with citizens.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

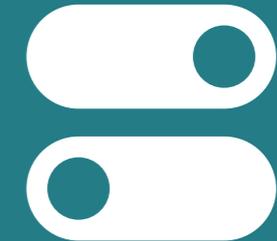
## 2. Decision making

### What's been completed or is underway?

- we've made a formal agreement with Digital Health and Care Wales to provide resources from the National Data Resource programme for our work on social care data.

### What will we do next?

- we'll establish a group to shape the creation and implementation of a data governance policy and standards framework. We will recruit an Information Governance Lead to support this work
- we'll work closely with the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru to set the priorities for improving how we work with and utilise social care data in Wales
- we'll publish regular, routine updates about the work of the data strategy so that we are open and transparent about the decisions that are made.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

## 3. Culture and leadership

### What's been completed or is underway?

- we'll set up a senior group from across social care in Wales to guide the data strategy.

### What will we do next?

We'll create a community of people working with social care data in Wales. The community will include people with technical, analytical and methodological interests in data and the insights it can provide.

## 4. Research and analysis

### What's been completed or is underway?

- we've launched a new version of the National Social Care Data Portal, based on the needs of our users
- we've collaborated with Public Health Wales, the SAIL Databank and Digital Health and Care Wales to set up and run the Networked Data Lab in Wales.

### What will we do next?

- we'll enhance the functionality of the Data Portal and the insight and analysis it provides
- we'll make more Social Care Wales data available through the Data Portal.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

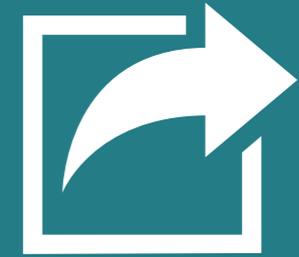
## 5. Data sharing and collaboration

### What's been completed or is underway?

- we attend several key groups and forums that consider the use of data, to promote the data needs of people working in social care. This includes the National Data Resource Programme Board
- in Quick win 4, enabling data sharing with SAIL and others, we explored how an information sharing gateway might be used to give organisations the processes and confidence to share data.

### What will we do next?

- we'll appoint an information governance lead for social care to progress this work
- we'll capture the social care user requirements for the information sharing gateway.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

## 6. Data quality

### What's been completed or is underway?

- in Quick win 1, Common standards for social care data, we created a checklist for organisations to support data sharing
- we've improved our approach for collecting data about the social care workforce
- we've looked at our own data and how we might improve the way we use and publish it.

### What will we do next?

- we'll use the checklist for common data standards to support data sharing and standardisation
- we'll work with people to develop social care data standards that allow data to be moved and shared between organisations
- we will work with local authorities, system providers and the NDR technical team to develop data hygiene processes to ensure all data passed into the NDR is of the highest quality.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

## 7. Standards and design

### What's been completed or is underway?

- we've redesigned the look and feel of our National Social Care Data Portal with our users and experts in user experience and interface design.

### What will we do next?

- we'll recruit a data standards lead for social care
- we'll define what qualifies as social care data to support standardisation, quality, sharing, interoperability and collaboration initiatives
- we'll create a group to identify which data standards to develop first
- we'll work with our partners in the National Data Resource Programme to define compatible data interoperability standards for social care data based on FHIR standards.



# Progressing our strategic data objectives across Wales

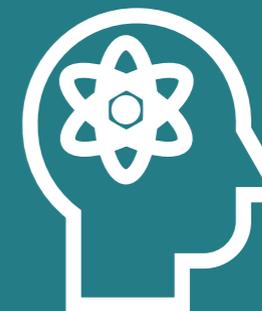
## 8. Data skills

### What's been completed or is underway?

- in Quick win 2, Developing roles and competencies for social care analysts, we explored data on digital professionals working in social care, using data sources such as job descriptions, CVs and training plans
- we worked with Social Finance to deliver a scoping exercise for developing a data analyst competency framework for social care. This exercise involved assessing the current capabilities and capacity of local authorities social care analyst community as well as investigating opportunities for continued professional development.

### What will we do next?

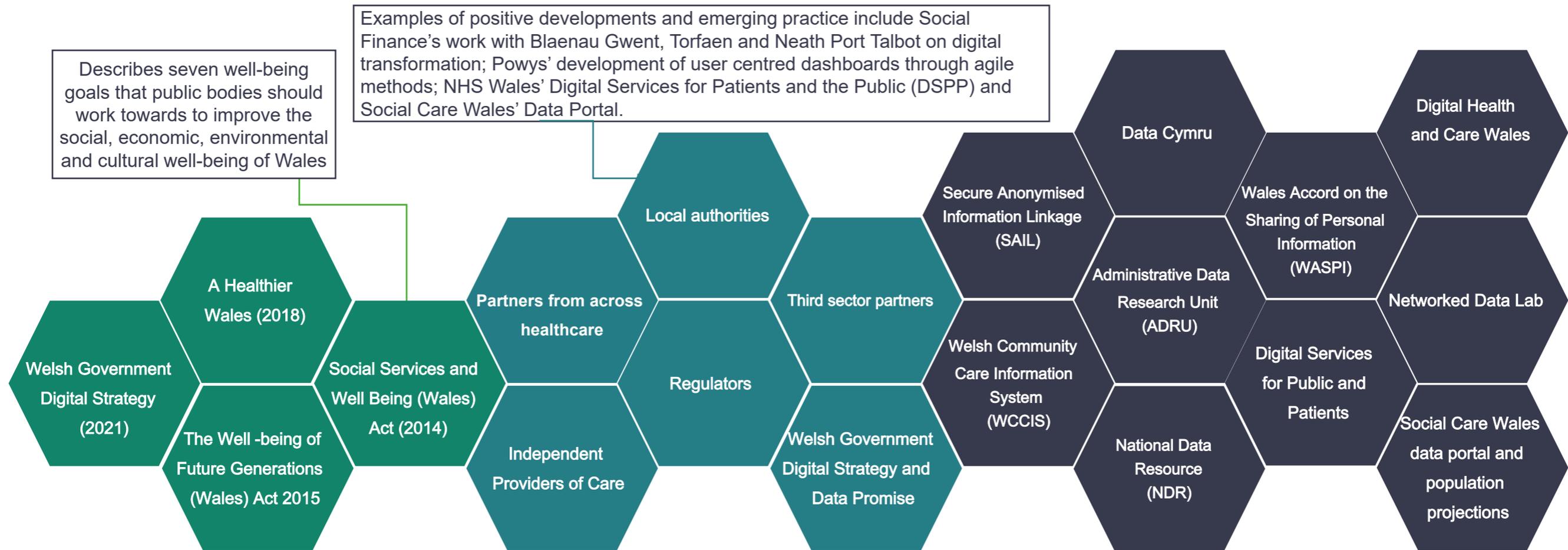
- we're working with Digital Health and Care Wales and KPMG to deliver foundation analyst training as part of the Analytics Learning Programme.
- we'll deliver the alpha (test) projects identified in the data analyst skills scoping exercise:
  - training resources library (2022 to 2023) - signposting, hosting and promoting training on data skills
  - job descriptions (2022 to 2023) - providing a platform for local authorities to access and share data analysis role descriptions
  - data journeys (2023 to 2024) - developing maps showing data flows within local authorities
  - data communities of practice (2023 to 2024) - providing informal online spaces for conversation and problem solving.
- we'll review the use of technology and the introduction of more modern tools and advanced analytics capacity (data science, machine learning, natural language processing and artificial intelligence).



# Building on our strengths

Over the last 10 years, the Welsh Government and partner organisations have made significant progress in evaluating and assessing the challenges faced by the social care sector.

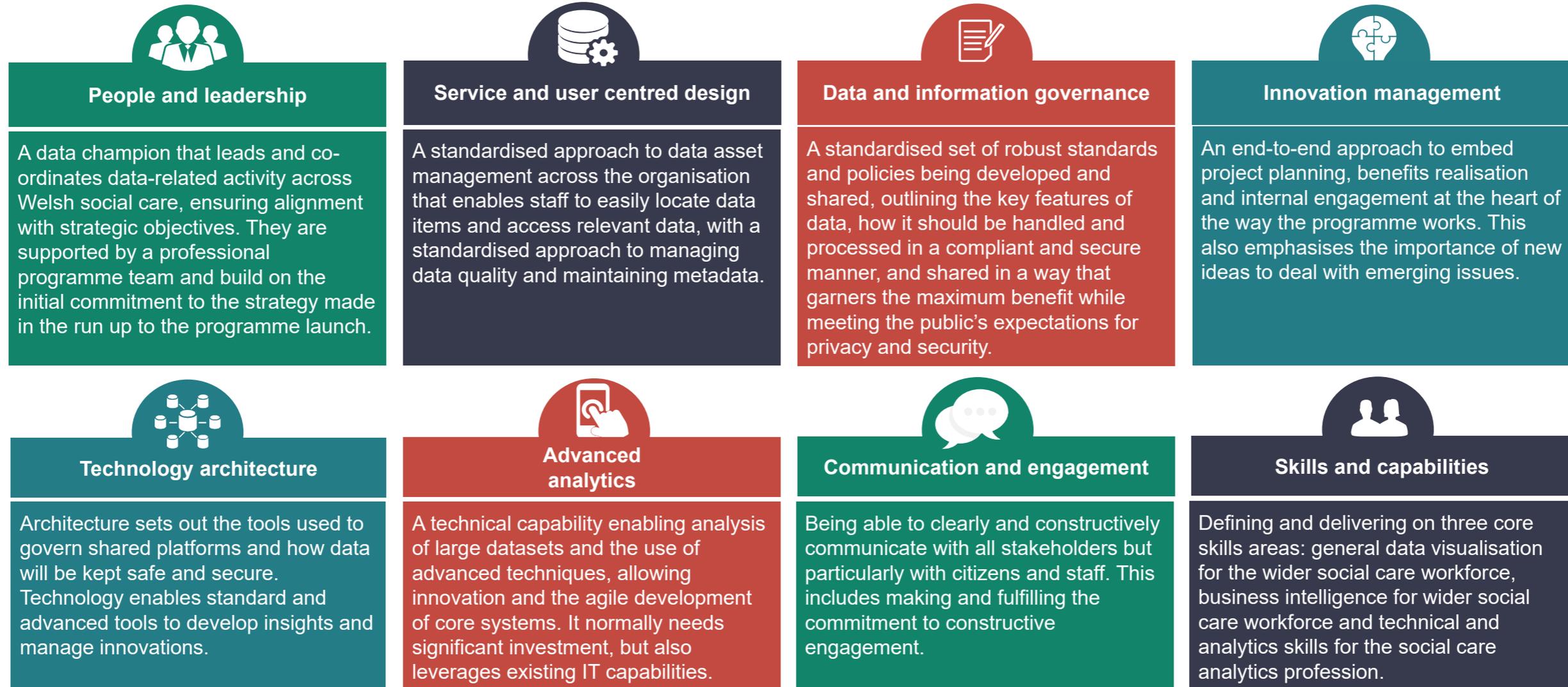
The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 set a direction towards *one system of seamless health and care for Wales*. Since publication, we've gathered a clearer picture of the data initiatives, both at a national and local level, that are taking place across Wales. It will be important to ensure that all these initiatives are aligned with each other.



We want to provide a better structure through the data strategy to bring all these pieces together, so we can all benefit from the great things happening across health and care, and work together to create new ones. We will co-design the approach with our partners. This means being brave about our goals, how we structure the programme, and the governance structures to ensure it delivers.

# Which key competencies do we need to develop?

To realise Wales' ambition of creating a data-driven social care sector, the programme supporting the data strategy is likely to need a number of key enabling competencies. Outlined below are the eight domain areas considered to be essential to unlocking the optimised use of data.



Our delivery plan recognises the importance of developing these skills and building capacity across social care.



# What's next?

We have established that the opportunity to transform the use of data will impact across the system and, most importantly, improve the experience of people receiving care. We can build on the strong foundations of legislation and policy, data initiatives across Wales and local good practice.

Improving the way that data is used in social care is not something that can be transformed overnight. The journey to better data will take time. By working collaboratively with Welsh people and the workforce, we will make an impact in the short, medium and longer term.

Our continuing work on the data strategy for social care covers a diverse range of projects with a range of partners and stakeholders across Wales. This co-operative approach ensures efficient use of precious resources and reduce unnecessary duplication of effort.

We are already beginning to see some of the cultural changes that elevate the importance of data within organisations, and we are starting to collect some of the knowledge and evidence to shape the development of better data and better skills to use that data more effectively.

There has been fantastic progress on the programme so far. We must use all the momentum gained over the last 18 months to continue to drive us forward.

# Contact us

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