Birmingham City Council Adult Social Care

A draft Challenge Brief for Digital Innovation in Public Services (DIPS)
31/03/2022

Prepared by Patrick Bek,
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The Challenge Question

How can technology enable citizens with learning disabilities to access, and be in control of, suitable transport services that increase confidence and independence?

The Challenge Summary

Transport is at the heart of how we live our lives. It helps us get to work, stay in touch with friends and family, contribute to society and access vital services like

healthcare and education. Easy access to transport is central to building a stronger, fairer economy.

While many take for granted the ability to travel easily from A to B, this is not the reality for everyone. For the fifth of people who identify as having a disability, access to transport can be far from straightforward.

Some of our most vulnerable citizens are not able to access public transport or cannot travel unaided. For these people, we have a particular responsibility to ensure that they have access to safe and reliable transport so that they can obtain the support or services which they may need. Without good quality and accessible transport, there is a real danger that people with a learning disability may become trapped in their own homes, leaving them isolated and unable to access social care services and the social opportunities that many of us take for granted. Safe and reliable transport is a vital link to enable vulnerable people to participate in the communities in which they live.

For people with learning disabilities, transport means independence. Accessible transport can transform someone's life. That means clear signs and timetables, easy-read information, trained customer-facing staff, accessible toilets, and priority seating and ramps. Without these accessible services, life can be a lot more difficult.

There is currently a fleet of day centre vehicles provided by the Local Authority which transports adults to and from the centres. However, unfortunately, sometimes Local Authority Transport is not enough to enable everyone to get around and be active in their neighbourhood. There are examples of local initiatives that have been created to fill gaps in provision - run by local groups, day centres, or parents of people with a learning disability who simply want to create their own solution to the transport problem.

These types of initiatives include *Travel Buddy* programmes that train and employ people who have a learning disability to become a buddy. All buddies are fully trained in how to meet the needs of every person they support. Travelling on transport with peers can give people more confidence and independence in other areas of their lives.

Accessible cycling schemes are another example whereby people are provided with adapted bicycles as well as offering them for hire to the public. These schemes also promote social independence through weekly or monthly cycling clubs. There are also many examples of transport training programmes and personalised travel support for people with learning difficulties - they enable people to develop their own activities across the week with grained support staff.

Why does this challenge need to be solved?

People with learning disabilities, like everyone else, need to be able to use safe, affordable and accessible transport. Good transport services open up access to health and social care services, education, and learning and leisure activities within the local community – helping people live more independently and have more control over their lives. Currently, transport available to people with learning disabilities is provided by numerous different transport providers, independent local groups, or via friends and family. Many of these services are difficult for people with disabilities to access without some support and they are often unable to manage their own travel options or plan routes independently. Solving this challenge will improve health and wellbeing and reduce reliance on formal care arrangements.

Who are the end-users of the solution likely to be?

- Adults 16-40 years old with learning disabilities
- People with non-complex needs
- People who are able to travel independently
- People who need a companion to travel
- People who are able to use mobile phones

How will we know when the challenge has been solved?

We will see a decrease in dependence on fixed care packages. Individuals will have the opportunity to try different things at different times if they become more mobile. Care providers will be able to access more community-based activities and become less reliant on building-based activity in one place. The council will see more citizens engaged in both local and city-wide activities.

What's the policy background to the challenge?

Local Authority Transport is a transport service provided to people who cannot use public transport independently due to disability or health problems and have no reasonable access to private transport. It can be provided through taxis, minibuses, Council fleet cars and volunteer drivers, either through direct provision by the Council, or sourced by individuals in receipt of Direct Payments. Assisted Transport usually helps people to access day opportunities, respite care, leisure services, and employment and training opportunities.

The aim of the Local Authority Transport policy is to reflect national and local priorities and is based upon the following principles:
- Promoting independence
- Maximising choice and control
- Supporting a healthy lifestyle
- Improving quality of life
- Maximising dignity and respect
- Developing local and community networks

An adult will be eligible for support and care if the identification of needs, due to an impairment or illness, means that they are unable to achieve two or more specified outcomes and as consequence, there is or is likely to be a significant impact on their well-being. A duty to provide transport only exists if that is deemed necessary for the eligible need to be met, with other options having been discounted. This might include an individual's use of their Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility component, Motability vehicle, other available transport concessions and the capacity of the adult to contribute to transport costs. The test of eligibility is "Would the failure of the council to fund transport result in an eligible need for support going unmet?" A risk assessment and review will identify an individual's potential to learn road safety and orientation skills so that they can travel independently to and from community services, day service, employment and college. In collaboration with carers, capacity to travel independently will always be assessed by an approved travel trainer.

For more details see Adult Social Care Transport Provision Policy 2018 V.01.2019.

Have you attempted to solve this problem before?

The local authority has piloted Travel Buddy and Peer Travel schemes in partnership with Birmingham Voluntary Service Council. However, we haven't explored how digital technology solutions might support people with learning difficulties to access and manage the numerous transport options available to them.

Are interdependencies or blockers?

Many adult social care clients experience barriers to digital inclusion. Research for the UK digital strategy suggests that there are a number of important barriers, and more than one may affect individuals at any one time.

They are:
- access - not everyone has the ability to connect to the internet and go online
- skills - not everyone has the ability to use the internet and online services

- confidence - some people fear online crime, lack trust or don't know where to start online
- motivation - not everyone sees why using the internet could be relevant and helpful

As access, skills and confidence improve, it is increasingly important to tackle other barriers, including:

- design - not all digital services and products are accessible and easy to use
- awareness - not everyone is aware of digital services and products available to them
- staff capability and capacity - not all health and care staff have the skills and knowledge to recommend digital services and products to patients and service users

Are there any technologies you wish to explore or avoid?

Nothing is off the cards - however, we must ensure the solution is safe, accessible and inclusive to end-users.

What is the commercial opportunity beyond a BCC contract?

Britain is on the verge of a transport revolution. Radical new technologies are emerging that within a generation will transform everyday journeys. Zero tailpipe emission cars are replacing those powered by fossil fuels. Self-driving vehicles will soon allow disabled people and older people to enjoy the freedom to travel that the rest of us take for granted. And advances in data will improve the way that transport services are devised, planned and delivered for the passenger.

The best transport technologies of the future will not just make journeys faster, they will also make them safer, easier, more comfortable and more affordable. Much of the change in travel will happen first and fastest in urban areas, where transport is busiest, economic opportunities greatest, and space most restricted.

The government has made a commitment to make the most of this extraordinary opportunity. The Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy (2019) aims to put Britain at the heart of the next mobility revolution, and bequeath a better, greener and more successful country for future generations. Ensuring this revolution is inclusive for all is vitally important and solutions we develop now will drive significant value in the new mobility economy.

Will the solution need to integrate with any existing systems or equipment?

Non on the daycare centre side. There may be integrations required with current local authority systems.

Birmingham City Council Adult Social Care

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29/04/2022

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The Challenge Question

How can technology enable citizens to access engaging and inclusive Adult Social Care service information quickly and efficiently?

The Challenge Summary

For the vast majority of people, care begins at home. Carers play a vital role in communities and the government's vision for Adult Social Care puts people and families at its heart. It is a vision that:

- offers people choice and control over the care they receive

- promotes independence and enables people to live well as part of a community
- properly values an exemplary and committed social care workforce, enabling them to deliver the outstanding quality care that they want to provide
- recognises unpaid carers for their contribution and treats them fairly

To deliver on this vision, the government wants to encourage investment and innovation right across the sector to shift away from a reliance on residential care and offer people genuine options for drawing on outstanding care at home and in the community. It's vital that information and advice are accessible and understandable, and can be accessed quickly to support independence and reduce reliance on services. However, citizens in Birmingham face a challenge in accessing the right Adult Social Care service information they need. Currently, there is no one point of contact and for many service users, the information can feel disparate and confusing.

Information and advice on social care can make a huge difference to people's lives. In a major study of social care users, 14% of those who said information and advice was very difficult to find said their quality of life was 'very bad' or 'so bad it could not get worse'. This compares to only 2% of those who found it very easy or fairly easy to find information and advice[1]

The same study suggested 8 major problems with the information and advice available to those with social care needs in the UK:
1. The social care system is too complex and localised to comprehend
2. Decisions are typically taken in a crisis
3. There are problems with the quality and availability of information, advice and referral
4. The availability and quality of council information services and assessments is patchy
5. There is a lack of independent support for the assessment process
6. There is a lack of joined-up advice covering care and housing/benefits options
7. There is a lack of information about service availability and quality
8. There is a lack of signposting to financial advice.

Birmingham City Council has faced criticism from some citizens for providing information about services via three different websites, in addition to the local authority's primary website, www.birmingham.gov.uk:
- https://birmingham.connecttosupport.org
- https://the-waitingroom.org

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[1] Personal Social Services Adult Social Care Survey, England 2010-11 (Final Release), NHS Information Centre, November 2011, P.59

- https://r2wbirmingham.info/home

Multiple points of access and information duplication are causing frustration among users which increases the risk of citizens not being able to access the advice and care they need in a timely manner. In turn, when users are unable to find the information they need quickly and in an accessible way, additional pressure is put on local authority resources to respond to user enquiries.

Why does this challenge need to be solved?

Services to support vulnerable adults are facing unprecedented challenges. Demands resulting from changing demography and austerity are increasing at a time when the available resources to meet such demand continue to reduce. Early advice and help, as well as prevention services, make up the cornerstone of the Adult Social Care delivery model. The aim is for low-level needs to be prevented (or delayed) from developing into more serious or acute needs. When effective, early intervention and prevention can not only increase independence, improve outcomes and the quality of life for people, but also provide a financial return to the Local Authority in the form of cost avoidance and a reduction in the use of more expensive, acute resources.

To avoid a cycle of crisis management that does nothing to support long term, positive outcomes, citizens need to be able to access advice and information easily, quickly, and in an accessible way that suits their needs.

Who are the end-users of the solution likely to be?

- All adult citizens of Birmingham - this is a legal requirement.
- People who have an existing service need.
- People who are supporting/caring for others who have an existing service need.
- People seeking advice and services for themselves, for the first time.
- People seeking advice and services for others, for the first time.

How will we know when the challenge has been solved?

We will see an increase in citizens accessing and managing their own social care needs and we will see a decrease in dependence on local authority resources and services.

What's the policy background to the challenge?

The Care Act 2014 which came into effect in 2015, represented the most significant reform of care and support in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support.

The Act combines various existing pieces of legislation which previously shaped how social care was arranged in Britain. The intention was and still is, that the Care Act will make it easier for the public to understand why things happen in a way.

Importantly the Care Act also changes many aspects of how support is arranged and aims to give greater control and influence on those in need of support.

Birmingham City Council reviewed policies and procedures and made changes to make sure they meet duties under the Act. They continue to review these same policies and procedures to ensure they remain compliant with this and any further changes to the Act.

The Care Act sets out some 'key principles' on how health and social care professionals should work with citizens which are;

- You know best
- Your views, wishes, feelings and beliefs should always be considered
- The main aim of professionals should be on your well-being, on reducing your need for care and support, and on reducing the likelihood that you will need care and support in the future
- Any decisions made should consider all relevant circumstances
- Any decisions should be made with your involvement
- Your well-being should be balanced with that of any involved family and friends
- Professionals should always work to protect you and other people from abuse and neglect
- Professionals should ensure that any actions taken to support protect you affect your rights and freedom as little as possible

Further information can be accessed via The Care Act

Have you attempted to solve this problem before?

Information consolidation, which is only part of the problem, has been attempted before but there was a barrier in sharing information and data across different platforms with different data sets. Connect to Support, the Waiting Room, and Route 2 Wellbeing will continue to remain accessible to those seeking information. The goals of each of these sites are strongly linked to the outcomes of the funding organisation. These outcomes differ and are not likely to perfectly align in the immediate future.

Are interdependencies or blockers?

Some data that may be required to access, share, or consolidate is kept with external partner companies and organisations.

Birmingham City Council's Digital Strategy sets out its approach to digitising services for citizens. The strategy has been created to ensure that citizens and businesses are at the centre of how they design and deliver better online services. It has been developed from their conversations with citizens, businesses and staff.

There are technology standards adopted by Birmingham City Council, particularly around security, that will need to be considered.

Are there any technologies you wish to explore or avoid?

Explore:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Smart Filters
- Voice Recognition
- Internet of Things

Avoid:

- Building another website

Will the solution need to integrate with any existing systems or equipment?

Potentially:

- Third sector social care partners/providers, for example:
  - Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
  - Autism West Midlands
  - Age Concern

- Primary Care Networks that signpost to social prescribing options

- Other providers of IAG within ASC contractors, such as The Carers Hub

Birmingham City Council Planning and Consultation

A draft Challenge Brief for Digital Innovation in Public Services (DIPS)
31/03/2022

Prepared by Patrick Bek,
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The Challenge Question

How can technology transform public consultation to increase citizen engagement, improve quality, and enable meaningful dialogue?

The Challenge Summary

After a local planning authority has received a planning application, it will undertake a period of public consultation where views on the proposed development can be expressed by citizens. There is typically a formal consultation period when the local planning authority will identify and consult a number of different groups.

Following the initial period of consultation, it may be that further additional consultation on changes submitted by an applicant, prior to any decision being made, is considered necessary. Finally, once the consultation has concluded, the local planning authority will consider the representations made by consultees, and proceed to decide the application.

Our current consultation process is not well equipped to engage in a useful dialogue with citizens because consultation contracts are typically framed as activities designed to inform, not listen to citizens. Moreover, our complimentary digital platform, 'Be Heard' only allows for two types of responses: "I am in favour of the proposed solution" or "I am against the proposed solution".

Current processes are failing to engage a broad range of citizens that are representative of their neighbourhoods, which means the 'usual suspects' are continually asked for their views. As a result, voluntary and community sectors can be deluged with consultations from many local stakeholders which causes feelings of 'consultation fatigue'. However, while there is little evidence the general public are overly concerned about consultation fatigue, no one complains if the consultation is meaningful, they can see it will make a difference and will lead to real change. What upsets people is having their time taken on consultations which they think lack credibility; be going through the motions, not listening to the views of a lot of people, promote an issue/agenda at variance with people's values, and not be followed up by satisfactory feedback – either of the output or the outcome.

In recent years citizens have turned to platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to have their opinions heard, tagging local councillors and politicians directly. The Local Authority is unable to resource the monitoring of comments provided through these channels, or make timely responses. This can create a situation where misinformation can easily be spread before the correct information responding to a post is provided, and where politicians are being asked to make comments on subjects that they are not able to respond to given the sometimes technical knowledge required. This can lead to diverging narratives being created about what is happening and could have a negative reputational impact. Not being able to respond to comments cohesively and in a timely manner has the potential to disengage residents in the development process and thus an opportunity for them to potentially influence the design of a scheme will be lost.

Why does this challenge need to be solved?

There is an urgent need to increase public trust and turn the tide of disengagement. Public consultations are where residents are most likely to be able to affect change; however, the current solution is transactional and formal which limits the possibility of

engaging in meaningful, sustained dialogue with a broad spectrum of citizens. Closing the feedback loop is one of the most important aspects of public consultation, ensuring that residents feel heard and that they can see the effect of their participation. That's currently missing. There is an opportunity to strengthen relationships between the local authority and citizens to support our ambition to become equal partners in the co-design of our city.

Who are the end-users of the solution likely to be?

External Users
- Schools
- Community Organisations
- Arts Organisations
- Developers
- All Citizens within the Bordesley Green area (soft border area taking into account external influences)
- Groups in a geographic context
- Health providers (NHS and social prescribing)
- Further education
- Higher education

Internal Users
- Housing Management
- Planning
- Parks
- Transport (Active Travel)
- BMHT
- Adult social care
- Adult Education
- Employment and skills
- Public Health

How will we know when the challenge has been solved?

Public consultation processes will be transformed to meaningfully engage with citizens who are representative of Birmingham's diverse and vibrant neighbourhoods. We'll enable ongoing, informative dialogue between citizens and the local authority and be able to evidence significant improvements in the quality of consultation across the following measures:

Demographic reach
Number of responses
Quantitative and qualitative data capture

Dialogue and retention
Frequency of engagement
User experience
Citizen satisfaction

What's the policy background to the challenge?

The idea of public consultation is not new but has taken a new focus in recent years, emerging initially as part of a plan for Civil Service reform by the Coalition Government in June 2012. The plan sought to establish a 'new relationship' with the public aspiring to identify problems, discover new thinking and propose solutions, as well as address consistently declining trust with politicians and political institutions.

This ambition, coupled with the current political and economic climate raises some important questions for local authorities that want to revive communities. How do we deliver authentic co-production? How can we unlock the power of public institutions to realise their local economic and social potential? How do we encourage local entrepreneurship? How do we engage communities in their own future? How do we increase trust in government decision-making?

Have you attempted to solve this problem before?

We have experimented with a number of consultation methods and tools, some are integrated, others are siloed activities. These include:

Google Forms
Survey Monkey
'Be Heard'
Birmingham Property Services' website
Face-to-face informal consultations with groups and individuals
Mailouts/newsletters
Drop-in consultation sessions at community spaces
Drop-in consultation sessions on Teams/Zoom
Themed Q&As with keynote speakers
Webinars with representatives of community organisations, arts organisations and experts
Printed consultation materials
Participatory Planning Portal - digital engagement process centred on a 3-D model of local areas

Are interdependencies or blockers?

All Birmingham City Council service areas will need to be engaged to ensure the solution is widely used across directives, meaning data is accessible, understandable and shareable.

The solution will need to understand and design for a level of dialogue with citizens that improves consultation quality but doesn't unnecessarily burden already stretched resources at the local authority.

The solution should enable and enrich face-to-face consultation, not transfer it to solely digital interactions.

Are there any technologies you wish to explore or avoid?

We are particularly interested in mobile technologies focused on user experience, augmented reality (AR), mapping and visualisation, education, and dialogue/ conversation.

What is the commercial opportunity beyond a BCC contract?

The public consultation solution is likely to be applicable to:

Public health
Policy Development
Commercial property
Research
Education
Social sciences

Will the solution need to integrate with any existing systems or equipment?

BeHeard - BCC's consultation hub
ARC GIS - mapping and analytics platform
The solution may need to integrate with other local authority management systems.

Birmingham City Council Public Health Vyse Street Food Hub

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31/03/2022

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The Challenge Question

How might we use technology to connect urban/regional food producers with local demand, and transport goods between them in a reliable, affordable, and sustainable way?

The Challenge Summary

Food is part of our cultural identity and, at the most basic level, essential to our survival. Over the past 100 years, we have seen unprecedented development of agriculture and the national food industry, which now brings many people reliable, affordable access to an extraordinary variety of food. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the ways we grow food and process it are undermining our health, and are not fit to meet the needs of a growing population. While citizens are more aware than ever about eating responsibly, we need to acknowledge that the negative health and environmental impacts of current food production and distribution systems are mostly unavoidable.

Food production today is wasteful, relying on extracting finite resources to grow food in ways that harm the natural systems that agriculture depends on. In cities, we capture and use an extremely small fraction of valuable nutrients in discarded food, food by-products and sewage. Given that 80% of all food is expected to be consumed in cities by 2050, it's vital that we establish new food systems that are healthier, sustainable, more efficient and affordable. Cities can influence what food is produced and how - they have a unique opportunity to make change. They can begin to transition to a circular economy for food, where food waste is designed out, food products are used at their highest value and food production regenerates rather than degrades natural systems.

Half of the world's population currently live in cities and, by 2050, 80% of the world's food will be eaten in densely populated urban environments. In order to get nutritious, local food onto city dwellers' plates, we have to figure out how to grow and distribute food in our cities, at scale, as soon as possible. However, in the haste to feed the city, it is important not to forget that the quality of food we eat matters.

Vyse Street Carpark Food Hub is a new food system prototype being developed by Birmingham City Council, GBSLEP and Slow Food Birmingham. The purpose of the project is to test Birmingham's capacity to become a market for good food (Slow Food's definition of good food: good, clean and fair) and shorten the farm to fork distance for the food we eat as a city.

This project aims to build and test a better food system for Birmingham at a hyper-local level first. The project provides an opportunity to explore a variety of strategies to address four primary challenges:

1. **Reducing the farm to fork distance** - Shorten supply chains and reduce packaging needs by enabling retailers, restaurants, and hospitality businesses to source food that's grown locally and regeneratively.

2. **Connecting farmers in surrounding areas to demand in the city** - Bring production closer to consumption by enabling consumers to pool their purchasing power.
3. **Wasting less food and redistributing food that is about to be wasted** - Make the most of food by better matching supply with demand and redistributing it.
4. **Streamlining food transport logistics and reducing carbon footprint** - Make use of underutilised transport systems, create intelligent packaging solutions and reduce the miles spent in transit.

Short food supply chains are defined as those with a maximum of one intermediary between consumer and producer, improving access to fresher products and reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well as distribution costs while promoting fairer prices for farmers.

As well as the environmental and social imperative for businesses to reduce their food waste, there's also a compelling business case. Driving efficient supply chains and reducing waste should be a priority for businesses; it makes financial sense, helps communities, and is a key way businesses can deliver Net Zero climate targets.

We won't fix climate change unless we fix the food system.

Why does this challenge need to be solved?

Global food systems are increasingly unhealthy and unsustainable. If left unchecked, our current approach to food production and consumption has the potential to cause huge economic, social, and environmental impacts at a local, regional, and national level.
Environmentally, food production is the single biggest contributor to biodiversity loss, deforestation, and drought. In the UK, the total carbon footprint of the food and drink that we consume is equivalent to 35% of total greenhouse gas emissions.[1]

Economically, the UK imports around 50% of the total food consumed.[2] The fragility of the UK's food system has been exposed by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, where reports of food shortages have led to panic buying and price inflation. While these were short-term shocks, climate change is the major long-term threat to food security due to the danger of extreme weather events and catastrophic harvest

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[1] https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/WRAP-Pathway-2030-Delivering-a-50%25-reduction-in-the-GHG-footprint-of-UK-food-and-drink-summary-report_0.pdf

[2] Exploring the resilience of the UK food system in a global context, Global Food Security, 2018

failures. It is vital that the UK increases its levels of local food production to protect itself from these external stressors in the future.

Building better links between local food producers and the market is crucial in driving food production towards more sustainable goals – there has been a significant push recently to increase bio-fuel farms and whilst these respond to the energy transition objectives they don't solve the problem of food insecurity and over-reliance on food imported from abroad. Farmers need good connection to the market to confidently grow what is in demand. In 2019, by speaking with a farmer in Coleshill, we learned that it's easier for him to sell his crops to French supermarkets because they are able to tell him what the need is a year in advance. When dealing with Birmingham, a complex and diverse market, it's a lot harder for individual farmers to predict demand and plant/sew confidently ahead. Due to Brexit, military and political conflicts and climate change, import has become a lot harder to rely on. That's why it's a great moment to rethink our local food system. Consumers want organic locally produced food but the supply cost is too high and the supply is unreliable due to limited logistics (confirmed with local schools, colleges, restaurants and independent retailers).

Local food systems enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular area. Increasingly, communities are organising 'food hubs' which can be defined as *'centrally located facilities with a business management structure that facilitates the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products'*. Food hubs help provide wider access to markets for small to mid-sized producers, and increased access to fresh healthy food for consumers, including underserved areas and 'food deserts'.

Local food systems play a vital role in building community wealth for several key reasons:
- Growing, processing, and distributing food locally creates and sustains community-based jobs.
- Direct channels between farmers and consumers boost local farmers' income.
- Food hubs, markets and cooperatives not only help ensure pounds remain and circulate locally but also help create more vibrant communities.
- Urban agriculture projects turn vacant spaces into productive, income-generating spaces and often include training or employment opportunities for local people.
- Community events bring people together, break isolation, increase good mental health and allow people to gain new skills (e.g. horticulture, composting, wormery, beekeeping)
- Create activities for children through the engagement of schools and holiday schemes.

It's possible that technology solutions will provide the 'connective tissue' within local food systems to bring about a critical mass of producers and consumers and enable the system to become financially sustainable.

Who are the end-users of the solution likely to be?

External Users
- Regional mid-sized Farmers/food producers
- Small urban/peri-urban food producers
- Hospitality companies
- Restaurants
- Food retailers
- Schools (independent academies) and colleges
- Other public sector food providers who are ready to make a transition to dynamic procurement.

Internal Users
- Food Hub management
- Birmingham City Council (Planning, Route to Zero Team, Highways, Parks, Public Health, Education)
- Slow Food UK and Slow Food Birmingham

How will we know when the challenge has been solved?

The technology solution will support the establishment of a thriving and sustainable food hub at Vyse Street car park. We will have a solid financial foundation including capital and infrastructure, a skilled and knowledgeable team, an awareness of our niche in the local food system, partnerships with producers and consumers throughout the system, an understanding of the market demand, and a reliable, consistent supply of quality products.

We will reduce food miles and establish Birmingham as a market for sustainably produced food. The technology solution will have a significant impact on city-centre logistics and will contribute to the city's carbon reduction targets by 2030.

What's the policy background to the challenge?

Vyse Street Food Hub is an initiative developed out of the Horizon 2020 funded Food Trails project. Food Trails aims to translate the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact's collective commitment to integrated urban food policies into measurable and long-term progress towards sustainable food systems. Eleven European cities, with universities and stakeholders, will co-design pilot actions as leverage points for FOOD 2030 urban food policies development, involving also 21 worldwide follower

cities. In its 11 partner cities, Food Trails will develop participatory Living Labs, innovative pilots and transformative food policies. Cities will foster innovation, collaborating with the consortium to establish successful approaches.

Have you attempted to solve this problem before?

The problem hasn't been tackled successfully or looked at through a whole-city lens; however, it is worth mentioning that Slow Food did attempt to introduce the Open Food Network's platform to enable access to slow (good, clean, fair) food for some of the city businesses. The take up has been slow as the platform itself is outdated.

Are interdependencies or blockers?

The success of the platform depends on the success of the Food Hub and more specifically on the physical location of that Hub. Should a space become available in/ nearby the city centre, a technology solution will become a natural next step. However, without a dedicated Food Hub where food could be brought in, re-packaged and re-distributed, the technology solution would not be able to operate fully.

Are there any technologies you wish to explore or avoid?

We are particularly interested in technologies that enable us to transport food and ingredients to and from producers and consumers in reliable, cost-effective and sustainable ways. We are also interested in technologies that enable us to map availability and trace food/ingredients in local systems, as well as facilitate reciprocal partnerships between stakeholders.

What is the commercial opportunity beyond a BCC contract?

The demand for locally grown/produced food is increasing rapidly. Business and individual consumers want to know where their food comes from, how it was made and by whom. They want the transparency required to know its source. As a result, there's a huge investment and business opportunity. Investing in successful food and farming enterprises not only garners financial returns but also creates value for other stakeholders, making positive social impacts supporting healthy communities, as well as strengthening local economies, and increasing environmental resilience.

Will the solution need to integrate with any existing systems or equipment?

Compatibility may need to be explored with the Open Food Network's system https://openfoodnetwork.org.uk/. It is an international platform promoted by Slow Food International and used by Slow Food Birmingham and across the UK. We have already discussed some possibilities to improve the Open Food Network's platform or to connect the two (Open Food Network attended the early-stage conversations on this challenge).

Similarly, the Dixon's Foundation is encouraging local authorities across the UK to embrace the Dynamic Purchasing System for food procurement. The DPS uses several online systems/application. Birmingham has not taken any decisions as to how to implement DPS or whether any external systems would be used. So, whilst we need to observe the landscape, there aren't any expectations of incorporating the DPS requirements into this challenge.

Birmingham City Council TfWM - Mobility Hubs

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31/03/2022

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The Challenge Question

How can technology support the transformation of Mobility Hubs into places of community and business activity that drives active transport use in the city?

The Challenge Summary

Becoming more active, tackling the climate emergency, and supporting local communities are key aims for the West Midlands. To meet these goals, we need to

rethink how we move. We also need to rethink how we use street space to prioritise active travel, public transport, and community enterprise.

Innovation will be critical. Change will rely on new, practical solutions to address air quality, decarbonise vehicles, free-up public space, improve the experience of using public transport and encourage the adoption of cycling and eMobility.

Bike hire, eScooter rental and car clubs are key ways that local governments in the West Midlands are driving change. These shared modes of transport broaden the range of sustainable choices available for each trip, reduce the costs associated with private ownership, and provide new ways to access transport corridors.

Mobility hubs have excellent potential to extend access to shared transport across the region while building new community focal points around sustainable travel. CoMoUK ([2019](#)), a charity, explain that *"mobility hubs create space designed specifically to house public and shared mobility modes and improve the public realm for local residents and businesses as well as travellers".*

The transport innovation team at TfWM is working in partnership with local authorities and mobility providers to plan how to introduce hubs across the region. This has involved a prototype-development programme during 2021, as part of the Department for Transport-funded Future Transport Zone programme.

The emerging vision is to build networks of hubs that offer:

- Convenient, safe places to pick up rides and finish trips
- A choice of shared modes to suit different travel needs
- Support for active travel, including secure cycle parking and wayfinding
- Integration with public transport, for example through co-location with bus stops
- More accessible neighbourhoods, by increasing what can be reached within 15 minutes
- Good-value commercial spaces that can be used by local entrepreneurs
- Community focal points for grassroots initiatives and pop-up public services

The focus for 2022 is to make this vision a reality. During 2022, we plan to conduct a pilot of 3 – 5 hubs in one neighbourhood. This will inform a broader rollout from 2023.

As part of this work, we need to explore how technology can help us to:

- Drive adoption and use of sustainable transport by citizens of the West Midlands
- Make mobility hubs thriving places that benefit both local communities and businesses

- Achieve high occupancy of spaces for pop-up trading and public services
- Engage residents in the design, build and maintenance of mobility hubs
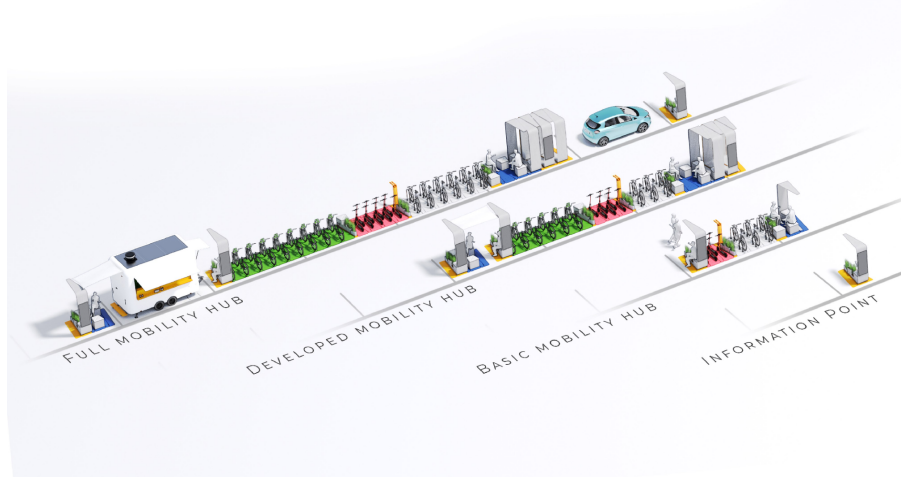
An illustration of the West Midlands mobility hub prototype, demonstrating how it can be adapted for different contexts (TfWM 2021)

Why does this challenge need to be solved?

- Many of us encounter practical, social and cultural barriers to the adoption of sustainable transport. We need to drive adoption and advocacy to make hubs a success.
- The right marketing, processes and services must be in place to allow businesses to make the most of the opportunities around hubs.
- Local communities need to be aware of how they can use the new public places for initiatives and exhibitions.

Who are the end-users of the solution likely to be?

External Users
- Local residents
- Families
- Community groups
- Young people
- Pop-up traders
- SMEs

Internal users
- TfWM active travel and innovation teams
- Local authority officers

How will we know when the challenge has been solved?

When residents and local businesses can:

- Confidently use mobility hubs for sustainable travel

- Easily book and complete administration for space at hubs
- Attract people to participate in events and initiatives

What's the policy background to the challenge?

The Birmingham Transport Plan 2031 describes what the city needs to do differently to meet the demands of the future. The plan contains a set of principles that will guide investment in transport so that it is able to serve a future Birmingham that is home to more people and that is a better environment in which to live and work for everyone irrespective of age, disability or income. These measures are designed to:

- Reduce transport's damaging impact on the environment, supporting Birmingham's commitment to becoming a carbon-neutral city by 2030
- Eliminate road danger, particularly in residential areas
- Connect people with new job and training opportunities
- Reconnect communities by prioritising people over cars
- Revitalise the city centre and local centres.

The Birmingham Transport Plan was adopted at cabinet on 12 October 2021.

Hubs will also support progress towards regional objectives. These are outlined in the emerging local transport plan - Reimagining transport in the West Midlands (TfWM 2022). The objectives include:

- **Public transport that connects people and places**. "One in four West Midlands households don't have access to a car". Shared mobility "allows people to move around without the need to own a car"
- **Safer Streets to walk and wheel**. "Safer, easier and more appealing [streets] for cycling and walking", "a broad range of transport options that can be used for short distances"
- **Delivering a green revolution**. "Providing green infrastructure will help habitats and biodiversity. This encourages people to spend more time outside improving physical health and mental wellbeing benefits"
- **Growth that helps everyone**. "Good, sustainable access to opportunities", "innovative and sustainable travel in all developments", "minimise the impacts of single-occupancy car usage"
- **Behaviour change for the better**. "Reallocating road space … at key destinations and workplaces", "Visible brands across our different modes"

Have you attempted to solve this problem before?

Mobility hubs are new for the region. However, a range of related projects are in operation. These include:

- The [Birmingham Be Heard](#) consultation platform, used for online community input into new public projects.
- [West Midlands Cycle Hire](#) (WM Cycle Hire), a region-wide network of shared conventional and electric bicycles
- Wellbeing hubs, for example [in Calthorpe](#), run by the Active Wellbeing Society
- Street trading and markets across the region, for example, the [West Bromwich Indoor Market Hall](#)

There are also numerous examples of successful mobility hubs in cities across Europe. For example, the [Redbridge mini-hub in London](#), [Jelbi Stations in Berlin](#), [Mobipunten in Leuven](#) and [Mobil.Punkte in Bremen](#).

Are there interdependencies or blockers?

- The completion of the business case process to secure funding for the rollout.
- Securing appropriate planning permissions.
- The development of national policy related to eMobility, like eScooters.

Are there any technologies you wish to explore or avoid?

- We would be interested in exploring solutions that blend online services and offline activity. For example, social media engagement and 'at-hub' cycling proficiency lessons.
- We wish to avoid exploring a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) style travel planner or app. MaaS is already being explored by TfWM as part of a separate project.

What is the commercial opportunity beyond a BCC contract?

The move to fully integrated transport solutions in cities across the UK, Europe and the USA represent a significant commercial opportunity for technology solution providers. Mobility hubs offer an opportunity for passengers and operators to engage with a range of innovative, data-driven, user-led solutions.

Will the solution need to integrate with any existing systems or equipment?

- The TfWM MaaS application, once delivered
- Existing, local-authority-led processes for street trading and street events (e.g. road closures)
- WM Cycle Hire and other micro-mobility services in operation at the time of delivery (e.g. car clubs and eScooters)

See images below;
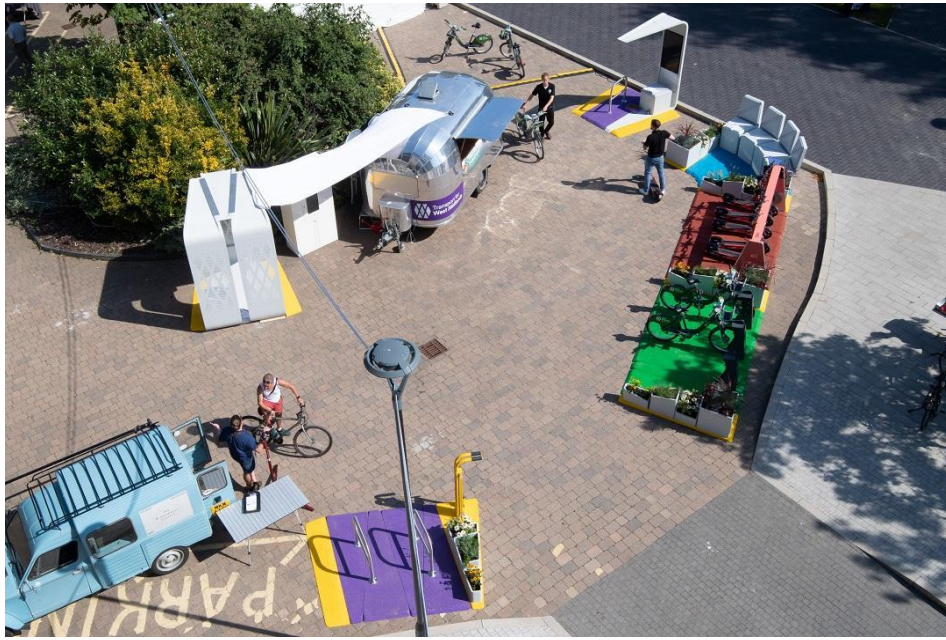
The West Midlands mobility hub prototype at Micromobility UK, September 2021 (TfWM)

The prototype at University of Warwick welcome week (TfWM 2021)