

# How mobility can help local authorities improve frontline efficiency and deliver better social care

Power to the frontline



## Why read this?

This whitepaper will help you evaluate ways to improve frontline social worker efficiency through mobile technology. We also explore the positive impact of technology on your organisation's working culture.

**Vodafone**  
Power to you

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# 1 Introduction

**Mobile technology is emerging as the key solution for local authorities that want to provide more efficient and effective services in their community.**

Here at Vodafone we believe that mobile technology is playing a big part in changing the way local government services are delivered.

Driven by the need to improve service, operate more efficiently and manage ever increasing demand, there's now widespread recognition that mobility can help remove old inefficiencies and get community workers back out into the community. Tellingly, a big part of the attraction is that the benefits are so easy to see and articulate. Enabling social carers working remotely to access up-to-date case notes and back office systems, for example, makes for more effective care. It supports better judgements, automates reporting processes to eliminate human error and improves prevention.

Mobility also makes each individual more productive. By digitising the way jobs are scheduled, workers can spend more time with citizens. And by reducing reliance on paperwork, travel or expensive office space, mobile working is also helping councils to reduce costs in line with budget cuts.

If you are starting your own mobility journey, this paper will help you examine how mobile technology can help you achieve these key benefits simply, securely and cost-effectively.

In this whitepaper we will cover:



The technology that can provide immediate benefits to frontline workers' efficiency



Results already achieved within local authorities and in organisations across the public sector



Impact on culture and how you can manage the change to your advantage

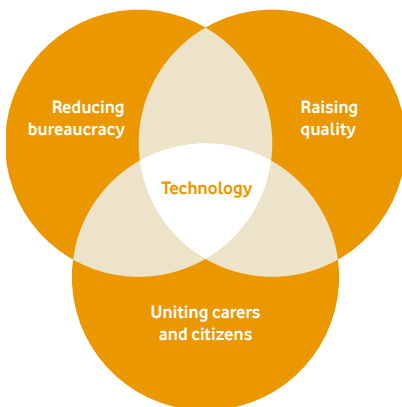
## The mobile agenda, driven by government

In 2014 the Government Procurement Service highlighted the importance of mobility for local government by issuing a tender for a New Software Applications Procurement Framework. The tender includes mobile enablement of existing solutions as one of the key objectives. When combined with the growing number of cloud-based applications available, it's clear that local authorities are heading to a future where much of their IT will be delivered via a mobile platform.

## 2 Mobile technology boosting frontline workers' efficiency

**With the right technology, social workers can provide a more responsive service for citizens.**

In recent years, mobile technology has become a proven problem-solver for organisations right across the public sector and, with citizens' demands rising all the time, it helps to provide a more responsive service. By making processes more efficient, mobile technology can also help to mitigate the impact of budget cuts. There are many examples where this has happened: from police officers taking electronic witness statements at the scene of a crime, to nurses improving care in the community using tablet devices. In social care, the efficiency and productivity issues that can be solved by mobile technology typically fall into three key categories, all of which prevent staff from carrying out more assessments. These issues also contribute to a poorer quality experience when assessments take place, and are:



- Too much time spent on the collection and processing of case notes
- Visits back and forth to the office to access records
- Lack of up-to-date information during review and delayed decision making

Today, local authorities are finding that all these issues can be solved by mobile applications and systems that focus on boosting both the quantity and quality of frontline work. The following examples show how processes can be improved to deliver a wide range of benefits.

### A Secure live access to case notes

With access to case notes on smartphones or tablets, social care workers can radically improve both the speed and quality of the way they work. Frontline staff can check previous notes, correspondence and also consult regulations and policies. They can also make faster decisions.

The benefits are numerous, including less time spent on administration and a better experience for service users during assessments.

### B Job scheduling

Mobile job scheduling means managers can send appointments as well as any special instructions or notifications to frontline workers' devices, wirelessly. Required job details, including full case history, can be made available to the social care worker on their mobile device. Meanwhile managers have a complete view of the job from creation through to allocation and completion. Community staff can update schedules as they are completed during or after the appointment.

The key benefit is that social care workers are no longer required to call or visit an office to pick up their next appointment schedule. This increases their individual productivity enabling them to spend more time making assessments. Additionally, managers get a more strategic view of resources and how they can be deployed more efficiently.

## **C Paperless working and digital data capture**

Replacing paperwork with digital forms means a social care worker's reporting and administration workload can also be made a lot lighter. All relevant forms can be pre-populated and completed either during or after assessments. There's no need to return to the office to submit forms or reports manually. Social workers can also embrace mobile working further by capturing other information digitally – for example, capturing images and attaching them to case notes or recording signatures on care plans.

The benefit, once again, is that social workers reclaim time that can be spent making more assessments. Plus, the data collected is available to other departments or services (such as GPs and hospitals or the local police force) within minutes, reducing the chance of errors or miscommunication.

These solutions illustrate the potential of mobility to revolutionise the efficiency of working practices in social care services. In the following pages we examine the wider business benefits that can be achieved. We also look at how it will change working culture and ensure that social carers are comfortable with the new systems deployed.

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## **How demand for services is driving the need for greater frontline efficiency**

According to a 2013 study by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce, increasing demand for services, combined with declining budgets, means frontline social service staff must do more than ever before to maintain services.

- Demand for social services is set to spiral, with the number of people aged 65 and over who require daily disability-related assistance to rise from 1 million in 2010 to 1.9 million in 2030
  - Local authorities funding for elderly social care is set to be slashed by 18% by 2015/16
  - By 2015/16 social housing-related spending is expected to drop by 33.8%
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# 3 Best practice examples from local government and across the public sector

## Improvements to social workers' efficiency can also help deliver wider business benefits.

Organisations across public sector that have adopted mobile technology for frontline workers achieve a wide range of immediate benefits, boosting both efficiency and service. These include:



Many hours recovered previously spent on paperwork



Less time travelling and more time to spend with citizens in the community



Better access to information so staff can react and respond with more immediacy



More efficient job scheduling and deployment of resources



Significant reduction in budget spent on desk space, travel and physical storage

This should be your baseline expectation. As a number of emerging case studies demonstrate, local authorities and other public sector organisations are also using mobile working to plan their resourcing more strategically.

## Nottinghamshire County Council: their story

Nottinghamshire County Council, for example, recently piloted a tablet-based solution for social workers that brings together the applications they use in their jobs. The solution enables frontline staff to review and update case notes, complete forms, provide photo or video evidence and adjust their work schedule from service users' homes. Workers can also access standard applications such as expenses, timesheets and email all through a frontend that looks like an Apple or Android app.

Nottinghamshire staff members completed 158 more assessments per month during the pilot. Based on these results, the council says it could reduce the time spent on travelling and reporting each assessment by 90 minutes. It has also calculated that it can pay back its investment in 18 months, saving about £1.7 million a year, as well as starting to manage resources more strategically.

In another example, Fife Council has rolled out a job scheduling mobile application to its social housing repairs unit, giving it the ability to send teams directly to their next job. This provides a better and more efficient service for residents, but there are also other strategic benefits. Fife now uses live data gathered by mobile devices to identify the maintenance materials that are most frequently used. This information guides procurement decisions, helps the Council buy items in the right quantities, standardises products

**“In an ageing society, the demand on councils to provide care services is growing. To cope with the changes there needs to be a fundamental reform of the way public sector works and an honest reappraisal of what public services should look like.”**

Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the Local Government Association

and reduces waste. The result is substantial cost savings and a more strategic approach to buying and managing resources.

Allan Barclay, Service Manager for Building Services for Fife Council, says this is a significant and positive shift in thinking.

“ This is a big step forward for Building Services. We are a trading organisation and we have to demonstrate our efficiency in order to show value for money and so safeguard our future. This investment is going to pay for itself in quick time and the savings and efficiencies will be multiplied when the roll out to other trades is completed. ”

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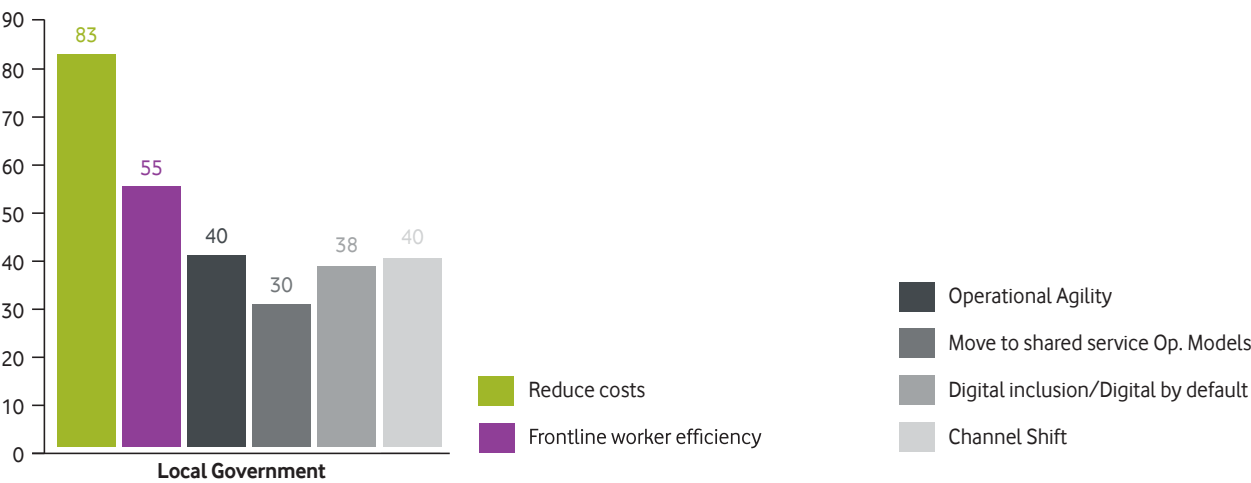
Other examples from around the public sector demonstrate benefits that can be easily transferred to local authorities. Blackpool NHS, for example, has enabled community nurses with tablet devices to achieve a number of strategic business objectives. On a solution level, carers now access and update records securely in the patient's home. As a result Blackpool's care workers now save up to an hour a day resulting in up to ten more patient visits per week. But the real impact spreads much further than that. Pressure on acute resources has been reduced considerably, with more time dedicated to planning, analysis and most importantly the care of citizens.

For anyone working in social care looking to cope with increasing demand on a reduced budget, these and many other examples from across the public sector, show that business cases for mobility are now hardening into tried and tested business models with proven operational and strategic benefits. More than this, they demonstrate that we are moving towards a culture in UK public service where mobility will soon become the accepted norm for both staff and service users alike.

**Kable research: reducing costs is also a top priority for local authorities**

New research from Kable confirms that reducing costs while also improving frontline efficiency is a top priority for councils. The research found pricing and value for money to be the most important issues. Enabling flexible working through mobile technology also scored highly. The report concludes that councils adopting mobile technology need to make sure that cost reduction and productivity aims go hand-in-hand.

Top priorities for social care





# 4 Changing your culture

## Workforce mobilisation has a positive impact on culture.

Changing the way social care workers work doesn't just have an impact on service delivery, it also brings about a significant culture change.

As illustrated below, the benefits of change have the potential to bring about a range of positive business outcomes for authorities, boosting both efficiency and quality of service.

### How mobility encourages new and more agile ways of working

#### Old ways of working

- Workers tethered to desks
- Paper reporting resulting in higher error margins
- Decisions pending face-to-face meetings
- Email
- Travelling to pick up and enter information

#### New ways of working

- Workers using mobility solutions to allow them to work in the community
- Information captured digitally in real time
- Real time collaboration
- Appointments scheduled dynamically

#### Benefits

- Higher productivity
- Faster speed to decision
- Reduction in office space and desktop maintenance costs
- Time and CO<sub>2</sub> savings due to reduced travel
- Potential to reduce property estate
- Social workers free to complete more assessments
- Faster decisions via real time collaboration

**Nottinghamshire  
County Council  
carried out**

**158** more assessments  
during the pilot

As covered on page 6 of this whitepaper

## Managing the change

The most effective way to manage change is to conduct an in-depth study of frontline worker needs. This must look at how social carers act on a day-to-day basis and how behaviours have to change to accommodate new working practices. This will help establish a new culture that gets the most out of new technology and applications.

### Top three recommendations for managing culture change:

- 1 Set objectives:** always ask yourself what you are trying to achieve. Is it cost reduction or better service? It could be both, but by setting priorities early on and communicating them widely there's a much greater chance of success.
- 2 Profile social carers roles:** take the time to profile your community workers, ideally through detailed 'day in the life' style studies. This is the ideal way to get the information that's needed to make decisions based on what is actually required by individuals from their working environment. It also helps to align new work styles to the wider objectives of the organisation.
- 3 Engage with social carers from the start:** ensure carers are engaged as early as possible by making the organisation's objectives clear from the outset. That means articulating three important things:
  - How it will help social carers provide better service to service users in the community
  - How more mobile working will benefit the organisation as a whole
  - How it will benefit them as individuals

With this approach, it is possible to achieve a community-based workforce that is fully engaged with new technology and where individuals can see what's in it for both them and their service users. Ready, in fact, to deliver all the benefits that improved frontline efficiency can offer.

**“We are a trading organisation and we have to demonstrate our efficiency in order to show value for money and so safeguard our future.”**

Allan Barclay, Service Manager for Building Services for Fife Council

# 5 Summary

## Local government organisations are facing some of the biggest challenges in their history.

Demand for services is spiralling, cuts to budgets are unprecedented – yet public expectations of the way services are delivered are rising all the time.

In response, local authorities are changing the way they work. Against the odds, local government leaders are achieving major cost cutting goals, while also giving staff more time with citizens.

At Vodafone we help local authorities achieve their objectives with a specialised solution for improving frontline efficiency. Total Workforce Mobility for local government is built around a highly robust toolkit of technologies, including



Digital writing



Job scheduling



Automatic record syncing

All elements have been carefully chosen and developed so you can deliver a more efficient service, plus better experience for service users. These include:

- Access to all the information and case notes that social workers need for community appointments
- Digital reports that can be completed in the community or where convenient
- Automated job scheduling so officers can pick up daily caseloads and tasks without travelling
- Offline working so social workers can access case notes even when there's no access to the mobile network
- Automated job scheduling so staff can pick up daily schedules and tasks without travelling to and from the office
- Secure devices and secure data, providing peace of mind for citizens and carers

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### Benefits at a glance:

Key benefits of workforce mobilisation for social care services:

**More time with service users** – less time chasing and filing reports

**Lower costs** – eliminate manual processes and cut travel costs

**Quicker decision making** – put information in the hands of frontline workers where needed most

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**We are committed to giving you insights and useful tips to help you plan your organisation's future direction and we hope you've found this whitepaper interesting.**

## Find out more

For a free evaluation on your workforce efficiency visit:

**[vodafone.co.uk/twm](http://vodafone.co.uk/twm)**

See how we can help you improve frontline efficiency  
by contacting us on **0845 241 9557**

(standard call charges apply)