

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is smiling and looking to her right. She is holding a black coffee cup. The background is a blurred office setting with a staircase. White wireframe lines are overlaid on the right side of the image.

From WCCIS to What's Next

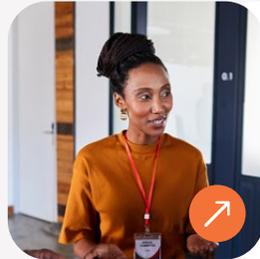
Five learnings from a decade of social
care system implementations



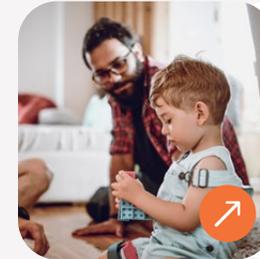
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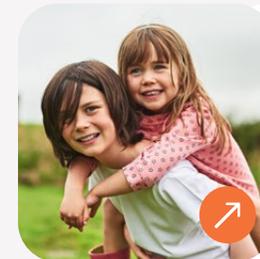
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A DEFINING YEAR FOR WELSH SOCIAL CARE

2026 promises to be a pivotal moment for Wales’s social care sector. As the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) goes offline, social workers across the country will find themselves booting up a brand new platform for the first time in over a decade. How that system performs—and the extent to which it can build on their experiences with WCCIS—will go a long way to shaping the standard of care they can offer.

Go-live, of course, is only a single moment on a much longer timeline. Throughout 2025, Local Authorities and health boards across Wales will be hard at work, doing everything they

can to ensure that the successor to WCCIS works flawlessly from day one.

Since 2016, BetterGov has been helping Local Authorities across Wales, Scotland, and England to deliver on that ambition. From Neath Port Talbot to Torbay—and across systems including Mosaic, Liquidlogic, and ECLIPSE—we’ve provided partnership, experience, and expertise to implementation teams across the United Kingdom.

We’ve learned much during that time—particularly when it comes to the challenges that authorities and health boards face

when making the leap from one platform to another. That’s why, in this short eBook, our team is sharing five key learnings from almost a decade of co-production with our local government partners. We hope you find it helpful.

With best wishes,



Marc Cohen
Founding Partner



Matthew Ryan
Managing Partner



THE TIMETABLE OF A TYPICAL IMPLEMENTATION



- 1 Scoping: here, the functional and technical requirements of the system are laid out.
- 2 Business process mapping: with a focus on efficiencies and improvements.
- 3 Migration: key data is identified, cleansed, mapped, and moved.
- 4 Testing: unit, integration, system testing—and User Acceptance testing—takes place.
- 4 Training: materials and documentation developed, alongside role-based training.
- 6 Reporting: Key Performance Indicators are identified and dashboards configured.
- 7 Go-live: the cutover between the old system and the new take place.



LEARNING #1:

“Authorities have a wealth of experience and talent—and tapping into that is critical to the success of an implementation.”

Andrew Anderson,

Senior Manager (Programmes)

“It’s usually one of the first questions that gets asked once a Local Authority has settled on a new social care system: ‘can we handle the implementation ourselves?’. It’s a good question, too—particularly when budgets are more constrained than they have been in some time.

“Cost isn’t the only consideration, of course. The social care systems of today are highly technical and deeply complex, and many steps in the implementation process require very specific expertise. More often than not, an in-house team won’t have that—not through any failing or insufficiency, but simply because the kind of work that’s involved just doesn’t happen all that often. The chances to learn are limited.





“This is even more of a challenge when it comes to the implementation of a brand new system. In those instances, it’s not just the sheer technical complexity that needs to be taken into account. There’s the fact that an in-house team is unlikely to have much experience with the new platform either—so an already difficult task becomes doubly so.

“This tends to lead to another important question: ‘if we don’t have these skills in-house today, why don’t we invest in them?’. And, again, that’s a worthwhile line of thought to pursue. In our own experiences, though, the answer tends to be shaped by one specific thing—and that’s the short-term nature of an implementation.

“The implementation of any new system is a project, and a project—by definition—is meant to be a temporary situation. Because of that, there’s a real risk that authorities spend time and effort in building up capabilities that won’t be required again for many years to come. That’s not a problem per se, but it can be if it prevents people from applying their experience and talent where it makes a real difference.

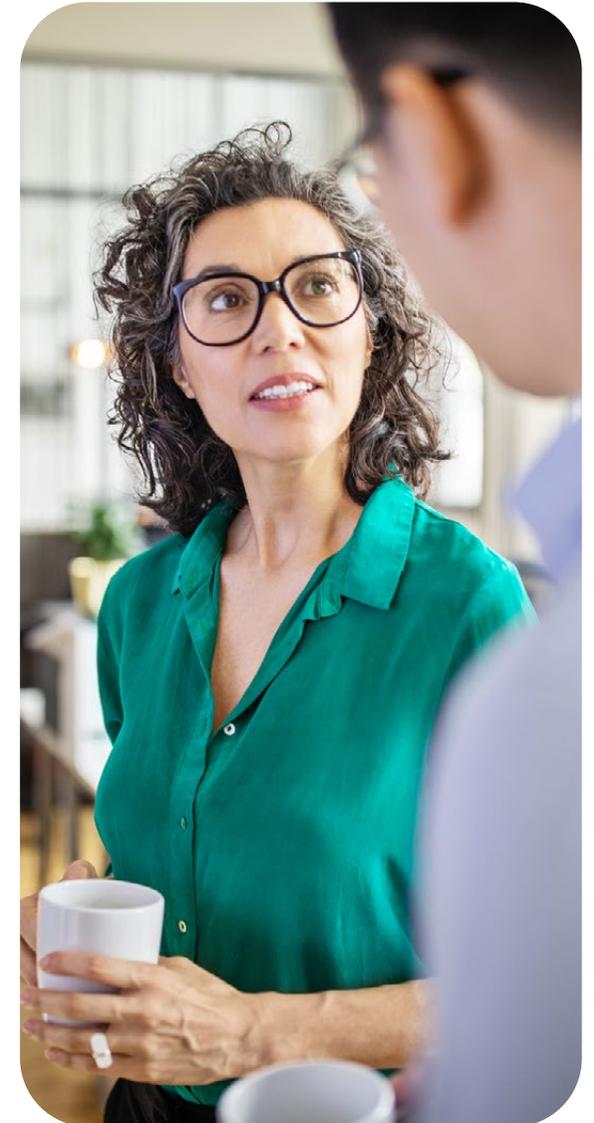


"In the many implementation projects that we've partnered on over the past eight years, one thing that comes through time and time again is that authorities are blessed with a wealth of talent and experience. Moreover, they're equipped with an incredible understanding of local culture and social care practices in their community. Ultimately, it takes a social worker to understand what a social care system needs to deliver.

"Tapping into that insight is critical to the success of a new platform. But doing that is far, far harder when you're also trying to implement said system and learning how to implement it at the same time.



"Is that to say that upskilling an internal team is a waste of time? Far from it. New skills and expertise will be essential to a system's ongoing upkeep. Ensuring that they're comfortable with a new platform is vital. At the same time, bringing in external help doesn't just provide a head start—it frees your people up to focus on what they're best at, too."





LEARNING #2:

“Managing an implementation yourself might look cost effective—but it can actually be far more expensive in the long run.”

Chris Baxendale,
Senior Associate

“The numbers speak for themselves. By 2027, Local Authorities in Wales are expected to face a funding gap of around £744 million¹. In an environment in which every penny counts, it’s only natural to start thinking about where savings could be made.

“On the surface, the implementation of a new social care system might look like a clear contender. After all, why would you pay to bring a partner in to help when you already have IT capabilities in-house? The answer to that question is simple, and it’s that managing an implementation yourself can actually end up being far more expensive than it first seems.



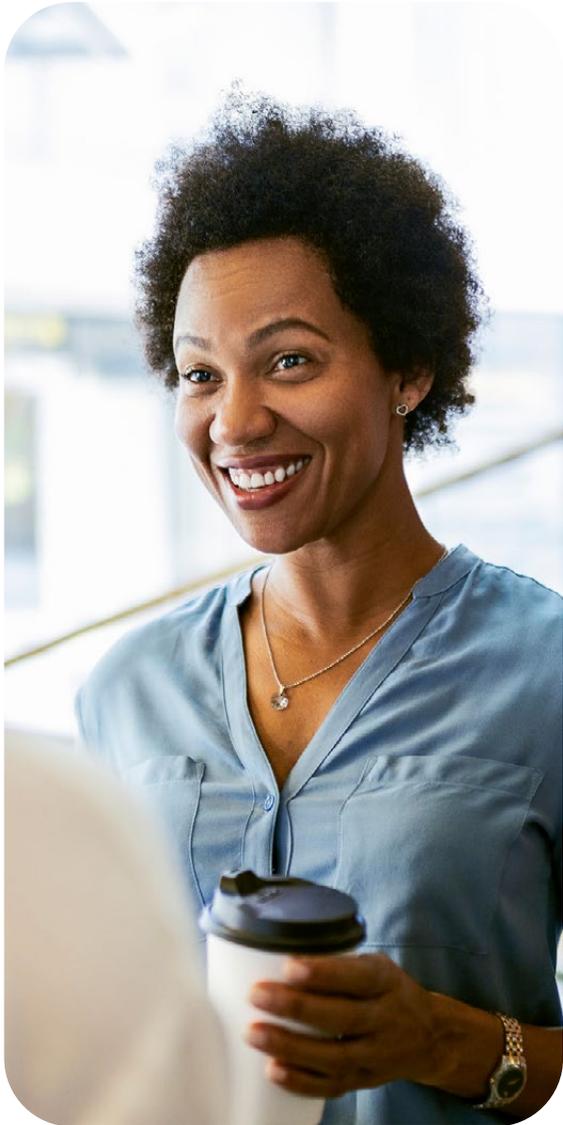


“One way in which that can manifest is in terms of the project duration and—subsequently—total project cost. It can be tempting to look at in-housing an implementation project as a cost-neutral exercise. Even if you need to bring a few contractors in to augment your existing resource, it’s easy to imagine that there’s little real cost to the organisation.

“The reality is very different. One of the main reasons that authorities choose to bring partners like BetterGov in is that we can help them deliver that much faster. Our expertise—in tandem with their knowledge—allows them to take big leaps forward when it comes to the more complex aspects of their implementation.

“That’s not always possible when managing an implementation in-house. Challenging steps like data migration and testing can easily begin to creep, meaning that the total cost of resourcing the project becomes greater. That can even happen if you bring contractors in, because it’s not uncommon for them to end up waiting on other parts of an implementation to be completed. Wasted time is wasted money.





“There’s also the risk that things don’t go to plan. Many of the social care system implementations that we’ve assisted on have been ‘recovery projects’. Often, things have gone so far awry that the only real option is to start from scratch. Even when that’s not the case, even ‘simple’ changes to the plan can result in a huge amount of unexpected cost. An additional data migration can easily reach a six figure sum for instance.

“Should authorities be exploring ways to reduce the cost of an implementation? Absolutely. Substantial savings can sometimes be made when it comes to customising a social care system, for instance. While managing things in-house might seem to be cost effective on the surface, though, it can often prove to be anything but.”



LEARNING #3:

“When it comes to a complex implementation, some things are impossible to predict without the benefit of wider experience.”

Richard Biscoe,
Delivery Director

“It’s a bit of a cliché, but that doesn’t make it any less true: ‘you don’t know what you don’t know’. You can apply that to any number of situations in life, but it has a specific relevance to the implementation of social care systems.

“Generally speaking, the implementation of a brand new care system is a relatively infrequent undertaking. Reviews may take place every few years, but it’s not uncommon for a system to remain in place for a decade or longer.





“There’s a consequence to this infrequency, and it’s that it then becomes very difficult for authorities to build up a level of retained internal knowledge. Even in organisations fortunate enough to have dedicated project teams, those people will often move into new roles in-between system implementations. As a result, it’s very unlikely that the same internal resources will be available the next time an authority needs to switch.

“Even if they were, there’s then the fact that the systems themselves will have seen significant updates during that time. While the core of what a platform delivers will remain intact, enough can change around the periphery to make implementing it a very different prospect to the last time around. We’ve seen that with the shift towards software-as-a-service (SaaS)-based systems, and we’ll see it again with the new possibilities offered by artificial intelligence (AI).





“So, even if an internal team does have experience of implementing a social care system, that experience can easily be five or more years behind what’s happening in the market today. That makes it difficult to predict how an implementation will go, because a lot of the assumptions made can be based on what happened a long time ago.



“This is where broader experience can be so useful. At BetterGov, for instance, we’re working with systems like Mosaic, Liquidlogic, and ECLIPSE on a daily basis. That keeps us up-to-date with any changes as they happen. Similarly, our work with authorities across the UK gives us a much wider perspective on the challenges that can occur during an implementation. It also means that the solutions we’ve developed are usually replicable elsewhere.

“It’ll never be possible to predict every bump along the road when it comes to an implementation. The benefit of experience, though, is that it makes it much easier to navigate them when they do pop up.”



LEARNING #4:

“An implementation programme can be an isolating experience –but it doesn’t have to be.”

Andrew Anderson,
Senior Manager (Programmes)

“You could be a CIO. You could be a project manager, or the person responsible for data migration. Whatever your role happens to be, there’ll probably come a time when you’re not quite sure about the best way forward. So who do you turn to for advice if no-one around you is sure, either?”

“Shared experiences go a long way in local government, particularly when it comes to systems implementations. While every authority is unique, there are certain commonalities that tend to unite them. Because of that, there tend to be commonalities between the systems they use, too. So even if you run up against a challenge that you’ve never faced before, there’s a good chance that someone at another authority has.”





“That’s something we learned first-hand here at BetterGov. The majority of our team members have direct experience working within local government and social care themselves. This, combined with their system experience, enables them to gain an immediate rapport with internal staff, and focus effort on specific areas of concern or improvement ensuring the engagement and implementation is as efficient and effective as possible.

“We’ve been co-producing social care systems with Local Authorities and other organisations for almost a decade now. During that time, we’ve been fortunate enough to establish close relationships with many of the people we’ve worked with—relationships that have continued even as those people have moved on to different roles.

“The benefit of that network is that it gives our new and existing customers the opportunity to talk through their challenges. If someone has a question about part of their system, for example, we’ll often be able to put them in touch with two or three other people who have direct experience of that same situation.

“That’s important, because it doesn’t just provide answers to questions. It can help people to think differently, and make decisions more effectively too. By speaking to one of their peers, our customers might find out that a certain idea they had didn’t quite pan out when it was implemented at a different authority. Alternatively, they might learn about a brand new way to approach a challenge.

“More than anything, it turns what can be an extremely isolating experience into a shared one. Because, no matter how big the challenges might be, the chances are that someone has already conquered them.”





LEARNING #5:

“A tight timescale makes implementation tougher—but it’s still important to take the time to think.”

Mark Hill,
Delivery Director

“Bringing any new platform online is challenging. But with WCCIS being phased out in 2026, Wales’s Local Authorities and health boards face two very specific issues: a hard deadline, and an undeniably tight timescale. In our own experience, it can take around 18 months to bring a new social care system online. In some cases, that can run closer to two years.

“A lot needs to happen in that time. As well as the overarching case management system, an authority will also need to build solutions for everything from financial assessments through to provider payments. Implementing just one of those things can be a complex endeavour, particularly when you consider how sensitive the underlying data is. Implementing them all at the same time—at speed—promises to be extremely challenging.





"In practice, that means two things. Firstly, authorities will need their implementation programme to be as seamless and efficient as possible. Secondly, and in service to the first point, they'll need to be able to bring in dedicated resource the moment it's needed. If you're racing towards a predetermined go-live date, you can't really afford to wait for a dedicated data migration specialist to become available on the contract market.

"All of that said, there's a big difference between a rapid system implementation and rushed one. No matter how compact the timescale might be, taking the time to stop and think is essential. In fact, with the right approach, it can even help to speed up delivery.





“At BetterGov, we’re passionate about the principles of co-production. Yes, we bring a lot of technical expertise to the table, but we also pride ourselves on our ability to help authorities find out what they really need their social care system to do.

“Going into an implementation, everyone has an idea of what they want the system to achieve. But things can also get set in stone without anyone really knowing why. That’s why it’s so important sometimes to take a (quick) step backwards and look at the ultimate objective. It might transpire that a specific choice will add three months to the timeline, for instance. If an alternative approach can deliver the same outcome faster, wouldn’t that be preferable?

“These are the kinds of things that you can only find out about by asking the right questions. And sometimes, you need an outsider’s perspective to know what those questions are.”



BETTER OUTCOMES START WITH THE RIGHT CHOICES

The decisions made in the next 12 months will shape Wales's social care sector for years to come. Making the right choices isn't just important—it's imperative. With the safety and wellbeing of tens of thousands of vulnerable children and adults at stake, there's simply no room for error when it comes to the implementation of these new systems.

While we created this eBook as a way to share some of the insights we've acquired across many implementations, it isn't intended to be a blueprint for success. As is the case in social care itself, there's no one-size-fits-all approach to social care systems. Each needs to be

designed and developed with the specific needs of its users and citizens in mind.

There is one thing that we believe applies universally, however, and that's the need for authorities and health boards to seek out specialist support in the run-up to 2026. The challenges that will define the year ahead may be daunting, but they don't have to, and shouldn't, be faced alone.





BETTERGOV

Your social care system implementation specialists

Founded in February 2016, BetterGov is built on a singular belief: that better social care systems deliver better outcomes for vulnerable citizens.

WITH BETTERGOV, YOU GET...



Partners that prioritise co-production. We combine our technical expertise with your knowledge and experience, working with you—not around you.



Technical excellence and true understanding. More than three-quarters of our current team have direct social and healthcare experience.



Trusted delivery in tight timescales. We pride ourselves on helping our customers to achieve excellence—even in the tightest of timescales.



In addition to systems implementations, BetterGov also specialises in data and analytics, modernisation, capability development, information security, digital services, and technology consulting.

We work exclusively with public services organisations.

Find out more at visit bettergov.co.uk

or email matt@bettergov.co.uk or marc@bettergov.co.uk