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Social Care **Wales**

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The digital potential tool

An insight into the digital maturity and literacy of social care in Wales.

Prepared by
Basis.
changing the change

Part-funded by
CLlLC
WLGA

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Social Care **Wales**

Social Care Wales is responsible for regulating and developing the social care workforce in Wales, as well as setting priorities for research, supporting innovation and gathering data. It is funded by the Welsh Government and was established in 2017.

socialcare.wales

CLlLC
WLGA

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents all 22 local authorities in Wales. It promotes local democracy, supports improvement, and champions councils' role in delivering essential services. In social care, the WLGA works with partners to influence policy, strengthen the workforce, and support better outcomes for people and communities. This work was part-funded by the WLGA.

wlga.wales

Basis.
Changing the Change

Basis exists to help people and communities thrive. They help public sector organisations make progress on messy problems using user-centred and agile approaches. Commissioned by Social Care Wales, they worked alongside the sector to co-create a tool that supports learning, action, and better outcomes for the social care workforce in Wales.

basis.co.uk

dxw.

dxw works with public and third-sector organisations to design and build digital services that improve lives. As a delivery partner on this project, dxw supported the development of the assessment tool, bringing technical expertise, service design thinking, and a commitment to building things that work for real people.

dxw.com

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Thank you to the Social Care Wales workforce development leads for your enthusiasm, support and input.

Thank you to our 1,200 users for helping us build a digitally ready workforce.

Foreword

Across social care in Wales, people are working hard to deliver high-quality, person-centred support in increasingly complex and demanding environments.

As services continue to evolve, so too does the need for digital skills and confidence. Not as an added extra, but as a central part of how care is planned, delivered and improved.

To build digital confidence and skills across the workforce, we need to understand what's already in place, what's getting in the way, and where support is most needed.

This isn't just about technology, it's about people.

We've worked closely with social care in Wales at every stage to make sure the digital potential tool is grounded in real experiences. It's been shaped by the voices of those who use it – from paper-based organisations just beginning their digital journey, to providers already exploring the potential of artificial intelligence. We're grateful to everyone who took part in the pilot group, shared feedback and helped us refine the tool into something that's inclusive, supportive and built for the reality of social care in Wales.

This report brings together what we've learned so far. It shows us where social care is today and where more support is needed. It also highlights the commitment, enthusiasm and creativity being shown across the workforce. That gives us confidence for the future.

Our ambition is that the digital potential tool becomes more than just an assessment. It's a starting point for long-term development and something that can evolve and continue to provide insight, support and guidance.

Thank you to everyone who made this work possible. To the pilot group, who gave their time, insight and challenge. To the people and organisations who took part in show-and-tell sessions, shared their experiences, and helped shape the tool. And to everyone across social care in Wales, whose openness, energy and commitment have guided this work from the start.

Lisa Trigg

Director of Improvement and Development at Social Care Wales

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Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the baseline of digital maturity and literacy across social care in Wales, based on responses from 1,200 individuals representing 295 organisations between January and March 2025.

Key findings

Workforce digital skills and capabilities

- High confidence in basic digital literacy (92 to 95 per cent of staff feel confident with fundamental tasks like going online and searching for information).
- Strong capability in using technology for person-centred care, with 58 per cent feeling very confident supporting people with everyday digital tools.
- Notable gaps in workplace-specific digital tools, technical problem-solving, and AI understanding (41 per cent report low or no confidence with AI tools).

Technology access and infrastructure

- Most respondents (87 per cent) report having the technology equipment they need, but access varies between public sector providers and private and third-sector providers.
- Significant differences in system integration, with only 35 per cent of IT representatives strongly agreeing their systems share information effectively.
- Strong cybersecurity awareness, with 88 per cent of organisations implementing adequate protection measures.

AI adoption and digital innovation

- Current AI usage is at an early stage, with 39 per cent of respondents never using AI tools.
- Main barriers include lack of skills or knowledge (31 per cent), insufficient training (31 per cent), and limited time to learn (26 per cent).
- Private and third-sector organisations show higher rates of AI adoption than local authorities.

Orgnisational digital culture and leadership

- 80 per cent of staff believe their leaders understand and champion digital technology.
- Local authority leaders express lower confidence in digital leadership skills compared to private or third-sector counterparts.
- 69 per cent of organisations have integrated digital into their strategy, but capability to put those digital aspects into practice varies.

Key recommendations

1. Develop a digitally ready workforce
    - Create a 'what good looks like' framework for digital maturity and literacy.
    - Create a digital capability framework.
    - Develop a targeted digital skills development programme that builds on existing resources and learning opportunities.
    - Build a community-led approach through national communities of practice.

2. Strengthen digital leadership and governance
    - Provide specialised digital leadership training, particularly for local authorities.
    - Improve communication about digital strategy and priorities within social care organisations.
    - Develop clear guidance on possible uses for AI in social care.

3. Focus on long-term sustainability
    - Maintain and evolve the digital potential tool.
    - Strengthen procurement confidence and capability for buying digital technologies.
    - Make sure cross-sector collaboration continues.

This report brings together what we've learned about digital maturity across social care in Wales. It shows where social care is today and where more support is needed. It also highlights the commitment, enthusiasm and creativity being shown across the workforce.

Our ambition is that the digital potential tool becomes more than just an assessment - it's a starting point for long-term development and something that can evolve to provide ongoing insight, support and guidance for social care in Wales.

1. Background and context

The role of technology in social care

Social care is evolving, and technology is playing an important role in enhancing services, supporting staff and improving the experiences of people who use care and support. Being able to confidently and effectively use digital tools, such as equipment, software or apps related to work, can improve care quality, enhance decision-making and create more efficient ways of working. But simply having access to technology isn't enough. It's about embedding it in ways that make a real difference to people's lives and work.

The health and social care workforce strategy [1] has a bold ambition for 2030. To build a workforce with strong digital and technological skills, who use those skills to improve the way they work. This will help deliver better outcomes for people who use care and support and strengthen public confidence in social care in Wales. Achieving this vision means making sure that social care professionals have the digital skills, confidence and opportunities to use technology in their daily work.

Digital maturity is an organisation's ability to integrate digital processes, operations and people to improve efficiency, adaptability and service quality[2]. For example, having established digital training practices and well-designed digital systems which are used by staff.

The more 'digitally mature' an organisation is, the more ready and able it's likely to be to use technology for the benefit of the organisation, its staff and the people it supports.

Being more digitally mature also means an organisation is more likely to be able to use technology to:

- make day-to-day processes smoother, such as care planning, record-keeping, and shift management, giving staff more time to focus on people
- strengthen decision-making, by making information more accessible, accurate and up to date
- save time and resources, by reducing duplicated work and helping teams to work more efficiently across services and settings
- improve practice and care quality by using new tools to communicate with families or tailoring care with the help of assistive technology.

1. Workforce strategy for health and social care: https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/Workforce-strategy-ENG-March-2021.pdf
2. Williams, C., Asi, Y., Raffenaud, A., Bagwell, M. and Zeini, I. (2020) 'Digital Maturity: Definition and Model', Research Gate.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341350730_Digital_Maturity_Definition_and_Model

Why the digital potential tool was developed

An action of the workforce strategy was to understand where social care in Wales currently stands in terms of its digital maturity, skills and confidence, and what support is needed to empower the workforce and organisations to develop their digital confidence.

The need for an assessment came from research commissioned by Social Care Wales and conducted by Basis, which identified key barriers to using digital technologies in social care. These included workforce skill gaps, inconsistent access to digital tools, and a lack of coordinated support for digital transformation.

These findings reinforced the priorities set out in the Health and social care workforce strategy, which outlines a vision for a digitally ready workforce, and one that can use technology to improve care, support staff and strengthen services across Wales. It also aligns with the Ymlaen[3] strategy's actions for research, innovation and improvement in social care, particularly those focused on building digital capabilities across Wales.

While various digital assessment tools exist across UK health and public services, the digital potential tool represents a new approach specifically designed for social care in Wales. Drawing on good practices, it not only highlights a person or organisation's current capabilities but also provides opportunities to foster collaboration. It provides the workforce and organisations with useful resources and guidance to help them build digital confidence and make lasting improvements. The digital potential tool is freely available for providers in social care in Wales and can help them understand their digital maturity and literacy journey over time.

3. Social Care Wales' Ymlaen Strategy: https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/Ymlaen-strategy.pdf

2. Purpose of the report

This report summarises key findings that have been generated from the digital potential tool responses from 9 January to 14 March 2025. It provides a baseline for understanding the current levels of digital maturity, skills and confidence of social care in Wales, and helps us understand what needs to happen next.

We'll do this by highlighting key strengths, identifying gaps and pointing out areas where more support is needed. We hope these insights will inform investment decisions and policy across many infrastructure organisations throughout social care in Wales, making sure that the benefits extend to the wider health and social care community.

Increasing digital skills across social care in Wales needs interest and investment across all levels of the 'system'. Because of this, findings and recommendations presented in this report will be based on insights across three different levels - individual, organisational and national, where data from individuals and organisations is analysed to draw conclusions at the national level.

Individual

The digital potential tool asks individuals to self-assess their digital skills and capabilities. It then gives them access to their results and signposts them to useful resources that help them become more confident in using technology in their roles. Capturing individual baseline data helped us understand the digital literacy of the wider workforce and has informed the insights and recommendations in this report.

Organisational

For organisations, the tool provides insights that inform their roadmap towards improved digital maturity. The tool presents organisations with their average scores across key areas and offers resources to support their digital transformation[4] journey.

The score helps them to track progress, identify training needs and provides the information needed to inform strategic plans for digital transformation.

4. Digital Transformation: A change in how organisations across social care in Wales work and think, focusing on finding digital solutions to problems and improving efficiency

The signposted resources are selected for the organisation based on their average scores, offering targeted support and raising awareness of what's available to them to help them progress on their digital maturity journey.

The ability to assess and reassess over time makes sure that the digital potential tool isn't just a one-off exercise, but a tool to be used on a journey of continuous learning and improvement.

Capturing an organisational snapshot helps us understand the digital maturity of organisations across social care in Wales and has informed the insights and recommendations in this report.

National

Collectively, data captured through the digital potential tool gives us valuable insights that will help shape long-term strategies for digital inclusion, workforce development and nationwide innovation.

Gathering real-time data with the tool gives us a clearer picture of where support is needed most (both across different parts of the system and different areas of digital capability), making sure that efforts to improve digital confidence are targeted and effective.

By working together, we can shape a future for social care in Wales where technology is used confidently and effectively - aligning with Ymlaen's vision that "people leading, developing and delivering social care feel confident, supported and inspired to use evidence and innovation to make a positive difference to care and support in Wales". It also aligns with the Workforce Strategy's ambition of "the digital and technological capabilities of the workforce being well developed and in widespread use to optimise the way we work, to help us deliver the best possible care for people". Our goal is not just to streamline processes, but to enhance care, support staff and improve outcomes for the people who rely on social care services.

Through this shared commitment, individuals, organisations and policymakers can work together "to make the most of technology and digital developments to support strengths-based social care", as outlined in the Ymlaen Strategy. This collaborative approach helps us make sure that every part of social care in Wales can make the most of digital opportunities.

Figure 1 shows how the tool collects this information across the 3 different levels:

Figure 1: How the digital potential tool provides insights to social care in Wales on three different levels

3. Principles that guided our work

Empowerment

We focused on enabling growth, learning and building digital confidence across social care.

Inclusivity

We made sure the tool was accessible to all, regardless of size, location or digital confidence.

Collaboration

We built the tool with providers, using feedback and continuous learning to shape it at every stage.

Data protection

All data is stored securely, with privacy and ethical practice embedded from the beginning.

Flexibility

The tool is suitable for any provider. Whether you're digital-first or just starting out, it works for your context.

Inclusivity

Reaching all of social care in Wales

From the start, we wanted to make sure the tool was accessible to all social care providers in Wales, regardless of size, type or location.

To achieve this, we worked closely with organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and Care Forum Wales, as well as all local authorities. We encouraged engagement with the project and the tool through regional roadshows, support sessions and by contacting people directly, making taking part as straightforward as possible.

A key priority was making sure the tool was accessible, and that we considered accessibility for all aspects of development. The tool was built bilingually from the beginning, allowing users to engage in either Welsh or English, which sets it apart from off-the-shelf alternatives. We also included accessibility features to accommodate various needs, ensuring compatibility with screen readers and using appropriate text sizes to support users with different visual requirements.

We also focused on making sure that workers who are less digitally confident weren't left behind. We introduced 'digital champions' by encouraging people with stronger digital skills to support colleagues to use the tool. The pilot group included organisations that relied mainly on paper-based processes, which helped make sure the tool and our approach were suitable for their needs and helped capture a true picture of digital maturity across social care in Wales.

Collaborative approach

A process led by social care in Wales

Collaboration was at the heart of this project. Rather than asking people to use a pre-designed tool, we worked alongside those delivering and supporting care in Wales to shape it. Our pilot group of 12 providers played an important role, giving us feedback on language, accessibility and functionality to make sure it was fit for purpose.

To make this process responsive to real-world needs, we used Agile methodologies. This means we worked in short, focused cycles to refine the tool based on feedback from pilot sessions, workshops and user testing. This approach made sure that the final assessment evolved to meet the needs of social care professionals.

Our 11 show-and-tell workshops, which were attended by 91 participants from over 45 organisations, created a space for ongoing feedback, shared learning and continuous improvement. This approach made sure the assessment was a practical resource designed by and for social care professionals.

Flexibility

Adapting to Wales' diverse social care landscape

We recognised that social care providers work in a variety of different environments, from small independent organisations to large local authorities. To make sure the assessment was relevant to all, we built in flexibility. This allowed people to skip sections that weren't relevant to them and only respond to the questions that applied to their role.

This approach made sure every provider could take part and get valuable insights, whether they were already working with digital technology or still using mainly paper-based processes.

Empowerment

Supporting action, not just measurement

This tool was designed to do more than capture a snapshot of digital maturity and literacy. It's a tool to help people and organisations achieve their digital potential.

Rather than a one-off evaluation, it gives people and organisations a foundation on which to carry on building their digital skills. It helps providers move from understanding where they are on their digital journey to taking meaningful steps forward.

We give providers the understanding, knowledge and resources they need to help embed digital practices that enhance care and improve efficiency. The focus is on action, not just assessment. This is to make sure digital maturity and literacy translates into real improvements for professionals and the people they support.

Data protection and ethical research

Protecting data privacy and ethical research practices was important to us throughout the project. From the beginning, we made sure that all data collected through the assessment was anonymised at the individual level and securely stored in Social Care Wales's internal digital systems.

The tool does keep some organisational identifiers, which allow us to give organisations insights into their own workforce's digital maturity and literacy. They also allow us to compare results across different types of providers, such as local authorities and private organisations. This approach helps us analyse patterns across social care in Wales while still protecting individual privacy.

By using robust security measures and keeping all data in Social Care Wales's secure digital systems, we make sure organisations can use the tool with confidence, knowing their information is protected and used only to support digital development in social care.

4. Our approach and how we worked

Our approach was shaped by a diverse group of participants, making sure the tool reflected real-world experiences across social care in Wales. We worked with:

- social care providers from different service types, including residential care, domiciliary care and support services
- local authorities and key organisations, who helped us reach providers and refine the tool
- digital champions, who played a role in supporting staff with lower levels of digital confidence
- a wide range of frontline workers, making sure the tool captured workforce perspectives.

We also worked closely with the Welsh Government, regulators and workforce development leads, making sure the findings could inform their long-term workforce and digital strategy.

This included key strategic frameworks such as the Digital and data strategy for health and social care in Wales[5] and the Social care workforce delivery plan, which emphasise the importance of digital skills development and infrastructure improvements. It also included 'Ymlaen', Social Care Wales's research, innovation and improvement strategy, which highlights the role of digital technology in driving innovation.

Our tool was designed to support these strategies by providing an evidence base for targeted interventions and measuring progress against strategic objectives.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusion

We tried to involve as many organisations as possible, both in the development of the tool and in completing the assessment. We also wanted to create accessible opportunities for everyone to take part, regardless of their organisation's size, resources or digital expertise.

5. Welsh Government's Digital and Data Strategy: https://www.gov.wales/digital-and-data-strategy-health-and-social-care-wales

How we developed the digital potential tool

We built the tool in two key phases:

Phase one focused on listening to voices across social care in Wales

We engaged with 97 service providers and eight national organisations, such as the Welsh Local Government Association, Care Inspectorate Wales and Care Forum Wales, to understand their needs, challenges and expectations. This helped shape the structure, language and focus of the tool.

How we identified the key pillars of the tool

Through this comprehensive discovery process, we identified three key pillars that form the foundation of our digital potential tool:

1. Digital skills and capabilities

Understanding the skills and capabilities of social care staff was consistently identified as the highest priority during our stakeholder interviews. As one workforce development lead for a local authority emphasised, organisations needed the tool to 'provide us with a skills analysis of the workforce and what training is needed'.

This focus aligns with both the health and social care workforce strategy theme of building a digitally ready workforce. The digital potential tool will help us understand the digital skills and capabilities of the social care workforce. For the health workforce, this intelligence is captured through Health Education and Improvement Wales's Digital Capability Framework[6].

2. Digital strategy and leadership

Senior stakeholders highlighted the need to develop higher levels of awareness around digital benefits among leadership teams. Our workshops with social care workforce development leads revealed varying levels of digital confidence across Wales. Some local authorities were establishing cultures of digital transformation, while others weren't prioritising this way of working.

Infrastructure organisations such as WLGA and ADSS Cymru emphasised that commitment from leadership is essential to make the most of digital initiatives.

6. HEIW Digital capability framework: https://heiw.nhs.wales/our-work/digital-capability-framework/

3. IT and infrastructure

During our discovery research, we identified significant differences in digital infrastructure and tools across social care in Wales. Organisations highlighted the need to understand if their basic digital infrastructure is fit for purpose. From our provider survey, we learned that many organisations want to know how to better allocate investment to support digital development. This pillar helps service providers understand the specific infrastructure improvements needed to support their digital transformation journey.

Phase two involved developing and sharing the tool

With these three pillars in mind, we tested and refined the tool with a pilot group of 12 providers, over the course of 10 pilot sessions. We gathered feedback on the tool's usability, accessibility and relevance. We also ran 11 show-and-tell sessions, which allowed a wider group of 91 participants from 45 organisations to see the tool in action and share their thoughts.

During phase two, working with a digital maturity and literacy subject matter expert and drawing on our research into existing models from phase one, we developed the three pillars into more detailed sections with specific question sets:

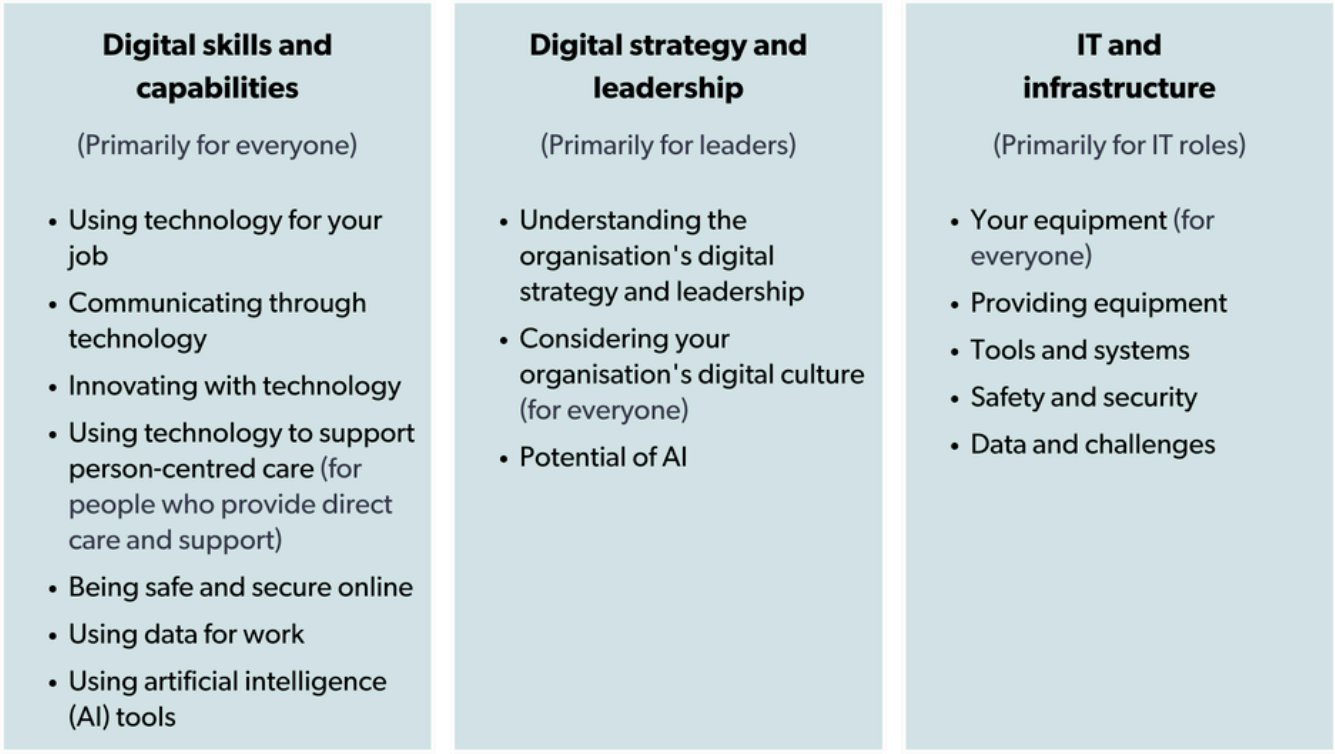


Figure 2: Three pillars of the digital potential tool and the sub-categories

We drafted initial question sets for these sections and tested them with our pilot group and steering group. During testing, we captured feedback to improve terminology, clarity and make sure plain language was used throughout. The steering group provided additional expertise by sharing the questions with survey development specialists from the North Wales Regional Innovation Coordination Hub[7].

We took a trio writing[8] approach to create a fully bilingual question set, taking care with how questions were phrased in both Welsh and English for consistency and clarity across languages. Basis, dxw, Crocstar and Natural Resources Wales developed this approach to writing bilingual content. The Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) has since piloted and scaled this approach with public sector organisations in Wales.

Our collaborative approach

To make sure we developed a tool that was useful, easy to use and beneficial to people working in social care in Wales, we focused on collaboration to co-create it. We used different methods and channels to get feedback and shape how we captured responses and shared the results.

These included:

- pilot group collaboration – public sector, private sector and third-sector social care organisations worked with us to test early versions of the tool, giving feedback on its clarity, usability and effectiveness. These organisations provided a range of services across Wales, such as domiciliary care and residential care homes for adults and children, and helped us make sure it was relevant to their day-to-day work.

- show-and-tell sessions - these sessions allowed for open discussions, which helped us improve the tool based on real-world experiences and input from people across social care in Wales.

Throughout the development of the tool, we made a particular effort to include organisations at the very start of their digital journey, including those who were still mainly using paper-based systems. This made sure the tool would be relevant to all organisations, no matter how digitally mature they were.

7. https://www.northwalescollaborative.wales/
8. Trio writing is a collaborative approach to developing bilingual content. It involves three people working together: a subject matter expert (or user researcher), a content specialist, and a translator. The goal is to create content in two languages simultaneously. Pair and trio writing for GOV.WALES | GOV.WALES

By the end of the development, we had a tool that used Microsoft Forms to capture information and a results portal where individuals and organisations could see their overall results. Based on these results, they were signposted to the resources that were most useful to them to help them build their digital skills and confidence. To learn more about how the tool works, you can find our guide in appendix three.

Supporting social care in Wales to use the tool

To help individuals and organisations across Wales use the tool confidently, we:

- ran bilingual training and support sessions to help organisations understand how to use the tool and access the resources
- attended registered managers' forums and the employer support roadshow, as well as other social care events, offering on-the-spot support to help people complete the tool on the day
- shared bilingual communication packs that gave organisations information about the tool that they could share with staff
- encouraged peer support through digital champions, helping staff with lower confidence levels to use the tool
- offered people the opportunity to use the tool over the phone if they weren't digitally confident, rather than creating paper copies. This allowed us to directly input responses into the digital system so that organisations could see the live data, while still supporting those who weren't confident using digital tools themselves.

This comprehensive support approach was an important part of making sure as many people as possible across social care in Wales could take part, regardless of digital confidence or resources. This approach meant we were able to gather data that truly reflects the digital landscape of social care in Wales.

Engagement with the tool

Between 9 January and 14 March 2025, 1,200 people from across social care in Wales used the digital potential tool.

The tool was used by people in many different jobs. Figure 3 breaks down users according to their job roles:

Job role	Number of responses
Adult care home staff	302
Domiciliary care staff	200
Residential childcare staff	53
Social workers	117
Responsible individuals	15
Senior managers	41
IT role only	15

Figure 3: Table breaking down users according to their job roles

307 people were from other groups, such as other social care roles, other social care management roles, and workforce development roles.

People from **295 different organisations** used this tool during this time.

These organisations provide **858 different services** across Wales.

They're made up of a range of organisations from the **public sector** (government-run organisations like local authorities), **private sector** (for-profit businesses providing care services) and **third-sector** (charities and not-for-profit groups).

We're particularly proud of the fact that staff from all 22 local authorities in Wales used the tool.

The tool has been widely used, giving us enough responses overall to draw conclusions about the social care workforce in Wales. But only 31 out of the 295 organisations who used the tool had enough of their staff members take part to give us a reliable picture of those specific organisations on their own. These 31 organisations provide 188 different services across Wales, including care homes for adults and children, home care services and adult placement services. Of these services, 37 per cent offer services in Welsh or in both Welsh and English.

When looking at organisation-level digital maturity, we've focused our analysis on these 31 organisations that had sufficient response rates to give us reliable insights about the organisation. However, we've used all 1,200 individual responses to understand digital literacy and skills at the workforce level. As only a sample of people from social care in Wales have used the tool, we need to be careful about how we interpret the results.

To help with this, we used something called '95 per cent confidence intervals' for each question. This is simply a way of showing how sure we can be about our findings. For example, if we say that 70 per cent of people feel confident using digital tools, with a confidence interval of plus or minus 5 per cent, it means the true figure for everyone in social care is likely between 65 and 75 per cent. When these ranges are narrow, we can be more certain about what the results tell us. When they're wider, we need to be more cautious about drawing firm conclusions. We've taken this into account throughout our report to make sure we're giving you reliable information about digital confidence across Wales. This approach allows us to draw conclusions about both individual digital capabilities and organisational patterns, making the most of all data collected.

It's worth noting that the digital potential tool is freely available from Social Care Wales, and our intention is that it remains open for people to use going forward. As more people and organisations use the tool, we'll get better and clearer insights. This is the first time this kind of assessment has been done in Wales, creating a starting point that will become more useful over time.

The tool gives organisations a way to see if their digital improvements are working. It could also be an indicator to help policy makers and supporting organisations measure and evidence the impact of their work and investments across social care in Wales.

As more people use it, the information becomes more valuable, which is why we're careful with the data and open about how we use it as we learn more about digital skills across Wales.

Data analysis and findings

Our assessment was structured around three key pillars: digital skills and capabilities, digital strategy and leadership, and IT and infrastructure. For each pillar, we used a measurement approach focused on perceptions and self-assessment.

Measuring digital skills and capabilities

To understand workforce digital literacy, we measured individuals' self-reported skills and confidence across different digital tasks.

We asked people to rate themselves with questions like:

- 'How would you rate your skills and confidence to…'
- 'How confident are you when…'
- 'How would you rate your confidence to…'

Measuring organisational digital maturity

For understanding organisation-level digital maturity, we relied on equally subjective questions, such as:

- 'To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your organisation…'
- 'To what extent do you agree that…'
- 'To what extent do you make sure that…'
- 'How digitally capable do you think your organisation is?'

Why we took this approach

We intentionally took this subjective approach because research shows that a person's perception of their own capabilities often determines whether they'll engage with digital tools, regardless of their actual technical proficiency (Bandura, 1997; Venkatesh et al.,2003)[9].

Digital confidence directly influences adoption and use, and subjective assessments reveal how people experience technology in their daily work.

9. Bandura, A. (1997) Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1997-08589-000 Venkatesh, V., Morris, M.G., Davis, G.B. and Davis, F.D. (2003) 'User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view': https://misq.org/user-acceptance-of-information-technology-toward-a-unified-view.html

It's important to recognise that our findings reflect people's perceptions, which can be influenced by several factors, such as:

- different awareness levels - some respondents might not fully understand what 'good' looks like in digital skills or organisational capability, leading them to over or underestimate in their responses
- personal confidence - some might underestimate their abilities due to modesty or lack of confidence, while others might overestimate them
- role-based perspective - respondents' views of their organisation's digital capability are gained through their specific role and experiences

While this subjectivity might be seen as a limitation in traditional assessment approaches, we view it as a strength. It captures the human experience of digital transformation that ultimately determines its success in social care settings.

To analyse the findings, we've focused on three main approaches:

- summarising key trends in digital skills and capabilities, IT and infrastructure, digital strategy and leadership, and AI use
- comparing digital confidence, workforce readiness and infrastructure across different job roles and sectors
- spotting patterns and gaps that show where digital maturity differs and where targeted support might help.

These initial insights connect directly to the key pillars we identified in our discovery work: digital skills and capabilities, digital strategy and infrastructure, and IT and infrastructure.

5. Key findings

What follows is a breakdown of the key findings from the digital potential tool based on responses from 9 January to 14 March 2025.

The following sections summarise the key themes, which are:

- workforce digital skills and capabilities
- technology access and infrastructure
- AI adoption and digital innovation
- organisational digital culture and leadership
- organisational digital maturity patterns

5.1 Workforce digital skills and capabilities

5.1.1 Key digital strengths across the workforce

Key findings:

- There are high levels of basic digital literacy, with over 90 per cent confident in fundamental tasks like going online (92 per cent), searching for information (95 per cent), and joining virtual meetings (93 per cent).
- Most staff (77 per cent) show 'strong' or 'good' confidence in recognising when technology isn't the best solution and offering alternatives.
- 78 per cent of respondents are confident learning new digital tools, and 75 per cent feel confident encouraging colleagues to use technology.
- 96 per cent of staff feel at least ‘somewhat’ confident in keeping systems, devices and data safe at work.

Key takeaways:

- The high level of basic digital literacy provides a strong foundation for digital transformation across social care in Wales.
- There's a positive learning culture, creating a supportive environment for digital skills development and knowledge sharing.
- Staff take a thoughtful approach to technology, considering when it's appropriate and when alternatives might be better.
- The confidence in finding information online suggests strong information literacy, which is valuable for staying up to date with changing requirements.

Basic digital literacy

Our analysis found high levels of basic digital skills across the social care workforce in Wales. Most respondents feel confident with fundamental digital tasks, such as going online (92 per cent), searching for information (95 per cent) and joining virtual meetings (93 per cent). Figure 4 below shows the overall responses to questions in the section 'using technology for your work'.

Figure 4: How would you rate your skills and confidence to...

	Access and use your email effectively. (n = 1198)	Go online using a computer or another device. (n = 1181)	Use the internet to find information. (n = 1185)
Strong	72 %	69 %	75 %
Good	23 %	22 %	20 %
Basic	5 %	7 %	4 %
Unable to do this	0.1 %	1 %	0.3 %
Not sure	0.1 %	0.3 %	0.1%
Not applicable	0.4 %	0 %	0.3 %

This widespread basic digital literacy is significant because it provides a strong foundation for digital transformation across social care in Wales. Organisations can build on these existing skills rather than starting from scratch, which could make it easier to adopt new tools and systems quicker.

The high confidence in finding information online (95 per cent) suggests that staff have developed strong information literacy. This capability is especially valuable in social care, where staying up to date with evolving legislation, safeguarding requirements and best practices is essential for delivering quality, person-centred care.

Across key areas such as basic digital literacy (for example, going online, searching for information, joining virtual meetings), confidence intervals were narrow, typically within ±0.1 to ±0.2 points on the Likert scale[10]. This shows a strong consistency in responses and suggests that the findings are more reliable.

10. A Likert scale is a simple rating system that measures people's attitudes or opinions. It typically uses a 5-point scale where people select their level of agreement with a statement. (Rensis Likert | Management Theory, Leadership Styles & Organizational Development | Britannica)

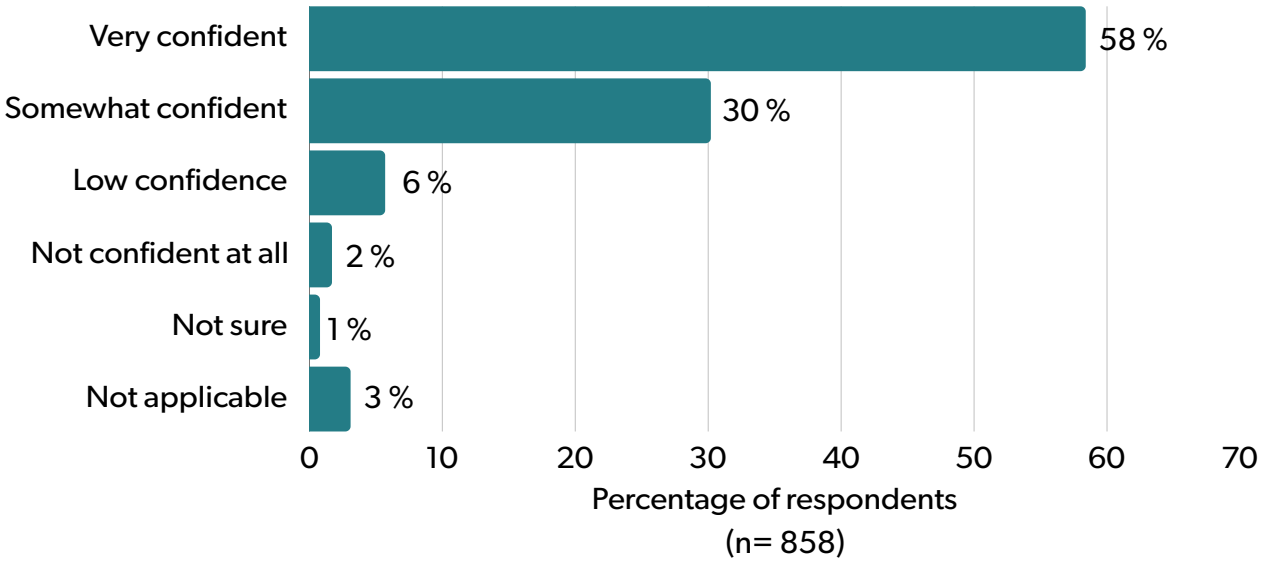
We can be confident that high levels of digital confidence in these areas reflect the wider social care workforce in Wales, providing a strong foundation for ongoing digital development.

Using technology to support person-centred care

Staff who provide direct care and support to people reported high confidence in helping the people they support to use everyday digital tools such as mobile phones, video calls and social media. This is an example of the digital skills staff are already using to enhance the delivery of care.

Figure 5 below shows staff's confidence to support people setting up and using everyday digital tools such as mobile phones for communication or social activities. As the graph illustrates, the majority of respondents were either 'somewhat' confident (30 per cent) or 'very' confident (58 per cent) using everyday digital tools.

Figure 5: How would you rate your confidence to support people setting up and using everyday digital tools such as mobile phones for communication or social activities?



We also asked staff if they can identify appropriate types of technology to deliver person-centred care. Most staff (64 per cent) said they could identify appropriate technology (for example, Telecare) to support people's independence, safety or well-being. Similarly, figure 6 on the next page shows that two thirds (67 per cent) feel confident including and reviewing technology in care plans.

Figure 6: How would you rate your skills and confidence to include and review the use of technology in a person's care plan, making sure it meets their agreed outcomes?

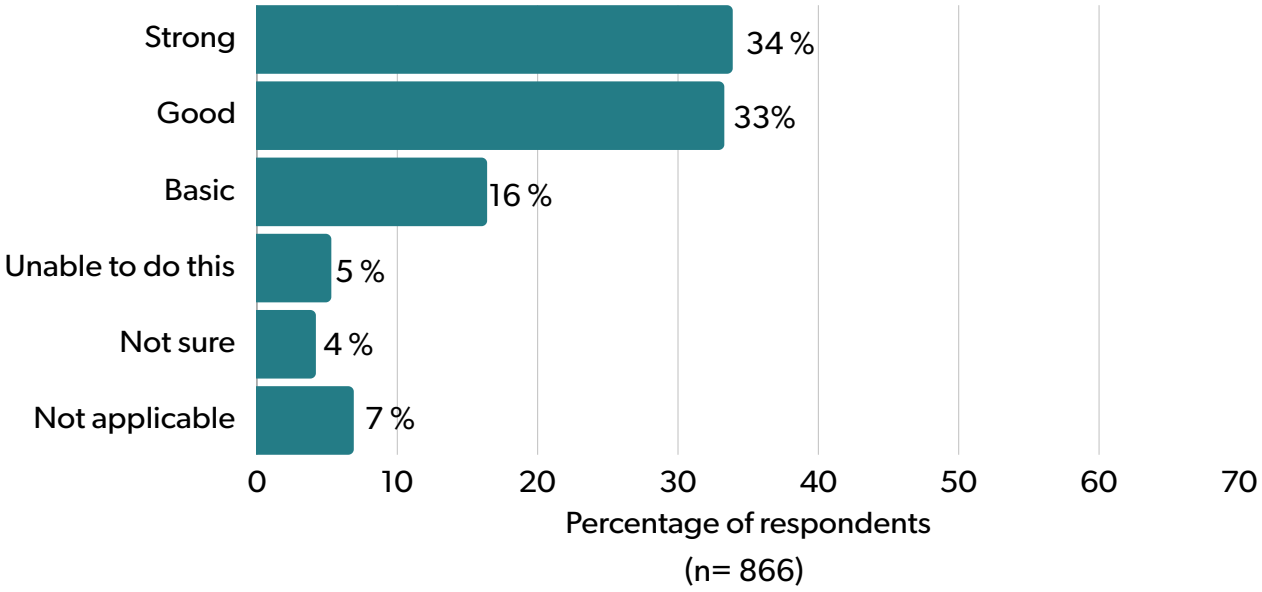
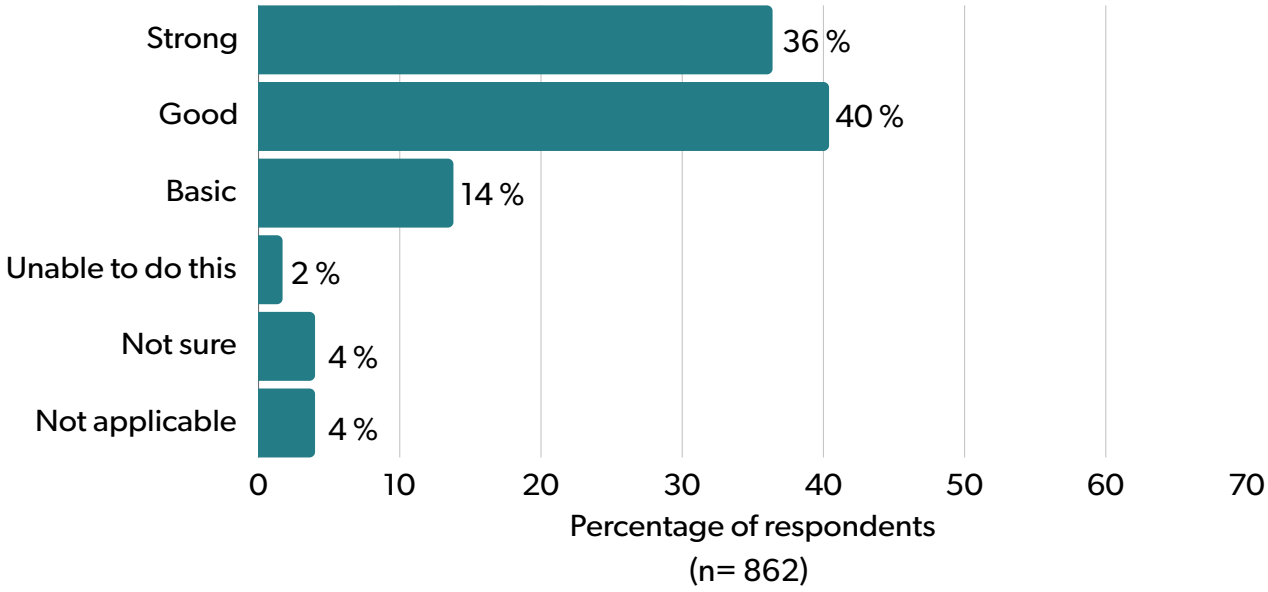


Figure 7 shows that staff feel confident when deciding if technology is right for someone's needs, with 76 per cent reporting ‘strong’ or ‘good’ confidence in recognising when technology isn't the best solution and offering alternatives.

This is the highest level of confidence reported across all of the person-centred care technology questions we asked. It suggests staff take a thoughtful approach that considers the role technology can play, but that doesn’t restrict them from offering different options when appropriate. For example, they might suggest a simple phone call instead of a complex video conferencing app, or recommend face-to-face visits rather than any digital communication, for someone who finds technology confusing.

Figure 7: How would you rate your skills and confidence to recognise when technology is not appropriate or preferred and offer different options?



Staff generally feel confident accessing and contributing to digital social care records, with 75 per cent reporting either 'good' (54 per cent) or 'strong' (21 per cent) confidence. When comparing sectors, staff in private and third-sector organisations are 29 per cent more likely to report 'good' or 'strong' confidence than those in local authorities. Among local authority respondents, 33 per cent reported not being able to use digital social care records, which is much higher than the five per cent reported by private and third-sector.

This difference might be due to local authorities often using more complex, integrated systems which need more technical knowledge. It's also worth noting that these figures likely reflect skill gaps or confidence issues, rather than lack of access. This is because respondents had the option to select 'not applicable' if they had no access to digital social care records.

When looking at people's confidence to support people setting up and using Telecare or Telehealth, 66 per cent felt 'somewhat' confident or 'very' confident. Again, private and third-sector respondents reported more confidence, with 34 per cent saying they were 'very' confident, compared to 11 per cent of local authority representatives. The difference was minimal for the 'somewhat' category, which was 32 per cent for private and third-sector respondents and 28 per cent for local authorities. Local authority respondents were 13 per cent more likely to report 'low' or 'no confidence' when compared to the private and third-sector.

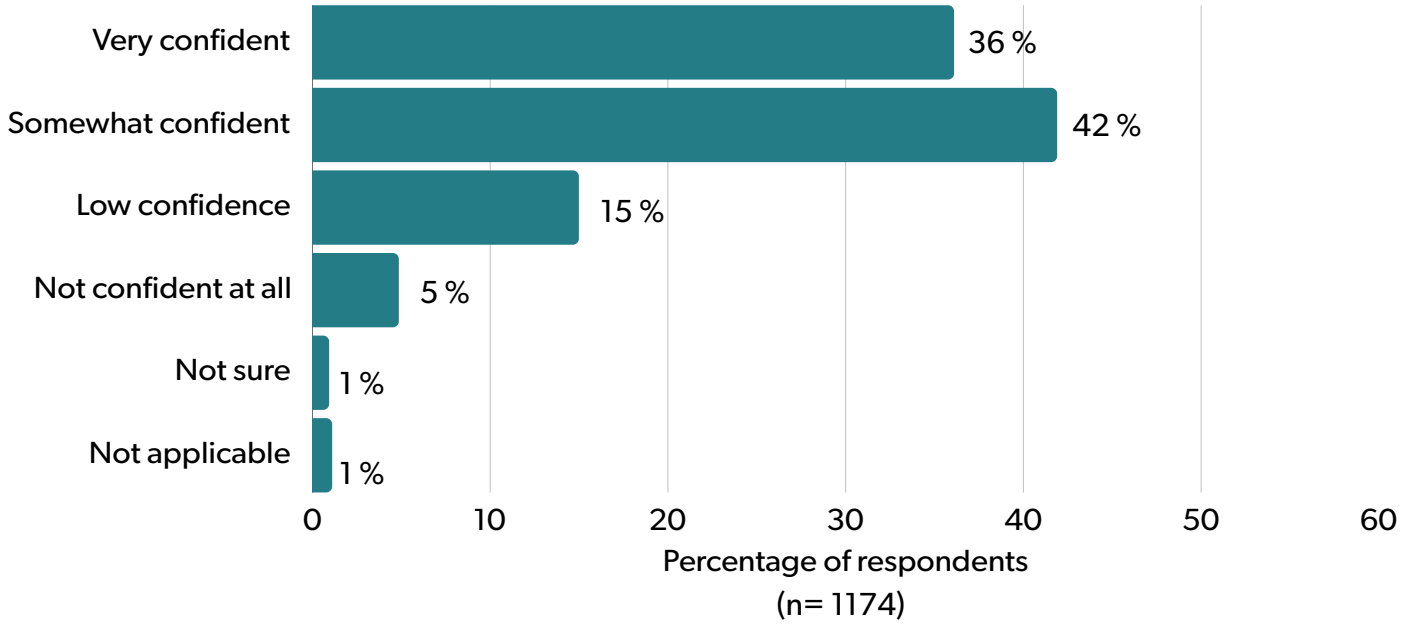
For most questions related to the use of everyday digital tools and access to digital social care records, confidence intervals were narrow (less than ±0.10), indicating highly reliable findings.

Findings related to newer or specialised technologies, such as Telecare and assistive well-being technology, showed slightly wider confidence intervals (approaching ±0.20), suggesting greater variability in staff confidence in these emerging areas.

Learning and peer support within organisations

There's a desire and confidence to learn new digital skills across most roles and provider types, with 78 per cent of respondents sharing that they're confident learning how to use new digital tools and technologies. Figure 8 below shows the overall responses to this question.

Figure 8: How would you rate your confidence to learn how to use new digital tools or technologies?



People also reported that they had an ambition to learn and develop. For example, one respondent left an additional comment stating that they "would love to have trainings to improve myself on digital tools and literacy". Staff also feel confident encouraging and supporting colleagues to use digital technology (75 per cent).

This number increased among individuals in management roles, where confidence ranged from 76 per cent to 88 per cent.

This suggests that a positive learning culture creates a supportive environment for digital skills development and knowledge sharing across social care.

It also highlights an opportunity to use and empower the learning systems that exist in organisations to build confidence and develop a digitally ready workforce.

Responses relating to the workforce's desire to learn new digital skills and support colleagues show narrow confidence intervals (less than ±0.08), indicating high reliability.

This suggests strong consistency across roles and provider types, reinforcing the finding that there is a positive learning culture in social care, with staff motivated both to develop their own skills and to encourage others.

Being safe and secure online

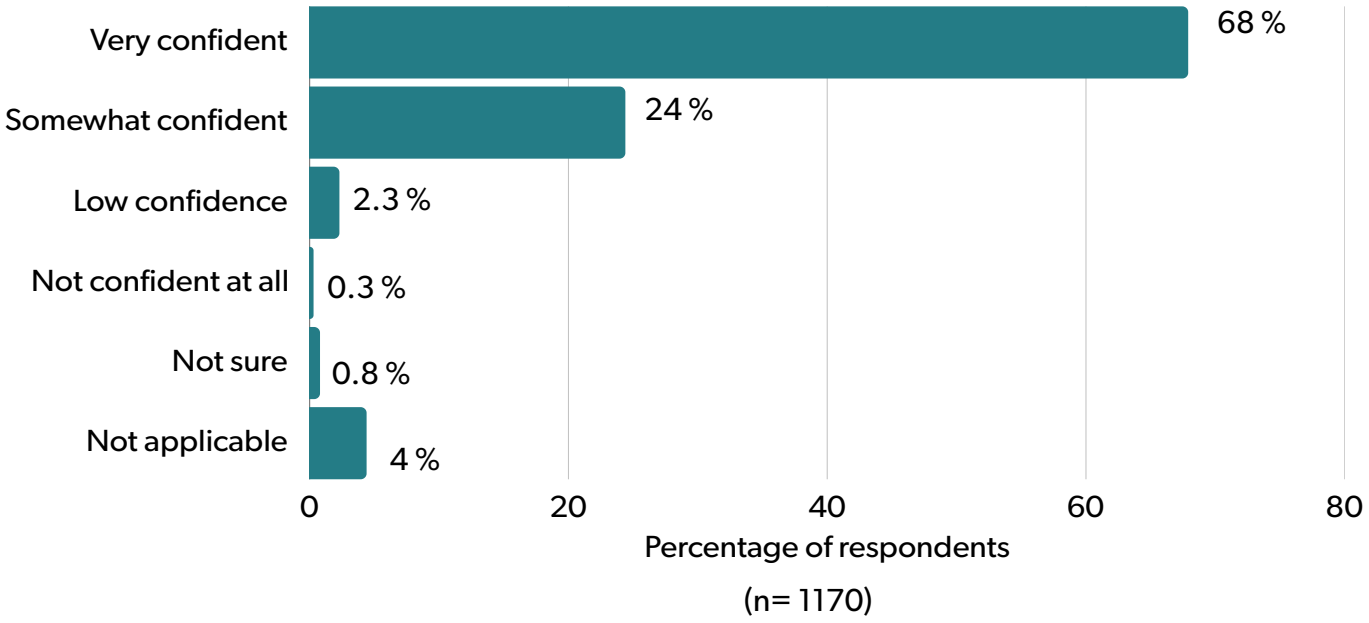
Digital safety and security awareness is an area where the social care workforce shows relatively strong confidence.

Staff across social care in Wales generally reported good confidence in basic online safety and security. Most respondents (96 per cent) feel at least ‘somewhat’ confident in keeping systems, devices and data safe in their work.

As seen in figure 9, staff also express confidence in their ability to use both work-related and personal social media accounts safely, demonstrating awareness of key issues such as safeguarding and data protection.

In fact, 68 per cent reported feeling ‘very’ confident, with an additional 24 per cent indicating they were ‘somewhat’ confident in their ability to manage these responsibilities appropriately.

Figure 9: How confident are you in your ability to use work and personal social media accounts safely?



Staff also generally feel confident in their understanding of organisational policies on data protection and cybersecurity, with 60 per cent reporting that they feel 'very' confident and 33 per cent being 'somewhat' confident.

The findings relating to digital safety and security awareness are highly reliable, with confidence intervals across all questions in this area remaining below ±0.08.

This strong consistency supports the conclusion that staff across social care in Wales not only feel confident in keeping systems, devices and data safe but also demonstrate solid understanding of organisational data protection and cybersecurity policies.

5.1.2 Key digital skills gaps across the workforce

Key findings:

- 33 per cent of respondents rated their ability to solve technical issues (like connecting to Wi-Fi) as either 'basic' or 'unable to do this'.
- 41 per cent of respondents have 'low' or 'no confidence' in using AI technologies, with 39 per cent 'never' using them.
- Only 45 per cent feel confident using specialised well-being technology, such as interactive therapy devices.
- 25 per cent of local authority leaders say they 'rarely' or 'never' have the skills needed to lead digital change, compared to just 10 per cent of private and third-sector leaders.

Key takeaways:

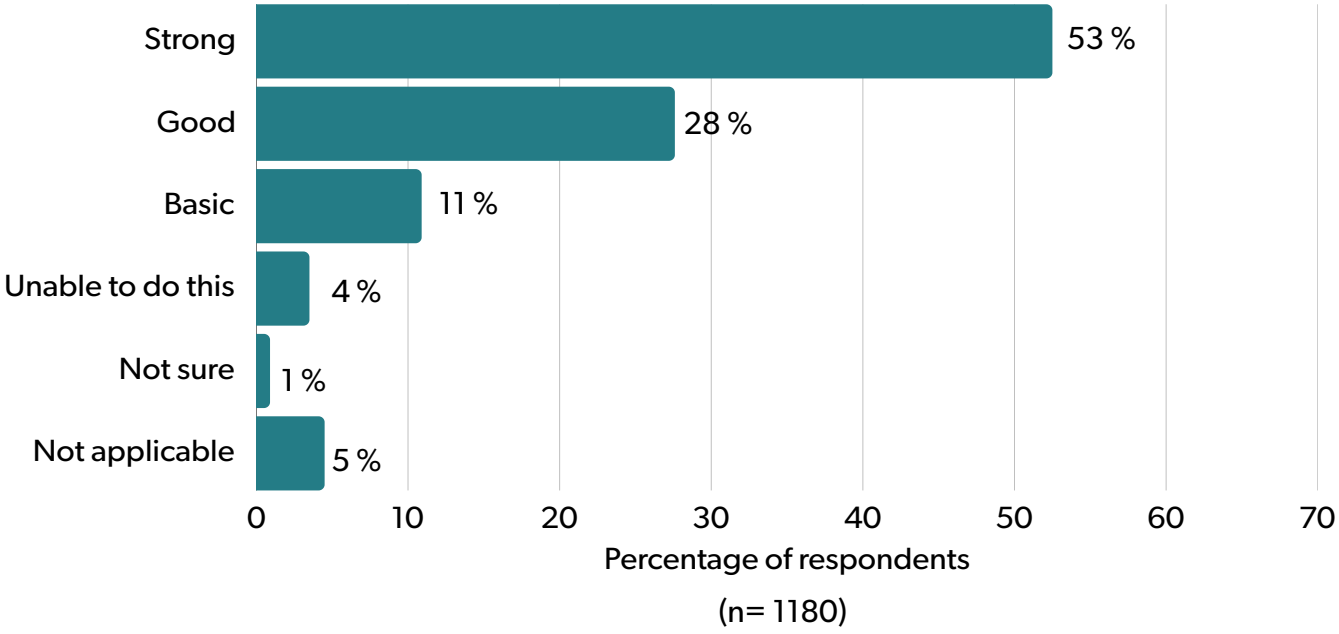
- The struggle with technical problem-solving may limit broader digital engagement and innovation.
- There's a need to raise awareness about how AI could enhance social care practice and support service delivery.
- The confidence gap between using everyday technology versus workplace-specific systems suggests a need for targeted training.
- The significant difference between local authority and private and third-sector confidence may reflect the complexity of systems being used.

As well as strengths, we've identified important digital skills gaps across the social care workforce in Wales.

Workplace-specific digital tools

While staff generally show confidence with everyday digital tools such as using a device to get online, many feel less assured when using organisation-specific systems for everyday admin tasks such as updating care records. Figure 10 on the next page shows the overall responses to this question.

Figure 10: How would you rate your skills and confidence to use your organisation's IT systems and other digital tools for everyday admin tasks?



In response to questions about basic IT skills, such as going online using a computer or using the internet to find information, only a small proportion of respondents reported being 'unable' to do so, ranging from just 0.3 per cent to 0.8 per cent.

This figure rises to four per cent when it comes to organisation-specific IT tools and systems. This is statistically significantly higher than the 0.1 per cent to 0.8 per cent reported for other tasks. Among those who responded 'unable to do this', the majority were adult care home workers and domiciliary care workers.

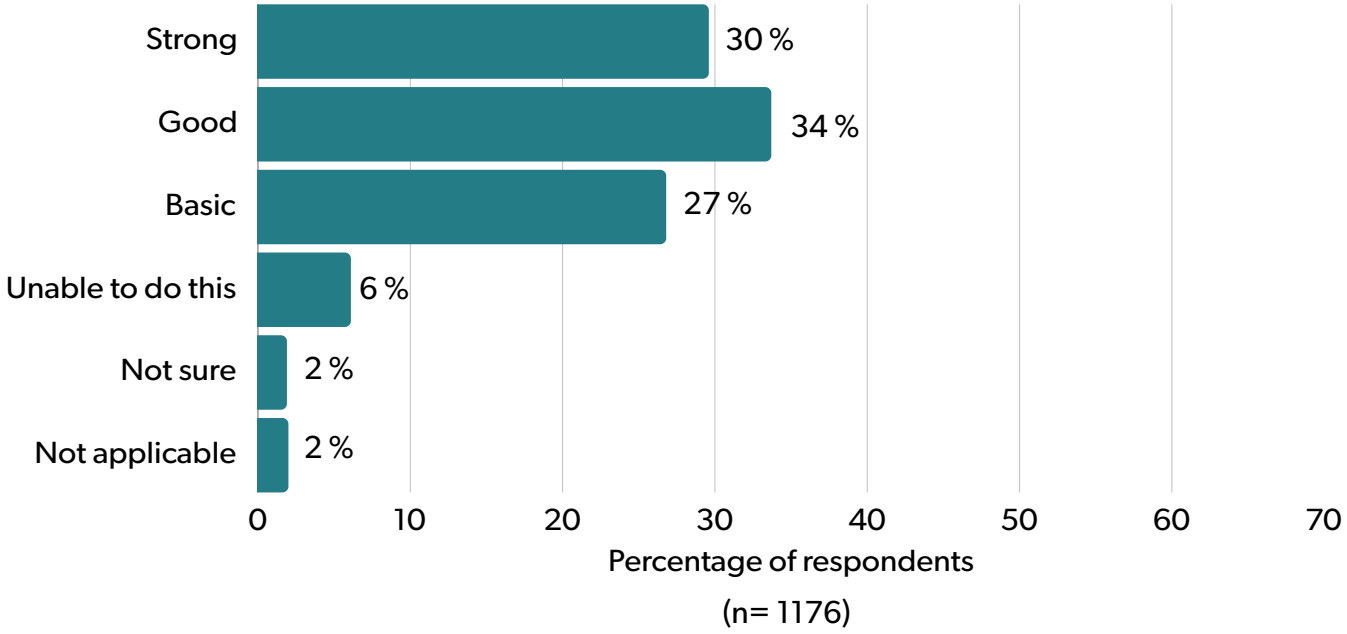
Responses regarding staff confidence in using their organisation's IT systems and digital tools for everyday administrative tasks showed a narrow confidence interval (±0.07), indicating consistency across the workforce.

This disconnect between general digital literacy and workplace-specific applications suggests that staff might benefit from more targeted training in their organisations for tools used in their daily work environments.

Technical problem solving

Confidence in solving technical issues, such as connecting to Wi-Fi, remains a challenge for some of the workforce. As figure 11 shows, 33 per cent of respondents rated their ability in this area as either 'basic' or 'unable to do this'.

Figure 11: How would you rate your skills and confidence to solve technical problems and challenges you encounter when using technology?



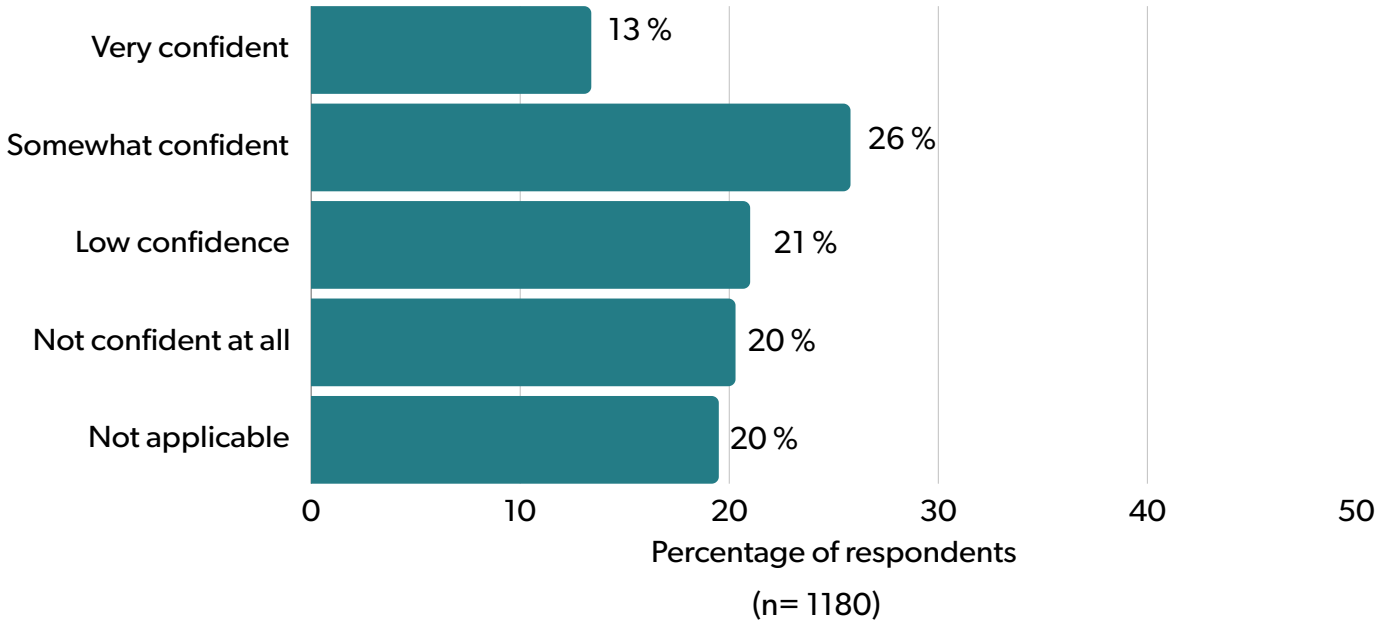
Staff across all workforce groups said they struggle with solving day-to-day technical problems, even when they're comfortable using digital tools for other tasks. This may affect how confidently staff can overcome day-to-day technical issues. It may also limit broader digital engagement and innovation as a result. Although confidence in solving technical problems is low, the narrow confidence interval (±0.07) indicates strong consistency in responses. This suggests that limited technical problem-solving skills are a widespread and reliable finding across the workforce.

Developing the skills to overcome day-to-day technical problems could help increase confidence and reduce the number of people in the social care workforce who don't feel confident to solve basic technical problems.

Understanding and use of AI across the workforce

Understanding and using AI tools represents another knowledge gap. Results from the tool found that 41 per cent of respondents have 'low' or 'no confidence' in using AI technologies in their work, as seen in figure 12.

Figure 12: How confident do you feel using AI tools in your work? For example reading AI responses when using search engines, or using AI tools to summarise meetings.



Only eight per cent of respondents say they 'always' use AI tools, while 39 per cent report 'never' using them in their work. Staff in local authorities show lower engagement with AI, with 43 per cent saying they 'never' use AI tools, compared to 36 per cent in the private and third-sector.

Confidence in using AI safely and responsibly is also limited, with 41 per cent feeling 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in this area.

Nearly one in five respondents (20 per cent) believe AI isn't applicable to their role. This suggests a significant perception gap about AI's relevance to social care. The main barriers reported were lack of skills or knowledge (31 per cent), lack of training (31 per cent) and lack of time to learn (26 per cent). These findings suggest a need to raise awareness about how AI could enhance social care practice and support service delivery. You'll find a deeper breakdown on this in the AI adoption and digital innovation section.

Using technology for person-centred care

This section explores how staff use technology to support people's independence, safety, well-being and personal goals. Staff were asked about their confidence identifying appropriate technologies, including them in care plans, supporting informed choices, and recognising when alternatives might be better.

Technologies covered range from Telecare and wearable health devices, to smart home technology, accessibility tools and digital communication platforms.

Although staff were generally confident using technology for person-centred care[11], confidence dips for some specialised technologies. For example, only 45 per cent feel 'somewhat' or 'very' confident using technology for well-being, such as interactive therapy devices. This is the lowest confidence area in person-centred care technology.

Different roles show different patterns of confidence. Responsible individuals, domiciliary care managers, domiciliary care workers, adult care home workers and social workers in adult services tend to feel most confident. Social workers in children's services, occupational therapists and senior managers report lower confidence across several areas. For example, under 50 per cent of social workers in children's services rated their confidence as 'strong' or 'good' in several areas.

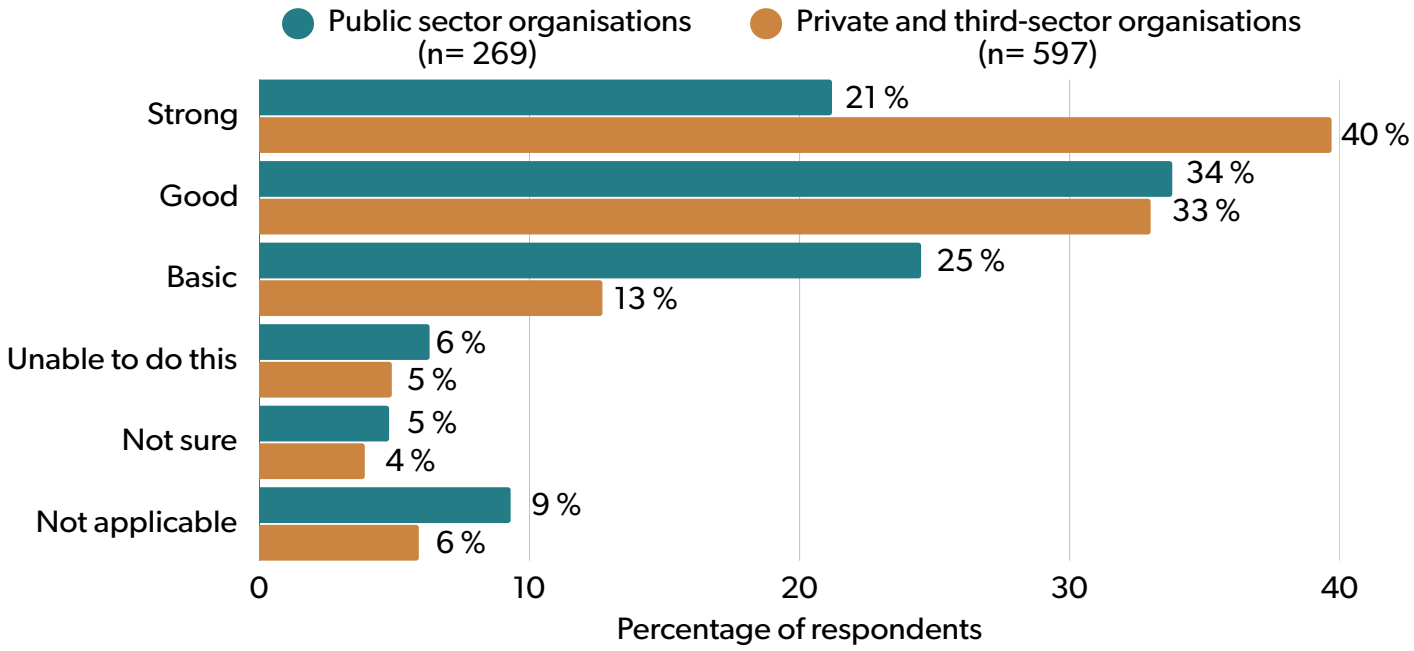
Across almost all technologies, staff in local authorities report lower confidence than those in private and third-sector organisations. For example, when including technology in care plans, 55 per cent of local authority staff report 'strong' or 'good' confidence, compared to 73 per cent in private and third-sector organisations.

This matches the broader patterns we've found in digital confidence and suggests differences in how technology is introduced and supported in different settings.

Figure 13 on the following page shows the difference in responses from staff in public sector organisations compared to private and third-sector organisations.

11. Person-centred care technology includes tools like Telecare (e.g., bed sensors, medication alerts), wellbeing technologies (e.g., therapy robots), smart home devices, health-monitoring wearables, entertainment systems, accessibility tools, and everyday communication apps.

Figure 13: How would you rate your skills and confidence to include and review the use of technology in a person's care plan, making sure it meets their agreed outcomes?



Overall, the data highlights that staff are confident using technology to support person-centred care, particularly in helping people use everyday digital tools and in identifying when technology is or isn't appropriate.

This reflects a thoughtful, balanced approach to care that prioritises individual needs. The findings also show differences in digital confidence across sectors, with local authority respondents reporting lower confidence with person-centred care technologies. This suggests a need for targeted support and training to ensure consistent, high-quality technology-enabled social care.

Our results for using person-centred digital tools are highly reliable (±0.10), while findings about using specific technologies like Telecare show more variation (±0.20) across staff responses.

Being safe and secure online

Despite respondents having high confidence in basic online safety and security, such as keeping systems, devices and data safe, they reported lower confidence in their ability to complete some tasks.

Recognising and responding to data breaches was the biggest area of concern, with seven per cent of respondents reporting 'low' or 'no confidence' in handling potential breaches and reporting incidents. This is higher than other security concerns, such as using social media safely (two per cent) and keeping systems secure (three per cent).

The tool also helped identify knowledge gaps related to data security threats. Six per cent of respondents reported 'low' or 'no confidence' in identifying risks such as phishing attempts, suspicious attachments and other common cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

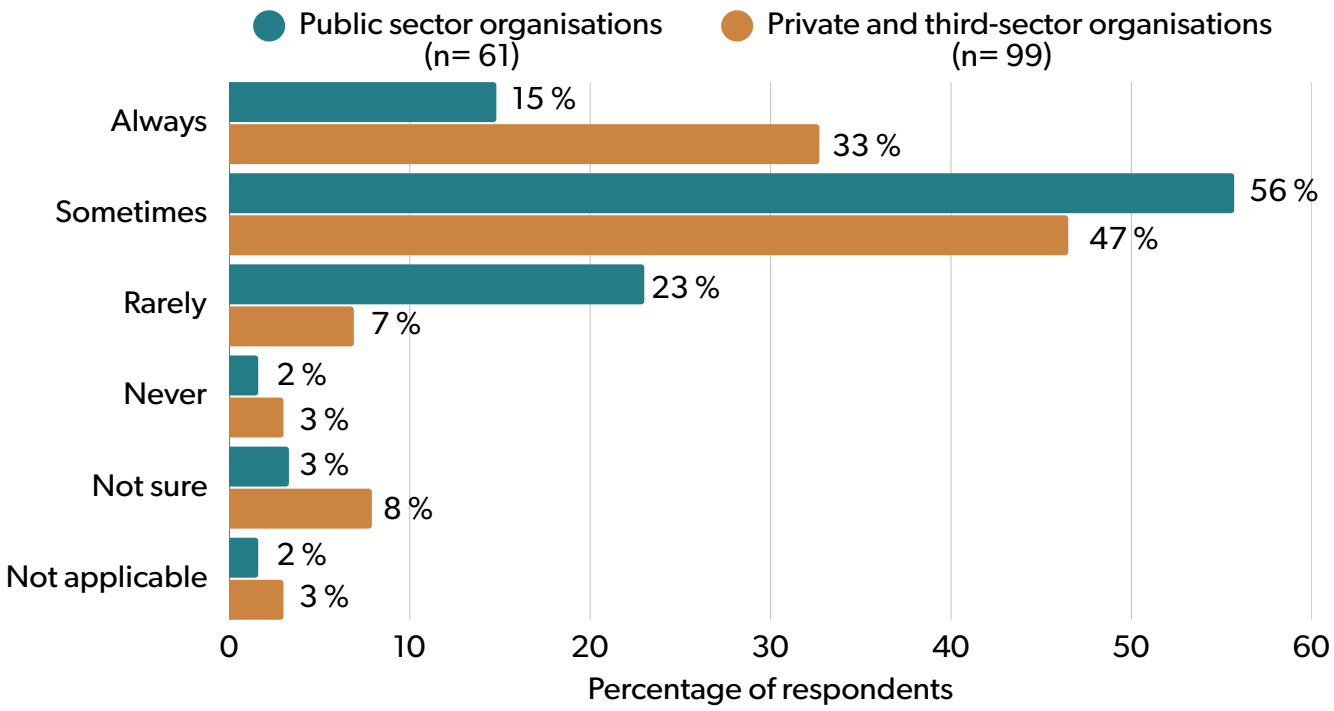
Similarly, GDPR compliance remains challenging for a portion of the workforce, with six per cent reporting 'low' or 'no confidence' in understanding and applying data protection regulations. This suggests ongoing challenges in translating complex privacy requirements into everyday practice across social care settings.

The confidence intervals for this section were narrow (all around ±0.07). This means that these insights are meaningful and that these knowledge gaps are genuine areas for development.

Leaders' confidence in digital change

Figure 14 on the next page shows that among local authority leaders, 25 per cent say they 'rarely' or 'never' have the skills needed to lead digital change. This is in comparison to just 10 per cent of the private and third-sector leaders.

Figure 14: To what extent do you have the skills and knowledge you need to lead digital change?



Confidence in leading digital change showed a wider confidence interval (±0.21), indicating more variability across respondents. The responses are less consistent across the group - some leaders feel very confident, some don't at all.

This confidence disparity between sectors raises interesting questions about its underlying causes. One possibility is that it reflects differences in the scale and complexity of digital transformation projects in each sector. Local authority leaders often manage large-scale digital changes, such as implementing comprehensive record systems across multiple services, potentially giving them a more realistic view of such challenges.

But there could be other explanations too. The independent sector's confidence might reflect how they've had to embrace technology to maintain competitiveness in a challenging market. Independent providers also likely benefit from less bureaucracy than local authorities, allowing them to be more flexible and responsive when implementing digital solutions. Both perspectives need further exploration, and this could be done through focused conversations with leaders and other professionals across sectors.

5.1.3 Management roles compared to direct care roles.

Key findings:

- Management roles show higher digital confidence with organisational IT systems (91 per cent compared to 76 per cent), video conferencing (91 per cent compared to 79 per cent) and using mobile devices for work (85 per cent compared to 68 per cent).
- Differences are minimal for everyday digital tasks like finding information online or using messaging tools.
- These findings suggest targeted support for direct care staff might be beneficial for workplace-specific systems.

Key takeaways:

- While targeted support for direct care staff might be beneficial for organisational systems, the overall workforce shows comparable skills across many digital tasks.
- The difference in confidence may reflect different exposure to these technologies in their daily roles.
- The smaller gaps in everyday digital tasks compared to workplace systems suggest general digital literacy is strong across all roles.

Our research shows some clear patterns in digital skills based on job roles and sector type.

Management roles compared to direct care roles

There are some interesting patterns in digital skills and confidence between management roles and direct care roles. Here's how we define these roles:

- management roles: adult care home managers, domiciliary care managers, residential childcare managers, senior managers, responsible individuals, other social work managers and other social care managers.

- direct care roles: adult care home workers, domiciliary care workers, residential childcare workers, social workers - children and families, social workers – adults, social workers - children and adults, personal assistants, occupational therapists in social care, registered nurses in social care, agency workers, other social care roles, and other social workers.

Management roles generally show higher digital confidence in some areas when compared to those in direct care roles. The most notable differences appear in the following key areas:

- using their organisation's IT systems and other digital tools for everyday admin tasks
  - 91 per cent of management respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - 76 per cent of direct care respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - In other words, managers were 15 percentage points more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' confidence in using organisational IT systems and digital tools for routine admin tasks

- taking part in video conferencing, meetings and events
  - 91 per cent of management respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - 79 per cent of direct care respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - In other words, managers were 12 percentage points more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence in participating in video conferences, meetings and events

- using mobile devices for work tasks
  - 85 per cent of management respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - 68 per cent of direct care respondents reported 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence
  - In summary, managers were 17 percentage points more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' skills and confidence in using mobile devices for work tasks.

Differences in confidence between role types were minimal for many other digital tasks. For example:

- using the internet to find information: while management staff were slightly more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' skills in using the internet to find information (98 per cent compared to 94 per cent), the four per cent difference wasn't statistically significant
- using messaging tools such as Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp: although management staff were slightly more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' skills in using messaging tools (97 per cent compared to 94 per cent), the three per cent difference wasn't statistically significant
- working on shared documents and presentations: management staff were slightly more likely than direct care staff to report 'strong' or 'good' confidence in working on shared documents and presentations (75 per cent compared to 71 per cent), but the four per cent difference wasn't statistically significant.

While targeted support for direct care staff might be beneficial in specific areas like organisational systems and video conferencing, the overall workforce appears to have comparable skills and confidence across many digital tasks.

5.1.4 Key patterns identified in digital skills and capabilities by sector (public sector, private sector and third-sector)

Key findings:

- Private and third-sector staff are more confident in identifying digital solutions (44 per cent 'very' confident) compared to local authorities (31 per cent).
- 34 per cent of staff in private and third-sector providers strongly agreed that digital training is available, compared to 27 per cent in local authorities.
- Local authority staff reported higher confidence in data security (58 per cent 'very' confident handling data breaches compared to 54 per cent in private and third-sectors).
- 10 per cent of respondents across all sectors were 'not sure' whether they had access to training for digital skills.

Key takeaways:

- Local authorities manage larger-scale, more complex digital changes, which may explain lower confidence levels.
- Private and third-sector providers may benefit from less bureaucracy and greater flexibility when implementing digital solutions.
- The lower perception of training accessibility in local authorities might be explained by lack of protected time due to service pressures.
- When digital training is clearly communicated, accessible and supported by protected time, staff develop greater confidence in using technology in their roles.

The digital potential tool was designed in a way that would allow us to compare digital skills and capabilities by sector. The next sections look at this for the following areas:

- innovating with technology
- leaders' confidence with digital change
- training and support for digital skills
- being safe and secure online.

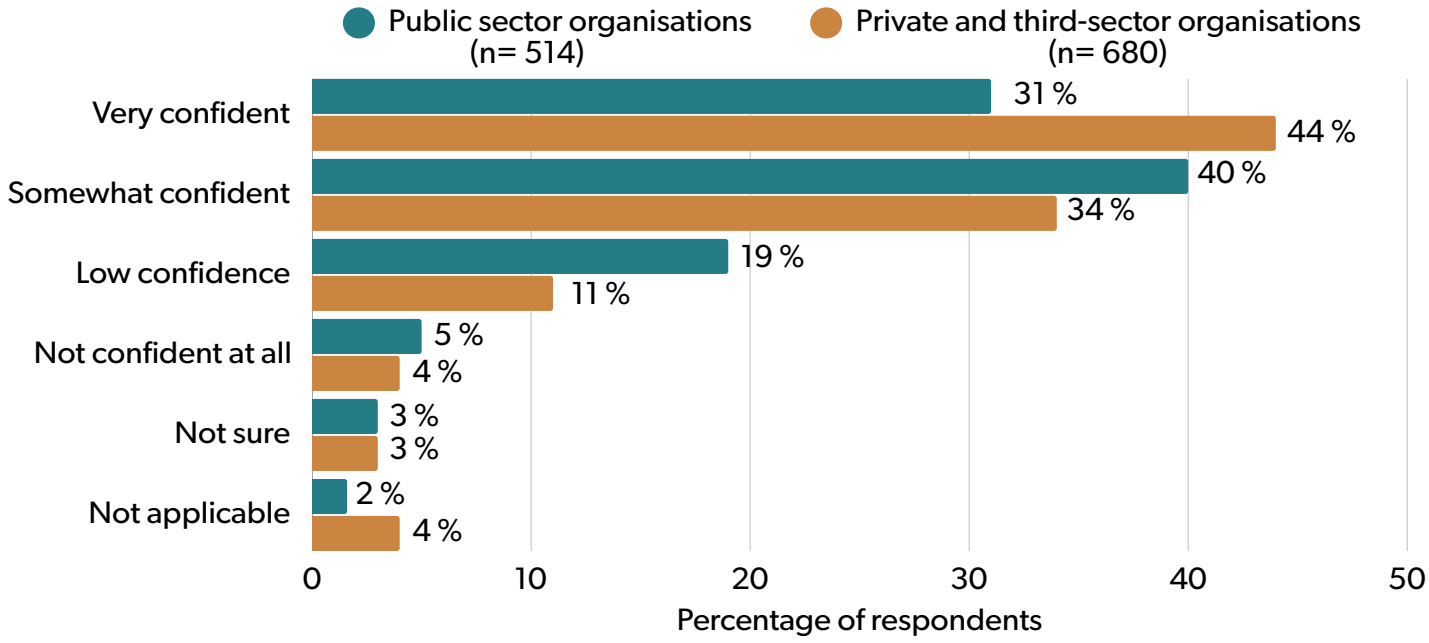
Innovating with technology

Figure 15 below shows the confidence of respondents in being able to identify when a digital solution could improve their work. For example, when automating a process to save time, or setting an alarm to remind an individual of a work task.

The graph shows that respondents from the private and third-sector organisations were significantly more likely to report being 'very' confident (44 per cent) compared to those from local authorities (31 per cent), a difference of 13 percentage points.

The remaining results for this question were similar across both sectors. Forty per cent of local authority respondents reported being 'somewhat' confident - six percentage points higher than those in the private or third-sector (34 per cent). Local authority respondents were also more likely to report 'low' confidence, with 19 per cent doing so compared to 11 per cent from the private and third-sectors.

Figure 15: How would you rate your confidence to identify when a digital solution could improve your work? For example, automating a process to save time.



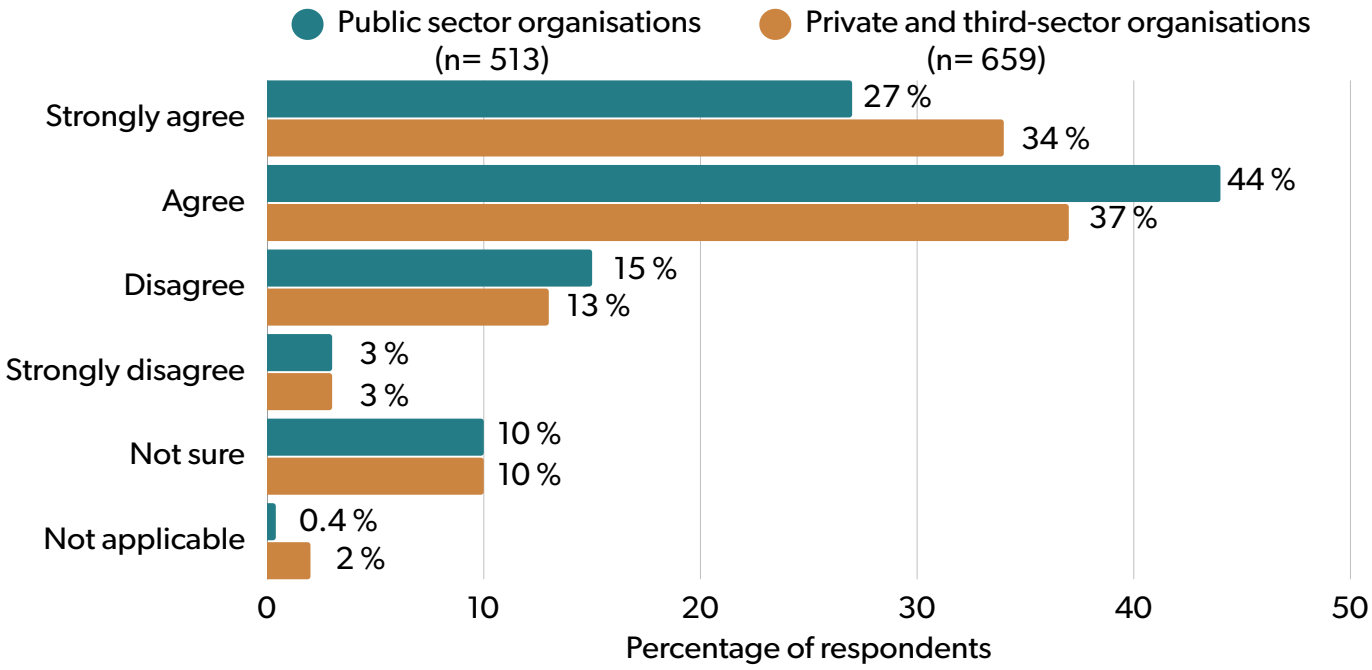
Confidence in identifying opportunities for digital innovation showed a narrow confidence interval (±0.08), indicating strong consistency across respondents. This strengthens the finding that private and third-sector staff report higher confidence levels than their local authority counterparts.

Moving forward, targeted training and practical examples of how digital solutions can save time or improve care would benefit staff, especially in local authorities. Supporting staff to explore simple innovations, such as automated reminders or digital forms, can help build confidence. Providing time and resources to test these tools will also encourage hands-on learning.

Training and support for digital skills

All sectors reported similar challenges with staff awareness of available training and resources to develop digital skills. As seen in figure 16 below, 10 per cent of respondents from both local authorities and private or third-sector organisations were 'not sure' whether they had access to such training. This highlights a need for organisations to better communicate digital training opportunities and increase staff awareness.

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree with the following statement about your organisation? We have access to training and resource to develop our digital skills and knowledge



Among those aware of their access to training and resources to develop digital skills, a higher proportion of staff in private and third-sector settings 'strongly' agreed that this support is available to them (34 per cent). This compares to 27 per cent of local authority staff who said the same.

Responses about access to digital skills training and resources had a narrow confidence interval (±0.07), showing strong consistency across sectors. This supports the reliability of the findings.

The lower perception of training accessibility among local authority staff raises questions about how training resources are allocated and delivered across different types of organisations. Potential explanations might include lack of protected time for staff to attend training due to service pressures. Research by Social Care Wales, carried out during the development of communities of practice and employer support engagement events, highlighted that a lack of protected time is a significant barrier preventing staff from engaging with training opportunities. They shared that without dedicated time set aside, they'd struggle to take part in development activities.

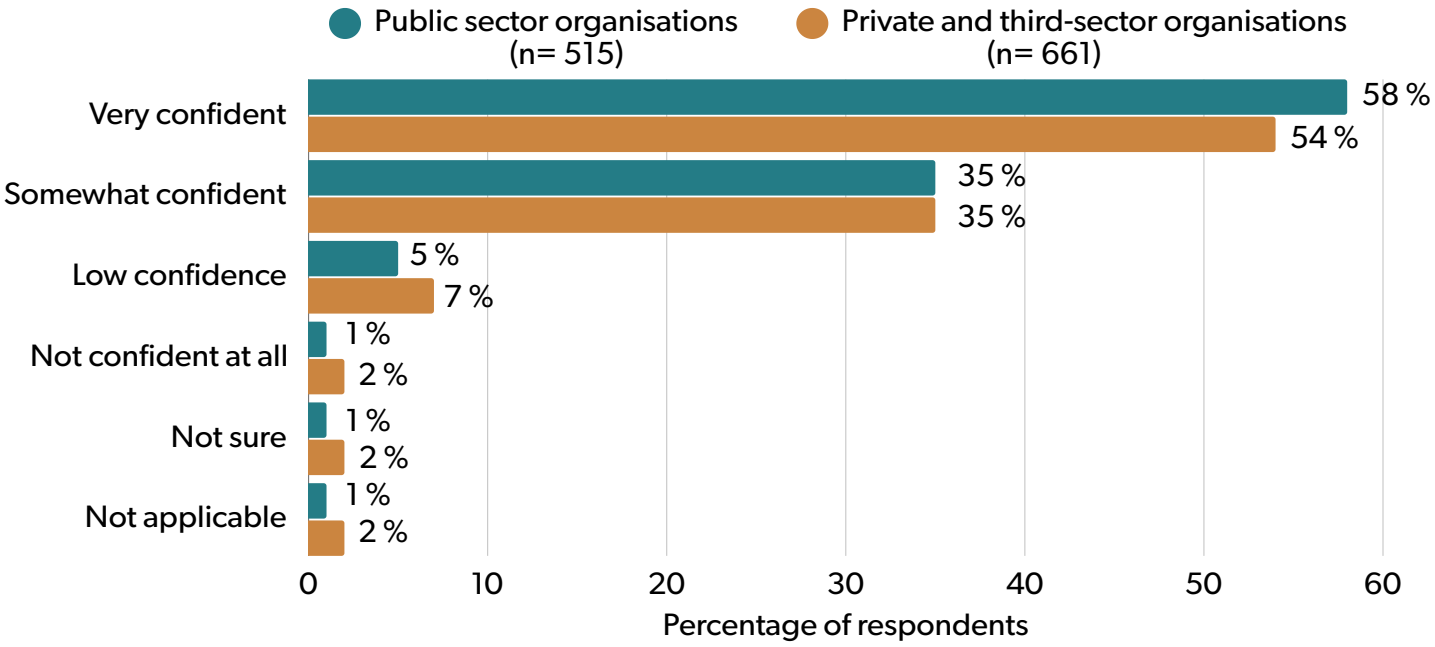
These findings suggest that accessible training plays a key role in building digital confidence. For local authorities, this may involve reviewing how digital skills workshops are promoted, creating space for dedicated learning time, and making sure there's adequate capacity to meet staff needs. The data shows that when digital training is clearly communicated, easy to access and supported by protected time, staff are more likely to develop confidence and capability in using technology in their roles.

Being safe and secure online

Local authority staff generally reported higher confidence in responding to data breaches and recognising data security threats such as phishing scams, compared to staff in private and third-sector organisations.

In local authorities, 58 per cent of staff were 'very' confident in their ability to recognise and respond to a data breach, compared to 54 per cent in private and third-sector organisations. Figure 17 on the following page compares responses from staff in public sector organisations compared to private and third-sector organisations.

Figure 17: How confident are you in your ability to recognise and respond to a data breach, potential breach, or near miss? For example, how to report an incident.



Also, when asked about recognising and avoiding data security threats, 56 per cent of local authority staff report being 'very' confident, compared to 52 per cent in the private and third-sector.

The gap persists when looking at overall confidence levels. Among local authority staff, 93 per cent feel at least 'somewhat' confident in this area, compared to 89 per cent in the private and third-sector. This confidence difference might reflect the more standardised security protocols and mandatory training typically implemented in local authorities. It could also reflect their broader experience in managing sensitive personal data under public sector governance frameworks. The narrow confidence interval (±0.07) for this question shows this is a reliable finding, with consistent responses across sectors.

To raise confidence levels in the private and third-sectors, these organisations could adopt similar approaches, such as standardised data protection training, clearer security procedures and more regular practice in responding to potential threats. Strengthening these areas across all settings will help reinforce safe practices, providing greater security and confidence for both staff and those receiving care.

5.2 Technology and infrastructure

We've examined how social care organisations approach technology infrastructure across Wales. This section analyses and summarises findings across five key areas:

- equipment availability and maintenance
- providing equipment and connectivity
- tools and systems
- safety and security
- data and challenges.

5.2.1 Equipment availability and maintenance

Key findings:

- 87 per cent of staff report having the necessary technology to work effectively.
- Local authorities have better equipment access (94 per cent) than private and third-sector (82 per cent).
- 84 per cent agree their equipment is well-maintained and updated.

Key takeaways:

- While most staff feel equipped, consistency improvements are needed, particularly in private and third-sector.
- Regular technology assessments, timely maintenance and clear reporting systems would help technology better support care delivery.

We asked 1,200 respondents about whether their organisation provides them with the equipment they need to do their job and if it's well maintained and updated. It's important to note that these findings reflect people's personal perceptions and experiences, which may vary based on their role, awareness of available resources, and individual expectations.

The data shows most respondents (87 per cent) report having the technology and equipment they need to do their jobs effectively. More local authority staff reported having the necessary equipment (94 per cent) compared to private and third-sector organisations (82 per cent).

Figure 18 shows that 84 per cent of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' their equipment is well-maintained and updated.

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree that…

	My organisation provides me with the equipment I need to do my job. (n=1198)	My work equipment is well maintained and updated. (n = 1169)
Strongly agree	55 %	42 %
Agree	32 %	42 %
Disagree	4 %	7 %
Strongly disagree	2.4 %	1 %
Not sure	1 %	2 %
Not applicable	6 %	5 %

Local authorities reported this slightly more than private and third-sector organisations (45 per cent compared to 39 per cent). Both sectors showed similar levels of 'strong' agreement (43 per cent and 42 per cent respectively).

The narrow confidence intervals for both access to equipment and its maintenance (each ±0.08) show that these are reliable findings, with consistent responses across the workforce.

While most staff feel they have the equipment they need, there's still room to improve consistency, especially in organisations where access to essential tools is lower, such as private and third-sector organisations.

Making sure all staff have up-to-date, well-maintained equipment is key to supporting the delivery of safe and efficient care. Organisations may benefit from regular technology assessments, timely maintenance processes and clear systems for staff to report and resolve technical issues. These approaches help create an environment where technology supports rather than hinders care delivery.

5.2.2 Providing equipment and connectivity

Key findings:

- 83 per cent of IT representatives report good training in their organisations.
- Local authority IT representatives show less strong agreement (17 per cent) than private and third-sectors (38 per cent).
- Office internet reliability is high (95 per cent), but community setting connectivity varies.
- Only eight per cent of local authority IT representatives strongly agree they can select providers meeting their needs, compared to 44 per cent in private and third-sectors.

Key takeaways:

- Local authorities face specific innovation barriers, including procurement rules, funding constraints, and compliance obligations.
- A more adaptive approach is needed to encourage experimentation and collaboration.
- Balance between safe experimentation and compliance requirements is essential.

Questions for this section were answered by the people who are responsible for planning and implementing IT and infrastructure digital solutions from a social care perspective. Out of the 1,200 respondents, three per cent of people identified themselves as the IT representative for their organisation. This low percentage was expected, as these roles represent a small but crucial group within the sector, including positions such as heads of ICT in local authorities and digital leads in care organisations.

Again, these findings reflect people's personal perceptions and experiences, which may vary based on their role, awareness of available resources and individual expectations.

Responses from IT representatives indicate that organisations generally provide good training and support for technology use, with 83 per cent ‘agreeing’. But there are clear differences between sectors, with only 17 per cent of local authority IT representatives strongly agreeing their organisation provides this support, compared to 38 per cent in private and third-sectors. Additionally, 33 per cent of local authority IT representatives disagreed that their organisation provides adequate IT training, compared to just four per cent in other sectors.

Although most IT representatives feel their organisation provides effective training and support, the higher level of disagreement among those in local authorities is an area for improvement. Beyond basic IT skills, making the most of digital opportunities in social care often needs a combination of organisational development and hands-on practitioner training that's targeted to the specific needs of certain professionals or teams.

Reliable internet connectivity

According to IT representatives, internet connectivity varies by location.

Office internet reliability is high overall (95 per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'), but connectivity in community settings shows more variation.

For internet connectivity in communal spaces in residential and care homes, IT representatives from private and third-sector organisations reported better provision, with 67 per cent 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing', compared to 17 per cent from local authorities. Local authority IT representatives showed higher uncertainty on this point, with 42 per cent reporting they were 'not sure' about connectivity in these settings. This compared to only four per cent of IT representatives from private and third-sector organisations reporting that they were 'not sure'. Figure 19 below shows the percentage of overall responses for the questions related to reliable internet connectivity in settings.

Figure 19: To what extent do you agree that you provide...

	Reliable internet connectivity in our offices. (n = 40)	Reliable internet connectivity for staff in the community. (n = 39)	Reliable internet connectivity in communal spaces in residential and care homes (n = 39)
Strongly agree	53 %	26 %	31 %
Agree	43 %	44 %	21 %
Disagree	5 %	13 %	10 %
Strongly disagree	0 %	0 %	3 %
Not sure	0 %	5 %	16 %
Not applicable	0 %	13 %	3 %

This suggests that while office-based internet access is strong, connectivity in communal and residential care settings could be improved. The high level of uncertainty among local authority IT representatives also suggests a lack of oversight or monitoring in these areas.

Due to the small sample size and wide confidence intervals (ranging from ±0.41 to ±0.47), findings related to internet connectivity should be interpreted with caution. Responses varied significantly across organisations, suggesting a need for further investigation into connectivity, particularly in communal and residential care settings. As more IT professionals use the tool, the better our understanding of this will be over time.

Helping organisations to improve internet infrastructure in communal settings might help their staff to use digital tools more effectively and allow people accessing care to benefit from enhanced services and experiences.

Autonomy to select technology providers and tools

Responses from IT representatives indicate differences in autonomy when selecting technology providers and tools that meet their needs and budget. Only eight per cent of local authority IT representatives 'strongly agreed' they can select providers, technology and tools that meet their needs and budget, compared to 44 per cent in the private and third-sector.

This 36 per cent difference may reflect constraints on local authorities' ability to invest in tailored digital solutions and limit opportunities for co-design and co-production. In contrast, independent providers may have more flexibility to experiment with emerging technologies and tailor tools to meet user needs. Due to the small sample size and wide confidence interval (±0.43), findings related to autonomy in selecting technology providers should be interpreted with caution, as responses varied considerably between sectors.

This suggests that local authorities may face specific barriers to innovation, such as procurement rules, funding constraints and compliance obligations, that are embedded in the system and unlikely to change. As a result, the challenge isn't simply about adopting a more innovative mindset but about developing ways of working that enable safe experimentation within these existing constraints. Without such mechanisms, there's a risk of fragmented technology adoption, inconsistent compliance with ICT policies and wasted resources, as each new challenge prompts a separate solution. This can limit opportunities for meaningful co-production and shared learning.

The lower sense of autonomy reported by IT representatives from local authorities likely reflects not just funding and procurement constraints, but also the added reality of operating in complex public-sector systems.

Looking ahead, a more adaptive approach is needed, one that encourages experimentation, collaboration and shared learning across local authorities. Rather than relying on a rigid model, social care may benefit from a more dynamic system that supports local adaptation while enabling the sharing of innovations and collective risk management. Striking the right balance between safe experimentation, compliance and long-term sustainability will be essential to enabling innovation in practice.

5.2.3 Tools and systems

Key findings:

- Only 35 per cent of IT representatives strongly agree their systems connect effectively.
- Private and third-sector providers report 32 per cent higher agreement on maintaining detailed digital care records.
- Local authority IT representatives show significant uncertainty about HR systems (42 per cent unsure) and scheduling tools (58 per cent unsure).

Key takeaways:

- Uncertainty likely reflects limited involvement in certain systems or communication gaps between departments.
- Stronger cross-department collaboration would create better shared understanding of digital systems.
- Involving IT specialists in care technology decisions would improve integration.

This section continues with responses from the same IT representatives who took part in the previous section. These findings are based on personal experiences and may vary depending on role, awareness and expectations.

How systems work together

IT representatives report that getting different systems to work together remains a challenge, with only 35 per cent ‘strongly agreeing’ that their various systems connect and share information effectively.

This suggests many organisations work with disconnected systems, making information sharing and collaboration more difficult. Local authority IT representatives reported more issues than those in the private and third-sectors. Seventeen percent ‘strongly disagreed’ that their systems work well together, compared to none of the IT representatives from the private or third-sector.

But this difference may not only reflect better system integration in the private and third-sectors. It’s possible that private providers operate with fewer systems that need to interconnect, or manage simpler service models that require less complex integration.

This would reduce the likelihood of system conflicts emerging in the first place. Due to the small sample size and wide confidence interval (±0.41), findings on system integration should be interpreted with caution, as experiences varied significantly between organisations.

Specific solutions

Maintaining detailed digital care records

Digital care records usage varies significantly across sectors. While 73 per cent of all IT respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their organisation maintains detailed digital care records, representatives from private and third-sectors reported 32 per cent higher agreement than those from local authorities.

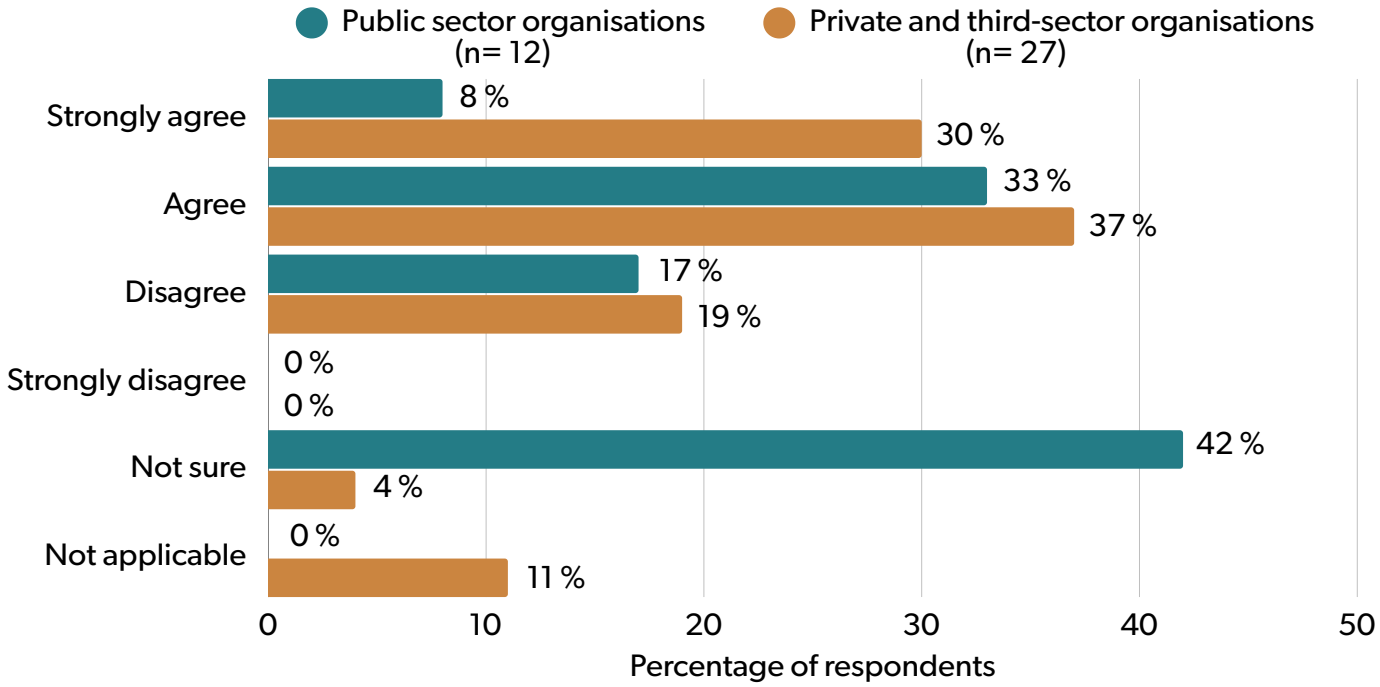
Making effective use of HR management software and digital tools for staff schedules and shifts

The use of HR management software shows similar patterns in IT representatives' responses. Overall, 59 per cent of IT representatives agreed their organisations make effective use of such systems. But local authority IT representatives showed higher uncertainty, with 42 per cent reporting they were 'not sure' about HR software effectiveness, compared to four per cent in private and third-sector organisations.

The graph below shows the responses from IT representatives from local authorities compared to private and third-sector organisations.

Interestingly, 11 per cent of the private and third-sector IT representatives said that this question was 'not applicable', suggesting that their organisation doesn't use HR systems or that it isn't something they're aware of or responsible for. No IT representatives from local authorities responded with 'not applicable'.

Figure 21: To what extent do you agree with the following statement about your organisation? We make effective use of online HR management software.



Only eight per cent of local authority IT representatives 'strongly agreed' their HR systems were effective, compared to 30 per cent in other sectors. This difference likely reflects the higher level of uncertainty we've seen from IT representatives on this question.

Staff scheduling technologies follow similar patterns in IT representatives' assessments. About 58 per cent of local authority IT representatives were 'not sure' about the effectiveness of their digital scheduling tools, compared to four per cent in private and third-sector organisations. Only eight per cent of local authority IT representatives 'strongly agreed' they make effective use of these tools, compared to 43 per cent in other organisations – a 35 per cent difference.

The high level of uncertainty among local authority IT representatives may reflect limited involvement in HR and scheduling systems, unclear roles in managing these tools, or communication gaps between IT departments and HR system users. Centralised structures and fragmented responsibilities may also make it harder to track how effectively these systems are used. Staff who directly use these systems might benefit from additional support to maximise system capabilities. In contrast, some private and third-sector representatives marked the question as 'not applicable,' suggesting differences in system use or awareness across sectors.

Making effective use of digital tools to manage and track medication administration

Responses from IT representatives revealed notable differences between sectors in the use of digital tools for medication management. None of the local authority representatives 'agreed' that their organisation makes effective use of such tools, compared to 41 per cent agreement in the private and third-sectors. Uncertainty was also much higher among local authority IT representatives, with 42 per cent responding that they weren't sure if their organisation used digital tools for medication management, compared to just four per cent in private and third-sector organisations.

This result doesn't necessarily suggest that local authorities don't use digital medication management tools, but rather that the IT representatives responding may not be directly involved in their implementation or day-to-day use, or aware of their use. While IT teams typically need to approve software for work devices, in large local authorities with specialised IT teams, the responding individual may not personally handle medication management systems.

But these findings suggest that stronger collaboration and cross-department working may benefit local authorities by creating shared understanding and accountability around digital care systems. Having the right expertise in the room, particularly involving IT specialists in care technology decisions, can help support the safe development and adoption of digital tools.

The knowledge gap we've found might reflect specialised team structures where different people handle specific systems, rather than a complete absence of these tools. Better visibility, training, cross-team engagement and documentation of digital solutions could help integrate these tools more effectively into care delivery across all relevant departments. This would help strengthen medication safety and tracking for the organisation as a whole.

Given the small sample size and wide confidence intervals (ranging from ±0.43 to ±0.47), these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Further investigation is needed to assess whether IT representatives were always best placed to answer questions regarding HR, scheduling, and medication management systems.

Future iterations of the survey could benefit from targeting or clarifying respondent roles to ensure accurate representation of system use across different organisational functions.

5.2.4 Safety and security

Key findings:

- Cybersecurity practices are strong across all organisations (88 per cent).
- Access protection, such as strong passwords and two-factor authentication, is strongest in local authorities (92 per cent always use strong measures), compared to private and third-sector (67 per cent).
- Local authority staff receive more comprehensive security training (75 per cent) than private and third-sector staff (43 per cent).

Key takeaways:

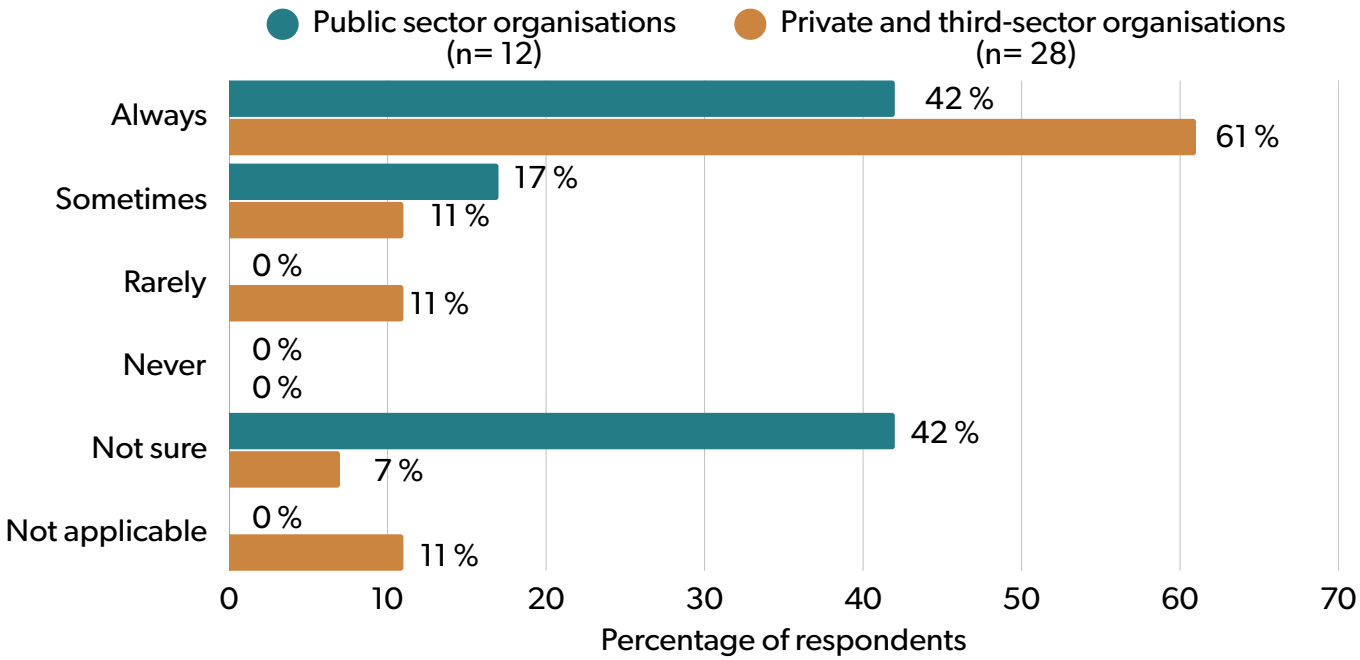
- Differences reflect the additional governance frameworks in local authorities.
- Security requirements protect sensitive information but may create barriers to innovation.
- Complex approval processes can slow adoption of new digital solutions.

Responses from IT representatives show that cybersecurity practices are relatively strong across all organisations, with 88 per cent saying they 'always' or 'sometimes' make sure that malware and antivirus protection is installed and updated on all devices.

Mobile device security practices differ widely. Only 55 per cent of IT representatives said tracking, locking and wiping measures are 'always' in place for mobile devices. As seen in figure 22 below, local authority IT staff seem less sure about these security measures, with 42 per cent saying they were 'not sure' if these practices were being used, compared to only seven per cent of IT staff from private and third-sector organisations.

This is a significant difference (35 per cent), and while the data doesn't tell us why, it may suggest that the local authority IT representatives have less visibility or control over mobile device management. This could be due to more complex organisational structures or the use of multiple systems across different departments.

Figure 22: To what extent does your organisation make sure that mobile devices can be tracked, locked, and wiped and are regularly updated, including apps?



Access protection appears strongest in local authorities, with 92 per cent of their IT representatives reporting they 'always' use effective measures like strong passwords and two-factor authentication, compared to 67 per cent in private and third-sectors. This suggests strong foundational security in the public sector, though implementation of more advanced mobile security measures may be lagging.

Staff training on recognising security threats shows variations according to IT representatives. Local authority IT representatives report higher rates of comprehensive training, with 75 per cent stating staff are 'always' trained on recognising and avoiding threats, compared to 43 per cent reported by other sectors. IT representatives from private and third-sector organisations reported less consistent training, with 39 per cent reporting staff are 'sometimes' trained.

This significant difference likely reflects the regulatory context for different types of organisations. While all organisations have to comply with data protection legislation such as GDPR, local authorities often operate under additional governance frameworks. They may have more standardised mandatory cybersecurity training programmes due to their handling of large volumes of sensitive personal data across multiple services. Private and third-sector organisations must also comply with these legal requirements but may implement them through more varied approaches based on their size, resources and the work they do.

These governance requirements across all sectors help protect sensitive information. But the potentially more complex approval and security clearance processes, particularly in local authorities, may create real or perceived barriers to innovation. New digital solutions have to navigate these necessary safeguards before being implemented.

Due to the small sample size and wide confidence intervals (ranging from ±0.40 to ±0.45), findings related to cybersecurity practices should be interpreted with caution.

While the patterns identified are important, they reflect a diverse range of organisational practices and experiences, suggesting a need for further, more targeted investigation.

5.2.5 Data and challenges

Key findings:

- 74 per cent of IT representatives report good data management systems.
- Local authorities show lower agreement (58 per cent) than private and third-sector (82 per cent).
- Only 50 per cent of local authority representatives agree people can access the data they need compared to 82 per cent in other sectors.
- Only 42 per cent of local authority representatives agree they effectively delete unnecessary personal data.

Key takeaways:

- Local authorities manage larger, more complex data sets across multiple services.
- Complexity and scale influence views on data accessibility and deletion practices.
- Smaller organisations benefit from more focused and manageable data needs.

Systems for collecting, storing and managing data

IT representatives generally report confidence in their data management tools, with 74 per cent agreeing they have good systems for collecting, storing and managing data. But local authority IT representatives reported lower agreement (58 per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed') compared to private and third-sector organisations (82 per cent).

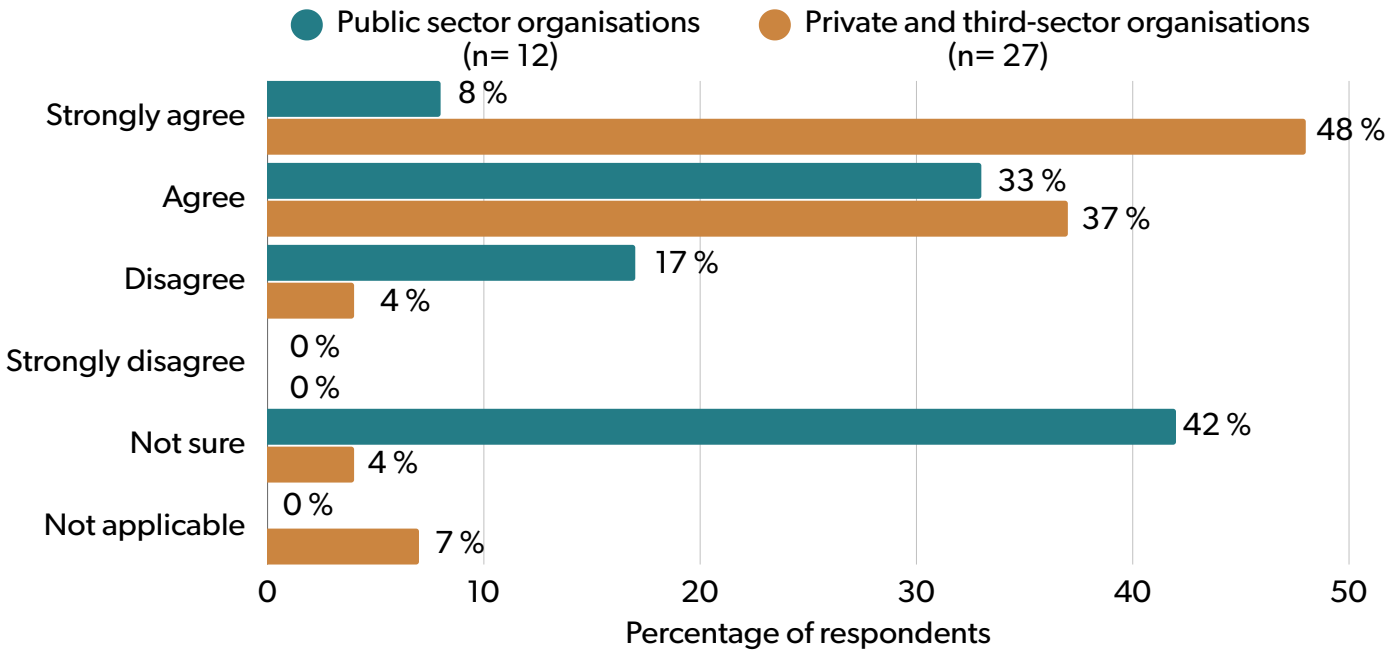
Data accuracy and accessibility

Among IT representatives, 75 per cent 'agree' that their organisation's data is complete, accurate and updated regularly. Again, local authority IT representatives showed lower agreement (50 per cent agreed or strongly agreed), compared to other sectors (86 per cent). Again, these findings reflect people's personal perceptions and experiences and may not be a true reflection of their organisation's data position.

Another sector difference we've seen in this pillar is that only 50 per cent of local authority IT representatives 'agreed' that people across their organisation can access the data, reports and analysis they need, compared to 82 per cent in private and third-sectors. A third (33 per cent) of local authority IT representatives actively disagreed that people across their organisation can access the data, reports and analysis they need.

When asked whether their organisation deletes data about identifiable individuals, we saw some differences from IT representatives from different sectors. As figure 23 below shows, only 41 per cent of local authority IT representatives at least 'agreed' that they effectively delete unnecessary data about identifiable individuals, and 42 per cent reported that they were 'not sure'. Among IT representatives from private and third-sector organisations, 85 per cent agreed that they effectively delete unnecessary data about identifiable individuals.

Figure 23: To what extent do you agree that your organisation deletes data about identifiable individuals that is no longer necessary?



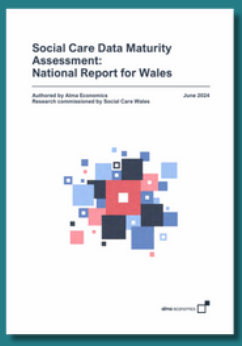
Eighty-three per cent of the IT representatives from local authorities 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their staff have training on GDPR and their data protection policies. Meanwhile, 93 per cent of the IT representatives from private and third-sector organisations 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with this.

It's worth noting that local authorities typically manage significantly larger and more complex data sets across multiple services than many private and third-sector organisations. This includes social care, education, housing, planning and numerous other functions, often using different systems that may not easily integrate. The complexity and scale of data management in local authorities may influence IT representatives' views on data accessibility and deletion practices. In contrast, smaller or more specialised private and third-sector organisations may have more focused and manageable data needs.

Although the findings around data accuracy, accessibility, and training are important, the wide confidence intervals (±0.40 to ±0.42) mean these results should be interpreted with caution. These responses likely reflect individual experiences and varying levels of awareness or responsibility for data systems.

If you're interested in getting a deeper look at how local authorities handle their data, check out the 'Social Care Data Maturity Assessment: National Report for Wales' on the Social Care Wales Insight Collective website.

It digs into the details of data practices across local authority social care services throughout Wales.



5.3 AI adoption and digital innovation

We've explored how people working in social care in Wales are engaging with artificial intelligence (AI). By AI, we mean the capability of a computer system to undertake human-like tasks, such as problem solving and learning.

We didn't gather any insight about what types of AI organisations are using. This section looks at current AI usage patterns, barriers to adoption, and how different organisations are looking to adopt these tools in the future.

5.3.1 Current AI usage across job roles

Key findings:

- AI usage in social care is at an early stage, with 39 per cent of respondents 'never' using AI tools.
- Only eight per cent report 'always' using AI tools.
- Private and third-sector providers show higher adoption (10 per cent 'always' using AI) than local authorities (four per cent).
- Overall confidence is modest, with only 39 per cent feeling 'somewhat' or 'very' confident using AI.
- There are differences between roles, with senior managers (46 per cent) and domiciliary care workers (45 per cent) showing higher confidence than adult care home managers (31 per cent) .

Key takeaways:

- Local authorities may face more stringent governance requirements and concerns about sensitive data.
- Private and third-sector providers likely benefit from more flexible decision-making structures.
- The higher confidence among senior managers likely comes from their broader exposure to technological trends.
- Domiciliary care workers may encounter more practical uses for AI through mobile working.
- Policy direction for AI in Welsh social care is relatively new, explaining the early adoption phase.

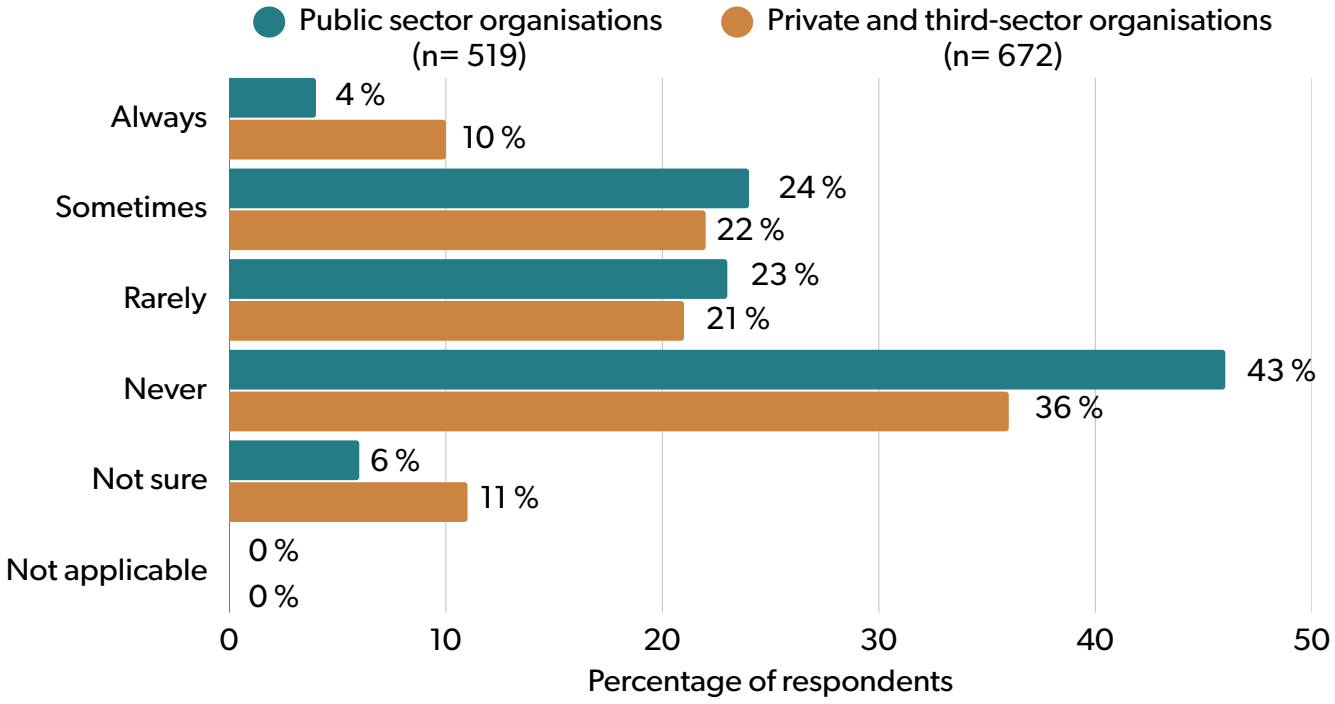
7. As defined by the UK Government, artificial intelligence can be understood as "the use of digital technology to create systems capable of performing tasks commonly thought to require intelligence". UK Government (2019) A guide to using artificial intelligence in the public sector. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-artificial-intelligence/a-guide-to-using artificial-intelligence-in-the-public-sector

Responses suggest that AI usage in social care in Wales is currently at an early stage. When we refer to AI usage in this section, we're specifically focusing on generative AI - technologies that create new content from prompts, such as ChatGPT, or similar assistants that summarise meetings or help with drafting emails. According to the Central Digital and Data Office, "generative AI is a specialised form of AI that can interpret and generate high-quality outputs including text and images" (Central Digital and Data Office, 2023)[12].

Thirty-nine per cent of respondents reported 'never' using AI tools (for example, reading AI responses when using search engines or using AI tools to summarise meetings in their work). Twenty-two per cent reported 'rarely' using AI tools, and 23 per cent 'sometimes' using it, with only eight per cent saying they always use them.

As seen in figure 24 below, there is some variation between different types of organisations. Staff in private and third-sector organisations reported slightly higher rates of AI use, with 10 per cent always using AI tools compared to four per cent in local authorities. More local authority staff reported 'never' using AI tools (43 per cent) compared to those in other sectors (36 per cent).

Figure 24: How often are you using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your work? For example reading AI responses when using search engines, or using AI tools to summarise meetings.



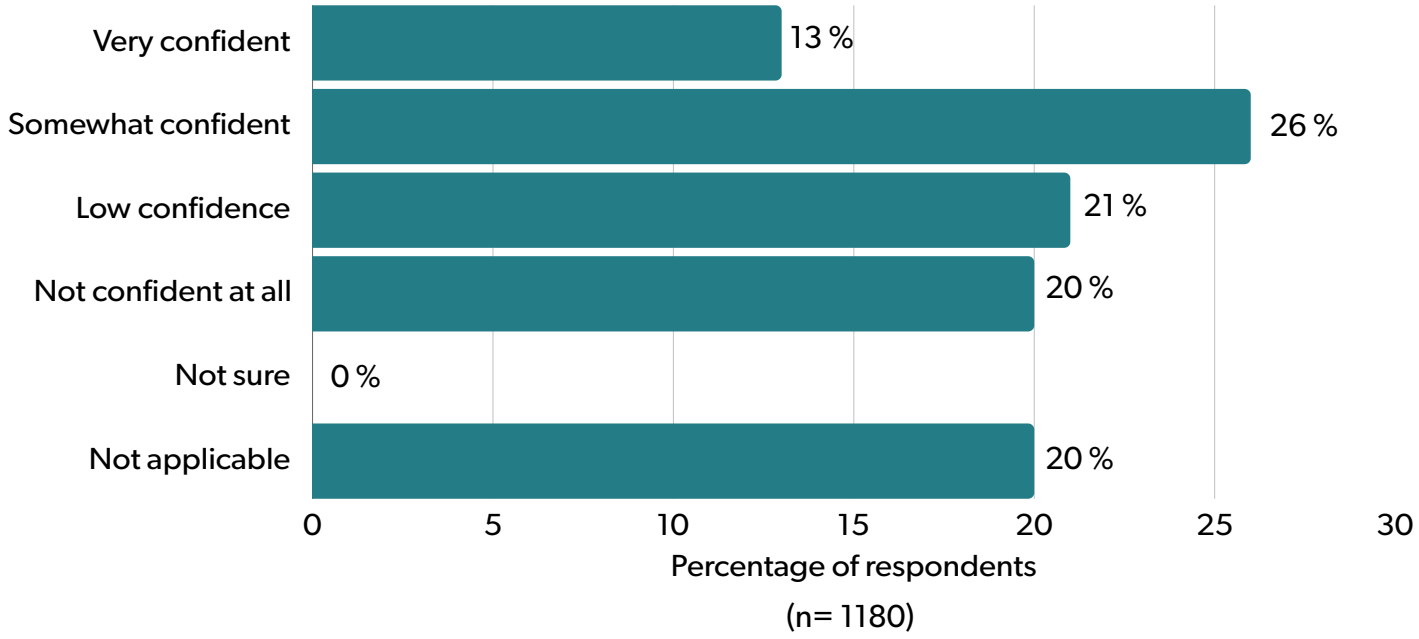
12. Central Digital & Data Office (2023) A guide to using generative AI in the public sector. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c3b5d628a4a00012d2ba5c/6.8558_CO_Generative_AI_Framework_Report_v7_WEB.pdf Please note that the Central Digital and Data Office became part of Government Digital Service in January 2025.

While the data doesn't explain why these differences exist, we can consider some potential reasons. For example, local authorities may have more stringent governance requirements and potential concerns about using AI with sensitive data such as personal information.

They may also face greater procurement restrictions or longer approval processes for adopting new technologies. Private and third-sector organisations, by contrast, might benefit from more flexible decision-making structures that allow for quicker adoption of emerging technologies and a need to establish a competitive edge.

Overall confidence in using AI at work is modest across social care in Wales. As seen in figure 25 below, only 39 per cent of respondents feel 'somewhat' or 'very confident' using AI in their work, while 41 per cent report 'low' or 'no confidence'. Nearly one in five respondents (20 per cent) believe AI isn't applicable to their role.

Figure 25: How confident do you feel using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your work? For example reading AI responses when using search engines, or using AI tools to summarise meetings.



Confidence in using AI tools varies by job role. Domiciliary care workers and senior managers show relatively high levels of confidence, with 46 per cent of senior managers and 45 per cent of domiciliary care workers reporting they feel 'somewhat' or 'very' confident using these tools. In contrast, adult care home managers are least confident using AI tools, with three per cent reporting that they're 'very' confident and 28 per cent that they're 'somewhat' confident.

The higher confidence among senior managers might come from their broader exposure to technological trends through strategic planning and networking. In contrast, domiciliary care workers might come across more practical use for AI in mobile working. Adult care home managers, with their complex regulatory duties and multiple priorities, likely have fewer chances to engage with AI tools. This may also impact how relevant they feel AI is to their role.

The use of AI in Welsh social care is still in its early stages, and it's natural that changes in practice take time to emerge. What might seem like a gap between current confidence levels and future expectations likely reflects the early phase of integrating new technologies.

These findings provide a useful baseline for understanding confidence in AI and can help inform how the sector supports the workforce in developing their digital capabilities.

Openness to experimentation

Despite low overall confidence, 39 per cent of respondents' report being 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in experimenting with AI tools. While there's a need to improve confidence levels among the majority of the social care workforce, this notable proportion of staff who feel confident using AI represents a valuable resource. This presents an opportunity to use the confidence of those staff in a way that will support the increase of confidence among their colleagues.

Staff in private and third-sector organisations report higher confidence in experimenting with AI tools compared to those in local authorities (43 per cent 'somewhat' or 'very' confident, compared to 33 per cent).

Similarly, staff in private and third-sector organisations show more confidence in making sure AI outputs are accurate (43 per cent 'somewhat' or 'very' confident) compared to local authority staff (31 per cent).

Confidence intervals across questions relating to AI use and experimentation were narrow (ranging from ±0.07 to ±0.09), indicating highly consistent responses across the workforce. These findings reliably highlight an early but important stage of AI adoption in social care.

5.3.2 Barriers to AI adoption

Key findings:

- 43 per cent report 'low' or 'no confidence' in experimenting with AI tools.
- 45 per cent lack confidence in making sure AI outputs are accurate.
- Local authorities show less confidence in understanding AI (53 per cent with 'low' or 'no confidence') than private and third-sector (44 per cent).
- Only 41 per cent feel confident using AI safely and responsibly.
- The main barriers are a lack of skills or knowledge (31 per cent), insufficient training (31 per cent), limited time to learn (26 per cent) and data privacy concerns (23 per cent).

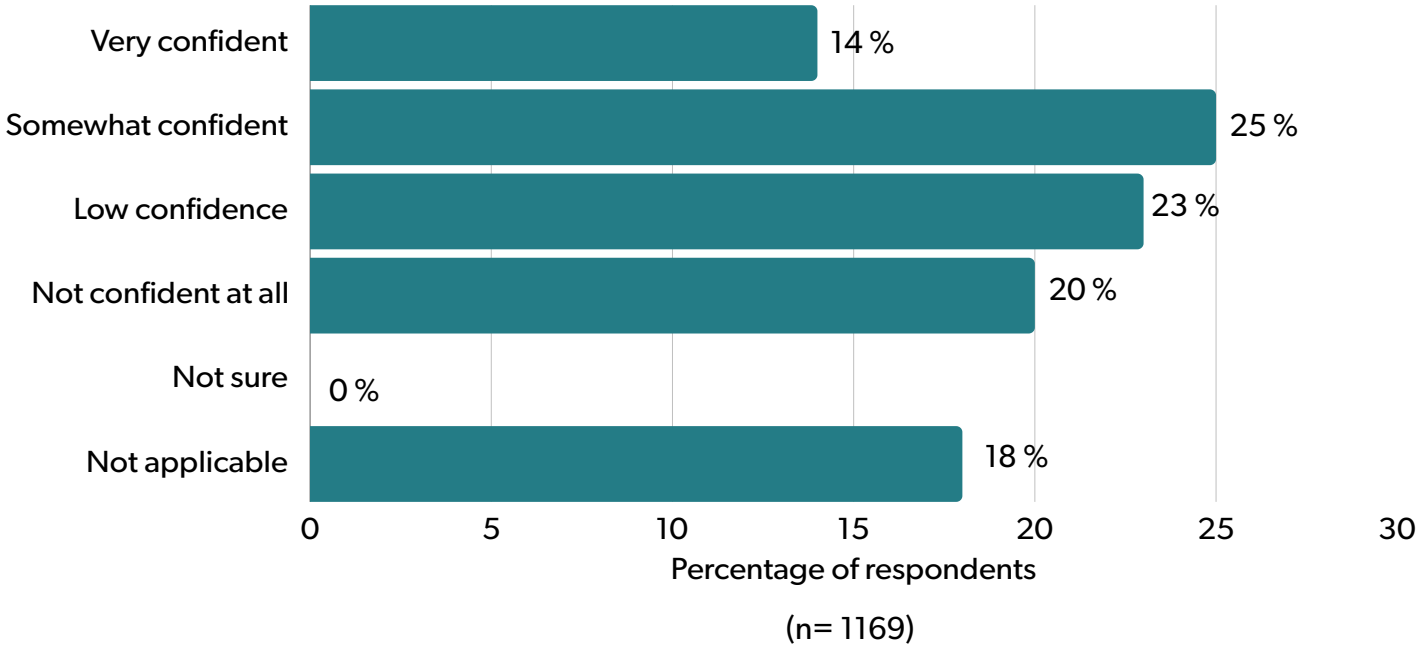
Key takeaways:

- Low AI literacy and confidence represents a significant barrier across the sector.
- Confidence varies significantly by role, with leadership positions generally showing higher confidence than practitioners.
- Many staff (20 per cent) don't see AI as relevant to their work.
- Understanding why 24 per cent report no barriers to AI adoption could provide valuable insights.
- Building AI confidence among frontline practitioners could unlock their ability to shape how these technologies integrate into care.

Low AI literacy and confidence

Beyond the generally low confidence in using AI tools mentioned above, we found that confidence in experimenting with AI tools could be improved. As you can see from figure 26 below, 43 per cent of respondents reported either 'low confidence' (23 per cent) or 'not confident at all' (20 per cent) experimenting with AI tools.

Figure 26: How confident do you feel experimenting with AI tools?



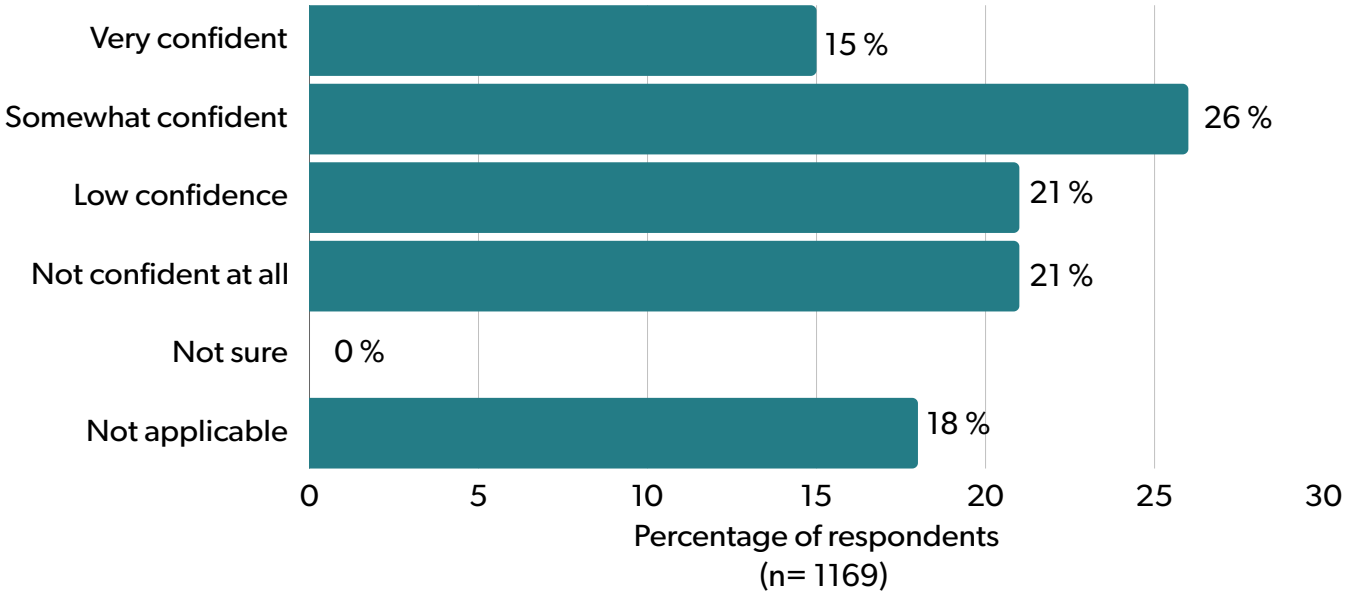
Making sure AI outputs are accurate shows room for improvement, with 45 per cent reporting 'low confidence' (23 per cent) or 'not confident at all' (22 per cent) in this area.

Local authority respondents reported less confidence in understanding how AI works (53 per cent with low or no confidence) when compared to private and third-sector respondents (44 per cent).

Using AI safely and responsibly

The data also reveals concerns about using AI safely and responsibly. For example, how respondents enter personal data. As figure 27 below shows, only 41 per cent of respondents feel 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in this area, while 42 per cent report 'low' or 'no confidence'. The remaining 18 per cent felt this was 'not applicable' to their role.

Figure 27: How confident do you feel using AI tools safely and responsibly? For example, how you enter personal data and the ethical issues involved.



Differences emerge across job roles. Residential childcare managers showed the highest confidence in using AI safely and responsibly, with 43 per cent reporting they were 'very confident'. Senior managers also demonstrated relatively higher confidence, with 56 per cent feeling 'somewhat' or 'very confident'.

In contrast, adult care home managers showed lower confidence in using AI safely and responsibly, with 30 per cent reporting 'low confidence' and 33 per cent 'not confident at all'. Similarly, occupational therapists reported low confidence, with 29 per cent having 'low confidence' and 43 per cent 'not confident at all'.

This suggests that while some leadership roles are beginning to develop confidence in safe AI practices, many practitioners remain concerned about responsible AI use in social care contexts.

There may be significant value in investing specifically in building AI confidence among frontline practitioners to unlock their ability to participate in and shape how these technologies are integrated into care practices.

Perceived lack of relevance

Nearly one in five staff (20 per cent) responded 'not applicable' when asked if they use AI tools in their work. This suggests many staff don't yet see how AI could be relevant to their daily work in social care. We saw this in our qualitative analysis of the additional responses people left at the end of the survey. A theme that came up over time was concerns with AI and its relevance in social care. Respondents asked questions such as "how will it fit in our line of work?" and that they "doubt digital technologies and AI could do [their] job of looking after and caring for someone".

It's important that we communicate the value of digital innovations in social care by sharing examples of how they've helped people in the past and their potential to do so in the future.

Barriers to AI adoption

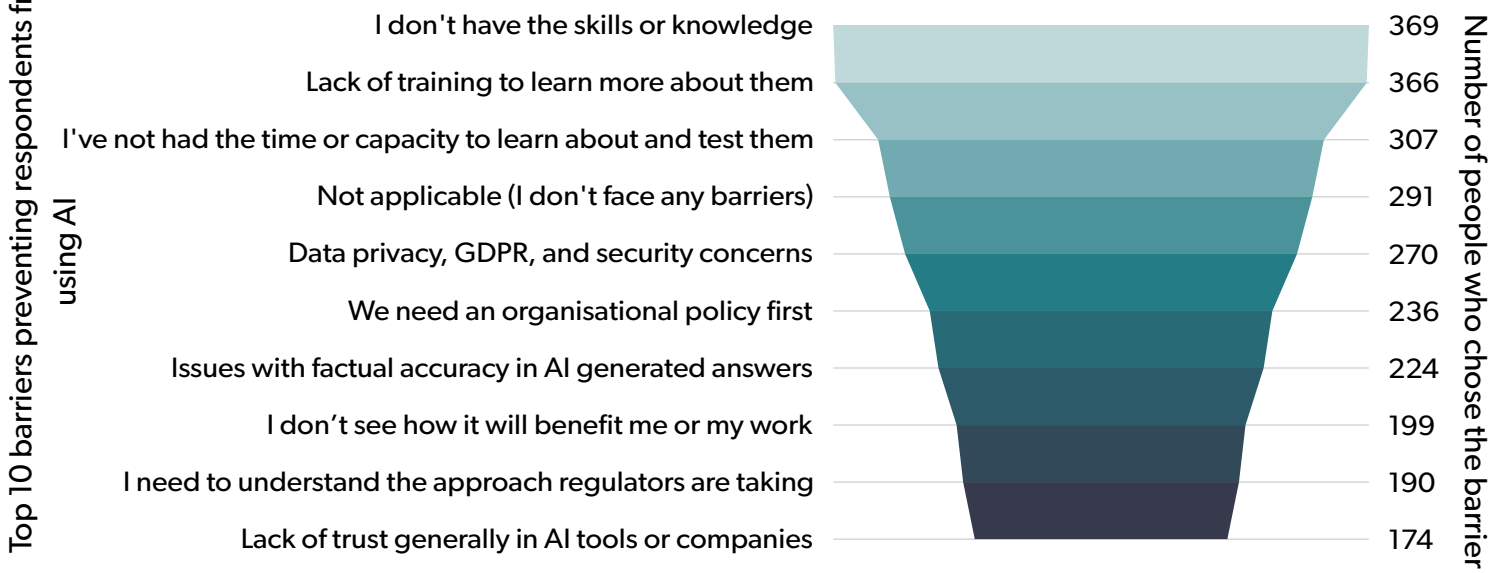
Figure 28 on the following page shows the top 10 barriers respondents identified as factors preventing them from using AI tools in their work.

The top three were:

- 'I don't have the skills or knowledge'
- 'Lack of training to learn more about them'
- 'I've not had the time or capacity to learn about and test them'

While the majority of respondents identified specific barriers to AI adoption, it's worth noting that almost a quarter (24 per cent) reported that they don't face any barriers to using AI. Understanding what enables this segment of the workforce to engage with AI without barriers could provide valuable insights for addressing the challenges faced by their colleagues and inform targeted support strategies across the sector.

Figure 28: The top 10 barriers respondents identified as factors preventing them from using AI tools in their work.



5.3.3 Organisational approaches to AI

Key findings:

- Most organisations (37 per cent) 'sometimes' evaluate strategic AI opportunities.
- Private and third-sector organisations are more proactive in this area (15 per cent 'always' evaluate) than local authorities (seven per cent).
- 13 per cent of respondents are unsure of their organisation's AI plans.
- The most common potential uses for AI are automating meeting transcription (32 per cent), data aggregation (26 per cent) and interactive case management (16 per cent).

Key takeaways:

- Current organisational approaches suggest varied and early-stage exploration.
- Lack of consensus on specific uses indicates organisations are still exploring rather than implementing established strategies.
- Focus appears to be on administrative efficiency and data analysis rather than direct care delivery.
- The variation in responses suggests no standardised approach to AI adoption exists yet in social care.

Evaluating strategic AI opportunities

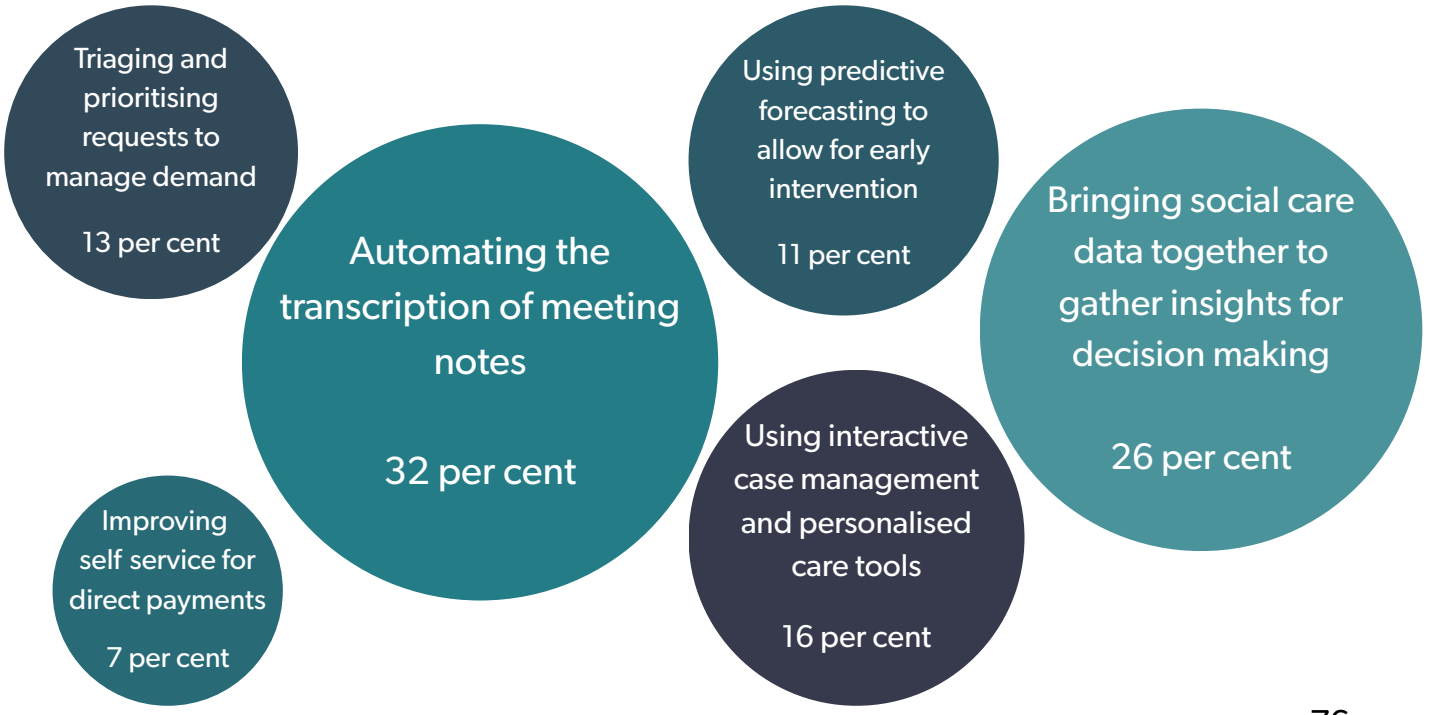
When asked about evaluating strategic opportunities to use AI tools in operations and services, most respondents (37 per cent) said they 'sometimes' do this. This was followed by 23 per cent who 'rarely' evaluate strategic AI opportunities and 14 per cent who 'never' do. Only 12 per cent of respondents said they 'always' evaluate these opportunities.

We found differences between organisation types. Staff in private and third-sector organisations reported higher rates of strategic AI evaluation, with 15 per cent 'always' evaluating AI opportunities. This is in comparison to just seven per cent in local authorities – an eight per cent difference. More local authority staff reported 'rarely' evaluating strategic AI opportunities (28 per cent) compared to private and third-sector staff (20 per cent).

Current AI adoption plans

When asked about their organisation's approach to adopting AI, the overall picture suggests varied and early-stage exploration. Some respondents (13 per cent) were unsure of their organisation's plans, while 29 per cent indicated 'none of the above' when presented with potential AI uses.

Figure 29 shows the most common ways organisations are looking to adopt AI tools:



Local authorities and private and third-sector organisations showed interest in automating meeting transcription and using data for insights. But the detailed responses revealed a diverse range of approaches without much consensus on specific uses, suggesting organisations are still exploring potential uses rather than implementing established AI strategies.

These findings give valuable insight into the current state of organisational AI adoption across social care in Wales. The data suggests most organisations are in the early stages of considering uses for AI, with an emphasis on administrative efficiency and data analysis rather than direct care delivery. The variation in responses indicates there isn't yet a standardised approach to AI adoption in social care.

5.4 Organisational digital culture and leadership

This section explores how digital technology is led and embedded in social care organisations across Wales.

We'll look at leaders' responses to questions on their organisations' vision for digital innovation and transformation and the leadership practices they have in place. Of our total number of respondents, 14 per cent were in senior leadership positions in their organisation. These include roles such as director, CEO, service manager, head of department and responsible individual.

We'll also look at what staff think of their organisation's digital leadership and culture, the varying levels of digital maturity, and how well organisational strategies align with staff experiences.

5.4.1 Digital strategy and leadership

This section provides an analysis of responses from senior leaders about their digital strategy and leadership.

Key findings:

- 76 per cent of organisations incorporate digital planning at least 'sometimes'.
- Private and third-sectors show stronger planning in this area (34 per cent 'always' have clear plans) compared to local authorities (16 per cent).
- Only 14 per cent of organisations 'always' invest in technology maintenance costs, dropping to three per cent for local authorities.
- 33 per cent of local authorities 'rarely' engage with emerging technologies, compared to 12 per cent in private and third-sector organisations.

Key takeaways:

- There are significant differences between sectors in digital strategic planning approaches.
- Investment in technology remains challenging across all sectors, but especially in local authorities.
- Local authorities struggle more with technology 'horizon scanning' and awareness.
- Data protection represents a relative strength, particularly in local authorities, where governance requirements are stricter.

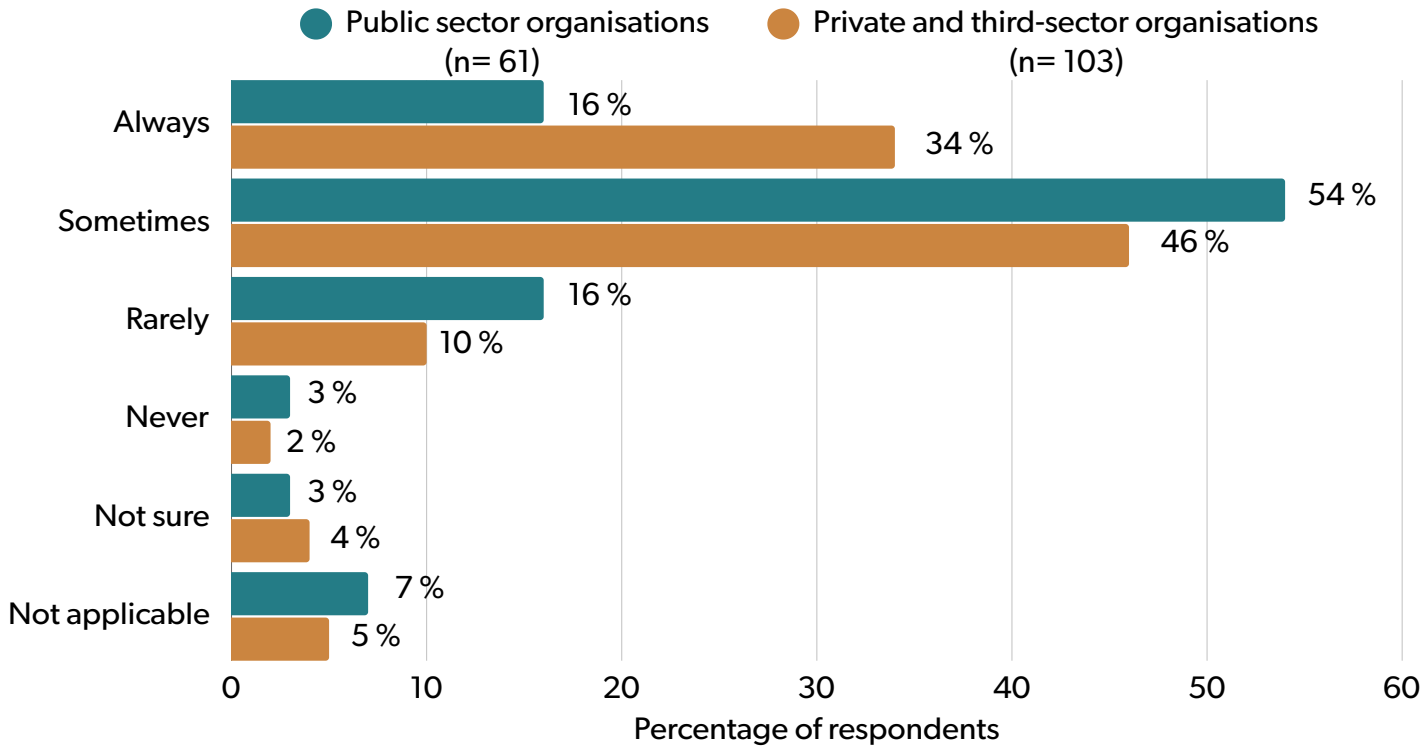
Clear digital planning and vision

When asked about having clear plans for how digital solutions will help achieve their mission, vision and goals, most organisations report making progress, but there are some variations.

While 76 per cent of respondents say digital planning happens at least 'sometimes' or 'always,' which suggests a growing focus on strategic digital integration, there are notable differences between sectors. Private and third-sector organisations show stronger digital planning than local authorities, with 34 per cent reporting they 'always' have clear plans compared to just 16 per cent in local authorities.

As shown in figure 30, around one in five local authority respondents (19 per cent) state digital planning happens ‘rarely’ or ‘never’, compared to 12 per cent in the private sector and third-sector. A small but notable percentage (six per cent) feel digital planning is 'not applicable,' suggesting some organisations don’t prioritise digital planning at all.

Figure 30: To what extent do you have clear plans about how digital solutions will help you achieve your mission, vision and goals?



While the findings highlight important patterns in digital planning, the moderate confidence interval (±0.21) suggests some variability in senior leaders' experiences. These results should therefore be seen as indicative of broader trends rather than fully consistent across the workforce.

Investment in technology support and maintenance

Only 14 per cent of organisations report that they 'always' understand and invest in the costs of supporting, maintaining and improving technology. This remains a challenge across all sectors, in particular with local authorities (three per cent). This is higher with private and third-sector organisations (21 per cent).

The proportion of organisations that 'rarely' or 'never' invest adequately in technology maintenance is concerning (28 per cent overall), with local authorities slightly higher at 30 per cent compared to 27 per cent in the private and third-sectors.

Keeping pace with emerging technologies and assessing risks

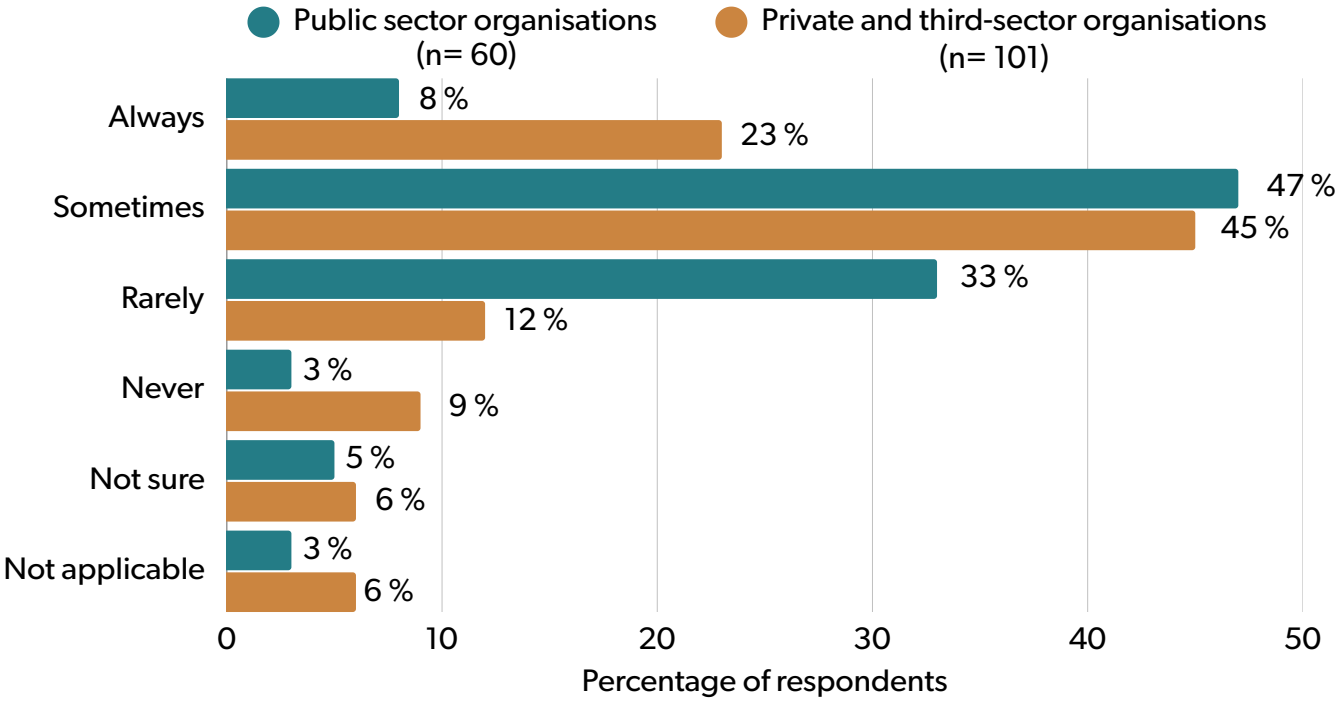
Awareness of emerging technologies and risk assessment shows room for improvement across social care.

Over 62 per cent of respondents keep up with emerging technology at least 'sometimes' but local authorities struggle more in this area. A third (33 per cent) of local authority leaders state they 'rarely' engage with emerging technologies, compared to just 12 per cent in the private and third-sectors.

The significant difference in those 'always' keeping up with emerging technologies (eight per cent in local authorities, compared to 23 per cent in private and third-sectors) suggests local authorities may lack dedicated resources or time for technology ‘horizon scanning’.

Figure 31 on the following page shows responses from public sector leaders compared to private and third-sector organisations.

Figure 31: To what extent do you keep up with emerging technologies and their implications?



When it comes to assessing risks of adopting and introducing new technology, the responses show a similar pattern. While 70 per cent of organisations assess technological risks at least 'sometimes' or 'always,' private and third-sector organisations demonstrate a slightly more consistent approach to risk assessment. Thirty-three per cent of respondents from private and third-sector organisations ‘always’ assess the risks of technology. This is compared to 23 per cent of local authorities.

The proportion of local authorities that 'rarely' assess technological risks (18 per cent) is higher than in private and third-sector (10 per cent). This suggests that formal risk assessment processes for new technologies may be less developed in local authority settings.

Data protection and cybersecurity prioritisation

Data protection and cybersecurity represent areas of relative strength for organisations, with 74 per cent of organisations discussing these issues at least 'sometimes' or 'always.'

Local authorities show slightly higher engagement in these discussions, with 82 per cent reporting that they ‘always’ or ‘sometimes’ discuss these concerns, compared to 69 per cent in private and third-sectors. This may reflect the public sector's stricter governance requirements.

There are similar patterns for cybersecurity, with 72 per cent of organisations discussing cybersecurity risks at least 'sometimes'. Local authorities only show a slightly stronger performance, with 75 per cent discussing these issues at least 'sometimes', compared to 70 per cent in the private and third-sectors.

Workforce digital skills recruitment and development

Recruitment and retention of digitally skilled staff shows mixed results. While 67 per cent of organisations consider digital skills and knowledge in recruitment at least 'sometimes', private and third-sector organisations appear more proactive. Among these organisations, 35 per cent 'always' consider this, compared to 23 per cent in local authorities.

A significant proportion of local authorities (22 per cent) 'rarely' consider how to recruit and retain people with the right digital skills and knowledge, compared to 10 per cent in the private and third-sectors.

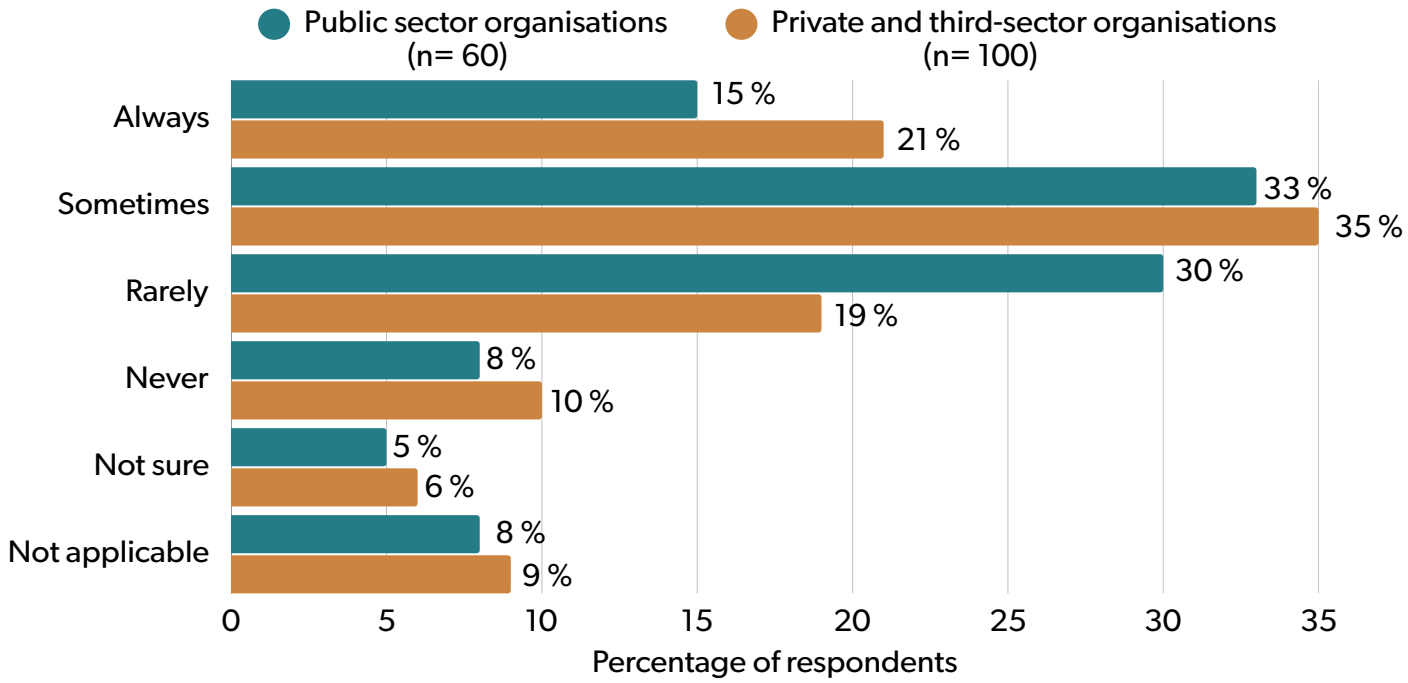
Cross-organisational learning and knowledge sharing

Sharing learning on digital transformation with other organisations, networks and partners appears to be the weakest area overall in the digital strategy and leadership section.

Only 53 per cent of organisations share learning on digital transformation with other organisations at least 'sometimes'. As figure 32 on the following page shows, local authorities are less likely to share learning, with 30 per cent 'rarely' sharing, compared to 19 per cent in the private and third-sector organisations.

This suggests a potential opportunity for cross-sector learning and collaboration, particularly given the varying levels of digital maturity identified across different organisations.

Figure 32: To what extent do you share learning on digital transformation with other organisations, partners and networks?



Confidence intervals across questions in the digital strategy and leadership section range from ±0.19 to ±0.21, indicating generally good to moderate reliability.

While responses regarding data protection discussions and recruitment practices showed strong consistency, findings relating to investment in technology, engagement with emerging technologies, and knowledge sharing showed greater variability. These trends should be interpreted as broadly indicative, recognising that different organisational structures and priorities influence practices across the sector.

5.4.2 Perceptions of digital leadership

Key findings:

- 81 per cent of staff believe leaders understand and champion digital technology.
- 11 per cent are unsure about leadership's digital stance.
- 71 per cent of senior leaders believe they have digital leadership skills.
- 23 per cent of local authority leaders report 'rarely' having necessary digital leadership skills compared to much higher confidence in the private and third-sector organisations.

Key takeaways:

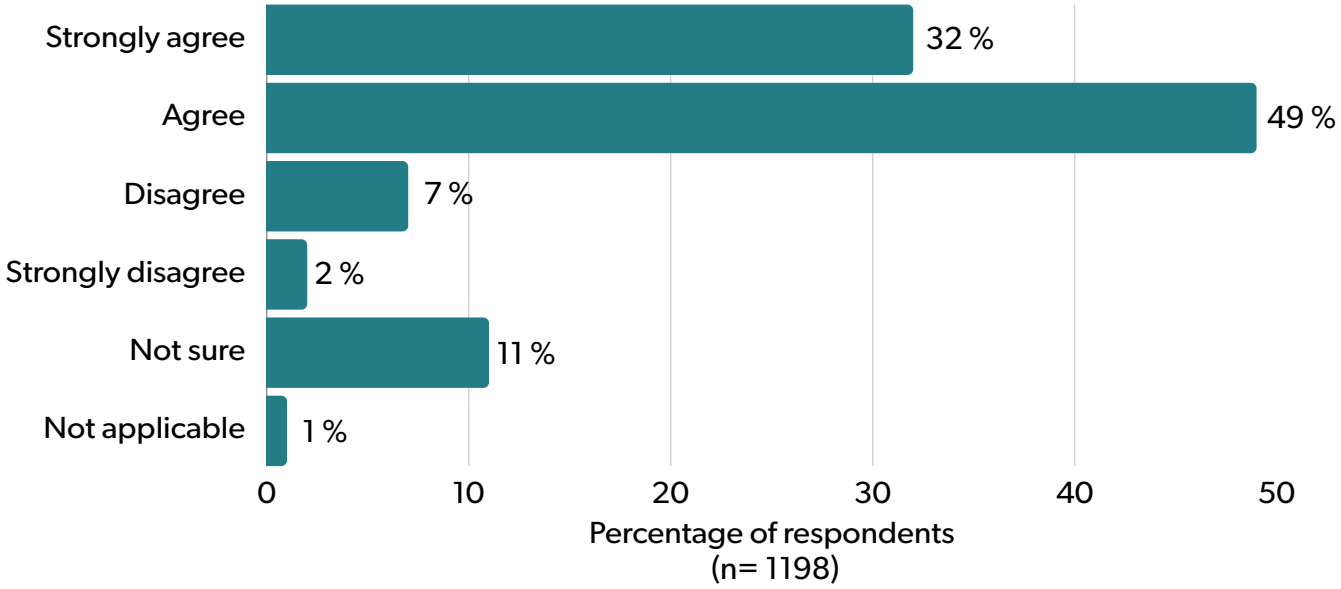
- A communication gap exists between leadership digital work and workforce understanding.
- Leadership confidence varies significantly by sector.
- The confidence gap likely reflects more complex technological landscapes in local authorities.
- Targeted support for local authority leadership could strengthen digital transformation efforts.

Most social care staff view their leaders positively when it comes to digital technology. Figure 33 shows that 81 per cent of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their leaders understand and champion digital and technology.

Only a small proportion (nine per cent) ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with this statement, suggesting leaders are generally seen as supportive of digital initiatives.

But about one in 10 staff (11 per cent) say they're ‘not sure’ whether their leaders understand and champion the importance of digital and technology. This suggests there may be a communication gap between the work being done by leadership in this area and how the workforce understands it.

Figure 33: To what extent do you agree that your leaders understand and champion the importance of digital and technology?



When we compare different types of organisations, local authority leaders express slightly more disagreement about leadership's understanding and championing of digital compared to those in private and third-sector organisations. Among local authority staff, nine per cent don't think their leaders understand and champion the importance of digital and technology, compared with eight per cent of private and third-sector staff.

Among senior leaders themselves, 71 per cent believe they have at least some level of digital leadership skills. But confidence varies by sector. Local authority leaders report lower confidence in leading digital change, with 23 per cent saying they 'rarely' have the necessary skills. In contrast, leaders in private and third-sector organisations show greater confidence in their digital leadership abilities, with 79 per cent stating that they 'always' or 'sometimes' have the skills needed to lead digital change.

The narrow confidence interval (±0.07) indicates that responses regarding leaders' support for digital initiatives are highly consistent across the workforce, confirming this as a genuine strength.

5.4.3 Perceptions of organisational digital maturity

Key findings:

- 69 per cent of organisations are making good progress integrating digital into strategy or operations.
- Nine per cent have no digital strategy and 21 per cent have only basic digital tools.
- The private and third-sectors have fewer organisations in the 'starting out' phase (six per cent) compared to local authorities (12 per cent).

Key takeaways:

- Digital maturity varies considerably across social care in Wales.
- Nearly a third of organisations remain in early development stages.
- Variations likely reflect different organisational structures and funding models.
- Smaller, more nimble organisations potentially adapt more quickly to digital opportunities.

Our responses reveal varying perceptions of digital maturity levels across social care organisations in Wales.

Most respondents believe their organisation is making good progress (69 per cent), reporting that digital is either part of their strategy or fully embedded in how they work.

Figure 34 below shows that nearly one in 10 organisations (nine per cent) are still in the early stages, with no digital strategy in place. A further 21 per cent have only some digital basics in place, such as using email or social media, and recognise they could do more.

This suggests that a substantial proportion of the sector remain at the beginning of their digital journey.

Figure 34: How digitally capable do you think your organisation is?	
Level of digital capability	Percentage of respondents (%) (n =1175)
Advanced: Digital is integral to our organisational strategy and embedded in everything we do.	34
Progressing: Digital is part of our strategy, but we've not embedded this yet. We're investing in technology and developing our skills.	35
Starting out: We're developing our use of digital across the organisation but we don't have a strategy in place yet.	9
Curious: We have some digital basics in place. For example, we use email or social media and recognise we could do more.	21

Private and third-sector staff generally report that their organisation is more digitally mature than local government employees. Only six per cent of private and third-sector staff believe that their organisation is 'starting out', compared to 12 per cent of local authority staff.

Additionally, 24 per cent of private and third-sector employees acknowledge that their organisation has digital basics in place but needs further improvements, compared to 18 per cent of local authority staff.

5.4.4 Staff perceptions of their organisation's digital maturity and culture

Key findings:

- 80 per cent believe their organisation actively seeks technology improvements.
- 77 per cent feel encouraged to develop digital skills but only 71 per cent have access to necessary training.
- Only 53 per cent feel confident delivering digital projects.
- Just 56 per cent have adequate project resources and 36 per cent are either unsure or lack what they need.

Key takeaways:

- There are significant gaps between strategic ambitions and practical implementation.
- The gap between encouragement and access to training suggests disconnect between goals and resources.
- Low confidence in project delivery represents the largest gap between strategic intent and workforce capability.
- Many staff lack the confidence, resources and training to turn strategies into everyday reality.

We asked how staff perceive their organisation's digital maturity, practices and culture, revealing important insights into how digital is embedded across social care in Wales.

Exploring digital improvement opportunities

Staff report broadly positive views about their organisation's approach to exploring technology improvements.

A significant majority (80 per cent) believe their organisation actively seeks ways to improve services through technology. This suggests that there's generally a positive attitude towards digital innovation across social care in Wales.

But 10 per cent of staff are unsure whether their organisation looks for technological improvement opportunities. While this could reflect communication issues, it might also indicate that, in some organisations, a clear approach to digital improvement doesn't exist or isn't well-developed.

When staff aren't sure about their organisation's digital direction, it may be because that direction hasn't been fully established, rather than simply not being communicated effectively. This pattern of uncertainty appears across several areas of our assessment and suggests that some organisations may still be developing their approach to digital transformation. The narrow confidence interval (±0.07) indicates a high level of consistency in responses.

Support for digital skills development and access to training

We explored both organisational encouragement for developing digital skills and access to relevant training resources. Figure 35 below shows the overall responses for both questions.

Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of respondents feel encouraged to develop digital skills, showing strong organisational support for digital capability building. But a slightly lower proportion (71 per cent) feel they have access to the training and resources needed to develop these skills.

This six per cent gap between encouragement and access suggests a disconnect between what organisations want to achieve and the access they provide to training or resources to support that aim. While organisations express support for digital development, they may not always provide adequate resources or time to make this possible.

Figure 35: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your organisation?

	We are supported and encouraged to develop our digital skills and knowledge. (n=1178)	We have access to training and resources to develop our digital skills and knowledge. (n = 1172)
Strongly agree	31 %	31 %
Agree	46 %	40 %
Disagree	12 %	14 %
Strongly disagree	3 %	3 %
Not sure	7 %	10 %
Not applicable	1 %	2 %

Consideration of digital barriers

Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their organisation considers digital barriers that people might face when using technology or tools. This suggests a generally good awareness of accessibility and inclusion issues across the sector.

But over 12 per cent ‘disagree’, indicating that some organisations may need to strengthen their approach to digital accessibility and inclusion. Making sure the diverse needs of both staff and service users are considered remains an important area for development.

Confidence in delivering digital projects

While most staff (69 per cent) believe digital is part of their organisation's strategy or fully embedded, we've found some disconnects between strategic intentions and day-to-day experiences.

The biggest gap appears around confidence in delivering digital projects. Just over half (53 per cent) feel confident in delivering digital projects. This is notably lower than the proportion who feel supported to develop digital skills (77 per cent) or who have access to training (72 per cent), representing the largest gap between strategic intent and the capability of the workforce.

A significant proportion (31 per cent) ‘disagree’ or are ‘unsure’ about their project delivery confidence, highlighting a substantial disconnect between general digital skills and the specific capabilities needed for implementation.

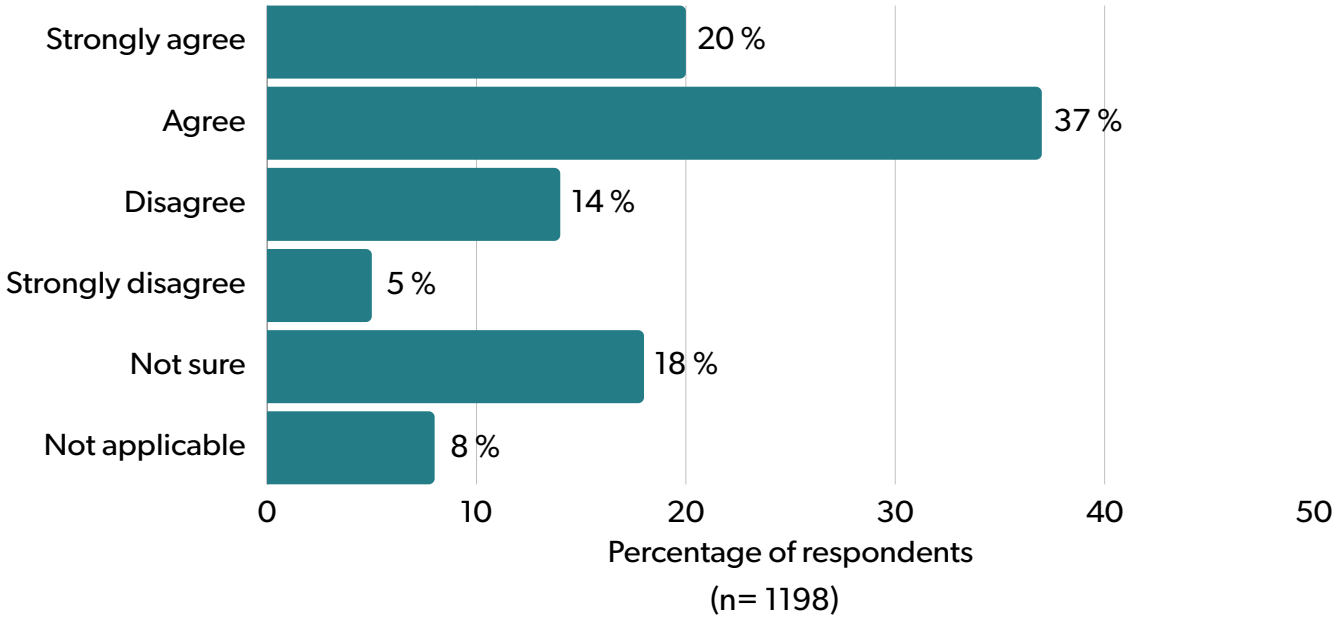
This suggests that while organisations might have digital ambitions, many staff don't feel fully equipped to turn these into reality. Organisations may need to focus more on practical project delivery skills alongside general digital literacy to bridge this gap.

Resources for digital project delivery

Responses about resource availability show similar patterns to confidence levels. In figure 36 on the next page, you can see that 57 per cent of respondents ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that they have the resources needed for digital projects, 18 per cent are unsure and 19 per cent actively ‘disagree’.

This suggests that limited access to adequate resources (for example, funding, devices, technical support and dedicated staff time) is a significant barrier to digital project delivery across social care in Wales.

Figure 36: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your organisation? We have the resources to deliver digital projects.



The relatively high proportion of respondents who are unsure about resource availability (18 per cent) suggests that some organisations may not communicate clearly about how digital projects are resourced or prioritised.

This resource gap clearly affects how digital strategies translate into practice, with confidence in digital project delivery significantly lower than general digital skills support. While organisations might encourage skill development, the practical resources needed for implementation may not be consistently available.

These findings suggest that while most social care organisations in Wales recognise the importance of digital and are working to embed it strategically, there's more work to do in making sure staff feel confident, resourced and supported to make digital ambitions a reality in their everyday work.

Key digital culture challenges

From our analysis, we've identified factors that affect digital culture and leadership across social care in Wales. They are:

1. Digital leadership confidence

- Overall, 16 per cent of leaders expressed that they 'rarely' or 'never' have the necessary skills to lead digital change. More local authority leaders struggle with this, with 25 per cent saying they lack these skills.

2. Project resource constraints

- There's a noticeable gap between strategic ambitions and practical implementation, with 23 per cent of staff not feeling confident in delivering digital projects.

3. Communication gaps

- With 11 per cent of staff 'unsure' about their leadership's approach to digital, there appears to be room for improvement in messaging about digital direction.

4. Training awareness

- 27 per cent of staff are 'unsure' or 'disagree' that they receive adequate training support. This suggests issues with how training opportunities are communicated, or barriers to accessing them, such as being given the time to undertake training.

5. Strategic implementation

- While 69 per cent believe digital is part of their organisation's strategy, the lower confidence in project delivery suggests challenges in translating strategy into practice.

5.5 Six organisational digital maturity patterns

This section explores the digital maturity patterns we've identified across some of the organisations who've taken part. It's based on data from 31 social care providers where enough staff responded to the tool to offer organisational insights that could be generalised.

While there were enough responses to give us some insight into these organisations, the results aren't a statistical representation of the entire Welsh social care sector.

We've focused our analysis on patterns in digital maturity that cut across different organisation types and sizes.

Key findings:

- Pattern one: Organisations with high digital confidence (more than 60 per cent of staff 'very confident') consistently demonstrate reliable access to equipment, strong leadership support and clear digital strategic integration.
- Pattern two: Digital weaknesses rarely exist in isolation. Organisations with low scores in one area typically show similar weaknesses across cybersecurity, leadership engagement, data confidence and project delivery.
- Pattern three: Strong data literacy correlates with higher innovation capability, greater readiness for implementing care technologies, and more consistent digital strategy engagement.
- Pattern four: Organisations with high cybersecurity confidence (more than 65 per cent) demonstrate structured approaches, including mandatory training and accessible security policies.
- Pattern five: Staff show high confidence in supporting technology decisions but low confidence in actually using Telecare systems, wearable technology, or smart home equipment.
- Pattern six: Smaller organisations (fewer than 100 staff) adopt new tools quickly but have weaker infrastructure. Larger organisations (more than 500 staff) have stronger governance but lower innovation ratings.

Key takeaways:

- Digital confidence flourishes when proper foundations are in place, such as reliable technology, leadership support and strategic integration.
- Digital maturity needs a holistic approach rather than focusing on individual technology areas.
- Data literacy appears to be an important indicator of overall digital maturity across all organisation types and sizes.
- Structured approaches strengthen cybersecurity, particularly in larger public sector and established third-sector organisations.
- The gap between ability to advise on technology choices and practical skills with devices highlights the need for more hands-on experience with care technologies.
- While size and sector influence digital maturity patterns, the most mature organisations show strong connections between systems, training, culture and leadership support, regardless of size.

1. Digital confidence flourishes with proper foundations

In organisations where over 60 per cent of staff report being 'very confident' in everyday digital skills, we consistently found stronger foundational elements that are essential to digital maturity.

These organisations demonstrate:

- reliable access to maintained equipment
- strong leadership support for digital initiatives
- clear integration of digital into strategic planning.

This suggests that when staff have reliable access to working technology and can see digital priorities reflected in leadership decisions, including how technology integrates into the wider system and way of working, they have more confidence in everyday digital skills.

2. Digital weaknesses rarely exist in isolation

Where organisations show ‘low confidence’ scores (between two and three on a five-point scale) in one digital area, this typically signals low confidence in other areas.

For example, our analysis reveals that organisations with low digital innovation scores typically showed similarly low levels in:

- cybersecurity awareness
- leadership engagement with digital initiatives
- confidence using data
- project delivery capabilities.

These connected challenges suggest that addressing digital maturity needs a holistic approach. Rather than focusing on single technology areas in isolation, organisations need to look at all the different elements of digital maturity collectively.

3. Correlation between data literacy and digital literacy

In organisations where 60 per cent or more of staff rate themselves as 'good' or 'excellent' in gathering, interpreting and applying data (data literacy), we found strong correlations with other areas, including:

- stronger innovation capability scores
- higher readiness for implementing care technologies
- more consistent digital strategy engagement at leadership level.

This finding appears across all organisation types and sizes. Data literacy may be an important indicator of overall digital maturity, even if we can't prove it directly causes success in innovation, readiness for change, or digital strategy.

4. Structured approaches strengthen cybersecurity

Organisations reporting 'very high' cybersecurity confidence (over 65 per cent of staff) consistently demonstrated that they have structured and formalised approaches to digital safety.

Analysis shows these organisations usually have:

- mandatory cybersecurity training programmes
- clearly referenced and easily accessible security policies.

Possibly as a result of this, these organisations also have high GDPR awareness and threat-recognition capabilities among staff.

This pattern is particularly evident in larger public sector and established third-sector organisations where structured policies and processes are more developed.

5. Staff confidently support people to make informed choices about technology, but lack hands-on skills to use them

Our analysis reveals a substantial gap between supporting decisions about technology and actually being able to use it across nearly all organisations.

Specifically:

- staff across organisations demonstrated high confidence in supporting people to make an informed choice about the benefits, risks and ethical issues surrounding technology
- these same staff reported low confidence in using Telecare systems
- most reported low confidence with wearable technology or smart home equipment
- this gap in confidence between different digital tools was consistent across both public sector and third-sector providers.

The gap highlights the need for more hands-on training and practical experience with care technologies.

6. Size and sector are factors, but don't determine digital maturity

Our analysis reveals distinct patterns related to digital maturity levels, when compared by organisation size and sector:

- smaller organisations (fewer than 100 staff) showed a stronger ability to quickly adopt and implement new digital tools but had weaker infrastructure
- larger organisations (more than 500 staff) demonstrated stronger governance structures and better cybersecurity, but lower ratings for AI adoption and innovation
- third-sector providers showed stronger values-driven digital culture but a weaker awareness of IT systems and data management and AI confidence.

Despite these differences, the most digitally mature organisations – regardless of size – showed stronger connections between their technology systems, staff training programmes, organisational culture and leadership support for digital transformation.

6. Recommendations and strategic actions

With the findings in mind, we've identified several key areas where focused attention could help strengthen digital maturity and literacy across social care in Wales. These recommendations are structured to build on each other and include both immediate priorities and longer-term strategic considerations.

The ultimate goal of these recommendations is to summarise key opportunities to help partners create a strong foundation for the sustainable improvement of digital maturity across the social care sector in Wales.

These recommendations are structured under the following headings:

- Developing a digitally ready workforce
- Strengthen digital leadership and governance
- Focus on long-term sustainability and continuous improvement
- The importance of working together

6.1 Developing a digitally ready workforce

6.1.1 Develop a 'what good looks like' framework for digital maturity and literacy in social care

The findings revealed that people and organisations are undergoing a journey of digital transformation. They're at different stages of this journey and there are different factors affecting their rate of progress.

Clear standards and expectations would help them navigate the digital landscape in social care and show their potential for digital confidence and innovation.

To help with this, we suggest co-developing a 'what good looks like' framework for digital maturity and skills in social care. This could be informed by the six organisational digital maturity patterns described in section 5.5 of this report.

By using real-life experiences and learning from relevant aspects of existing frameworks, such as England's what good looks like guidance, a Welsh framework could help:

- establish clear expectations for digital maturity at different types of providers
- give organisations a reference point for assessing their current capabilities to guide the development of targeted training and support
- create a common language for discussing digital maturity across the sector.

The framework should be co-produced with input from frontline staff, managers and digital leaders across different types of organisations to ensure relevance and buy-in. It should also use the findings from the digital potential tool to help set realistic expectations based on what the current digital maturity and literacy levels are in social care in Wales.

6.1.2 Target skills development based on identified needs

6.1.2.a Create a digital capability framework

The digital potential tool has highlighted distinct patterns in digital confidence and capability between management and direct care roles, as well as variations among different types of organisations.

We recommend creating a digital capability framework with flexible learning pathways tailored to social care professionals that address the unique requirements of their roles based on the 'what good looks like' framework.

Unlike the Government Digital, data and technology (DDaT) profession capability framework,[13] which is designed for digital professionals, these pathways would target social care professionals, identifying the practical digital skills they need to improve everyday care delivery. This would give leaders and frontline staff clarity about the digital capabilities expected in their roles and make sure that upskilling is relevant, achievable and aligned with real-world practice.

Specifically, these pathways would:

- help identify skill gaps for social care roles
- help assess how well existing learning opportunities meet digital skills needs for social care
- provide clear progression routes for digital skills development
- make the most of the existing training offer
- align with existing qualification frameworks where appropriate
- support career development and workforce mobility.

13. Government Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework - Government Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework: https://ddat-capability-framework.service.gov.uk/

This aligns with:

- mission one of the Welsh Government's Digital and data strategy,[14] which calls for nationally agreed skill standards and training support
- the Workforce strategy for health and social care[15] – specifically the goal to identify common competencies and enable digital capability at all levels of the social care workforce
- intelligence from the Social Care Wales Workforce development programme (SCWWDP)[16] applications, which stresses the need for relevant training packages that can be tailored to identified needs
- The Copilot Readiness Report[17] recently published by ADSS Cymru, which recommends targeted digital readiness training to support AI use and confidence.

Please note, in the strengthen digital leadership and governance section, we focus on how we can develop digital leadership and transformation.

6.1.2.b Develop a targeted digital skills development programme

Our findings show key skills gaps across social care in Wales. We've identified key differences across the public, private and third sectors and job roles. For example, direct care roles report lower digital confidence compared to management roles, and leaders in public sector organisations report lower confidence in leading digital change.

We recommend developing a targeted digital skills development programme that would use findings from the digital potential tool, the digital capability framework, and build on existing training to develop a programme that supports building a digitally ready workforce. Areas of focus for the training would begin with the areas of lowest confidence for specific groups. The programme should also acknowledge and build on their existing strengths.

Specifically, the programme should:

- address practical, job-relevant digital skills
- include hands-on experience with relevant technologies
- provide sufficient time for practice and consolidation
- be accessible through multiple channels, including in-person and online options

14. Welsh Government's Digital and Data Strategy: https://www.gov.wales/digital-and-data-strategy-health-and-social-care-wales
15. A Healthier Wales: Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care: https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/HEIW_SCW_Draft_Workforce_Strategy_for_consultation_July-Sept_2019-English-v2.pdf
16. The Social Care Wales Workforce Development Grant (SCWWDP) is a long-established grant programme to support training and workforce development across social care in Wales: https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy/social-care-wales-workforce-development-programme-scwwdp
17. ADSS Cymru's Copilot Readiness Report: https://www.adss.cymru/image/page/Copilot%20report%20version%201.0%20final%20(En).pdf

- be responsive to the learning needs of professionals, recognising that needs might change over time
- be adaptable to emerging technologies and digital trends, allowing practitioners to engage with new developments as they come up in the field and testing ways of introducing and scaling these within the sector.

The programme should identify, align with and build on existing local, regional and national skills development activities for social care and digital to strengthen their connections. For example, it supports:

- the Workforce strategy for health and social care, which emphasises flexible, inclusive access to digital training and upskilling the entire workforce
- the Social Care Institute of Excellence's Digital learning report[18] findings on the need for different approaches for care workers with lower digital confidence
- the A Healthier Wales plan, which champions equity in digital access and lifelong learning.

Where to start

Our assessment identified specific areas where staff consistently report lower levels of confidence across multiple roles and sectors.

We recommend prioritising training and support in the areas where respondents reported the lowest levels of confidence, including:

1. Technical problem solving

- Helping staff develop skills to troubleshoot common technical issues

2. Specialised technologies for person-centred care

- For example, only 45 per cent of staff feel confident using technology for well-being, such as interactive therapy devices

3. Understanding and using AI tools

- 41 per cent report low or no confidence in this area, with many not seeing its relevance to their role.

Training in these areas should include practical, hands-on components and opportunities for ongoing practice and support.

18. Social Care Institute of Excellence's Digital Learning report: https://www.scie.org.uk/wales/digital-learning/

6.1.3 Develop a community-led approach to building a digitally ready workforce

Our analysis shows that digital confidence varies across different roles and sectors. Some people and organisations have a higher level of digital literacy and maturity than others and this provides an opportunity to learn from others' experience.

The findings show clear evidence that peer support is already happening in organisations, with 75 per cent of staff feeling confident in encouraging and supporting colleagues to use digital technology. This number increases in management roles, indicating a strong foundation for knowledge sharing.

But when we asked leaders how often they share learning on digital transformation with other organisations, networks and partners, only 53 per cent said their organisations do so at least 'sometimes'. This suggests that valuable expertise and experience could be shared more widely across the sector, potentially benefiting everyone involved in delivering care.

To help bring this to life, we recommend establishing a national community of practice that provides a place for information sharing, support and encouragement. This would build on the work Social Care Wales has already done in establishing evidence-based national communities of practice. Drawing on Social Care Wales's expertise in successfully building communities of practice would enable us to create a sustainable model. This approach would enhance workforce confidence to support others, improve cross-organisation sharing, and develop digital readiness at all levels.

A more coordinated approach, through a community of practice, can help address several common challenges. For example, it can:

- cut down on repeated work: organisations can learn from each other rather than solving the same problems separately, helping new digital approaches start up more quickly
- join up good work: it would connect people doing good work in different places, so that knowledge, tools and ideas can flow between organisations, sectors and regions
- share practical experience: the main thing these communities do is help people share what they've learned through doing the work - the valuable insights that don't make it into training guides or manuals
- share resources better: providing a place to share training materials and approaches across the care sector, helping good ideas spread further

- include everyone: unlike many current groups, it would welcome the whole social care workforce, including private and third-sector providers
- keep going long-term: it creates an ongoing space for learning and working together, rather than short-term projects or informal networks
- link people to national tools and research: it would give people a place to keep using resources like research, the digital potential tool and the Insight Collective (Social Care Wales's research, data, innovation and improvement service), making sure these tools stay useful and respond to real challenges
- support national plans: it helps deliver key aims in the Ymlaen strategy and the Digital and Data Strategy by creating a joined-up culture of digital improvement.

Establishing a national community of practice will strongly align with Social Care Wales's Ymlaen strategy. The strategy calls for connecting people and initiatives across research, innovation and improvement to enable sustainable change. Ymlaen supports this through a commitment to 'joining the dots' between different types of support, building relationships across the system, and creating inclusive spaces where learning, reflection and problem-solving are actively encouraged. A national community of practice reflects this ambition by acting as a practical way to embed shared digital innovation, evidence-informed practice and sector-led collaboration.

Similarly, the Welsh Government's Digital and data strategy for health and social care highlights the importance of partnerships, collective capability building, and the creation of cross-sector learning networks as a key enabler of digital transformation. The strategy sets out a vision where digital transformation is driven through cross-sector collaboration, shared leadership and collective capability building, helping to spread innovation and address differences in digital readiness across the system.

In practice, this has included the development of a series of themed digital networks - such as the Digital inclusion alliance[19], the Digital leadership network, and the Data and intelligence learning network. These are designed to bring together professionals from across health, social care and the third sector to exchange insights, co-develop resources and align around common goals.

Although there are several networks in Wales that help people working in and alongside social care to connect and share learning, they're often limited in scope - either too narrow (focused on a specific region, sector or organisation) or too broad (covering local authorities as a whole without addressing specific social care needs) to meet the specific needs of social care practitioners.

19. Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) – an informal cross-sector alliance advocating for digital inclusion, sharing resources, and supporting organisations (public, private, third sector) working with digitally excluded groups. https://www.digitalcommunities.gov.wales/digital-inclusion-alliance-wales/

These networks have made a valuable contribution, but they usually focus on either the public sector or specific areas of digital transformation, meaning large parts of the social care sector, especially independent and third-sector providers, aren't consistently involved.

We're recommending the development of a national digital community of practice for social care. This would build on what already exists but also fill a vital gap by offering a space focused on improving digital maturity, digital literacy and innovation across all parts of the sector, regardless of organisation type or geography.

Here are some of the existing networks and initiatives that a new digital capability community of practice would engage with and draw upon:

- Centre for Digital Public Services' Digital Squads[21], which are multidisciplinary digital teams to assist local authorities in modernising adult social care services and peer networks for public sector digital transformation
- Technology Enabled Care Cymru's learning and improvement network[22]
- Digital Health Ecosystem Wales (DHEW)[23] – collaboration between tech innovators, care professionals and policymakers
- funding and coordination of regional digital care projects in some regional partnership boards (RPBs)[24]
- public sector digital champion networks[25] – internal peer support to build digital confidence
- sharing of best practice in the independent sector, such as through Care Forum Wales[26] and other provider associations
- community-led digital support for people and carers - voluntary sector organisations, such as Age Cymru[27] and Carers Wales.

These networks all contribute valuable expertise and connections in their respective areas. The proposed national community of practice would be the first of its kind to focus specifically on digital capabilities and confidence across the whole social care sector in Wales.

By collaborating with these existing networks, the new community would create a shared space where their learning, tools and innovations could be brought together, making it easier for good practice to spread and adapt across the social care system. This approach would help increase the impact of work already happening while making sure all parts of the social care workforce, including independent and third-sector providers, can benefit.

21. CDPS' Digital Squads: https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/introducing-our-squad
22. Technology Enabled Care Cymru: https://teccymru.wales/
23. Digital Health Ecosystem Wales (DHEW)
24. Regional partnership boards (RPBs): https://www.gov.wales/regional-partnership-boards-rpbs
25. Public sector digital champion networks: https://www.gov.wales/public-sector-digital-champions
26. Care Forum Wales: www.careforumwales.co.uk/
27. Age Cymru: https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/programmes/digital-skills/digital-champions/

Social Care Wales is well-positioned to lead this work, given its sector-wide role, links with providers, and commitment to supporting improvement.

The organisation's proven experience in building and managing communities of practice at scale gives it the expertise needed to help make this initiative successful, with support from other organisations across social care in Wales.

Hosting this community would also allow Social Care Wales to extend the value of the digital potential tool by ensuring ongoing engagement, collective learning and action at scale.

6.1.4 Improve accessibility and visibility of digital support

6.1.4.a Make digital training opportunities more visible and accessible

Public, private and third-sectors report similar issues with staff awareness of available training, with around 10 per cent unsure whether they receive adequate digital skills support.

We recommend improving communication about digital training opportunities through existing channels. Local and regional channels to share what's being funded and delivered play an important role. Opportunities can be shared through web pages such as the SCWWDP pages on the Social Care Wales website, the Insight Collective (Social Care Wales's research, data, innovation and improvement service) and the digital potential tool, making sure that staff at all levels are aware of available resources and support.

This would include:

- creating clear signposting to training resources and keeping these up to date
- using multiple communication channels to reach different staff groups
- highlighting success stories and the benefits of digital skills development
- making sure information is available in Welsh and English and is optimised for assistive tools such as screen readers.

A key consideration is that information should be tailored to different audiences, recognising the different digital confidence levels across the workforce.

6.1.4.b Share good practice examples of training and communication approaches

Our assessment identified organisations with higher levels of digital confidence across their workforce, suggesting effective approaches to digital skills development.

We recommend identifying and sharing good practice examples of training and communication approaches used in digitally confident organisations, helping others learn from successful models.

The Ymlaen strategy highlights the importance of sharing and scaling effective practice to support sector-wide improvement. It encourages organisations to celebrate what's working and make learning accessible to others. The Insight Collective and its 'project finder' feature are key channels for sharing these examples.

Examples should reflect different organisational contexts, including size, sector and geographical location. This will help ensure relevance across the diverse social care landscape in Wales.

6.1.4.c Improve access to devices and support protected learning time

The findings show a disparity in equipment availability between sectors, with particular challenges for frontline staff in private and third-sector organisations. While this is largely an organisational responsibility, we recommend national work with social care providers and commissioners to promote improved access to appropriate devices for staff and protected learning time to develop digital skills.

The National framework for commissioning care and support: code of practice requires that statutory partners and providers work together to:

- ensure that people accessing care and support have access to the internet and digital devices as required
- increase the use of digital solutions
- ensure staff have basic digital skills to provide care and support.

The SCIE Digital Learning Report strongly recommends that local authorities address inequality in access to devices and time for digital learning. The Digital and data strategy (Mission four: Infrastructure and connectivity) also recognises this as a barrier to digital maturity and proposes making sure digital foundations are robust and equitable across health and social care.

This will need engagement with commissioners and funders to make sure digital skills development is recognised as an essential part of service delivery and improvement.

6.2 Strengthen digital leadership and governance

6.2.1 Provide digital leadership training for social care leaders

Our findings highlight the importance of effective digital leadership in driving digital change. This is important because confident and capable leaders understand the value of their organisation's digital assets, and the potential of emerging technologies. They create the organisational conditions where digital approaches can flourish. Without strong digital leadership, even the most well-intentioned digital initiatives can struggle due to insufficient strategic direction, resourcing or staff engagement.

Our assessment found that 25 per cent of local authority leaders say they 'rarely' or 'never' have the skills needed to lead digital change, compared to 10 per cent in the private and third-sector organisations.

We recommend providing targeted digital leadership training for social care leaders, particularly in local authorities where confidence is lower. The training should be accessible and relevant to leaders at different levels, recognising varying responsibilities for digital strategy and implementation. Targeted training could help build the confidence of leaders and, over time, improve how they actively champion initiatives using digital approaches to reducing the cost of improved care.

This training should:

- focus on strategic aspects of digital transformation in social care, including how to effectively use existing digital assets and identify emerging technologies that add value
- link to existing leadership training for social care, including the leadership training and resources offered by Social Care Wales and the Intensive Learning Academy for leading digital transformation.[28]
- include practical approaches to leading digital change, emphasising digital leadership as the strategic management of an organisation's digital resources and capabilities
- address specific challenges faced by different types of organisations, recognising varying digital maturity levels and resource constraints
- build confidence in making digital investment decisions based on organisational needs, available evidence, and future sustainability
- develop skills to assess, prioritise and maximise the impact of digital assets to improve service delivery and outcomes.

28. https://www.southwales.ac.uk/business/professional-development/intensive-learning-academy/

This is aligned with the Workforce strategy for health and social care, which prioritises leadership development to enable digitally confident, compassionate and effective services

6.2.1.a Improve communication about digital strategy and priorities

One in 10 staff (11 per cent) are unsure about their leadership's role in digital. This may suggest a communication gap between leadership initiatives and workforce understanding.

We recommend emphasising the importance of clear communication about digital strategy to help increase staff understanding and engagement and bridge the gap between leadership and frontline staff. This could form an element of leadership development training developed as part of 6.2.1.

This aligns with the SCIE Digital learning report's findings that many staff lack awareness of their organisation's digital goals. Strengthening internal communication helps connect high-level strategy to frontline practice, supporting better organisational alignment and improved staff morale. Communications about digital initiatives should be accessible to all staff, regardless of their digital confidence levels. Digital initiatives should be communicated through multiple channels and be available in Welsh and English.

6.2.2 Clarify guidance and strategies for emerging technologies

6.2.2.a Develop guidance on the potential uses for AI in social care

Many staff have low or no confidence in understanding AI technologies, with a significant proportion (20 per cent) believing these tools aren't relevant to their roles.

We recommend developing clear guidance on organisational approaches to AI that emphasise its relevance and potential applications in social care, helping to demystify this emerging technology area. Guidance should include practical examples and case studies that demonstrate relevant uses in social care settings. This is supported by the Copilot readiness report by ADSS Cymru, which advocates for once-for-Wales[29] guidance on AI usage, governance and safety. It also reflects ambitions in the Digital and data strategy, which positions AI as a transformative tool to be used safely and ethically. Social Care Wales, with support from the AI Commission for Health and Social Care, is developing AI guidance to help provide a sense of direction to providers in all sectors. The AI Commission for Health and Social Care could provide context and guidance for next steps.

29. "Once-for-Wales" refers to a strategic approach where solutions, standards, or processes are developed and implemented consistently across all of Wales rather than having each local authority develop their own independent approaches.

6.2.2.b Strengthen digital strategic planning processes

While digital planning is becoming more common, private and third-sector organisations report stronger digital planning than local authorities, indicating variations in approach.

We recommend supporting leaders to engage with staff to understand and prioritise digital innovation in their context to strengthen digital strategic planning processes. This should especially be the case for local authorities, which report the lowest confidence when it comes to digital innovation. Support should be tailored to different organisational contexts, recognising the different starting points and priorities across the sector.

This recommendation is in line with Mission five: user-centred services in the Welsh Government's Digital and data strategy, which calls for all organisations to embed digital goals in planning processes. The Social Care Wales workforce development programme 2025 to 2026 priorities also note the need for capacity-building support to strengthen digital planning.

6.3 Focus on long-term sustainability and continuous improvement

6.3.1 Maintain and evolve the digital potential tool

The digital potential tool has provided valuable baseline data on digital maturity and literacy across social care in Wales. To continue providing insights and supporting digital development, the tool itself needs to be maintained and improved.

This report recommends that Social Care Wales and key partners involved in the tool commit to regular updates and improvements. This will help ensure the digital potential tool stays relevant and useful as the digital landscape evolves. Regular review cycles should be established, with input from users to make sure it continues to meet their changing needs.

In practice, this could involve:

- refreshing signposted resources to make sure they remain current
- updating questions to reflect emerging technologies and practices
- enhancing reporting capabilities to provide more tailored insights to providers
- continuing to promote the tool to increase participation
- developing further national reports to help measure progress.

6.3.2 Strengthening procurement confidence and capability

Feedback during the assessment process highlighted challenges around procurement confidence for digital technologies. Local authorities face particular challenges, with only eight per cent of their IT staff 'strongly agreeing' they can select providers that meet their needs and budget, compared to 44 per cent in private and third-sectors.

This 36 per cent difference shows that local authorities often work with tighter procurement rules, limited funding, and more compliance requirements. These aren't just mindset issues – they need practical solutions that balance flexibility with proper oversight.

We recommend creating straightforward guidance to build confidence in buying digital technologies that truly work for people, while allowing room for safe innovation.

The guidance should:

- create clear frameworks that enable flexibility to experiment without risking governance requirements
- help larger organisations find the right balance between control and freedom to try new approaches
- provide simple tools to assess risk and value that don't stifle innovation
- work for organisations of all sizes while recognising their different needs
- create opportunities for services to share both successes and learning from experiments
- consider how to negotiate joint procurement.

This approach will help address the inconsistent use of technology we currently see across services and ensure digital tools better support people while giving organisations the structured freedom they need to innovate responsibly.

6.4 Importance of working together

The recommendations are interconnected and build on one another. Organisations should be encouraged to use the tool regularly to track their digital maturity over time. This will also help assess the impact of interventions led by bodies such as Social Care Wales, WLGA and the Welsh Government. Figure 37 below shows how the tool can be used to support a cycle of continuous improvement on a national level so that we can empower a digitally ready workforce based on real-time information and understanding.

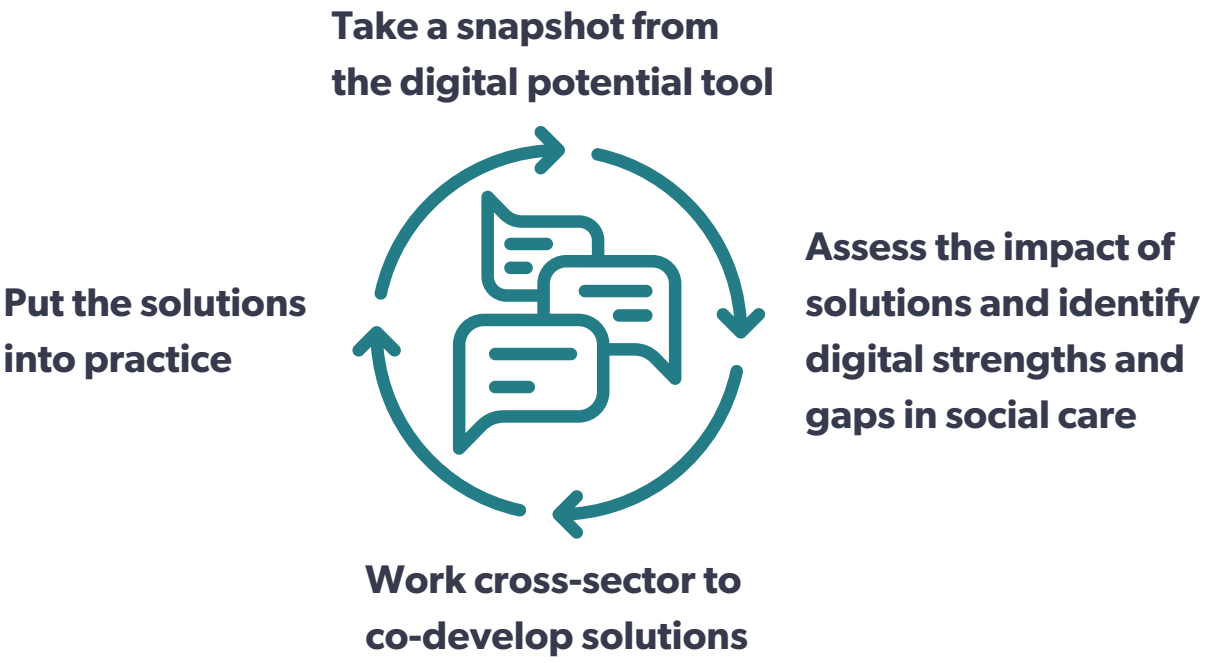


Figure 37: Cycle of improvement using the findings from the digital potential tool

By taking a coordinated and strategic approach to these recommendations, social care in Wales can build on its existing digital strengths while addressing key gaps. This marks a starting point for long-term development and an opportunity to strengthen the workforce's confidence, capability and readiness to embrace digital opportunities. By doing this, social care will be better positioned to embed digital skills in ways that make a meaningful difference to people's lives and work.

7. Appendix

1. Glossary of key terms
2. Sampling strategy document
3. Slides explaining how to use the tool
4. Confidence intervals for all questions

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