Social Finance Data and Digital Innovation Service

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Service definition document

G-Cloud 15

January 2026

Who we are

Social Finance, a not-for-profit, partners with people, communities, and the voluntary, health, and public sectors to drive systemic change to improve people's lives.

We partner with local and central governments around the world to improve services and outcomes for people and communities.

To changes services and lives requires bringing together a truly multidisciplinary team. Our 100+ team practitioners, designers, developers, strategists, analysts, product managers, researchers have the skills needed to transform services.

"You are a trusted digital partner, you understand our values and approach. You bring the pace and expertise of a private sector company, and the impact-focus and cultural alignment from a non-profit organisation"

Peter Storrie, Head of Children and Adults Services Intelligence and Policy, Leeds City Council

What we do

We combine research and tech to reimagine public and social services for the 21st century.

We partner with people and communities in developing deep understanding of their most challenging problems.

We then work together to design and build innovative human-centred services, that are safe and trusted, and empower people to live happy and healthy lives.

















Our Values

Curious

We unearth the evidence, ask the awkward questions and don't give up until we get an answer.

Through rigorous thinking, and learning from others, we generate ideas that make a big social impact.

Empathetic

We look from all angles, welcome all viewpoints. We seek to understand without reproach.

We build strong teams from diverse backgrounds, with a shared goal to create lasting partnerships for change.

Pioneering

We are ambitious for lasting change and won't stop until social systems truly meet people's needs.

Change is hard. But by combining social insight, business flair and practical innovation – we make it happen.

Our Principles

Outcomes-focus – Our deep public sector and social issue knowledge enables us to design and deliver projects/products/services that meet the needs of residents.

User-centred – Our team are experts in user research and user-centred design so that we design and think from the user perspective.

Collaboration across boundaries – Our products/ services put users at the centre through breaking down silos and finding a common solution that works across central government, LAs, and health.

Capacity not dependency – We employ a collaborative approach with client teams to capacity-build and transfer knowledge, so they can undertake similar work in future.

Learn and adapt – Our agile approach developed over 10 years means we constantly use learning from each activity to improve the services we provide.

Our Partners

We've worked with partners around the world to improve services and outcomes



Services Overview

KEY FEATURES

- User-centred research and design
- Cloud-based tech strategy
- Service, systems and architecture requirements mapping
- Service and organisational design
- Change, transformation and implementation support
- System design
- Capacity-building and training
- Prototyping of cloud-based products and services
- Design, build and maintain cloud-based products and services
- UI/UX design

KEY BENEFITS

- Improved outcomes for people and communities
- User-centred services that meet users' needs
- Co-designed products and services with users and staff
- Improved capacity and knowledge
- Implementable roadmap for cloud-based infrastructure, products and services
- Cost-effective cloud-based products and services
- Services and organisations re-designed to improve experiences of people
- Business analysis and cost benefit analysis to unlock funding
- Products and services that integrate with legacy systems and skillsets
- Robust measurement and monitoring of outcomes

“I loved working with Social Finance... They care deeply about solving social problems, show real empathy for people and go the extra mile to ensure everyone is heard. I appreciated their inclusive approach. The team showed deep understanding of the challenges faced by care leavers and council staff…they used this as motivation to find creative solutions to them."

Strategic Lead – Looked After Children, Coventry City Council

Core Services

User-Centred Design Approach
(User Research, Service Design)

Data Approach

Capacity Building Approach

Software Development Approach

User-Centred Design Approach

User Research, Service Design

We start from user priorities and perspectives. We define our solution to respond to their needs, context and constraints, and then iterate until we can show we are meeting them.

Our approach will maximise users' input with minimum disruption to their day-to-day routine to ensure products meet their needs and improves services.



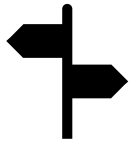
Plan inclusive research

… to make sessions accessible to a wider audience.



Hypothesis-driven

… to ensure we are targeted and surface insights that address the objectives.



Multiple engagement channels

… to reach a wider audience and ask a broader set of questions.



Build, Test, Learn

… to allow us to respond to findings as we proceed.

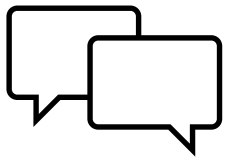
Capacity Building Approach

We build capacity, not dependency. We work hard to empower our partners to develop the skills, vocabulary, and tools.

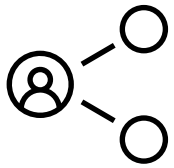
We do this by building time into delivery for learning.



Jargon-free communication: We'll break down the language barriers that exist and make it hard for people to apply digital and user-centred skills to their day-to-day work.



Mentoring: Build deep relationships with partners to support your development and offer advice and guidance during and after projects to embed learnings and ensure the project's long-term success.



Knowledge sharing: We'll embed sharing knowledge directly into delivery. We use a learn by watching, doing and discussing approach to ensure people build the confidence to do this type of work in future.

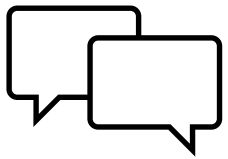
Software Development Approach

Our product team has deep experience with data and digital software development across government from children services, to health care, to employment, and more.

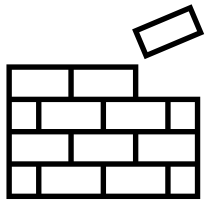
We take an agile, iterative approach to software development to meet user needs, build cloud-first solutions, and develop maintainable, scalable and secure solutions.



Cloud-first: We support partners to leverage modern application architecture and cloud-native, server less solutions to build products that can be maintained and scaled.



Tech Agnostic: We start each project from first principle to understand the best technology to solve the problem. We want to leverage as much as possible partners existing skills and tools to maximise re-use and savings for partners.



Secure: We take a security-first and privacy-by-design, by-default approach in line with ICO best practice from identifying security requirements, to opportunities for data minimization to design decisions. We've design/built solutions for some of the UK's most sensitive data (e.g. Police National Computer and National Pupil Database).

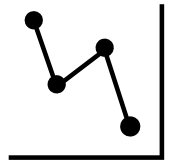
Data Approach

We work closely with partners to unlock the data and insight on services and outcomes to improve decision-making and outcomes across children social care, health, education, blue light services and more.

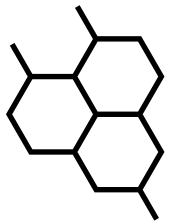
We think about data holistically from collection through to analysis to ensure insight is understood, trusted and used.



Understand the problem: We work closely with decision-makers to understand their needs, and test and iterate analysis to ensure it drives better decisions.



Analysis: Our data scientists conduct rapid, iterative analysis to surface insights that matter and that are understood and trusted by the service.



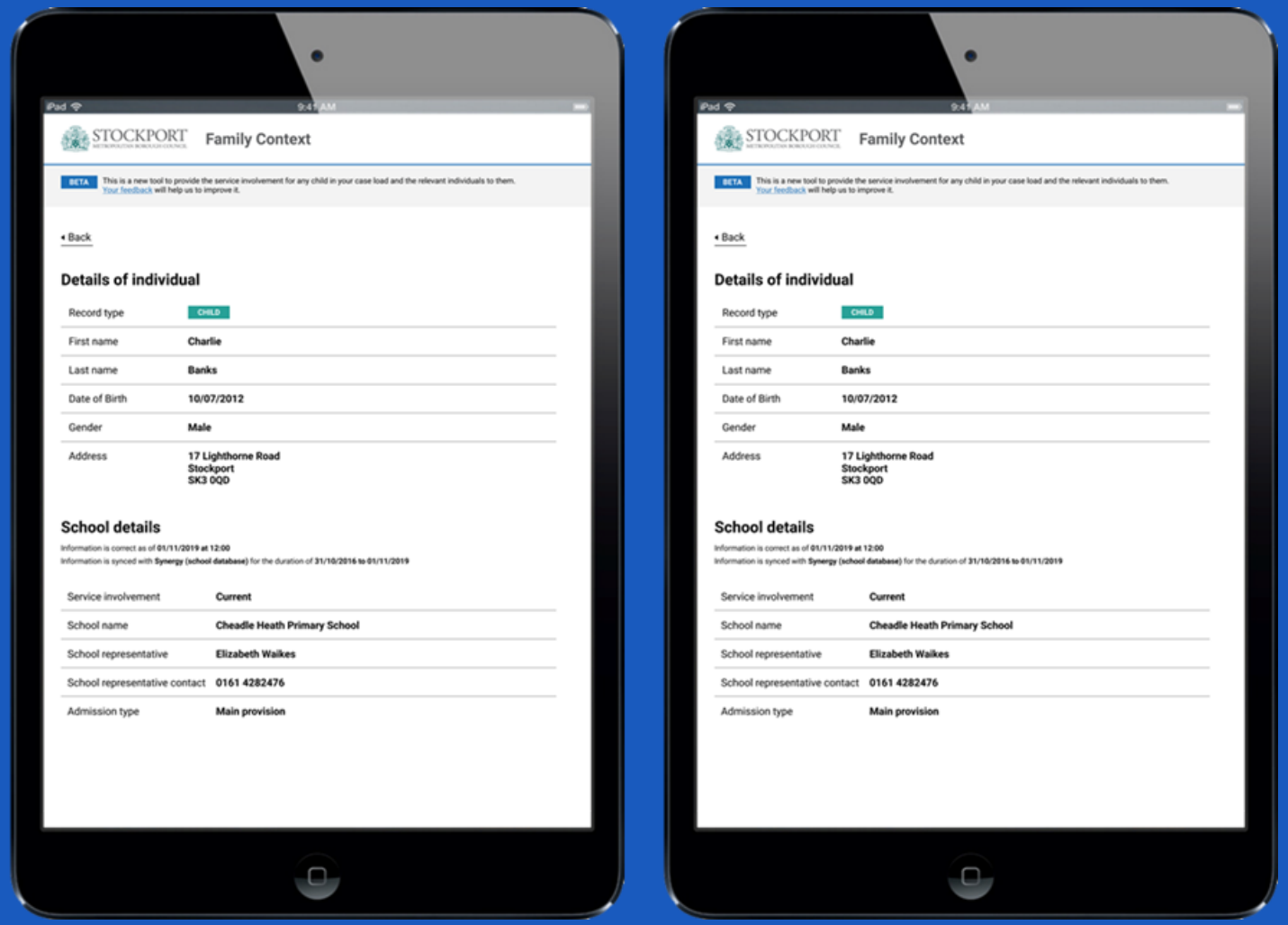
Infrastructure: We define, build and embed that data infrastructure needed to continue collecting, using and analysing data to improve services and outcomes (e.g. information governance, data sharing, run books, data models, and more).

"This product has been one of the most user centered, with iterative development based on feedback from testing with users, that I have ever seen delivered across the Welsh public sector. This has been a key point of it being a demonstrator product for us on how to do digital transformation well."

Director, Welsh Centre for Digital Public Services

FAMILY CONTEXT

Empowering social workers to understand the needs and strengths of families



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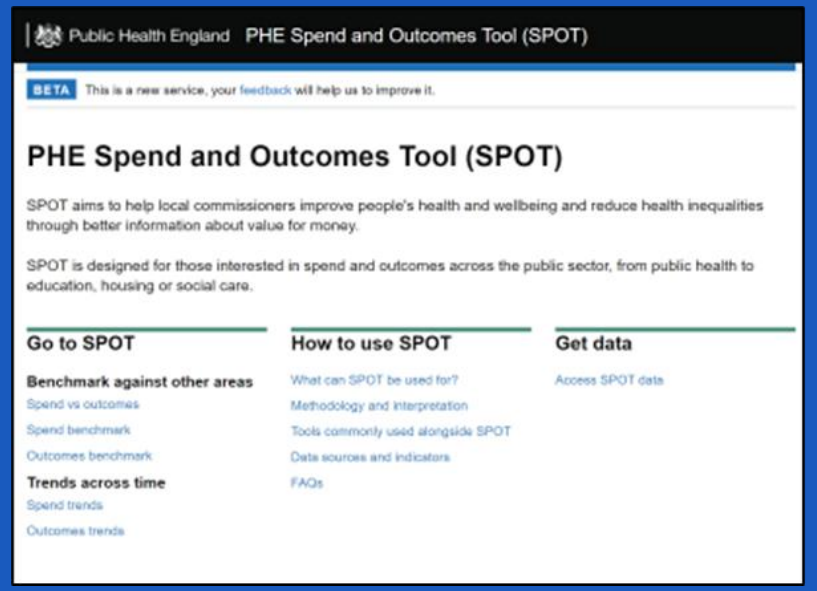
PROBLEM: Local authorities make life-changing decisions for vulnerable children and families every day. However front-line social workers often struggle to access all the information they need to ensure child safeguarding, effective and timely decision-making, and coordinate services to work together to provide wrap-around support.

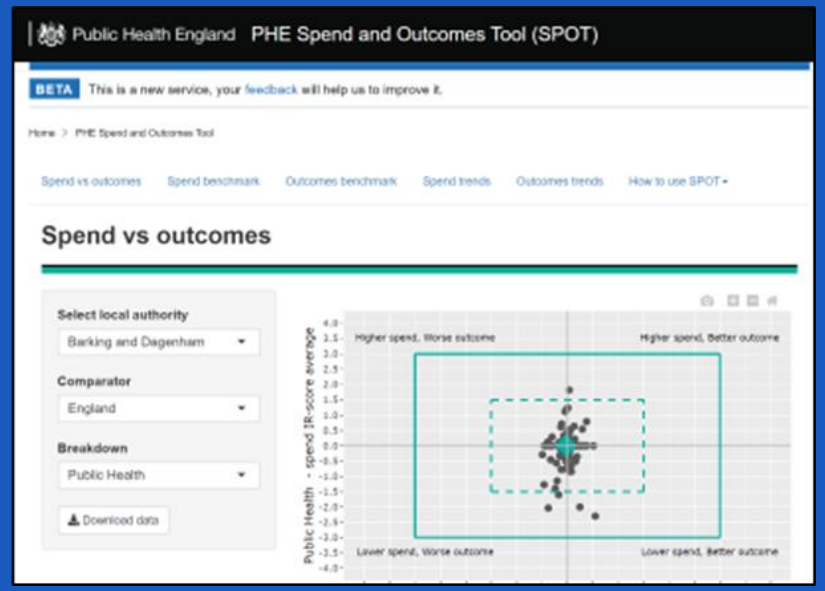
SOLUTION: Social Finance partnered with Stockport Council and Leeds City Council to identify a solution that would give social workers a more holistic understanding of a child and their family. Together we built a tool that enables social workers to access the contact details of lead practitioners from other services involved in the family and basic information on when the service was last involved.

IMPACT: 'Family Context' will enable social workers to build a more thorough understanding of families by talking to people who have a direct relationship with them. This will allow them to collaborate with other services in supporting the family and better assess risk when conducting social care assessment ensuring children and families get the right support. Family Context has been highlighted by the Information Commissioners Office as an exemplar of best practise in ethical data sharing.

PHE SPOT TOOL

National data visualisation tool to support over 1000 Public Health Analysts





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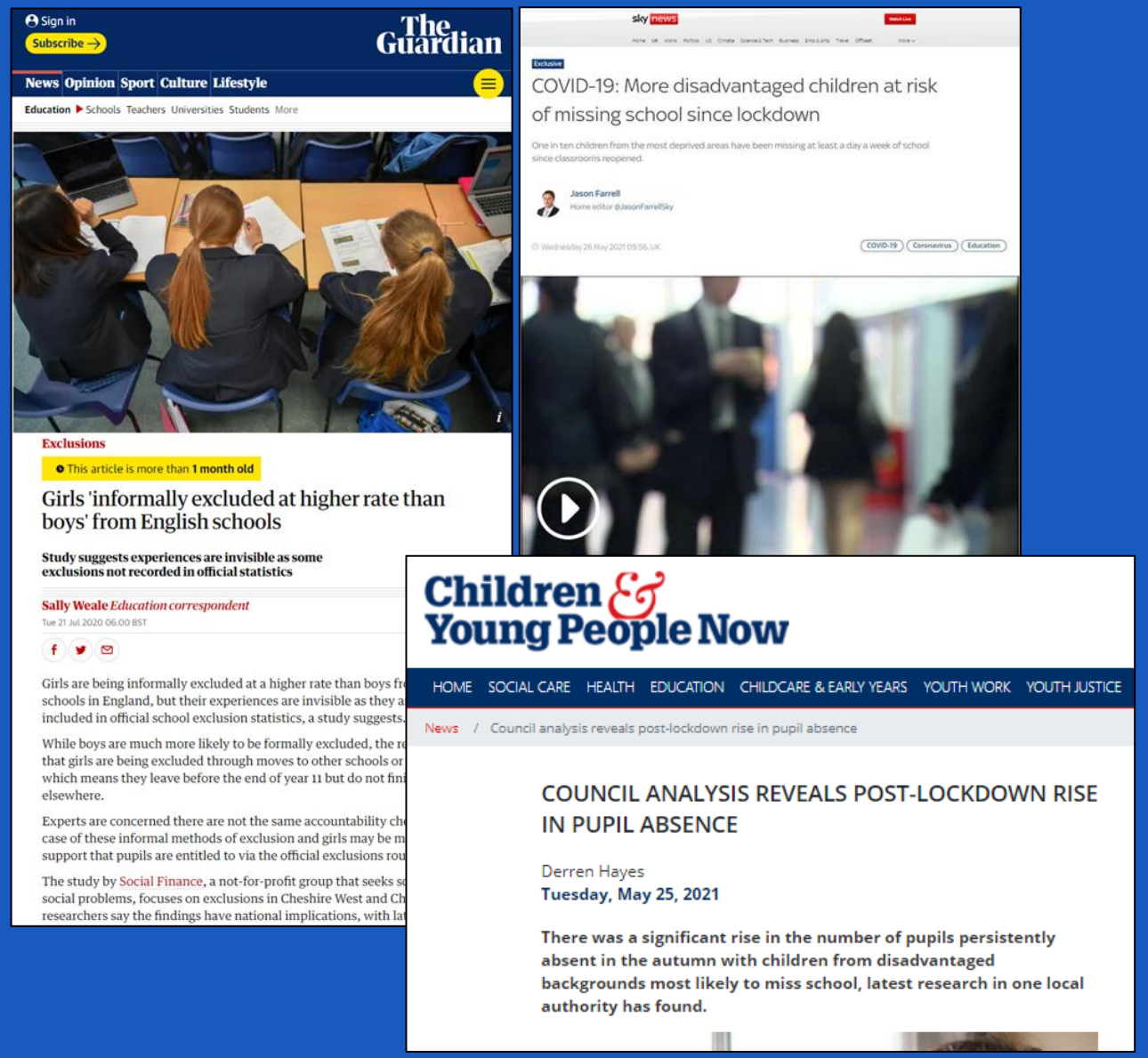
PROBLEM: Public Health England commissioned Social Finance to redevelop their 'Spend and Outcomes Tool' to make it easier to update, more accessible, and increase value to users. The project spanned initial user research to understand core user groups and their needs, through to prototyping, building and testing a refreshed version of the tool.

SOLUTION: We moved the tool from Excel into a custom-built webapp, adding new functionality to provide key information for users' decisions, including viewing of trends over time and benchmarking against statistical neighbours, as well as refreshing the overall structure to improve usability. Alongside this, we also worked with Public Health England to automate the data upload process to reduce the level of manual input required.

IMPACT: User testing demonstrated that users were better able to navigate the tool and find the information they needed, as well as gathering a more holistic picture to inform decisions through the added functionality of viewing trends over time. Through streamlining the data input process, PHE are now able to publish more frequent updates to the tool. The solution is regularly used by 1,000+ analysts across public health to better understand the relationship between spend and outcomes - a key enabler of better commissioning and strategy decisions.

CHANGING THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON EXCLUSION

Using innovative data analysis to make invisible children seen and safer.



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PROBLEM: The education systems within Gloucestershire and Cheshire West and Chester had created an environment where children and young people only received support at 'crisis point.' There is insufficient capacity to prioritise early intervention and address unmet needs in a holistic way. The result: children are becoming unnecessarily at risk of a school exclusion.

SOLUTION: We conducted an innovative data analysis to identify who is at increased risk of exclusion. We analysed the experiences of 10,000+ pupils from which we gained a better understanding of the interplay between pupils' experiences inside and outside of schools and uncovered different forms of exclusions that go beyond fixed term and permanent exclusions. We discovered that girls are being informally excluded at a higher rate than boys from some schools in England, but their experiences are invisible as they are not included in official school exclusion statistics.

IMPACT: Our analysis has had a significant impact both at a local and national level. The research is informing the strategic redesign of services in two councils and our recommendations are informing the national debate. For example, our partner local authorities have adopted a more comprehensive definition of exclusions, we're in discussion with the DfE about broadening their definition of exclusion, and we've started to re-shape the national conversation with articles in the Guardian, BBC Radio 4, Sky News and more about our insights.

SOCIAL FINANCE

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