



Data Skills Capacity Workshop 1 Summary

About this document

This document summarises the key ideas shared by LOTI borough data professionals in response to the discovery question: “How might we increase boroughs’ access to data talent?” These suggestions were crowdsourced during a workshop held on 8 September 2021, which examined the [results of a survey](#) conducted with local government data professionals over the summer. For more information about this work, visit our [Data Skills & Capacity project page](#).

How might we better train and develop existing data staff?

1. Create a data academy

- 1.1. Use apprenticeships: Barnet is launching a Data Academy at apprenticeship levels L3 (for general staff) and L4 (for data staff), as part of month of learning this October. Hackney and Ealing have staff doing L4 data analyst apprenticeship. At Hackney this is 30 people - mostly staff in non-data roles. Potential to scale idea beyond apprenticeships. See for example: [M&S](#).
- 1.2. Create a local gov Data Science campus (building on work with ONS).
- 1.3. Develop a London wide training course for Junior Data Scientists aimed at school or university leavers and build capacity and experience.
- 1.4. Create a resource for more junior staff to help them understand how to navigate around the wealth of websites and sharing platforms available, e.g. how to use Github, etc.

2. Facilitate knowledge, ideas and skills sharing between boroughs

- 2.1. Consider how LOTI peer networks enable this.
- 2.2. Arrange secondments between boroughs.
- 2.3. Train beyond data skills - e.g. learning Behavioural Science.
- 2.4. Set up buddy system - where interested parties can sign up and be paired with either someone of a similar skills set for a buddy scenario, or a more advanced skill set in mentoring scenario.

3. Increase access to expert support

- 3.1. Have “surgeries” or 1-1 sessions with experienced/specialised staff (perhaps from ONS) who can support with specific data problems i.e. specific script issues in a programming language.

4. Learn by doing

- 4.1. Appetite for more LOTI-facilitated joint data projects between boroughs - e.g. exploring tackling different forms of vulnerability.

5. Vet and use online upskilling platforms

- 5.1. Need to identify high quality online provision - E.g. Data Camp - covering key skills and common data tools.
- 5.2. Include data analysis training modules on e-learning platforms that all staff can access.

How might we recruit better?

6. Develop and recruit internally

- 6.1. Identify an internal talent pool to support and develop as well as looking externally.

7. Learn from digital apprenticeship recruitment

- 7.1. See [LOTI guide to recruiting digital apprentices](#).

8. Use industry standard job descriptions

- 8.1. JDs and person specs that focus on the data skills and not the sector.
- 8.2. Be open to recruiting outside of Local Government.

9. Recruit more junior levels then develop

- 9.1. Hire promising first-time data analysts can be a good strategy to mitigate the effects of recruiting below the market in terms of salary.

10. Educate HR teams on more innovative recruitment methods

- 10.1. Currently there is little flexibility in the procedure to do anything other than than the “advertise and hope”.

11. Increase transparency about what Localgov data professionals do

- 11.1. Publish more of the work that is being done in local government to provide better understanding of what we do.
- 11.2. Hold day event / webinar to talk about and showcase opportunities for working in London local gov data roles.

12. Make investment case for roles and salaries

- 12.1. Work with LOTI's [DDI Model](#) to develop a set of must have roles to campaign for investment.
- 12.2. Challenge the assumption that managers/supervisors should earn more than other team members. Often the team member skills are more specialist and hard to recruit for.

13. Offer sandwich year placements for degree courses

14. Learn from other sectors

- 14.1. Observe and learn from how other sectors have addressed key skills gaps, e.g. private sector or central gov.

15. Consider shared recruitment

- 15.1. E.g. Data Architecture, where individual boroughs consistently struggle.

16. Make use of staff networks

- 16.1. Explore staff professional contacts and networks and encourage use of those resources.

17. Design intro course on understanding Localgov

How might we form useful strategic partnerships?

18. Work with local universities

- 18.1. Use local academia to support large data projects (c.f. Camden and UCL; Westminster).
- 18.2. Collaborate on advanced data analysis/machine learning projects to expand available datasets and skill/resource base for better results and insights as well as upskilling/mentoring opportunities for junior staff.
- 18.3. Offer opportunities for students to work on localgov challenge as part of dissertation.

19. Work with colleagues across the public, third and private sectors

- 19.1. E.g. central government, NHS organisations, Public Health and industry.
- 19.2. Explore Leeds model of creating public private partnership around data
- 19.3. Collaborate with companies who are looking to develop POC (c.f. Barnet work with a couple of software companies to develop a POC around financial vulnerabilities.)
- 19.4. Link to technology colleges.
- 19.5. Look for local partners - most boroughs have big local companies.

20. Arrange cross-industry secondments

21. Explore role of social value

- 21.1. Include data support in social value as part of procurement process.

How might we improve the experience of incumbents?

22. Make demonstrable commitment to learning and development

- 22.1. C.f. Hackney is developing a Learner Agreement, similar to what apprentices sign at the beginning of their course, as a commitment of the staff and the manager.

23. Mentoring between more senior data roles and new starters

- 23.1. Help address knowledge gaps in complex organisations.

24. Implement GDS style learning modules on data

- 24.1. Including podcasts, e-module etc.

25. Reframe role of data analysis

- 25.1. Highlight that data analysis is a profession - not a back office function.
- 25.2. Should be seen as key part of service transformation.
- 25.3. Need HR, IT etc to treat Data Analytics as a critical profession similar to social workers.

26. Encourage flat reporting structures

- 26.1. Let data roles explore and get involved in other projects to help build up more holistic picture and develop their strengths and interests.

How might we educate non-data professionals?

27. Include basic data skills/understanding in mandatory training

28. Hold month of learning

- 28.1. Cf. Barnet model of increasing data literacy across organisation.

29. Excite people about data

- 29.1. Run “lunch and learn” sessions.
- 29.2. Train data analysts to present data in an easily digestible format.
- 29.3. Run sessions or surgeries on data problem solving.

How might we develop more effective structures & practices?

30. Develop resourcing roadmap

- 30.1. E.g. as a minimum to get started must have ABC responsibilities covered (with some guidance on how this might map to specific roles). Then as maturity grows consider EFG responsibilities. This would help build business cases for resourcing to develop capacity.

31. Review data team structures across organisations

- 31.1. Review structures used by boroughs and other organisations and evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Confusion in boroughs as to whether centralisation / hub-spoke / decentralisation is best.

32. Conduct data maturity benchmarking

- 32.1. Understand the level of maturity across the organisation and develop an action plan across the LA.

33. Focus on functions not just structures to develop organisational maturity