# A Better Life?  My Voice, My Say, My Way!

Social Care Digital Innovation Programme (SCDIP)
South Tyneside Council Discovery Phase Review
14th December 2018

## Our initial problem to solve

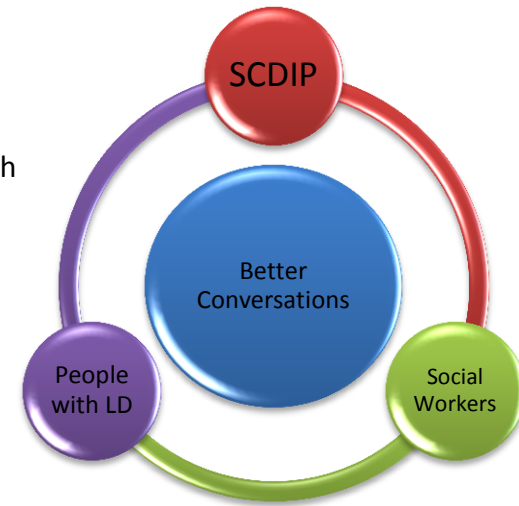- We wanted to understand more about the challenges people with learning disabilities and / or autism experience during communications and conversations with Social Workers and ultimately any professional in their life.

- Once we understood more about these challenges, we would explore how digital technologies could directly improve communication.



## Why did we choose this problem?

- 0.74% of our adult population have a learning disability (higher than national average) with around 542 people being known to our services.
- Compared to the rest of the population people with learning disabilities are more likely to have higher levels of :

  - **Unrecognised / unmet physical and mental health needs**
  - **Social isolation**
  - **Poverty and unemployment**
  - **Poor diet and exercise**

- This results in poorer life outcomes and **increased engagement with services across health and social care**
- The feedback from people with a learning disability and / or autism is that they aren't listened to or understood
  e.g. *"communication with Social Workers is directed by scripts and tests"*, and they **don't have control over their lives.**
- Audits of records and case discussion confirmed we are not communicating effectively and the person's voice was not present, while the voice of the carer was having too much influence in determining what someone was offered to make **their** life better.
- Working with Your Voice Counts (a local advocacy organisation) and our Personalisation Champions on this problem would help us to learn more about using a co-production approach.

# Adult Social Care Strategy and 3 conversations model

**Adult Social Care Strategy**

Our Adult Social Care Strategy 2016 – 2020 outlines our approaches in supporting people to 'live better lives', with a focus on a person centred approach, co-production and 'Let's Talk Together' 3 conversations model.

www.southtyneside.gov.uk/adultsocialcarestrategy

**Conversation 1: Listen & Connect**

We wanted to learn more about what a good 'Conversation 1' would look like in this service area, and explore what improvements digital technologies could bring.

**1** Conversation 1 : Listen & Connect

Listen actively - don't assume anything. What really matters to this person? What are their interests and skills? What are they wanting to do? Consider and discuss all of the resources and supports that you can connect the person to within their community and networks in order to help them get on with their life, independently.

**2** Conversation 2 : Work intensively with people in crisis

What needs to change urgently to help people regain resilience and stability? Complement peoples' own networks by exploring what offers you have at your fingertips, and those of your colleagues - including all of your knowledge of the community to help makes these things happen. Pull the most effective things together into an 'emergency' plan (that includes the needs of family carers), and stick to people like glue to make sure that the plan in place works. If it doesn't, then change it!

**3** Conversation 3 : Build a good life

*For some people, support in building a good life will be required.*

Listen hard. What does a good life look like for this person (and their family)? What resources, including a fair personal budget, are available? What support, both informal and formal will help people to live a life that is good, according to their definitions? How can we help someone get that support organised so they can live the best life possible?

## Our starting point

Understanding the communication challenges of people with LD and Autism and Social Workers, and how digital solutions could help.

Co-production with advocates and Personalisation Champions to understand and develop the 'problem to solve' through discovery.

Early learning from discovery highlighted the need for more time and a request to LGA and NHS Digital for an extension was approved.

Work with Digital Catapult (regional digital development agency) and local SME digital community to deliver innovative and effective digital solutions through a hackathon.

## Where we ended up

Not able to engage with Autism Able (due to illness in their team), so discovery only considered the communication challenges of people with LD.

Co-production during discovery with Your Voice Counts advocates and Personalisation Champions helped us focus in on two specific issues that impact on communication.

The hackathon became an 'Innovation Competition' with 3 SME digital developers pitching proposals that addressed the challenges we shared.

Two credible proposals were generated plus a third that offered a future innovation. One solution selected for inclusion in our implementation proposal.

# How we approached the research

## Engaging with people with learning disabilities

An important element of our project was working directly with people with learning disabilities to learn more about the problems they experience when interacting with their Social Worker, and what might help improve things.

To strengthen the co-production approach we contracted with Your Voice Counts, a local advocacy and support organisation for people with learning disabilities, and three Personalisation Champions, to plan and carry out the research sessions and to feed back the findings. Had we been able to engage with Autism Able this work would have been delivered in the same way.

**Personalisation Champions** are people with learning disabilities who are employed by our Joint Commissioning Unit to engage with other people with learning disabilities, primarily around personal health budgets.

## Carers and families

We deliberately did not include carers and families in the research process. They were briefed at the beginning so that they understood what we were doing, and we ensured that Your Voice Count got appropriate consent for all participation in the project.

## Social Workers

In addition to talking to people with learning disabilities, we also wanted to understand how Social Workers felt about their interaction with people with learning disabilities. We decided that this element of the research should be carried out in the same way by Your Voice Counts and the Personalisation Champions.

## Specification and guidance

As part of the commissioning process, we developed a specification for Your Voice Counts and the Personalisation Champions. This included guidance on how to run a successful discovery session which was informed by recent learning from the Government Digital Service Academy and the service design recommendations from the SCDIP launch day. The guidance included some conversation prompts to help the discussions develop in a natural but useful way.

**Conversation prompts**

*Tell me about the last conversation you had with your Social Worker?*

*How has your day / week been so far? What have you been up to?*

*Did you feel that you said everything you wanted to say? Did you feel that your Social Worker understood everything you said? How did you feel afterwards?*

*Do you have a smart phone or tablet? What kinds of things do you use it for?*

Tell me about the last conversation you had with a service user? What went well? What didn't go well? (Is this common?) What was the main topic? (Is this usually the main topic?)
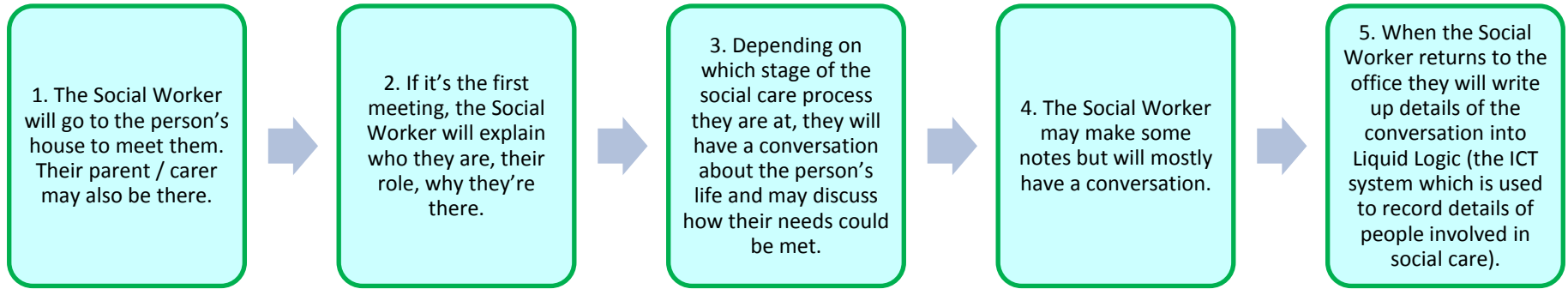
*What issues do you face when meeting with service users?*

# The research

Qualitative research was undertaken between August and November 2018 in two phases.

**Understanding what happens now**

Before we began the research we mapped out how communication between Social Workers and people with learning disabilities happens now, so we understood the wider context around the interactions.

| 1. The Social Worker will go to the person's house to meet them. Their parent / carer may also be there. | → | 2. If it's the first meeting, the Social Worker will explain who they are, their role, why they're there. | → | 3. Depending on which stage of the social care process they are at, they will have a conversation about the person's life and may discuss how their needs could be met. | → | 4. The Social Worker may make some notes but will mostly have a conversation. | → | 5. When the Social Worker returns to the office they will write up details of the conversation into Liquid Logic (the ICT system which is used to record details of people involved in social care). |

# Phase one - August / September 2018

This was broad research intended to identify specific issues and challenges around communication.

**Who did we engage with in phase one ?**

Research was undertaken with 21 people with learning disabilities known to social care. The age range of participants was 24 – 65. All participants had learning disabilities and communicated verbally. Some people used only key words and needed more prompting with examples and options to give yes, no, or not sure responses.

**The research was made up of:**

- Interviews with **10 people with learning disabilities** via two different drop-in groups and a home visit
- Role play and group discussion at a workshop with **11 people with learning disabilities**
- A group discussion with **4 Social Workers**

# During phase one we also

**Met with Autonome**, a company that provides  independence technology for people with learning disabilities. Although the solution was not relevant to our problem it gave us assurance that digital solutions could be successfully implemented with this client group and that people with learning disabilities were using them.

www.autono.me.uk

**Engaged with Digital Catapult** to discuss how to turn the discovery learning into a digital solution that could be progressed during the implementation phase.

www.digicatapult.org.uk

**Researched the MoMo (Mind of My Own) app**, which the Council had identified as a  potential model for a digital solution. MoMo is used to facilitate better engagement and communication by Social Workers with looked after young people.

www.mindofmyown.org.uk

# Phase one outcome

At the end of phase one (mid September) Your Voice Counts and the Personalisation Champions met with the Council's project team and the full learning disabilities team, to share the learning from their discovery work. This included showing some videos of the role play exercise.

Two key themes which emerged from the research were:

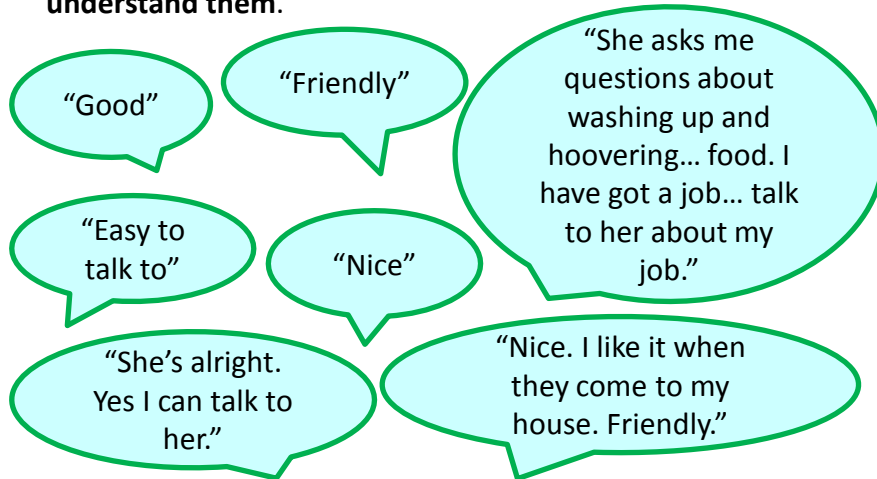| Planning for meetings with Social Workers | Remembering what was said in the meetings |

Everyone at the meeting agreed that:

- these were two areas that a digital solution could potentially assist with
- these should be the focus for more detailed research by the Personalisation Champions, and the subsequent engagement with the local SME digital developer community
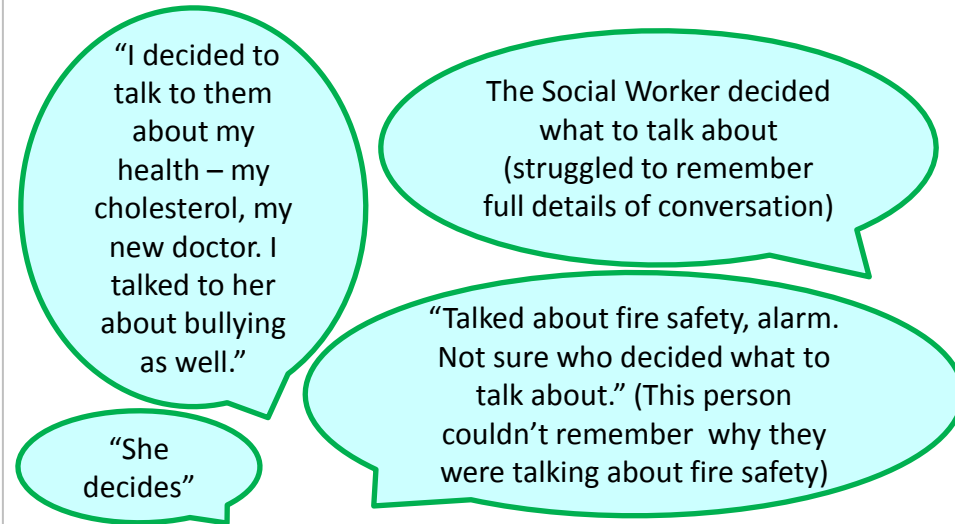
The MoMo app was  also reviewed at the meeting and the Personalisation Champions agreed that it would be very helpful to have a real example of a digital solution to demo at the session, to help the participants understand the type of solution that could be developed.
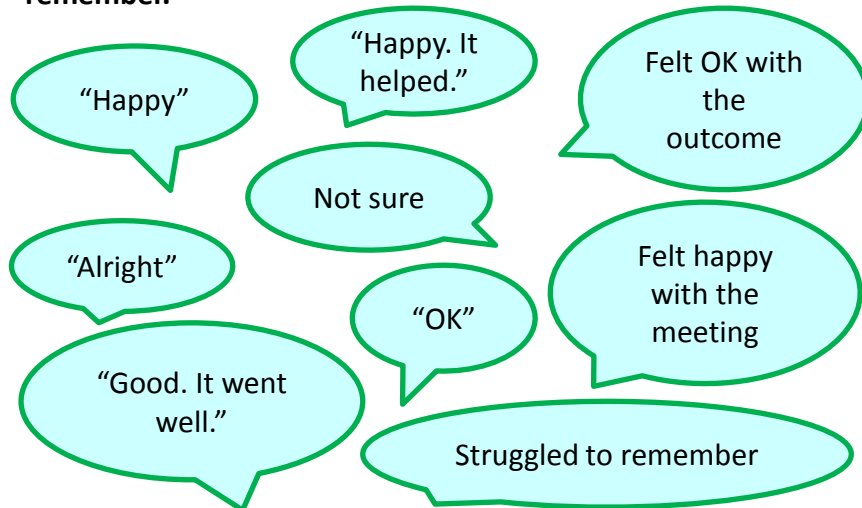
# Phase one findings

**Social Workers are easy to talk to, friendly and people do understand them.**

"Good"

"Friendly"

"Easy to talk to"

"Nice"

"She asks me questions about washing up and hoovering… food. I have got a job… talk to her about my job."

"She's alright. Yes I can talk to her."

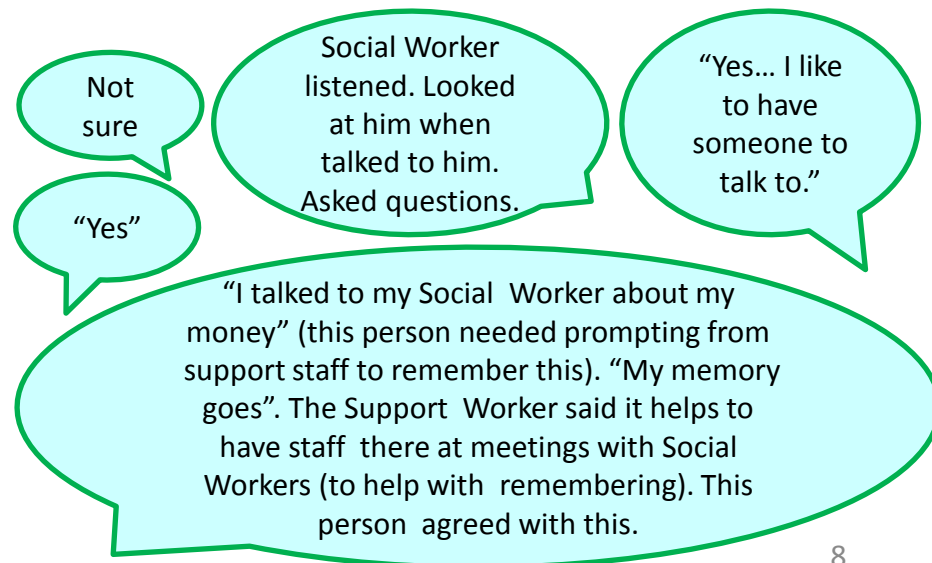"Nice. I like it when they come to my house. Friendly."

**It was a mixed response in terms of who decided what to talk about. Feedback also showed that people had some trouble remembering why they spoke about certain things.**

"I decided to talk to them about my health – my cholesterol, my new doctor. I talked to her about bullying as well."

The Social Worker decided what to talk about (struggled to remember full details of conversation)

"She decides"

"Talked about fire safety, alarm. Not sure who decided what to talk about." (This person couldn't remember why they were talking about fire safety)

**After meetings with Social Workers, people mostly felt positive or 'OK'. A few people weren't sure or couldn't remember.**

"Happy"

"Happy. It helped."

Felt OK with the outcome

Not sure

"Alright"

"OK"

Felt happy with the meeting

"Good. It went well."

Struggled to remember

**People mostly feel that Social Workers do listen to what they say**

Not sure

Social Worker listened. Looked at him when talked to him. Asked questions.

"Yes… I like to have someone to talk to."

"Yes"

"I talked to my Social Worker about my money" (this person needed prompting from support staff to remember this). "My memory goes". The Support Worker said it helps to have staff there at meetings with Social Workers (to help with remembering). This person agreed with this.

# Phase one findings (continued)

**How people feel about their Social Worker**

As part of the workshop with 11 people with learning disabilities, participants took part in a post it note exercise to answer the question - 'What's good and bad about your Social Worker?'

**Good things:**

Nice

Friendly

Nice – good job

Listening

Helps explain things

Good listener

Helpful

Comes to see me at home

Friend

Supportive when big changes happen in my life

Made me feel happy

Smart-dressed

She is very kind

**Bad things:**

Not understanding

Late

Don't tell you they are leaving

She does not smile

Difficult to remember (conversations)

Sometimes they are late or don't turn up

Social Worker deciding (what to talk about)

Who is my Social Worker? (change all the time)

Social Worker not listening about bullying to tenants reps

**Role play – advice for a Social Worker**

As part of the workshop, participants also took part in a role play, where one of the Personalisation Champions was a 'Social Worker' ('Adam') and the participants gave him advice about meeting his first client with a learning disability.

"Ask if he (client) wants a cup of tea"

"Be polite and respectful"

"Call the person before meeting them"

"Do research on learning disabilities"

"Somebody to offer Adam support"

"Talk to someone about his worries"

"Introduce himself"

"Ask for help"

"Shake hands"

"Be friendly"

"Have somebody with the person who Adam is going to see"

"Talk clearly"

"Smile"

"Think about what he is going to say to his client beforehand"

"Do not be too serious"

"Don't rush"

"A person could go with him for the first time to meet the client (someone that knows the client well)"

"Give people time"

"Be on time"

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# Phase two – October / November 2018

**What did we want to learn in phase two ?**

From the phase one research we identified two themes that we felt it would be useful to learn more about. These were:

| Planning for meetings with Social Workers | Remembering what was said in the meetings |
|---|---|

In addition to being key issues from phase one, these themes were very relevant to the broader work around the 3 conversations model, and developing a digital solution within the available resources and timescale felt achievable.

**For people with learning disabilities, the phase two research would focus on:**

- How they would like to have the information about their meetings i.e. what format (to help them plan for meetings, and remember afterwards)
- How they remember things in their life now (e.g. appointments / shopping lists / social plans)
- If a text / reminder on their device about meetings would be something they would use, and find useful
- What would help them plan for their Social Worker meetings
- How they would want to bring up personal subjects with their Social Worker
- What kind of device(s) they regularly use (e.g. mobile / laptop / tablet)
- What they use their device(s) for now (e.g. social media / texting / shopping)
- If they would use something like MOMO  (screenshots) both with their Social Worker or in their own time
- If they would use their own device to communicate with their Social Worker

**For Social Workers,  the phase two research would focus on:**

- How they think they could prepare for the session to make it more personalised for the person they're meeting
- How could they use their current tools more creatively to personalise the conversation
- How could they help to prepare the person for the session
- How could they help the family members / carers prepare for the session
- What would help them to describe complex processes in a plain English way
- Discuss MOMO (screenshots)
    - Do you think something like this would help you and the people you're working with?
- Discuss idea about videos in more detail (from first workshop with Social Workers)
    - Is there any support / training you would need /  would there be any barriers to working in this way?

# Who did we engage with in phase two?

We ensured that all participants in phase two had taken part in phase one. The Personalisation Champions decided to speak to younger people and people who had already said that they used smart phones; tablets; email; text; Facebook; WhatsApp.

**The research was made up of:**

- Three detailed interviews with people with learning disabilities
- Three detailed interviews with Social Workers

# Phase two findings

At the end of phase two the Personalisation Champions presented their work and findings.

**Video summaries of meetings may help people to remember and understand things better**

- This could be a 30 second recap of the meeting, to remind the person of the main points of the meeting
- "Video records would be a good way of keeping everybody on track" (Social Worker)
- "You could record and upload them to an app. This would save time for us and other professionals. It would also help the person to keep other people in their life in the loop." (Social Worker)
- Other workers could record video messages too.
- It could help people prepare for their meeting  e.g "Before our next meeting I would like you to think about..."

**People liked the MOMO app**

People with learning disabilities:

- It helped them to speak up about the things most important to them
- Liked being given options about what they wanted to talk about
- Liked the emotions page – they would like to be able to pick more than one emotion.
- Should Social Workers use something like MOMO? - "Yes. Social Worker has bag, paperwork, nothing else"
- Relationships are important to people – they feel that something about relationships should be included

Social Workers :

- "Would be good to have something that captures the person's likes / dislikes, hopes and fears"
- We talked about having images that you could upload to help people choose what they want to talk about
- "You could also upload templates / examples, like assessment templates"
- "At the moment we don't capture what is most important to the person – this is what I want from my life, this is what would make my life better. Something like this would make the person more dimensional."

**Two people said they would email their Social Worker**

# The Personalisation Champions' ideas for a digital solution

The Personalisation Champions came up with two ideas for the digital solution.

## 1. Personal profiles
People are often nervous, especially meeting a new Social Worker. They don't know how long they're going to be there for, and often feel guarded ("Is this person going to judge me?"). Some people worry about being misunderstood, and build up a scary picture in their head.  Profiles may be a good way to remove this barrier, and show they're normal people who want to help.

**The feedback about the personal profiles was very positive:**
- "Yes, I would want to see what the Social Worker was like before meeting them"
- Social Workers thought personal profiles would be a good approach to help them and the client get to know each other better and find out what is important to the person.
- "A digital, shared version of personal profiles could help to enable friendships and connections" - We talked about having a relationships and support page on an app.
- The person could choose who they share their profile with. Uploaded information, plans and action lists could be shared with other professionals. For Social Workers "this would save so much time communicating with other professionals".



Meet your social worker.....

**Alan Smith**

**About me**
I live in South Shields.
I have a wife and 3 children
I have 3 sausage dogs

**I like**
Bowling with my friends
Going camping
Going to music festivals

**The things important to me are**
My family
Doing a good job  and helping people
Having a laugh with my friends

An example of a personal profile from the Personalisation Champions

## 2. Guidelines
The 'guidelines' would be information around what people can expect from their meeting with their Social Worker. It could let people know information such as: what they can talk to their Social Worker about; what a Social Worker does and doesn't do; they can open up to their Social Worker; a friend or sibling could come along to meetings. This would help people and their families to understand what they can expect from their meeting with their Social Worker. Guidelines could be interactive accessible and easy to understand information on a website / app.

**The feedback about guidelines was also positive:**   "It would make me feel more confident" (knowing what to expect)
"Guidelines might also help family members so they know what to expect". The guidelines could include a reminder that "the client has an opportunity to take time out after the meeting with parents / carers to discuss things separately with their Social Worker."

# Our digital solution

Throughout the project we had a regular dialogue with Digital Catapult around the best way to engage with the local SME digital developer community to generate innovative but deliverable solutions.  After considering a number of  approaches we agreed to fund an 'Innovation Competition' via Digital Catapult .   This had the following elements
- A brief with info on the problem to solve, the discovery  learning and the Social Care Digital Innovation Programme.
- Digital Catapult circulated the brief to a shortlist of developers that they had selected based on relevant experience and their track record of delivering on time and producing high performing solutions.
- The first three developers to respond were  each offered  two days funding to work on the proposal / proof of concept and attend a launch session with the council.  This  generated a lot of interest.
-  A few days later the three funded suppliers pitched their proposal to the council.   These were evaluated against the following criteria which had been shared with the developers at the beginning of the process.

| The overarching solution (30%) | Functionality (30%) | Implementation proposal (40%) |
|---|---|---|
| A 'normal' digital solution | Core functionality as specified | Wireframes etc. |
| Ease of  use and access | Potential for future enhancements | Technical environment |
| Security (infrastructure and data) | | Delivery approach |
| Cost to rollout wider | | Timescale and cost |

- The process was very successful, generating two  credible proposals and a third that was very innovative but more relevant to future iterations of the solutions
- After internal discussions,  and advice from Digital Catapult, one  developer and solutions was selected.  We had considered whether we should ask the suppliers to work together, and combine what we saw as the 'best' elements of both solutions but the advice from Digital Catapult was that this was unlikely to be successful, as each proposal was  credible and viable on its own and it would # complicate  delivery during the implementation phase.
- Further information about our solution, which has a working title of  'natter notes' , can be found in our implementation proposal with a brief overview on the next slide.

# A brief overview of the proposed "Natter Notes" solution

- A full responsive and secure web application that can be accessed on any device.
- Intended to be a 'wraparound' companion to Social Worker/client meetings.
- Scrollable timeline of clickable 'events' (where content can be added).
- Optional meeting reminders via Text (SMS), Email, WhatsApp, to prompt the client to go into the app and review the content in the tab… and respond if they want to.
- Two user account modes – people with LD and Social Workers. Same interface for both account modes (Social Workers will be able to select from a list of their clients to add content).

## For the Social Worker

- Initiate new event pages

- Provide service user with relevant information prior to  a meeting etc.

- They will be able to choose a medium (text, video, audio, pictures) to communicate with service user (whichever suits the user best )

- Provide a summary of the meeting, and add other info that  might be helpful
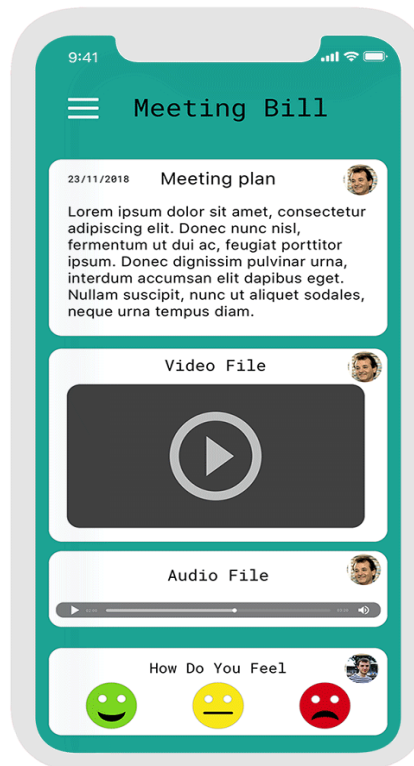


## For the person with LD

- Receive  reminders about meetings and summaries afterwards

- Initiate and  respond to digital engagement with   Social Workers

- See the published profile of who they are meeting

- Provide quick feedback on the content - selecting options on a smiley face scale

- Social workers should be able to take feedback to work on before initiating the next 'event page on timeline'

# What have we learned from our discovery phase?

o   Our initial problem to solve was valid and digital solutions will help people with LD and Social Workers have better conversations.

o   We also realised we could make immediate improvements around communication. Training on Makaton  has been arranged for 2019.

o   The buzz around this project has also resulted in  many other conversations and micro actions  to improve communication and engagement.

o   True discovery work takes time and requires a commitment to allowing the learning to shape the work and   requirements. Within our project we identified issues that were not on our radar at the beginning.  The solution we   would like to develop includes functionality we had not considered at the outset.

o   Co-production also takes time and commitment and  you must give your co-production partner the time and space to develop and deliver what they want in a way, and at a pace, that works for them and the client group. We are very pleased with  the outcome of our co-produced work but working within the specified timescales has been challenging and it is different  to working with  other partners.  In the future we would engage with co-production partners sooner around the scope   and approach  and review how we procure / commission the work.  Delivering this type of project over the summer  holiday season is not a good idea!

o   Turning learning and ideas into prototypes can be quick and inexpensive and there is a wealth of SME digital  development talent that would like to learn more and help solve our problems.  We understand that there  will be   challenges around security, information governance, data privacy, ongoing support etc. but these can only be resolved by working through the issues.

# In conclusion

What we would like to develop is not particularly complex, innovative, or expensive when compared to the digital solutions used in the rest of society.  However it has the potential to make a significant impact on  the outcomes for people with LD and it could help them lead more engaged and rewarding lives. As with the rest of society there will be some people with LD who can't or don't want to use a digital tool, but there are plenty who are already using digital solutions to connect with friends, share their news, and engage with the rest of the world. Introducing this into Social Work will help a group of clients who are more likely than others to have memory problems and there is the potential to extend our solution into other areas of social work practice where some advance information, or the ability to remind yourself what is happening / has happened, will be a helpful tool that will help everyone get more out of a situation, reduce ongoing contact and engagement and achieve better outcomes.