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Improving quality of life for Worcestershire residents

Worcestershire County Council

The Challenge

- Give social workers improved access to information about community services

The Benefits

- Access to information on a wider range of community services that can help improve quality of life
- Faster delivery of information to adults
- Time savings within Adult Social Care team
- Support for new approach to communicating with citizens

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Adult social work teams in Worcestershire County Council are now using a suite of ArcGIS solutions to help them provide people with relevant, up-to-date information about community services. As a result, social workers are saving time, while encouraging more people to engage in activities that will help them live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

The Challenge
A key part of Worcestershire County Council's published vision is to ensure that "Worcestershire residents are healthier, live longer, have a better quality of life and remain independent for as long as possible." Consequently, the council's Adult Social Care teams work proactively with people, to encourage them to engage in activities that could improve their sense of well-being and ultimately prevent, reduce or delay the need for care.

The council's social work teams previously recorded information manually in team folders about events and activities that might be beneficial to the people in the county. These community assets range from support sessions for people with hearing loss to knitting groups and fitness classes for older people. Whenever they wanted to find out about a community service, they had to return to the office to check the database and write down the details to take to their next meeting with the person they were supporting, which took a considerable amount of time.

The Solution
A long-term user of Esri's ArcGIS platform, Worcestershire County Council used its existing ArcGIS license to transform this manual process and create a solution for the Adult Social Care team, comprising three integrated Community Assets Tools (CATs).

1. Capturing data
The first tool uses Esri's Survey123 for ArcGIS to allow workers to collect information about new community-based services using their mobile devices, while they are in the field. They can add new support groups or activities, upload details, such as contact numbers, and click tick boxes to indicate which types of people might benefit from this service. Users can also update existing records to notify colleagues of changes in opening hours, for example.

2. Verifying data
The data collected using Survey123 for ArcGIS can then be reviewed, edited and verified by office-based staff using an ArcGIS Server web app. This second tool allows the council to control what data is shared among the Adult Social Care teams, as well as add supplementary information that may be helpful for potential service users. The directory currently includes over 235 assets ranging from walking groups for young adults with learning difficulties to craft sessions for older people with dementia.

3. Searching data
The third tool is another ArcGIS web app that allows everyone in the Adult Social Care teams to search for and find services relevant to their clients, either from a desk or from their mobile devices when they are with their clients. Social workers can click tick boxes to fine tune their search and find services specifically relevant to their client's needs and within a short distance of their home. From within this web app, social workers can also email details of relevant community services to their clients, including map-based directions.

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James Price, GIS Developer at Worcestershire County Council
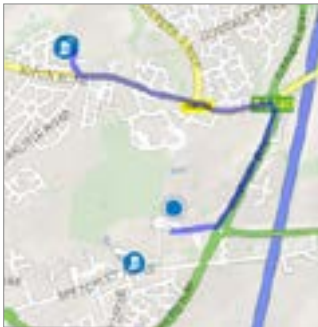
Using an ArcGIS web app, social workers can search for community services on their mobile phones and share this information and directions with their clients by email

The Benefits

A better quality of life

People in Worcestershire can now receive information about a wider range of activities that may help to improve their quality of life. Even small support groups, which just one or two council workers may have known about before, are now included in the ArcGIS directory and shared with everyone in the Adult Social Care teams. "The ArcGIS apps help social workers to introduce people to local support groups that they weren't previously aware of," says James Price, GIS Developer at Worcestershire County Council. "People can then make new friends, access support to help them live independently for longer and have a greater feeling of control over their lives."

Faster delivery of relevant advice in the community

For the first time, social workers or social care workers in Worcestershire can search for and share information about community assets using mobile devices, while with their clients. As a result, they can deliver relevant advice much more quickly and even email details and directions to clients straight away. "This is a huge benefit for people in Worcestershire," says Price. "People who have disabilities or are lonely can receive information about community services that are specifically suited to their needs, much more quickly, and begin to engage in these potentially life-enriching activities sooner."

Improved efficiency in Adult Social Care teams

Social workers and social care workers can potentially save time using the ArcGIS solutions, as they no longer have to manually type information into the central database or allocate time in the office to searching for community assets. Uploading information about a service using Survey123 for ArcGIS now takes social workers just five minutes or less on their mobile devices, whereas previously, it might have taken them up to 15 minutes to do, days or even weeks later, when they were next in the office.

Support for Three Conversation Model

The ArcGIS-based CATs complement the council's Three Conversation Model, a newly introduced approach to delivering services in the community that has been developed to help the council communicate with people in a simpler, more personalised way. "Our focus is on listening to people so that we can get a better understanding of their goals, interests and areas where they need support," says Elisabeth Sheppard, Three Conversation Model Development Practitioner at Worcestershire County Council. "ArcGIS supports the Three Conversation Model by helping us connect people to the appropriate local community options."

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