



CIPFA\

Data to drive decisions

cipfa.org/datatodrivetdecisions

The **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy** (CIPFA) is the only accountancy body in the world exclusively focused on the public sector. Our aim is to be the global leader in public finance and governance in order to make a real difference to the world we live in.

Through our internationally recognised qualifications and training we support our students and members throughout their careers – helping them add value to their teams and the organisations for which they work.

In addition to our education and lifelong learning services, we also provide a range of leading advisory and consultancy services to the public sector. As a result, we can help public sector bodies develop robust financial plans – which in turn help them make a real difference not only to their financial resilience but also to the communities they serve.

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Welcome

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the face of the UK public sector. The health, social and economic impacts of the crisis have led to a marked increase in demand for services at a time when resources – particularly after ten years of austerity – are tight. Going forward, public sector organisations will have to take tough decisions, often with little visibility of what the future will bring for their communities.

CIPFA can support organisations ... in accessing the information they need at a time when they need it most.

Evidence-based decisions will ultimately lead to better use of available resources. Local leaders must use data not only to understand their past and their current position but also, through forward looking tools, to help them plan for the future. By doing this, data allows local authorities to better understand their place and make decisions that improve societal outcomes for their diverse communities. It can also help with their own financial resilience, for example by getting under the skin of their support services costs.

At CIPFA, through our own data services, we can support organisations right across the public sector in accessing the information they need at a time when they need it most.



Rob Whiteman, CBE
Chief Executive, CIPFA



01 Transforming data

Transforming data

CIPFA has long recognised the importance of data. For over 100 years, we have worked with local authorities to build the most comprehensive, independent source of data about local government and other public sector services in the UK.

We are now undertaking an extensive transformation programme to ensure organisations across the public sector can access the data they need, as and when it's most needed.

As part of this transformation, we have introduced a new cloud-based data management platform that will radically improve how our customers can use and interrogate our data.

The new platform enables users to visualise and engage with our data in completely new ways. For example, it supports comparisons over time and space and displays information using a variety of interactive charts, graphs and geographical outputs.

Presented via new 'dashboards', you can now analyse data in multiple dimensions, drilling-down and 'slicing and dicing' datasets to reveal actionable insights.

Our **CIPFAstats+** service (see [page 6](#)) is the first to go live on the new platform, giving users a completely fresh, visually compelling and accessible way to interrogate our data.

This brochure showcases some of CIPFA's leading data products. Each one has been designed to help councils make sense of their current environment – they provide the insight needed to make tough decisions on how financial and human resources are allocated, for the benefit of both their balance sheets and the people they serve.

To learn more about our data services or to discuss your own data project, contact us:

analytics@cipfa.org

020 7543 5600

The new platform
enables users to
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02

Improving outcomes for communities

CIPFA offers several data products that help local authorities better understand their place – enabling them to make decisions that improve societal outcomes for their diverse communities.

CIPFAstats+

Understanding how frontline services are performing is critical to knowing the best ways to reduce costs while maintaining service levels.

For many years, our CIPFAstats service has provided invaluable insight into key frontline services, including education, social care, housing services, culture, leisure and recreation, and waste management.

Now, as part of our extensive data transformation programme, we are developing a new service – **CIPFAstats+**.

Housed on our new data management platform, the service will feature comprehensive financial and non-financial data across 11 core themes:

General Finance

Police

Culture, Leisure and Recreation

Environmental and Regulatory

Fire and Rescue Service

Housing, Assets and Estates Management

Social Care

Children's Services and Education

Highways and Transport

New! Demographics and Economy

New! Public Health (England)

CIPFAstats+ will also include three complementary tools making it an indispensable resource for decision-makers and analysts alike:

- the **VfM Toolkit** (see [page 7](#))
- the **Nearest Neighbours Model** (see [page 8](#))
- **Housing 360** (see [page 9](#))

Access to the complete CIPFAstats+ product suite is via an annual subscription.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/cipfastatsplus



VfM Toolkit

Encompassing both frontline and support services, CIPFA's **VfM Toolkit** compares a council's key performance indicators with those of similar authorities. The results are presented in an easy-to-understand graphical format and help councils to evidence value for money, and help identify areas where efficiencies might be improved.

The VfM Toolkit features data on 142 metrics from 49 different sources, including government departments. It compares a council to their closest socio-demographic and economic neighbours – which are identified using our Nearest Neighbours Model (see **page 8**).

In this way, the VfM Toolkit helps local authorities to better assess their own performance and relative spend, as well as pinpoint organisations they may wish to approach for tactics and ideas for improving efficiency.

The VfM Toolkit can be purchased as part of CIPFAstats+ or on its own.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/vfmtoolkit

Nearest Neighbours Model

Each local authority is unique – not only are its social and physical characteristics different to those of other authorities, but its traditions, organisation and practices are also distinctive.

CIPFA's **Nearest Neighbours Model** includes 41 metrics and a wide range of demographic and socio-economic indicators to help councils identify the most appropriate authorities to benchmark themselves against, and therefore better assess financial risks.

While measuring similarity can be a subjective process, the factors we use in the classifications provide a balanced representation of authorities' traits.

The Nearest Neighbours Model can be purchased as part of CIPFAstats+ or on its own.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/nearestneighbours



Housing 360



Predictive analytics and performance measurement will play an increasingly vital role in the way councils manage their properties.

Launched in 2020, CIPFA's **Housing 360 tools** assess capital expenditure, existing stock, homelessness, valuations, depletion rates and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves. Offering insights into past, present and future performance, the tools are designed to help councils make informed strategic decisions on how to tackle their community's housing needs.

- The **Housing Interactive Profile** is an interactive dashboard enabling comparisons against over 80 different sets of performance indicators using local authority and sector groupings.
- The **Housing Future Resources Model** allows the user to project a range of HRA metrics forward to 2026 – this modelling is underpinned by robust trend assumptions informed by CIPFA's experts.
- The **Housing Scorecard** brings various measures, visualisations and methodologies together to create an effective tool for HRA resilience.

The Housing 360 tools can be purchased as part of CIPFAstats+ or on their own.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/housing360

Vulnerable people

CIPFA has partnered with data management company Xantura to help councils identify, prioritise and protect vulnerable citizens impacted by COVID-19, as well as by debt.

Built with information governance and ethical data sharing at its core, there are two services that utilise Xantura's pioneering OneView infrastructure.

The **COVID-19 OneView service** enables authorities to consider where preventative efforts might support those at risk in the community before they are in critical need of help.

Xantura can integrate the data which councils already have about vulnerable groups into one place, and then provide a multi-agency triage tool and case management system – COVID-19 OneView – that identifies those whose support needs may escalate as a result of the pandemic. This may include:

1. Residents who are most at risk of being directly affected by COVID-19.
2. Residents who are most at risk of being indirectly affected by COVID-19 due to isolation and social distancing restrictions.
3. Residents for whom there are likely to be knock-on consequences of COVID-19 in the future.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/covid19oneview

The **Single View of Debt and Vulnerability service** allows councils to more intelligently assess their overall view of debt and balance this against the needs of individuals and cohorts of people. This helps develop more sustainable solutions for all.

The Single View of Debt and Vulnerability service can be used by councils in the following ways:

1. Targeting debt advice and benefits take-up: The analytics and insights available enable debt advice services to proactively identify cohorts of households with certain characteristics and risks. This means people can be offered support before they reach a crisis position of debt or homelessness.
2. Sensitive automated treatments: The analytics and insights available through the service enable a local authority's debt collection team to deliver targeted treatment strategies to different cohorts of households based on their characteristics and risks. This approach maximises council revenue while taking into account wider vulnerabilities.
3. Frontline support across debt and wider services: The OneView button embedded into all case management systems enables staff with the appropriate data sharing protocols to instantly access a textual case summary of all debt and vulnerability information for a resident or household that has contacted the council for support or information.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/debtoneview

Public Library Profiles



Offering access to knowledge, culture and a range of community services, public libraries play a fundamental role in society.

As part of our highly popular **Public Library Profiles** service, CIPFA conducts an annual survey of public libraries across the UK to gather data on service costs and performance. We then produce annual reports to help inform councils' modernisation and improvement strategies.

The reports build up a detailed view of how one library service compares to others of similar authorities that have been identified using our Nearest Neighbours Model tool.

We look at the following key aspects of services provision:

- numbers of libraries and service users
- costs of running library services
- levels of staffing and volunteers
- annual book and audio-visual issues
- stock and acquisition levels
- performance in relation to speed of requests
- user satisfaction.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) sponsors the reports, making them freely accessible to all English authorities. The reports are available to purchase for authorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/publiclibraries



03

Improving financial resilience

CIPFA offers a range of data tools to help councils address the current uncertainty and manage their medium to long-term financial sustainability.

Financial Foresight

Together, CIPFA and Grant Thornton have developed **Financial Foresight**, a modelling tool which aligns with CIPFA's Financial Resilience Index (see **page 15**).

Powered by local authority financial data, Financial Foresight provides current insights and a dynamic projection of every English council's financial trajectory over a 20-year horizon. Its aim is to help ensure the long-term sustainability of councils' finances.

In addition to demand, income, expenditure, reserve and borrowing level projections, Financial Foresight can benchmark spend between authorities, and apply socio-economic and service outcomes to understand the nature and effectiveness of spend.

The solution comprises a future-look analytics platform that projects costs and income forward to provide a baseline financial forecast, with relevant comparative benchmarks for every council in England.

It is designed to help councils understand the wider performance and socio-economic context for financial decision making, as well as prescribing remedies for intervention through testing and evaluating a range of financial strategies and scenarios.

For more information, visit: **cipfa.org/financialforesight**

CFO Insights

Also developed with Grant Thornton, **CFO Insights** is an online analysis tool that gives instant access to insight around the financial performance, socio-economic context and service outcomes for every council in England, Scotland and Wales.

Designed for those aspiring to improve the financial position of their local authority, it can help improve performance and transformation plans, as well as identify potential income generation opportunities. It can also support budgeting and expenditure decision-making and provide financial transparency in response to scrutiny questions.

For more information, visit: **cfoi2.cfoinsights.co.uk/**



Financial Resilience Index

CIPFA's **Financial Resilience Index** is a free tool that aims to support councils' financial decision-making by highlighting areas of possible financial risk.

The index measures councils' resilience against ten key indicators that are associated with financial risk:

Reserves Sustainability Measure
Level of Reserves
Change in Reserves
Interest Payable / Net Revenue Expenditure
Gross External Debt
Social care ratio
Fees and Charges to Service Expenditure Ratio
Council Tax Requirement / Net Revenue Expenditure
Growth Above Baseline
Auditors VfM Assessment

Developed in close collaboration with councils across the UK and technical stakeholder engagement, the index provides a rounded picture of an authority's resilience to financial shocks. It supports good financial management and provides a common understanding within a council of their financial position.

For more information, visit: cipfa.org/resilienceindex

See our work in action



See our work in action

CIPFA is one of the leading sources of financial and non-financial data about local government and other public sector services in the UK.

Contact us to arrange a demonstration of our new data platform or any one of our data products:

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