Local **Government** Association

Peterborough City Council: Hey Geraldine, a personalised AI assistant

Peterborough City Council has developed an innovative artificial intelligence (AI) assistant, 'Hey Geraldine', designed to support social workers and social care staff.

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Background

Peterborough City Council has developed an innovative AI assistant, 'Hey Geraldine', designed to support social workers and social care staff. The tool is based on a real member of staff within the social care team, Geraldine, with over 30 years of experience. She offers valuable insights and advice to staff drawing upon vast experience and expertise.

The idea for Hey Geraldine stemmed from the frequent requests social work teams made to the real Geraldine for guidance and support. By leveraging AI, the council has created a virtual assistant that can provide instant access to knowledge and information, improving efficiency and decision making. By basing the AI on a real person, the council has significantly increased user adoption. This approach has made it easier for the council to introduce the tool and gain buy-in from staff.

The council initially explored commercial AI solutions but had concerns about data privacy and the ability to address local nuances. To overcome these challenges, they developed Hey Geraldine, a bespoke AI tool.

The council's existing systems relied on manual updates. By implementing an AI-powered solution, the council was able to streamline processes and improve the overall user experience. The AI system can support timely updates to training materials with the latest information, ensuring accuracy and relevance. It can also personalise the experience for each user, delivering tailored content based on their specific needs. Additionally, the AI can analyse user interactions to identify knowledge gaps and areas for improvement, allowing the council to refine its offerings.

The development of Hey Geraldine was a collaborative effort between Peterborough City Council, Outcomes Matter Consulting, and Datnexa. Together, they were able to bring this innovative solution to life in just 6 weeks.

Overall aims of the project

Through the development of Hey Geraldine, the aims were to:

- Upskill the workforce: Enhance staff knowledge and confidence in using technology-enabled care and digital solutions.

- Reduce occupational therapists' burden: Alleviate the workload of occupational therapists by automating responses to common queries.

- Increase occupational therapists' productivity: Empower occupational therapists to focus on complex cases and strategic tasks.

- Promote technology adoption: Encourage the wider use of technology-enabled care and digital solutions across the service.

Governance

The development of Hey Geraldine was part of a wider ambitious transformation programme aimed at exploiting the opportunities that AI technology provides in managing demand, increasing workforce capacity and increasing the uptake of assistive technology.

Datnexa has guided the council through the complexities of AI governance, assisting with the completion and sign-off of crucial documents such as Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), Data Processing Agreements (DPAs), and service agreements.

Furthermore, they proactively collaborated with the information governance team and other relevant stakeholders to complete necessary information security processes before the testing period began, mitigating potential data protection concerns and risks.

Stakeholder engagement and feedback

The project has placed a strong emphasis on engaging frontline staff, including occupational therapists and commissioners. Hey Geraldine has undergone rigorous testing to ensure accuracy and reliability. Over a six-week development period, feedback on the tool's responses was collected through twice-weekly huddles and feedback forms. This allowed the council to iteratively improve the tool, ensuring it provides the most up-to-date and accurate information.

During the testing phase, the tool was trained to:

- define solutions and their use cases,
- identify solutions to meet the needs defined by the practitioner,
- respond to contextual and practice-based questions (e.g., "I am working with a person who is forgetting to turn the oven off, what is available to support them?").

The occupational therapist team were introduced and trained on the back end functionality for the system and the insights dashboard. This means internal teams are now able to easily update content and glean relevant insights from the application, understanding what staff are frequently asking and where more support may need to be allocated.

The council recognises the importance of building user confidence in the AI assistant. To encourage further adoption, the council aims to leverage a group of Technology Enabled Care champions to foster trust in Hey Geraldine. Integrating the application into Microsoft Teams will also make it more accessible and easier to use for social care staff in their daily roles.

Initial impact of Hey Geraldine

Hey Geraldine has been proven to save the OT team 15 minutes per conversation. This saved time has been used to manage caseloads, allowing priority to be given to cases that require additional support.

During the testing period, over 1200 questions were asked. While many were for testing and demonstration purposes, a significant number were genuine queries.

In addition to the time saving a range of positive feedback has been seen from across the service:

> " The answers were exactly as Geraldine would advise. The chatbot is quick and easy to use

Care Support Worker, Review Team

> " Just wanted to share with you my moment of pure joy this morning. Geraldine is on leave for 2 weeks, and first day of her leave I'm approached by a number of staff with multiple technical questions… ask Hey Geraldine... well, it was like talking to Geraldine herself, even gave me the part number of the equipment I needed!

Deputy Therapy Manager

Additionally, the tool provides a valuable insights dashboard, enabling the calculation of time savings and the identification of key themes and trends in user queries. This data-driven approach allows for the maximisation of ROI through targeted training and communication strategies.

During the testing phase, staff feedback highlighted additional opportunities for Hey Geraldine's application, including:

- supporting the development of broader practice,
- enhancing practitioner decision-making,
- reducing the volume of incoming queries to other service areas.

As the adoption of Hey Geraldine grows within the council, they are exploring ways to expand the AI assistant's impact across various service areas. As the tool continues to evolve, it has the potential to significantly improve Peterborough City Council's Adult Social Care services.

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