



Suffolk CoronaWatch

FROM DATA TO INSIGHT – BUILDING A POWERFUL COVID-19 DASHBOARD FOR SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Local Authorities across the UK have played a pivotal role in managing the public sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the many challenges they faced was the urgent need to collect and interpret public health data, so that local and national decisions could be made quickly and with evidence-based confidence.

FROM DATA TO INSIGHT

It's important, however, to draw a firm distinction between the collection of headline data, such as infection rates, hospitalisations, etc and the insight that can be revealed by analysing that data quickly and accurately.

For Suffolk County Council, moving from data to insight for a population of around 750,000 people required a rapid and innovative change in approach. As Rebecca Allen Head of C-19 Analytics, Knowledge & Intelligence, at Suffolk County Council explained, at the time, the information and communication capabilities of many local authority public health teams were not suited to the volume and complexity of data which now needed to be processed.

"In common with colleagues across the country, as the pandemic took hold, we were reliant on Excel-based data sets as the basis for data collection and analysis," she said.

"Given the crisis situation, this presented us with a range of challenges, not least because it seriously impacted our ability to turn data into decisions."

Using this data to create a high-level dashboard, the Suffolk team were faced with the need to carry out ongoing and intensive manual upkeep to ensure datasets and the dashboard outputs remained accurate.

They also had to download daily updates from Public Health England (PHE) and other NHS sites, before manually converting them into a format that could be merged into their data layer.

"Initially, the situation was manageable but time consuming," said Allen. "The problem was that as the pandemic developed, we were soon working with more than 30 data sources and the concern was that we'd reach a critical mass where the existing processes and technology wouldn't be able to keep up."



For Suffolk County Council, moving from data to insight for a population of around **750,000 people** required a rapid and innovative change in approach."

Laura Henderson

Business Development Manager, IJYI





Working with the IJYI team on this solution has been extremely important in developing an effective response to the COVID-19 crisis. Our new approach delivers much quicker data and insight refresh performance, data sources are stored in a data lake for reduced human error, and our adoption of automation technologies means there is much less manual input required from staff.

Rebecca Allen,
Head of C-19 Analytics, Knowledge & Intelligence,
Suffolk County Council

DEVELOPING A DIGITAL STRATEGY

In response, the Council moved to develop what became known as their 'Coronawatch' dashboard, designed to provide not only public access to critical COVID-19 information, but also available in greater depth privately for key stakeholders, partners and decision-makers.

Visualised as a series of dashboards using Microsoft PowerBI, the solution – developed in close cooperation with IJYI – was designed to increase the stability and resilience of their infrastructure, reduce the need for manual data input and automate a range of key processes to deliver the agility required.

The service infrastructure was migrated to a secure cloud-based solution, and as a result, the Council now operates an agile, high-performance public and professional healthcare information and insight service offering access to vital data sources in an accessible and timely format. Not only has this experience delivered a powerful set of capabilities to help address major public health issues, it has also helped inform the way the Council and colleagues from other local government organisations approach the collection, analysis, management and delivery of data and the vital guidance it can provide.

"Working with the IJYI team on this solution has been extremely important in developing an effective response to the COVID-19 crisis," said Allen. "Our new approach delivers much quicker data and insight refresh performance, data sources are stored in a data lake for reduced human error, and our adoption of automation technologies means there is much less manual input required from staff."

As the Coronawatch Dashboard was rolled out, Suffolk County Council was the only local authority in the UK automating the download process of large files from PHE. By May 2021, the Council team had worked with IJYI to implement full automation across the majority of its reporting processes.

Laria

Local Area Research + Intelligence Association

BEST USE OF DATA

Following the introduction of the new Coronawatch Dashboard, Suffolk County Council has since been running a national trial for proving the concept before it is rolled out to other councils around the country, as well as being nominated for the 'Best use of Data' at the national LARIA Research Impact Awards 2021.

Why IJYI

SCC required a partner who could help them deliver analytically ready data into the CoronaWatch service. IJYI was able to provide the expertise required to scale up the CoronaWatch solution during a time of significant data growth. IJYI enabled SCC to transition to a modern BI/MI platform, with guidance on best practice and implementation, which proved invaluable.

CONTACT

Laura Henderson | Business Development Manager
sales@ijyi.com

Kevin Linsell | Sales and Marketing Director
sales@ijyi.com

+44 (0)1473 558748

