

# THE MCA AWARDS 2023

## WINDS OF CHANGE

The race is on to meet decarbonisation targets

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## PROJECT OF THE YEAR

### Cutting the paper mountain in prisons

Prisons aren't places you might consider as being digitally connected. And for the most part this is true: communication with inmates is largely done in person, and sheets of paper regularly suffice for prisoner requests.

"Everything from ordering meals to shopping and requesting calls to the outside – a big bit of paper is pushed through your door at night," explains Sophie Otter, head of digital prison services, Ministry of Justice. "Then prison officers have to collect and collate all of the information. Some prisons have 1,500 inmates. The volume of paper is a nightmare."

Knowing that processes needed to change, the Ministry of Justice partnered with North Highland to start the journey of digital transformation that, with traditional infrastructures and practices, was always going to be a challenging ask.

"There are 120 prisons across England and Wales, and each one is different," explains Mike Wilkinson, practice executive at change and transformation consultancy North Highland. "We decided to design a system that would be 80 per cent the same for all prisons and 20 per cent tailored and flexible. We needed to make sure we were being collaborative with the operational side because trying to land change like this into a live operational environment is high stress."

The objectives of the plan were bold. The Launchpad Programme, as it was called, wasn't just about modernisation but aimed to contribute to rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. It wanted to drive efficiency for prison officers, who could better spend their time on more meaningful work with inmates and create an infrastructure that would continue to evolve and meet future needs.

The answer in the simplest terms was in-cell laptops, but there was

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## TIMES CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

# 'We can make a positive impact'

Companies and communities should work together to reduce carbon emissions, says David Orr. *By Gabriella Griffith*

Orr has worked on projects in India, Kenya and South Sudan

do it," Orr explains. "We're using digital tools to make sure they have the right data from every sector, from the national airline to the port authority to energy transmission companies, and that everyone's voice is heard."

It is vital work that management consultants are uniquely well placed to lead, Orr believes. In emerging economies in particular, he points out, the need to address the infrastructure gap while pursuing decarbonisation is a particularly challenging task. The skills and best practices that consultants have developed are vital in achieving that balancing act.

"Sound project management is vital, as these works don't always finish on time or on budget, and they're often taxpayer funded," Orr says. "It's crucial to identify the risks upfront, to ensure every stakeholder has the same expectations, and that the project then proceeds in a way that is codified and structured."

Bringing multiple stakeholders together is a critical element of infrastructure development, Orr adds. "You're building projects that have to link up, whether it's a new airport that needs a train station,

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**M**anagement consultancy is about mobilising stakeholders and building the right frameworks to achieve your goals," says David Orr, a consultant who works for global engineering and infrastructure company Mott MacDonald. "In my case, those goals are social and environmental. I'm interested in how companies and communities can work together to make a positive impact."

Orr is the winner of the Chartered Management Consultant of the Year award and Times Consultant of the Year. This is part reward for his work leading a digital team at Mott MacDonald, where they work with clients on major infrastructure projects to reduce carbon emissions.

"If you can think about carbon

at an early stage on these projects, which tend to use huge amounts of steel and concrete, you can make an enormous difference," the Canadian explains. "We also focus on the idea of democratising decarbonisation – that is, working with clients to get their entire supply chain on board to really drive this change."

But such projects account for only half of Orr's time at Mott MacDonald. He also works with policymakers in the battle against climate change – for instance, with the government of Kenya and teams there to support carbon reduction pathways, having undertaken similar work in India.

"Kenya has targets to significantly reduce carbon emissions, which is awesome, but the question is how to

## WORKPLACE BENEFITS

The office of the future arrives in Cardiff

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## CASH CONVERTS

How high street banking hubs are helping locals

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## FASTER FIBRE

Rolling out a solution for rural broadband

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## QUICKER CARE

Cutting NHS waiting times in the capital

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# Q&A

### Management consultants are helping key industries tackle the challenges they face

**Tamzen Isacson**  
Chief executive, Management Consultancies Association

Tamzen Isacson has been chief executive of the MCA for five years, having previously held a number of leadership positions in organisations where she worked to raise the global profile of London and the Nobel Prize. She also worked for the BBC for over a decade.

#### What has impressed you most about the 2023 shortlist?

The scale of the MCA Awards this year and the energy behind them is impressive, with more than 45 leading consulting firms making it to the final stages in partnership with 95 client organisations – including some of the biggest global brands. That commitment and drive to demonstrate the true value of consulting, and the time and effort given to this process by so many of our clients, is incredibly striking.

Through reading the entries you witness the huge breadth of our industry's work, from vital data transformations and cutting edge work on the use of AI to driving productivity and growth across the UK.

The MCA Awards also demonstrate the clear social impact of the sector on a range of issues, not least helping the NHS provide better hospital care, improving blood and organ transplant donation and treatments, tackling youth reoffending and helping those suffering from the harmful effects of gambling.

#### Why is sustainability an important focus in the 2023 awards?

Helping clients to achieve their sustainability goals across all service lines is a vital part of our consulting offering and is heavily embedded in so many of our projects across all sectors.

The way members drive progress on climate change can be seen in multiple MCA Awards categories and sectors in the UK and across the world – from work on retrofitting buildings to providing safer travel, turbocharging the UK's offshore infrastructure and creating green jobs.

The interviews with individual finalists clearly demonstrate the huge depth of

talent, experience and capability this sector is fortunate to have, and which supports our clients to rise to the complex challenges ahead and demonstrate real progress on creating a greener future.

#### What have been the highlights and challenges of the past year in your role?

It has been great to see a growing MCA team really excel and push the boundaries on sharing best practice across the sector, raising standards of professional development and producing high quality events for our members.

The year has been busy so far, but particular highlights include the MCA Annual Report launch, our latest Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, our new Young MCA video promoting careers in consulting, and welcoming more new members to our trade body.

The news cycle is always a challenge; when stories happen we have to respond quickly, authoritatively and with integrity, having consulted our members. These periods may be some of the busiest, demanding and most intense – but I can't say I don't enjoy them!

#### Where do you see the growth in management consultancy services over the next 12 months?

Clients are facing some of their greatest challenges at the moment during a period of significant global disruption. Growth in services will be driven by work on adopting new technologies

and making real impacts on confronting climate change. Our sector is forecast to achieve double-digit growth over the next few years, and there will be more demands placed on firms for support on adopting AI and tackling cybersecurity.

#### What advice would you give somebody starting in management consultancy?

Four key points: join an organisation that is an MCA member, as we represent the leading consulting firms committed to high standards of Consulting Excellence; start your journey to becoming chartered with ChMC – a professional pathway to help you develop skills across 54 competencies; sign up to the Young MCA to help build your network and meet other budding consultants. Finally, find out about the diversity of available careers and options in consulting, as this profession can be incredibly enriching in the long term.

#### Which individual projects have caught your eye this year and why?

I would say all the MCA finalists! As a trade association representing more than 80 leading consulting firms, you'll appreciate it might be a bit precarious to pick favourites. That's why – fortunately – we have an independent judging panel that decides on who makes it to the shortlist and eventually become winners. We've worked with The Times to highlight some great case studies in the supplement this year.

## CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Striking a blow: a wind farm under construction in the North Sea



# New ideas power clean energy plans worth £7bn

SSE worked with Deloitte on an innovative approach to major projects that will help the UK to develop its renewables infrastructure

**T**he UK has ambitious plans for net zero, including a significant increase in the use of renewable energy to power homes and businesses.

But connecting offshore wind facilities – a hugely important part of the UK's renewable energy mix – to the grid is also hugely challenging.

"There's a huge gap between what's been achieved so far and what is required," explains John Scott, programme director at SSEN Transmission (offshore delivery).

"The government's target is to have 50GW of offshore wind capacity connected by 2030, but the industry as a whole has managed to deliver only 14GW in the past decade or so."

SSE's role in closing the gap is a programme of work that will see its SSEN Transmission business connect offshore infrastructure with the grid through six new high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) transmission networks.

But Scott and his team realised early on that getting these projects done by 2030 would be impossible without changing the way they worked, both internally and with partners. It therefore commissioned Deloitte to produce

detailed research it could use to drive change within the business and in the broader sector.

"For us, the challenge was to change the way we thought about procurement, moving away from approaching it transaction by transaction to a mindset of multi-project early engagement," Scott explains.

"But we also needed to convince policymakers and regulators to put the right type of support in place to make that kind of approach viable."

Deloitte's response was to launch an intensive eight-week programme of research with key stakeholders inside SSE and from across the sector. "We needed to help SSE shift its own mindset, but we also needed to create a robust and independent body of evidence that we could take to the regulator and government," says Susan McDonald, energy transition lead at Deloitte.

For this process, Deloitte carried out 40 interviews, collected data and insight, and worked with its strategy



We wouldn't have got those changes without the work we did with Deloitte

and regulation specialists to set out a vision for change.

The key with external stakeholders was to make the case that SSE wasn't looking for special treatment, McDonald says. With multiple countries pursuing similar net zero goals, the supply chain is under huge pressure, she points out.

Demand for HVDC networks is set to triple in the coming years. "We wanted to make sure that the energy industry in the UK could genuinely say this country was an attractive market for suppliers to prioritise," she explains.

The hard work has paid off. Last December, the government announced a new regulatory regime for the offshore electricity network, which reflected many of the conclusions the Deloitte-SSE report had presented to regulators. The goal was to give businesses such as SSE the confidence to move forward with big infrastructure projects at a much faster speed.

For SSE, the changes were critical, substantially reducing the risks attached to a portfolio of projects worth up to £7bn. "We would not have been able to move on those projects without the regulatory changes announced," says Scott. "And we wouldn't have got those changes without the work we did with Deloitte to build the case for reform."

Equally, however, the work Deloitte did to help SSE rethink its own approach has been instrumental. "We were able to see the need to step back and look at the bigger picture – to approach procurement and delivery much more collaboratively with our suppliers," adds Scott. "Then, once we got the regulatory support we needed, we were able to operationalise that mindset shift and get those critical projects up and running."

The outcome of the engagement has therefore been a step change in the speed at which the UK is moving to decarbonise the electricity grid, with SSE playing a hugely important role. The completion of the six infrastructure projects will also be vital in improving the country's energy security.

For Deloitte, the exciting opportunity was to help the UK lead the charge on decarbonisation, says McDonald.

"We often talk about the UK being a leader in the international battle against climate change and we certainly have some impressive targets," she says. "But really, it's all about delivery and this project is making a significant difference there."

Indeed, beyond SSE, the regulatory changes announced last year will provide other major energy companies with the confidence to accelerate their decarbonisation strategies. "That has been hugely rewarding," adds McDonald. "The individual team members who worked so closely with SSE say this is one of the most impactful and professionally rewarding projects they've ever been involved with."

David Prosser

## CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE



nothing simple about it. The Launchpad began with two pilots, one in a young offenders institution and one in an adult male prison. Two places that would require very different approaches, with variations in style of communication.

The plan was to give each prisoner their own laptop where they could access a range of services and information: important messages about day-to-day prison changes, information such as upcoming visits, and their budget – a place to order their meals and buy things.

This would immediately remove some of the paper admin from the officers and put the responsibility of ordering on to the prisoners. Beyond this, the laptops would also become a source of educational videos and tutorials as well as other prison-approved content.

One of the biggest challenges was encouraging adoption. "From the staff side, we expected a bit of resistance – prisons really aren't a technology environment and trying to learn something new in a prison environment is not easy," says Wilkinson. "We used behavioural science teachings to encourage adoption, bringing the staff along with us and working closely with them to create the suite of services available to inmates."

North Highland had to design a laptop system that would be accessible regardless of literacy level. "Whatever your abilities, you're able to use it without feeling threatened," says Wilkinson. "If it's not designed like that you exclude a portion of the prison population and that can cause tensions to rise."

The use of video messages helped with this and the unique laptops also have a simple button on the keyboard to make written content audible.

As well as accessibility, there was the challenge of security. "We had to dispel any fears that we were giving prisoners access to the internet," explains Mark Robinson, head of technology, Ministry of Justice. "In reality, we were giving access to a laptop with very controlled services and we worked with the National Cyber Security Centre to prove that our layers of security protection ensured this."

Having worked hard to ensure the laptops were the right product for the job, they started the rollout. The results were positive. Firstly, the prisoners felt a greater sense of autonomy and trust in the system. "The self-service element was powerful for inmates," explains Otter. "Sixty one per cent said they had a better understanding of what was going on in the prisons, 58 per cent said they felt they had greater choice about how they spent their time and 48 per cent said their mental health improved."

There are no initial statistics around the impact on reoffending at this early stage, but indicators are good. "We know that having good relationships with friends and family is one of the key aspects in turning people's lives around, and 55 per cent of prisoners have said their relationships with family and friends had improved as a consequence of having access to laptops," says Otter.

North Highland has designed the changes to be carried on by the civil service team and has since delivered the laptop system to a further 10 prisons.

## Can AI help us be more human?

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# Deloitte.



# Progress in the workplace

What did it take to move on from the office v WFH debate?

**E**ven before the pandemic, Legal & General had begun to ask some challenging questions about the future of its workplaces. Covid-19 forced it to accelerate the debate.

"We had been thinking carefully about what kind of environment would enable people to do their jobs more effectively," recalls Heather Andrews, group people change and transformation director at L&G. "Then the pandemic arrived, and we found ourselves standing on a burning platform."

The insurer recognised that staff valued working from home, and that there were elements of jobs they didn't need to be in the office for. But it feared losing collaboration and spontaneous interactions if staff worked entirely remotely.

Equally, L&G was conscious of its responsibilities from a sustainability perspective. How could it reimagine the future of work in a way that reduced its environmental impact – and give staff the sense of purpose they were looking for?

"These are fundamental issues for our workforce – and the workforce of the future," says Emmajane Varley, L&G's director for reputation, employee communications and sustainability. "In every interview we do with new staff, we are asked about our approach to sustainability and social responsibility."

To tackle these issues, L&G commissioned PwC to help design an optimal working experience. "Engagement was crucial – we knew we had to make the workforce part of the solution," says Peter Brown, global leader of PwC's workforce practice.

From the start, L&G avoided thinking through the narrow prism of remote versus office-based work. Rather than impose arrangements on staff, it wanted to build more modern and vibrant environments that made better use of space, and ensure those spaces were equipped to drive collaboration. Technology would also be a key element, with new tools to help with productivity.

As PwC and L&G engaged with staff at every level, finding common ground wasn't always simple. "Any change process is difficult, even more so an exercise as complicated as this, and we wanted an approach

that people felt was fair," says Andrews.

The key, adds Brown, was to be upfront. "We tried to be as transparent as possible about our plans, even though this led to disagreements on occasion," he says. "There wasn't a playbook to follow, we just had to work as hard as possible to build trust with people."

The project spanned the whole organisation and reflected different priorities and requirements. PwC helped L&G run a series of behaviour and culture workshops, and support staff with new tech and workspaces. The project also overhauled L&G's leadership development programme, not least so that managers would feel confident in helping their teams work in new ways.

Andrews is particularly excited about the opening of a new building in Cardiff. Built to high environmental standards, it is equipped with a range of new technologies, has agile working spaces and emphasises staff wellbeing with features such as cycle and changing facilities, a café, a social space and an external terrace. "There's a real buzz about the place," she says. "It's about employees knowing what we stand for, rather than just opening another office."

Such developments are only the start. "We're really thinking in terms

"There wasn't a playbook to follow. We had to build trust"

of the future of work now and next," says Andrews. "Now is the work we've done over the past two and a half years, creating connectivity that enables people to work together more effectively. Next is building on what we've learned, including from our new building in Cardiff, and evolving further."

L&G is delighted with the results that it is already seeing. Its internal surveys show a 4 percentage point increase in employee satisfaction; and when asked about the balance that work at L&G provides, employees' scores have improved by 10 points. "It's unusual to see that level of uplift in employee sentiment so quickly following an exercise of this kind," says Brown. Andrews believes L&G will also enjoy a boost to recruitment and retention. She points to increased levels of employee advocacy, where the number of staff making the case for L&G as a place to work has increased by around 10 per cent.

"Our people now work more purposefully and productively, and they have access to the right tools and workspaces to enable them to be at their best," Andrews says. "They no longer talk about 'hybrid working' or 'going back to the office'; they're much more likely to talk about the purpose of their work."

David Prosser

MCA AWARDS 2023

## Congratulations to all of our winners

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PwC with the Home Office  
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PwC with Legal & General  
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Change and Transformation in the Private Sector

PwC with London Borough of Hillingdon  
Performance Improvement in the Public Sector

PwC with Birmingham City Council  
Social Value

Jonny Brighton  
Young Consultant of the Year

PwC with the Ministry of Defence  
Performance Improvement in the Public Sector

Sumitha Fernandez Musoles  
Technology Consultant of the Year

Georgina Letts  
Chartered Management Consultant of the Year

Tara Shrestha Carney  
Thought Leader Consultant of the Year

Nick Durrans  
Experienced Leader Award

Read their stories and find out more



TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

# Treating the cause, not the symptom

Tasked with finding the best digital medicine for ailing healthcare systems in the NHS, Raj Cheema built his team from scratch. Diagnosis? Excellent

**K**PMG's digital health partner, Raj Cheema, fell into his career by accident. "I didn't know what a professional services firm was," he says. "None of my friends or family did either, but I've always had a passion for charity work and I liked the idea of doing something with the public sector – and having real value in what I was doing."

Having studied management and law, Cheema started with assurance work and later went into advisory roles where he carved out a reputation for his public sector work, particularly in healthcare. In 2019, KPMG asked him to head up a new digital healthcare department.

"I started from scratch with no team, which was slightly daunting," he says. "But the unit was treated like a start-up with agility, which meant we could try new things and fail fast. It was the first time where the digital capabilities of KPMG and the traditional services capabilities married up, which created some magic. It showed courage to let this dude who doesn't quite fit the mould take an idea and run with it."

His passion for healthcare goes beyond the day job. His wife is a nurse and he's witnessed first-hand the challenges she has faced with the lack of digitisation in the role. "She came home one night and realised she had to turn around and travel all the way back because she

hadn't given someone her handover sheet," he says. "I couldn't believe we were still living in a world where ten people on a busy shift were dependent on a piece of paper to tell them what had happened that day."

His passion for improving the healthcare system is coupled with a healthy readiness to challenge the status quo. "I'm a fan of disruption and, right now, I think technology is the way to do it," he says. "It allows you to create revolution rather than evolution – and that is exactly what's needed when you look at the state of play in the NHS right now."

Healthcare is beset by challenges and for many of the clients that work with Cheema, there's no obvious starting place or easy fix. "Our clients never come to us and say: 'This is the problem, it is because of X.' They are suffering the symptoms of broad problems. It's my job to listen and find the root causes of those symptoms and pull the right team together with the skills to do that."

Rather than try to serve the whole market, Cheema's multidisciplinary team focus on building longstanding client relationships with whom they feel they can add value and grow from there. Cheema grew the unit by 73 per cent last year and it is set to grow by over 90 per cent this year.



I'm a fan of disruption and, right now, I think technology is the way to do it



Shake it up: Raj Cheema is a fan of disruption and uses tech to do it

"We started at an average of 1.3 services per client and now we're at five," he adds. "Client scores are nine or ten out of ten and we're growing by word of mouth – our clients are doing the bidding for us."

At the heart of Cheema's success is a focus on the purpose element of everything they do. "All of the clever stuff that people like me do on computers, it means nothing unless it has a positive impact on a human. I can put the best technology into an organisation but if no one adopts it, it doesn't mean anything."

Cheema's team has worked on many exciting projects, including one aiming to protect the NHS from cybercrime that involved providing sophisticated mock phishing campaigns to staff. Another is exploring what

hospitals of the future should look like. "The mission is to build the smartest, most efficient hospitals that will serve the population over the next few decades," he explains. "One of the things we discovered is the importance of managing temperature control, because theatres were losing surgery time at the beginning of the day when they were too cold."

Cheema has achieved more than most – and you might say he's done it against the odds, what with the extra challenge of having dyslexia.

"I've always had coping mechanisms that I didn't talk about, perhaps because of shyness or even shame," he says. "But I feel a burden of responsibility to share my experience with others, so I have started mentoring people and telling them how I have faced my challenges. Two people I mentor are actually clients – which is cool."

Cheema is clear about his goals for the future. For clients, he wants to create sustainable transformation so they can succeed long after he and his team move on. "It's not about selling more," he says. "If I've done my job well, my clients will build on the work I've done – I will leave a sustainable legacy for my clients, their staff and the people they serve."

For KPMG, he wants to build a business with agility that can scale and innovate. "Part of that is nurturing talent and confident leaders of the future," he adds.

For himself, he wants to leave society in a better place than he found it – continually learning and always pushing. "I've delivered and grown something that is impactful," he says. "I want to keep going." **GG**

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

## Don't go with the flow...

...speed it up. How IMPOWER tackled the great hospital bed-blocking problem

Hospitals across the country are struggling to cope with demand for beds, but an innovative project run by IMPOWER Consulting in Lincolnshire offers a model that could provide part of the solution.

Working closely with the local authority and one of the largest acute hospital trusts in the country, IMPOWER has been able to double ward discharge rates, freeing up crucial capacity.

"We focused on patients' first 72 hours on the ward, and how we could move them much more

quickly to the right place, whether in intermediate care or back home," says Nikki Pownall, system flow director for Lincolnshire.

Pownall tasked IMPOWER with achieving those goals, based on work that the consultant had already undertaken with Lincolnshire County Council's adult social care teams.

"Our challenge was to develop close relationships with frontline staff on the wards," says Sam Ingamells, a delivery director at IMPOWER. "They are the experts but often didn't feel they had the agency to make changes happen."

Crucially, the objective was to improve outcomes for all patients by moving them to the most appropriate settings for their needs, rather than simply increase the throughput of the hospital's acute wards.

IMPOWER's work elsewhere in Lincolnshire meant the consultant was already regarded as a trusted partner and had shown it could navigate the complexities of the local system.

"We focused on workflows that hadn't been effective in the past, such as ensuring patients could access the physiotherapy services they

needed following discharge," Ingamells says. "We did simple things such as develop a laminated checklist that staff could work through as they looked at which patients needed to go where."

"In many cases, these were things practitioners had wanted to do in the past, but we had the mandate to make them happen. The more we showed that we would do what we promised, the more positive people became."

The day-to-day realities of operating in a hospital presented challenges. "Working in a hospital throws up unexpected difficulties – a fire in an MRI machine one day, say, and an outbreak of *C. difficile* on a ward the next," says Ingamells. "Our job was to keep coming back to the end goal and identify the best way of proceeding in each ward."

The project was high-profile, says Pownall, with senior figures, including the trust, sitting on the stakeholder group steering the project. "IMPOWER produced a comprehensive data bank so that we could baseline the starting position, map out a target trajectory for improvement and monitor progress against it," she says. "There was a sense of accountability from early on."

After six months of work, the trust saw the proportion of patients discharged from acute wards within 72 hours increase from 20 per cent to 40 per cent, an improvement that also generated substantial cost savings.

Cultural shifts have ensured these improvements have been maintained. "When I spend time on our acute wards today, I can see how so much of the positive work is continuing, even though IMPOWER's consultants are no longer there," Pownall says.

The project proved so successful that the trust commissioned IMPOWER to carry out similar work on the hospital's surgical wards. More broadly, Pownall believes the work can provide inspiration for others struggling with the same challenges of capacity and patient outcomes. "There's been a great deal of interest in our approach," she says.

The project has also been inspiring for IMPOWER's consultants, adds Ingamells. "Every ward has slightly different challenges, so you're continually forced to think on your feet as you problem solve," she says. "It's a huge exercise in listening to people and understanding exactly what they need." **DP**

# Games changer

Birmingham's council and its partner Arup revitalised the race to prepare for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in world record time

**E**ven before the Covid-19 crisis struck, Birmingham faced a tough challenge as it prepared to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Having replaced the original host city Durban in 2017, it had just four years to get ready for the games rather than the usual seven. "No one had done that before," recalls Craig Cooper, strategic director of city operations at Birmingham City Council.

The pandemic's arrival added to the pressure, and with two and a half years to go Cooper asked consultancy Arup to lead a strategic review of progress. Arup associate director Dan Evanson says: "Our initial role was to understand if Birmingham was going to be able to deliver on its ambitions to run an amazing game with a real legacy."

But Arup's contribution was soon to expand. Already engaged on capital projects needed for the

games, including the redevelopment of Alexander Stadium – the flagship venue and host of track and field events – Arup was chosen to help fill capacity gaps that its review identified.

With many of the council's employees overwhelmed by the challenges of Covid, Arup provided support to keep the games on track. That included work to improve the Games Route Network – the transport links between the 15 venues in the West Midlands – and to dress strategic locations around the city. As Cooper puts it: "When you ask your relatives over, you want to make sure your place is looking at its best."

Other roles included community engagement, with the city council determined to build momentum around its Be Bold, Be Birmingham campaign. Arup also had to plan the execution of the event itself – not just the sporting contests, but



Urban culture: the council aimed to deliver an artistic programme as well as sporting events

also a programme of artistic and cultural events. "The aim was to squeeze every ounce of benefit out of the games," Cooper says.

To achieve this, it was key for Arup's consultants to work side by side with council staff. "There were times when people didn't know who their colleagues worked for because we were operating as a single team," Evanson points out.

Technology played a crucial role, too. Arup developed tools such as an interactive planner that tracked thousands of events happening in

the city in the run-up to the Games, to ensure the efficient allocation and use of BCC resources.

The culmination of this work was the largest ever Commonwealth Games, delivered on time and on budget. Cooper says Arup ensured Birmingham could fulfil its potential and that the buoyancy of the event itself continued beyond the closing ceremony: "If there was ever a Commonwealth city, Birmingham is it. We are a majority black and minority ethnic city with the youngest population in Europe." DP

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# Digital car cover drives success

Internet insurer now settles claims in a few hours thanks to a consultancy's online platform that can assess vehicle damage just from a photograph

**T**he challenge facing esure three years ago was simple but daunting, recalls Peter Martin-Simon, the insurance company's chief customer officer. "This is a sector that has persistently enjoyed low levels of trust with customers," he says. "We asked ourselves: 'How can we fix insurance for good?'"

Launched in 2000 as one of the first direct insurers to focus on serving customers through the internet, esure's early years were characterised by its commitment to investment in technology.

More recently, the company's legacy systems struggled to offer the level of customer service to which it aspired. "Our legacy technology just didn't provide us with the capabilities we needed," explains Martin-Simon. "We felt we needed to build a completely new platform."

Crucially, esure was determined not to think about the project as a technology initiative. Rather, the goal was to see how transformation could put the customer back at the centre of the business: "This wasn't about putting new technology in. We saw it as technology creating a whole new business model."

The project felt pioneering from the word go, says Preetham Peddanagari, UK financial services technology consulting lead at EY, which esure chose for transformation partner. "The ambition was to build something that would be the first of its kind in the insurance sector," he says. "We thought that if we got

this right, it would be a shining example for the whole sector on how to use technology to transform business models."

Peddanagari and the EY team began by scouring the world for best practice that might inspire them, noting innovations in markets as wide-ranging as South Korea and South Africa. "What became clear was that there wasn't going to be a one-size-fits-all solution that we could simply drop in," Peddanagari says. "We had to create an ecosystem of solutions and technologies."

Esure and EY agreed a two to three-year timeframe for the transformation project, partnering with tech experts EIS to implement its cloud-native digital insurance platform. The goal was to build an environment in which esure would be able to operate and innovate more like a technology-enabled challenger brand, plugging in new tools and solutions as needed.

The project deadlines were demanding, even before unexpected disruptions. During the initial stages of the transformation, all involved had to pivot to remote working as the Covid-19 pandemic forced the UK and other countries into lockdown. Russia's invasion of Ukraine provided further challenge, with many of EIS's employees based in Odesa, close to the front line.

The scale of the project also created potential headaches. At the height of the transformation, more than 150 EY employees in

ten countries were working on different aspects of the programme. EY says it's "one of the largest, most global and cross-functional" projects it has undertaken.

Given these challenges, Peddanagari and Martin-Simon are proud that the programme is on target to be completed within just a few months of the original target date. "We recognised that early value delivery would be crucial to building momentum," says Peddanagari. "We broke down the work into more manageable value streams with something like 25 to 30 key milestone moments; each time we hit one of those milestones, it gave everyone confidence that we were making progress."

Most importantly, the project has delivered what esure wanted – a state-of-the-art technology platform by which it can compete aggressively for market share. This included the development of automation tools to handle the migration of customers from esure's legacy systems to the new technology.

What does that mean for customers? The project's overarching aim was to make their lives easier – to eliminate the frustration that people can feel when dealing with insurers – and esure is recording big improvements in metrics like net promoter scores. Martin-Simon points to the example of making



Original thinking: Preetham Peddanagari wanted to create a first for the insurance sector

**150 employees in 10 countries worked on the project**

a claim following a motor accident – once a burdensome process that would have required lengthy form filling and multiple contacts.

"What if you could simply post a picture of your vehicle following an accident? What if our systems could automatically analyse your picture, establish the vehicle is not repairable and deposit the payment for your claim in your account within a couple of hours? That's exactly what we can do now."

He is also delighted with the impact that the project has had on esure's employees. Their working experience has been improved by the new platform, and many have taken an active role in the programme. "We have really upskilled the talent in our business. Our people are hands-on and experienced with digital technologies."

Martin-Simon is excited by the platform's potential to supercharge esure's data analytics capabilities. "We've got the freedom to experiment with data through an industry-leading machine learning capability, and that will deliver real benefits for customers in areas such as pricing."

In other words, esure sees the work as the first stage in an ongoing evolution. It's an important point, says Peddanagari, who advises organisations considering major transformation to think in terms of change capacity.

"The agility we have brought to the organisation is really important," he says. "This is a platform that can pivot as the marketplace changes, whether you're facing the kind of disruption that we've seen in recent times or you're embracing new opportunity."

Martin-Simon says another key lesson of the project is the importance of focusing on the outcome rather than how to get to it; technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

"We built this platform from front to back for the whole organisation. This was never going to be just a technology transformation; it was a business rebuild." DP

## Planning ahead for retirement

How an AI tool aided a retirement community developer in its search for prime locations

Retirement community builder and manager McCarthy Stone has purchased and constructed more than 500 developments in the past decade – creating safe homes for older people across the UK.

Sustaining this momentum is the company's land buying team, which has been assessing and buying up to 60 sites a year. "There was nothing scientific about the way our team



chose new sites – just years of experience," says McCarthy Stone COO Shane Paull. "Each site has criteria we needed it to meet and then it was about gut feeling on what would probably sell."

With a high quota of locations to buy, a lot of jeopardy is involved. "Your investment value effectively sits on the books. Having cost you probably £4 million to purchase and £14 million to £15 million to build, you don't get a lot of praise if the properties take a long time to sell," Paull explains.

McCarthy Stone approached AI consultancy Arca Blanca, part of global consultancy Artefact, for support in rethinking its land buying methods. "There's a housing crisis in the UK so moving older people who are in big houses into specialist retirement apartments is really valuable," says Arca Blanca director Chris Watterson. "It also goes a long way towards tackling loneliness for older people, so accelerating the process is a good thing."

The Arca Blanca team first had to fully understand the challenge of how



Site purchases are up 25% with £25m in savings on development costs

to assess the future saleability of sites McCarthy Stone planned to buy. The next stage was to delve into the data, then use it to create a prediction tool to analyse sites' potential. "McCarthy Stone had ten years of data on nearly 400 sites they've sold," says Watterson. "It puts them in a unique position, as machine learning only works when it has a wealth of data to learn from."

Arca Blanca took the data and developed a deep neural network in order to apply machine learning to the problem. "When we inputted all of the

data, from types of house and prices to the local amenities, we found that there were 300 useful variables when determining whether a site would be successful or not," says Watterson.

The result is an easy-to-use machine learning tool that predicts saleability in ten minutes – but the land team needed to be persuaded to work with it. "We're asking people to have trust in data when they previously worked on instinct," explains Watterson. "They were also concerned about AI taking their jobs – we proved to them the tool will assist them not replace them."

The tool has now informed decision making for over 50 sites. Site purchases are up 25 per cent, while headcounts remain the same. The company is also de-risking land acquisition – walking away from two purchases which saved £25 million in development costs.

"We have added data science to an area of the business which was the least technological," says Paull. "Now it's probably the most advanced. It's a big, big success for us." GG

## INTERNATIONAL

# Problem solving for the long term

How Deloitte helped drastically reduce downtime at an innovative waste upcycling facility in Nairobi – and ensured that the operator is able to proactively prevent operational issues in the future

**P**ersistent outages are the last thing wanted by a social enterprise operating a critical waste management and sanitation facility in a city struggling with those issues.

But that was the problem faced in 2022 by The Sanergy Collaborative, which has developed an innovative and sustainable solution to turn Nairobi's waste into organic fertiliser, animal feed and renewable energy.

Repeated breakdowns of key machinery at its plant in a rural location outside the Kenyan capital – home to more than 4 million people – meant the facility was functioning for only 60 per cent of its operating hours.

"We were really struggling to respond to such widespread equipment failures," recalls Rizwan Elias, manufacturing manager at Sanergy's Regen Organics recycling factory. "And we lacked the expertise to be more proactive about getting ahead of the problem."

Sanergy met Deloitte after being a runner-up in the Build A Waste-Free World category of the Earthshot Prize, founded by Prince William in 2020 to encourage new solutions to environmental problems. The consulting teams work on a pro bono basis with businesses nominated for the awards.



It's an approach that we've been able to continue using – and to implement at another plant we run elsewhere in the country

"We spent time running intensive interviews and workshops to really understand their business challenges," says Kevin Thomson, a manager in the Smart Operations & Manufacturing team at Deloitte. "One issue was that they didn't have good visibility of their assets or performance metrics. They also lacked the means to identify the root causes of breakdowns, and often found it hard to fix problems quickly."

Deloitte proposed an approach designed to reduce the number of mechanical failures overall and to minimise the disruption of breakdowns that did occur.

Public health service: the collaboration between Sanergy and Deloitte has been hugely beneficial for local people



The first objective was tackled through the introduction of root cause analysis methodologies that enabled Sanergy to fully understand why critical assets kept breaking. The team was then able to implement a maintenance strategy to address these issues.

The second task saw Deloitte help Sanergy introduce a new approach to spare parts, with critical replacement items identified and spares procured and kept on site, so that the plant didn't have to wait for them to be shipped in the event of a failure.

The results were spectacular, with a 12 per cent reduction in breakdowns over the course of Deloitte's 16-week engagement. Since the project, the plant's uptime has increased from 60 per cent to 90 per cent, says Elias. "It's an approach that we've been able

to continue using – and to implement at another plant we run in Kenya."

It's a critical success given the facility's role in supporting public health. The impact extends beyond the immediate benefits to Sanergy and its customers. It contributes to the United Nations' sustainable development goals by promoting modern frameworks for sustainable waste management, and creating jobs for economic growth in the region.

Nick Davis, supply chain partner at Deloitte, says the results of the project demonstrate what can be achieved by diverse teams working together. "This was a multicultural and multinational team taking lean manufacturing principles developed in Japan and implementing them in a Kenyan plant co-founded by an American." DP



Having an ethical approach as a foundation is so important

youngest chartered management consultant at Mott MacDonald to have completed the on-programme route to the award.

Launched in 2021, the Chartered Management Consultant (ChMC) accreditation was developed to set and maintain the highest standards in management consulting, and to reward consistently high professional competence and achievement.

Such rigour was an important consideration for Orr. "I was conscious that it was a new award and could see value in being an early adopter, but I was also reassured that it was just as challenging and robust as some of the chartered awards in other professions," he says. "It certainly felt rigorous when I was doing the work, because there are more than 50 competencies where you need to show clear examples of

your skills and experience."

While the workload was demanding, Orr believes the ChMC accreditation can play a valuable role personally and professionally for management consultants. "At a personal level, you're hopefully making yourself eligible for more interesting and demanding projects because you've demonstrated you have the capabilities required to manage them," he says. "For the profession as a whole, having that single stamp of authority is important. I think management consultants have often been recognised for particular projects or initiatives, but the chartered status can give that aura of professionalism you see in other sectors."

It also helped that the work felt connected to Orr's role: "The first theme in the programme is ethics. In some of the complex and challenging environments where I find myself working, having an ethical approach as a foundation is so important."

Orr hopes more of his consulting colleagues will be attracted to the sustainability field. "This is the greatest challenge we now face in the world," he says. "If management consultants can play even a small role in rising to that challenge, we have to seize the opportunity."

## CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

# A positive from the pandemic

A system designed to help the NHS respond to patients' needs during the Covid crisis is now being adapted by its creators for use with other health issues

**W**hen the likely impact of Covid-19 on the health of the population started to be realised, two of the key questions were: who was most at risk, and how could those people be reached and helped in time?

It was a problem NHS England and the business and technology consultancy BJSS were tasked with solving – knowing that not only did they face a multitude of disparate datasets, but that time was short.

The solution was to build a new platform that could integrate and analyse combined medical records to identify citizens at scale so they could receive care throughout the pandemic and beyond.

"It's a tool that ingests seven primary and secondary healthcare datasets, including GP records, and cancer and maternity datasets," says BJSS managing consultant Ben Surdeau. "It can categorise people based on age, ethnicity, weight, smoking status and other factors so that we can make predictive estimates about their risk."

It was first used to identify 1.7 million clinically vulnerable individuals who could shield. Phase two was to supply 1.3 million PCR test kits to people in advance.



As the pandemic developed, we started to learn more about the virus, including who else was vulnerable

Vulnerable patients who tested positive were quickly identified and flagged to newly developed systems across England, manned by clinicians who triaged 80,000 people and offered often lifesaving treatment to 15,000 within four days.

"Previous ways of finding patients were convoluted," says BJSS delivery lead Gerry Murphy. "We had to go out to third parties, such as GP IT providers, and it could take weeks."

One of the major challenges, Murphy explains, was that they were trying to identify conditions that hadn't previously been looked for. "If somebody had a respiratory illness, say, we'd know they needed to shield. But as the pandemic developed, we started to learn more about the virus, including who else was vulnerable."

Trying to streamline millions of records was a challenge, but doing it during a pandemic was unprecedented. "Things were changing daily – sometimes several times a day," Murphy says. It was only made possible because of the smooth and efficient collaboration between BJSS and NHS England.

"The NHS is one of our most important clients because of the

1.7m Clinically vulnerable individuals identified

impact of the work we do with them," says Jila Bahri-Esfahani, head of business consulting at BJSS. "Our longstanding relationship is built on experience, knowledge and trust through working together for years."

This experience also allows BJSS to understand the individual concerns of stakeholders, whether these are clinical, regulatory or legal.

The "Cohorting as a Service" platform has now evolved from a tactical response at the start of the pandemic to a strategic solution used to identify citizens for other, non-Covid related health issues.

"I came in to help move the programme from that reactive: 'Here's an acute problem, we need to fix it' to 'How do we repurpose it?'," Surdeau says.

Bahri-Esfahani adds, "We talk a lot about working in badgeless teams in management consulting, but after going through fire with people from different organisations – when you come out of that, there is nothing you wouldn't do for those individuals. That's really powerful in terms of relationship and trust, and I think the potential for the platform is genuinely exciting."

TK Heming

## SOCIAL VALUE

# Good news for places where cash is still king

Banks and other bodies have collaborated on a unique scheme to help the millions dependent on notes and coins

As banks have closed branches where footfall no longer justifies their presence, the industry has come under pressure to ensure people can access cash.

In 2019, the Access to Cash review, chaired by Natalie Ceeney CBE, concluded that as many as eight million consumers and small businesses remained dependent on cash for their everyday needs.

"The current model wasn't working," says Ceeney. "Commercial pressures were making bank branches nonviable in smaller towns, but the absence of facilities was leaving individuals and consumers behind."

So, in 2021, the banking industry group UK Finance launched the Cash Action Group (CAG), with Ceeney as chair. Working with the UK's 10 largest banks and organisations such as the Post Office, Link, Age UK and the Federation of Small Businesses, it promised to find new ways for people to access basic banking services locally.

Eric Leenders, UK Finance managing director and head of personal finance, was keen to involve the professional services group EY UK. "We needed



support in providing strategic insight and implementation expertise," he says.

The CAG developed a £30 million plan centred on shared banking hubs in physical premises, run jointly by all the banks to meet people's cash needs and help regenerate local high streets.

"It's the first time anything like this has been done anywhere in the world," says John Saxton, a partner in EY's banking and capital markets team.

Eight hubs have been launched in the UK, with 30 more scheduled by the end of the year. Overall, the group has announced plans for more than 150 new services, comprising around 90 hubs and 70 deposit-taking solutions.

"The hubs have been hugely welcomed by the local communities," says Leenders. "We've also had very positive feedback from regulators and politicians." The CAG initiative is even feeding into government plans to protect access for cash, he adds.

All those involved in the project at EY have been inspired by it, adds Saxton: "It's been a real privilege to be involved in a project that has such an impact," he says. DP

## CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

say, or a water treatment works that will add to the existing network," he explains. "You're also having a real impact on people, so you need to be talking to community groups too."

Orr's efforts to bring discipline to large-scale infrastructure projects have driven a number of successful outcomes in crucial areas. Initiatives have included a project in Pakistan to advance medical collaboration in response to the Covid-19 crisis, work on efforts to improve girls' education in South Sudan and an urban development programme in India.

The quality and impact of such



work has been widely recognised. Last September, the United Nations Global Compact, which leads efforts worldwide to get businesses to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, recognised Orr (below) as its 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Pioneer for Climate Mitigation.

The award was made in part for Orr's work at Mott MacDonald to advance the 2050 Carbon Calculator, a digital tool incorporating existing and emerging green technologies. It is an energy model that governments, other stakeholders and the public can use to think about how to decarbonise a region or country. The outputs provide the basis for the development of evidence-based policies that are tailored to that specific area.

"Winning the award was very special and humbling," Orr says. "It felt as if it proved I'm on to something with the work I've been doing, but more importantly I think it showed that with a supportive company behind you it's possible to blend management consultancy and sustainability work to really drive positive impact."

Orr credits Mott MacDonald with giving him plenty of support. The firm encouraged him to pursue chartered status, supporting him with a mentor during the process. At 29, he is the

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TEAM LEADER CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

# Reaching in and out to succeed

In helping a grocery chain re-establish its independence, Andrea Poore drew on the combined skills of her PwC team and those in-house. Thanks to her passion for retail, she's rooting out the best way forward

**S**upporting a big UK grocer to establish independently again after many years under ownership by a retail giant is no mean feat. All of a sudden, the business functions that were taken care of elsewhere needed to come back in-house. PwC's Andrea Poore and her business architecture team have taken on the challenge. "We're responsible for designing and optimising all of the business processes that operate the grocer and ensure we get food on the shelves," she explains. From supply chains to commercial teams, finance and HR, in the past 18 months the

team has designed more than 2,000 processes that will enable the grocer to operate in an efficient and effective way. Its work has impacted 140,000 people, 640 stores and 18 million customers. The business architecture team itself is a combination of PwC specialists and people from within the grocery businesses, and this collaboration has been key to the success of the project. "You get much better ideas when you work together as one team," says Poore. "The client team brings deep knowledge of the business, and we combine that with the expertise and insight

we have from working with other retailers, and the innovations we're aware of from the wider ecosystem. When you bring these elements together, it's much more effective."

Collaboration isn't simply about ideas though; honesty and transparency are key, as is a healthy working environment when you are tackling potentially thorny areas such as business change.

"It's important for upskilling on both sides and it helps to build trust," Poore explains. "If you have a better relationship, you're going to have more clarity on what clients really want, which enhances decision-making – and ultimately it just makes it more fun when there isn't an 'us and them' type culture."

Building skills and capabilities on the client side to set up the internal teams to take ownership has been a priority for Poore.

"It's really important because it supports knowledge retention and reduces that dependency on outside sources," she explains. "Obviously, I want them to have more work with me but, ultimately, we'd rather they could stand up on their own – no retailer is flush with cash at the moment."

In practice, this means one-to-one coaching sessions, drop-in clinics and hands-on tutorials. "If my client wants to develop something, I'll focus my efforts on that," she says. "We have a 'see one, do one, teach one' approach, which helps people to learn on the go – and then we step back when they're comfortable. It's about creating sustainability within the business."

The strategy is clearly working. As well as successfully designing 2,000 processes,



A steady hand: Andrea Poore is described by colleagues as calm under pressure

**2,000**  
Number of processes that PwC designed

store and 25 per cent for an electronics retailer.

At PwC, she set up a retail community, which she describes as "a group of passionate, like-minded, retail-obsessed colleagues." The team meets once a quarter to debate the latest retail innovations, client challenges and other insights from within the industry.

"Recently we've been discussing frictionless retail, the use of drones for delivery and harnessing artificial intelligence," she explains.

There are many strings to Poore's management bow. She's described by colleagues as a strong team player, unafraid to get her hands dirty, as well as being resilient and unflappable under pressure.

But she says it's her curiosity and dedication to making a difference that really help her to inspire her teams. "I think my sweet spot is around purpose and being super-passionate about retail," she says. "I often bring my work back to societal importance, which helps to get people excited to work with me in this industry."

Despite the stakes being high, Poore is also unafraid to try new things. "I love innovation and I bring a lot of new technology to the table," she says. "I'm really interested in the changes in retail at the moment and I'm not afraid to experiment and fail if it gets us closer to breakthroughs."

Having an empowered team around her is certainly part of the process. Poore sees value in giving responsibility to those rising through the business. "We had some of our graduates take on the complex walkthroughs we did on the grocery client, and actually they did an amazing job. I'm always there to step in if they need it, but I think it's important to create opportunities. I have to be comfortable letting go and trusting they'll do a good job." **GG**



I love innovation and bringing new tech to the table – I'm not afraid to experiment and fail if it gets us closer to breakthroughs

Poore's team won the Client's Team of the Quarter, as voted for by 800 people across the business.

"The award was won for carrying out a number of large, complex, end-to-end process walkthroughs with over 100 people at a time," Poore explains. "We needed everyone to understand how they were going to drive it on their own and continue to put food on the shelves."

Poore has been working on this sizeable client project for around two years now, but her experience isn't limited to supermarkets and helping people access fresh fruit and veg. Previously her work has helped to remove 30 per cent of costs for a British department

YOUNG CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR

# A quest to reimagine healthcare

Rhys Thomson learnt valuable lessons while managing London's intensive care unit capacity during the pandemic. Now he wants to improve the patient journey

**A**fter studying medicine at university, Rhys Thomson decided a career as a doctor wasn't for him. "But I still wanted to do something with a similar intensity and where I could have a positive impact," he recalls. "Healthcare consultancy is perfect: it's a new challenge every day, I'm constantly using my problem-solving skills, and I never stop learning."

Thomson joined CF five years ago and was appointed last November as a manager at the consultancy, which specialises in working with private and public sector healthcare

and life sciences clients, including the National Health Service.

"We can have a huge impact on outcomes for patients, so it's a real privilege to do this work," he says. "There are so many brilliant professionals working tirelessly in the NHS and my role is to make it as easy as possible for them to do their jobs."

Two projects stand out for Thomson. First, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, he was tasked with managing the capacity of intensive care units across London, mapping out likely patient need and ensuring there was sufficient staffing and equipment to cope with the crisis during its different phases.

"It was an incredibly pressured time and the work didn't stop as the crisis eased, because the challenge then was to start tackling the backlog of patients that had built up during the pandemic," he says.

More recently, Thomson's particular interest in technology and digital health services has seen him work on an initiative to introduce "virtual wards" in north London. "If you need a bed, it's likely that you would rather that bed is in your home," he explains. "Technology makes it possible to care for many more people outside a traditional hospital setting."

Video conferencing tools allow for consultations with clinicians, he points out. Wearable devices enable

care providers to monitor patients' vital signs remotely. Most people are happier being cared for at home and this frees up valuable capacity in hospitals for those who need it most.

Introducing such innovation in the health service can be difficult, with professionals rightly anxious about patient safety, but Thomson's skill as a consultant is to bring different stakeholders together to overcome challenges and find the best way forward. Building such relationships is vital to the role, he believes.

"The key is to focus on aligning your objectives because everyone involved has the same end goal in mind – better outcomes for patients," he says. "There is also an opportunity to bring the value of consultancy here. I'm not the clinical



Self-starter: Rhys Thomson encourages his own team to pinpoint effective solutions



We can have a huge impact on patient outcomes, so it's a real privilege to do this work

Rhys Thomson, CF

expert in the room, but I've worked on many different projects and learned lessons from each that might apply in other situations."

The goal with consultancy, Thomson adds, should be to promote self-sufficiency – to help clients identify solutions they can then run with themselves. It's an objective the young consultant is now trying to instil in his own teams, having made the step up to more of a management role.

"The next big challenge for me is supporting and developing my team," he says. "It's another example of how you're always learning as a consultant." **DP**

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EXPERIENCED LEADER AWARD

# Why diversity of thought counts

In her consulting role at BAE Systems, Jo Lister finds that to get results, everyone needs to feel empowered

When Jo Lister started her career as a trainee consultant prior to joining BAE Systems, she didn't see many people that looked like herself in senior leadership.

"It was a different time and the top levels were populated by old white men," she explains.

"There were some women but things like work-life balance weren't really talked about. One of the biggest changes I've seen throughout my career is how much more things like diversity, different ways of working and the importance of bringing your whole self to work, are spoken about."

Lister now leads a business analyst team at the defence and security company, having grown it from a team of one to nine in a complex business environment.

"We work with law enforcement agencies and security clients to help

**The onus is on creating an environment where everyone feels part of a team**

prevent and detect crime and keep the country safe," she says. "A lot of the work my colleagues and I do is around how we use data to identify threats and prevent things from happening."

This growing team is a tribute to her determination to embrace diversity in all its forms. She refers to her colleagues as a "rainbow team" – pulling in a lot of specialisms, roles and backgrounds to solve the challenge at hand.

"A lot of the role is about understanding people and problems," she explains. "So diversity of thought is really important because it's so easy to bring your own assumptions and solutions to something, but you could miss an entire section of stuff because you don't have lived experience in it."

While gender and ethnicity play a big part in this area, Lister has also learned that so too does socioeconomic background. "I found this area of diversity to be really interesting and have seen first-hand recently how people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have a totally different opinion on how you might solve a problem."



You can miss a solution to a problem if you don't have lived experience in it

In the mix: Jo Lister grew her unit from a team of one to nine in three years



The onus has been placed on creating an environment where everyone feels they can be themselves and feels a part of the team. "For instance, I had someone in my team who had audio-processing difficulties and was on the autism spectrum," she explains. "By just making sure we had subtitles on, we enabled that person to be a more active member of the team. It took no effort from anyone else and it has been a massive leveller. Small things like that can make a huge difference."

As a working mum, Lister is also motivated to prove that you can have a high-flying career and a family. "It's a balance, but one thing I have learned

is that it doesn't need to be level: some weeks and months work is more important. It has taken me a long time to feel comfortable saying that out loud."

Proving that the reverse is also true, Lister only works in term time. This was something that was always part of BAE Systems' flexible working policy but wasn't something staff routinely utilised. "I had no pushback whatsoever and actually, the predictability of it makes it easy to manage," she explains. "My team knows I'm off for a month every summer and it actually gives someone else a chance to step up into the role I'm doing for a long enough stretch to develop themselves." **GG**

SOCIAL VALUE

# Connecting wide open spaces

Thinking differently helped bring quicker internet to a sprawling county – boosting equality in communities and paving the way for investment

Northumberland has an abundance of space and rural areas – in fact, “it’s the least densely populated county in England”, says Chris Thompson, director of digital and IT for Northumberland County Council. What it hasn’t traditionally had is good connectivity.

In addition, some 10,000 properties in the county had internet speeds of less than 30 Mbps – the government baseline for acceptable speeds.

One of the areas this was felt most keenly was in education, Thompson says. “Children were not able to take part in the same activities as those in other parts of the country.”

With the county’s wide area network (WAN) contract coming to an end in 2023, the council wanted to make some improvements, but switching providers wasn’t going to easily solve the challenges of connection in the sprawling county – England’s seventh largest by area.

“It comes down to cost,” explains Thompson. “To get fast internet you need fibre to the building where you want to use it. But unless there are towns and villages close by that have existing fibre, you often need to dig very long trenches to the nearest location that has it. Most of



Cross-county social value was put front and centre in Northumberland Council’s tender for connectivity

New high-speed connections for up to **230,000** people

the time that is prohibitively expensive.” This means the work isn’t viable for the big providers when only, say, 100 people might benefit – but it has a big impact on individuals. “If you don’t have reliable internet you’re cut off from jobs and services delivered via digital channels,” says Adam Todd, of Mason Advisory.

“More often than not, low internet connectivity goes hand in hand with poor mobile coverage – a double whammy that leaves many isolated.”

With very limited budgets, the County Council had to employ some creative ways to attract investment. It hired Mason Advisory, who turned the tender into a social value project.

“The huge county-wide footprint, combined with the longevity of the council meant it could offer a long-term contract of 20 years to the right provider, if they were willing to solve the connectivity challenge,” Todd explains.

To ensure the social impact angle was front and centre in their bid, Mason Advisory put together a unique procurement framework. “Social value is always part of a deal,” says Todd. “But it’s usually a fairly low percentage of the overall score. We put much more weighting on it and we decided to be very clear about the outcomes we wanted to achieve.”

The vendors were urged to compete on three areas: connectivity exclusion, digital skills and confidence, and digital poverty. “We defined very specific social problems, with clear measurable outcomes we wanted vendors to achieve, but offset this by being open about how they proposed to get there. We said we don’t want to be a service provider, it’s up to you how you run and deliver it,” adds Todd.

The contract was awarded to Commsworld, which has committed to installing a fibre “spine” from the

north to the south of the region, as well as collaborating with other organisations to ensure this reaches rural areas. “By December 2026, Commsworld will have deployed 260km of fibre, connecting up to 230,000 people, around 100,000 of them in hard-to-reach remote areas,” Todd says. “We have already connected roughly 20,000 pupils in the region, with 114 schools now on gigabit services at a significantly lower cost than they could have achieved individually.”

But connectivity was only part of

“It opens up a world of opportunities which could transform the community

the deal. Commsworld committed to a number of measures to boost growth, too. “As the owner of the spine, it has offered to provide discounted backhaul connectivity to operators who want to improve mobile services, such as 5G,” says Thompson. “This creates an incentive to build here.”

The supplier has also committed to funding “digital champion” roles supporting Community Action Northumberland and the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise to help people become more digitally literate. Plus, it’s providing a year’s free connectivity for 86 village halls and a special social housing tariff.

“It’s early days but there is a sense of excitement around the changes and it opens up a world of opportunities, for things like agritech which could be transformative in a big farming community,” Thompson concludes. “We’re now in a much better place to take advantage of innovation.”

Gabriella Griffith

INCLUSION AWARD

# From small voice to courageous conversation

With a passion for equality derived from experience, Anna Nation wanted to bring about greater inclusivity at the business consultancy Eviden – starting with visibility at the highest level. *By Gabriella Griffith*

Senior consultant Anna Nation felt strongly that diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) strategy at consulting in Eviden (an Atos business) could be accelerated.

While a company-wide strategy was in place at the global business technology firm, Nation believed additional essential elements would drive further change. There was an opportunity for increased engagement from leadership as well as participation from people beyond the minority groups concerned.

“Leadership was making the right noises, but there was no visible sponsorship,” she says. “I always felt the responsibility for DE&I was left to those in the affected groups, which I didn’t think was fair.”

As well as gaining momentum internally, Nation saw a chance to engage more ambitiously with clients on the subject. A courageous conversation with the head of consulting helped further develop things in this direction.

“I said he didn’t need to be able to relate to my lived experience, but it was important he listened,” she explains. “I told him I had felt too intimidated to speak up because I didn’t have role models that looked like me. I told him of the barriers and challenges I had faced, from growing up in 1970s Leeds, where racial abuse was the norm, to being a single parent and caring for my elderly mother who had dementia.”

This was a catalyst for change, and Nation has since led its DE&I strategy and taskforce. “I was clear we needed visibility from the top, real commitments,” she says.

“I wanted to apply a consulting approach because this is what we know. I regarded the leadership team as the client and other consultants as the end customer. The first move was to create a brand for our journey to inclusion, using our design skills to package up an engaging vision for all to get behind.”

With a brand in place, Nation began creating awareness-raising sessions: a mix of fun activities and harder projects

like training for line managers and recruitment campaigns. “I wanted to weave inclusivity into all aspects of the career journey,” she says.

The results have been impressive: colleagues now feel empowered to have conversations they didn’t before and are able to lead clients on DE&I ambitions. And it has led to Eviden UK having 46 per cent representation of non-white consultants, up from around 32 per cent. The percentage of black consultants has doubled too.

“Our senior leaders are actively engaged in promoting our DE&I

“No one should be at a disadvantage because of an aspect of their identity – especially in the workplace

ambitions and I feel inclusion is at the heart of our culture,” Nation adds.

Her passion for change clearly comes from the heart. “My family came here as part of the Windrush generation and my children and grandchildren have mixed heritage,” she says. “I believe no one should be at a disadvantage because of an aspect of their identity – especially in the workplace.”

“As consultants, we have a responsibility to positively influence inclusion through our global client base.

“I’m proud that we have embedded this in our organisation and created a happier, more fun workplace that has enabled creative problem solving through our diversity.”

Change maker: Nation believes in equality for all

MCA 2023 AWARD WINNERS AND HIGHLY COMMENDED

PROJECTS

**BEST USE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP Winner**  
Deloitte with the Home Office and Companies House

**Highly commended**  
• CF with the NHS Confederation  
• KPMG with NatWest Group

**CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR Winner**  
Deloitte with SSEN Transmission

**Highly commended**  
• EY with Estée Lauder Companies  
• PwC with Lipton Teas and Infusions  
• Vendigital with the Club Company

**CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR Winner**  
North Highland with the Ministry of Justice

**Highly commended**  
• BJSS with NHS England  
• Eviden – an Atos business with the DE&S

**COMMERCIAL IMPACT Winner**  
PwC with the Home Office

**Highly commended**  
• KPMG with Kantar

**TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION SPONSORED BY KANTATA Winner**  
EY with esure Group

**Highly commended**  
• BearingPoint with Volta Trucks  
• KPMG with Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council

**INTERNATIONAL Winner**  
Deloitte with Sanergy

**Highly commended**  
• EY with MSD  
• KPMG with FCDO

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR Winner**  
Arca Blanca with McCarthy Stone

**Highly commended**  
• KPMG with London Stock Exchange Group  
• Managers with ReAssure, part of Phoenix Group

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR Winner**  
IMPOWER Consulting with Lincolnshire County Council

**Highly commended**  
• PwC with London Borough of Hillingdon Council  
• PwC with the Ministry of Defence

**PEOPLE AND LEADERSHIP Winner**  
PwC with Legal and General

**Highly commended**  
• Gobeyond Partners with First Bus

**SOCIAL VALUE Winner**  
Mason Advisory with Northumberland County Council

**Highly commended**  
• EY with UK Finance/ Cash Access UK  
• PwC with Birmingham City Council

**STRATEGY Winner**  
Propaganda with BSW Group

**Highly commended**  
• Arup with Birmingham City Council  
• Moorhouse Consulting with Barts Health NHS Trust

**SUSTAINABILITY AWARD Winner**  
Arup with Glasgow Life

**Highly commended**  
• AtkinsRéalis with Portsmouth City Council  
• Deloitte with Ordnance Survey and Climate Investor

INDIVIDUALS

**YOUNG CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
Rhys Thomson, CF

**Highly commended**  
• Mitra Seirafi, Deloitte  
• Michael Wyatt, IMPOWER Consulting  
• Jonny Brighton, PwC

**APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR Winner**  
Olivia Sullivan, Arup

**Highly commended**  
• Joe Shepherd, AtkinsRéalis  
• Lewis Gough, Deloitte  
• Helen Jones, KPMG

**RISING STAR SPONSORED BY GRAYCE Winner**  
Muneeb Sheikh, Vendigital

**Highly commended**  
• Archie Cobb, IBM Consulting  
• Uzoma Mezue, KPMG  
• Joseph Kleeman, Simon-Kucher

**TEAM LEADER CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
Andrea Poore, PwC

**Highly commended**  
• Christie Fearnside, Deloitte

**THOUGHT LEADER CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
Steve Gwynne, GHD Advisory

**Highly commended**  
• Mark Essex, KPMG  
• Tara Shrestha Carney, PwC

**TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
Raj Cheema, KPMG

**Highly commended**  
• Edward Burrows, GHD Advisory  
• Sumitha Fernandez Mules, PwC

**INCLUSION AWARD Winner**  
Anna Nation, Eviden – an Atos business

**Highly commended**  
• Tori Roberts, EY  
• Georgina Pipe, Gate One

**EXPERIENCED LEADER AWARD Winner**  
Susan McDonald, Deloitte

**Highly commended**  
• Will Shaw, EY  
• Nick Durrans, PwC

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD Winner**  
Lisa Fernihough, KPMG

**Highly commended**  
Hugh O’Reilly, KPMG

**CHARTERED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
David Orr, Mott MacDonald

**Highly commended**  
• Ellie Wilkes, EY  
• Georgina Letts, PwC

OVERALL

**BEST NEW CONSULTANCY SPONSORED BY EQUITEQ Winner**  
Enfuse Group

**Highly commended**  
• Clarity Consulting  
• MH&A

**PROJECT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
North Highland with the Ministry of Justice

**THE TIMES CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR Winner**  
David Orr, Mott MacDonald

**Congratulations to our MCA Award finalists**

- Social Value**  
Northumberland County Council
- Rising Star**  
Sammy Allanson
- Experienced Leader of the Year**  
Mike Kingston
- Technology Consultant of the Year**  
Dan Brooks

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# Keeping the capital on track

Accessibility for all was a key priority in bringing London's new rail line to life

**T**he Elizabeth Line might be the shining new jewel in London's transport infrastructure, but its impact stretches far further than shuttling 700,000 people in and out of the capital every day.

"I first travelled on it with two people from opposite ends of our company's Crossrail journey," says Neil Henderson, a key account director at the global engineering, management and development consultancy Mott MacDonald.

"David, our tunnel ventilation engineer, completed his first work on what would become Crossrail in 1976. Emma was a 16-year-old apprentice who lives in Woolwich and who can now get into work at our office within 20 minutes rather than the hour it took on the bus.

"That puts it into perspective for me. It's not just engineers saying how great the project was. We've actually changed people's lives."

Henderson's colleague, consultant director Carmen Peraita Sanz, adds a simple but powerful anecdote. "It has enabled a friend who uses a wheelchair to access central London. That's something he told me he had never been able to do before."

All this is by design. Mott MacDonald is one of the largest employee-owned companies in the UK, and has been involved with Crossrail for three decades – from putting together the initial business case to justify it, right through to commissioning the engineering.

"We're not driven by profitability from the City, but by long-term impact from projects when helping our client," Henderson explains. "Our purpose is all about improving social outcomes in everything we do. Working on the Elizabeth Line puts that purpose into practice."



It's not just engineers saying how great the project was – we've changed lives

From the outset, one of the key requirements was to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, making public transport more inclusive and convenient for more passengers. Barring one lift due to be installed shortly, TfL's Elizabeth Line director Howard Smith explains, every station now has step-free street-to-platform access.

"We've been looking to maximise the benefit for Londoners," says Peraita Sanz. "We embedded requirements to social outcomes in the procurement process from the beginning." Mott MacDonald even has software that allows it to check suppliers stick to agreed values, such as a commitment to apprenticeships and local employment.

"The railway was planned with a benefit-cost ratio of around two to one, and we're confident that is still valid today," Smith says. "Since opening 18 months ago, we're moving record numbers of people. Our busiest day yet saw 702,000 passengers, but it's not an outlier." He believes the Elizabeth Line has been instrumental in bringing people back to work and back into the city following the pandemic.

With 41 stations en route, ten of them new, it has also been delivered hand-in-glove with new housing stock. "It's supported development outside central London that the city desperately needs," Smith adds.

Henderson cites Woolwich station, on a brownfield site developed in partnership with



Wheels of industry: the Elizabeth Line has step-free access from street level

Crossrail, Berkeley Homes and the Royal Borough of Greenwich. "It's been a catalyst for thousands of new and affordable homes that wouldn't otherwise have been built.

"We solved all the engineering challenges faced when building residential property near big transport infrastructure. It's seen as a big success story, and there are several other examples along the line of similar things being done."

The project was not without its challenges. One of the biggest was how a shortage of labour posed an industry-wide dilemma that necessitated reform. "Early on in the programme it was clear there were insufficient numbers of skilled people to design and build the line," Henderson says plainly. "We could see the population of engineers was ageing and younger engineers weren't taking their place."

Mott MacDonald's solution to draw young people into the industry was to create training opportunities. It joined forces with like-minded consultancies to form the Technical Apprenticeship Consortium. The first scheme was in partnership with South Thames College in 2010 and provided Level 3 civil engineering apprenticeships for 16 to 18-year-olds from marginalised areas in London. At the same time, TfL pushed its supply chains to bring more apprentices through.

"We started with three apprentices, and now we have 236 from across seven different schemes, including at degree level, across the UK," Henderson says. Over such a long period, how has Mott MacDonald's collaboration with TfL and Crossrail stood the test of time? "By developing trusting relationships and being authentic," Henderson believes. "And delivering what we promised. There were times when we had to reassure the leadership team from Crossrail and TfL that we would stay the course and get it over the line, because it did get tough."

Smith says the vital thing was not losing sight of the objective. "Focus on the end game. You can be diverted by so many intermediate targets and objectives, but the trick is to realise there is one goal: to have a safe, reliable railway at the end. Everything else is just a step along the way."

TK Heming

# A shot in the arm for hospital leadership

After a thorough check-up, this London health group has cut waiting times and improved links with the wider NHS

As one of the UK's largest groups of NHS hospitals, Barts Health brings the running of five busy east London hospitals under one leadership team – together they treat over a million patients a year and employ 18,000 staff.

"We cover some of the most deprived and diverse, fast growing areas in the country," explains Andrew Hines, director of group development. "People have been significantly impacted by coronavirus in terms of both infection rates and significantly increasing wait times for planned procedures, cancer diagnosis and treatment and emergency departments."

Barts Health introduced a group operational model in 2016 in response to significant quality and financial challenges, which had led to it being placed in special measures. Its leadership continued to be very operationally involved in day to day problem solving. "We knew if we carried on working in that way we wouldn't be effective and able to provide the kind of leadership required to tackle the extra challenges Covid had created," Hines says.

Barts Health therefore enlisted the support of Moorhouse Consulting, a firm it had worked with before and which it felt understood the group's unique challenges. "This was an opportunity for the organisation to stand back and reflect a bit on what had happened, what had really worked during Covid and how the different roles and responsibilities were evolving," says Claire Eve, client director at Moorhouse. Moorhouse used the "Galbraith Star" model to conduct a rapid review of the group's existing leadership strategy and model, and produce future designs for each directorate team.

"We ran a couple of visioning and purpose workshops which highlighted the different views people had and helped to realign the team so they were speaking with one voice," Eve explains.

10,000 patients have been offered faster treatment

Moorhouse supported the development by Barts Health of an accountability framework, which formalised the various relationships and responsibilities, making it clear when the teams should hold each other to account and when they should offer support.

One of the biggest outcomes of the work has been the greater collaboration the leadership has been able to foster between Barts Health and Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust.

"We're now working much more closely with our neighbouring trust and in an integrated fashion, which would not have been possible without our work on vision, roles and responsibilities," Hines says.

This collaboration has had a beneficial impact on patients. "We've seen shortened waiting times, and as a result around 10,000 patients have been offered faster treatment," says Hines. "Greater collaboration between hospitals has meant we can be flexible about where people are sent."

To support the emergency departments, Barts Health also put in place a pilot service called Reach, which meant that before ambulance crews brought patients to A&E, they could call a hotline to a senior clinician. The clinician could advise on the best pathway for care – which often meant not going to hospital at all. The system has now been used on 17,500 calls, and saved 13,000 patients from long waits in A&E when they could be better seen elsewhere.

Other NHS trusts have followed suit. "What's exciting is not just the local benefit," Hines says, "but the opportunity to work with other trusts to share our experience, and the improvements we have enjoyed. We are already doing this with one organisation and sharing actively with others across the country." GG

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Patients game: The Royal London Hospital is one of five run by Barts Health



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**Catherine Whelan**  
Young Consultant of the Year



**Lauren Hallworth**  
Apprentice of the Year



**Megan Earl**  
Apprentice of the Year



**Amy Basil**  
Rising Star



**Tori Roberts**  
Inclusion Award



**Eleanor Bell**  
Team Leader Consultant of the Year



**Sushmita Nad**  
Team Leader Consultant of the Year



**Ryan Naranjo**  
Thought Leader Consultant of the Year



**Mira Pijselman**  
Thought Leader Consultant of the Year



**Yang Liu**  
Technology Consultant of the Year



**Will Shaw**  
Experienced Leader Award



**Mavis Dwaah**  
Experienced Leader Award



**Ellie Wilkes**  
Chartered Management Consultant of the Year



**Rachel Dyges**  
Chartered Management Consultant of the Year



**EY with NHS Digital**  
Commercial Impact



**EY with John Lewis Partnership**  
People and Leadership



**EY with West Midlands Police**  
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