Lightening the workload for public services

How speech recognition eases the admin burden in the public sector

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Overcoming public sector burnout with technology

Burnout is a growing issue for public sector employees—and the huge admin workload of producing reports, case files, detailed notes and other documentation is a major contributing factor.

But with the right tools, you and your team can ease that workload, creating more accurate documentation in less time, with less manual effort. Let's explore how technologies like speech recognition can help drive better outcomes for the citizens you support.

Streamlining workloads for public sector employees

With the public sector under constant pressure, employee burnout is all too common.

Research by the Health and Safety Executive has shown that stress is more prevalent in public sector industries, such as education, health, and social care, and public administration. By occupation, healthcare workers, teachers, and public sector professionals all show higher stress levels than employees in other sectors.

Heavy workloads, long hours, and stretched teams all contribute to stress and eventual burnout, with many choosing to leave their roles for private-sector jobs instead.[1]

And the impact of workplace stress doesn't always end when public sector workers leave. A recent study of Whitehall civil servants found that those working over 11 hours a day were more than twice as likely to develop major depression than those working a regular seven-hour workday.[2] It's clear that keeping people content, healthy and productive in their roles relies on reducing stress.

The public sector is full of high-pressure, often high-impact roles. That makes cutting down on stress a complex task—but making the workload easier to manage is a simple way to start. However you and your team support citizens, admin tasks like emails, notes, reports, forms, and other processes, can mean hours of the workday spent typing.

But typing is no longer the most efficient way to work.

1 hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf
2 compassonline.org.uk/publications/burnout-britain-overwork-in-an-age-of-unemployment

The average person can speak three times faster than they type—and twice the speed of most professional typists. So, with the right speech recognition tool, stress-inducing public sector documentation becomes as quick and easy as speaking. Our Dragon speech recognition engine provides professional-grade speech-to-text that's up to 99% accurate out of the box. It's intuitive to use, compatible with your everyday office software, and offers a variety of deployment options, including desktop and mobile versions, which makes it ideal for busy public sector teams.

Speech-to-text solutions can help any public sector professional work faster and smarter, so they can focus their attention on higher value tasks—and leave their desks on time. To better explain, let's look at the difference it can make to those working in local government.

We talk three times faster than we type — shouldn't completing paperwork be as simple as speaking?

Easing the pressure on local councils

UK citizens rely on their local government services for everything from recycling collection and housing to adult education and social care support. But stretched budgets, increasing demand, and mounting regulatory requirements are leading to stress for council workers and difficulty delivering services efficiently.

This became especially clear in 2020, as councils dealt with the impact of COVID-19 on their communities. LocalGov research positions councils as the "forgotten partner in the pandemic", with many workers taking on new roles or extra responsibilities to support the local COVID-19 response,[3] which has in turn led to a sharp rise in workload-related stress.[4]

Without additional budget, many local government bodies won't be able to hire more personnel to share the work, which is particularly important for roles in adult social care and children's education.[5] That means councils need to find other ways to help its people manage their workloads.

Digital transformation and intelligent tools for local government
With many local governments still relying on disconnected legacy systems, it can be especially difficult for council workers to provide a joined-up service and build that all-important 'golden record' for each citizen. And though councils throughout the UK are working on digital transformation initiatives, many of their processes are still heavily reliant on paperwork—especially forms.

A professional-grade speech-to-text solution like Dragon can be a cost-effective way to ease the paperwork burden and help local government and council workers complete tasks faster, boosting productivity without needing to increase headcount. Because speech-to-text is such a versatile solution, Dragon can slot into any department, simplifying document creation and helping local government workers collaborate across teams.

Now, let's dig deeper to see how a local social services team could use speech recognition to ease their workload.

3 localgov.co.uk/COVID-19-Is-local-government-the-forgotten-partner-of-the-pandemic/52058
4 localgov.co.uk/COVID-19-How-has-the-past-year-affected-council-staff/52057
5 local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-march-2021-budget-submission

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The Dragon family is approved by the UK government's Technology Code of Practice framework—so our speech-to-text tools are ready to slot into public services workflows without compliance or integration challenges.

Supporting social workers in critical roles

The incredible pressure on social workers in the UK means many are planning to leave the profession for other, less demanding roles. In fact, almost 40% of England's social workers expect to move on within the next five years, with 85% of them reporting work-related stress due to high administrative workloads and heavy caseloads.[6]

The country can't afford to lose so many trained individuals from the profession—so how do we keep skilled, caring people in their roles?

From the statistics, it's clear that easing the admin workload is key to making social workers happier at work. Documentation represents a huge proportion of that workload, from interview notes and assessments to case files and social care plans. And in many cases, social workers are still using digital recorders to capture their thoughts, typing them out later when they return to their computer—a task that hasn't changed much since the days of cassette tapes.

Social workers need modern, digital tools that can help them produce documents faster and in more detail. With speech-to-text, they can capture information while it's fresh in their minds, without having to wait until later in the day, often after several client visits, to write up their notes.

6 socialworkengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/publications/research-reports/
   the-social-work-profession

Professional-grade speech recognition makes all the difference
But in a role where accurate, timely notes can be the difference between positive and negative outcomes for clients, team leaders can't afford to introduce tools that aren't reliable and secure. The speech-to-text market has rapidly filled up with freeware tools in recent years, which could be tempting for a busy social worker, but don't offer the robust, professional-grade speech recognition they need.

Dragon is a purpose-built family of speech-to-text solutions founded on our latest speech recognition engine, and offers the robust, reliable tools social workers need to complete documentation faster and with more accuracy.

It's a versatile set of solutions, with a customisable dictionary that allows users to add social work-specific terminology and acronyms for increased speed and accuracy—and set up vocal shortcuts to add long phrases or boilerplate text with a single word.

Dragon Anywhere Mobile gives social workers the ability to capture notes using their smartphone or tablet, even when they're sitting in the car, immediately after an offsite meeting or home visit. They can create more detailed notes, captured in the moment—and no longer need to spend hours typing them up later.

With Dragon Anywhere Mobile for taking notes and filling forms on the go and Dragon Professional Anywhere for speech-to-text across desktop applications when they're back at their computer, social workers can work more flexibly, wherever they are. That means they can spend less time in front of a screen, and more time giving meaningful support to citizens. And that translates into more time to spend with their own families, too.
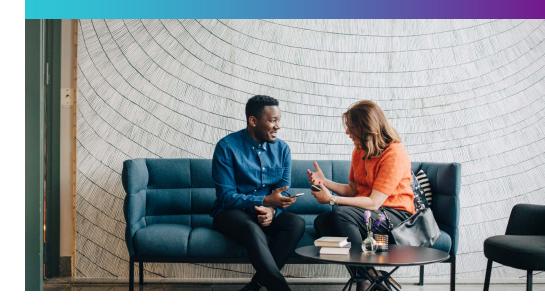
85% of social workers in England say high admin workloads cause significant stress

— Social Work England

Dragon for public services

Here's a rundown of some of the key features that make the Dragon solution family a compelling choice for the UK's public sector:

— Dragon can help public sector workers produce documents three times faster, with a speech recognition engine that delivers up to 99% accuracy out of the box.

— Using AI and deep learning techniques, the Dragon engine becomes more familiar with users' accents, speech patterns, and preferred pronunciations over time, tailoring itself to your team's personal ways of working.

— 256-bit encryption secures data both in transit and at rest, making compliance simpler and protecting sensitive government and citizen information—particularly important for health and social care teams.

— Dragon Professional Anywhere sits on top of your everyday applications, including Microsoft Office, with no complex integrations or extra IT management headaches. Complete documents, fill out forms, send emails, and even navigate within your internet browser using voice commands.

— Dragon Anywhere Mobile provides a feature-rich speech-to-text tool, all contained in an intuitive iOS or Android app. You can dictate, edit, and share documents and forms with your colleagues—all with your voice.

— Sync and share your documents through Dropbox and other shared storage, to streamline collaboration between different teams and agencies.

— The Nuance Management Centre allows you to track your people's Dragon usage, helping monitor and visualise that all-important ROI.

— With on-premises, cloud, and hybrid deployment options, Dragon is adaptable to all sorts of public sector departments and team setups.

— Most importantly, Dragon is approved for government use via the Technology Code of Practice framework—so there are no compliance or regulation concerns.

It's time for the public sector to put down its keyboards

Burnout among public sector employees isn't a simple challenge to solve. But by making targeted improvements to the everyday processes that underpin public services, leaders have a chance to alleviate some of the pressure.

The burden of admin in the public sector is huge—and speech recognition could be instrumental in making those documentation and correspondence tasks easier. With the right speech-to-text technology, public sector employees can save many of the hours they currently spend typing. Dragon solutions provide the secure, professional-grade tools they need, helping individuals to create more timely, accurate documents, and helping multiple teams and agencies coordinate to deliver better outcomes for the UK's citizens.