

INNOVATION

Cheshire West & Chester Council working with ICS.AI

Lockdown anniversary - a lost year or a push for innovation?

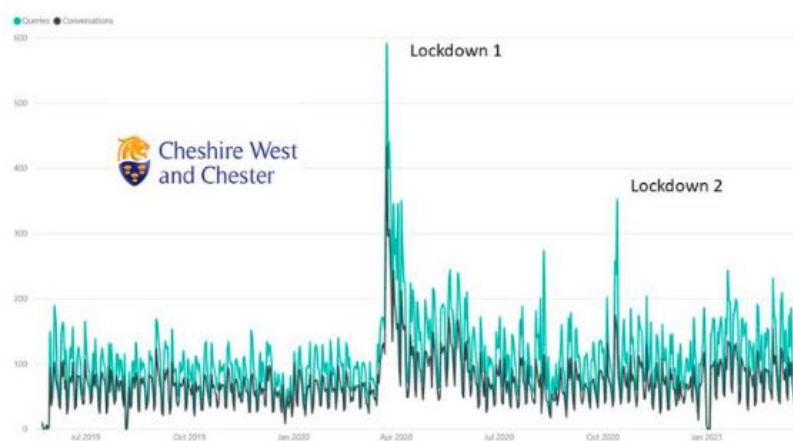
One year after the country's first lockdown, we shouldn't dwell on what we've lost but focus on how to do better

The chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic has marked us all. It has changed our reality forever. There is no point in trying to bring back the old. All we can do now is rise up and face new challenges in new ways. Humanity has always excelled at turning calamities into ingenuity.

Solutions that think independently

The pandemic has been a blow to the quality of public services. Councils have been struggling with a surge in queries, information bottlenecks and the vulnerable people queuing up their digital channels. An increase in funding is helpful, but only if it is distributed wisely and used on effective solutions. Solutions that streamline work, offset financial losses and help more people than humanly possible. We need solutions that think independently.

Lockdown Anniversary - Cheshire West & Chester Council successfully manages a 500% spike in citizen queries with the help of AIDA - their AI citizen assistant



AI helps Cheshire West and Chester Council handle a 500% increase in COVID-19 questions

ICS.AI has been developing Conversational AI for years already. It is more advanced, accurate and responsive than simplistic customer service bots. ICS.AI's pre-trained and ethical AI Assistants achieve human parity performance even in times of crisis. At the start of the first lockdown, the council saw a 500% increase in requests to their AI Assistant AIDA for information. When their agent capacity was suddenly redirected to deal with a huge increase in citizen demands relating to Coronavirus, they were able to switch to using the AIDA and help hundreds of residents.

AI learns fast, freeing humans to help better

When a crisis hits, information is power. It is a complex task to equip AI with curated knowledge. The Public COVID-19 Assistant has a priority store of hundreds of Coronavirus voice-ready answers and can fall back on multiple trusted and curated Coronavirus knowledge sources such as the council's own website, the World Health Organisation, NHS 111, and Public Health England. Clients can also create their own dedicated local Coronavirus knowledge store. And this can be done on any topic. It is impossible to train staff as quickly, especially when they are needed elsewhere. Or simply not enough. When we need all hands on deck, it's reassuring to have AI that works as well as humans on our side.

Intelligent machines for the greater good

The Coronavirus crisis has cost us a lot. But we must try and look ahead. The worst catastrophes always remind us how much we need innovation. Ben Cummins, Managing Director of Qwest, who runs the council's contact centre, stresses how fortunate they were to have had a 24/7 AI Digital Assistant on their website and hopes AI will further improve the service we are able to provide. Maybe this new symbiotic relationship between humans and AI can help us brace ourselves for future impacts. Machines have been a part of our systems since the beginning of time. Intelligent machines mean we've gotten better at it. But it's not about ego. It's about putting them to use for the greater good. And as the Coronavirus has taught us, it's never too early to prepare for what the future holds.

See the AI Assistant Live: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/home.aspx>

AI Transformation for Local Government: <https://www.ics.ai/ai-transformation-for-lrg> info@ics.ai

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