

## **Appendix I**

### **FOIs identifying products in use**

In the relatively rare instances where the councils have disclosed their use of algorithms in the provision of welfare and social care, they have been quick to stress that the algorithms are designed to assist the local authorities with decisions, rather than entirely autonomously making decisions. As discussed, this relieves local authorities of the need to notify individuals of the tools in use – but neither does it mean that the human input is necessarily meaningful. We found evidence of the following products in use by local authorities:

#### **Servelec Corelogic:**

Servelec is company that offers data management and decision support systems, bridging social care, health and education. Examples of their products include:

**Synergy:** Synergy is described as follows:

*Servelec's Synergy gives local authorities a practical, clear and reliable way of managing critical information around the education, safeguarding and care of children and young people. The Synergy suite manages all aspects of Children's Services (...) Full visibility of each and every individual gives users the insight they need to make key decisions, resulting in powerful positive outcomes for children and young people.*

Derbyshire County Council confirmed to us that they use the Synergy product.

**Mosaic:** Mosaic is described as follows:

*Mosaic provides a modern fully integrated solution for Adults, Children's and financial case management on a single platform, which means a lower cost of ownership for local authorities as well as less resources to manage multiple systems and databases (...) Mosaic has been designed based on four key principles: improving decision making; telling the client's story; saving time for practitioners; supporting collaboration with families and other agencies.*

We have not received any FOI responses from councils regarding use of Mosaic. However, Servelec claims to have over 137 local authority customers, and its website features a number of case studies of councils who have integrated it into their services.

**imosphere FACE RAS (Resource Allocation System):**

FACE RAS, developed by imosphere, is an integrated resource allocation system used to determine personal budgets for individuals and carers with support needs – covering both adult and child social care and healthcare. The algorithm draws in data regarding the circumstances of the individual in need in order to calculate a personal budget.

In FOI responses, Gloucestershire, Islington, Devon, Slough, Oxfordshire councils confirmed that they are currently using it.

On its website, imosphere claims that “around 40 Local Authorities and 15 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) across England currently use our RAS for adults, carers, children and young people.”

However, our FOI responses have already identified controversies and disagreements even between councils as to the value of the algorithmic tool.

In their FOI response, Gloucestershire Council told us:

*“There has been a move away from standardised supplier prices, consequently the RAS is no longer sustainable or reliable and is not used to determine an individual’s personal budget.”*

The council added:

*“The unreliability of the RAS combined with an increasing move towards a strength based approach by assessors has made the RAS element of the imosphere redundant. Where the imosphere assessment tool is used, an indicative budget is automatically produced. As outlined it is now extremely rare that this would equate to the personal budget which is determined by the judgment of the assessment officer.”*

## **Liquidlogic:**

Liquidlogic advertises itself as “*the UK’s fastest growing supplier of software for Local Authority social care and education management services.*”<sup>1</sup> The company offers products that are similar to FACE RAS, offering integrated adult and child social care software, with modules specifically designed to address Early Help, Early Years and Education as well as the Troubled Families programme.

Through our FOI requests we found that Oxfordshire Council uses both FACE RAS and **Liquidlogic’s LAS** (Liquidlogic Adults’ Social Care System). LAS “*provides flexible and comprehensive functionality to enable the management of contacts, referrals, assessment, reablement, plans, care commissioning, personal budgets, self-funders, safeguarding, DOLS, provider management, financial management and financial assessment*”.<sup>2</sup>

Liquidlogic claims that over 50 Local Authorities in England have purchased LAS.<sup>3</sup>

We also found that Bradford Council uses **Liquidlogic’s LCS** (Liquidlogic Children’s System), which “*supports all aspects of social work with children (...) to allow case management and record keeping for children in need, looked after children, adoption and child protection cases*” and “*enables true costs associated with a child and family to be understood and managed.*” The exact machinations of LCS are unclear, described only as utilising “*innovative technology*”, but clearly involve algorithmic data analysis and decision support as the product claims to “*assist practitioners’ professional judgement by helping to make connections within a case, which may not otherwise be so apparent.*”<sup>4</sup>

Liquidlogic claims that over 80 Local Authorities are using LCS.<sup>5</sup>

## **Northgate**

Northgate provides revenues and benefits calculation software. The company advertises the software as enabling cost cutting through automation and fraud detection:

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1 <https://www.liquidlogic.co.uk/>

2 <https://www.liquidlogic.co.uk/adults/las/>

3 Ibid.

4 <https://www.liquidlogic.co.uk/children/liquidlogic-childrens-system-lcs/>

5 Ibid.

*“As resources get tighter, our software can free teams from the burden of manual effort by [automating tasks](#) and helping them work more effectively wherever they’re based. With optional [processing services](#) to tackle claims backlogs or cut down fraud and error, we have the software and expertise to deliver better results in all areas of revenues and benefits.”*<sup>6</sup>

Our FOI research found that Northgate products are used by Isle of Wight and St Albans councils. Northgate advertises that it has 170 customers.<sup>7</sup>

## **Capita One**

Capita One sells technology products covering social care, housing and benefits services.

For example, Capita One advertises a “**Benefits Automation**” service:

*“Benefits Automation is a user process that lets local authorities automate the assessment of new claims and changes in circumstances. Claimants immediately discover how much housing benefit or council tax discount they’ll receive and you can process claims 24/7 while reducing costs and putting less strain on resources.”*<sup>8</sup>

Through FOI requests, we found that Bradford Council uses Capita One products in relation to school allocation. Isle of Wight Council has also stated that it uses Capita One products but has not specified which product or for what purpose.

## **Mobysoft**

Mobysoft sells a tool, Rentsense, which is “*a series of complex algorithms that analyse a housing organisation’s tenants’ transactional history, which is coupled with a predictive analytical application that then predicts which tenants will and won’t pay their rent. It then produces a list of tenants, in priority order, that need contacting that week regarding their rent.*”<sup>9</sup>

Through FOI requests, we found that that Arun District Council and St Albans Council use this product.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.northgateps.com/software-solutions/revenues-and-benefits/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.capita-one.co.uk/product-and-services/one-revenues-and-benefits/automation>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mobysoft.com/products/rentsense>

## **TransUnion (formerly Callcredit)**

TransUnion sells “*total credit protection all in one place*”.<sup>10</sup> We found that their products are commonly used in local government for Risk Based Verification, which is:

*“(…) a method of applying different levels of checks to benefit claims according to the risk associated with those claims. This in effect means being able to target activity toward checking those cases deemed to be at highest risk of involving fraud and/or error.”*<sup>11</sup>

The Department of Work and Pensions has supplied all councils with this software.<sup>12</sup> While we have confirmation from Erewash, Fylde, North Somerset, Isle of Wight, South Derbyshire and Bristol councils that they are using Callcredit’s RBV, Callcredit lists a number of other councils (namely, Teignbridge, Oxford City, Portsmouth, Stoke on Trent, Southwark, Northampton)<sup>13</sup> who have not answered positively when asked about the use of algorithms.

Interestingly, one of our FOI responses relating to this vendor included a clear assertion that the algorithm is merely advisory and thus exempts the authority from the prohibition on automated decisions under Article 22 of GDPR (and thus the notification safeguard under the Data Protection Act 2018):

*“Each Local Authority is expected to act in accordance with the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular – S11/2011. Paragraph 13 of this document refers to the potential for human review of (and intervention in) the risk category identified and, therefore, the level of verification undertaken.*

*The decision regarding the level of claim verification does not in itself produce legal effects concerning the applicant in question or similarly significantly affect such a person (ref Article 22(1) GDPR).*

*The algorithm only assists the Local Authority in determining the level of claim verification to undertake; it does not determine an individual’s eligibility for benefits.”*

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10 <https://www.transunion.com/>

11 <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/2189/risk-based-verification-policy.pdf>

12 <https://www.callcredit.co.uk/media/2090315/files/assets/common/downloads/RBV.pdf>

13 <https://www.callcredit.co.uk/press-office/case-studies/fraud-and-verification>

## **Xantura:**

Xantura is a predictive analytics company providing Risk Based Verification. The use of their software was confirmed by Folkestone & Hythe Council.

However, recent media coverage revealed that Hackney and Thurrock councils have been using their products to predict child abuse (Thurrock responded negatively to our FOI request despite its use of this software):

*“In Thurrock and Hackney, the Xantura system operates by running its predictive model against a household in response to warning signs, such as a child being expelled from school or a report of domestic violence. The model’s prediction is then passed to a social worker for potential action.*

*Hackney council said its system had generated 350 risk alerts for families in potential need of attention, while Thurrock said its system generated 300. A Thurrock council memo said earlier this year that all of its referrals to the government’s [Troubled Families](#) scheme were now identified by the data analytics system and predictive model provided by Xantura.”<sup>14</sup>*

In a FOI reply to us, Hackney Council stressed that *“Xantura is not being used to make operational decisions about safeguarding interventions. (...) The algorithm itself only assists staff in prioritising their work - it is not automating any decision making. The role of the algorithm does not change the process for collecting housing debt so the policy, which is published on the website, will not change.”*

Calderdale and Bolton councils have confirmed that they are using Xantura’s RBV programme for benefits calculations.

Tower Hamlets & Newham councils are listed on Xantura’s website as using their Early Help Profiling System, but have stated that they do not use any algorithms or automated decision making systems in their FOI responses to us.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/16/councils-use-377000-peoples-data-in-efforts-to-predict-child-abuse>