



# Empowering local communities through Open Referral UK

Giving citizens access to the services they need, no matter where they first seek help.

“Lots of people in the council have been crying out for a system like this, and there it is, virtually fully formed and ready to use on a plate. It will revolutionise how social care functions as a mediator between people in need and the community support on their doorstep.”

An adult social care contact centre worker. Just one example of how Open Referral UK (ORUK) is transforming citizen outcomes.

[ORUK](#) is a data standard supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. It defines the what, where, and how of describing information about a support service.

## Executive summary

Adopting ORUK enables your council to consolidate and streamline the maintenance of community services information across sectors and partners. It ensures reliable, accessible information that can help ease the strain on public services by empowering citizens to independently find the support they need. As a data standard, ORUK allows data to be aggregated to prioritise accurate service information—benefiting partners, staff, and residents alike. Most importantly, it supports a truly 'no wrong door' approach, making it easier for citizens to access the services they need, regardless of where they first seek help.



## The problem we're working to solve

The information that describes local services and how to access them is not available in one place and is not kept up to date so we can't empower people to help themselves.

"Relatives and friends of vulnerable people, especially those who don't live locally, do not currently feel empowered to help them find support"

A charity worker

Current community service data is often siloed, overlapping and difficult to maintain. This can lead to inefficiency, resident confusion and missed opportunities for care or prevention. In many cases, it means residents are left frustrated and without access to the resources they need. Councils need the capability to collect accurate data and make it available to relatives and friends of vulnerable people.

## Our vision

"Giving people self-care information about local services when they are currently well enough to not need public services is the proactive way to reduce demand on NHS and Social Care"

An ICB Transformation Officer

Councils can take the lead in addressing the challenges of gathering, verifying, and sharing service information by adopting ORUK. Working collectively to create a single, trusted repository that makes service data available across interventions, platforms, and applications. In health, this could be a meaningful lever for early prevention of chronic conditions.



## **What are the key benefits of adopting ORUK?**

### **Make every contact count**

Better prevention becomes possible when every citizen-facing worker has access to comprehensive, up-to-date information about services and support. Frontline workers typically focus on addressing a specific issue faced by a resident. With access to a comprehensive directory of services, they can also identify and recommend local support options to help with other challenges the resident may be experiencing. They are therefore empowered to identify and address all issues before they escalate.

### **Trusted data, accessible to all**

The ORUK website includes information on when the data was last verified and who performed the check. This builds trust by ensuring accountability for data accuracy and providing a clear indication of how current the information is. Additionally, it identifies a point of contact for reporting any necessary updates or corrections.

### **Data reuse across platforms**

ORUK enables data integration across various pathways, interventions, directories and applications —such as autism assessments, mental health interventions, SEND Local Offer, Family hubs —ensuring consistent information for residents, practitioners, and partners.

### **Increased efficiency and cost savings**

ORUK enables councils to standardise data across departments and partners, reducing redundant administrative work, minimising software costs, and making the data available to complement existing service delivery.



## Value of ORUK for councils and communities

“Frontline professionals e.g. social workers/prescribers spend too much of their time researching and checking information about local services, when they should have access to accurate information”

A GP

ORUK has the potential to drive improvements to community health by:

**Frontline workers’ trust.** Having accurate information in one place makes it easier to recommend local support services.

**Enhanced support.** Data reusability allows for personalised services that meet residents' needs, from healthcare referrals to social care follow-ups.

**Empower residents.** Enabling people to access support themselves. Conduit to help themselves. Self care / management.

## How to implement the standard

“When we began exploring a place-based approach with ORUK, we knew it would need stronger relationships, joint data sharing, and resources to support it. As we progress, we’re seeing early signs of how much more efficient it makes managing local service information for ourselves, residents, and partners. Ultimately, we hope it ensures reliable, up-to-date information while reducing the administrative burden on public services”

Victoria Tomlinson, Lancashire County Council

ORUK represents a transformative way for councils and their partners to think about local service information data. There’s no single pathway to implementation - the journey will look different for every council. But to support your adoption journey, we have identified six focus areas:



1. Leadership
2. Governance and oversight
3. Data collection and management
4. Data quality assurance
5. Publish & re-use
6. Performance monitoring

We have created an accompanying ORUK [Project initiation document \(PID\)](#) to help your teams understand and plan how to implement ORUK.

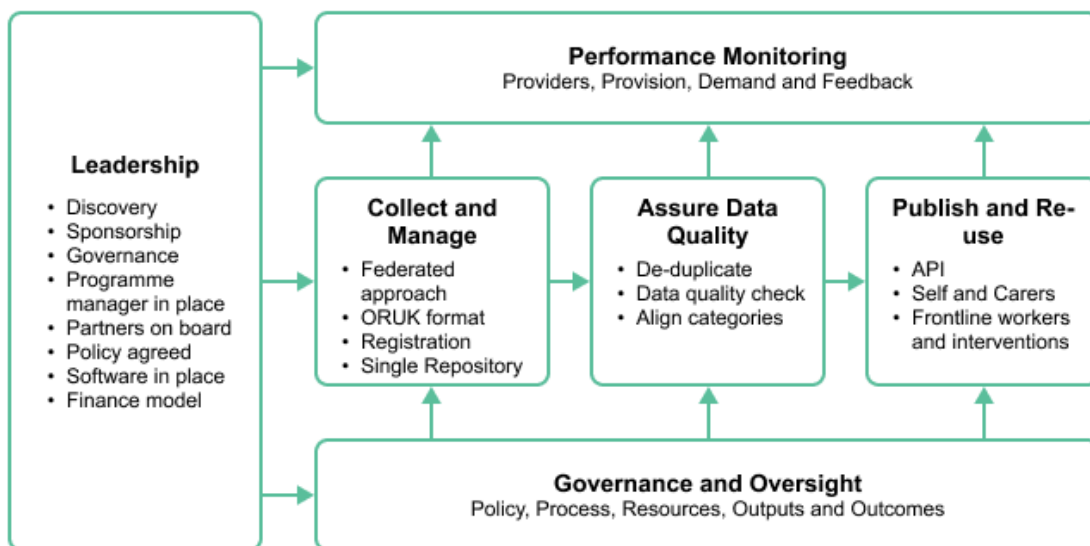


Figure 1: A framework for managing and ensuring the quality of ORUK data

## Next steps to get started

1. **Review.** Assess your current directory costs and [explore the ORUK Business case](#) for a better understanding of why you should adopt.
2. **Assess.** Work with your digital teams to expand ORUK data use across platforms.
3. **Learn more.** Visit [www.openreferraluk.org](http://www.openreferraluk.org) and access implementation resources.
4. **Stay Informed.** Look out for updates about events, technical insights, supplier engagement and future funding opportunities.