



# Innovation doesn't have to be expensive or disruptive or radical



By  
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Organisations can start on their innovation journey by focusing on cost-effective, incremental, and continuous innovation; letting that begin to transform the way they deliver their services, drive value, and bring a wealth of benefits to the people and communities they serve.

This supports building that all-important innovation culture and ecosystem, learning and growing those hard-to-acquire and expensive skills, understanding what works and establishing your innovation model; building innovation trust through evidenced impact and paving the way for a repeatable, sustainable model, that in time can become more adventurous should you wish!

The NHS has reported that telemedicine consultations have saved them over **£100 million annually** with far higher predictions when you look at the wider potential.

Of course, **innovation doesn't fall out of trees; you have to allocate some time, people and a bit of money too, but it doesn't have to be about big, long, expensive projects.** You can focus on benefits and right now to drive value and improve services, whilst keeping them sustainable.

One example of cost-effective innovation is the use of [telemedicine in the NHS](#), allowing patients to consult with doctors remotely. The NHS has reported that telemedicine consultations have saved them over £100 million annually with far higher predictions when you look at the wider potential.

An interesting case study is from Airedale Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, West Yorkshire, (purposely chosen as it's pre-pandemic). Their telemedicine service covered 13 prisons across England, c.100 patients with long term conditions or who were near end of life, using an at home service, as well as 160 nursing and residential care homes. The reduction in admissions, A&E attendance, overall bed days, and length of stay are positive and the economic case is clear. Of course, there's learning and adapting plus challenges to overcome - which is where measuring, evidencing, and incremental and continuous innovation is key.





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Cost-effective innovation not only saves the council time and money, it helps the environment and has had a positive impact for residents

Another is the use of [computer vision](#) by Swindon Borough Council, co-delivered with Methods, to improve the response to fly-tipping. This innovation resulted in clean up times reducing from 10 to 4 days and brought annual savings of over £28,000. It also returned 2,137 staff hours, and helps the environment with a reduction of 1,591,200g CO2 per year through better use of routing optimisation and minimising the problem of *fly-tipping attracting more fly-tipping*. This cost-effective innovation not only saves the council time and money, it helps the environment and has had a positive impact for residents, communities, and staff, who say it's transformed the way they work. With the ability to re-use this across patterned services, such as graffiti, fallen trees, abandoned trollies, potholes, and more, there's great opportunity to grow this innovation.

And remember, innovation is not a one-time event, it's a continuous process. Don't be afraid to think differently, experiment and try something new. You might just be surprised at the positive impact it can have.

**Top tip:** It costs very little to communicate a vision of innovation, to build that innovative culture (so so important!) and allow time to think-innovation. Ask for ideas, evaluate, and select the best ones for trialling. Get customers involved and evaluating, implement small incremental innovations, empower people to try more initiatives and look at collaborations and partnerships.





## **Sarah Peña** Managing Consultant

Sarah Peña is a Managing Consultant at Methods, with a lead on Innovation. Sarah brings 30 years' experience within emerging tech, innovation, and engineering, with an extensive technical delivery and business background across both Private and Public sector. Sarah established Swindon's Emerging Technology Team, delivering several ground breaking projects including improving user experience post-pandemic at the [Household Waste Recycling Centre](#) (powered by an existing streetlamp!), realising huge cost savings through development of the [AWS Neural Machine Translation](#), and winning an industry award for '[Report It](#)', a machine learning and object detection (computer vision) proof of concept in collaboration with Methods.

Sarah is experienced in Lean and Agile Delivery and has a focus on ethical, mission-orientated sustainable innovation for positive societal outcomes.



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