

SHELLEY HECKMAN ON THE SAVVI MOVEMENT: DATA INTERVENTIONS TO BETTER SERVE VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Transcript

Linda O'Halloran (00:00)

Shelley Heckman of iStand UK, thank you so much for joining us and agreeing to share what you've been learning through the SAVVI project. Could you start us off by explaining at a high level what it is and what problem it's trying to solve?

Shelley Heckman (00:12)

Absolutely. So, I'm here to talk about the SAVVI project, and SAVVI was born during the pandemic. And the pandemic, I guess it exposed something that we'd known for a really long time, but we hadn't really fully confronted, which was that public services weren't as ready as they needed to be to use data intelligently to find and support vulnerable people. And I think there was a growing expectation that we should be smarter and faster in how we identify risk. But in practice, actually, data was fragmented, it was held in silos, and data is described in different ways. It's really difficult to share, and so much effort is going into managing crises after they've happened rather than identifying vulnerability early and preventing escalation.

So SAVVI, which is short for Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability, was created to close that gap. And I guess at its core, it's about early identification, smarter intervention, and using data as a routine, business-as-usual capability rather than something that's bespoke or crisis-driven.

Linda O'Halloran (01:26)

I think this is such an ambitious project, and it's interesting because it seems to have two complementary motivations for coming into existence. One is obviously this COVID crisis where all of a sudden you need to understand where people that you need to get services to are. That's a common motivation for these systemic interventions getting permission to go ahead. And the other one is, it sounds like, awareness that data was in silos and that there is this vendor lock-in, or there's old-fashioned technology that evolved organically over time that we're kind of locked into and that we need to do something about.

Was there a moment when you realised SAVVI is the approach that we have to take, or how did the project start off?

Shelley Heckman (02:08)

Well, I guess the background is that without SAVVI, the problem is generally approached in a really reactive and siloed way. So vulnerability is identified once people cross the service threshold — when they present as homeless, or they're flagged at school, or they turn up at A&E, or they require statutory intervention. And data is therefore used primarily for case management and not early identification and prevention. And so each organisation collects and uses information for its own purposes within its own systems, under its own governance arrangements. And that actually makes absolute sense because organisations are accountable for their own statutory duties, their budgets, and their own risks.

But when data sharing actually does happen, it's usually done through one-off projects or bespoke agreements, or each vulnerability issue tends to result in a brand new solution, a new data-sharing protocol, and often a new technology build. So there's also a strong culture of caution around data sharing. Without clear common standards or trusted frameworks, many organisations default to the safest interpretation of the law, which often leads to not sharing data at all.

And I guess we kept bumping into lots of different challenges and barriers as we were going along. So it wasn't just the data or the technical challenge, because we started off thinking that SAVVI would be a data standards project, but we really quickly realised that it was as much of an information governance project. You can have a fantastic technical solution to data sharing, but legally and lawfully, can you access that data? And so there was a legal interoperability challenge as well.

And then we would bump into other challenges along the way. We found up in Scotland, for example, that we couldn't access the data that we wanted; there was just no legal route. So we have started to build what we call the SAVVI legislation group, and we are working with the Digital Economy Act team within DSIT to start looking at changing legislation. So we're starting to bump into some of the structural changes or the structural barriers this project started off looking at.

Linda O'Halloran (04:28)

This is a brilliant example of how a collection of organisations that are suffering imperfect features of the system are able to actually coalesce around a shared mission and then go to the centre to get the legislative support that they need. Because, as you said, and everyone has said, it's never just one intervention. Often, we start with a really strong sense that if we just had this data standard, or we just had this common component and everyone adopted it, everything would be fixed. But it's never that simple, and it requires a multi-pronged approach. What were the conditions for enabling you to come to DSIT with a clear ask and have them buy in and be part of your team?

Shelley Heckman (05:16)

It's probably worth just talking about what triggered this approach in the first place before we talk about the conditions. I think it's worth saying that iStand UK didn't arrive at the SAVVI project and what we're doing overnight.

So iStand UK is the programme that I manage. We support data standards, and we've been around supporting and promoting the use of data standards in local public services for close to 20 years. And for a long time, that ambition was there, but the conditions weren't. So 10 or even 15 years ago, we simply didn't have the technology to match what we were trying to achieve. There were no APIs back then for machine-to-machine data sharing. Most data exchange was manual, and it was slow. Even when organisations wanted to collaborate, the tools weren't there. At the same time, I think the maturity of local authorities in terms of their data capability was hugely variable, and data was seen as a really important requirement for reporting but not as a strategic asset. I think that was the same probably in government as well.

So what's really changed to sort of make these things align is that the technology has matured, interoperable systems and APIs are now commonplace, and there's just far greater literacy around data and more confidence across the sector. And so there's a much stronger expectation, both politically and publicly, that data should be used ethically but effectively to improve outcomes. And as I said before, it was the pandemic that acted as the catalyst.

And I guess another key factor really alluding to your question is around policy buy-in. I think there's a real growing recognition across policy teams that the existing approaches to prevention and vulnerability weren't really delivering what they were meant to. And there was that shared understanding that created permission to focus on root causes rather than defending inherited ways of working. We sort of had a framework to talk and approach the problem like that. And I guess particularly the support from key national teams was really, really crucial.

We had the MHCLG local digital team, who played a really vital role in championing the importance of common approaches and supporting places to think beyond local, bespoke solutions. Thank you to them for funding us as well; they have funded us each year since 2020, which is the pandemic, which really speaks to the level of support. And similarly, the backing of the Data Standards Authority within DSIT has been really fundamental for us. Their leadership has really helped create the space for cross-government collaboration on fundamental standards, and it's signalled that this work actually really matters on a national and system level, and not just at a local level.

We've also worked with the Digital Economy Act team in DSIT, which is led by Patrick Kiernan. And we've also got the support of DSNE, which stands for the Data Sharing Network of Experts, led by Murat Soncul within DSIT. That's been critical because, as we've encountered legal barriers to data sharing, just having a really constructive, collaborative relationship with government colleagues that are responsible for legislation and routes through to looking at the legal issues has really allowed us to explore what's genuinely possible and where long-term legislative change might be needed.

And I guess market shaping is about industry. We're working with Tech UK, who is giving us a route to bring suppliers into the conversation early to align around shared data standards and really start shifting away from bespoke, one-off builds towards more componentised, interoperable solutions. So, lots of criteria for success.

And actually, I have to say maybe timing matters as well. The pandemic created a moment where there was political and organisational permission to share data more proactively to protect people. It also created a shared acknowledgement that strategies from the past hadn't really worked in certain ways. And it's not because of a lack of effort — everybody's working really, really hard — but it's because the system itself isn't set up to succeed.

And I guess the other area that was really crucial in terms of conditions was our ability to work in the open and to really co-create. I think that was essential. SAVVI wasn't developed behind closed doors. We actually work really openly with councils, central government, suppliers, and practitioners to really build that trust, and that created a sense of shared ownership. And I think, taken all together — the policy buy-in, the sponsorship, the legislation, engagement, market collaboration, all the champions that support us, the openness — I think those are the conditions that have created the space in which a systems-level approach such as SAVVI can really take hold.

Linda O'Halloran (10:57)

You've painted such a good picture of how many people need to be involved to affect systems change, because essentially a system is a whole bunch of autonomous people that all need to align around something in a different way. I'd love you to dig in a little bit more about how, when you didn't have these relationships, you went about establishing them.

Shelley Heckman (11:19)

Yeah, that's a really good question. It's funny because when we initially sought funding back in 2020, we were actually given less than what we asked for because we were told at that time that stakeholder engagement couldn't be funded; only technical solutions could be. At that time, I think it reflected a really common mindset that engagement is a nice-to-have rather than core delivery. We actually took a different view even back then. iNetwork actually covered the cost of stakeholder engagement in that first phase of our project in the early days. We really picked up the slack and paid for my time to do that engagement because we knew that bringing people on that journey wasn't optional.

Because this work cuts across policy, legal, digital, operational, and market boundaries — all the gaps between services — without that trust, the shared understanding, and the co-creation, the most beautiful technical solution just would never stick. And I think that decision that we made to fund ourselves to do stakeholder engagement in the early days was absolutely right. The progress that we made later on standards adoption, on gaining government confidence, cross-government definitions, industry engagement, and all of those things was only possible because of the relationships and the shared ownership built early on. I guess one insight into this is that stakeholder engagement isn't an overhead; it's actually core infrastructure for systems change.

Linda O'Halloran (13:08)

We used to talk a lot in MHCLG Local Digital days about the collaboration overhead, that it is a really, really essential investment because no individual organisation can justify taking responsibility for how useful what they do is to other organisations. It's a really bad use of their local taxpayer money and their budget. On that note, it strikes me that something that was really essential to your success was actually just taking ownership, was deciding, "This is a problem, somebody needs to lead on it, we're going to lead on it and we're going to do the convening, we're going to put in an application, we're going to put up some of our own reserves," which is something that very few organisations have the means to do. Any reflections on that, and maybe advice for people who would love to see a similar project happen and aren't in your position?

Shelley Heckman (13:56)

Yeah, it's really interesting. I have to say we are absolutely privileged as iStand UK to be in the space where we can convene people, and that's what we do best. That's our USP: creating those safe spaces for people to come together, to learn, to share, and to collaborate. And we've done that for ourselves. In effect, it is really difficult because this project really is a major market-shaping, systems-change type project. It's not a project that can be done in a year or in a short time. It's slow; it's a really slow burn in many ways.

I think one of the learnings that we've had — well, I guess the frustration — is that what we often try to do is work at the pace of the problem. When you're trying to do systems change, the hardest part is actually working at the pace of the system rather than the pace of the problem. When you're dealing with vulnerability and prevention, the need to act feels really, really urgent, and you can often see very clearly what would help people in the short term. But when you're trying to do that sort of systems change — changing those conditions, changing standards, governance, legislation, market behaviour — all of that progress is inevitably slower. I think that's been a real challenge for us to understand and then set that pace.

We've been working, plodding along for a long time, and it feels like now we've had a bit of recognition. We've been put forward for a number of awards recently, so it feels like we're an overnight success, but actually, it's been quite a long plod. We've just been in a really privileged position, I think, to be able to do that convening and already have a lot of those relationships in government, in industry, and in the local public sector that we've built over the last 20 years. It feels like everything has sort of all come together to coalesce in this opportunity.

Linda O'Halloran (16:07)

There's something there about making the case and telling the story. It's across, again, every case study that I've been learning about or that I've been involved in. It's a very hard benefits case to land politically sometimes. "We know this is a massive systemic problem, you have to invest loads of money, and I can't tell you exactly what specific benefits we'll realise, but there'll definitely be loads, I promise. Keep going with us for the next decade," because it

actually does take that long to really see the macroeconomic benefits. How important has benefits case-making been, and how have you gone about it that has been more or less effective even?

Shelley Heckman (16:44)

Yeah, that's a really, really good question because it's really hard to make that case, right? To get funded, often you need to be able to say, "We've saved X amount of money here," and it's really hard when you're doing systems change or big change like this to be able to point specifically at what the savings are. Because SAVVI is a methodology, an approach, and the data standards and all the tools you need can apply to any type of vulnerability. Of course, we started off looking at how do we identify people who are potentially vulnerable during the pandemic, who are in lockdown and might need a food basket, or need support, or might be socially isolated. The discipline, the tools, and the methodology around doing that effectively could then be turned to a different vulnerability because it's scalable. That in itself is a really hard, difficult thing to measure in terms of outcomes, because the methodology doesn't directly lead to savings for us; it's only when it's implemented by others that there are savings.

So we're starting to build the case. Beyond the pandemic, we worked with North Yorkshire Council to look at SAVVI and how SAVVI can identify those children that are not quite school-ready at reception. We've worked with Wigan Council to identify people who might need additional assistance to evacuate their homes in the event of a civil contingency emergency, such as a flood. We've used SAVVI up in Scotland to try to identify rural child poverty — those households that might have rural child poverty, because it's really difficult in rural areas of Scotland where those that are living in poverty are living next door to those that are living in affluent areas. Those projects themselves are slow-burn and long, so how do we then attribute that?

Having said that, we have been banging on the standards drum for 20 years. Why is it suddenly now? I think one of the things is that the storytelling aspect of choosing to apply what we're doing to vulnerability and in the prevention space is an easier story to sell. If we tell the story of "it's data standards, and it's market interoperability, and it's technical this and technical that, and it's squiggly brackets," people get turned off. If we're telling the tale of "somebody's life could be saved because we're able to evacuate them because we've identified them at the push of a button rather than three days down the line because we didn't know about them," or "children not being school-ready and now school-ready because we're able to intervene earlier," those are human stories that we can actually relate to. I think that has been part of the success of SAVVI, because they are really urgent things that people can relate to.

But in actual fact, what we've done in SAVVI and all the things that we've put in place is at the real cutting edge where it could be applied to any data sharing. The data sharing that we are trying to achieve is using existing data that has been collected for one purpose, for another purpose, to actually identify individuals who might possibly be at risk of vulnerability. It's like on the edge of what you can do with information governance. And because we have tried to tackle this head-on, all the best practice that falls out of it could actually be applied to other aspects of data sharing that are less contentious around looking for the single view of

residents from a local authority perspective, where people are starting to come to us for all those things. It's because we've been able to illustrate it from a really people-person storytelling angle that we've been able to do that.

Linda O'Halloran (21:25)

It's interesting also, I think, that all of the projects that have had the most impact so far, that are the most mature by way of market interventions, none of them were kind of commissioned through a manifesto: "There's this big problem, we need to understand that, we need to design some interventions." They've all come from grassroots initiatives that are close together — maybe there's a digital and a policy initiative in the same department. That was the case for planning and for out-of-hospital social care. And because those existing relationships were there and there was some trust there, the right people were able to give good advice at a time when there was a COVID moment or a legislative change moment.

So, my question is, how do we learn from these examples so that when we don't have these special circumstances, we can try and mainstream this practice? Because I think every local service and a lot of health and other distributed, complex public services suffer from similar ailments when it comes to depending on slightly out-of-date technology, and it being really hard for those suppliers to meet the demands of the market because we're very incoherent about what we ask for. Everyone has a quite bespoke ask, and they have a really complex estate to integrate with. How can we learn from the likes of iNetworks, the planning program, and the social care interoperability program to accelerate the fixing of the plumbing now that we've started to learn how to do it?

Shelley Heckman (22:53)

Oh, that's a big question. That is a really big question, Linda. I feel like this could be the question for my PhD if I ever... yeah, right. It feels like such a big question. You could do a full PhD on it because your question essentially is: what are the conditions that can be repeated to make something like this happen again? And it's really hard to pin that down, I think.

As I mentioned before, iStand UK has been working for 20 years before really any notice of data standards was taken. So what is it? I think it was so many different things that came all at once. The maturity in our technology, the maturity in our data, and understanding the fact that we can now have APIs rather than just sending slugs of Excel spreadsheets around — you know, that's just one aspect. The fact that people in policy-making positions are ready to speak to us and listen as well. The fact that we've banked 20 years of trust, not just with government colleagues, but with local public sector colleagues as well, like councils.

I'd hate to say that it can only happen under really special circumstances and that they couldn't just be repeated over and over again. But I think there is a reason why some of these big changes don't happen overnight. Having said that, though, it's really interesting because one of the things that I'm most proud of about SAVVI is that when we have bumped into structural barriers, we've inspired other parts of the structure of the market to actually do something about it.

For example, we naively thought that there would already be cross-government definitions of what a person is, or to describe a person or an address. It wasn't there. And now there is cross-government work inspired by the work of SAVVI to address that. So some of that really fundamental digital plumbing or data plumbing that you were talking about — the foundations are starting to be done.

I think now the time is ripe because we're at a time where people are starting to understand data. And if we don't get ahead of it, with the onset of AI and things like that, we really need to be making sure that we're working with really high-quality data. We need to have that plumbing in place. I think it's a lot of different efforts all coalescing at the moment.

Linda O'Halloran (25:56)

It is a really exciting time, and I wanted to dig into something that you mentioned about working with policy and policy teams being more understanding and open to collaborating. I definitely suspect that the way to accelerate the fixing of the plumbing is to figure out better ways of digital and data people collaborating with policymakers and making policy together so that it's more machine-readable and more consistent. I'm curious to know how you have been successful in engaging new policy teams. You have such a challenge because there are so many policy areas that SAVVI could apply to.

Shelley Heckman (26:32)

Yeah, it's really interesting you say that because this is a challenge for us. In fact, we were only having a conversation with MHCLG yesterday about an ask that we've been asking them for a while, because we don't have the capability and capacity to do the horizon scanning. I feel like we're always on the back foot because our heads are down all the time trying to develop SAVVI, get it adopted, and do all these things and talk to these different people, but we're not seeing new policy initiatives coming our way soon enough so that we can respond. We need other people who do have that visibility to be able to alert us to that, so there's definitely that.

I have also wished, over the last few years, that there was a government department for vulnerability rather than it all being in silos. The issue of children often gets locked in DfE, the issue around welfare gets locked in DWP, and the issues are all addressed by different departments. They all have their own siloed way of addressing them and there isn't one owner at that national government level — an owner for all of this — which makes it hard. It makes us necessary, because what we're trying to do is stop people falling between those gaps, between those silos. So yeah, it's tricky.

Linda O'Halloran (28:33)

I mean, it's an ocean-boiling problem, but it's amazing how when you look back in 10 years' time, it will be, I think, undoubtable that the work that's happening now will have contributed to a warmer ocean, for want of a better metaphor that isn't so terrifyingly real.

Shelley Heckman (28:52)

Yeah.

Linda O'Halloran (28:54)

I think you've hit on something that could be the leverage and the game changer that we need to do this accelerating or fixing the plumbing, which is to attach to emerging legislation. This has always been a real problem to know from back in my day when I was in government. But I don't think I'd made the connection yet as to how powerful policy teams can be in reshaping operational markets that we work in to deliver outcomes, and essentially shaping technology markets. There remains a disconnect in the policy vision of its role and the opportunity, perhaps of market shaping through new policy. I don't know if you've had any success, perhaps in convincing emerging policy areas that there's a really valuable collaboration to be had and them actually making the time in their programme.

I really feel for them because the legislative process is extremely demanding and often the timescales are bananas. Politicians have made commitments, and they want to see changes in legislation worked out really quickly, and actually working through the operational implications of new legislation — for example, around how to make homes safer, and how to have your systems identify when there are vulnerable people in the house and when there's a hazard in the house, things like that. There have been tragedies that have necessitated new legislation, and it's going to be very difficult to get this perhaps slower process of working in better data standards and things that might feel outside of scope into this policy agenda. How have you gone about solving that problem?

Shelley Heckman (30:36)

Gosh, Linda, you're really good at these big questions. Where to start? We do speak with a lot of different teams and have engaged in different policy agendas. I think sometimes, from our experience, they stick; they get it, and they see it straight away. I have a lot of standing meetings in my diary, which are just catch-ups with all these different policy people. That's why my diary is completely bonkers so far in advance, because there are regular meetings all the time. It might not be something that we can do some work on straight away, but it's just keeping informed with each other as things are going.

Occasionally, we do collaborative working as well. I think the thing that has really helped, though, in terms of how supported SAVVI has been over the last six years — like, gosh, the pandemic was six years ago, we're in 2026 — is something about particularly MHCLG's support over the long term. I think there's something about how policymakers can support long-term, on a slower basis than trying to fix things project-by-project in a really quick way. How do we engage across changes in government? How do we engage beyond the quick "this project" or "that project"?

We've seen some of that. We keep really great notes on who we were engaging with, and we have people that we engaged with four years ago whom we're now starting to re-engage with again because we're a bit maturer in what we're able to deliver. It's definitely a slow burn. If we're doing something that is market-shaping, that's really big, where we're actually fixing the plumbing and that's really structural in change, then we're never going to see success straight away or overnight. We're not going to see the fruits of our labour right now; it's incremental.

We're starting to talk to local authorities, for example, who are coming to us to say, "We would love to take on SAVVI data standards and methodology, not just for this project, but as a way of delivering across our organisation." Those are slow-burn things. We're starting to talk with individual suppliers who are coming to us to say, "We would like to put SAVVI standards in our technology." The ideal would be that you don't have to buy a case management system for adults and then for children — you could just buy one because we're using SAVVI standards and it can apply right across. That's the same for all sorts of different componentised digital technology solutions. But we're not there yet because we haven't got the market take-up, but that's the direction of travel. We can kind of see where we want to go, and it's still a slow burn. But in order to succeed, we need people to come on that journey with us and to be with us for the long distance. It's a marathon, I guess, and not a sprint.

Linda O'Halloran (34:17)

That is the ultimate key to success, I think, for all of these projects: making it a collective endeavour that everyone can understand and rally around. You can almost never make a perfect roadmap or plan for this kind of thing, but when you set up the conditions to be guided by the sector at large, so much more is possible.

Now that you've got a number of irons in the fire — people that are really interested in experimenting — are there things that you wish you could just unblock really quickly? How could the things that you know are really likely to be helpful? How could you scale these more quickly?

Shelley Heckman (35:00)

It would just be so much easier for data sharing if we already had agreed definitions across government around some basic stuff so that we can do that data sharing. We'd like a catalogue, actually, of data shares, and we're trying to convince somebody to create or to be responsible long-term for a catalogue. We can do it ourselves at iStand UK, but it doesn't feel like a long-term, sustainable thing. It shouldn't be an iStand UK thing; I think it needs to be a government thing potentially, or a sector thing where we can catalogue data shares where it's worked — where one local authority has said, "We've used this data to access this data for this vulnerability, and we've used this legislative gateway, and we feel really confident that this is legal and ethical and it's right." We're pulling all of these things into what we call a blueprint, but actually, a lot of it could be in a catalogue that can be accessed. So that is on our horizon. We'd like to develop that, and we will develop it ourselves, but it really needs to be a national thing. It needs to be something held nationally. So that's one area.

I think the other is just more collaboration between government departments. It's really difficult because government departments are trying to solve just their thing, but within their own confined structures. For an example, DWP approached us at iStand UK to say, "Look, could you help us write data standards for an open API so that any council accessing DWP data can access it through an open API?" And we said, "Yes, we can help you to do that. But wouldn't it be better if it wasn't a specific DWP API?" Because then MHCLG can come to us and say, "Could you provide the standards for that?" We're just talking about siloed standards.

So that actually kicked off — and we're quite proud of this — it kicked off all of the open API work that is now really flourishing, because we engaged a number of government colleagues to say, "Look, if DWP want this, I know other departments want this. Let's do one that we can share, then that's cross-cutting." There aren't enough of those sort of things at the moment; it's all still siloed. And so I wish, if we had a magic wand, we could get that cross-government working collaboration and access to that sort of working much more quickly and easily. I guess GDS is in that space to try to do that.

Linda O'Halloran (38:07)

Yeah, I'm hopeful it's a time where there's definitely the ambition. I guess the last in the arc of how one might go about understanding systemic problems, prioritising the interventions, and the complement of interventions that we think have the best chance of fixing this problematic dynamic... the last phase in this is scaling adoption. The hardest part. I think we've all been in this situation where we've been really behind a particular collective solution, and then it is really good for the few people that have co-designed it and nobody else adopts it. Can you teach us anything about how bloody hard that is, but how worthwhile the slog to kind of figure out the human side of adoption perhaps can be?

Shelley Heckman (38:51)

Yeah, it is a slog. It really is. And we're not quite there yet, Linda, so I don't know if I've got all the answers, but we are in that large-scale adoption phase. That's our next challenge. We've done a number of pilots, and we are working slowly with all these different stakeholders, but the thing is: can we get more adoption at that local level?

What's happening at the moment is that MHCLG has funded £1.1 million into the adoption of both SAVVI standards and Open Referral UK standards, which we also steward as well. They are complementary sister standards in the whole approach to finding and supporting people and households that are potentially at risk of vulnerability. And so there's a project going on. The funding funds Greater Manchester Combined Authority and across the Greater Manchester conurbation in adopting this as a use case. They've just got the funding now; we're literally at that very start. They've also got funding to fund a SAVVI engagement team just for Greater Manchester.

They aren't the first to do that. We are really lucky that up in Scotland, through the work that we've done in the child poverty work and SAVVI, the Scottish Government has funded the Improvement Service up in Scotland to fund a Scottish SAVVI engagement team. So, we are starting to see engagement and adoption. It's still slow going, but we're seeing commitment through funding from both the Scottish Government and from MHCLG to do this. And hopefully, when we've got more engagement teams on the ground, they can support more local authorities to embed and to deploy the SAVVI methodology as a business-as-usual way of working. Because if you can do data this way as a competency for vulnerable people, you can turn that to any part of your organisation when you're doing data work.

Linda O'Halloran (41:05)

Amazing. I could talk to you until the cows come home. If you want to have any final words, any insights into how AI could play out in the vulnerability space and how maybe it's even more important now to be investing in scaling the adoption of SAVVI and finding all the possible use cases, I would love to hear.

Shelley Heckman (41:26)

Gosh, well, that's a whole other topic, Linda. Do you have time? Because, in short, AI is really, really important, actually, because it's landed. This is where we have to be. And so there's a big question for us: what is the place of data standards in a world of AI? We would argue that it's needed more than anything because when we're talking about data sharing to identify potentially vulnerable people at risk of vulnerability, it's person-identifiable. You've got to have your purpose; you've got to have your legal purpose for doing a project like that in the first place. Part of it is really understanding where your data comes from, having trust in the provenance of your data, and the quality of your data. Without data standards to support that, then it's really difficult, and it has real implications legally for how AI can be used in these terms.

And so we are experimenting with looking at AI. One of the pilots that is being funded at the moment to support AI — not necessarily in SAVVI but in our other data standards, Open Referral UK — involves a number of agentic AI projects that we're bidding for to really look at the place for data standards in the context of the world that we're living in right now. We're in the future, aren't we?

Linda O'Halloran (43:12)

Whoever said data standards weren't absolutely fascinating? Shelley, thank you so much for sharing your insights and taking a stab at humongous questions. I hope we can talk more again soon.

Shelley Heckman (43:22)

Yes, thank you so much for having me. I really enjoyed this..