



Transfor**M**Ative

Strategies for Success: Building Efficient, Effective Technology Strategies in Times of Austerity



A TransforMAtive Roundtable Networking Dinner
Event partner – CloudClevr, 15.10.25,
The Ivy, Birmingham

Executive Summary

In an era of deep financial constraint, education leaders face a profound challenge: how to modernise and scale digital infrastructure while protecting frontline delivery for children. This roundtable revealed not only constraints but a spirit of innovation, pragmatism, and moral purpose. Participants agreed that technology is not about “shiny tools,” but about **unlocking capacity, reducing operational drag, and enabling humans to focus on what matters most, teaching and care.**

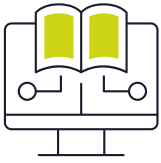
Key conclusions include:

- **Back-office efficiency is frontline investment** optimising processes directly returns time and value to schools.
- **Simplicity, not complexity, is the future** lean, robust, cloud-based platforms reduce dependency and volatility.
- **People are the limiting factor, not technology;** digital strategies fail when staff behaviours, trust, and mindset are ignored.
- **AI creates opportunity, not redundancy;** the real prize is reallocation of human effort toward bespoke pastoral and inclusion work.

The sector stands at an inflection point. Maturity in digital thinking is shifting from **cost-saving IT to value-creating digital strategy.**



Key Learning



Technology Optimisation = Financial Stewardship

Leaders stressed a ruthless need to eliminate duplication, poorly used systems, and under-leveraged licenses. This is not austerity thinking it is operational discipline.

People & Culture Are the Critical Success Factors

Technology alone cannot transform schools. Mindset, adoption, and human behaviour dominate success. One Leader expressed that the biggest barrier to digital adoption isn't tech, it's people still checking the AI's work out of habit.

AI as Augmentation, Not Headcount Reduction

AI was not approached as a jobs threat but as a force multiplier creating bandwidth for personalised intervention, safeguarding, and SEN priorities.

Leaders felt that AI won't reduce workload but rather it will change what our workload is.

Visibility, Governance & Risk Cannot Be Afterthoughts

Cybersecurity and IT assurance were growing concerns, particularly organisational blindness to hidden vulnerabilities.

Sector Insights



Shift from IT Cost Centres to Digital Value Centres

The conversation has evolved. Trust leaders are no longer talking about IT as a purchase they are talking about digital as strategic capital.

Legacy View	Emerging View
IT is an overhead	Digital is an enabler
Cost per device	Value per process
Reactive support	Proactive optimisation
Siloed MIS/IT	Unified digital capability

Collaboration as Untapped Sector Currency



Participants criticised the duplication across trusts, each building similar solutions in isolation.

Leaders were confident that collaborations could unlock even greater cash savings without compromising service quality.

Cybersecurity is a Systemic, Underestimated Risk

Schools are culturally unprepared for breach reality. Resilience planning (backup, recovery, continuity) is insufficiently mature.

Future Research Questions



Theme	Strategic Questions for Further Inquiry
AI & Human Capital	How do we quantify AI's impact beyond workload; on inclusion, pastoral care, and cognitive bandwidth?
Shared Sector Infrastructure	Can MATs co-develop shared digital backbones, procurement blocs, or AI policy frameworks?
Resilience & Cyber Preparedness	Beyond DfE technology standards, what defines a "minimum digital safety standard" for trusts in a when-not-if threat landscape?
Measuring Digital Value	How can the sector design metrics that capture impact , not just cost especially where value is relational, cultural or long-term?
Future Workforce Design	How will digital roles evolve; technician to enabler, MIS manager to data strategist, COO to Chief Digital Officer?