



Run with social care,  
for social care

# Reimagining social work and social care in the age of AI

## House Keeping

- This webinar is being recorded
- Attendees are on mute and can't be seen
- Please use the **Q&A** function to ask questions, not the chat.
- You will get access to the recording and the presentation

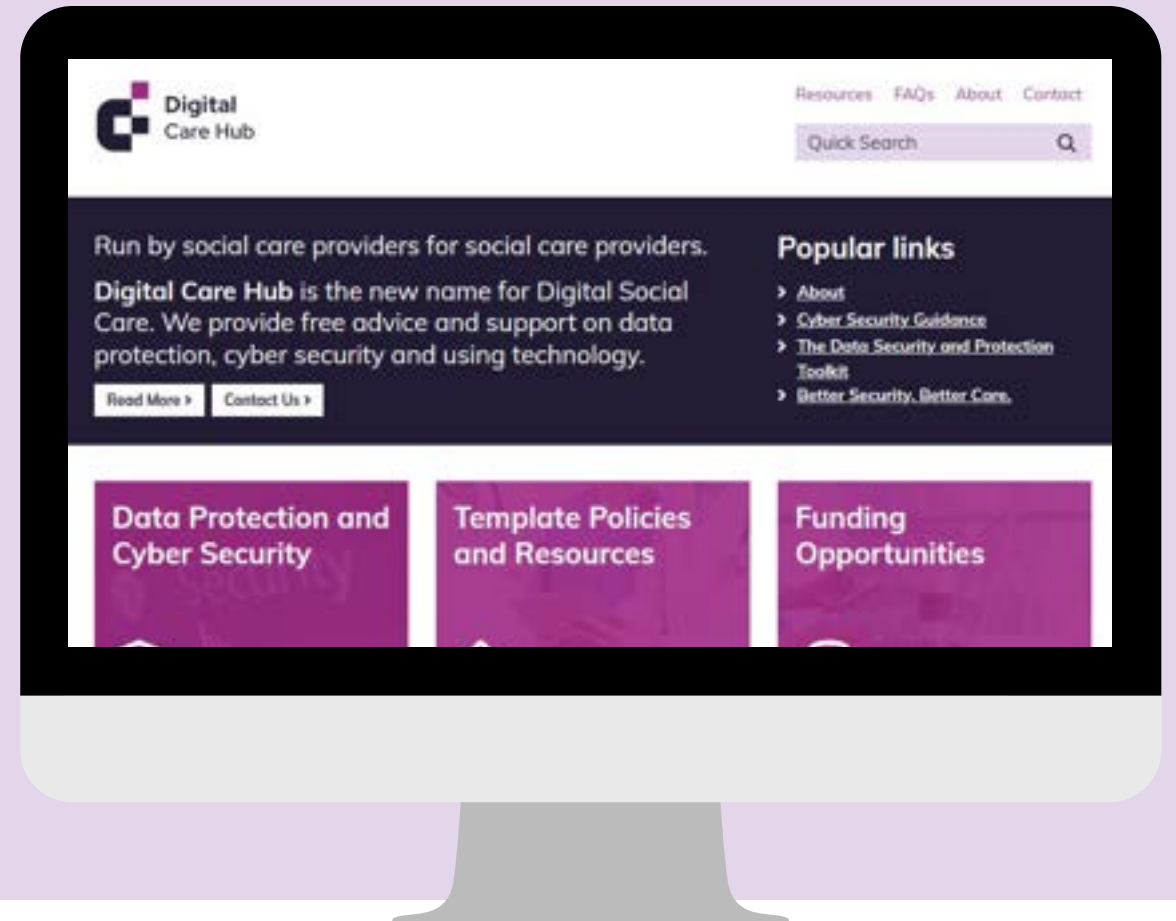


Photo by [Valeriia Svitlini](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Time	Agenda Item	
12:00 -12:05	Welcome and Introductions	Katie Thorn
12:05 - 12:20	How AI fits in with the workforce strategy for adult social care	Sarah Gilbert, Head of Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy, Skills for Care
12:20 – 12:40	Research on the emerging use of AI in social work	Natalie Day, Social Work England
12:40 – 13:00	The impact of AI on social work	Andrew Reece, Strategic lead for England and Wales at British Association of Social Workers (BASW)
13:00 – 13:10	Updates from the recent AI Summit in Oxford	Katie Thorn, Director of Innovation at Digital Care Hub
13:10 - 13:30	Questions	Katie Thorn

# Digital Care Hub – who are we?

- A partnership project run by the Care Provider Alliance. We represent care providers of adults with physical, sensory or learning disabilities, people with mental ill-health, and older people
- Cover almost 10,000 organisations, employ over 600,000 staff and support an estimated 1 million people.
- **Run by social care providers, for social care providers.**
- We work in partnership with providers, representative bodies, and statutory bodies to support the digital journey of adult social care providers in England.
- We are funded by Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England





**A Workforce Strategy**  
for Adult Social Care in England

# Reimagining Social Work in the Age of AI

Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy

Sarah Gilbert, Skills for Care

# Workforce projections, 2024/25 i

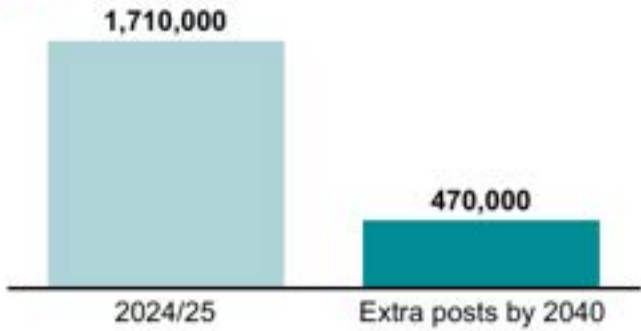
[Download PowerPoint](#)

This page projects the size of the adult social care workforce if it grows proportionally to the number of people aged 65 and over in the population. Please note that demand due to replacing leavers will be in addition to the figures shown below.

This workforce includes adult social care total posts in local authorities, the independent sector and posts employed by direct payment recipients.

If the adult social care workforce grows proportionally to the projected number of people aged 65 and over in the population, the number of total posts needs to increase by **27% or 470,000** extra posts

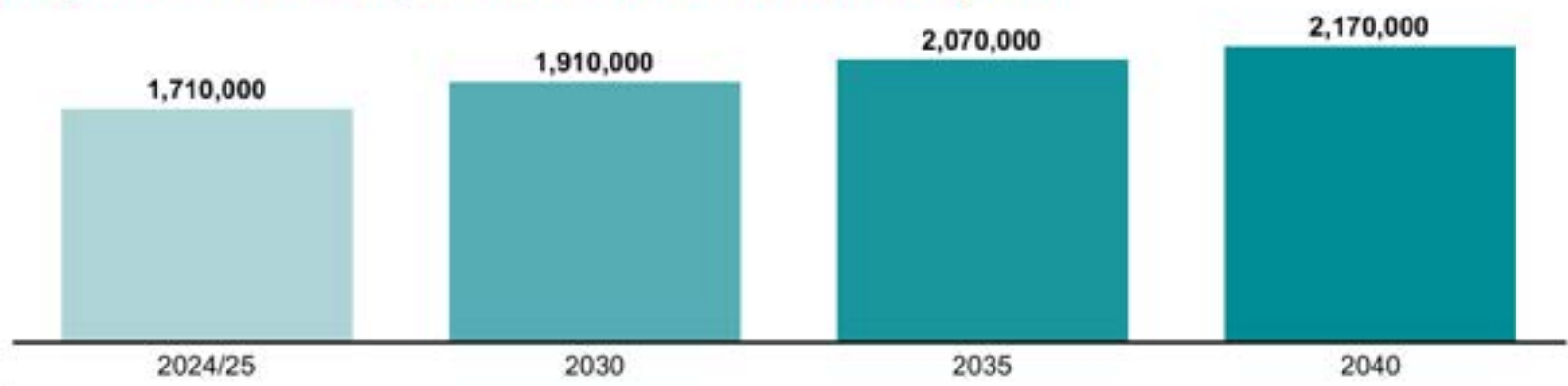
**Total posts in 2024/25 and extra posts required by 2040**



This would take the number of total posts in 2040 to around **2,170,000**



**Projected total number of posts in adult social care required by 2040**



Adult social care workforce projections

# What it is and how it works

- Created by the sector, led with the sector
- Launched July 2024, 15-year strategy, 56 recommendations and commitments over three themes
- Owned and overseen by over 30 system leaders
- Without coordination, AI use becomes fragmented. Shared oversight sets common guardrails and shared learning - so use is safer and more consistent.



# AI is a workforce issue



## AI is a workforce issue - it affects time, skills and safe practice

- An opportunity to reduce admin burden and support learning & planning
- There are significant risks, without shared guardrails AI use can drift and vary
  - unfair outcomes
  - hard to explain
  - unclear accountability
  - exclusion
- Workforce Strategy = the sector's shared way to use AI safely and consistently

# AI in the Workforce Strategy



**A Workforce Strategy**  
for Adult Social Care in England



**Attract  
and retain**



**Train**



**Transform**

## Attract & Retain

Better job quality and bringing in technical skills

## Train

Digital / data / AI literacy and leadership confidence

## Transform

Modern working practices, workforce planning and new roles (e.g., Care Technologist)

# Two Social Work Workforce Strategy initiatives



**A Workforce Strategy**  
for Adult Social Care in England

## **Social Work Workforce Strategy**

A future-facing plan for adult social work: skills, support and sustainability

## **AI and the future of social work: A one-day Summit**

- Wed 20 May 2026, Birmingham (free to attend)
- practical: experts + real teams + lived experience + tool try-outs

If you're curious, cautious, excited, or sceptical - you're exactly who this day is for.

[AI and the future of social work - one-day summit](#)



**The future workforce is made by  
the choices we make now**



# AI in social work practice and training

**Natalie Day**

Assistant Director for Policy & Strategy



A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It consists of a vertical green bar. At the top of this bar is a white circle containing ten lines of binary code (0s and 1s) in a light green font. The binary code is: 001101110, 010000100, 001001110, 110010100, 001100101, 100100101, 011010110, and 010010011.

001101110  
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# AI and social work practice

AI systems are developing rapidly, including in social work practice and education.

We commissioned research to explore:

- **types of AI** in social work settings
- potential **opportunities, risks and challenges**
- how **confident and prepared** social workers feel
- how social work educators and employers are **supporting** social workers
- how social work employers are **balancing risk, opportunity and governance**
- how social work employers and educators are **collaborating** to explore AI
- how **people with lived experience** of social work feel about use of AI in social work
- how the **professional standards** may be impacted



# How is AI being used in social work?

- Generative AI is the most common type of AI used in social work
- Many are using virtual assistants, transcription software, case recording support and chatbots
- The use of AI is uneven across social work and social work education

40% said they have used AI with direction from their employer

24% said they have used Gen AI without direction from their employer





# Potential benefits of AI in social work

83% of people felt that AI had the potential to reduce administrative burden for social workers

70% of people indicated that there are 'equal or more benefits to using AI in social work than there are risks'.

Potential benefits include:

Increase access to services and improve service quality

Support decision-making and risk assessments

Increase workflow efficiency and social workers' efficiency

Reduce workload

Enhance collaboration

Provide personalised and tailored support



# Key findings: potential benefits of AI in social work

“Overall, my documentation time for [case] notes has been reduced by about 30 to 50%, this allows me more direct time with my clients.”  
(social worker)

“Transcription allows me to speak my visit details while I drive between visits and transcribed them to text. I'm then able to copy/paste to text to the system and make any necessary (smaller) edits... as opposed to having to type all of it up from scratch, when I finally get back to my desk.” (social worker).



# Key findings: potential benefits of AI in social work

“The opportunity [of AI] lies in its potential to ease practitioners’ workloads, reducing stress and the burden created by high caseloads and limited support—realities faced by many local authorities. When used safely, with the right checks and balances, AI can be a valuable tool to enhance efficiency while allowing practitioners to focus on relationship-based practice,” (social worker).

“I have autism, and the logical approach used by AI is welcomed.”  
(neurodivergent social worker)



# Potential risks of AI in social work



Privacy and data protection



Complexities around consent



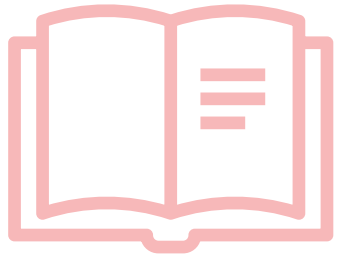
Fairness, bias, discrimination



Accuracy and reliability



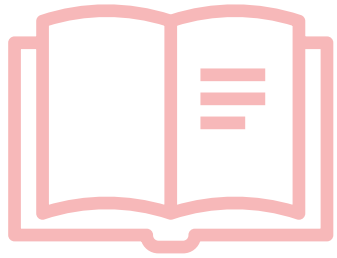
Accountability and responsibility



# Key findings: potential risks of AI in social work

“We are going into this too quickly and not thinking enough about the inbuilt biases of AI – e.g. marginalised communities may become more marginalised. Social work is a nuanced activity that involves all of your body and senses and not just the fingers you use to type.”  
(social worker)

“In a fast-paced world, I worry that SW will become careless and not thoroughly check AI notes leaving them inaccurate and potentially [biased].” (social worker)



# Key findings: social work education and AI

Potential benefits of using AI in social work education included:

Personalised learning, access and support.

Improved administrative efficiency

Equipping students with digital literacy / tech assisted learning

Enabling assessment and curriculum redesign.

Social work educators varied in their level of engagement with AI, and their attitudes towards it, with academic integrity flagged.

Guidelines for use of AI in social work education are often unclear – more likely to be more generic university approaches.

Greater support for social work educators in this area would be beneficial.



# Key findings: social work education and AI

The use of AI in social work education and practice comes with risks and ethical challenges that overlap with social work practice, with some additional risks specific to students and apprentices.

Writing skills

Critical thinking skills

Academic integrity issues

Knowledge acquisition

Reflective practice skills

Equity and access

Misuse of AI may result in students missing out on developing core skills/knowledge at a critical stage when preparing for practice.



# Creating a future-ready workforce

86% of social workers that graduated in the past 5 years did not receive any specific preparation on using AI in social work practice during their education and training

Collectively we need to :



Raise awareness of ethical practice when using AI



Consider how AI can enhance practice



Emphasise the need for critical thinking and professional judgment



Stress the importance of having people at the heart of support



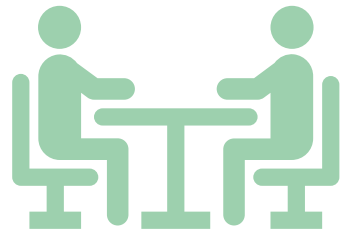
Think about the value of CPD where AI is evolving



# The importance of regulation in use of AI in social work

- Social workers should be responsible for the accuracy and reliability of their case recordings and how they use AI
- Governance and regulation of AI systems both at the employment level and national level are important
- Those working across the social work and care sectors need to work together to inform and shape the use of AI
- Any work should build on existing standards and frameworks including professional standards





# Continuing the conversation



Join us to hear from experts, social work teams working with adults, children and families, and individuals using AI. Try out new tools and consider how it could be used in future social work.

**Hosted by:**



# To AI or not to AI?

## The role of generative AI tools in Social Work practice

Andrew Reece, Strategic Lead for Wales and England

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026

**Powerful**  
**Respected**  
**Transformative**

## What I will cover

- My AI background
- The case for AI in Social Work
- The risks and pitfalls of AI
- BASW's practice guidance

~~• What is AI or AI decision making~~

**Powerful  
Respected  
Transformative**

# My AI background

- Head of Service and practice lead for AI pilot
  - Evaluating SW and practitioner experience
  - Evaluating impact on productivity
  - Developing recommendation to stop of roll out
- BASW Practice guide

# The case for AI in Social Work

**BASW**

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

- Pragmatic Case
  - Efficiency
  - Productivity
  - More time with people
- Practice improvement
  - Person centred
  - Relationship enhancing
  - Reasonable adjustment?

**Powerful**  
**Respected**  
**Transformative**

## Risks and Pitfalls

- Off-the-shelf tools vs bespoke tools
  - Data Protection: is the tool GDPR complaint?
  - AI hallucination
  - AI bias
- Reflective Practice: ‘writing is thinking’  
‘I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say’: Flannery O’Connor?
- Professional liability
  - You are responsible for what is written for you
- Employer duties vs employer short cuts
- AI decision making in Social Work

## BASW's AI practice guidance

Social Workers	BASW
<p><b>You are responsible and liable for 'your' work:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Fitness to Practice'/disciplinary</li><li>• Efficiency vs critical thinking</li><li>• Bias risks: generic tools</li><li>• Hallucination vs 'clear and accurate records'</li><li>• Level of risk:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• transcription vs generating recommendations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Writing is thinking</b></li></ul></li></ul></li><li>• Evidence your decision making</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ethical Guidance</li><li>• Representation</li><li>• Lobbying</li></ul>
Employers	Social Work England
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear mandate to use from DASS/DCS<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidance and procedures</li><li>• Consent process</li><li>• Data Protection compliance</li><li>• Ethical Implementation lead: PSW?</li></ul></li><li>• Training before roll out</li><li>• Efficiency to benefit people</li><li>• Avoid off-the-shelf/generic tools in SW practice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidance to support safe use</li></ul>

Review of our work  
to date:  
Oxford project  
on responsible use  
of AI in social care



Date	Activity	Output
Feb 2024	Initial meeting in Oxford	Oxford statement
Throughout 2024	Workstream activities	Pledges, principles, guidelines, and statements
Jan-Feb 2025	Online co-production workshops	
March 2025	Oxford Summit	Co-produced guidelines and call to action
2025 /26	Steering group continues to meet, tech providers continue to develop their pledge, TLAP review co-production approach	

# The Oxford project co-production

- **Co-production is a philosophy and a method**
- **5 working groups formed:** Careworkers, care providers, tech providers, people using care services, values working group
- Each working group created their own output: statements, pledge
- Deliberation



# AI in Social Care Summit

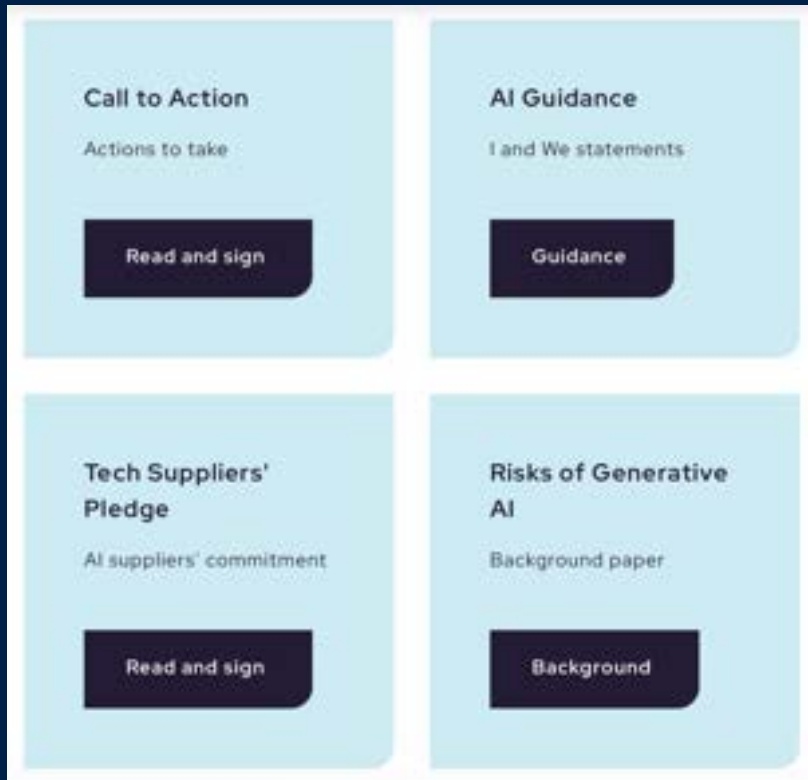
*“The responsible use of AI in social care means that the use of AI systems in the care or related to the care of people supports and does not undermine, harm or breach fundamental values of care, human rights, independence, choice and control, dignity, equality and wellbeing.”*



# AI Guidance – I/we statements

Improving care and support	AI systems should be safe and effective to support and improve caregiving, with enhanced outcomes for people who use care services.
Choice and control	People who use care services, unpaid caregivers and paid care providers can make informed choices regarding the type of AI systems they use and are subjected to.
Accessibility	AI systems are accessible to people with different needs and the costs of AI systems do not create new inequities
Training	People have the opportunity to learn about the AI systems used in care provision and are therefore empowered to use it responsibly and make choices.
Data privacy	People have access to information regarding their personal data and how this data is handled and stored to be able to make informed choices.
Transparency	There is transparency around the use of AI systems in peoples' care, which is enabled by accessible information.
Human contact and connections	AI systems are not there to replace human interaction or care provision but to support and enhance caring relationships.
Bias and discrimination	Proactive steps are taken to identify and address bias and discrimination inherent in AI systems or resulting from the use of such systems
Continuous improvement	The experiences of AI systems by people who use these system is taken seriously and systems are improved or risk-remediated when appropriate
Co-production	Co-production is backed into the AI lifecycle, into AI roll outs in care services and wider policy
Sustainable technology	People are informed how the use of an AI system fits into the wider economy and context of care, and the impacts this has on wider social issues.

# The responsible use of Generative AI in Social Care



# Join us!

## Alliance in AI and Social care

**Our Vision** AI that enables person-led care, where human connection stays at the forefront and those closest to care have a genuine voice in shaping the tools that affect their lives.

**Our Principles** Co-production | Human dignity | Accountability | Honest about power | Positive about possibility

### **Our Work**

Practical guidance & resources for the care sector

Research & co-production hub

Training & AI literacy

Convening diverse voices through summits and working groups

# Q&A

# Thank you



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