

Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025 - 2028

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| Creator | Author(s) | Head of ICT and Digital | | | | | |
| | Approved by | Mayor Chris Cooke | | | | | |
| | Department | Legal and Governance Services | | | | | |
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| Contributor(s) | Head of ICT and Digital Head of Policy, Governance and Information Data Protection Officer Enterprise Architect Project Manager | | | | | | |
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| 1.0 | First policy | | | | | | |
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| Contact: | Head of ICT and Digital | | | | | | |



1. Purpose

This Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy provides a framework for the lawful, ethical, responsible, and effective use of AI technologies by Middlesbrough Council. It is a living document and as such the Head of ICT and Digital, following consultation with the Senior Information Risk Owner, will make minor amendments to the policy during the life of the policy to reflect emerging changes to technologies, risks, or regulations as they arise. Major required changes will be returned to Members for decision.

Key expectations are that:

- AI must never replace human accountability. All final decisions remain the responsibility of Council officers or elected Members. AI may provide analysis, summaries, however human review, judgement and decisions is required in every case.
- All staff who use AI tools will be required to undertake training on safe and responsible AI use, including data protection, prompt management, and how to review and challenge AI outputs.
- Software suppliers providing AI solutions must comply with this policy, assist the Council in completion of its Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), and provide assurances on ethical use, transparency, and data security.

This policy is designed to enable the effective and lawful use of AI to improve productivity while remaining fully compliant with ethical principles. It provides assurance to residents, staff, and businesses that their data will be handled ethically, safely, and transparently. The policy forms an element of the Council's Information Governance Policy Framework and supports delivery of the Digital Strategy vision.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, elected members, agency, volunteers working and commissioned services within Middlesbrough Council.
- All departments and services across the Council
- All AI systems used, develop, procured, pilot or deployed, including:
 - systems built or configured by the council.
 - systems purchase or licences from suppliers
 - systems being trailed or evaluated
 - AI features embedded within existing software platforms.

Device and Access Control

- All Council information systems, including AI tools, productivity platforms, applications, and data services must only be accessed on Council-issued and managed devices that meet corporate ICT security standards.
- The use of personal devices for Council systems is not permitted, unless formally authorised in writing by ICT Security and Information Governance.
- This requirement protects the security of Council data, ensures compliance with information governance obligations, and maintains accountability.
- All AI solutions and digital services, including associated data, must be accessed only through Council-approved environments and devices. Personal or unmanaged devices must not be used.

Permitted Use

AI may be used within Middlesbrough Council only when it supports lawful and ethical activity. Permitted uses include:

- Summarising information, generating draft reports or text, and assisting with communications.
- Supporting capturing content, processing requests, generating or logging routing queries.
- Productivity tasks such as document formatting, coding support, workflow automation or data classification.
- Analysing or processing datasets, documents or publicly available information to generate summaries, insights or comparisons in line with data protection legislation and Council policies.
- Use of AI tools that have been formally approved by the Council through Information Governance and the Technology Design Authority.
- All AI-generated outputs are to be reviewed, validation, and approval by a human officer before use.

Prohibited Use

AI must not be used where it creates increases risk to individuals, data, or the Council. Prohibited uses include:

- Processing or sharing personal, confidential, or sensitive data in any public or unapproved AI tool.
- Treating AI outputs as authoritative or factual without verification by a trained officer.
- Using AI for automated decision-making about individuals that produces legal, financial, or significant personal effects, unless:
 - authorised by Information Governance and the Technology Design Authority,
 - supported by a DPIA, and EIA and
 - includes meaningful human review and the right to challenge.
- Deploying AI in a way that removes or replaces final human judgement.

Human oversight

All AI systems must include meaningful human oversight:

- A trained officer must review, challenge, and approve outputs before they are acted upon.
- Responsibility for decisions always remains with the human, not the AI system.

Third-Party Suppliers

All third-party suppliers and partners providing AI solutions, systems, or services on behalf of Middlesbrough Council must comply with this policy and with relevant legislation. Requirements for Suppliers:

- Suppliers must provide evidence that their AI systems comply with authority policies.
- Suppliers must disclose how their AI systems work, including training data sources, safeguards against bias, accuracy limits, and processes for human oversight.
- Suppliers must support the Council in completing or updating a DPIA and EIA and, before any AI functionality is enabled or procured.
- All contracts must include clear requirements for lawful use, transparency, supplier accountability, and Authority rights to audit and monitor compliance.
- If a supplier introduces or activates AI functionality in an existing or new system, the functional system owner must consult Information Governance to review and update the DPIA and EIA before the feature is enabled or the system is purchased.

3. Definitions

| Topic | Definition |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Artificial Intelligence (AI) | AI is a way of using computers to attempt to replicate human intelligence |
| Agentive AI | Refers to artificial intelligence systems designed to perform tasks autonomously on behalf of users. These systems can make decisions, take actions, and complete tasks without needing constant human intervention. They are often used to automate repetitive tasks, manage complex processes, or provide personalised assistance. |
| Generative Artificial Intelligence | Generative AI (GenAI) mimics intelligence by generating new outputs based on its training data, often seen in AI chatbots, which recognizes patterns and makes predictions, creating content from user prompts. |

| Topic | Definition |
|---|---|
| Large Language models | The “Large language Model (LLM)” is a type of AI that uses deep learning techniques and large data bases to understand, summarise, generate and predict new content. |
| Machine Learning | The term Machine Learning emerged as a subfield of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that focuses on developing algorithms and techniques to enable computer systems to learn and improve from data without being explicitly programmed. |
| Natural Language Processing/ Conversational AI | These AI systems are designed to interact with humans through Natural Language Processing (NLP), a subfield of computer science and AI that enables computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language. |
| Predictive AI | This type of AI uses historical data to make predictions about future events. It's commonly used in areas like finance for stock market forecasting, weather prediction, and customer behaviour analysis. |
| Robotic Process Automation | Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is a technology that uses software robots or "bots" to automate repetitive, rule-based tasks typically performed by humans, improving efficiency and accuracy in business processes. |
| AI Data Ethics | Systems will need to be developed ethically and clearly to ensure they address issues such as bias, discrimination, privacy and surveillance to avoid potential harm and maintain public trust. |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is a process to identify and minimise data protection risks in a project. |
| Data Quality | Data Quality refers to the accuracy, completeness, reliability, and relevance of data, ensuring it is fit for its intended use. |
| Microsoft Co-pilot | Microsoft Copilot is an AI assistant designed to enhance productivity by providing intelligent, context-aware support and solutions across various tasks and applications. |
| Training Data | Training data is the dataset used to teach an AI model to recognise patterns, make decisions, and generate outputs based on the examples it has learned from. |

4. Legislative and regulatory framework

This policy will also ensure compliance with all applicable UK legislation and statutory guidance in relation to use of AI including:

| Legislation | Summary |
|--|--|
| UK General Data Protection Regulation 2016, Data Protection Act 2018, Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 | Data protection legislation governs how personal data is processed, including by AI systems and provides statutory rights including the right to object to automated processing to challenge and prevent decisions made solely by automated systems that significantly affect them. |
| Equality Act 2010 | Requires all AI systems to be fair and not discriminate against individuals based on protected characteristics. |
| Human Rights Act 1998 | Protects fundamental rights and freedoms, including privacy and freedom of expression, which may be affected by AI use. |
| Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 | Under the FOIA/EIR, the Council has a duty to make information available to the public upon request, unless specific exemption(s) apply. It is also obliged to proactively and routinely publish information that has been frequently requested in the past in its Publication Scheme. |
| Contract, Copyright, and Intellectual Property Law | Contract Law in the UK governs the formation and enforcement of agreements between parties, Copyright Law protects the rights of creators over their original works, and Intellectual Property Law encompasses various legal protections for inventions, designs, trademarks, and trade secrets. |
| Statutory and recommended guidance | Guidance provided by the Information Commissioner's Office, HM Government Departments, the Local Government Association, and the National Cyber Security Centre. |

5. Practical Requirement for Staff

- All AI use must be reviewed against the above legislation and guidance.
- A DPIA and EIA must be completed before any AI system is deployed or feature is enabled.
- Information Governance must be consulted at an early stage to ensure compliance.

6. Artificial Intelligence Principles

Middlesbrough Council adopts the following principles to ensure that AI is used lawfully, ethically, and responsibly. These are based on Central Government and adapted for the authority context, these are:

- We know what AI is and what its limitations are
- We use AI lawfully, ethically and responsibly
- We know how to use AI securely
- We have meaningful human control at the right stage
- We understand how to manage the AI life cycle
- We use the right tool for the job
- We are open and collaborative
- We work with commercial colleagues from the start
- we have the skills and expertise needed to implement and use AI
- We use these principles alongside our organisation's policies and have the right assurance in place.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- **The Mayor and Elected Members of the Council** are democratically accountable for the way in which Middlesbrough Council discharges its functions. Information Governance (including Artificial Intelligence) sits within the portfolio of the Mayor.
- **The Chief Executive** has a duty to manage the discharge of the Council's different functions, including its legal responsibilities for effective information rights management. Oversight of the Council's information governance arrangements sit within the remit of the Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee.
- **The Head of ICT and Digital** will lead the Digital Strategy development and ensure planned use of AI within it adheres to this policy.
- **The Leadership Management Team and Directorate Management Teams** collectively and individually are the owners of the Council's 'information assets' and are responsible for the compliance of their services with legislation, associated codes of practice, guidance and this policy.
- **The Executive Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Social Care and Health Integration** have been designated and registered by the Council as its 'Caldicott Guardians', the senior persons responsible for protecting the confidentiality of people's health and care information and making sure it is used properly.

- **The Head of Policy, Governance and Information** has been designated as the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner and they must foster a culture for protecting and using data, provide a focal point for managing information risks and incidents, and is concerned with the management of all information assets.
- **The Data Protection Officer's** role is to assist the Council to monitor internal compliance, inform and advise on data protection obligations, provide advice regarding Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), and act as a contact point for data subjects and the supervisory authority.
- **Technical Design Authority Board** is responsible for providing technical governance across all ICT and Digital projects. It will review and approve technical designs to ensure alignment with the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy, Information Strategy security standards, and architectural principles. The Board acts as an escalation point for technical risks, validates compliance with policies, and ensures proposed solutions are cost-effective, sustainable, and interoperable with existing systems.
- **Information Strategy Group** is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Council's agreed Information Strategy.
- **All staff, volunteers, and third parties** handling personal data on behalf of the Council must comply with legislation, the Council's AI Policy, and follow procedures and training. When using AI, users remain accountable for decisions, must review AI-generated answers, intervene if necessary, and identify any content produced by Generative AI when documenting or sharing it.

8. Supporting Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following other policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Data Management policy
- Secure Working Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Public Information and Information Request Policy
- Equality Policy
- Impact Assessment Policy.

9. Procedure and Process

Middlesbrough Council will ensure that it maintains the required documentation, procedures, and processes in relation to its legal obligations and matters of good practice in relation to mitigation of risk including but not limited to:

Governance and Approval

- Technology Design Authority must review and approve all AI proposals.
- Functional system owners must consult Information Governance and update a DPIA before any AI functionality is purchased, enabled, or significantly changed.
- Significant AI projects must also be recorded in the AI Transparency Register and, where relevant, included in privacy notices and equality impact assessments.

Risk and Compliance

- Responsible procurement of AI, suppliers must demonstrate compliance.
- Appropriate training datasets.
- Business and decision-making process mapping.
- AI Transparency Register.
- Compliance audits (including contract monitoring).
- Fairness check assessments.
- Consultation with citizens and stakeholders.
- Performance monitoring.
- Privacy notices updated where AI is used.
- Data Protection Impact Assessments.
- Data protection by design and default.
- Equality Impact Assessments.
- Intellectual property and copyright compliance.
- Mandatory AI user training.

10. Monitoring and review arrangements

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Technical Design Authority within its oversight role.

This policy will be fully reviewed annually. The Head of ICT and Digital has the delegated authority to amend this policy to reflect emerging technologies and issues, following consultation with the Senior Information Risk Owner, Data Protection Officer and the Technical Design Authority.

11. Further Information

Additional guidance is available on [The Bridge](#), Services, ICT, Artificial Intelligence. For queries about this policy, please contact the Head of ICT and Digital or the Data Protection Officer.

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