

Community of Practice 1: Ambient Voice Technology

Wednesday 23rd September 2026

10 to 11:30am

Dan Lacey, Practice Development Consultant (SCIE)

Purpose and structure of this community of practice

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is delivering this work for Partners in Care and Health (PCH) as part of the PCH grant, funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), which is a programme of sector led improvement support for adult social care in England.

Purpose:

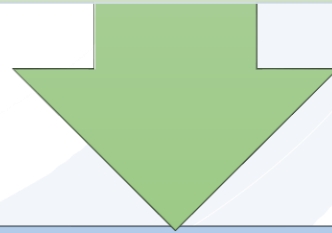
- ❖ Explore the emerging evidence on the benefits, risks and practical implications of using Ambient Voice Technology (AVT) in adult social care, including lessons from current implementation and evaluation activity.
- ❖ Share the key principles and expectations from the forthcoming national AVT guidance, with a focus on safe, responsible and person-centred use in practice.
- ❖ Provide an opportunity for councils to discuss their experiences, challenges and questions regarding AVT implementation, helping to inform future learning and support across the sector.

Format:

- ❖ There will be 2 presentations, with ample time to ask questions.
- ❖ The webinar will be recorded and the video uploaded to our SCIE: [Digital Communities of Practice webpage](#)
- ❖ Following the webinar the slides will be distributed.

Topic 1: Transcribing Trust

Oliver Bruff, Ada Lovelace Institute



Topic 2: Ambient Voice Technology guidance update

Tommy Henderson-Reay, DHSC/NHS

Transcribing Trust: the impact of AI transcription tools in social care.



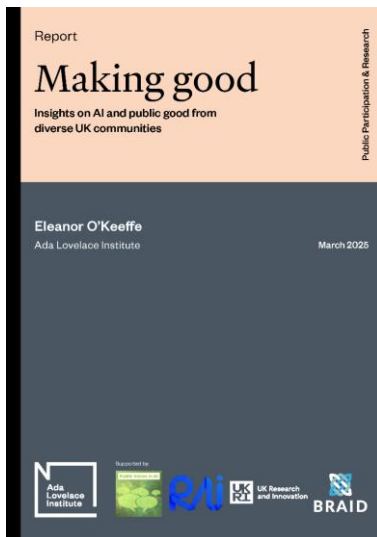
Who we are

The Ada Lovelace Institute is an independent research institute with a mission to ensure data and AI work for people and society, and the opportunities, benefits and privileges generated by data and AI are justly and equitably distributed and experienced.



What we do

Convene diverse
voices



Build evidence on
social impacts



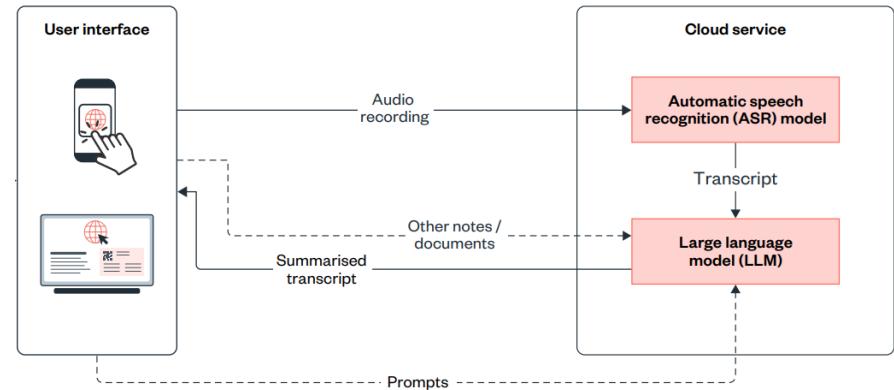
Influence policy and
practice



Project background

AI transcription tools in the UK public sector

- The government is rolling out AI transcription tools , also called ambient voice technologies, to transform backend administration
- Workers are using these tools across the public sector, but governance differs by context
- AI transcription tools are powered by two foundation models and so have the same risks as other AI tools.
- There is little evidence of the systemic impacts of transcription tools on public services



Overview of our Transcribing Trust project

- We interviewed local authority staff members and experts from industry and academia to understand how AI transcription tools are impacting care work
- Method:
 - 39 qualitative interviews:
 - 29 social workers and 7 digital/delivery leads across 17 local authorities
 - 2 vendors
 - 1 academic
 - Thematic analysis of interview transcripts

Current project

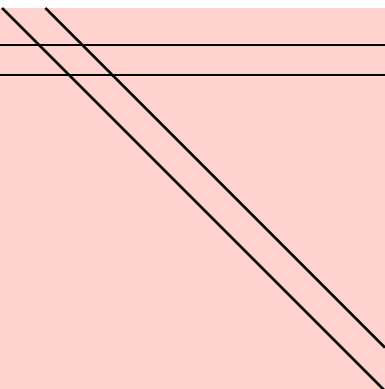
Transcribing trust

Evaluating the use of AI in social care



Project lead	Lara Groves
Project Status	Current
Project members	Oliver Bruff
Research domain	Emerging Technology & Industry Practice
Keyword	Case study

Findings

The top right corner of the slide features a light pink background. Two thin black lines are drawn diagonally across this area, starting from the top edge and extending towards the right edge. The lines are parallel and create a simple geometric design.

Social Workers use AI transcription tools in diverse ways to create meaningful benefits to their work

- Most social workers were enthusiastic about the benefits of using these tools

“Literally, it just changed everything for me, so, you know, I would say it's literally a proper game changer.”
- Social Worker G

- AI transcription tools can be used flexibly, meeting the needs of a dynamic profession like social work

“... there's meant to be a part where it would bring together information you've received and kind of complete an assessment for you. I've not used that function myself and I perhaps feel a little bit weird about AI generating a conclusion to a social work assessment” – Social worker A

The use of AI transcription tools currently imposes additional responsibility on social workers

- Not everything is working perfectly: there is a risk that inaccuracies enter care records
- Questions remain about effective 'human in the loop' & personal oversight from social workers.

"...in one of the templates it indicated that there was suicidal ideation, and the thing is, is that if I hadn't have read that, at no point did the client actually, you know, talk about suicidal ideation." - Social worker E

"...some social workers may not take that time to check what's going in there [a care plan] and then that could then cause issues in the future for our SLT and our directors because care plans are not consistent" - Social worker C

There is no consensus on when it is, or isn't, appropriate to use AI transcription tools

- Inconsistent use of AI in statutory contexts
- Some inter-agency meetings cannot have AI transcription tools
- Currently, it is up to individual social workers to judge when AI transcription tools are appropriate

"... a court report has to be written by the social worker from scratch, really, so I'd never use it for that, because it has got to be accurate. A judge would just absolutely wipe the floor with you basically." - Social worker C

"When you've got multi agency meetings, sometimes the police don't want you to use it, for example, because they're recording it in a certain way." – Manager Z

Current evaluations of AI transcription tools do not consider systemic impacts

- Evaluation of the tools is inconsistent
- Most councils rely on evaluations by vendors and other external organisations
- Many councils have done some testing on top of external evaluations, but this varies

“... my worry [is] that we lose the skill and the professional judgement and the knowledge and the experience and the gut feeling and the instinct and the observations and all of that.” – Social worker I

“... I wanted the personal touch, person-centred, and sometimes it [AI] can just sound as if it's quite detached, because it is. I hate to see a machine doing it.” – Social worker K

Conclusion

Key take-aways

- AI transcription tools can meaningfully help social workers to manage their workload
- The use of AI transcription tools could have downstream implications for people who draw on care and social care as a profession
- Our case study demonstrates the need for more evaluation and oversight of AI tools in the public sector

Questions?

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) in social care

Non-statutory guidance on the use of artificial intelligence in children's and adults' social care in England - update



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Social work

Social workers' AI tool makes 'gibberish' transcripts of accounts from children

Transcription tools used by councils in England and Scotland reported to wrongly indicate suicidal ideation

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How artificial intelligence can make social care better

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The emerging use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in social work

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The emerging use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in social work

In 2025 we commissioned 2 pieces of research into the emerging use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work. The Open University carried out a literature review and Research in Practice carried out a research investigation.

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Report

Scribe and prejudice?

Exploring the use of AI transcription tools in social care

Oliver Bruff, Lara Groves

15 February 2025

Reading time 140 minutes

Download PDF (2 MB)

AI in Social Care Summit: Charting a Course for Responsible Use of AI in Social Care

The Herald

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AGENDA

Could AI help find the answer to our social care problems?

6TH MAY 2024 HEALTH TECHNOLOGY

Why police have been told to pause their use of AI in court cases

Published: August 24, 2026 2.52pm BST

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AI (artificial intelligence)

This article is more than 1 year old

AI tools used by English councils downplay women's health issues, study finds

Exclusive: LSE research finds risk of gender bias in care decisions made based on AI summaries of case notes

Jessica Murray Social affairs correspondent

Mon 11 Aug 2025 06:00 BST

Columbus

The Shift

The Telegraph

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Council's AI helps decide when elderly go into care

Authority hopes to make £6m in adult services savings, documents obtained by The Telegraph show

Telegraph Reporters
Published 24 August 2025 4:35pm
A cash-strapped council is using AI to help determine whether elderly residents should go into care.



AI and AVT adoption is widespread—and accelerating

In adult social care, AI and AVT specifically is increasingly being used to support core activities such as Care Act assessments, reviews, and case recording. AVT adoption across local authorities (LAs) is already widespread and increasing at pace. Around 80% of LAs are now using AVT in some capacity, primarily for transcription and documentation to reduce administrative burden and save time

01 KEY USE CASES

Key use cases:

Automating admin and documentation

Predictive analytics and risk prioritisation

Service improvement and decision support

02 WORKFORCE SIGNALS

Some evidence that AVT is being used as a pull factor for attracting social workers and staff to work in an LA. Many LAs using AI tools have reported that their staff would leave if they no longer had access to them.

Conversely some PSW's report organisational “pressure” to use AI when staff don't necessarily feel ready

03 PILOT EVIDENCE

- Evidence from LA pilots, funding evaluations, Task & Finish groups and case studies shows measurable benefits from the use of digital and AI tools in assessments:

Efficiency
(Kingston's pilot
showed up to 60%-
time savings)

Backlog (TBI report
estimated 227,000
assessments within
a month)

Time-saving
(Barnsley saved 500
hours in one week
using Copilot)

Workforce wellbeing
(job satisfaction and
ND inclusion)

Our guidance consultation process

01

WHO WE HEARD FROM

Six task and finish groups over 2 months

PSW network

POT network

Wider statutory stakeholders

TLAP and people drawing on support

Care Provider partners

02

HOW SESSIONS WORKED

Structured sessions focused on ascertaining risks, understanding current practice, presenting challenges and good practice examples

“How is it influencing practice?”

03

WHAT EMERGED

Five main ‘practice’ areas became prevalent:

1. AVT used in Care Act assessments
 2. Application of AVT in Mental Capacity Assessments
 3. AI for newly qualified, new to the profession or student placements
 4. Multi agency scenarios
 5. Consent – to use or not to use?
-

The guidance aims to address risks identified in the sector through our work

SECTOR RISKS & RESPONSE

#	Top sector risks of AI in social care	What does the sector need to address these?
1	Accuracy and reliability risks	• Clear, practical guidance tailored to adult social care • Assurance and guardrails on safe, ethical and lawful use • Clarity on roles and accountability, particularly around human oversight and decision-making • Support for implementation, including real-world use cases, good practice examples and workforce considerations • Consistency across the system, reducing variation between local authorities
2	Automation bias and loss of professional judgement	
3	Data protection and privacy concerns	
4	Consent and transparency challenges	
5	Inequalities and bias in AI tools	
6	Market and supplier risks	
7	Too much guidance that is inconsistent and fragmented, therefore hard to find and follow	

PRACTITIONER VOICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>01 “There are concerns about the accuracy and reliability of AI outputs, including transcription errors, hallucinations and misinterpretation of care conversations.”</p> | |
| <p>02 “It’s a 2D picture of a 3D image”</p> | <p>03 “There is a lot of guidance, from lots of different organisations...it’s unclear who to follow”</p> |
| <p>04 “Sometimes, especially when someone has a strong accent, the output is full of gibberish”</p> | <p>05 “How can someone who is struggling clearly give consent? What does consent look like?”</p> |
| <p>06 “In the case of Josh (white male) and Jack (black male) very different care recommendations were given – the only thing that was different is their skin colour.”</p> | |

DfE and DHSC proposed position on AI



The guidance is non-statutory and the principles within the guidance **should complement and not replace existing national and local policies**, statutory guidance and professional standards.



Social care is fundamentally relationship-based, so AI should **always strengthen, not replace, human connection** and professional judgements.



AI can support practitioners to make effective and informed decisions by helping to **provide analytics, identify patterns, support reflection and free up time spent on administrative tasks.**



Government will continue to explore this technology, **encourage safe innovation and develop an iterative approach** to supporting the children's and adults' social care sector to navigate this emerging area.



AI tools **should not be used to make, automate, or replace professional judgements or decisions.**



AI **should not be used** to make an **independent assessment of individual needs or risks.**



AI **should not record directly into case records without human oversight/human in the loop.** AI outputs should be checked for accuracy by a practitioner before being uploaded.



AI should create more time for care— not replace judgement

AI should assist • human-led in practice • whole process needs to be governed

01

RELATIONSHIPS FIRST

Reduce administration to create more time for direct work, trust and reflection. Judge success by people's experience—not efficiency alone.

02

ASSISTIVE, NOT AUTONOMOUS

Transcribe, draft, summarise, improve records and accessibility, surface gaps and support reflection. Every output is a starting point for review.

03

HUMAN ACCOUNTABILITY

Practitioners own records and decisions. No autonomous statutory, risk, eligibility or safeguarding decisions. Check facts, context, tone, bias and omissions.

04

GOVERN FOR LASTING VALUE

Use approved secure tools; protect data; explain use and choices. Train, monitor and audit. Measure quality, fairness, safety, wellbeing and sustained benefit. Change management is central

BOTTOM LINE AI enables • professionals decide • organisations assure



Approach & timelines – joint comms with DfE

- DfE & DHSC co written foundational guidance
 - The guidance reduces duplication and fragmented guidance risk
 - Facilitates a layered specific approach to AI guidance
 - Acknowledges that AI impacts shared audiences
-

01

Foundational Guidance

Foundational AI guidance for adults' and children's social care (October 2026)

- A high-level overview of how AI is being used, the AI tools market, benefits, key considerations and limitations
- Outlines CQC/Ofsted position on AI
- Glossary of terms relating to AI

02

Specific AVT guidance (to follow foundational guidance)

- Focuses on the use of AVT specifically, across ASC and CSC
- Acts as a non-statutory 'handbook' with detailed information about risks, mitigations and opportunities
- It will address key issues: consent, data protection and privacy; accountability and human in the loop; accuracy, bias and hallucinations; legal risk; AI use in multi-disciplinary settings as they apply to the application of AVT
- Features CSC and ASC case studies as best practice and 'deep dives' into ethical issues / key risks from LAs who have participated in our engagement

03

Future guidance to be issue-specific starting with guidance for newly qualified and student placements in conjunction with PCH and SCIE to follow

Post-evaluation survey

Community of Practice 1: Ambient Voice Technology



Link to evaluation: [COP 1 \(AVT\): post-evaluation – Fill in form](#)

Register now

21st October: Decision support and human oversight
10am-11:30am

Book your place: [Meeting Registration – Zoom](#)

18th November: AI drift, functionality creep and overuse
10am-11:30am

Book your place: [Meeting Registration – Zoom](#)

16th December: Digital inclusion and accessibility
10-11:30am

Book your place: [Meeting Registration – Zoom](#)

13th January 2027: Co-production in digital pathways
1:30pm-3pm

Book your place: [Meeting Registration – Zoom](#)

10th February 2027: Data standards in practice
10am-11:30am

Book your place: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)



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About SCIE

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is an independent social care charity, collaborating and innovating with a wide range of partners and people with lived experience, to improve people's lives. Working across social care, health and related services such as housing, for adults, children and families, we contribute to the development and implementation of better care, support and safeguarding at local and national level.

As we are not-for-profit, our income goes towards improving social care, delivered through our four offers: innovative consultancy, expert training, extensive resources and information, and evidence-based insights.

Co-production with people with lived experience underpins and informs what we do, and with over 20 years' experience we bring a wealth of trusted, evidence-based expertise to work together to help transform care.

Find out more at www.scie.org.uk or connect with us on LinkedIn.