

DEMOS

TECH THAT LIBERATES

A NEW VISION FOR
EMBEDDING AI IN PUBLIC
SERVICE REFORM

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NOVEMBER 2024

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Published by Demos November 2024
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following colleagues at Demos for offering their insight, feedback and support at various stages throughout the drafting of this report: Andrew O'Brien, Polly Curtis, Hannah Perry, Aidan Garner, Andrew Phillips and Chloe Burke.

In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude to our many interlocutors on the topic of AI and public services. The footnotes contain a brilliant array of reports and research projects across a range of viewpoints, which have been invaluable in shaping our thinking on this topic.

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November 2024

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Demos is the UK's leading cross-party think tank producing research and policies that have been adopted by successive governments for over 30 years. We exist to put people at the heart of policy making and to build a more collaborative democracy. Demos Digital, the team that led on this project, specialises in digital policy making to create a future in which technology is built for the good of people and democracy.

This paper lands at the intersection of two of Demos' strategic focus areas: ***Trustworthy Technology***, which works to build bridges between politicians, technical experts, and citizens to explore solutions, improve trust, and create policy to ensure our technologies benefit society; and ***Public Service Reform*** in which we are championing reforms to liberate professionals and communities to work together to build services that work for their local circumstances and to rebuild the social, civic and cultural foundations that create the social capital and strengthen relationships which are the bedrock for our health and wellbeing. In it, we bring these strands together by making the case that digital solutions should be embedded in reform, rather than added as sticking plasters to a broken system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our public services are nearing breaking point. Citizens are too often unable to access help in their time of need and public sector staff are overburdened, disgruntled, and exiting the workforce. Our services are responding to one crisis after another, rather than having the capacity to predict and prevent future crises.¹

There is hope from many that AI will save our public services by boosting public sector efficiency, cutting costs and personalising citizens' interactions with the state.² We agree that there are many exciting applications of AI which can improve aspects of public service delivery, from relieving professionals from excess administrative burden and freeing up time for interactions with citizens, to modelling the spread of future viral illnesses and supporting effective resource allocation.

However, we caution against viewing AI as a silver bullet. Our public services are facing deep structural problems - entrenched silos, an overemphasis on meeting targets rather than producing better long-term outcomes, and insufficient ability to adapt to meet local needs. Rushing to implement new technology without strengthening the foundations might temporarily treat some of the symptoms, but it will not resolve the underlying drivers of dysfunction. It may even make existing problems worse.

More fundamental reform is essential. We need a new operating model for our public services, one that liberates service professionals to flexibly respond to local needs, strengthens the relationships which are the bedrock for our health and wellbeing, and prevents problems before they happen. AI is part of this vision, but it is not a substitute for renewal.

In this paper we make the case for embedding AI within a reform agenda for Liberated Public Services, as set out by Demos elsewhere.³ The Liberated Public Services agenda liberates public service professionals to work in partnership with empowered citizens and communities and meet local needs, with the ultimate goal of making our public services more able to address complex challenges and prevent problems for better long-term outcomes.

Starting with this reform agenda, we set out a systemic vision for embedding AI in public services that will not only improve the quality of services, but will strengthen the foundations of our reformed public services.

In Section 2, we make the case for Demos' Liberated Public Services agenda. We first highlight the problems facing our public services, which include an overly narrow focus on targets and efficiency, a lack of autonomy for public service professionals and a system which treats citizens

1 Demos (2024). Public Service Reform. Retrieved 28 October, 2024, from <https://demos.co.uk/our-approach/a-stronger-state-2/>

2 Iosad, A., Railton, D. & Westgarth, T. (2024). Governing in the Age of AI: A New Model to Transform the State. <https://institute.global/insights/politics-and-governance/governing-in-the-age-of-ai-a-new-model-to-transform-the-state>

3 Glover, B. (2024). Liberated Public Services: A New Vision for Citizens, Professionals & Policymakers. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Taskforce-Vision-Paper_May.pdf

as the problem, rather than part of the solution. A liberated approach to public service reform tackles these challenges, by incentivising preventative services and tackling root causes to produce better long-term outcomes, liberating public service professionals to better adapt to local needs, and actively engaging citizens as partners in improving services.

In Section 3 we describe how to embed AI within Liberated Public Services, to support prevention and better long-term outcomes using predictive modelling, empowering frontline service professionals to create more locally responsive services by using AI to free up time spent on administrative tasks, and improving communication and collaboration with citizens through AI-enabled civic technology and more effective information sharing.

Finally, Section 4 outlines the structural foundations we need to help us get the most out of AI in our public services, including better connectivity and data access, through tools such as the upcoming National Data Library and Digital Identity, and building AI capacity in the public sector through reforms to procurement, and exploring options for Public AI.

The paper's structure and discussion is summarised in Table 1, on the following page.

TABLE 1

HOW PITFALLS IN OUR CURRENT PUBLIC SERVICE MODEL ARE ADDRESSED BY A LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM AGENDA AND SUPPORTED BY EMBEDDING AI

	PITFALLS OF OUR CURRENT PUBLIC SERVICE MODEL (SECTION 2.1)	A NEW STRATEGY FOR LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM (SECTION 2.2)	THE ROLE OF AI IN SUPPORTING LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICES (SECTION 3)	BUILDING THE STRUCTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF AI SUPPORTED PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM (SECTION 4)
A	A narrow focus on targets and efficiency leads to perverse incentives, structural inflexibility, and difficulty attending to root causes.	Attending to long-term outcomes incentivises preventive care and tackling root causes.	AI for reinforcing prevention and better long-term outcomes at a local and national level E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For anticipating needs and fluctuations in demand For predicting long-term outcomes For preemptively identifying high risk individuals 	Improving data connectivity and access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a liberated version of a National Data Library because data is distributed, siloed, and difficult to access, reducing capacity of local government, service providers, and citizens to make effective use of that data. Engage with the possibility of establishing a national digital identity program to facilitate smooth and connected delivery and information sharing across services. This process will need to be handled carefully due to serious concerns regarding data privacy, security, and the potential misuse of centralised private data by government.
B	Lack of autonomy for public service professionals results in a demoralised workforce and untapped skills	Affording local authorities and professionals greater support and more flexibility in delivering mission outcomes boosts morale and better addresses local needs.	AI for empowering and supporting frontline public service professionals, not replacing them E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For streamlining admin to free up time for human interaction 	

C	<p>Citizens are seen as a problem to be fixed which leads to carrot-and-stick incentive structures that can work well in the short-term but often have longer term adverse consequences.</p>	<p>Citizens are seen as active partners in delivering better care when local authorities and providers are given more autonomy to draw on local insights and resources.</p>	<p>AI for improving communication and collaboration with citizens</p> <p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For facilitating translations • For monitoring feedback loops of complaint, response, and outcomes to identify failing • AI-enabled civic tech to engage in broader collaborative discussions and decision making with citizens 	<p>Facilitating access to appropriate AI tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish centralised AI procurement guidance to help local authorities procure the best AI tools where they lack tech procurement expertise and where a preponderance of mediocre tech solutions are on offer. • Support Public AI to help orient a proportion of AI research and development in the UK toward developing and supporting public interest AI.
D	<p>Difficulty dealing with the complexity of public service challenges results from siloed administrative structures that prevent coordinated responses to interconnected social problems.</p>	<p>The ability of public services to better deal with complexity emerges from the cumulative impact of liberated public service reform. When providers are liberated from rigid controls and held accountable for outcomes rather than targets they are able collaborate more freely and to tailor support around the complex challenges faced by the individuals and communities they work with.</p>	<p>AI for enabling public services to better deal with complexity. AI's contribution to addressing complex public service challenges lies not just in its direct applications, but in catalysing the development of better data-sharing and communication infrastructures across services.</p>	

1. INTRODUCTION

Our public services are stretched to the point of breaking. Citizens are struggling to access help as waiting lists for healthcare and council housing expand.⁴ Public service staff are overburdened and demoralised.⁵ Long-term outcomes are declining while demand on public systems continues to increase.⁶ We are caught in a reactive cycle, our public services responding to one crisis after another, rather than having the capacity to predict and prevent future crises.

In recent months, excitement has bubbled in technology and policy circles about the promise of AI for remedying the ills of the UK's over-stressed public services.⁷ By AI, we refer to a variety of applications, ranging from narrow machine learning models for predictive analytics that can be used to predict likely outcomes or improve medical diagnostics, to generative AI systems like Large Language Models that can generate, analyse and synthesise large volumes of text data.

These applications could have substantial impact in streamlining back-office functions to relieve administrative burden, optimise resource distribution, and reduce costs. Deployed on the frontline, AI can help improve decision making by providing real-time data, and facilitate higher quality interaction between citizens and practitioners. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change imagines a future in which each citizen could have their own "digital public assistant", fundamentally revolutionising public services and "repairing the relationship between government and citizens".⁸ They continue that the prospect of adopting AI into public service delivery "should be exciting in its own right, but in reality it is the only path forward [...] Adopting AI in the public sector is a question of strategic prioritisation that supersedes everything else".

We agree that AI has potential for helping improve aspects of behind-the-scenes public service delivery, however we strongly caution against viewing AI as the only, or even the primary route to fixing our public services. First, the AI solutions themselves are imperfect which must be considered when rolling out in potentially high risk social applications. They are designed to "extract, amplify and push forward" patterns from the data which can be very useful for low-stakes, high-volume administrative tasks.⁹ Yet in the higher-stakes domains that form the bedrock of our public services - e.g. health and social care, policing, and immigration - replicating and exacerbating discriminatory patterns can cause substantial harm.¹⁰

4 Glover, B. (2023). Recovery through Reform: Launch Paper of the Future Public Services Taskforce. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Recovery-through-Reform_Paper.pdf

5 Glover, B. (2024). Liberated Public Services: A New Vision for Citizens, Professionals & Policymakers. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Taskforce-Vision-Paper_May.pdf

6 O'Brien, A., Curtis, P. & Charlesworth, A. (2023). Revenue, Capital, Prevention: A New Public Spending Framework for the Future. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PDEL-Briefing-paper_final-version.pdf

7 House of Commons Library (2024). Debate on Technology in Public Services. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2024-0115/>

8 Iosad, A., Railton, D. & Westgarth, T. (2024). Governing in the Age of AI: A New Model to Transform the State. <https://institute.global/insights/politics-and-governance/governing-in-the-age-of-ai-a-new-model-to-transform-the-state>

9 Vallor, S. (2024). The AI Mirror: How to Reclaim Our Humanity in an Age of Machine Thinking. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-ai-mirror-9780197759066?cc=gb&lang=en&>

10 Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (September 2022). The benefits and harms of algorithms: a shared perspective from the four digital regulators. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/findings-from-the-drcf-algorithmic-processing-workstream-spring-2022/the-benefits-and-harms-of-algorithms-a-shared-perspective-from-the-four-digital-regulators#current-and-potential-harms-of-algorithmic-processing>

Second, the public services into which the AI tools are currently being introduced suffer deep structural problems - entrenched silos of disconnected care, an overemphasis on narrow targets rather than holistic outcomes, and insufficient ability to adapt and innovate to meet local needs. These are not strong foundations on which to build AI into public services. Whilst our current situation presents a clear opportunity to rebuild in a way that makes the most of AI, rushing to layer AI remedies on top of a flawed structure is only a stopgap solution, an expensive sticking plaster that could ultimately reinforce the underlying issues at play, making fundamental reform down the line all the more difficult.

The need for public service reform in the UK is a long-standing and well-recognised issue. At Demos, we have argued at length that we need a new operating model for our public services. Our vision is a model of Liberated Public Services in which service professionals have the flexibility and autonomy to respond to local needs; policy-makers and central government are freed from day-to-day micromanagement of services to a broader, strategic role supporting learning and best practice; and citizens and communities are empowered to partner with service providers to strengthen the relationships which are the bedrock for our health and wellbeing.¹¹ Technology, and notably AI, is part of this vision, but it is not a substitute for the hard work of renewal.

In this paper we propose how AI can be embedded within a reform agenda for Liberated Public Services to help realise and support more resilient and well-functioning delivery systems.¹² In Section 2 we first outline the challenges facing our public services and how Demos' Liberated Public Services agenda tackles these. In Section 3 we describe how AI might be embedded within a liberated approach to public service reform. Finally, Section 4 outlines additional considerations allowing us to get the most out of AI in our public services.

Ultimately, we argue that while AI is not the reform we need, by starting with a reform agenda to liberate and empower professional providers and to strengthen relationships, we can create a systemic vision for embedding data and AI in service of lasting change, for more resilient and well-functioning public services.

¹¹ Glover, B. (2024). Liberated Public Services: A New Vision for Citizens, Professionals & Policymakers. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Taskforce-Vision-Paper_May.pdf

¹² Ibid.

2. THE CASE FOR LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICES

2.1. PITFALLS OF OUR CURRENT PUBLIC SERVICE MODEL

The last national vision for public service reform reached its height in the 2000s in the form of New Public Management (NPM).¹³ Introduced in the 1980s, NPM set out to reshape public service around a top-down “command and control” model, importing managerial techniques from the private sector into public services, in order to drive competition and increase efficiency.¹⁴ The shift to NPM emphasised performance management, increased competition through competitive tendering, and treating service users as customers.¹⁵ Since the height of these reforms, public services in England have trundled along in the shadow of NPM - despite its limitations becoming increasingly evident - without a clear alternative vision.¹⁶

The top-down command and control model has left UK public services riddled with troubles:

A. Narrow focus on targets and efficiency

The “command and control” model optimises for a set of narrow targets set by the central government, rather than holistic outcomes. Focusing on targets like A&E waiting times incentivises treating the symptoms of dysfunction instead of attending to its root cause. It can lead to perverse incentives to ‘game’ the system - e.g. by parking patients in A&E hallways - in order to meet targets.

13 Glover, B. (2024). Liberated Public Services: A New Vision for Citizens, Professionals & Policymakers. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Taskforce-Vision-Paper_May.pdf

14 Dalingwater, L. (2014). Post-New Public Management (NPM) and the Reconfiguration of Health Services in England. <https://journals.openedition.org/osb/1714>

15 Kattel, R., Haverkamp, K., Kalema, N. & Kofler, J. (2023). New Public Management and Innovation Policy: A Systematic Literature Review. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/public-purpose/sites/bartlett_public_purpose/files/new_public_management_and_innovation_policy_a_systematic_literature_review.pdf

16 Dalingwater, L. (2014). Post-New Public Management (NPM) and the Reconfiguration of Health Services in England. <https://journals.openedition.org/osb/1714>

B. Lack of autonomy for public service professionals

Local governments have been made responsible for an increasing share of health and social care service delivery, their budgets are under strain, and providers are subject to high levels of top-down performance micromanagement through narrow targets.¹⁷ A lack of autonomy leads to an increasingly demoralised public sector workforce,¹⁸ leaves an experienced and skilled workforce largely untapped,¹⁹ and prevents the effective use of local expertise and contextual knowledge, leading to wasted opportunities to improve outcomes.

C. Citizens are seen as a problem to be fixed

In line with a command and control based approach, public services overwhelmingly operate with the assumption that citizens are the problem to be fixed, requiring top-down carrot-and-stick incentives to motivate changes in behaviour. While such measures may produce short-term behavioural changes, they often prove detrimental to long-term outcomes. For instance, unemployment benefit sanctions may increase immediate job entry but negatively impact child welfare and crime rates.²⁰

D. Difficulty dealing with complexity

Finally, the system struggles to address complex, interconnected challenges. Modern social problems, such as poverty, typically involve multiple related issues including housing instability, poor health outcomes, and reduced educational attainment.²¹ However, our centralised, top-down public service administration is also sectorally balkanised, with the different departments independently addressing interrelated challenges. The result is a system which is able to identify and address facets of a given problem,²² but lacks the coordination to join up the dots, or the flexibility to tackle underlying issues.²³ This fragmentation not only frustrates citizens but also limits the system's ability to tackle root causes rather than symptoms.

2.2. A NEW STRATEGY FOR LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICES

To address the complex social and economic policy challenges ahead of us, we and many others are advocating for public service reform. Demos' Liberated Public Services reform agenda has pioneered a new operating model for public services, which liberates public service professionals, strengthens communities and prevents problems before they happen.²⁴

Moving towards Liberated Public Services requires a redefinition of the relationship between the central government and our frontline public services.²⁵ In the Liberated model, summarised in Table 2, the central government sets high level missions instead of narrow targets and thresholds. Missions define high level priorities and outcome-based success criteria; for example, the Camden London Borough Council set a mission that by 2030 "everyone eats

17 Ibid.

18 Beatson, M. (2023). Public Sector Morale is in Decline. <https://www.cipd.org/uk/views-and-insights/thought-leadership/cipd-voice/public-sector-morale/>

19 Winchester, N. (2022). Fit for the Future? Rethinking the Public Services Workforce. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/fit-for-the-future-rethinking-the-public-services-workforce-public-services-committee-report/>

20 Watts, B., Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G. & Watkins, D. (2014). Welfare Sanctions and Conditionality in the UK. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/social-security/welfare-sanctions-and-conditionality-in-the-uk>

21 Sabel, C. & Zeitlin, J. (2011). Experimentalist Governance. [https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20\(with%20abstract\).pdf](https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20(with%20abstract).pdf)

22 Greenway, A. & Loosemore, T. (2024). The Radical How. <https://options2040.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Radical-How.pdf>

23 Sabel, C., Zeitlin, J. & Helderman, J. (2023). Transforming the Welfare State, One Case at a Time: How Utrecht Makes Customised Social Care Work. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00323292221140710>

24 Demos (2024). Public Service Reform. Retrieved 28 October, 2024, from <https://demos.co.uk/our-approach/a-stronger-state-2/>

25 Sabel, C. & Zeitlin, J. (2011). Experimentalist Governance. [https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20\(with%20abstract\).pdf](https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20(with%20abstract).pdf)

well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food”.²⁶ Meanwhile, local and regional authorities and service providers take on responsibility for the commissioning and strategy to deliver the missions in the way most effective in their local context. Central government is responsible for providing resources for success, such as financial support, and holding local areas accountable for outcomes.

In this way, central government is liberated from day-to-day micromanagement of services to focus on its broader strategic role of supporting local authorities. Meanwhile local authorities and providers are liberated from the tight specification defined by the centre, and are afforded more autonomy to respond flexibly to unique local needs.

TABLE 2
REDISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND REGIONAL/LOCAL ACTORS²⁷

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	REGIONAL / LOCAL ACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines success criteria • Provides resources for success Holds local areas to account on outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for strategy and commissioning • Flexibility on the methods of service delivery • Held to account locally and nationally for outcomes

Source: Adapted from Ben Glover, *Liberating from the centre: Tackling centralism and incoherence in the governance of English public services* (forthcoming publication)

The Liberated Public Services model makes progress on each of the challenges of NPM outlined in Section 2.1.

A. Attending to long-term outcomes incentivises preventive care and tackling root causes

A focus on long-term outcomes fundamentally reshapes public service delivery by aligning incentives with prevention rather than “plugging the gaps”.²⁸ When public services are evaluated on outcomes like sustainable improvements in quality of life, providers are naturally motivated to invest in preventive interventions and early support. This approach enables public servants to address root causes such as social inequalities, systemic barriers, and environmental factors. At the same time, liberating public services to experiment and flexibly adapt to local needs can lead to better long-term outcomes, reducing further need for additional interventions.

26 Pannell, J. (2024). Mission-driven Government: What Has Labour Committed To? <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/mission-driven-government-labour>

27 Glover, B. (Forthcoming publication). *Liberating from the Centre: Tackling Centralism and Incoherence in the Governance of English Public Services*.

28 Curtis, P., Glover, B. & O’Brien, A. (2023). *The Preventative State: Rebuilding Our Local, Social and Civic Foundations*. <https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/the-preventative-state.pdf>

B. Affording local authorities and professionals greater support and more flexibility in delivering mission outcomes boosts morale and better address local needs

By affording public sector professionals and providers greater dignity and autonomy, we can open up space for services to innovate and adapt to serve local needs, making better use of limited staff time and resources. A liberated public sector workforce utilises the knowledge, ability and motivation of frontline staff to adapt to their specific contexts.²⁹ Increasing public sector professionals' sense of autonomy at work is associated with a lower rate of turnover, a problem which has plagued the public sector.³⁰ Additionally, by liberating professionals to work more collaboratively with citizens, our public services can build trust and deliver better outcomes.³¹

C. When local authorities and providers are given more autonomy, citizens are seen as active partners in delivering better care

Local autonomy shifts the service delivery model from a top-down, standardised approach to one that encourages local innovation and contextual response. This structural change incentivises providers to recognise and leverage citizens' unique knowledge and lived experiences as resources for understanding the local challenges that need to be addressed and the barriers that will need to be overcome. In this way, instead of treating citizens as the problem to be fixed, liberated public services empower citizens as partners in working toward societal resilience and sustainable change for our most complex social challenges.

D. The ability of public services to better deal with complexity emerges from the cumulative impact of liberated public service reform

When service providers are made accountable for demonstrated outcomes, driven by high level missions and long-term outcomes, professionals across various frontline services are liberated to collaborate more freely and to tailor support around the individuals and communities they work with.³² This enables the creation of new, joined-up services, which work to centre the needs of individuals across the whole of their lives.³³

29 Honig, D. & Freedman, S. (2024). How Labour Can Fix the Public Sector. <https://samf.substack.com/p/how-labour-can-fix-the-public-sector>

30 Honig, D. (2021). Supportive Management Practice and Intrinsic Motivation Go Together in the Public Service. <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2015124118>

31 Early Intervention Foundation. (2018). Case Study: Family Group Conferencing, Camden. <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/family-group-conferencing-camden>

32 Sabel, C., Zeitlin, J. & Helderman, J. (2023). Transforming the Welfare State, One Case at a Time: How Utrecht Makes Customised Social Care Work. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00323292221140710>

33 Smith, M. (2023). The Liberated Method - Rethinking Public Service. <https://www.changingfuturesnorthumbria.co.uk/rethinking-public-service>

3. THE ROLE OF AI IN SUPPORTING LIBERATED PUBLIC SERVICES

In this section, we set out how to embed AI within a wider Liberated Public Service reform agenda. It is by attending to public service reform and AI integration simultaneously that we can draw the most value out of AI tools and support Liberated Public Services that serve communities and citizens better.

A. AI for reinforcing prevention and better long-term outcomes at a local and national level

A Liberated Public Services framework resets the relationship between central and local government, liberating public service providers to adapt to local needs through experimentation. There are a variety of opportunities for embedding AI to reinforce this reform agenda.

At a national level, a promising application of AI is predictive modelling, which will allow government departments to anticipate fluctuations in demand for services and coordinate resource distribution across the country in a way which is more responsive to local needs.³⁴ By using AI to identify patterns such as flu progression throughout the country, experts can evaluate likely future scenarios and better distribute resources across the National Health Service to where they are most needed.³⁵ As a result, frontline practitioners will be better equipped to deliver locally-responsive interventions on the ground.

³⁴ Welby, B. (2024). Building a Data-driven Public Sector Part 1: The Potential of Data for Delivering Public Value. <https://bm.welby/2024/07/19/ddps-part-1-the-potential-of-data-for-delivering-public-value/>

³⁵ Farmer, H. (2024). Predicting: The future of health? <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/predicting-the-future-of-health/>

At a local level, the use of predictive modelling by local authorities and frontline service providers can help to identify patterns and flag individuals who may be high-risk for particular negative outcomes, in order to provide preventative support.³⁶ For example, the Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council brought together multiple council data sources across social care, housing, benefits and education into a single system, applied predictive modelling, and used the outputs to support decision making for both borough-wide service provision and frontline social services.³⁷ Barking and Dagenham's novel approach to data use was embedded within their Community Solutions initiative, which reformed traditional services to focus on prevention and addressing root causes of challenges.³⁸ This reform made it possible for the Borough to act on insights from the data, through multi-agency teams and proactive outreach to residents.³⁹ During the COVID-19 pandemic, this system was used to identify and reach out to residents at risk, and offer them support far earlier than the central government.⁴⁰

As part of a process of wider Liberated Public Service reform, the pattern recognition capabilities of AI can be used to empower local public service providers to identify, predict and respond to local needs. By analysing locally-specific data, AI tools can be part of a shift towards prioritising long-term outcomes for citizens, reinvestment in the civic and social capital of local communities, and moving upstream to prevent challenges.

B. AI for empowering and supporting frontline public service professionals, not replacing them

Liberated Public Services provide public service professionals with greater autonomy, allowing them to innovate and adapt to meet local needs, using resources more effectively to address specific on-the-ground challenges.

A key role for AI in supporting Liberated Public Services is to relieve professionals of excess administrative burden, allowing them to spend more of their time applying their expertise and skills to address meaningful challenges, and to strengthen relationships with citizens.⁴¹ We call this approach "AI-in-the-loop",⁴² meaning that instead of building AI-led processes with checkpoints for human review, we embed AI into a human-led process, allowing professionals to form new practices together with technology which support their own ways of working.⁴³ At the end of the day, successful workplace transformation is fundamentally dependent on workers, not technology. It is essential that our public sector workforce has the capacity, training and development necessary to empower professionals to make effective use of AI tools.⁴⁴

An example of one such AI application that nicely integrates with human workflows is Magic Notes, an AI-based transcription and summarisation tool, which is being used to support social care practitioners during conversations with residents, carers and staff, by cutting down

36 As noted by the source below, predictive modelling, when applied uncritically, can lead to discriminatory outcomes. At this stage, predictive modelling ought to be used as an input to human decision making to offer further support, not to automatically make a decision or to enact punitive measures. Watson, D. & Liu, W. (2024). The (Problematic) Rise of Predictive Analytics in Children's Social Care. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/research/centres/sociodigital-futures/stories/rise-of-predictive-analytics/>

37 Carter, L. (2024). Critical analytics? Learning from the Early Adoption of Data Analytics for Local Authority Service Delivery. <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/local-authority-data-analytics/>

38 Wellbeing Economy Alliance. Case Studies: Barking and Dagenham, UK – Public Service Transformation Programme. <https://weall.org/resource/barking-and-dagenham-uk-public-service-transformation-programme>

39 Ibid.

40 Carter, L. (2024). Critical analytics? Learning from the Early Adoption of Data Analytics for Local Authority Service Delivery. <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/local-authority-data-analytics/>, <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/local-authority-data-analytics/>

41 Nwe, S. (2023). Lessons for Implementing Digital Health Technologies. <https://public.digital/pd-insights/blog/2023/09/lessons-for-implementing-digital-health-technologies>

42 AI: Trustworthy by Design. (2024). Seger, E. & Axente, M. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AI_Trustworthy-by-design_July_2024.pdf

43 Neff, G. (2024). How Industries Change. https://digit.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Neff_Digit_How%20Industries%20Change.pdf

44 Ibid.

the amount of time spent on routine note-taking.⁴⁵ Applications of AI in medical diagnostics are another promising area for supporting and improving the efficiency of existing human workflows. For example, Moorfields Eye Hospital in London has collaborated with Deepmind to produce an AI tool which analyses retinal scans and flags for potential pathology, acting as a useful triage for human review.⁴⁶

Embedded within a Liberated Public Services agenda, AI-in-the-loop can be used to support more time and flexibility for frontline staff, complementing rather than replacing skills and workers. Time-saving applications of AI can support frontline public service professionals to spend more time developing context-specific interventions, grounded in the needs and wants of the communities they serve.⁴⁷

C. AI for improving communication and collaboration with citizens

Liberated Public Services seek to empower citizens by treating them as potential partners who bring valuable skills and knowledge for collaboration. By investing in social and civic life at the local level, our public services can support communities to be more resilient and self-determined, for improved long-term outcomes. There are several applications of AI which can help facilitate and reinforce more productive engagement with citizens in our public services.

A potential application of AI is to improve communication between public service professionals and citizens, as well as facilitate deeper collaboration. An example of an AI application which improves communication is Simply Readable, which uses AI to generate accessible "Easy-Read" documents for residents with learning disabilities, as well as supporting translation of documents from English into 75 languages. Swindon Borough Council co-created the tool with a group of residents with learning disabilities, to ensure their needs were addressed. The tool has drastically reduced the cost of translation and the time taken by social workers to produce easily-read documents, as well as making official documents more easily accessible to a wider range of individuals.

By using AI to process complaints and feedback data, which often is underutilised, we can improve the flow of information between citizens and providers, which will enable service providers to more quickly respond to common issues.⁴⁸ On a deeper level of participation, civic technology utilising AI to improve accessibility and support collective intelligence could be used to directly engage citizens in decision making processes, to better reflect the needs and values of the public within public services.⁴⁹

Within a Liberated model of public services, AI can be applied to support the development of public services which strengthen the relationship between citizens and service providers, and foster more collaboration. As we will cover in Section 4, making the best use of AI tools will depend on ensuring that our public services at a local and national level have access to effective data infrastructure, managed with strong governance and accountability measures to ensure a foundation of trust.⁵⁰

45 Camden London Borough Council (2024). Adult Social Care use of BEAM/Magic Notes. <https://camdencarechoices.camden.gov.uk/care-and-support-rights/adult-social-care-use-of-beam-magic-notes/>

46 Fenech, M., Strukelj, N. & Buston, O. (2018). Ethical, Social, and Political Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Health. <https://wellcome.org/sites/default/files/ai-in-health-ethical-social-political-challenges.pdf>

47 Plunkett, J. (2024). How do we drive AI adoption? <https://medium.com/@jamestplunkett/how-do-we-drive-ai-adoption-057fc152b409>

48 Margetts, H., Dorobantu, C. & Bright, J. (2024). How to Build Progressive Public Services with Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-923X.13448>

49 Davies, T., Mellier, C., Shilongo, K. & Wilson, R. (2024). Global Citizen Deliberation on Artificial Intelligence: Options and Design Considerations. <https://connectedbydata.org/resources/global-deliberation-ai>

50 Reid, O., Colom, A. & Modhvadia, R. (2023). What Do the Public Think About AI? <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/evidence-review/what-do-the-public-think-about-ai/>

D. AI for enabling our public services to better navigate complexity

The cumulative goal of Liberated Public Services is to better enable our public services to respond to complexity - the multiple and diverse causes of individual problems, which require interdisciplinary intervention - by collaborating across services and departments to better tailor support to individuals and communities, and tackle underlying issues.⁵¹

By supporting the aspects of Liberated Public Service reform we have discussed in this section, these AI applications can help us to progress towards systems that can more flexibly respond to and coordinate around the complexities of life. For example, by integrating AI into Human Learning Systems to support the processing of data collected by local service providers, providing insights into areas where existing services are repeatedly failing, which may indicate where new approaches are needed.^{52,53}

Though perhaps the greatest benefit toward addressing complexity that we will get from our endeavours to embed AI in public services is not so much a product of the AI application itself, but the result of building the kinds of communication and data sharing infrastructures needed to effectively utilise AI.

In the following section we sketch out the structural blockers to making the most of AI for Liberated Public Services, and avenues for exploration.

51 Sabel, C. & Zeitlin, J. (2011). Experimentalist Governance. [https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20\(with%20abstract\).pdf](https://charlessabel.com/papers/Sabel%20and%20Zeitlin%20handbook%20chapter%20final%20(with%20abstract).pdf)

52 Lowe, T. & Plimmer, D. (2019). Exploring the New World: Practical Insights for Funding, Commissioning and Managing in Complexity. https://www.humanlearning.systems/uploads/Exploring-the-New-World-Report_Case-Studies.pdf

53 Code for America. Human-Centred Government: Improve Continuously. <https://codeforamerica.org/ideas/human-centered-government/improve-continuously/>

4. BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR AI SUPPORTED PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

In the previous section we detailed how AI can be embedded within a wider public service reform agenda, to liberate citizens and public service professionals, and to build better long-term outcomes for communities across the nation. But, as noted, there are several challenges regarding data infrastructure and AI procurement that will need to be tackled in concert with public service reform to realise the best future for AI in public services.

In this section, we will articulate the fundamental structural challenges which will need to be resolved in order to make the most out of AI as part of Liberated Public Services: public sector data connectivity and access (4.1.); improving public procurement of AI (4.2.); and considering the potential role for public AI investment (4.3.).

4.1. IMPROVING DATA CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

Our public data ecosystem faces numerous challenges, many of which will be significant barriers to effective AI adoption. There is a staggering volume of public sector data, stored across different databases which are often not interoperable.⁵⁴ To make matters worse, much of our public sector data is stored in legacy IT systems from previous generations of digital transformation projects, which can be expensive and difficult to maintain.⁵⁵ Even when we do have standards in place to help with interoperability, the standards landscape is fragmented across departments and services, meaning that the data remains siloed.⁵⁶

54 McBride, K. & Davies, N. (2024). Building a 21st Century Digital Government – Interoperability and Data Exchange. <https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/news-events/building-a-21st-century-digital-government-the-necessity-of-interoperability-and-data-exchange/>

55 Candadai, H. (2024). UK Public Sector IT: Is Legacy Software the Real Problem? <https://www.techuk.org/resource/u-k-public-sector-it-is-legacy-software-the-real-problem.html>

56 National Audit Office (2019). Challenges in Using Data Across Government. <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Challenges-in-using-data-across-government.pdf>

Within local government and frontline services, stretched resources mean that there is limited resource and capability to make effective use of data. Hiring specialists and accessing data stored in proprietary systems may be beyond the available budget, and investing in training and development to analyse the data local governments already possess can be both costly and time-consuming.⁵⁷ Part of this challenge could be addressed through the development of a taxonomy for preventative expenditure, which would enable investment which prioritises long-term outcomes for our public services, such as increasing workforce technical capability.⁵⁸

At the same time, there are serious concerns about whether the goal of joining up data is even desirable. If data is joined up into a central repository, significant questions remain about which departments and services will have access to which kind of data, and if the uses of citizens' personal data will be solely for public good.⁵⁹ Civil liberties groups have expressed concerns about the use of personal data from health, housing and education by law enforcement and immigration services.⁶⁰ Public trust in government to protect their data privacy and ensure that personal data uses meet ethical standards is low.⁶¹ Significant work remains to build trust.

While there is still widespread uncertainty regarding how the challenges we have raised here can best be addressed, we believe that the following solutions should be explored in more detail.

A liberated vision for the National Data Library

Creating a National Data Library (NDL) was one of the commitments in the Labour manifesto.⁶² However, it is not yet clear what the NDL will look like. We have some suggestions for how the NDL could take shape to support the well-functioning of Liberated Public Services.

A key consideration in the design of the NDL will be: who are the intended audiences, and what are their purposes?⁶³ We believe that the NDL's primary purpose should be for public benefit, which could be supported by enabling supported, free access to data for use by local authorities and public services. Additional support could include simple AI tools for data analysis and visualisation, allowing public entities with limited resources to make the most of the data.

Other features of the NDL could include secure mechanisms for data access which would enable data access to be safely controlled from the centre, allowing individuals and groups to have different degrees of access, depending on their purposes. For example, Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) has worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice to open up access to linkable datasets across courts in England and Wales for academic researchers, enabling analysis of risk factors between children's social care, educational outcomes and the criminal justice system, which could help to improve outcomes for care leavers.⁶⁴ The NDL could also provide a user-friendly API interface with embedded AI tools for data analysis and visualisation, allowing users with less technical expertise to extract useful insights from a given dataset.⁶⁵

57 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024). Setting the Foundations for Effective Data Use in Local Government. <https://mhclgdigital.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/03/setting-the-foundations-for-effective-data-use-in-local-government/>

58 O'Brien, A., Curtis, P. & Charlesworth, A. (2023). Revenue, Capital, Prevention: A New Public Spending Framework for the Future. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PDEL-Briefing-paper_final-version.pdf

59 Thwaites, E., Shadbolt, N., Burke, L., Simperl, E. & Sørensen, K. (2024). The ODI's input to the AI Action Plan: an AI-ready National Data Library. <https://theodi.org/news-and-events/consultation-responses/the-odis-input-to-the-ai-action-plan-an-ai-ready-national-data-library/>

60 Open Rights Group (2024). Data Use and Access Bill Will Fail to Protect Public from AI Harms. <https://www.openrightsgroup.org/press-releases/data-use-and-access-bill-will-fail-to-protect-public-from-ai-harms/>

61 Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (2020). Addressing Trust in Public Sector Data Use. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cdei-publishes-its-first-report-on-public-sector-data-sharing/addressing-trust-in-public-sector-data-use>

62 The Labour Party (2024). Manifesto. <https://labour.org.uk/change/kickstart-economic-growth/>

63 Freeguard, G. (2024). How Should We Think About a National Data Library? <https://gavin-freeguard.medium.com/how-should-we-think-about-a-national-data-library-dd2d47edee8b>

64 Administrative Data Research UK. (Ongoing). Data First: Harnessing the Potential of Linked Administrative Data for the Justice System. <https://www.adruk.org/our-work/browse-all-projects/data-first-harnessing-the-potential-of-linked-administrative-data-for-the-justice-system-169/>

65 Wang, C., Lee, B., Thompson, J., Drucker, S. & Gao, J. (2023). Data Formulator: A Concept-driven, AI-powered Approach to Data Visualisation. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/blog/data-formulator-a-concept-driven-ai-powered-approach-to-data-visualization/>

To increase the availability of useful kinds of data, particularly local data, incentives could be offered for contributing datasets to the NDL. For example, the Local Government Open Data Incentive scheme has offered grant incentives to local authorities to publish certain kinds of data openly, while ensuring consistency in data structure and quality.⁶⁶ We believe that careful management of data access will be crucial for building public trust. Yet, many important questions regarding trust, data curation and degree of government ownership and control will remain. To act as inputs to further discussion, we have suggested two potential examples of schemes which have navigated some of these challenges.

LifeCycle is a data trust based in Jersey which is creating a new database in partnership with local cyclists by gathering information about community cycling and cycling conditions using wearable technology.⁶⁷ The data will be aggregated and stored locally, analysed, and the insights shared with organisations with a mission to improve or promote cycling in Jersey.

Te Mana Raraunga, the Māori Data Sovereignty Network, was established in Aotearoa/New Zealand, to safeguard and protect data for and about Māori people, advocate for Māori involvement in data governance, and support the development of Māori data infrastructure.⁶⁸ In collaboration with Statistics New Zealand, Te Mana Raraunga is working to create a new geographic variable in the national Integrated Data Infrastructure which maps the boundaries (rohe) of Māori groups (Iwi), validated by Iwi themselves.⁶⁹

Engaging with debates over Digital Identity

One of the most ubiquitous and contentious topics in digital public services is Digital Identity. The term Digital Identity is used to refer to a wide range of applications, from a single sign-on for government websites, age verification in shops and bars, immigration control and management, to the roll-out of compulsory identity cards.⁷⁰ While there is a general acknowledgement that establishing some kind of Digital ID program is a foundational step for creating efficient and smooth-running digital public services, how Digital ID is implemented in practice is a matter of fierce debate, raising concerns related to digital inclusion, digital rights and civil liberties.⁷¹

Professor Keegan McBride at the Oxford Internet Institute has argued that any successful digital public service must be based on a reliable Digital ID infrastructure.⁷² Successful implementation of Digital ID could support easier interoperability and cross-government communication, as well as more proactive public services, built around the needs of individual citizens.⁷³ Estonia's e-ID is a particularly notable example, with citizens able to engage in activities from starting a business to managing health appointments online using their Digital ID.⁷⁴

Even among proponents of Digital ID, there remains a recognition that analog versions of services and credentials must remain for those who want and need them. The recent roll-out of the UK's digital-only immigration status⁷⁵ has highlighted the potential for digital exclusion

66 Local Government Association (2014). Local Government Open Data Incentive Scheme. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LG%20Open%20Data%20Incentive%20Scheme%20Outcomes%20Report%20May%202015.pdf>

67 LifeCycle Jersey. <https://www.lifecycle.je/data-trust>

68 Te Mana Raraunga. <https://www.temanararaunga.maori.nz/>

69 Statistics New Zealand (2018). Fact Sheet: Partnering with Māori on Real-world Issues. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Data-leadership-fact-sheets/fact-sheet-partnering-with-maori-apr18.pdf>

70 Ibid.

71 Coldicutt, R. (2024). Digital Identity in the UK: A Rapid Response Study. <https://www.careful.industries/digital-identity-in-the-uk>

72 Global Council for Happiness and Well-being (2022). Global Happiness and Well-being Policy Report. https://s3.amazonaws.com/happinesscouncil.org/GHC_2022.pdf

73 Pope, R. Platformland (2024). <https://anatomyofpublicservices.com/>

74 Cater, L. (2021). What Estonia's Digital ID Scheme Can Teach Europe. <https://www.politico.eu/article/estonia-digital-id-scheme-europe/>

75 Pope, R. Platformland (2024). <https://anatomyofpublicservices.com/>

to exacerbate existing barriers and discriminatory patterns.⁷⁶ Even when individuals are able to access Digital ID, there remains a complex set of ethical questions surrounding the Right to be Forgotten: how long should a record remain attached to our Digital ID, and should we be allowed to alter or delete our own data? There is a difficult balance to be struck between pushing too many of these decisions onto individual users, leading to apathy and resignation, or leaving individuals lacking any control over their data at all.⁷⁷

Finally, there is a clear need to build public trust by establishing the parameters of what a new government-issued Digital ID would look like, what it could and could not be used for, and what the alternatives will look like for those who cannot or will not adopt it.

4.2. FACILITATING ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE AI TOOLS

More centralised procurement guidance

At present, procurement of AI tools for local use is largely in the hands of individual local authorities. For well-resourced councils, with high levels of digital capability, localised procurement can present an excellent opportunity to tackle local needs. However, many local authorities are severely struggling to keep up due to restricted funds, lack of internal tech procurement expertise, and the preponderance of mediocre tech solutions on offer.⁷⁸

When lacking expertise, some councils may simply choose to “follow-the-leader” in their AI procurement decisions. Procurement solutions which appear to work well elsewhere are possibly a safer choice but lose the benefit of local procurement for adapting to a specific local context. Councils must also be wary of potential “snake oil” vendors, who may be selling disingenuous AI applications.⁷⁹ In either case, councils may find themselves making a poorly-informed procurement decision and ending up with a tool which does not meet their needs, or even backfires and causes harm.⁸⁰

Another consideration is that, government procurement is an important level for promoting national industry and innovation, however, for many UK SMEs, applying individually to multiple separate procurement processes across local authorities may require a prohibitive investment of time and resources. This puts them at a disadvantage relative to larger tech companies with greater resources and capacity to court individual local authorities.

One potential option - both to provide UK SMEs support to compete in the procurement market, and to help local councils make well informed AI procurement decisions - would be to centralise and consolidate more procurement processes relating to AI and other technologies. However, over-centralisation of procurement may hinder the benefits of liberating local service providers to adapt for local solutions. To square the circle, we might consider procurement at the level of combined authorities, allowing for a degree of scale and consolidation of skills, without hindering local flexibility.

Another possible option would be for central government to maintain a repository of recommended systems, including those AI solutions employed by different councils or levels of government, as well as any learnings, such as benefits and shortcomings of particular applications.

76 Knight, S., Perry, H., Dawson, A., Garner, A. & Pay, J. “It can’t get any worse”: An online forum listening exercise revealing how people talk about poverty now. <https://demos.co.uk/research/it-cant-get-any-worse-an-online-forum-listening-exercise-revealing-how-people-talk-about-poverty-now/>

77 Bagger, C., Einarsson, A., Alvarez, V., Klausen, M. & Lomborg, S. (2023). Digital Resignation and the Datafied Welfare State. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20539517231206806>

78 Studman, A. & Machirori, M. (2024). Buying AI: Is the Public Sector Equipped to Procure Technology in the Public Interest? <https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/buying-ai-procurement/>

79 Shah, Hetan. (2024). Tony Blair is Wrong – AI Will Not Magically Solve Our Public Services. <https://www.newstatesman.com/comment/2024/10/tony-blair-is-wrong-artificial-intelligence-ai-publ>

80 Ibid

Supporting Public AI

In addition to procurement of AI, we need to examine the potential role of government in supporting Public AI. In a recent report, Mozilla defines Public AI as “a robust ecosystem of initiatives that promote public goods, public orientation, and public use throughout every step of AI development and deployment — from how compute and data are provided, to how tools and workers are involved.”⁸¹

Public AI is an alternative to an AI landscape currently dominated by profit-driven big tech. Commercial incentives have led to significant technological breakthroughs in AI, but the majority of innovation is currently happening at the frontier of Large Language Models, to fulfil a narrow set of profitable applications.⁸² AI in the public interest is comparatively under-resourced.

Government investment in Public AI initiatives and support infrastructure such as compute and data commons will help ensure quality AI tools that prioritise public interest are readily available and supported for public application. For example, investment in public compute can ensure affordable and secure compute resources are available for the training and running of AI applications in sensitive or high risk public service and government applications.⁸³ Government can also invest in the development of national or “sovereign” AI models to provide a foundation for public service delivery. While building a sovereign frontier AI model may require more investment than the UK’s finances will currently allow for, other possible avenues for exploration include research and development funding for smaller language models, which can be more affordable, trustworthy and locally flexible.⁸⁴

81 Marda, N., Sun, J. & Surman, M. (2024). Public AI: Making AI Work For Everyone, By Everyone. https://assets.mofoprod.net/network/documents/Public_AI_Mozilla.pdf

82 Ibid.

83 Lawrence, D. & Seger, E. (2024). GB Cloud: Building the UK’s Cloud Compute Capacity. <https://demos.co.uk/research/gb-cloud-building-the-uks-compute-capacity/>

84 Marda, N., Sun, J. & Surman, M. (2024). Public AI: Making AI Work For Everyone, By Everyone. https://assets.mofoprod.net/network/documents/Public_AI_Mozilla.pdf

CONCLUSION

AI will not save our public services, but it can be used to support the kind of radical change our public services desperately need. At Demos, we believe that to be successful, AI adoption in the public sector must be grounded in a Liberated Public Service reform agenda.

In this paper, we have set out a vision for AI adoption in the public sector to support Liberated Public Services. By using AI to identify patterns in national and local data, our public services can better anticipate future demand on services, provide preventative interventions and improve long-term outcomes. Through applying "AI-in-the-loop", frontline public service professionals can free up time spent on routine admin or initial triage of medical diagnostic scans, and utilise more of their professional judgement and time to develop context-specific interventions and build better relationships with citizens. Engaging with citizens directly using AI-enabled civic technology could open up new avenues of communication and collaboration between public service providers and citizens, supporting more responsive services.

All of these interventions depend on a foundation of improved data access and connectivity across the public sector - which will help our public services to better address complex, cross-cutting challenges - in combination with appropriate AI tools, acquired through improved procurement processes and investment in public interest AI.

Guided by our vision for Liberated Public Services, we believe that AI adoption can help to strengthen our wider civic and social foundations, building more resilient and adaptable communities and public services that are able to weather future challenges.

We hope that this provocation paper can serve as a bridge to bring together individuals, communities and organisations with a diverse range of interests across AI and public service reform, to build a better path forward for AI adoption in the public sector.

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DEMOS

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PUBLISHED BY DEMOS NOVEMBER 2024

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