# High Court warns of serious penalties for AI misuse in legal filings



Demis Hassabis, CEO of Google DeepMind, has urged UK policymakers and business leaders to adopt “smart regulation” of artificial intelligence during a speech at the inaugural SXSW event in London. He warned that ineffective oversight could lead to unintended consequences and a loss of public trust. “AI is the most important technology humanity is working on. We should be making sure we do it properly – in a way that’s safe, that gets public buy-in, and that unlocks economic value,” said Hassabis.

His intervention comes amid growing pressure on the UK government to close gaps in its regulatory framework. Business leaders, campaigners and lawmakers are calling for clear rules to guide the safe and responsible use of AI. A recent report by the Ada Lovelace Institute highlights serious deficiencies in the governance of biometric technologies, warning that the UK’s fragmented approach risks turning it into a “wild west” for facial recognition, jeopardising privacy and civil liberties.

Facial recognition technology used by UK police and retailers has drawn particular concern. Law enforcement scanned nearly five million faces in 2024, resulting in over 600 arrests. Critics, including Privacy International, argue that current laws lack the safeguards needed to protect human rights.

Hassabis criticised the “move fast and break things” ethos of Silicon Valley, arguing that AI demands caution. “For something this fundamental, it is important to try and have as much foresight ahead of time as you can,” he said. He called for an ethical framework grounded in public engagement and long-term thinking.

The need for reform is echoed in Parliament. Conservative peer Lord Chris Holmes has proposed a new AI authority to enforce standards on safety, transparency and accountability. Others, including Lord Tim Clement-Jones, have raised concerns about opaque algorithmic decisions in areas such as social welfare and immigration, where the lack of transparency limits redress.

While the UK has followed a “principles-based” regulatory model, ministers have signalled a shift towards binding legislation. Following the King's speech last July, plans were announced to impose legal duties on AI developers via the upcoming Digital Information and Smart Data Bill. An AI Safety Institute has also been tasked with strengthening oversight and compliance.

Hassabis likened the urgency of AI regulation to the climate crisis, suggesting the creation of global oversight bodies similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He stressed the importance of international cooperation as AI’s rapid development poses profound societal risks.

The Ada Lovelace Institute has called for a unified regulatory approach that addresses the concentration of power among a few dominant firms while prioritising the public good. Survey data shows that 72% of the UK public support AI regulation, with 88% backing government action to mitigate harm once systems are deployed.

As the UK charts its regulatory course, the focus is shifting from rule-making to trust-building. With industry leaders and lawmakers aligned on the need for action, the decisions made now could shape the global future of AI governance.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.jurist.org/news/2025/06/uk-judge-warns-lawyers-of-consequences-for-misusing-ai-in-court-filings/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/lawyers-face-sanctions-citing-fake-cases-with-ai-warns-uk-judge-2025-06-06/> - A senior UK judge has issued a stern warning to lawyers using artificial intelligence (AI) to cite non-existent legal cases, highlighting the potential for severe consequences including contempt of court and criminal charges. The warning follows two recent cases in London's High Court where lawyers appeared to have relied on AI tools such as ChatGPT to generate supporting arguments based on fictitious case law. Judge Victoria Sharp emphasized the serious threat this misuse of AI poses to the integrity of the justice system and public confidence in legal proceedings. She called upon legal regulators and industry leaders to implement more effective measures to ensure lawyers recognize and uphold their ethical duties. While existing guidance on AI use exists, Sharp stressed it is not sufficient to curb misuse. In extreme instances, submitting deliberately false material to court could constitute the criminal offense of perverting the course of justice. This ruling adds to global concerns about the rapid adoption of generative AI in legal practice without adequate oversight.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/46013a78d78dc869bdfd6b42579411cb> - A UK High Court judge has warned about the risk to the justice system after lawyers cited fake legal cases generated by artificial intelligence (AI) in court. Justice Victoria Sharp noted the serious implications of such misuse for public trust and legal integrity. In one case involving a £90 million lawsuit with Qatar National Bank, a lawyer cited 18 non-existent cases generated by AI, relying on the client, Hamad Al-Haroun, for legal research. In another case, barrister Sarah Forey referenced five fictitious cases in a housing claim. Though Forey denied using AI, she failed to provide a clear explanation. The judges, including Jeremy Johnson, referred both attorneys to professional regulators. Sharp emphasized that knowingly presenting false information could lead to contempt of court or, in severe cases, charges such as perverting the course of justice—an offense punishable by life imprisonment. She acknowledged AI as a powerful and useful legal tool but stressed the importance of accurate oversight and adherence to ethical standards to maintain public confidence in the justice system.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/sep/15/court-of-appeal-judge-praises-jolly-useful-chatgpt-after-asking-it-for-legal-summary> - A Court of Appeal judge has used ChatGPT to provide a summary of an area of law, and called the chatbot that is powered by artificial intelligence 'jolly useful'. Lord Justice Birss, who specialises in intellectual property law, said that he asked the AI tool to provide a summary of an area of law and received a paragraph that he felt was acceptable as an answer. At a conference held by the Law Society, he said generative large language models had 'real potential'. 'I think what is of most interest is that you can ask these large language models to summarise information. It is useful and it will be used and I can tell you, I have used it,' he said. 'I'm taking full personal responsibility for what I put in my judgment, I am not trying to give the responsibility to somebody else. All it did was a task which I was about to do and which I knew the answer and could recognise as being acceptable.' This is the first known use of ChatGPT by a British judge to write part of a judgment.
5. <https://www.legalcheek.com/2025/04/judges-given-guidance-on-how-to-spot-ai-generated-submissions/> - Judicial guidance on the use of AI in courts was updated this week, outlining common pitfalls, recommended practices for available tools, and a glossary of key terms. The new release updates guidance from 2023, applying to all judicial office holders – court clerks, support staff, court of appeal judges, legal assistants, and more – and was published online to promote 'open justice and public confidence'. The document outlines key signs that a party may have used AI—such as cases that 'do not sound familiar' or include 'unfamiliar citations (sometimes from the US)'; parties 'citing different bodies of case law' on the same issues; and submissions that use American spelling, reference overseas cases, or 'do not accord' with judges’ understanding of the law. Perhaps most interesting is the final indicator: 'content that (superficially at least) appears to be highly persuasive and well written, but on closer inspection contains obvious substantive errors.' Nevertheless, the guidance notes there is no reason AI couldn’t be a 'potentially useful' tool, and judges won’t be required to disclose if they’ve used it. 'Anything you type into it could become publicly known', reads the guidance, advising chat histories to be turned off and to deny mobile app permissions. If something private and confidential is uploaded, judicial office holders are to treat it as a data breach.
6. <https://www.judiciary.uk/the-impact-and-value-of-ai-for-ip-and-the-courts-a-speech-by-lord-justice-birss/> - Lord Justice Birss delivered a speech discussing the impact and value of artificial intelligence (AI) for intellectual property (IP) and the courts. He highlighted the importance of being cautious when entering private data into public AI systems, advising against it. He emphasized that the person producing a document takes full responsibility for its contents, stating that a lawyer producing a document to court which contains hallucinated case citations only has themselves to blame. He also mentioned 'Garfield', an AI law firm that guides litigants through the process of bringing a debt claim in the county court, preparing the Claim Form and drafting the Particulars of Claim for them. He noted that Garfield has insurance and the startup behind it is in close contact with the Solicitors Regulatory Authority about regulation. He referred to this as an example of the 'democratising effect of AI in relation to access to justice'.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/12/12/judges-given-green-light-use-chatgpt-legal-rulings/> - Judges will be able to use ChatGPT to help write legal rulings despite warnings that artificial intelligence (AI) can invent cases that never happened. The Judicial Office has issued official guidance to thousands of judges in England and Wales saying AI can be useful for summarising large amounts of text or in administrative tasks. However, it said that chatbots are a 'poor way of conducting research' and are prone to making up fictitious cases or legal texts. The guidance also warned that the rise of bots such as ChatGPT could end up being widely used by members of the public when bringing legal cases and that deepfake technology could be used to create fake evidence. Sir Geoffrey Vos, the Master of the Rolls, said that AI 'offers significant opportunities in developing a better, quicker and more cost-effective digital justice system'. He said: 'Technology will only move forwards and the judiciary has to understand what is going on. Judges, like everybody else, need to be acutely aware that AI can give inaccurate responses as well as accurate ones.'