# All civil servants in England and Wales to receive AI training from autumn



From this autumn, more than 400,000 civil servants across England and Wales will receive practical training in artificial intelligence, in a major government initiative aimed at boosting public sector productivity. The programme, announced by Cabinet Office minister Pat McFadden, is part of a wider reform to modernise the civil service and address contemporary challenges.

The training roll-out accompanies a planned reduction in the civil service workforce, with tens of thousands of roles to be cut through voluntary redundancy and non-replacement. AI is being positioned as a key enabler of efficiency, with civil servants encouraged to identify tasks where technology can deliver faster, high-quality outcomes.

A new AI tool named “Humphrey”—inspired by the character from Yes, Minister—is currently being piloted. In trials, it has streamlined bureaucratic processes, including the analysis of public consultations on cosmetic surgery regulations in Scotland. Officials say the tool delivered results comparable to human analysts in a fraction of the time and could save up to 75,000 workdays annually, potentially reducing costs by £20 million.

A March directive to civil servants stated that “no person’s substantive time should be spent on a task where digital or AI can do it better, quicker and to the same high quality and standard.” The guidance reflects the government's push for civil servants to actively explore the use of AI in daily workflows.

Sir Chris Wormald, cabinet secretary, praised the civil service’s adaptability and encouraged staff to embrace innovation. He stressed the need to preserve core civil service values while evolving to meet the demands of an uncertain world.

The training programme forms part of broader digital transformation efforts, including a target of £45 billion in productivity savings. The State of Digital Government Review has criticised existing inefficiencies and called for greater coherence in the use of technology across government departments and local councils.

Despite the promise of AI integration, concerns remain. Past implementations in the public sector have exposed algorithmic biases affecting age and disability, raising questions over oversight and risk management. UK Auditor General Gareth Davies has urged the government to foster a culture of experimentation while investing in the skills needed to manage AI responsibly.

Alongside civil service training, the government has also launched a 12-week AI Accelerator Programme to retrain data scientists as machine learning engineers. The initiative is part of a wider goal to double the number of digital experts in government by 2030.

As the AI rollout progresses, it signals a significant shift in how the UK civil service operates—offering potential gains in efficiency and effectiveness while underscoring the need for careful implementation and strong public accountability.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/09/all-civil-servants-in-england-and-wales-to-get-ai-training> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itpro.com/business/public-sector/governments-humphrey-ai-tool-helps-local-authorities-cut-costs> - The UK government is piloting an AI tool named 'Humphrey' to assist local authorities in improving efficiency and reducing costs. Developed by the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT), the tool is currently being trialed in 25 local councils. A key component, 'Minute,' helps streamline note-taking in services such as planning and social care, freeing up staff to focus on more critical tasks. Central government trials indicate that Minute can save up to one hour of administrative work per one-hour meeting. The initiative aligns with the Prime Minister’s goal to achieve £45 billion in productivity savings through digital transformation. The State of Digital Government Review highlighted inefficiencies like redundant tech spending and insufficient digital staff. The government aims to improve data sharing between councils and encourage collaborative tech procurement and best practice sharing. AI and digital minister Feryal Clark emphasized the tool’s potential to accelerate planning decisions, support homebuilding targets, and modernize council operations as part of the broader 'Plan for Change' strategy.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/5299582a-4a27-44ea-aec7-be2b3124e7b8> - The UK's Auditor General, Gareth Davies, has called for the public sector to embrace a greater propensity for risk-taking and tolerance for failure to better harness the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI). Davies emphasized that officials should foster a culture of experimentation and rapid learning, enabling them to manage the risks associated with technological innovation rather than avoid them. He highlighted the importance of investing in research and development with a portfolio approach, acknowledging that not all ideas will yield positive results. Davies also stressed the need to boost productivity in public services and called for improved preparedness and resilience against adverse events such as pandemics and cyber-attacks. Additionally, he urged the state to invest in people and their skills to meet modern challenges and maximize the performance of new technologies, including the AI tools recently introduced by ministers.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-bootcamp-upskills-whitehall-coders-into-ai-specialists> - The UK government has launched a new AI Accelerator Programme aimed at upskilling data scientists across the public sector into machine learning engineers. The 12-week programme will train 25 machine learning engineers through hackathons, where participants will work on live government challenges. This initiative is part of the Prime Minister’s goal to double the number of digital experts in government departments by 2030, aiming to improve public services and drive growth. The programme brings together participants from several government departments and agencies, including the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government, Ministry of Justice, UK Health and Security Agency, and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, to work on cross-cutting projects to drive efficiency.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-courses-on-artificial-intelligence-launched> - Nine new Artificial Intelligence (AI) courses have been launched on Civil Service Learning to boost civil servants’ skills and knowledge. These courses will replace the existing seven courses in the Generative AI suite, which will be removed on 4 October. The new courses are offered in various formats, including video, interactive, and written formats, allowing flexibility to learners. The courses cover topics such as AI fundamentals, understanding AI ethics, the business value of AI, generative AI tools and applications, working with large language models, machine learning and deep learning, natural language processing and speech recognition, computer vision, and a technical curriculum.
6. <https://www.techradar.com/pro/humphrey-to-the-rescue-uk-gov-seeks-to-save-millions-by-using-ai-tool-to-analyse-input-on-thousands-of-consultations> - The UK government has launched a homegrown artificial intelligence tool named ‘Humphrey’—inspired by the bureaucratic character from the sitcom Yes Minister—to streamline the review of public consultations. Central to this effort is an AI system called ‘Consult,’ which has undergone successful real-world testing in Scotland during a public consultation on regulating non-surgical cosmetic treatments. The AI analyzed over 2,000 responses and identified key themes similar to those found by human analysts, offering significant time and cost efficiencies. Proponents claim that such technology could shave off around £20 million annually by automating the analysis of roughly 500 consultations, equating to about 75,000 administrative workdays. Technology Secretary Peter Kyle highlighted its potential to enhance productivity and reduce human bias, asserting that AI should handle tasks it performs more efficiently. However, concerns linger about transparency, accuracy, and potential bias influenced by the AI's training data. Although not yet benchmarked independently, Consult's use signals a broader governmental shift toward incorporating AI in policymaking processes.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/civil-servants-get-one-stop-access-to-digital-skills-learning> - Civil servants can now get easy access to more free digital learning as part of a drive to boost productivity and agility. Government Skills’ curriculum of recommended learning now has an expanded range of digital, data and innovation learning that has been specifically curated for civil servants. More tools and learning will be added to the curriculum over time. The new offering is the first step in delivering on the Prime Minister’s pledge last month to give all civil servants better opportunities to develop skills in priority areas such as digital. The expanded curriculum comprises access to the Microsoft 365 Public Sector Training and Resources Hub, which provides resources to help civil servants upskill quickly in a way that meets the needs of their role or job task.