

Worcestershire County Council Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2025–2028

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Section 1 – Introduction

Foreword by the Head of IT and Digital

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) has released its Artificial Intelligence Strategy for 2025–2028. Developments in AI are influencing the public sector by introducing new possibilities and responsibilities for services and communities. This strategy outlines WCC’s approach to using AI with an emphasis on ethics, inclusion, and transparency, aiming to support residents and staff in Worcestershire through digital transformation. The council intends to promote data-driven decision-making, responsible innovation, and ongoing improvement.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to outline WCC’s vision, priorities, and approach to deploying Artificial Intelligence. It sets out how we will harness AI to enhance the delivery of public services, improve operational efficiency, and ensure fair and equitable access for all residents. The strategy further defines the governance and ethical principles that will guide our approach, ensuring that AI is implemented responsibly and sustainably.

Objectives

- To integrate AI technologies across the Council’s services, increasing efficiency and responsiveness.
- To promote data-driven decision making at every level, building a culture of evidence-based practice.
- To ensure digital inclusion and access to AI-enabled services for all residents.
- To establish robust governance, transparency, and ethical frameworks for AI use.
- To support workforce development, reskilling, and capacity building for a future-ready council.

Executive Summary

Worcestershire County Council’s AI Strategy sets a clear direction for the ethical and effective adoption of Artificial Intelligence from 2025 to 2028. Building on national best practice and our own digital journey, the strategy aligns with the UK National AI. Our priorities include enhancing service delivery, enabling data-driven decisions, promoting digital inclusion, and underpinning all progress with ethical standards and robust governance. Success will be defined by improved outcomes for residents, empowered staff, and increased public trust in how technology serves Worcestershire.

Linked Strategies and Programmes

- UK National AI Strategy
- Digital, Data and Technology Strategy 2024-2027

Section 2 – Where Are We Now?

The Journey So Far

WCC has already begun to leverage digital and data technologies to enhance public service outcomes. Our ongoing digital transformation programme has established strong foundations in IT infrastructure, data governance, and customer services. AI has been trialled in areas such as automation of routine tasks, and virtual assistants supporting customer queries. These early projects have demonstrated tangible benefits, including faster service delivery, cost savings, and improved resident experiences.

An AI Policy has been published to ensure ethical and transparent use of AI technologies and guidance pages have been created on OurSpace supporting the responsible AI usage. AI specific questions are being incorporated into the updated DPIA form. Additionally, a public-facing webpage has been launched to outline AI usage across the organisation, and an internal audit is underway to assess AI controls and governance.

In terms of implementation, the Council has expanded the use of Microsoft Copilot, with 35 staff currently licensed and various departments leading the way in adoption. The Council is also reviewing the use of AI transcription services in Social Care and incorporating AI-driven features in the updated contact centre solution, such as AI-enhanced voice assistants and AI-powered chatbots. Furthermore, a proof of concept for an intelligent knowledge base is being developed, and additional AI applications are being explored, including error checking in school attendance documentation and document translation tools.

To foster a culture of responsible AI usage, the Council has made "How to Use AI Responsibly" a mandatory E-Learning module. Additionally, the Council is exploring new digital apprenticeship programmes that include AI-based courses, demonstrating commitment to leveraging AI for efficiency, innovation, and improved service delivery.

Our Key Challenges

- **Digital Divide:** Ensuring all residents benefit from AI, not only those with high digital literacy or access.
- **Skills and Capacity:** Addressing the AI skills gap within the council workforce and among residents, as highlighted in national research.
- **Data Quality and Access:** Improving the quality, availability, and interoperability of data across services to support effective AI deployment.
- **Trust, Ethics, and Governance:** Building public trust through transparent, accountable, and ethical AI use, and addressing concerns around bias, privacy, and safety.
- **Legacy Systems and Integration:** Integrating new AI technologies with existing infrastructure and workflows efficiently.

Section 3 – Where We Want to Be

Our Vision

Worcestershire County Council aspires to be a leader in the ethical and innovative use of Artificial Intelligence in the public sector. Our vision is for smarter, more responsive public services; a skilled and empowered workforce; and an inclusive society where AI enhances the lives of all residents. By 2028, AI will support aspects of service delivery, strategic decision making, and community engagement, supporting the Council's wider ambitions for sustainable development and social equity.

Our AI Priorities

- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly review and assess new AI technologies and use cases, learning from pilots and early projects to scale successful solutions.
- **Data Management and Quality:** Prioritise improving data foundations, including data collection, quality, and interoperability across legacy systems. High-quality, well-managed data is fundamental for effective AI deployment and to unlock valuable insights.
- **Ethics, Transparency, and Security:** Establish robust governance frameworks, including an AI board, to ensure AI use is fair, transparent, accountable, and secure. Prioritise

cybersecurity and data protection measures to maintain public trust and comply with regulations like GDPR.

- **Workforce Upskilling and Capacity:** Invest in training staff, from frontline workers to senior leadership, to manage and use AI effectively and ethically. Address skill gaps and build in-house AI expertise to reduce reliance on external consultants and foster a culture of innovation.
- **Procurement and Collaboration:** Develop smart procurement strategies and collaborate with internal services and other relevant organisations to share knowledge and pool resources.
- **Improved Access and Responsiveness:** Deploying AI-powered assistants and automation to streamline contact and support channels for residents, ensuring rapid and accurate responses 24/7.
- **Digital Inclusion and Accessibility:** Designing AI systems that are intuitive and inclusive, ensuring all residents—including vulnerable groups—can access and benefit from digital services.
- **Transparency and Engagement:** Communicating clearly how AI is used, how decisions are made, and gathering ongoing feedback from stakeholders. Engage with residents and councillors on AI initiatives to build public trust and ensure that AI solutions are designed with community needs and values in mind.

Section 4 – Delivering Change, Monitoring Progress and Measuring Success

Resourcing the Delivery

Delivery of this strategy will require a whole-council approach. WCC will establish a dedicated AI Group responsible for the ethical deployment and oversight of AI initiatives. Investment will be made in workforce training, recruitment of talent, and partnerships with academic, business, and community stakeholders.

Resource allocation will emphasise sustainability, value for money, and scalability of AI solutions. Where possible, automation will reduce operational costs, freeing staff to focus on high-value, person-centred activities.

Monitoring and Reporting Progress

Progress will be tracked through a robust framework of key performance indicators (KPIs), regular audits, and stakeholder engagement. The AI Group will provide oversight, ensuring compliance with data protection laws, ethical guidelines, and national standards. Regular reports will be published to maintain transparency and public trust.

The Council will adopt best practice from the National AI Strategy by:

- Setting clear targets for efficiency gains, resident satisfaction, and digital inclusion.
- Monitoring for unintended consequences or emerging risks such as bias or exclusion.
- Using independent audits and feedback from residents and staff to inform continuous improvement.

Measuring Success

Success will be measured by:

- Demonstrable improvements in service delivery speed, quality, and accessibility.
- Growth in staff AI and data literacy, and successful reskilling programmes.
- Increased public trust and understanding of AI applications.
- Evidence of fair, ethical, and inclusive outcomes from AI-enabled services.
- Alignment with sustainable development goals and the Council's wider strategic objectives.

By implementing this strategy, Worcestershire County Council will ensure that AI serves as a responsible catalyst for positive change—delivering smarter services, empowering communities, and preparing for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.