

Accelerating AI adoption in the Civil Service



Open Innovation Team



About us

HM Government's Open Innovation Team (OIT) works with experts to generate analysis and ideas for policy.

Set-up in 2016, we operate like an in-house consultancy, delivering projects for colleagues across government and charging them to recover our costs.

We have five university partners - Brunel, Essex, Lancaster, Surrey and York - but we work with academics and industry experts worldwide.

This slidepack

To help civil servants understand and make the best use of emerging AI tools, we're developing a programme of practical advice, training and support. The **AI Adoption Accelerator** offers tailored support to help departments integrate generative AI tools into their everyday work, combining expert-led workshops with hands-on practice and strategic guidance.

This initiative aims to bridge the gap between awareness and implementation, helping teams identify high-value use cases while building practical skills and confidence in using AI responsibly within the Civil Service context.

Our mission: to help
civil servants use AI to
solve problems and do
their best work

Why civil servants need better support with AI

The challenge

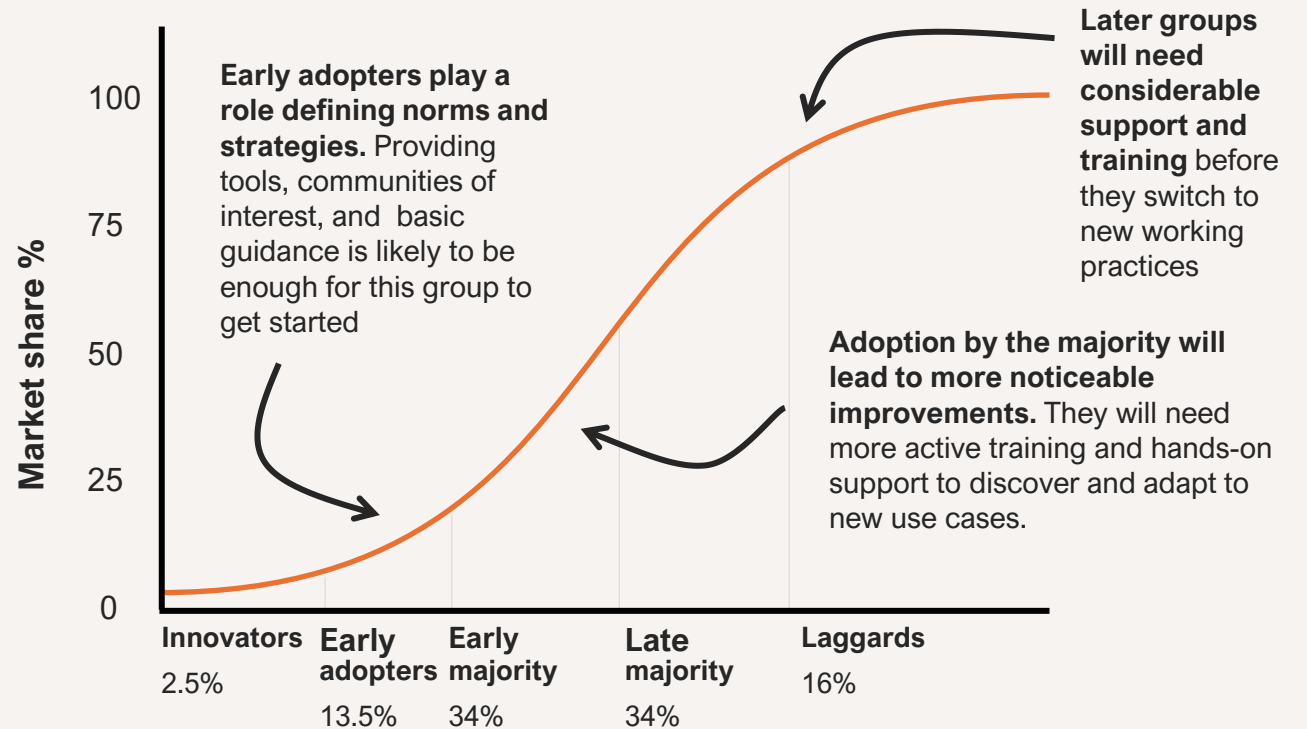
Civil servants are gradually trying AI at work, but without proper support this often leads to:

- Poor quality outputs that need to be redone
- Security and compliance risks
- Frustration when AI doesn't deliver expected results
- Concerns about losing core skills

The opportunity:

Among other things, when civil servants get the right support, AI can help them:

- Produce better quality work, more quickly, with less need for senior oversight
- Tackle growing numbers of complex queries more quickly
- Spend more time on creative problem solving and engaging with the public



Source: Diffusion of Innovations 'S Curve', adapted from Everett Rodgers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 1962

What we offer



Resources & tools

We create practical resources that help teams understand how AI can improve their specific work - from policy analysis to operational delivery.

Example: Our prompting guides help policy teams produce more comprehensive stakeholder analysis, whilst our security guidance ensures safe usage.



Hands-on support

We work with teams to show exactly how to use AI for their day-to-day tasks, building confidence through practice with real work examples.

Example: Instead of generic AI training, we're working with a school complaints unit to develop approaches to help them provide better, faster responses to parents.



Planning & strategy

We help leaders develop approaches that improve work quality whilst addressing legitimate concerns about capability and security.

Example: Working with deputy directors to create simple rules and principles that encourage innovation whilst maintaining standards.

What we offer

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Example: Our prompting framework and tools help civil servants craft prompts for their particular roles

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Problem solving

We work with teams and leaders to tackle specific AI-related challenges, and develop practical, workable approaches with the tools they have.

Example: we work directly with a policy team to test whether Microsoft Copilot can improve the quality and reliability of their submissions.

Accelerating real adoption

- There's a critical gap between learning about AI, and figuring out how to use it to change and improve the ways we work
- Our structured approach moves teams through three distinct phases – each designed to make AI relevant to people's work, build practical capability and deliver noticeable results.

The three stages needed to make AI stick

01

Explore: How can AI improve your work?

- Trying AI with your actual work tasks
- Spotting where AI adds most value
- Building confidence through hands-on practice

02

Develop: Making AI work for your team

- Practical support to develop approaches that work
- Focus on improving what you produce
- Training people in your team to help colleagues

03

Optimise: Embedding better practices

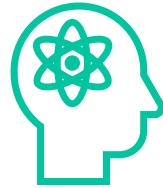
- Checking that work quality is actually getting better
- Making sure AI supports good decision-making
- Creating simple approaches that work long-term

Our People First approach to AI



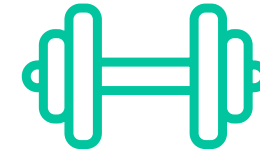
We tackle concerns about skills head on

- AI should help people do better work – not do the thinking for them
- We focus on building skills that will always be valuable, not just for one AI tool
- We help civil servants think through when to use AI and when their own judgement matters most



We work with what teams already know

- We start with existing strengths and knowledge
- We show how AI can help civil servants do what they're good at, even better, and support them where they're weakest



We build confidence, not dependence

- We believe deskilling could be a major risk of AI in the Civil Service
- We place the emphasis on thinking critically about what AI produces
- We provide support for developing AI skills as part of professional development

Our toolkit



Upskilling and discovery workshops

Teams learn about AI in the context of their own jobs and tasks, and practice developing effective prompts.

Example: A compliance team discovers how AI can help them spot inconsistencies across complex submissions.



AI deployment workshops

Collaborative sessions that help teams identify, test and develop specific points where AI can improve their work without disrupting effective practices.

Example: A policy team tests approaches with AI to help them produce better policy briefings and submissions.



AI Pioneers bootcamps

Two-day training programmes that upskill internal AI champions within teams.

Example: Three staff are trained to facilitate workshops and provide support to colleagues on AI, in turn upskilling their wider directorate.



AI quick wins review

Strategic reviews that identify quick wins for leaders and address concerns about quality and capability.

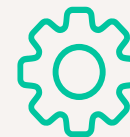
Example: We help an SLT work through their top five challenges and figure out where AI could help.



Implementation roadmaps

Working with leaders and their teams to develop sustainable approaches that improve work quality and build capability.

Example: Creating a directorate-wide strategy that encourages AI use whilst addressing concerns.



End-to-end support

Six-month programmes combining discovery, development, and integration to ensure lasting improvements.

Example: Supporting an operational delivery team from experimentation to reliable daily use.



“

Ben and Jack ran a brilliant workshop for policy and delivery staff in my division. The workshop was well tailored to our work, with examples that rang true and reflected day to day tasks. It was engaging, well-paced and fun. We all learnt a huge amount both about the possibilities but also the risks and how to put guard rails around our AI use.”

Alice Douglas

*Deputy Director, Department for
Education*

What we cover in our AI discovery workshops

Over the course of 2-3 hour in-person or virtual sessions with teams, we aim to cover a range of topics, including:

- **Building confidence in how generative AI works**, what it can and can't do, and how to use it safely and ethically in a government context.
- **Exploring real work tasks to identify practical AI use cases**: from summarising and drafting to idea generation and problem solving.
- **Developing practical prompting skills using the PICKSIE framework**, learning how to improve AI outputs through iteration and feedback.
- **Discussing risks, limitations and guardrails**: helping teams think critically about when to delegate tasks to AI and when to retain human control.
- **Supporting participants to leave with clear next steps on testing AI further in their work**, sharing lessons, and building team capacity.

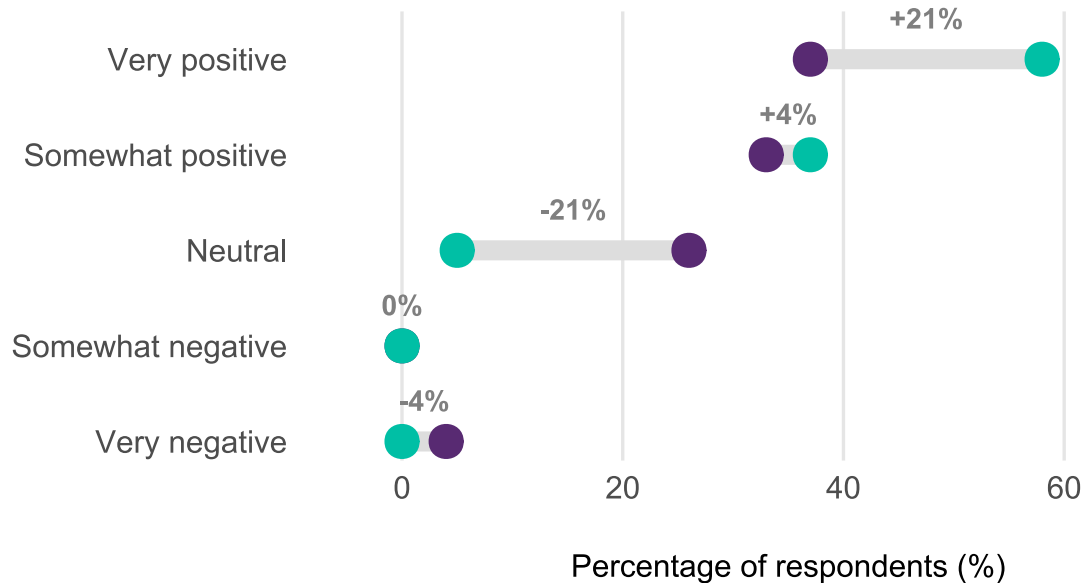
Our Discovery Workshops are already **boosting AI confidence** in the Department for Education

We've been running **Discovery Workshops** with parts of DfE including the Regions, Skills and Schools Groups, to improve confidence in using AI tools, and identify relevant **use cases** and **prompts**.

While we intend to continue working with them, we've already helped empower teams to better understand and use the AI tools at their disposal.

Sentiments improved after our workshops

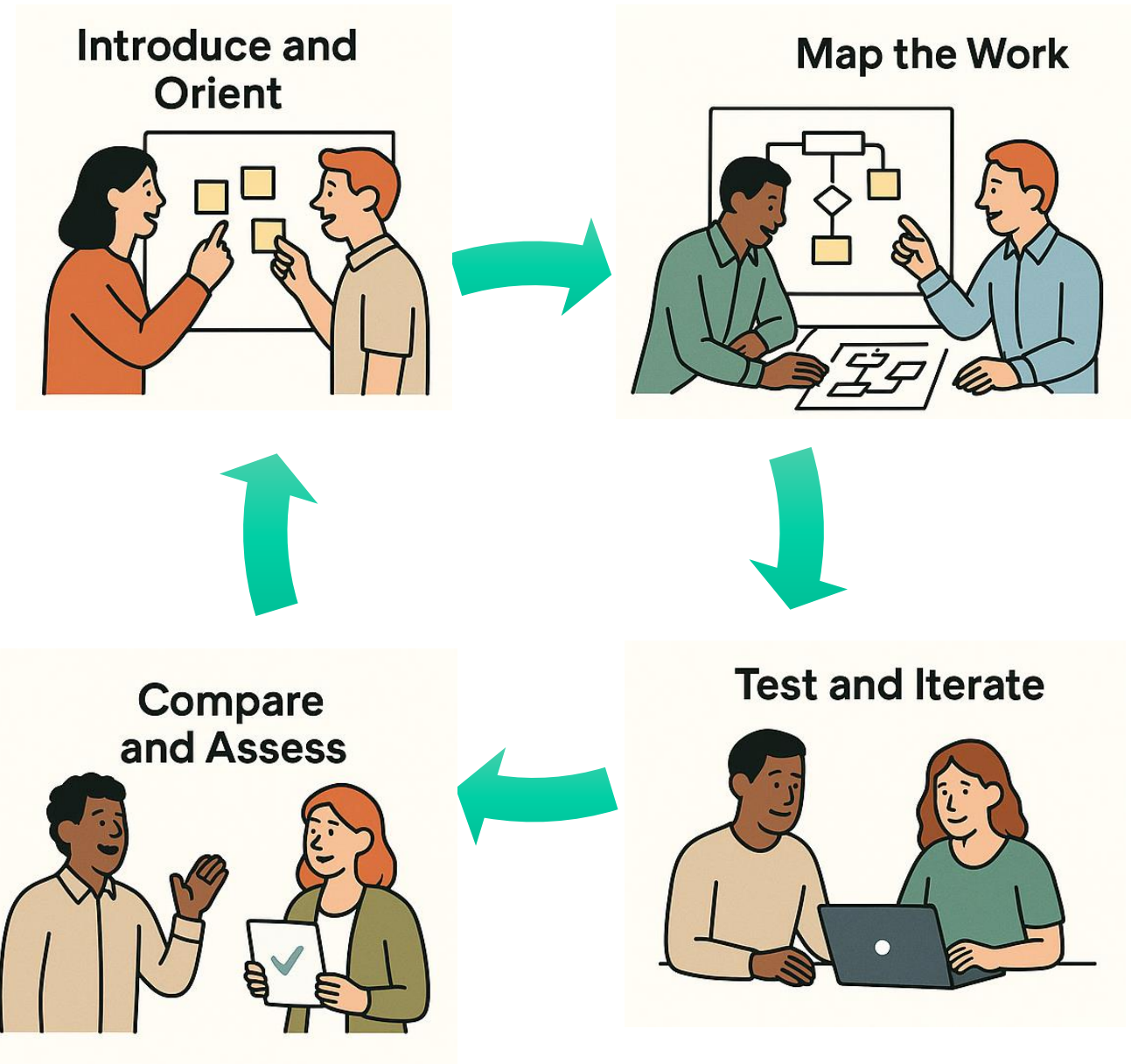
Percentage of respondents in each sentiment category **before** and **after** the workshop.



Source: Open InnovationTeam workshop surveydata, 2025

AI deployment workshops

- Following on from upskilling, AI deployment workshops help teams plan and test the use of generative AI for their own work
- We help them consider and prioritise where AI might have the greatest value – avoiding the natural tendency to focus on low-value use cases like document summarisation
- We also help them work through the friction and workflow issues that often prevent teams from making best use of AI in practice



About the team



Ben Taylor

Ben has worked on AI policy in the Open Innovation Team and Parliament over 8 years.



Jack Orlik

As a digital anthropologist, Jack has 13 years experience helping organisations and governments to innovate in the OECD, Nesta and elsewhere.



Megan Lynch

Meg has overseen Open Innovation Team AI projects for a range of departments, including the DfE AI Content Store.



Vasia Passaris

As our behavioural science expert, Vasia is helping develop techniques for embedding AI adoption in organisations based on emerging evidence.

Get in touch for a 30 minute chat

If you're interested in working with
us on AI adoption

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w [gov.uk/government/organisations/open-innovation-team](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/open-innovation-team)



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