

# The Scottish AI Register and AI in Public Services

In the last few years, AI (Artificial Intelligence) has gained significant public attention with the release of tools like ChatGPT. Policymakers are quickly turning to AI as a potential solution to challenges in public sector funding, productivity, and staffing levels.

AI has the potential to improve services and make work more rewarding. But without proper safeguards and worker involvement, it could also lead to unfair treatment, increased surveillance, and threats to jobs, privacy, and the experience of work.

## The Scottish AI Register

The Scottish AI Register provides information on the AI systems in use or in development within the Scottish public sector. It is now mandatory to register any use of AI within the public sector in Scotland. The register also provides access to; general descriptions of Scottish AI systems in use and in development; broad information on understanding of how AI works; more detailed information of what processes are being used, and how data is being used to inform decision making in public services. The Scottish AI register also provides the opportunity to provide feedback on those AI systems. You can visit the Scottish AI Register [here](#).

The Register also provides information about the Scottish AI Alliance, which is a partnership between [The Data Lab](#) and the Scottish Government. The Scottish AI Alliance is tasked with the delivery of Scotland's AI Strategy in "an open, transparent and collaborative way." Scotland's AI Strategy and the Scottish AI Alliance are under the ministerial portfolio of Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Small Business, Trade, and Innovation. You can read more about the Scottish AI Alliance and Scotland's AI strategy [here](#).

## UNISON's position on AI in the workplace and principles for AI in the public sector

AI has the potential to free workers from repetitive and mundane tasks, free up time for more meaningful aspects of work, make work safer and more accessible, and improve services delivered to the public. However, AI also poses significant risks, including job displacement, changes to job roles, increased surveillance and monitoring of workers, discrimination and unfair treatment, work intensification, and loss of privacy and data security.

These problems are multiplied in public sector workplaces, where AI doesn't just pose a risk to workers, but to public services themselves and the people who use them. UNISON believes that technology should serve people, not the other way around. AI use should always be **responsible, ethical, and fair**.

## KEY POINTS:

- The Scottish AI Register provides information on the AI systems in use or in development within the public sector in Scotland
- It is now mandatory to register any use of AI within the public sector in Scotland
- UNISON's AI Hub provides information and resources to members and branches



## Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

Stephen Low  
[s.low2@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.low2@unison.co.uk)

Susan Galloway  
[s.galloway@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.galloway@unison.co.uk)

Fiona Montgomery  
[f.montgomery@unison.co.uk](mailto:f.montgomery@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2811  
0800 0 857 857

UNISON believes that artificial intelligence has the potential to play a positive role in public services, but only if implemented responsibly and ethically. Our approach is guided by these core principles:

**1. Democratic participation and worker voice** – Public service workers and their unions must be involved in decisions about AI from the earliest stages of development through to implementation and review

**2. Augmentation not replacement** – AI should enhance human capabilities and judgement rather than replace them especially for complex decisions affecting vulnerable people who rely on public services

**3. Quality-focused implementation** – The introduction of AI into public services should priorities improving service quality and enhancing both worker and service user experience, not simply reducing costs and boosting efficiency.

**4. Fairness and equality** – AI systems in the public sector must be designed and used in ways that do not discriminate or reinforce existing inequalities, particularly given the public sector's responsibility to serve diverse communities.

**5. Transparency and explainability** – Public Sector workers and service users should understand how AI systems operate and the basis on which decisions that effect them are made.

**6. Respect for privacy:** The collection and use of data for public sector systems must respect individuals' privacy rights and maintain appropriate boundaries, especially when handling sensitive public service data.

**7. Fair distribution of benefits** – The productivity gains achieved through AI public services should be shared with the workforce and reinvested to improve services

**8. Beyond AI solutions** – The focus on evidenced-based policymaking and addressing underlying issues in public services rather than relying solely on technological solutions

## UNISON AI Hub

UNISON's AI Hub is a resource for UNISON members, reps, and activists on the fast-growing issue of artificial intelligence at work and in the UK's public services. The hub is there to help members understand the issues around AI in public sector workplaces, and to both negotiate and organise on these issues with their branches.

You can visit UNISON's AI Hub [here](#). UNISON Members and Branches can also get in touch tell us what's happening in your workplace and share if any new digital technologies are being introduced in your organisation or considered by your employer. Get in touch [here](#)

## Actions for Branches

- Visit UNISONs AI Hub and feedback/share any issues or concerns from your workplaces around AI and new digital technology use.

## Additional reading

- [AI Strategy for Scotland](#)
- [UNISON Bargaining Guide - New-technology-in-the-workplace](#)
- [UNISON AI Hub Resources](#)
- [TUC - The AI Bill Project](#)



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Stephen Low  
[s.low2@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.low2@unison.co.uk)

Susan Galloway  
[s.galloway@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.galloway@unison.co.uk)

Nicola Morris  
[N.Morris@unison.co.uk](mailto:N.Morris@unison.co.uk)

0141 342 2811  
0800 0 857 857