

Exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI) at SJOG: no one left behind in the digital age



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Visual representation generated via Microsoft Copilot to reflect the themes explored in this study.

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1. Introduction: AI and the Charity Sector

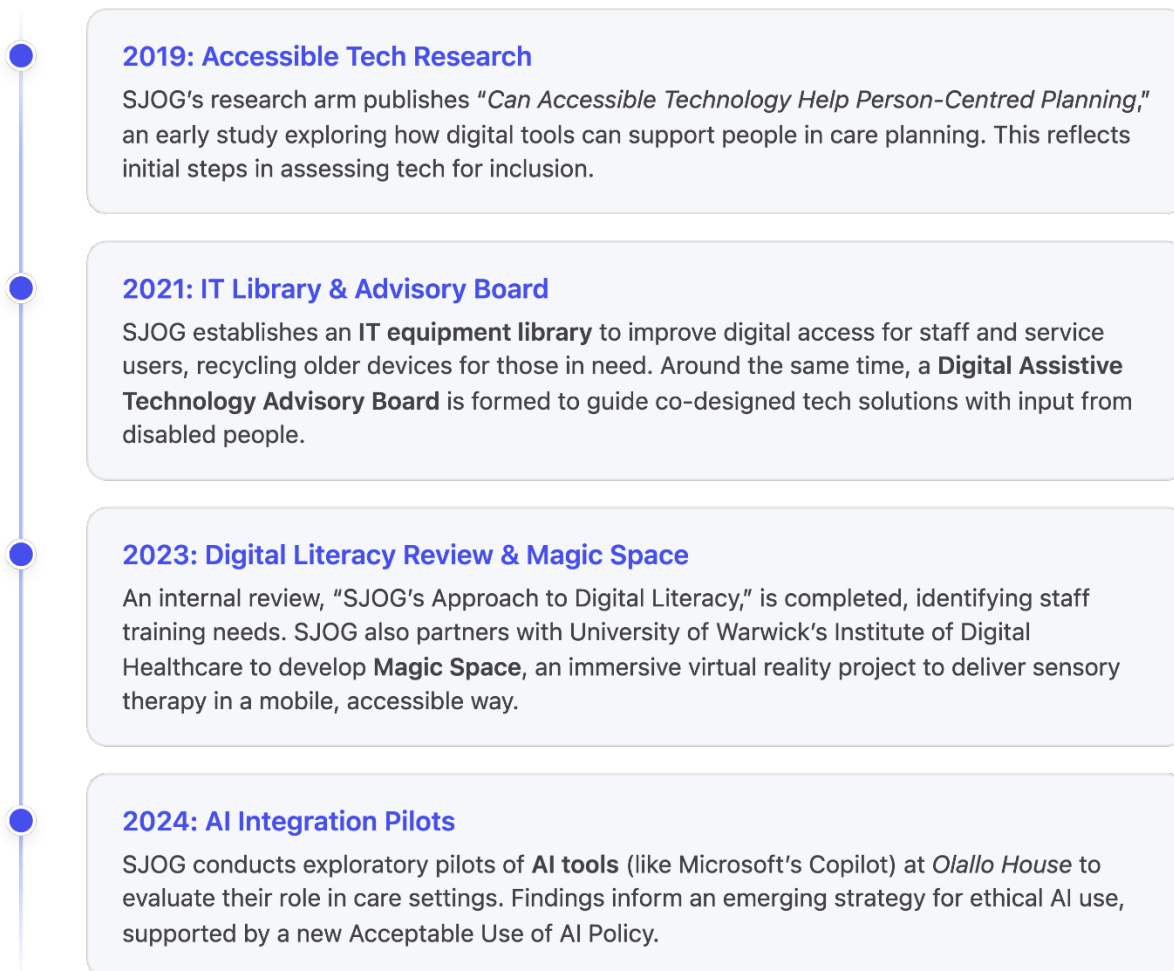
Over the past three decades, digital technologies have transformed the operational landscape of charitable organisations. From administrative tools to complex data systems, the sector has progressively adapted to an increasingly digital world. In health and social care, this digital evolution includes innovations such as telemedicine, patient portals, electronic health records, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies.

AI is particularly transformative, enabling machines to perform cognitive tasks traditionally associated with human intelligence—including learning, reasoning, and decision-making. According to McKinsey, AI is defined as ‘a machine’s ability to perform the cognitive functions we associate with human minds, such as perceiving, reasoning, learning, interacting with an environment, problem solving and even exercising creativity’.

But while the private sector has rapidly embraced AI, its adoption in charities is more nuanced. There are promising opportunities for operational efficiency, data management, and service delivery—but also concerns around ethical use, digital exclusion, and staff readiness.

2. AI at SJOG Hospitaller Services: Approach and Context

SJOG recognises the dual responsibility of adopting emerging technologies while ensuring alignment with its core values of hospitality, compassion, and respect. Through the years, SJOG has pursued a range of projects integrating digital solutions to enhance accessibility and inclusion. While this includes the introduction of digital care management systems, wider projects have been explored. The timeline below highlights major milestones in SJOG’s digital journey:



Yet, in this rapidly evolving landscape, technology is fundamentally transforming the way health and social care are delivered. SJOG has started to explore how AI technologies can enhance its care and operational models. While acknowledging AI's future potential, there is a need to evaluate current awareness, engagement, and readiness among colleagues before undertaking wide-scale adoption of AI-enabled tools such as Microsoft Copilot.

In this spirit, we've been investigating how AI can support colleagues and enhance services, while prioritising digital inclusion and ethical integrity. A preliminary research initiative was developed to explore:

- Colleague knowledge of and attitudes toward AI;
- The potential uses and limitations of AI tools in care settings;

- How AI integration can be guided by existing organisational policies, including data protection, confidentiality and accessibility.

This report draws from both qualitative and quantitative research, including internal surveys and experimental use of AI tools, to understand frontline colleagues' perceptions, concerns, and aspirations around AI.

A colleague survey at Olallo House, an experimental trial using Microsoft Copilot, analysis of dominant AI narratives in media and research, and a broader inquiry into AI and disability inclusion.

Case Study 1: Olallo House – Attitudes Toward AI

Service Overview

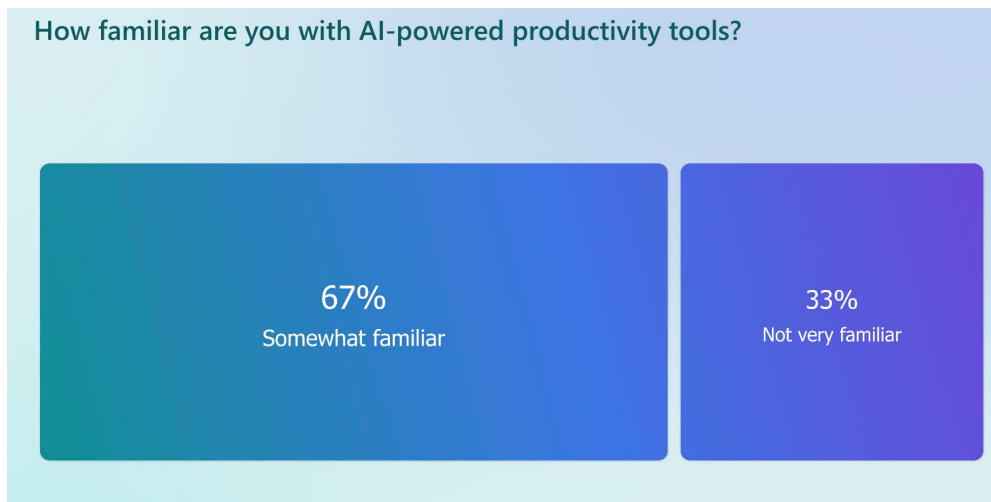
Olallo House is based in central London and provides 33 beds and specialist support for people experiencing street homelessness. The service supports individuals recovering from tuberculosis, people discharged from hospital and/or with ongoing mental and physical health conditions, survivors of modern-day slavery it works extensively with people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

Digital tools are integral to service delivery—from managing health referrals and developing care plans, to facilitating communication and record-keeping. Colleagues are required to be proficient with email systems, online forms, and digital databases.

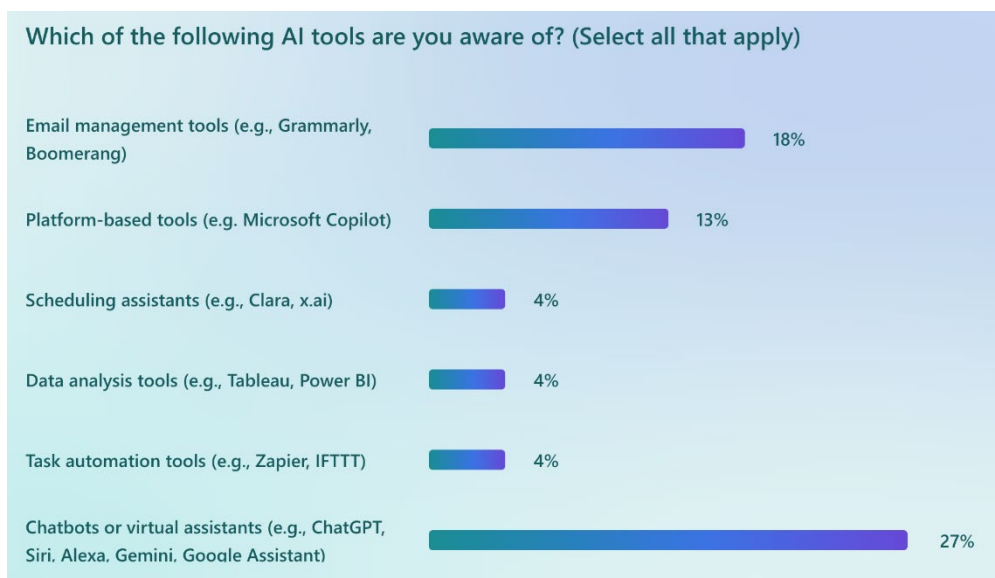
Methodology and findings

In July and August 2024, a 17-question survey was distributed to all 20 colleagues at Olallo House, with 10 responding. The survey captured demographic data, levels of digital literacy, familiarity with AI tools, and attitudes toward AI integration. Six responses were received.

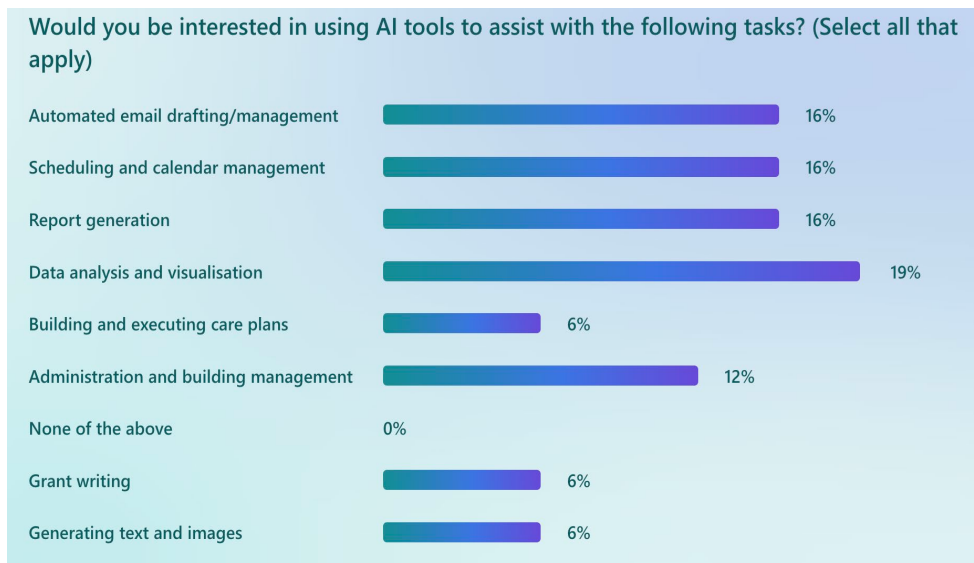
- **Familiarity with AI:** All respondents recognised that AI is not sentient but functions through human input. Most colleagues (4/6) reported some familiarity with AI tools, while two indicated no familiarity.



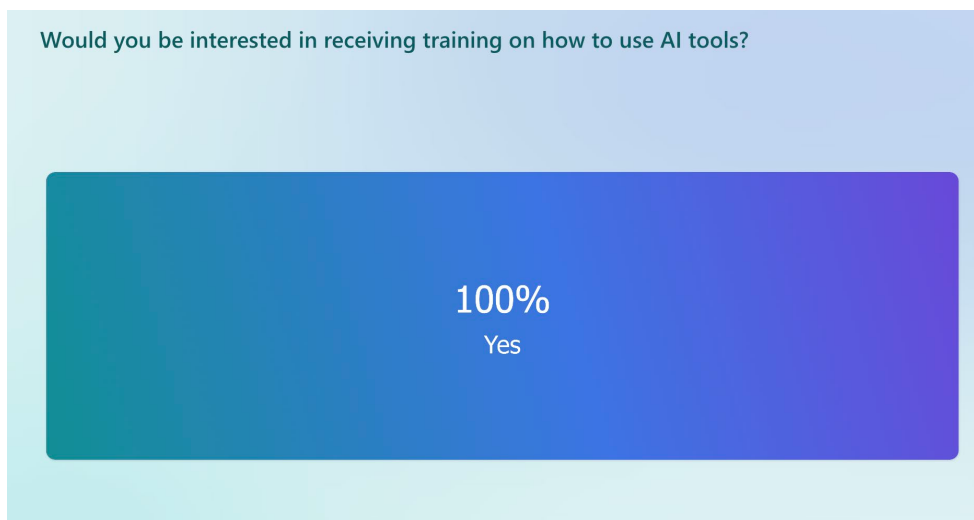
- **Tools Recognised:** Respondents named Canva, ChatGPT, Siri, Alexa, Meta platforms, and Grammarly as tools they recognised.
- **Tool Usage:** Despite general awareness, 83% (5/6) reported not using AI tools at work. One respondent used ChatGPT and Grammarly.



- **Perceived Benefits:** AI was seen as potentially helpful in report writing (83%), scheduling (83%), data visualisation (100%), and grant writing (20%).



- **Concerns:** Top concerns included data privacy (83%), accuracy and reliability of AI outputs (83%), and potential job displacement (33%).
- **Training Needs:** Further training is also need. 100% of participants indicated they would like to receive support with understanding the uses and implications of AI tools. Additionally, only one respondent felt 'very familiar' with the SJOG Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy, while the rest of colleagues would benefit from regular revisions of internal policies.



The survey conducted at Olallo House highlights a strong interest among colleagues in further AI training and integration into daily tasks, particularly for improving efficiency, managing time better, and enhancing communication. However, concerns about AI's accuracy, reliability, privacy, and security remain prevalent. While younger colleagues are more receptive to adopting new technologies, there is a noticeable gap in familiarity and usage of AI tools among colleagues. The survey reveals also the necessity for better guidance and training on AI usage, aligning with the charity's Data Security and Information Policy, to address the challenges of AI adoption in the day-to-day operations.

Case Study 2: Experimenting with Microsoft Copilot

To explore practical implications of AI integration, Artur Lucyk, project worker at Olallo House and tech enthusiast who is also piloting an AI policy monitoring tool for charities, tried Microsoft Copilot features in Word, Excel, Outlook, and Bing over several weeks.

His reflections focus on usability, impact on productivity, and learning curve of Microsoft Copilot tools and highlight both the promise and limitations of AI when embedded within the relational and service-delivery aspect of care.

The experience showed that while AI tools can save time on repetitive tasks like email drafting and summarising, the benefits are currently limited and context dependent. Effective use requires skilful prompt creation, and the technology remains at an experimental stage concerning accuracy and reliability in some areas.

Moreover, Artur explains that AI could not capture the nuance of client stories or the emotional complexity of care relationships:

'At times, it felt like an outsider trying to mimic empathy'

In fact, in a service like Olallo House, every day is shaped by urgent needs, system navigation, and compassion fatigue administrative duties are substantial, yet time is limited. Initially, AI tools offered Artur a sense of relief. Copilot's capacity to summarise documents, draft safeguarding updates, and rephrase emails proved useful. However, the learning curve was time consuming as effective prompting required experimentation, and outputs often needed significant revision. The following observations were made over this period:

1. The time and effort needed to produce appropriate prompts that accurately describe the needed help/outcome that contains all relevant information is, in most situations, comparable to the time and effort needed to write an email yourself.
2. Although Copilot is advertised and positioned as a ready product, the reality of the state of the technology is that (for the time being) the level of accuracy and reliability of outcomes requires revision and checking.
3. AI usage is a habit. Like all habits, this one too requires going through a particular learning curve as well as unlearning some of the old ones that have been very well-established in the workplace and in our digital skills.
4. Writing effective prompts with AI in an increasingly efficient manner will imply experimenting with AI-enabled tools for decreasing costs and effort over time.
5. Care sector actors (and even more so in social care) are not a primary target audience for AI-productivity tools right now, with creative industries benefiting from it the most. It is, however, a rapidly changing situation and transformative adoption of AI in all industries, including health and social care, is inevitable.

According to Artur, the real value of AI, lies not in replacing judgement but in lightening the cognitive load. Drafts, summaries, and templates are welcome, but must be filtered through the practitioner's ethics and understanding, with the lens of Hospitality, Compassion, and Respect Adoption, he warns, requires time, trust, and ongoing reflection.

Case Study 3: Microsoft Copilot, AI and research at SJOG

Research at SJOG plays a foundational role in supporting evidence-based, compassionate, and supportive service provision. The research programme is designed not only to identify emerging and unmet needs but also to enhance innovation, inform strategic development, support impact measurement, and strengthen fundraising and policy engagement.

Above all, it seeks to embed evidence-based practice across all services to ensure that interventions are effective, person-centred, and aligned with our mission and values.

Methods and Approaches

To achieve these aims, research and service evaluation takes on the following forms:

- **Qualitative and quantitative research:** interviews, surveys, focus groups, case studies, and service data analysis.
- **Community-based participatory approach:** involving people with lived experience, colleagues and partners in co-producing research.
- **Evidence-based practice:** integrating day-to-day expertise experiences to inform decision-making and service delivery.
- **Data analysis and recommendations:** literature reviews and analysis of outcomes to identify models of intervention and report suggestions and learnings.

The Role of AI in conducting research and gathering evidence

AI presents new opportunities for SJOG to strengthen its research capabilities. Several aspects that relate to data protection and time management concerns would benefit from tools designed by Microsoft Copilot. These include the possibility to record and transcribe meetings, interviews and training, the ability to improve presentations by creating tailored briefs and infographics, and the opportunity to summarise complex data and speed up literature reviews. Other functions that have been positively explored helped identify patterns, risks and evolution of practices from existing literature. AI can also generate visual formats of summaries, therefore improving accessibility.

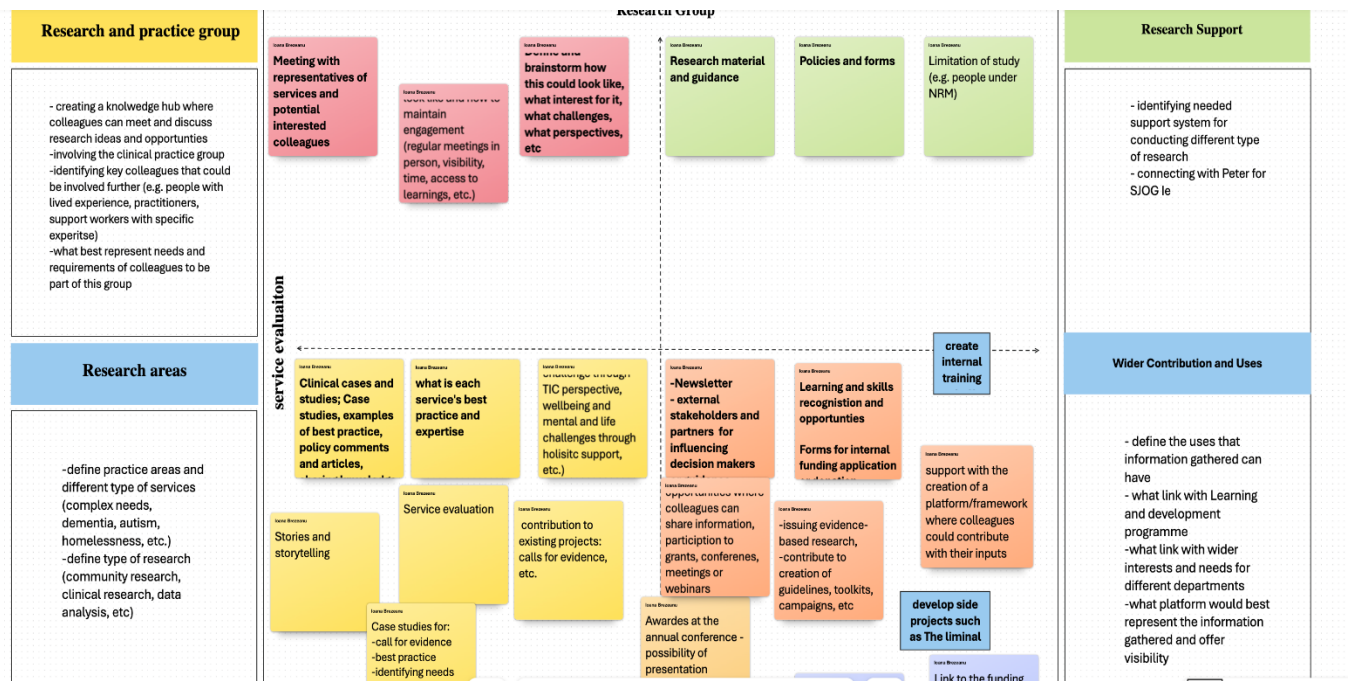
While adopting AI for drafting content and helping with processing complex data, a first observation is that further exploration is required for improving data collection at both service and organisational levels. The employment of digital tools and data platforms that are safe and centralised, would be a fundamental step in creating collaborative and accessible data repositories to host research data, tools, reports, and dashboards.

In fact, the newly introduction of a Research Hub project within SJOG, aiming to gather experiences and voices of colleagues and people we support and to share best practices to influence wider policy and sector development, poses further reflections on the adoption of digital tools and platforms that would help facilitate knowledge exchange and production.

In this process, the uses of Microsoft Copilot could represent an important tool to create a collective platform for:

- **Organising research collaboration** through Teams and OneNote with smart reminders, meeting summaries, and automated task tracking.

- Facilitating **collaborative research** through shared digital workspaces and automated documentation and data collection systems.
- Encouraging a **learning culture** where colleagues can access tailored insights, quantitative and qualitative data, training resources, and evidence summaries to inform practice and governance.
- **Shared frameworks for knowledge exchange**, enabling the co-production of insights and evidence-based information that is valuable across care sectors, communities, and people with lived experience.



Case Study 4: AI and Disability sector at SJOG

Disability affects an estimated 1.3 billion people globally—about 16% of the global population. Yet, disability is not static: it can be temporary, permanent, or fluctuate over time, and it may affect anyone, regardless of age or background. The impact of disability extends beyond the individual, influencing families, workplaces, and entire societies.

As our world becomes increasingly digital and reliant on artificial intelligence, the potential for technology to support disabled people grows, ranging from screen readers, voice assistants, and speech-to-text systems to specialised apps and smart home devices. However, the path to fully integrating them is not straightforward.

Challenges remain in the ways we define, measure, and address disability. Data on disability is often fragmented or insufficiently representative, making it hard to design technologies that can truly meet diverse needs.

Inclusive co-design involving disabled people, small-data methodologies, and ethical frameworks are crucial for effective and equitable technology development.

SJOG has launched multiple digital accessibility projects in recent years – from immersive mobile sensory unit for people with disabilities to an internal examination of Digital Assistive Technology - to ensure that technology adoption is guided by those people use it. The board, involving people with disabilities, together with colleagues working in service, are often engaged in co-producing and co-designing initiatives such as:

1. The SJOG Digital Library, a central repository of accessible digital resources and tools. The Digital Library was introduced to share best practices and assistive software across the charity.
2. Identifying what unmet needs for digital assistive tech exist in SJOG services? and how can emerging technologies (e.g. sensory devices, voice AI) be used to support individuals with complex or multiple disabilities?

This approach led to concrete projects such as trialling new sensory devices that incorporate not just sight and sound but also touch feedback for people with profound disabilities. One example is the Magic Space, which is a multi-sensory therapy experience for people with learning disabilities who might otherwise face barriers to traditional therapy environments. The VR setup was mobile and adaptable, effectively 'bringing the sensory room to the person'.

Another internal study identified a digital literacy gap, which had tangible consequences among colleagues working in the care sector: resistance to adopting new electronic care record systems, low confidence navigating e-learning, and frequent calls to IT support for basic issues.

Key Challenges Faced

-  **Staff Digital Skills Gap:** Early resistance and errors underscored the need for sustained training and peer support to build confidence.
-  **Data Security:** Safeguarding sensitive information became paramount as more data went digital – prompting strict AI use policies and staff education.
-  **Infrastructure Limits:** Uneven Wi-Fi and device access at some sites delayed tech rollouts, teaching SJOG to upgrade infrastructure before expecting digital uptake.
-  **User Fit:** Not every tech suits every person – co-design and offering low-tech alternatives remain vital when high-tech tools fall short.

In response, SJOG launched several initiatives:

- ✓ IT EDigital Library (2021) – Old but functional laptops and tablets from SJOG’s IT upgrades were refurbished and lent or gifted to staff and people who use our services who lacked devices. Staff who previously had no home computer could now practise using email, online training, and care apps on a donated device.
- ✓ User-Friendly Platforms – In tandem with training, SJOG’s IT team has been rolling out more intuitive software. For instance, in 2024/2025 the charity is implementing Nourish, a modern electronic care planning system, to replace outdated databases, which is expected to reduce frustration and save time.

Conclusion: learning and recommendations

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into health and social care—especially within SJOG—presents both promises and space for adaptation and improvement.

Being a charity that supports vulnerable people to lead fulfilling lives, our priority is to provide a compassionate, person-centred approach, by asking every person, ‘How can we be of help?’ AI has the potential to significantly ease the daily workload of colleagues. In doing so, it could not only make their work more manageable and less stressful but also create more time and space for the human, relational aspects of their roles.

In fact, care is relational, emotional, and often individual. The complexity of people’s lives—especially those navigating trauma, disability, exclusion, or end-of-life situations—cannot be fully captured through algorithms. AI systems still struggle to recognise the nuance, context, and empathy that represent the best care relationships and lived experience.

As Artur mentioned, AI can mimic, but not replicate, empathy – therefore, the human dimension must remain central.

As demonstrated across the case studies, the greatest potential of AI lies not in replacing human judgement or empathy, but in reducing administrative burdens, enhancing exchange, and supporting colleagues in delivering compassionate, evidence-based care and knowledge.

One size doesn't fit all, by discovering that a tool that works for one person might frustrate another. For instance, a high-tech solution might overwhelm someone who prefers a simple, familiar aid, therefore it is important to always have alternative options and involve users in choosing what suits them.

This user-centric approach helps avoid wasted effort on technologies that people wouldn't use. It also highlighted the need for ongoing feedback loops; SJOG now routinely gathers feedback to refine digital tools.

AI tools, including platforms like Microsoft Copilot, can support colleagues at SJOG by summarising, organising, and visualising information. But their outputs must be verified, ethically reviewed, and interpreted through the lens of professional experience.

The practices and perspectives of colleagues also reveal persistent concerns around data protection, content reliability, and the safe sharing of information. Even where internal policies provide clear boundaries, the need for continuous training and literacy in data ethics and digital tools remains present. Training, therefore, must include functionality, awareness, consent, accessibility, and the limitations of AI.

At present, the use of AI tools within SJOG is governed by strict guidelines to ensure data protection, information security, and ethical practice. A few internal policies including the Acceptable Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy and Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy ensure that all AI use aligns with GDPR regulations and maintains accountability, and integrity in practice.

The policies aim to outline the acceptable and prohibited practices of AI at SJOG, claiming the tools that have been approved by SJOG's IT team—primarily those within the Microsoft Office 365 environment such as Microsoft Copilot—may be used.

As SJOG continues developing its research and innovation infrastructure—including the establishment of a Research Hub—it must do so with care. Centralised data repositories, collaborative platforms, and AI-assisted analytics hold great potential for knowledge production, policy influence, and practice improvement. However, this work must be

inclusive, ethical, and participatory grounded in co-produced insights, lived experience, and clear governance.

Recommendations include:

- **Invest in digital literacy and AI training**, with a strong focus on ethical awareness, data protection, and responsible use of generative tools.
- **Regularly update AI policies and acceptable use guidelines**, keeping pace with technological changes and sector-specific needs.
- **Establish a centralised, secure data-sharing platform** with AI-enabled tools to streamline data analysis, improve accessibility, and enhance cross-organisational and cross-expertise learning.
- **Development of AI tools** that support narrative analysis and help surface unmet needs and individual perspectives.
- **Support for methodological innovation and adoption of tools** that improve drafting and summarising information, help with visual representation of data, and facilitate real-time qualitative analysis, and participatory research platforms.

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