

westsussex.gov.uk



Artificial Intelligence

Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (often referred to as AI) is the ability of machines or software to perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence. AI systems can process and learn from information, and act upon or learn from predictions based on that learning. AI is a broad field and encompasses many different types of systems and approaches to machine intelligence. Some examples of AI being used in different ways are:

- **Medical Diagnosis** – Scanning and analysing huge volumes of medical images and then predicting the need for treatment.
- **Translation** - Real-time language translation without the need for a traditional multilingual translator (person).
- **Retail Recommendations** – Scanning consumption trends and frequencies to recommend re-orders or cross-selling to other products.
- **Fraud Prevention** – scanning in real time for transactions that do not meet spending trends, thresholds, or purchasing channels etc. and then flagging a check or deferral to avoid financial loss.

2. How can AI be used at WSCC?

When applied effectively in a local government setting, AI can be used to:

- Provide simple, low cost, round-the-clock automated access to public services.
- Undertake targeted engagement with residents and communities.
- Analyse trends and performance, supporting education and development.
- Automate low complexity, high volume tasks to free up capacity and reduce backlogs.
- Trigger processes through capture and processing of information from disparate sources.
- Use available information to identify trends and recommend early interventions.
- Consume data at scale and complete deep analysis in relation to source or context, e.g. information dissemination, financial management, quality of service trends, risk management, or scenario modelling.

3. What are the benefits for residents?

As we modernise the way we work, we are using AI and digital tools to enhance the services we provide to our community. Here's how this benefits residents:

- **Faster, More Responsive Services**
AI helps process requests and information more quickly, meaning shorter wait times and faster responses to enquiries.
- **24/7 Access to Support**
With AI residents assistants, residents can get help or find information at any time - not just during office hours.

- **More Personalised Services**
By analysing data (securely and ethically), we can better understand residents' needs and tailor services to be more relevant and effective.
- **Smarter Use of Resources**
AI helps identify where services are most needed, so we can allocate resources more efficiently and fairly across the community.
- **Improved Accuracy and Fewer Errors**
Automation reduces the risk of human error in tasks like form processing or data entry, leading to more reliable outcomes for residents.
- **More Time for Human Interaction**
By automating certain tasks, staff have more time to focus on what matters most - supporting people directly and compassionately.

4. How are we using AI and/or planning to use it in the future?

The objectives of the Digital Strategy are to become a digital organisation, provide more choice in how people access council services and interact with us, harness the power of digital technology to improve services, and empower staff to work efficiently and develop their digital skills and knowledge.

In summary, we are using AI in the council to simplify, streamline, and speed up processes and interactions, improving operational efficiency and achieving better value for money.

Our use of AI at West Sussex County Council began in Sept 2024 when we implemented the CCAIP digital platform in the Customer Service Centre. This technology not only provides greater understanding and management of demand into the council but is also the foundation for our future use of digital and AI technology and tools, such as AI assistants (or bots) to answer resident queries and assist staff in their roles.

Resident AI Assistants (voice and chat assistants)

There are also AI assistants answering residents calls into the Customer Service Centre and responding to queries and requests for information. By introducing AI assistants, we are increasing the number of ways residents can interact with us and providing a quick, reliable way for residents to access information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Internal Staff Assistants (voice and chat assistants)

There is now an Adults AI staff assistant which supports staff in their roles by scanning policy and process documentation in a fraction of the time it would take to do manually. This has been extremely effective in saving time and effort, and more staff assistants will follow in areas such as HR, Pensions and Learning & Development, allowing council staff across all services quicker access to information and support at a time that suits them best. AI staff assistants are also being developed to support users of systems such as Power BI.

Internal AI Staff Tools

Staff AI tools are being developed by West Sussex County Council IT colleagues to provide support, improve efficiency, and make certain everyday tasks quicker. For instance, an AI translation tool will be able to instantly translate text to text, or voice to text, removing the need to use a translation service, saving time and money for the council.

Web Channel

A new web channel as part of a wider platform powered by AI will replace the existing WSCC website ready for early 2026 to further our digital strategy ambitions.

5. How are residents being prepared for these changes and what about those residents who are not digitally aware or capable?

We recognise that not everyone is able to, or would like to, use more technology and some may need additional support interacting successfully with AI resident assistants (voice and chat bots). We value the personal interaction that we get from speaking to someone face to face or talking to someone on the telephone, and these options will still be available. The introduction of AI resident assistants is not about closing doors and taking away choices for those who need them. Instead, it's about opening new doors, providing alternative ways to interact with the council at a time that suits residents.

As part of the council's [Digital Strategy](#), we have developed the [Digital Inclusion, Access and Safety Framework](#) that sets out how everyone in West Sussex can benefit from being online. It describes the action we are taking to ensure that everyone can go online and interact successfully with AI resident assistants if they wish, regardless of where they live, their ability, culture, language, income, or skills. All council libraries provide free access to Wi-Fi and PCs with trained staff and volunteer support to help people get online, access digital services and resources, and interact with AI resident assistants. Over 1200 people a year access our Digital Volunteer support sessions and library staff answer over 24,000 digital enquiries annually.

6. AI has been around for a while, so why hasn't the council prioritised introducing this technology sooner?

It takes time to put the groundwork in place to ensure that the technology lands well. Services and management need to understand both the dependencies on successful use (good quality data) but also consider the work and workforce implications that introduction of such technologies can bring.

