# Community Care to explore AI’s ethical and practical impact on social work practice



Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an ever-more prominent feature in social work, presenting both exciting opportunities and notable challenges for practitioners and those they serve. As organisations and professionals are increasingly called to navigate this evolving landscape, Community Care is set to host a pivotal online event on 9 July 2025. This half-day gathering aims to enhance understanding around these technological advancements and their implications for social work practice.

The event will kick off with insights shared by Dr Tarsem Singh Cooner and Dr Caroline Webb from the University of Birmingham. They will discuss social workers’ experiences with generative AI, a technology designed to create new content based on user prompts. This exploration follows recent research highlighting not only the potential applications of generative AI but also ethical concerns, particularly regarding data privacy and algorithmic bias. According to experts, there remains much uncertainty concerning how AI can enhance or, conversely, detract from the nuanced decision-making that is central to social work.

Further sessions will delve into the practical integration of AI tools within social care settings. Experts Kevin Yong from Coram-i and Jonny Hoyle of North Yorkshire County Council will demonstrate the Policy Buddy tool, which has been designed to streamline caseload management and policy compliance. This AI-driven resource draws upon extensive local and national guidelines to support social workers in finding accurate information swiftly, thereby promoting consistent application of policy. This technological progress marks a significant shift towards leveraging AI for practical outcomes; however, it is vital to remain aware of the potential pitfalls inherent in such systems.

Educational aspects of AI will also be examined, with Dr Clare Stone from Lancaster University discussing her findings on the use of generative AI within social work education. While many students and educators are employing AI tools, often without proper guidance or official protocols, her research underscores a pressing need for clear strategies that govern their ethical use. As the landscape evolves, an absence of established policies may inadvertently encourage practices that are unaligned with professional standards and ethics.

The event will conclude with a panel discussion featuring digital safeguarding expert Dr Peter Buzzi, Social Workers Union chair Dave Callow, and data scientist Sean Manzi from the Dartington Service Design Lab. This closing segment will tackle the vital issues of ethics and equity related to AI's integration into social work. Topics such as data bias, transparency, and accountability will come under scrutiny, with an emphasis on fostering inclusive data practices. There is a prevailing concern that without careful oversight, AI could exacerbate existing inequalities, a point underscored by several case studies revealing concerning outcomes arising from the use of AI tools.

For example, reports of AI-driven tools in child welfare settings have raised alarms over potential discrimination against parents, especially those with disabilities. Instances where such tools fail to account for the complexities of human behaviour and family dynamics have led to devastating consequences, including wrongful custody decisions. This highlights the urgent need for ethical frameworks guiding AI applications in sensitive areas like social work, ensuring that technology serves to support rather than replace human judgement.

However, it is worth noting that AI also holds the potential to bridge inequality gaps. Initiatives like PaidLeave.ai illustrate how AI can be harnessed for social good, providing tailored support to vulnerable communities. Engaging these groups in the design process is critical to ensure that the benefits of AI are equitably distributed, rather than perpetuating existing biases.

As the discourse surrounding AI in social work advances, it is evident that ongoing dialogue and critical examination of its applications are essential. The Community Care event is set to provide a platform for such discussions, encouraging a constructive approach to integrating AI into social work practice while carefully considering its ethical implications.

### Reference Map

1. Lead article summarising the event and its themes
2. Related insights on social workers' experiences with AI
3. Discussion of AI tools and their applications in fostering care
4. Ethical challenges related to AI in social work
5. Potential of AI to address social inequalities
6. Analytical perspectives on the ethical use of AI in practice
7. Critical examination of AI's role in case note writing

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2025/05/09/ai-and-social-work-learn-about-the-opportunities-and-risks/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2025/05/09/ai-and-social-work-learn-about-the-opportunities-and-risks/> - This article discusses the increasing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work and the uncertainties regarding its impact on practice and those who rely on social care. It announces a half-day online event scheduled for July 9, 2025, organized by Community Care, aimed at exploring the opportunities and risks associated with AI in social work. The event will feature experts discussing various topics, including social workers' experiences with generative AI, the role of AI in children's and adults' services, the use of generative AI in social work education, and ethical and equity-related considerations of using AI in social work.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/f803bf3faa02bc90d285e68b1d2bc560> - This article examines the use of an AI-powered tool called Family-Match, designed to enhance the adoption process for vulnerable foster children by predicting lasting adoptive family matches. Despite its promotion, the tool's success has been limited, with states like Virginia and Georgia dropping trials due to low adoption results and unhelpful matches. Social workers have expressed concerns about the tool’s effectiveness, transparency in data handling, and potential biases. Critics argue that the tool may not address the complexities of human behavior needed for successful adoptions and raise concerns about data security and ethical use of sensitive information.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/02469a9ad3ed3e9a31ddae68838bc76e> - This article highlights concerns about AI-driven tools in child welfare cases potentially discriminating against parents with disabilities. It details the experience of Lauren and Andrew Hackney, who lost custody of their child after seeking medical attention, suspecting that an AI tool flagged them due to their developmental disabilities. The U.S. Justice Department is investigating whether the tool discriminates against disabled individuals. Critics argue that such tools can perpetuate biases and unfairly target vulnerable groups, emphasizing the need for ethical considerations in AI applications within social work.
5. <https://time.com/6342280/ai-paid-leave-social-good/> - This article discusses the potential of AI to bridge inequality gaps by providing innovative solutions to societal issues. It highlights advancements in educational AI, such as AI tutors aiding low-income students, and AI supporting people with disabilities. The article also mentions the launch of PaidLeave.ai by the Moms First organization to assist New York parents in accessing paid leave benefits, particularly benefiting low-income women. It emphasizes the importance of involving vulnerable communities in the design of AI solutions to ensure they benefit from these technologies and advocates for ethical and innovative AI development.
6. <https://jswve.org/volume-20/issue-2/item-05/> - This article examines the ethical challenges associated with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work. It discusses issues such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, transparency, client misdiagnosis, algorithmic bias, and the ethical use of evidence-based AI tools. The author emphasizes the need for social workers to understand these ethical challenges and outlines strategies for the ethical use of AI, including familiarizing themselves with AI protocols, reviewing relevant ethical standards, and ensuring compliance with practice standards.
7. <https://www.theaisocialworker.com/blog/ai-in-social-work-a-critical-analysis-of-using-ai-for-case-note-writing> - This article provides a critical analysis of using artificial intelligence (AI) for case note writing in social work. It discusses ethical concerns such as privacy and confidentiality, accuracy and nuance, depersonalization, overreliance on technology, algorithmic bias, and legal and professional liability. The author emphasizes the importance of maintaining client confidentiality, ensuring the accuracy of AI-generated notes, and balancing the use of AI with professional judgment to avoid potential pitfalls in social work practice.