Insights Report

Learnings and Recommendations from the Copilot Trial

Future of Work Programme

Research & Ethics Workstream

June 2024

Contents

Executive Summary

The Future of Work programme has been established to explore how the impact of technological, generational, and social shifts will change the way we work to support our staff and residents. The programme aims to inspire and develop a deep understanding across communities and to explore the opportunities presented by the adoption of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, within the council.

Microsoft Copilot is a GenAI tool that can assist our staff with various tasks, such as writing, research, data analysis, and communication. Copilot can generate high-quality content, suggest relevant information, and automate workflows. Copilot is designed to be a collaborative and adaptive partner that can learn from our staff and improve over time.

To assess the feasibility and desirability of using Copilot in our organisation, we conducted a trial with staff members from different teams and roles. The 4-month trial period ran from March-Mid June 2024, during which we collected data from surveys, engagement sessions, and qualitative interviews to understand the impacts of using such tool in the daily work of our staff.

Findings

The main findings of our research are:

- **Our staff have generally positive attitudes and high expectations towards Copilot**. They perceive Copilot as a useful and innovative tool that can enhance their productivity, their wellbeing, their creativity, and the quality of their work.
- **Our staff have experienced benefits from using Copilot**. They report that Copilot has helped them save time, improve communication, generate new ideas, and learn new skills. They also provide examples of how Copilot has enabled them to complete challenging and complex tasks, such as writing proposals, drafting complex communications, analysing data, and creating presentations.
- **Our staff have encountered some challenges and risks when using Copilot**. They mention that Copilot sometimes produces inaccurate, irrelevant, or inappropriate content, which requires careful review and editing. They also express some concerns about the reliability, security, and ethics of Copilot, and the impact of Copilot on their autonomy and identity as professionals.
- **Some of our staff have reflected on best practices and guidelines for using Copilot ethically and effectively**. They suggest that Copilot should be used as a complementary and supportive tool, not as a replacement or substitute for human intelligence and judgment. They also recommend that Copilot should be used with transparency, accountability, and responsibility.

Organisation's readiness to use AI

Three key areas of work were identified that would need support to enhance the council's readiness in the use of AI: **organisational culture, skills development and responsible and ethical use of AI.**

- The workforce was found to have varying levels of experimentation and openness to Copilot and new technology in general, which has influenced their perceived relevance, learning and capacity, and attitudes towards AI.
- The workforce was found to have a varying level of digital literacy, with some teams needing additional support for a successful adoption of Copilot.
- Some staff had concerns around the ethical issues that can arise from using Copilot, such as security breaches, the misuse of the tool, and their roles becoming redundant.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of our research, we propose the following recommendations for adopting and using Copilot in our organisation:

01_Enhancing digital literacy and confidence: Develop a plan to enhance the digital skills and confidence of staff beyond the use of Copilot, by providing training, support, and resources on various digital tools and platforms that can support their work.

02_Supporting the adoption of Copilot: Develop a flexible onboarding journey for Copilot users that provides staff with different support options depending on their needs and preferences. This way, we can ensure better adoption of the tool and help staff use it effectively and confidently in their work.

03_Attracting a talented workforce: Offer a Copilot license and training as part of our employment offer, which can attract and retain talented and digitally skilled staff who can use AI tools to enhance and innovate in their work.

04_Creating opportunities to talk about AI and ethics: Create a Tech and Ethics group with residents to discuss and co-create a responsible and inclusive use of GenAI in the council.

These recommendations can help ensure that Copilot is used in a way that benefits our staff, our residents, and our organisation as a whole.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the research developed by the Future of Work's Research Workstream to explore how our staff feel and facilitate strategic choices and policy creation as part of the programme. The research examines how people have interacted with Copilot during the trial, and understanding how this can influence the future of work. The report aims to provide evidence and insights to support our business case for investing in Copilot.

Research objectives

We have conducted a mixed-methods study involving surveys, engagement sessions, and interviews with our staff using Copilot as part of the trial. Our research has focused on exploring five main areas:

- **Experience with Copilot:** Understand the expectations, needs, preferences, and challenges of our staff regarding the use of Copilot in our organisation.
- **Benefits and risks of using Copilot:** Explore the potential benefits and risks of using Copilot in our organisation.
- **Impacts of using Copilot:** Measure the impact and outcomes of using Copilot in our organisation.
- **Ethical considerations:** Identify the best practices and guidelines for using Copilot ethically and effectively in our organisation.
- **How a Copilot roll out looks like:** Develop recommendations and strategies for implementing Copilot in our organisation.

By exploring these areas, we hope to not only inform our decision-making about Copilot, but also to understand how our organisation can be ready to adopt new GenAI tools in the future.

Research activities

The main research activities consisted of:

- Collaborative engagement involvement from ICT department and programme team leads, throughout trial period
- 9 engagement sessions with trial participants from different teams, varying from 30 minutes to an hour
- 10 30-minute semi-structured interviews with trial participants
- 5 surveys to collect feedback from trial participants
- 2 expert interviews with staff working on Copilot trials in other local authorities
- 3 conferences on AI and local government, organised by Brent Council, the GLA, and AWS.

More detail on research activities in Appendix 1.

Research Insights

A. Definitions of Copilot

We wanted to know how staff copilot license holders viewed and valued Copilot as a tool. To find out, we asked 10 of them to give us their definitions of Copilot, based on their perceived value. The responses varied, but some common themes emerged.

Most of them described Copilot as an assistant, a support, or a helper to be more efficient, productive, and faster in their tasks, and they recognised Copilot as a useful tool that makes their life easier. They also emphasised the need to communicate clearly with it.

Figure 1: Word cloud generated with users' responses to the question "How would you define Copilot?"

B. Uses of Copilot

One of the main objectives of this research was to understand how staff use Copilot in their daily work. Users have reported using Copilot in diverse situations, but the main uses are related to meetings and content generation. Some users have also used Copilot for more specialised tasks, such as data analysis, automation of tasks, and research. Although users still struggle with some of the features of Copilot, such as its accuracy, reliability, and responsiveness, they generally have found many benefits both as an assistant and as a collaborator.

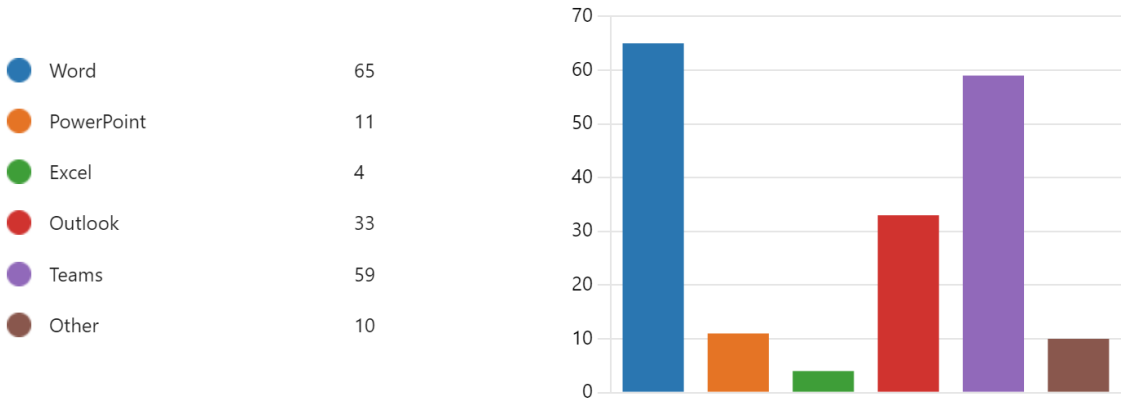


Figure 2: Copilot usage based on apps. Responses from 95 Copilot users. Users responding "Other" mainly mentioned Copilot on Bing, while a couple mentioned MS Forms

Moreover, the type of usage varies depending on the roles of the Copilot users:

- Users in **data-heavy roles** appreciate Copilot's ability to handle large datasets and streamline reporting processes.
- Those in **content creation and communication roles** find value in Copilot's capability to generate and refine written material.
- Employees with **managerial or strategic responsibilities** see Copilot as a tool that can assist with planning, analysis, and documentation, enhancing their ability to lead and manage effectively.

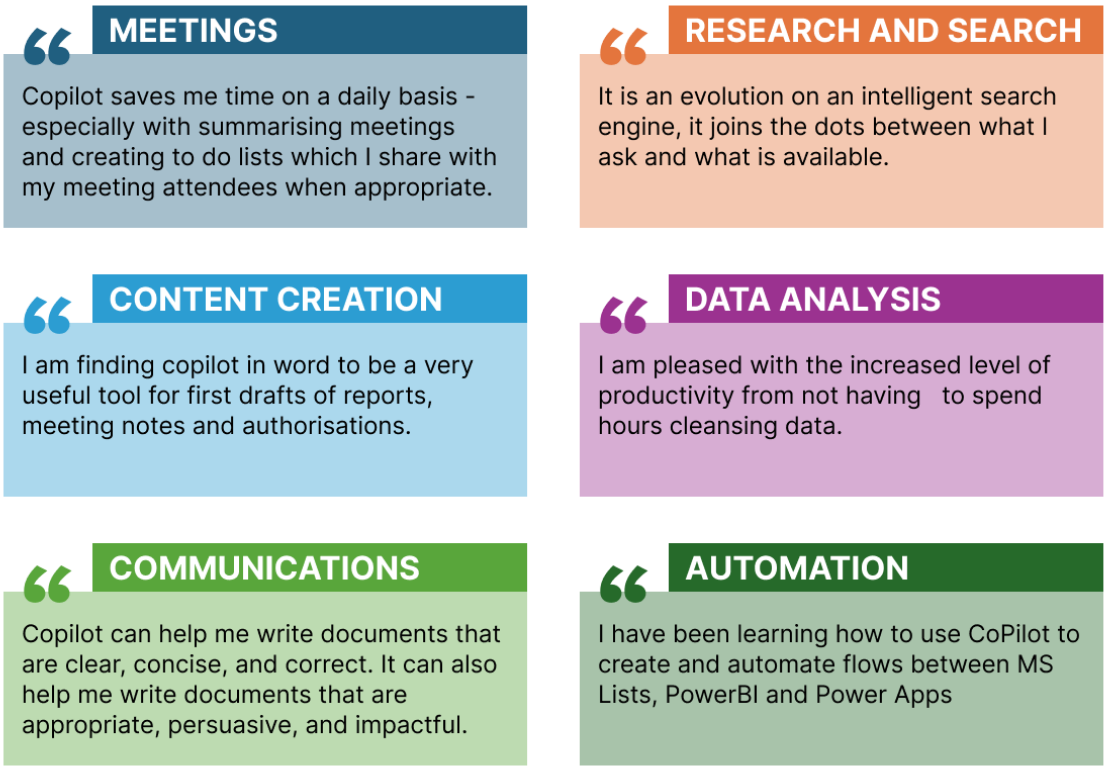


Figure 3: Main uses reported by users, with some quotes from the periodic surveys

Meetings

Using Copilot to assist in meetings is the most mentioned usage among users, as it has helped them improve the process of organising, attending and following up on meetings. This includes:

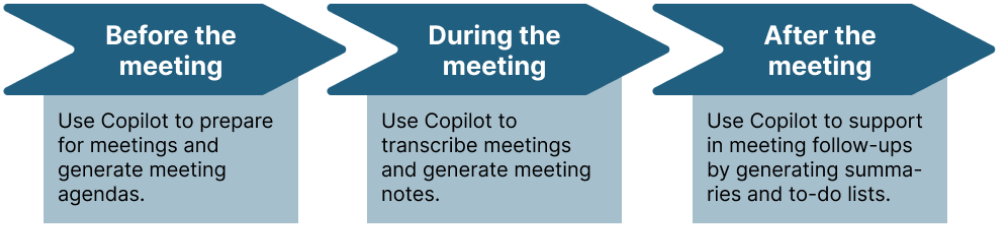


Figure 4: How users use Copilot to help them with meetings

It boosts productivity and frees users from the pressure of taking notes but struggles to work well in face-to-face meetings as it is unable to detect different speakers. Transcription with precision is seen as a challenge in a hybrid work format.

Meeting considerations such as location, necessity of meeting, clarifying who is speaking, clarity of purpose of meeting may need to be reviewed to optimise meeting experiences.

Content Creation

One of the main uses of Copilot among users is to help them create different types of content. Users appreciate that Copilot can generate first drafts in various formats, such as documents, business cases, proposals, reports, pitches, or presentations, and save them time and effort. Copilot has also assisted users with more specialised tasks, such as creating forms and surveys.

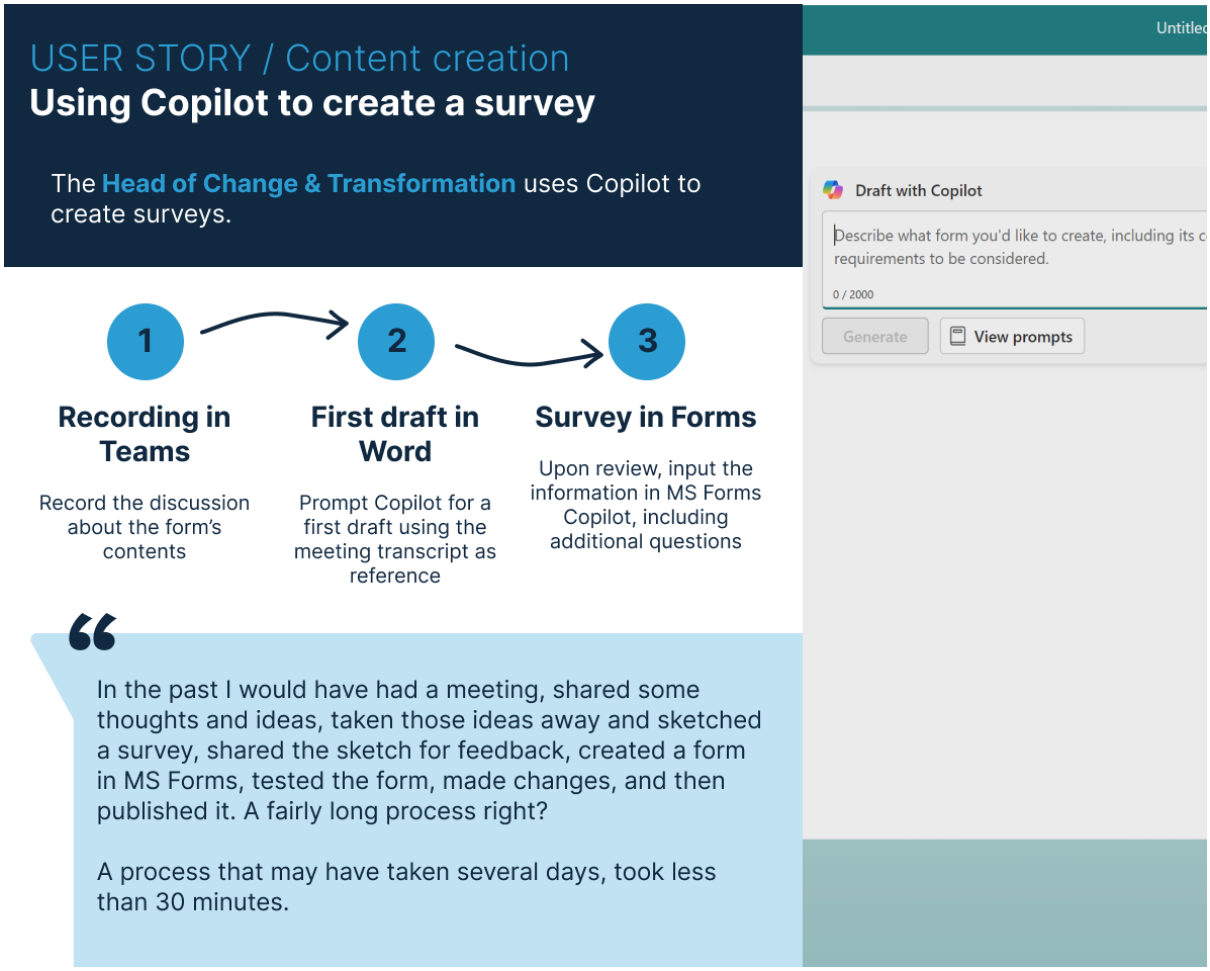


Figure 5: Example of staff using Copilot for content creation

Communications

One of the common ways that users have employed Copilot is to help them with their communications, especially when they need to structure and write emails. Users value how Copilot can enhance their communication skills by providing them with suggestions for complex or difficult messages, such as letters for residents, or more engaging and persuasive communications. Users with English as an additional language have found this useful to help them be more confident about their communication.

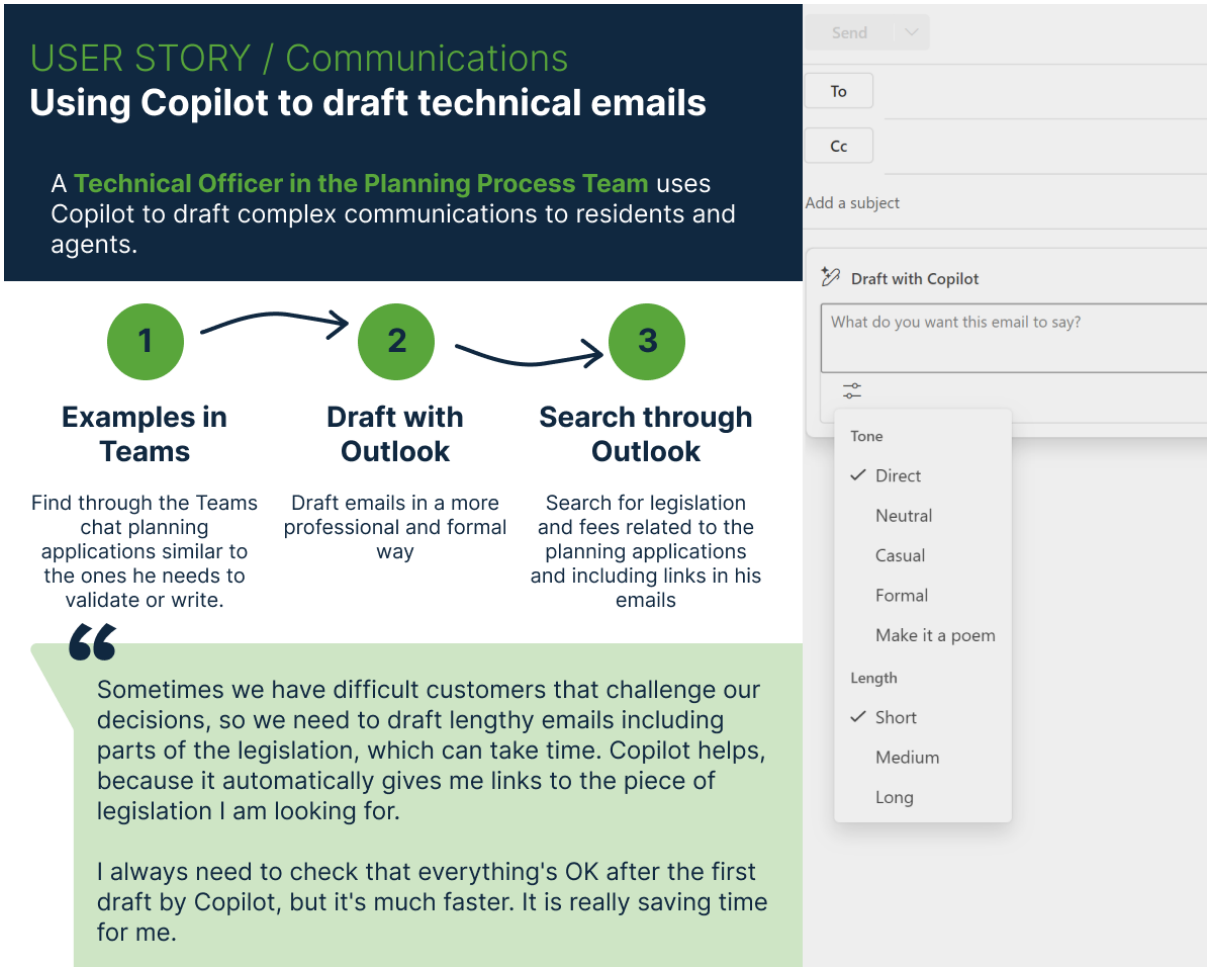


Figure 6: Example of staff using Copilot for drafting communications

Research and information search

One of the most appreciated features of Copilot by users is its ability to search for information and enable conducting research in a convenient and smart way. Users report using their browser to ask Copilot specific questions and receive relevant answers that include multiple sources. Users also appreciate the possibility to use Copilot to compare information, and to use it as a source of learning opportunities. Users have reported that this feature saves them time and helps them access high-quality information.

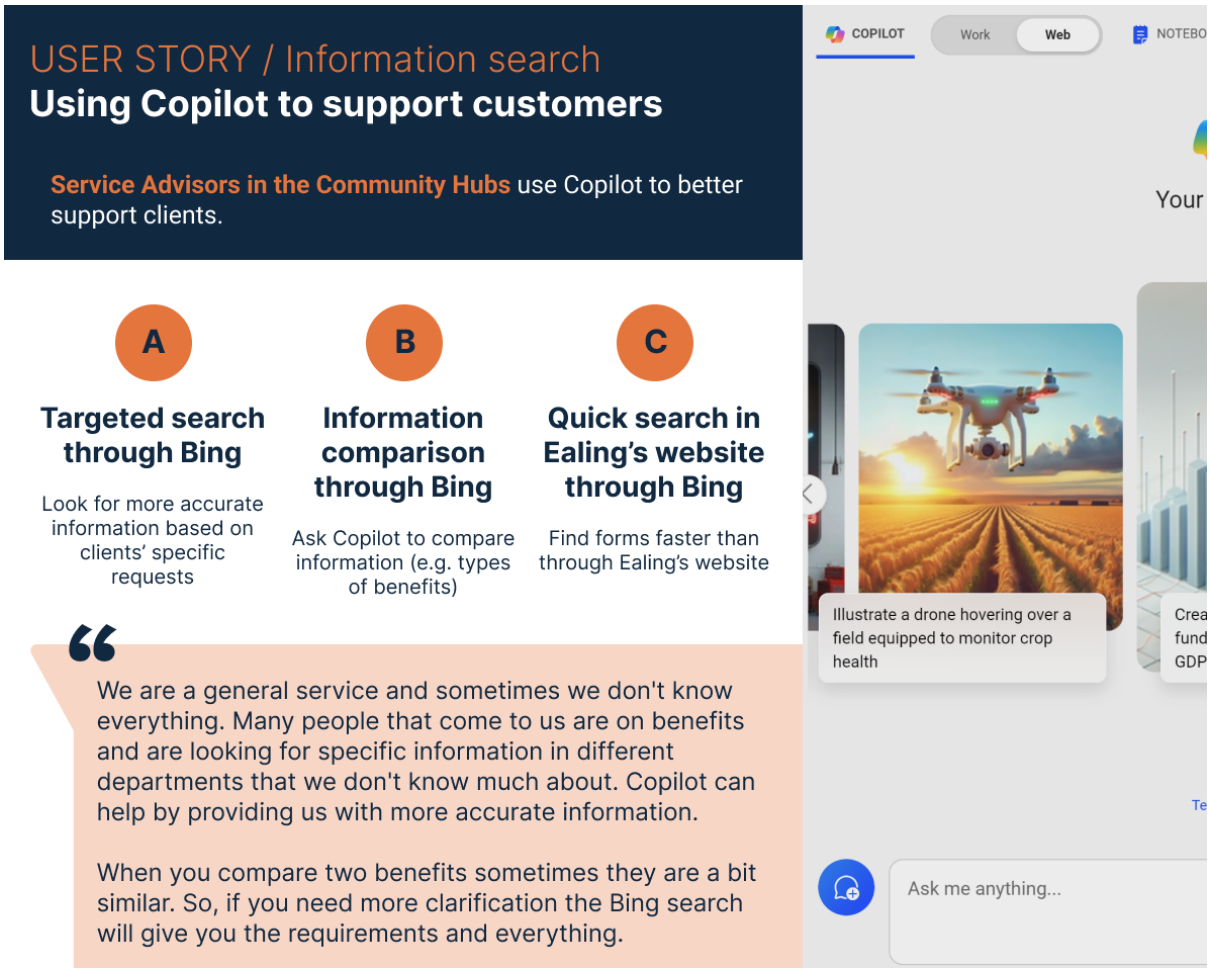


Figure 7: Example of staff using Copilot for searching for information

Data analysis

Some users have reported using Copilot with data analysis, whether it is quantitative data in Excel spreadsheets, where Copilot has assisted them with data cleaning, manipulation, and visualisation, and even merging files, or qualitative data analysis in free text format from research activities and meeting notes, where Copilot has assisted with content analysis and summary generation. In this use of Copilot, users have highlighted the need to be specific in the prompting, as this influences the reliability and objectivity of the answers. By analysing data with Copilot, users report benefits in completing strategic reporting requirements more efficiently, as well as be able to more effectively challenge and learn from the data in front of them.

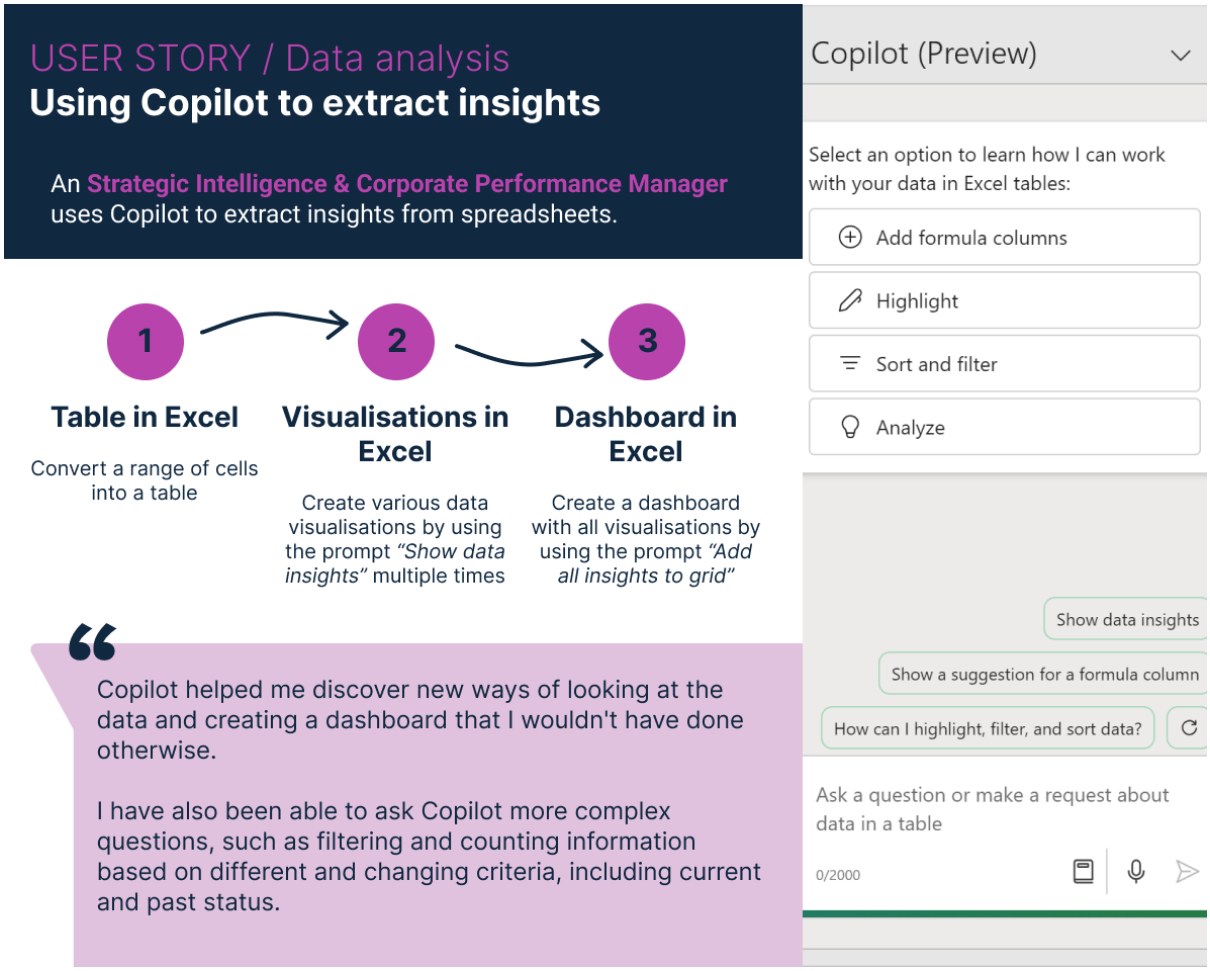


Figure 8: Example of staff using Copilot for analysing data

Task automation

Copilot for automation has been adopted by users who already where using tools such as Power Automate or Power Apps to automate flows. This could be beneficial for other teams but who might not have the digital skills/knowledge.

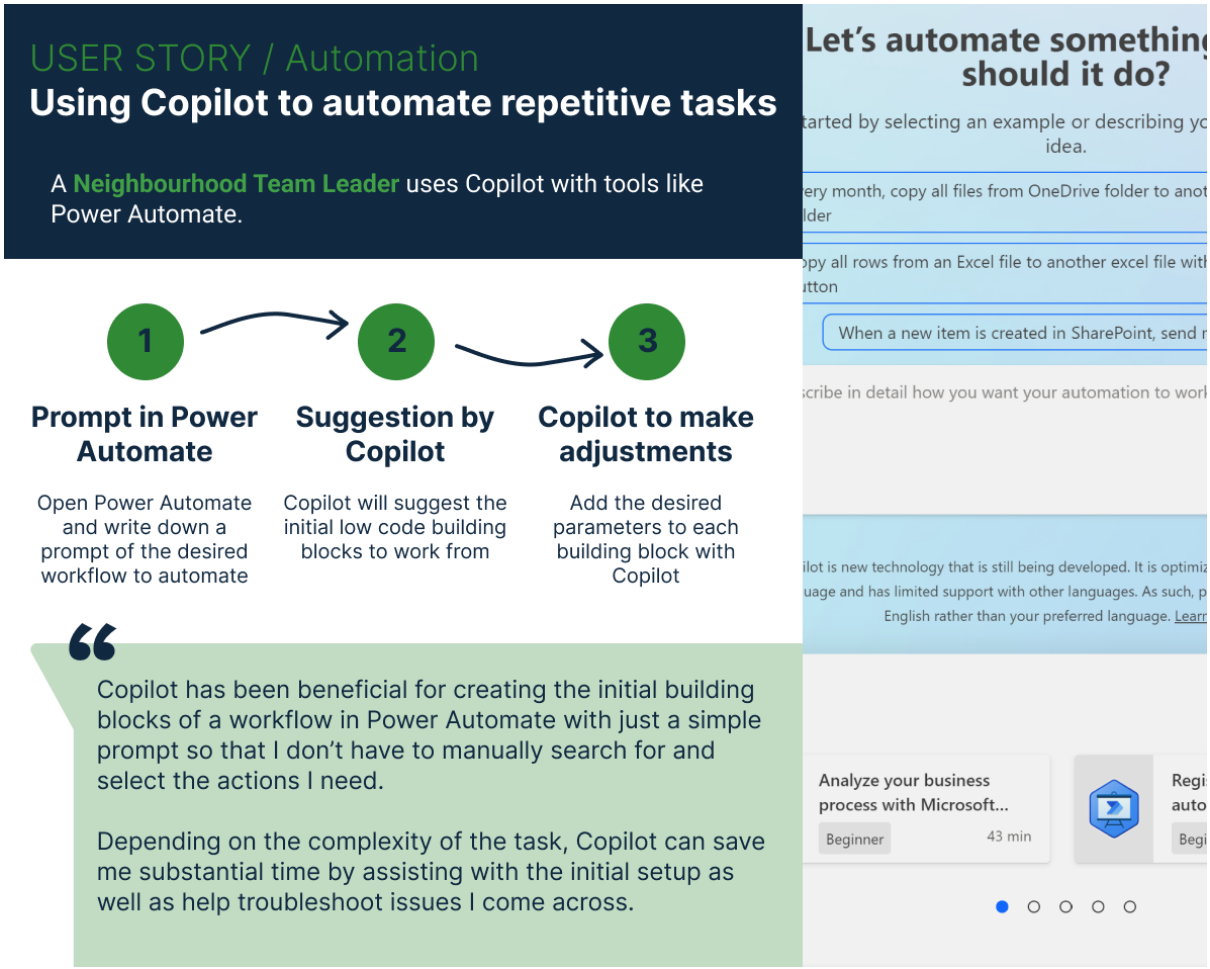


Figure 9: Example of staff using Copilot for automating tasks

C. Benefits of Copilot

Copilot helps save time and enhances productivity

Users highlighted the biggest benefit of the adoption of Copilot has been the amount of time saved automating tasks, with Copilot on average reducing the time spent on manual tasks by an approximation of 53.5 minutes.

The following tasks such as writing meeting minutes, summarising documents, generating email responses, and creating presentations were mentioned by users from across different roles and functions as being the biggest time saving activities. However, users acknowledged that whilst such automation of processes led to increased efficiency and productivity they were still required to fact-check for accuracy.

Additionally, users that with the time saved they were able to focus on more strategic, creative and value-added tasks as mentioned here by one user, “time saving on mundane tasks, allowing for more focus on strategic, value-added tasks and polishing”.

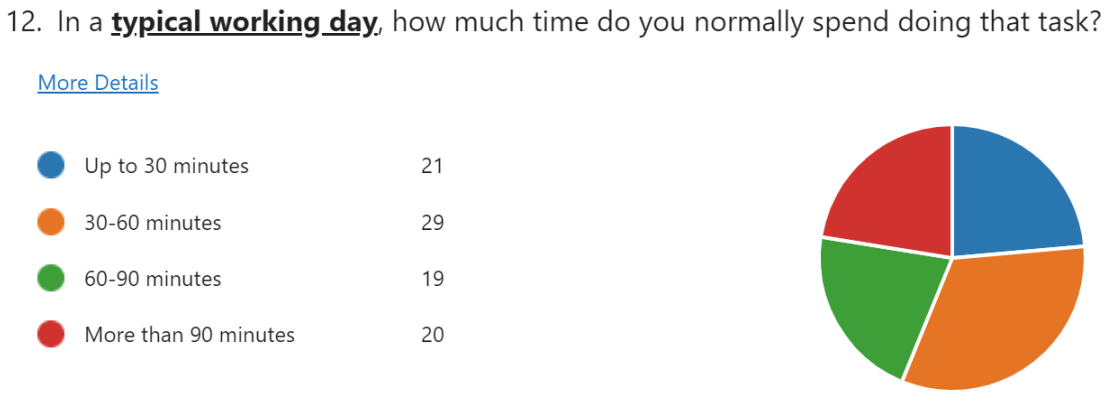


Figure 10: Time spent carrying out impactful listed tasks on Copilot. More than a third of all users save between 30-60 minutes on the task listed.

*Although users appreciate the time-saving potential of Copilot, they are reluctant to commit to a specific number of hours or minutes saved per day or week for any given task, as they feel that the tool is not consistent enough in its performance. Therefore, they do not trust Copilot fully and prefer to be cautious when estimating the impact of the tool in its entirety on their productivity.

Copilot helps access content and new learning

Another benefit of Copilot that users have mentioned is its ability to help them access content and new learning. Copilot can act as a source of information and inspiration for various tasks and topics. Users report finding information faster from within the organisation, but also from the wider web, which in its turn can help them create better content.

Some users also expressed that Copilot could enhance their learning and curiosity. One user compared Copilot to "an interactive Wikipedia" that can provide summaries and insights on different topics. Another user said that Copilot "makes me think of things I might not have

considered before, kind of like a place to get inspiration from." Users also appreciate Copilot's ability to help them interrogate documents. These users demonstrate how Copilot can stimulate their interest and creativity and help them explore new ideas and perspectives.

Copilot helps improve wellbeing

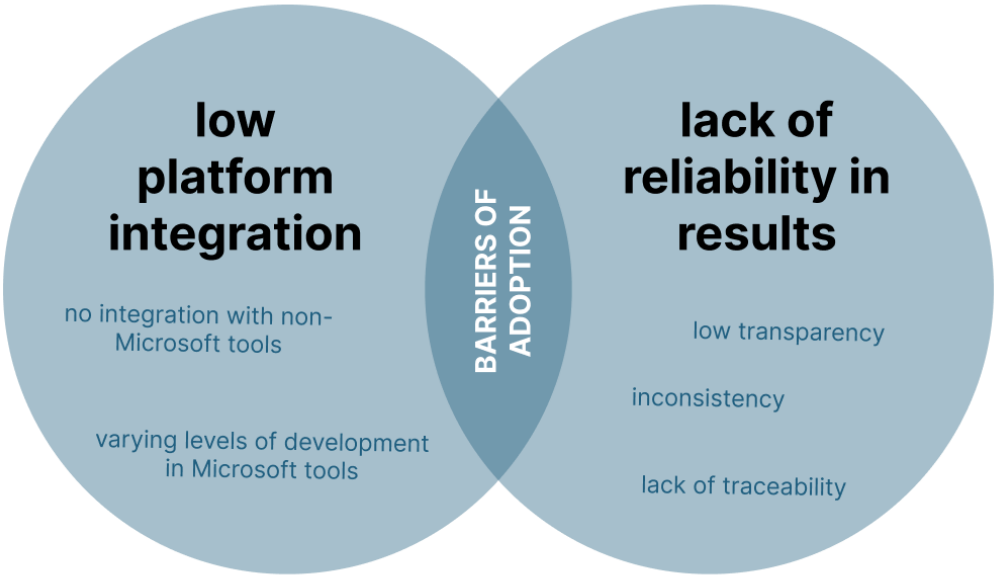
Improving wellbeing and productivity has been a benefit that has been expressed interchangeably by users, with one user stating that their wellbeing has improved due to the time saved. Additionally, users have reported that 'freeing up' time has enabled them to regain mental energy for high value tasks whilst also being able to stay on top of administrative action tasks.

Copilot helps improve communication and collaboration

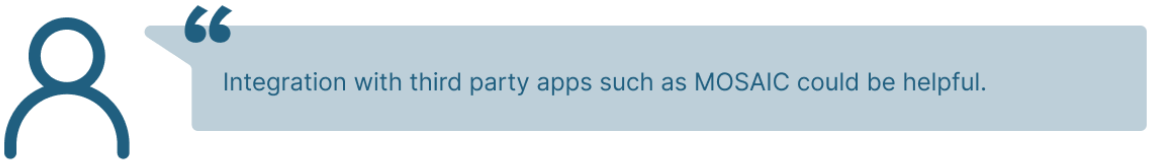
Copilot's ability to enhance communication and collaboration has been another key benefit listed by users. Users have reported the natural speaking language responses helps to convey inclusive communication. For example, one user noted its ability to decipher complex legal documents into "coherent responses" providing accessible reading material on legislation. Notably, the available style and tone style was referenced as making "work more accessible and inclusive, especially for users with disabilities or different learning styles" as the content can be tailored to resonate with the recipient allowing people to feel more connected and confident that the conveyed the correct message. This was also a sentiment shared by users who are non-native English speakers.

Limitations of Copilot

Users have also reported limitations in the use of Copilot during the trial, with the two most mentioned being the varying levels of platform integration, and the lack of reliability on the results due to inconsistency and lack of transparency of how the tool sources the data it uses. These have generated frustration among users and hindered the adoption of the tool.



Low platform integration



One of the main drawbacks of Copilot that users have reported is its low level of integration with other platforms and tools. Many users work with applications that are not part of the Microsoft suite, such as Mosaic, and they would like to use Copilot in them as well. Furthermore, some users have also complained about the lack of functionality of Copilot within some Microsoft tools, such as Excel. All this affects their productivity and satisfaction with the tool. Therefore, users demand a higher degree of platform integration for Copilot, both internally and externally.

Lack of reliability in results

> It's still quite basic in terms of relying on specific prompts and often doesn't understand the tasks that are needed. We can improve 'prompt-writing' but it would be better if co-pilot improved its understanding.

Another limitation of Copilot that affects its adoption is the lack of accuracy of the results it generates. Users have experienced inconsistency in the outputs, as they sometimes get different responses for similar prompts. This makes them doubt the validity of the information that Copilot provides. Moreover, users also feel that Copilot is not transparent enough about how it sources the data it uses, or when it does not understand a prompt. Users would like to see more transparency from Copilot, as it would increase their trust and confidence in the tool.

The need of time to make Copilot a useful tool to solve complex issues in roles

Common Elements Making Work Challenging

Employees are stressed by tasks that involve complex, multi-faceted challenges, often requiring coordination and accuracy in information handling, and compliance with changing regulations. Many of these tasks involve interactions with other colleagues, clients, or external data sources, which can be complex to manage and beyond the capability of a single AI tool to fully resolve.

- Constant Changes and Compliance: Keeping up to date with changing rules and regulations.
- High Demand and Low Supply: Difficulty in recruiting qualified candidates.
- Pressure and Efficiency: Improving team efficiency and dealing with audit pressure.
- Accuracy and Context: Ensuring reports are accurate and well-contextualized.
- Data Handling: Working heavily with data and the limitations of AI tools in handling complex data.
- Customer Expectations: Managing unrealistic customer expectations and misunderstandings about service scope.
- Adapting to New Tools: Learning to use new software and security concerns.

Organisation's readiness for GenAI

As the organisation moves towards a more widespread use of GenAI tools, such as Copilot, it is important to assess its readiness and potential challenges for adopting new technology. Based on our research, we have identified three main areas that need to be addressed: organisational culture, skills development, and AI and ethics. In this section, we will present what we have learnt in each of these areas, and how they can affect the adoption and impact of Copilot and other GenAI tools in the organisation.

Throughout the trial period users' have reflected on their readiness for AI tools to see how the organisation would need to navigate the cultural shift for an adoption of emerging technology. More than half of all users were revealed to be early adopters, the findings present many users would need to see the sustainable advantage and clear standards to embrace new technology. One user shared "if I'm not going to embrace that, then I'm going to be just stuck in the same place and that's not going to be beneficial to me, nor is it going to be beneficial to the organisation because change happens all the time and whilst not all change Is always good, but we have to In a sense, embrace change and positive change."

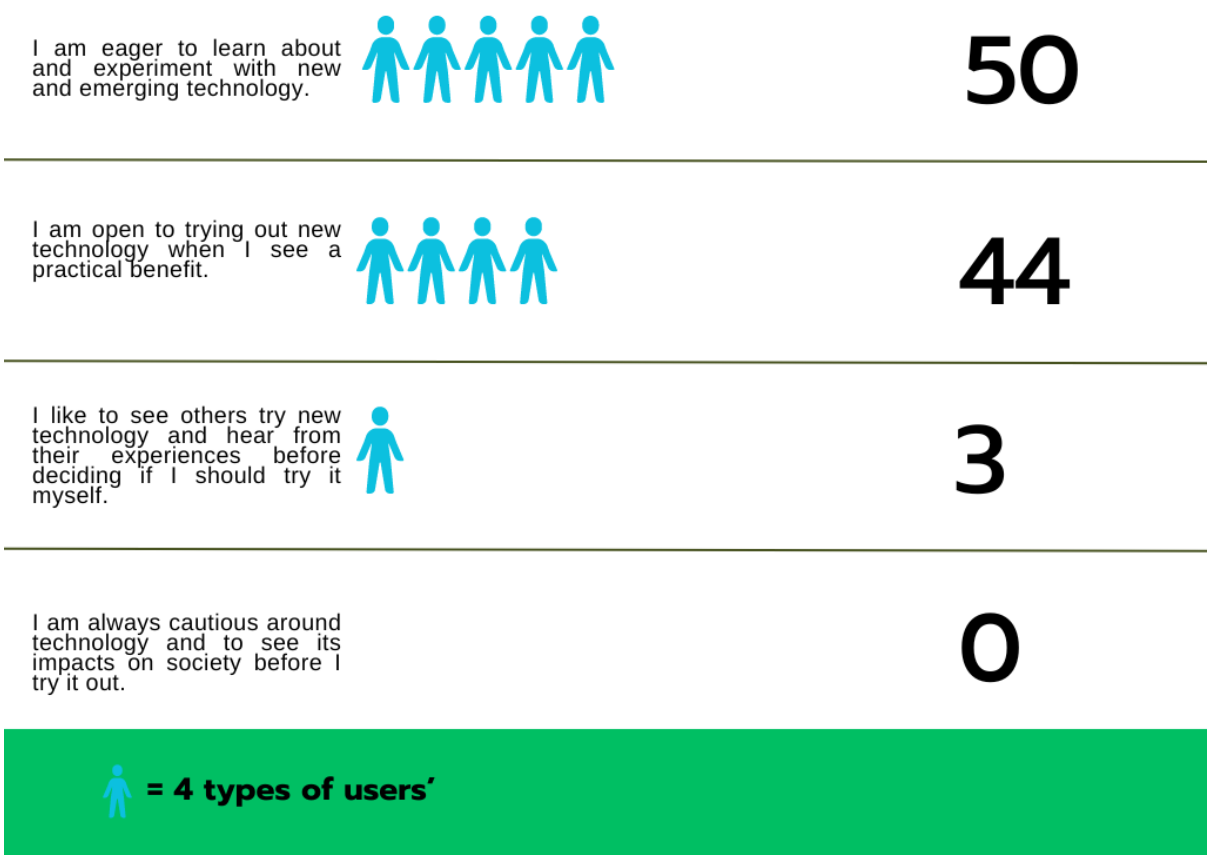


Figure 11: Digital readiness – 52% people answered "I am eager to learn about and experiment with new and emerging technology."

Organisational Culture

Varying levels of experimentation and openness, and a perceived lack of time

Relevance

One of the challenges for the adoption of Copilot is the alignment of the tool with the users' needs and expectations. Some users don't see the relevance of Copilot for their profiles and roles, or they have difficulty in finding opportunities to use Copilot efficiently. However, this lack of use could also be a result of a lack of exploration of Copilot's possibilities and a resistance to change their ingrained daily habits.

Learning and capacity

Another challenge is the learning curve that both users and Copilot must go through to interact successfully. Users need to learn how to write effective prompts that can elicit the desired response from Copilot, and how to use Copilot in different software applications. Copilot also needs to learn from the users' feedback and preferences and improve its accuracy and consistency over time. However, some users face limitations in dedicating the proper time and effort to learn and experiment with Copilot, due to a perceived lack of time, lack of confidence and a of a digital skillset, or perceived lack of relevance to their work.

Openness to new technology

While some staff are more cautious or sceptical about AI's impact and risks, some staff are more open and enthusiastic about embracing AI and see its potential and benefits, especially those that possess higher levels of digital confidence and critical thinking skills. Some staff are also involved in other AI projects or initiatives, which can influence their attitudes and skills towards Copilot and other GenAI tools. Moreover, staff agree that having been part of this trial and having learnt more about AI has impacted positively on their perception and acceptance of AI tools. For instance, some users went from being sceptical or indifferent about AI, to fully supporting or finding it indispensable for their work, showing a significant positive shift in their attitude, digital skill immaturity and behaviours.

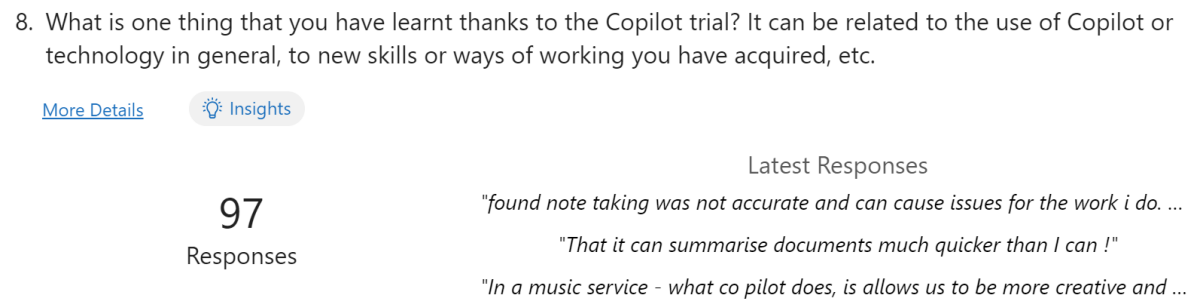


Figure 12: Learnings identified as part of the Copilot trial

This can be seen in examples of users who have shared that using AI has reminded them to expand their thinking by "considering the needs of the end user" and encouraged them to "try and look try think from a different perspective." The importance of adaptation and experimentation has been an important learning for many, alongside embracing the Copilot experience as an opportunity for skill development., as mentioned by these users "having to articulate prompts in a meaningful way to get the best out of the product has helped my writing skills and vocabulary", "It has enhanced my skills. It has been a helpful tool when I've been learning SQL and Power BI".

Whilst not all users reported any learnings as part of the Copilot trial many users discovered they could work more effectively by automating tasks, one user described Copilot as a "great asset" and revealed "I look forward to embracing technology more and reaping the benefits it can give us".

Skills development

Greater support to improve digital literacy and to help users adopt Copilot

Easiness to use

Copilot is generally perceived as an easy tool to use, with a friendly and intuitive interface. However, this does not mean that all users had a smooth experience with Copilot, or that they were able to make the most out of its functionality. Some users reported difficulties in navigating Copilot's interface in the different software applications, or to being able to elicit the desired responses from Copilot. This could be lack of digital literacy, willingness and confidence to test or ingrained behaviours. It is crucial to consider how to empower users adapting to new technology, by creating shared engagement activities, fostering a sense of community through team channels, informal catch-up, which have all been welcomed touchpoints to further discuss Copilot and Microsoft 365 apps.

Support for adoption

Users often asked for additional help for adopting Copilot successfully, such as trainings on how to craft good prompts, or how to use Copilot in various software applications. Some users also mentioned the value of peer learning to hear from other users' stories and tips, and discussions to gain skills and reflect on their practices. Moreover, it is important to consider that users with higher digital skills were more likely to engage independently with other users in conversations about Copilot, while users with lower digital skills requested more handholding and through training and one-to-one sessions.

Digital literacy

One of the challenges that were made visible thanks to the trial was the low level of digital skills among many staff, which hindered their adoption and use of Copilot. Many users asked questions that were not specific to Copilot, but rather to basic functionalities of the Microsoft 365 suite. This indicated a lack of digital literacy and confidence and pointed to a need for more training and support. However, the trial also became a space for digital development for staff

with more digital skills, who were inspired by the innovative uses of Copilot by more advanced digital users, such as PowerApps or Power Automate, which made them more self-motivated to try out new things.

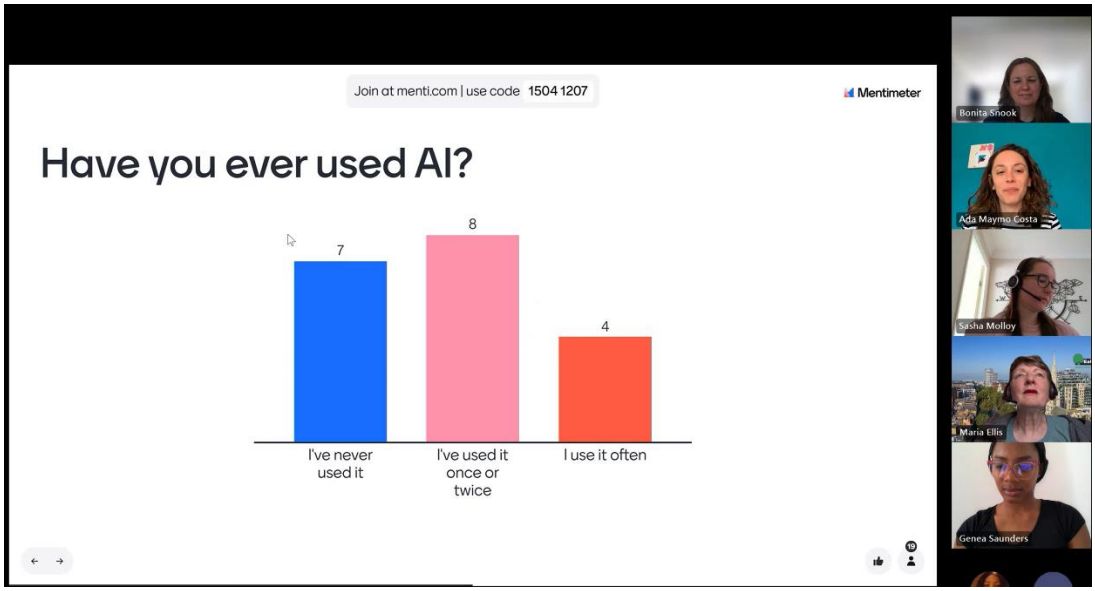


Figure 13: Live poll in the learning session open to all staff "The Future of Work: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Local Government", which shows the low levels of knowledge of AI tools among staff.

Ethical and responsible use

Lack of policy on AI and ethics, and risk of using AI "the wrong way"

Security

One of the main ethical concerns emerging from the trial was around security and data privacy when using Copilot. Some users were worried about the risks of transferring sensitive or confidential information, such as financial data, through Copilot, and whether the tool could comply with the GDPR regulations. Others were also wary of the possibility of unethical use of Copilot. Therefore, it is crucial to have clear and transparent policies and guidelines on how to use Copilot safely and responsibly, and to ensure that the tool does not compromise the integrity or trustworthiness of the organisation.

Misuse

Another ethical issue that was raised by some users was the potential misuse of Copilot, and the impact that it could have on the critical thinking skills and the quality of work of the staff. Some users expressed the fear that Copilot could make staff lazy or over reliant on AI, and that it could make them lose their ability to think creatively or analytically. Therefore, it is important to provide adequate training and support for the staff to develop their digital literacy and to learn

how to use Copilot effectively and appropriately, and to maintain a balance between human and machine input.

Workplace replacement

A third ethical issue that was mentioned by some users was the threat that Copilot could take over their jobs or reduce their value. Some users felt that Copilot could replace some of their tasks, such as minute taking, or that it could make their skills obsolete or redundant. Others were also anxious about the future of work, and how AI could change the nature and demand of their roles. Therefore, it is vital to communicate clearly and openly with the staff about the purpose and scope of Copilot in the organisation, and to reassure them that the tool is meant to augment and complement their work, not to substitute or diminish it.

Key recommendations for a future Copilot roll out

Based on the insights gathered from the interviews and surveys, this report offers four recommendations to prepare staff for a future Copilot roll out. These recommendations are enhancing digital literacy, providing support for the correct adoption of Copilot, attracting and retaining talent, and addressing ethical concerns.

01_ Digital literacy beyond Copilot

A plan to enhance digital skills and confidence of staff

One of the key recommendations for a future Copilot roll out is to boost the digital literacy of staff beyond the use of Copilot itself. This is important because some users expressed a lack of confidence or familiarity with digital tools in general, and some felt that they needed to be more digitally skilled to be able to integrate Copilot into their work. By enhancing the digital skills and confidence of staff, we can ensure that they are able to not only use Copilot more effectively and efficiently, but also adopt other digital tools relevant their work. Furthermore, we can also foster a culture of innovation and curiosity among staff and empower them to explore new ways of working and learning with technology.

To boost the digital literacy of staff, more training and support needs to be provided. There are many building blocks that could be put in place, for instance:

DIGITAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT	A tool to measure and improve staff's digital competence and confidence across different domains and dimensions
TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION TEAM	A dedicated team to guide and support staff to use Copilot and other digital tools
BASIC TRAINING	A series of sessions to introduce staff to the essential apps of the Microsoft 354 suite, including a module as part of the induction
ADVANCED TRAINING	Sessions on advanced features and functionalities of the Microsoft 365 suite, such as PowerApps or Power Automate
GAMIFICATION	System to motivate learning, for instance a digital skills badge to recognise and reward staff's achievements and progress in digital skills, or a 1-day facilitated hackathon to solve a problem with a digital tool
DEVELOPER TEAM	A team of developers who can develop customised and relevant tools of work to enable specific use cases (more information in recommendation #03)

Figure 14: Potential building blocks of a digital skills programme

02_ Support for Copilot adoption

A flexible phased out onboarding journey to support staff adopt Copilot, considering their diverse needs

One of the key recommendations for a future Copilot roll out is to provide support for users' onboarding journey and thus ensure a better adoption of the tool. The support should be comprehensive but also flexible to each cohort's needs - By offering a flexible phased out onboarding journey, we can ensure that staff are motivated and confident to use Copilot in their daily work and that they discover more relevant and beneficial use cases. Furthermore, we can also ensure that we are addressing the need of more guidance and support by some of the user cohorts, and that we consider diverse needs of support, such as more 1:1s for the users in the accessibility use case, as requested during the trial.

We propose an onboarding journey that allows staff to access different resources and support options according to their needs and preferences. For instance, staff could find general information about Copilot on a One Space page, receive a welcome pack with useful materials and a kick-off session invitation, request 1:1 sessions for more personalised support, form community of practices to ensure continuous learning and development including joining specialised training on various digital tools, skills, and actions. See the below visual for an illustrative example.

Figure 15: Illustrative example of a potential support programme for Copilot, based on Westminster's City Council Technology Adoption team proven approach to the Copilot trial.

03_Talent acquisition

An appealing employment value proposition to attract talented workforce

One of the challenges of the public sector is to attract and retain talented and digitally skilled staff, who can contribute to the improvement and innovation of the services we offer. An appealing employment offer is a key factor in attracting such staff, who can feel that they can progress and work at their best in our organisation. Such offer could include a Copilot license, along with adoption support and training, both as part of the induction and as a continuous professional development programme.

Integrating AI tools in the toolbox can also attract different types of profiles from the ones we have now – For instance, developers, who can use Copilot to develop customised and relevant tools of work for specific use cases for diverse teams to use, who might be less skilled digitally but still need tools that enhance their work.

Boosting our wellbeing at work

Another common theme of challenges identified within local authority is effective time management. By learning how to better optimise time and recognising the relationship between time use and wellbeing have never been greater given the unfamiliar pressures new working practices have placed on organisations.

By rethinking new ways of working such as adopting AI technology as a support tool for staff, in highly pressurised roles or volume traction, such as those working in customer facing roles by increasing automation function for manual tasks – such as using Copilot to summarise phone calls. Integrating this system can provide a seamless approach, reduce call waiting time, which would help to improve both resident and staff satisfaction.

BENCHMARK

Swindon Council

Swindon Council has a 4-member team of developers, the **Emerging Technology team**. They work with other teams in the Council to develop tools that enable better work with residents. For instance, **Easy Read**, a tool for ASC to help residents with learning disabilities, low literacy and English as an additional language, to translate or redraft complex documents to increase accessibility with GenAI.

While still being a very small team, they are able to develop and test the tool by making them open source. For instance, Easy Read is now being used by DEFRA and UNICEF.

Resident group composed by 'experts by experience', put together to help develop and test Easy Read

Figure 16: The case of Swindon Council and their emergent technology team, which supports other teams developing technology tools based on real resident needs

04_ Technology and data ethics group with residents

A place of encounter with residents to discuss and get their thoughts on the ethical implication of using GenAI in the council

The final recommendation is to create a conducive space to enable conversations on responsible and ethical use of GenAI tools, among staff but also with Ealing residents. This has a twofold objective:

- Foster a culture of transparency and trust in our use of Technology and Data – and especially GenAI – among residents
- Become a space for staff to hold meaningful conversations around the use of these tools and boost their critical thinking.

We believe that by involving residents in the dialogue, we can ensure that our work aligns with their interests and values, and that we can address any concerns or questions they may have. We also hope that this group will create a space for meaningful discussions about the ethical implications and challenges of using new technology in the public sector, and how we can collectively shape a responsible and inclusive approach.

We propose to invite a diverse and representative sample of residents from the seven Towns to join us for quarterly sessions. Each gathering could address a specific theme and use case and include different types of activities. The gatherings will be designed to be accessible and engaging for everyone, avoiding technical jargon. Finally, the gatherings will also foster accountability and trust, as both the council and the residents will agree on actions and improvements to follow up until the next event.

Possible agenda for the day*: overview

** Example of a session showcasing the use case of Copilot for social care work in children services*

Welcome & Introduction (25')
Informal check-in prior to official start of the event, introduction of the day and icebreaker

Learning time (20')
Subject matter expert presentation on Tech & AI

Short Break (10')

AI for social care work (60')
Live demo by Ealing staff and Q&A, followed by an individual reflection through an interactive poll and a group discussion based on the results

Long break/mingling time (20')

Playback (35')
Playback of conversations in breakout groups and of new ideas from the exhibit/wall

Conclusion & Wrap up (10')
Next steps, Conclusion & Final reflection

Figure 17: Possible agenda for the day, featuring an example of a session showcasing the use case of Copilot for social care work in children services

Conclusion

GenAI tools, such as Copilot, have the potential to transform the way we work and serve our residents at Ealing council. They can help us solve complex problems, generate innovative solutions, and enhance our productivity and creativity. However, they also pose significant challenges and risks, such as bias, privacy, accountability, and trust. Therefore, we need to be careful and thoughtful in how we use these tools and ensure that they align with our values and goals as a public organisation.

In this report, we have shared the insights and learnings from our internal research on the use of GenAI tools in various departments of our council. We have also proposed four key actions that we believe are essential for ensuring the successful and ethical adoption of these tools in our organisation. These are:

- Improving the digital literacy and confidence of our staff, to be able to integrate the use of digital tools first, GenAI tools after, and be prepared for the future of work.
- Training our staff to use GenAI tools effectively and responsibly, understanding their benefits and limitations, and being able to leverage them to truly impact their ways of working.
- Improving our offer so that we make it attractive to a skilled workforce, that aims to foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and innovation among the staff in the use of new technology, but also in improving the work we do for our residents.
- Engaging our residents in the discussion on the use of GenAI tools and building their trust and confidence in our work, as well as providing spaces for our staff to reflect on their practices and uses of these tools.

The aim is to not only introduce new GenAI technology to our work, but empower our staff to use it well so that we can enable our services to deliver better outcomes providing significant transformative benefits for the organisation. We hope that this report will inspire you to think of not only the new tools we can introduce, but how to meaningfully integrate them into our daily work so that they generate meaningful impact.

Appendix 1

Research Activities

Internal research on Copilot usage

Engagement sessions

1. Customer Support – Community Hubs (x2)
2. Business Support (x1)
3. Human Resources (x2)
4. Children Services (x1)
5. Adults – Social Work Delivery (x2)
6. Engagement & Equality (x1)

Staff interviews

1.Economy and Sustainability (x5)

- MIS and Funding Manager
- Principal Planner
- Safer Communities Intelligence Analyst
- Strategic Intelligence and Corporate Performance Manager
- Technical Officer

2.Strategy and Change (x1)

- Recruitment Coordinator

3.Resources (x4)

- Assistant Director Technical Finance
- Customer Service Advisor
- Customer Contact Centre – Repairs and Environment
- Service Coordinator for the revenues and Benefits Contact Centre

Copilot survey

Qualitative insights from surveys 1 to 5

External research on GenAI

Conferences

- *Brent Council: The future of Intelligent Innovation in Local Government* (07/03/2024)
- *Smith Square Debate: AI risks, rewards and councils' readiness* (07/03/2024)
- AWS Public Sector Day 2024 (19/03/2024)

Other local authorities' expert interviews

- Modern Workspace Officer (Technology Adoption and Accessibility Team) - Westminster City Council
- Technology Adoption Manager – Camden Council