

AI Policy Buddy

By North Yorkshire Council in collaboration with [Leading AI Ltd.](#)

The North Yorkshire AI Policy Buddy project for children's social care is streamlining access to legislation, policies, and procedures. The project aimed to **simplify access to accurate, up-to-date information, reduce workload, and enhance service delivery.** The vision was clear: to empower staff, reduce workload, and enable a greater focus on direct work with children and families.

Initially trialled with 50 staff members, the tool's overwhelming success led to a rapid rollout to nearly 1000 practitioners. The AI-powered tool not only met but exceeded expectations, significantly improving efficiency, compliance, and staff satisfaction.

Key features include:

- Multi-lingual capabilities.
- Ability to provide comprehensive, cross-referenced answers tailored to specific queries.
- Ability to create bespoke guides for staff and the children and families they work with.

For example, the Policy Buddy was able to create a bespoke guide for a 12-year-old child about what to expect at their first Looked After Review, written with a Taylor Swift theme in French, to make it really personal to the child and the things they like.

The Policy Buddy can be used on desktop, mobile, by voice or text. This means it is accessible wherever staff need it and building professional confidence in new technologies. It also makes it easier to review and update policies, as well as track staff query themes, helping to identify possible areas where the team might want to enhance the council's training offer.

Prior to the introduction of the AI Policy Buddy, practitioners often relied on colleagues or managers for policy guidance, which:

- Created delays in accessing up-to-date information.
- Led to inconsistencies in practice due to reliance on informal knowledge-sharing.
- Added pressure for senior staff, reducing time for strategic oversight.

Additionally, the existing document storage system was difficult to navigate, meaning that practitioners often found one relevant document but missed supporting information. The Policy Buddy was able to resolve this by searching all available documents before producing an answer, ensuring comprehensive and accurate information.

The project launched with a two-month pilot involving 50 staff members. Within four weeks, overwhelmingly positive feedback led to a rapid expansion across the entire workforce.

Project leads Jonny Hoyle (Children and Young People's Service) and Cath Ritchie (Transformation Service) championed a phased approach, incorporating:

- Initial testing and feedback collection.
- Iterative improvements based on staff insights.
- A full rollout within just three months, demonstrating the team's efficiency and commitment.

The success of the project was underpinned by collaboration between multiple departments, including Technology, Transformation, Information Security, and Data Governance.

This whole-organisation approach ensured seamless integration into staff's daily workflows.

Key activities in the implementation process included:

- Developing the AI engine to interpret and cross-reference policies.
- Training staff to use the tool effectively.
- Embedding the tool into social work practice, making it a natural part of case management.

- The financial investment was modest, with the annual cost equivalent to purchasing six and a half iPhones. The tool's ability to improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary queries provided a high return on investment.

Challenges, such as ensuring staff adoption, were addressed through user-friendly design, responsive support, and ongoing feedback mechanisms.

The project delivered the following outcomes:

- Significant time savings, reducing the administrative burden on staff.
- Enhanced compliance, ensuring policies and procedures are followed accurately.
- Improved practitioner morale and confidence, with feedback including:
 - "The policy buddy has changed my life"
 - "I thought I would hate it (new technology) but I love it."

The AI Policy Buddy reconnected staff with legislation and procedures, providing a personalised service to children and families. The tool's ability to generate bespoke guides, such as explaining child protection conferences to an 8-year-old using a superhero theme, showcased its versatility and impact. The project's sustainability is ensured through ongoing support and plans to extend the tool to other council departments, including HR and Adult Services.

Several factors contributed to the project's success:

- A clear vision to empower staff and improve efficiency.
- Strong leadership with passionate communication.
- Quick wins and early successes in implementation, building trust in the technology.
- Cross-departmental collaboration, which ensured smooth integration.

Future areas for improvement include ongoing user feedback and continuous updates to the AI engine to keep pace with evolving needs.

See more: ["Our AI Policy Buddy: Transforming Children's Services in North Yorkshire."](#)

