

12 December 2023

AI in the Home Office

James Cox, Group President on the potential implications of AI for members.

Artificial Intelligence has become a regular news item. What was once a niche subject is now very much mainstream and could have a huge impact on our members, and the people we serve.

The implementation of new technology has the potential to revolutionise the world of work in a positive way. However, the question inevitably is - who benefits? The potential productivity gains from AI could enable shorter working weeks, higher pay, and less routine jobs. Alternatively, if it were allowed to be implemented without controls it could lead to job losses.

We know the current government is intent on utilising and exploiting AI. A recent Freedom of Information response has detailed several areas in which AI is currently deployed in the Home Office, including e-gates at the border, the marriage assessment triage tool and a number of police projects.

There are also areas which could be considered for future deployment. These could include auto-generated letters in response to complaints and queries, decision-making via ATLAS in immigration and through the Digital Application Process (DAP) system in the passport office.

GDPR currently limits the circumstances in which solely automated decisions can be made, including those based on profiling, that have a legal or similarly significant effect on individuals. However, the government is piloting a Bill through parliament which would alter clauses of the GDPR to allow greater scope for automated decisions.

It's PCS's position that only humans should make decisions that affect other humans. We are working with the TUC to lobby for legislation which would regulate the use of AI decision-making to protect workers and users. We are also seeking a central agreement with the Cabinet Office regarding its use. Things are moving very fast in the world of technology and we will have to move quickly to ensure that members are protected.