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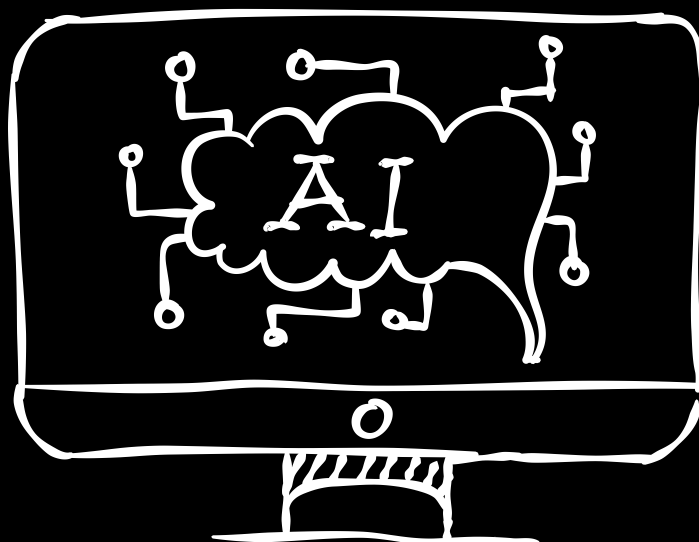


AI UNDER WATCH

***SCRUTINISING THE ASYLUM SYSTEM
BY THOSE MOST AFFECTED***

Insights for people in the asylum system
and refugee support services

January 2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

“My destiny should not be left to AI.”

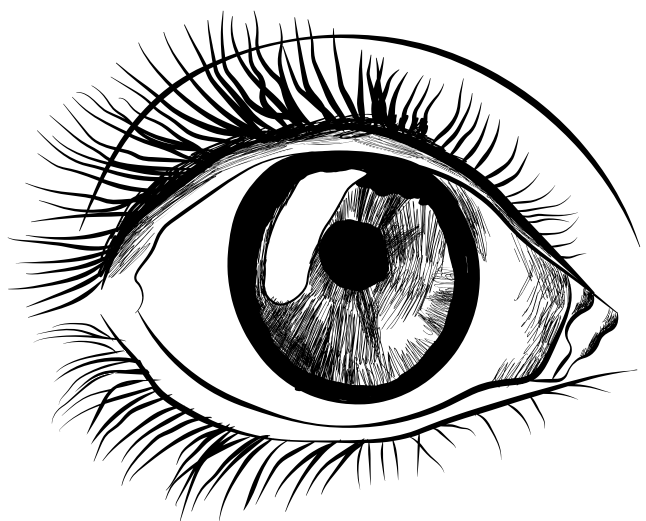
- London workshop attendee

The use of AI in the asylum system and wider immigration system raises concerns about discrimination and negative impact on migrants, including refugees. At the Migrants’ Rights Network, we have become increasingly concerned about the potential implementation of AI without transparency or scrutiny, while neglecting the human impact. We began looking at the use of AI in the asylum system after hearing anecdotal evidence from members of our community that they suspected AI had been used in their application process.

At the Migrants’ Rights Network, we have been interested in the increased ‘digitalisation’ of the immigration system for some time. Through our Hostile Office¹ campaign, we are investigating how the UK Government intends to implement its plans for a “fully digital border” and what that will mean for the rights of migrants, including refugees and people seeking asylum. This includes attempting to expose the opaque implementation of AI in decision making.

In August 2024, we received funding from Public Voices in AI Fund to investigate the potential role and impact of AI on people seeking asylum in London and the South of England. Through workshops and interviews, we set out to inform and be informed by people seeking asylum about AI through creative activities and gather evidence of its impact on their daily lives. The workshops aimed to enable people seeking asylum to identify and challenge AI misuse in their cases through deliberative dialogue sessions and interviews, and co-produce this resource to help inform and support others who navigate digitised systems and borders.

We hope by amplifying the voices of those affected, we can challenge the unchecked use of AI in asylum decision-making processes, raise awareness for other migrants, and move towards more ethical systems and transparent, accountable, and reliable mechanisms.

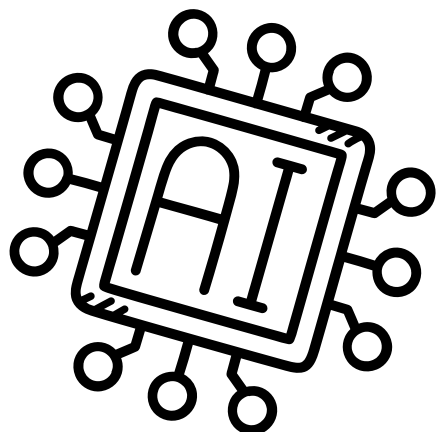


2. A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Examples of AI applications include expert systems², natural language processing (NLP³), speech recognition⁴ and machine vision⁵. In a nutshell, AI works by gathering large amounts of data and analysing it for patterns or connections. It then uses these patterns to make predictions. IBM states that AI “should not attempt to replace human experts,” but instead “extend human capabilities”⁶.

Generally, AI works by looking for patterns in data to make predictions. AI is first 'trained' on example data with a human marking an output as correct or incorrect until it learns to make more accurate predictions. AI can be trained on data such as text, which would then allow it to sort through and categorise applications and make recommendations about whether the application should be approved. It can also be trained on data such as images, which is why it is being used for developing other technologies like facial recognition, which attempts to match faces on video or in a photo to another image of a face.

AI can be broadly categorised into traditional AI, including less sophisticated uses like auto-correct, and generative AI, which creates new forms of content in response to (usually) text-based inputs and has the capacity to 'learn' from data and past actions. Generative AI includes Large Language Models (LLMs), which generate language (for example, chatbots like ChatGPT as explained under Chatbots), as well as programmes that generate images in response to text prompts (such as DALL-E⁷ or Midjourney⁸).



AI in the asylum/immigration system

The Home Office uses streaming algorithms, which sort data into categories or 'streams' to inform decisions. One streaming algorithm introduced in 2015 was used to determine visa applications where nationality played a key factor. This algorithm was successfully challenged in 2020, as certain nationalities were receiving immediate refusals through being assigned higher 'risk' ratings⁹. While this decision-making algorithm was scrapped, new streaming algorithms have been implemented in a broader and more complex system with no scrutiny or transparency.

A prominent, confirmed use of AI in the asylum system is Identify and Prioritise Immigration Cases (IPIC), which recommends outcomes for people with immigration reporting conditions, such as deportation, detention, or other kinds of monitoring. While not limited to the asylum system, IPIC affects many people seeking asylum who have reporting conditions.

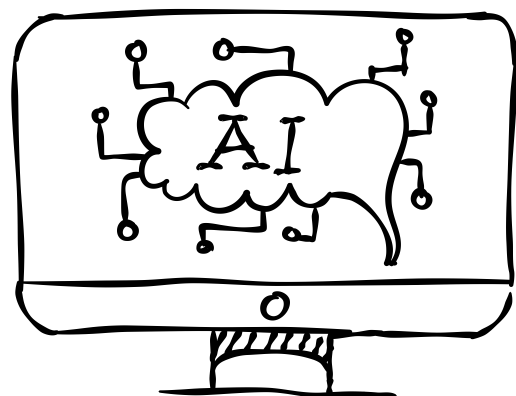
Like the visa application streaming algorithm, IPIC includes nationality as one of its categories, as well as at least one other protected characteristic¹⁰. A protected characteristic is something such as race or nationality, sexuality, or disability¹¹, and it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of one of these characteristics, so the inclusion of these factors in IPIC's recommendations could amount to discrimination. The reason this could be discrimination is because people with certain nationalities could be more likely to receive negative decisions against them (such as recommending detention or electronic monitoring via a worn device)¹², in a similar manner to the now scrapped visa application streaming algorithm.

The quality of the information that is inputted into IPIC has also been criticised¹³ by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. This is because IPIC uses information from a triage management tool called TRaM, which relies on the Case Information Database (CID) and Central Reference System (CRS), containing entry clearance data from British embassies, and has 'regularly' been found to contain 'poor' records.

Further information about how IPIC works, as well as the function of other forms of AI used in the asylum system, has been difficult to obtain, as the Home Office refuses to be transparent about the programmes due to their alleged concerns that information about how they work could impact the operation of immigration controls.

People in the asylum system and refugees in our Network have spoken to us about instances where they believe AI has been used in the process of their asylum cases. This includes transcribing (writing out) both screening and substantive interviews, and the country information used to inform decisions. We have been unable to confirm whether AI is being used in these instances, as the Home Office has not been forthcoming with requests for information.

However, we can also look beyond the UK to the Netherlands, where the AI-based programme Casematcher is used to speed up asylum decisions. Casematcher uses text analysis and scoring to identify commonalities in the accounts of asylum seekers who made similar claims, instead of a caseworker having to manually go through similar claims and find the legal basis on which these claims have been accepted or rejected. In light of shifts towards AI¹⁴ in the UK Government's aim to clear the asylum backlog, as well as increased cooperation in sharing intelligence¹⁵ between the UK and EU in relation to borders, it is important to note these developments which could be replicated in the UK.



Chatbots

A chatbot¹⁶ is a computer program that mimics human conversation with an end user. Not all chatbots are equipped with artificial intelligence¹⁷ (AI), but modern chatbots increasingly use conversational AI¹⁸ techniques such as natural language processing¹⁹ (NLP) to interpret user questions and automate responses to them. Modern AI chatbots now use natural language understanding (NLU) to figure out the meaning of open-ended user input (i.e. free text that a user writes, instead of selecting from a menu), solving issues that may arise from user errors, such as spelling mistakes and translation issues. AI tools then use statistical likelihood to attempt to match that meaning to the specific “intent” the user wants the chatbot to act upon and use conversational AI to put together a response.

A number of people in the asylum system who we spoke to mentioned that they would like to use an AI-based chatbot, but that it would also need to work in every possible language and dialect. They told us what they wanted from this was for the chatbot to answer questions about their asylum claim and processes, as well as being able to practice for their substantive interview. We discuss this in further detail in Section 4.

3. METHODOLOGY: AI IN THE ASYLUM SYSTEM WORKSHOPS

We set out to better understand the impact of AI through educational workshops and engagement sessions with people seeking asylum and refugees. In November 2024, we ran six workshops (114 participants) across London and Kent which consisted of English, Arabic, Farsi and Dari speakers. Pashto was also offered (requested as an alternative but attendees also spoke either Arabic, English or Dari so the workshops were not conducted in Pashto). Participants were remunerated for their workshop and interview participation.

Participants were from the following countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uganda and Yemen.

We invited participants in London and Kent to apply for the workshops based on if they were currently in the UK asylum system or had had their substantive interview in the previous 12 months. There was also demand from other language speakers including those who spoke Spanish, French, Bangla, Kurdish, Turkish, German, Igbo, Hausa, Urdu, Amharic, Burmese, Yoruba, Vietnamese, Tigrigna, Somali and Tamil. Unfortunately, due to a lack of time and restricted budget, it meant we were unable to meet their needs with this project.

We asked participants about their level of knowledge of AI prior to the workshops, of which the majority answered between low to moderate. There was a keenness to know more about AI by some participants and shared why they wanted to understand more:

“The world is changing and we can see many government's (sic) is converting towards e-gov, so this make me eager to know about this more”
- Kent attendee

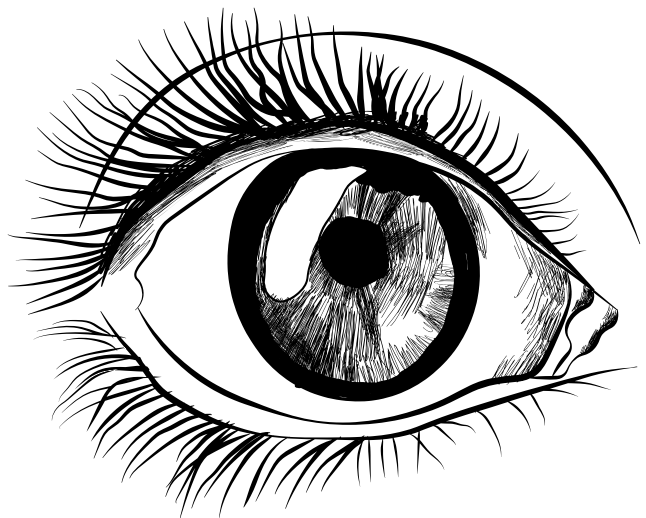
“Merits and possible demerits of using AI in such a sensitive process”
- Kent attendee

The first workshop used online games and thought experiments to introduce AI concepts, questioning the nature of intelligence and prompting engagement. We wanted to ensure everyone participating in the workshops and this project all had the same idea on what AI was and how it functioned. A custom-designed game demonstrated how biases and data availability influence AI decision-making, using a selective school analogy to reflect on asylum systems. This approach allowed participants to critically examine AI's role in decision-making while maintaining emotional distance from their current circumstances. We also incorporated role-play to explore broader systemic questions, encouraging creative and critical engagement.

With the same cohort of people from the first workshop, the second workshop shifted to movement and theatre-based methods, such as “Floor is a Map” and Image Theatre (see annex), to foster personal connections and explore systemic oppression (see glossary) in embodied ways. This can help people connect personally and understand this through physical and creative activities that incorporate movement-based exercises.

While some exercises felt they had no connection to AI, they enabled storytelling and reflection on how systems—including AI—are designed to harm or help. These methods highlighted the importance of accessible, emotionally aware frameworks for discussing complex topics like AI in migration systems.

Following the workshops, we invited workshop participants to participate in interviews about their experiences in the asylum system, their thoughts on the use of AI in decision-making, feedback on workshops and what their recommendations would be for policymakers and support services organisations regarding technology in the asylum system. Overall we conducted 14 interviews in English, Arabic and Farsi.



4. INSIGHTS FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS: WHAT DO PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM THINK

Participants had a range of views and suggestions regarding the use of AI in the asylum system. There were a majority of views about how and where AI could be used, while a minority were completely opposed to its use at any stage of the process. The most widespread view was that while the majority of participants were content with AI being used in order to standardise decision-making or make the system more efficient, the consistent feedback was that the final decision should not use AI or a “machine”. This was due to concerns around AI’s ability to interpret body language and linguistic or cultural intersections such as dialect if AI were used in place of a human caseworker.

However, one of the most pertinent findings of our research was the prevalence of errors in the asylum process. In addition, the research also highlighted wider systemic issues with the asylum system itself, most notably the immense anguish the waiting times cause people seeking asylum and lack of transparency around how and when decisions are made.

Errors

Participants shared their frustrations with errors in details or interview transcripts, where it was speculated that AI may have had a role in creating. The scale of errors - relating to names, date of birth or inaccuracies in the transcripts - is nothing short of unacceptable regardless of whether AI is being used or not. Participants stated that there needs to be greater transparency about the process of how transcripts are compiled and evaluated, alongside how to challenge or edit incorrect transcripts.

In a response to an Freedom of Information Act (FOI) request by us on 7th November 2024 the Home Office stated it does not use transcription software. However, in Home Office caseworker guidance on asylum interviews under the 'interview recording policy' it states that:

"Digital interviewing capability is part of the Home Office's aim to become digital by default. The term 'digital interviewing' covers both the typed interview transcript and the audio recording when the digital interviewing software has been used to capture the record of the interview. When the digital interviewing software is available, this is the preferred way of capturing and providing a copy of the interview record both for the transcript and audio recording.

When digital interviewing software is not available, the transcript must be typed in word (or handwritten if there is no other alternative). The interview must also be audio recorded by other means (subject to audio recording exemptions)"²⁰.

This implies that (in contrast to the FOI response) some form of 'digital interviewing' covers the typed transcript such as transcription software. In addition, from the research conducted during this project, there is qualitative evidence to cast doubt on the Home Office's FOI response. Specifically, some of the participants stated:

“Sometimes when the interview goes for 2/3/4 hours - every question leads to another. That is an AI generated question. A person using their own analytical mind would be able to prioritise more relevant questions. When you have lots of less relevant questions it takes more time and makes the case confusing.”

- London workshop attendee

“Only time I am sure I engaged with AI was when I was talking during the interview. I think it was AI taking the notes (transcript). When I read through there were some things that sounded funny. Interviewer said that he might be looking at another system but that doesn't mean he's not listening. The way the sentences were being constructed, it didn't look like what I said. It was clear that it wasn't the person I was talking to that was taking down the notes.”

- London and Kent workshop attendee

“I would say something and they would write another thing completely that was different to what was said.”

- London workshop attendee

“For the screening [interview] I don’t think it was AI as it was a lady interviewing me. Then the main interview was a man so when he asked questions he would be typing. It took 4.5 hours almost 5 hours so it might be AI I don’t know. Just now I am trying to know about AI, before I didn’t know anything. Maybe whatever I am saying, I don’t really know. When my results [transcription] came I discovered, when I got the hard copy, I noticed that things were misinterpreted. Spellings incorrect. A lot of things were messed up in my case. I don’t know if it was AI.”

- London workshop attendee

“During my screening interview there was an in-person translator and there were two significant errors. These two mistakes could have completely changed my interview path. I didn't know at that time that I had the opportunity to correct the transcript - at that moment I was feeling very bad and stressed, I walked out thinking there is nothing I can do.”

- Kent workshop attendee

Efficiency and tackling waiting times

“AI should be used to help with timeframes and help with waiting times, or just let people know how long they’re going to be waiting. People need to be informed. This will help people stay positive. Need to know that there is some kind of end to the process.”

- London workshop attendee

The long waiting times and asylum backlog are well documented²¹. As of September 2024, there were 97,170 cases (relating to 133,409 people) awaiting an initial decision. While that is 22% fewer than September 2023, it is 13% higher than the previous quarter ending June 2024. 32% of cases have been waiting more than 12 months for an initial decision. The human impact of these waiting times was incredibly evident amongst the participants and was reflected in the insights regarding the use of AI in the asylum system.

Participants stated that AI could be used to help with the overall efficiency of the system, particularly in regard to reducing waiting although they did not elaborate on how this could be specifically used to speed up the process. However, a minority of participants did raise concerns about the ability of AI to make errors which may not be adequately picked up or addressed.

“I believe that the resource / educational resource could play an important role in the lives of asylum seekers. As the asylum system, we live in challenging conditions - eating poorly in hotels, sleeping. End of day, we thank God for the opportunity. What is concerning is waiting times are happening over a prolonged period which is very difficult. Having such educational courses like AI workshops would be fantastic resources and teach us practical skills/avoiding risks. E.g. crimes - on unemployment of asylum seekers, if AI can be used to accelerate claims this would significantly reduce these issues.”

- London workshop attendee

“I believe that using AI is going to expedite the asylum process, because the current reliance on the human factors introduce certain issues such as delays in decision-making and sometimes mood-based decisions or biased decisions. In some cases someone might receive the outcomes of their asylum case in 2 months but for others there may be delays that would extend up to 2 years. With AI, issue of time could be regulated and streamlined to ensure efficiency and timely process.”

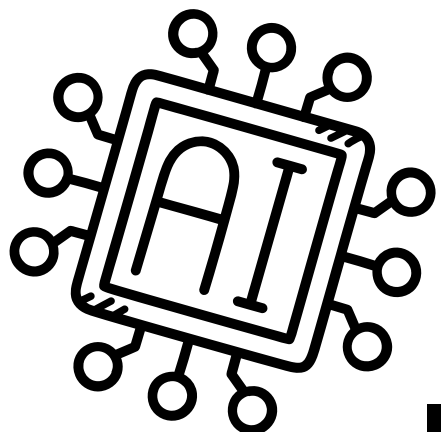
- London workshop attendee

“It is better to introduce the use of AI as soon as possible in order to save time and streamline procedures, reduce financial costs. Benefitting both itself and the asylum seekers.”

- London workshop attendee

“I think if AI could be used much more during the asylum seeking process it would be far better. AI could save a lot of time. I have studied and worked my whole life - here I can't do anything. The government could reduce the response time for asylum requests using AI. Could also reduce the cost if the timeframes are quicker. It is better to use AI through the whole process to save time.”

- Kent workshop attendee



Body language, linguistic barriers and cultural sensitivity

Concerns were consistently raised around the limitations of AI in its ability to understand human behaviour and emotions. For example, not only would AI be unable to read body language, but it might also have difficulty in differentiating or appreciating the complexities of how mannerism may differ from culture to culture. AI cannot 'understand' human emotions nor how certain reactions may differ between cultures such as head shaking, which in Bulgaria means 'yes' as opposed to many other cultures where shaking your head means 'no'. If the data has not been provided to AI regarding differences of this nature, then people from certain countries or cultures may be at a disadvantage. Some of the participants stated they had concerns about how AI would impact disabled people, specifically neurodivergent people.

"There are many people who can't speak English. So for them to meet with these people, it is very hard. So they create a website where we ask, where we track our case. Could also create a chat bot where they answer every frequently asked question. In camp there are many people who are neurodivergent - struggle to communicate."

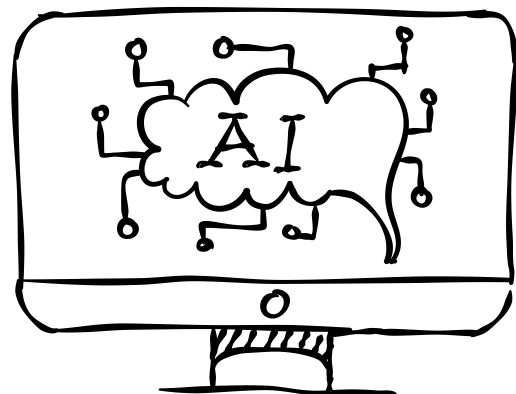
- Kent workshop attendee

“If AI could be designed with extreme sensitivity to people’s words and cultural backgrounds, it might succeed in certain areas. However, I’m concerned about the use of AI and how it could handle the Arabic dialects. Given the diversity of Arabic dialects and accents - we even struggle to understand this in the Arab world. How can AI do that?”

- London workshop attendee

“Sensitive matters are at stake, the human understanding is irreplaceable. An interpreter committee is always better suited to make decisions.”

- London workshop attendee



General cultural sensitivities in the asylum system

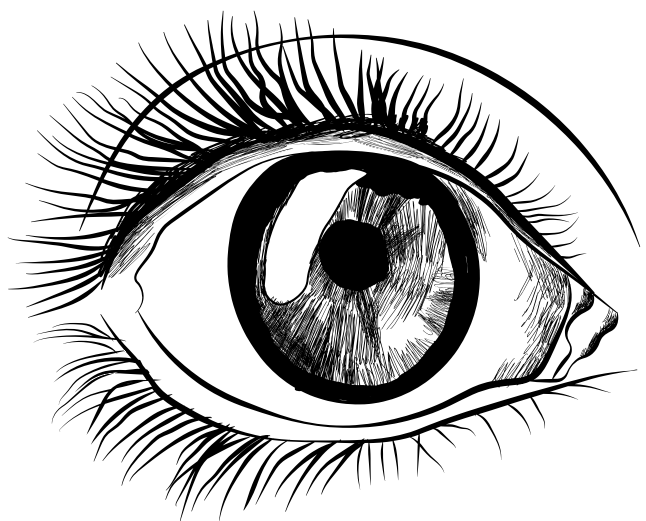
It is unclear if there is intention to use AI in interviews or other parts of the decision-making process, however whether AI is used or not, participants shared their frustration and hurt at dealing with often insensitive caseworkers. For example, one participant told us:

“When I applied for Migrant Help for accommodation - I had to chat with a chatbot. I was chatting with it - it was asking me so many questions, I think it was AI. I felt the chatbot was not hearing me out. Was not sympathetic enough to understand my concerns and what I was going through at that point, because I was really homeless, [I] was cold, I was sick, and it was not really giving me the feedback that I expected, that if it was a human, would really understand.”
- Kent workshop attendee

However, to our knowledge Migrant Help has a **webchat not a chatbot** function. Crucially, a webchat (or live chat) is an online conversation between a user and a human. This usually requires a trained team of advisors to handle user inquiries. This means that in this case, the individual in question was in fact speaking to a human that failed to demonstrate empathy to someone asking for help.

“The caseworker is an emotional person - they will judge based on emotions or mood. They may give the emotional or cultural perspective which will affect decisions.”

- London workshop attendee



Lack of transparency

“Whatever system is used, transparency and accountability are central.”

- Kent workshop attendee

Participants stated they were cautious of AI due to the lack of transparency around how it would be used, and what datasets it would rely on.

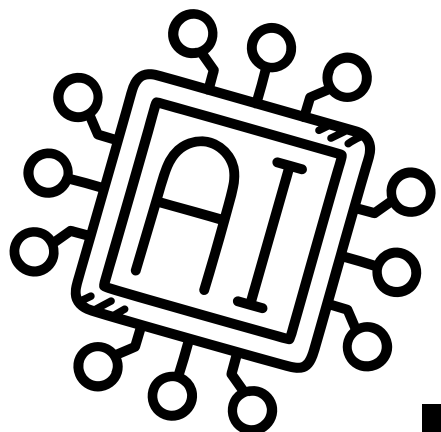
“If they want to use AI, I don't approve. If they do it needs to be transparent. Whoever has the case, let it be transparent.”

- London workshop attendee

“AI does not make a decision itself but is used to recommend a decision to caseworkers, if that is the case, if there is an error to what it gives to the caseworker. They can only decide based on the information given to them. In which case it is not good to use in any area of the asylum system.”

- London workshop attendee

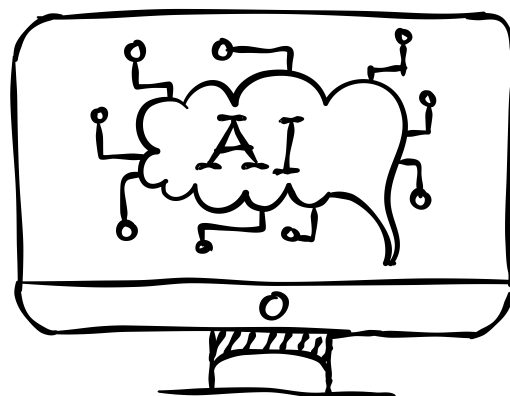
Workshop participants and people we interviewed consistently raised transparency as a key part of AI being used in the asylum system. People largely reported that they did not feel confident to challenge the uses of AI where it has produced errors in their cases because the uses of AI by the Home Office are so unclear. There is a limited ability to gain information on these systems and how they have affected you personally using Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Subject Access Requests (SARs) (see annex).



5. RESOURCES FOR MIGRANTS, INCLUDING REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Both the immigration system and implementation of technology are opaque, and for migrants it is not always clear how to navigate it. Throughout the project, participants said they wanted more information on the UK immigration system generally and how to protect your rights, as well as expressing interest in more workshops in the future.

Based on the discussions in the workshops and the interviews, we identified a few ways that people seeking asylum who are awaiting decisions can help them understand and get greater transparency around their cases. These were some of the points people expressed they wanted more information about, and what we thought would be helpful.



Knowing what is in your case file- How to make a Subject Access Request (SAR)

A person who claims asylum in the UK will have a 'case file' created by the Home Office to document the information shared with them e.g. interview transcripts, evidence for the asylum claim, and it will include the correspondence between the individual and the Home Office in this file.

People are able to request information that is held about themselves through a Subject Access Request (SAR). For migrants, including people seeking asylum, this can be useful because it enables them to see and challenge any incorrect information relating to their personal data which may impact their asylum claim.

Information requested can be specific (such as a record of your substantive asylum interview), as well as broad, covering all information held about you by the Home Office. You will need to provide proof of your identity to get this information, including photo identification, to ensure that personal data is not being shared with someone other than you, i.e. non-authorised people. To make a SAR to the Home Office, you can fill out an online application form or email the Home Office at subjectaccessrequest@homeoffice.gov.uk. More information on SARs from the Home Office can be found [here](#)²² (see footnote), and tips on submitting a SAR can be found on the [ICO website](#)²³.

Obtaining a copy of your substantive interview transcript

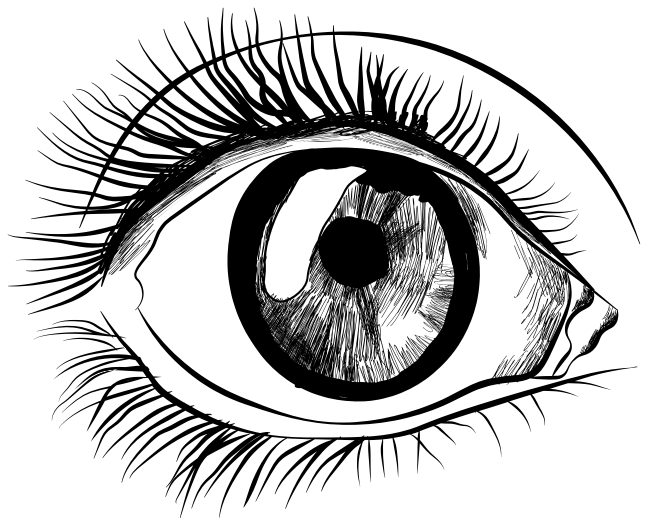
Once a person seeking asylum has had an interview with the Home Office, you should receive a transcript of your substantive interview. If not, you can request a copy. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, people seeking asylum have the right to access personal data held about them, which would include the interview transcript. You can make a SAR to the Home Office (information in above section), which can be done online (see footnote 22). If you have access to legal assistance, your lawyer could assist in making this request.

If you do not receive your interview transcript and audio recording of your substantive interview immediately after the interview, you are able to complain to complaints@homeoffice.gov.uk.

More information on obtaining transcripts and recordings, as well as any other issues that may come up in your interview, can be found in [Right To Remain's toolkit: Asylum Substantive \(Big\) Interview](#)²⁴.

Find out what the Home Office is doing- How to make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request

Migrants, including people seeking asylum should be able to challenge (and hold to account) the system that impacts all parts of their lives. Making a Freedom of Information (FOI) request can be one way for migrants, including people seeking asylum to do this.



Why is an FOI useful?

An FOI is a request for information from a public body - in this case likely to be the Home Office - that uses the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

An FOI request can be done by letter, email, social media or some organisation's may have an online form you can fill out. If someone is unable to request in writing (e.g. because of a disability), they can contact the public authority or can support them to make the request in another way such as over the phone.

All FOI requests to the Home Office should be sent to FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk. You can also submit a request via [WhatDoTheyKnow](#)²⁵. Below is an example of an FOI that we have sent:

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to request information (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000) regarding the use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the asylum system. I would be grateful if you could provide information on the following:

- **a) Is data obtained from border surveillance technologies (e.g. surveillance towers, drones) shared with Home Office departments involved in asylum decision-making? b) If so, how does the data obtained from border surveillance technologies (e.g. surveillance towers, drones) affect the asylum claims of people who cross the Channel? E.g. are the images captured via surveillance of an individual crossing the Channel used as evidence in an asylum case.**
- **What software does the Home Office use to transcribe people's asylum interviews?**
- **What, if any, software does the Home Office use to translate testimony from people seeking asylum (both written and spoken)?**
- **How is the Home Office using AI (Artificial Intelligence) to organise documents, gather information, share data and/or help decide whether to grant someone asylum?**

- **Does the Home Office use outsourced companies or in-house developers for AI (Artificial Intelligence) programmes that are used during the process of an asylum application?**

**Kind regards,
Lauren Fernandes**

This does not mean that all requests are granted. The two main reasons for rejection that people may come across are a request being too broad, and therefore rejected on the basis of the cost of retrieving that information, or failing the public interest test. This test weighs up whether, in the eyes of the Home Office, granting access to information would affect the Home Office's work, such as impacting the operation of immigration controls - i.e. by giving this information, the Home Office alleges that people could use it to "game the system" - or, less often, undermining national security.

Due to the outsourcing of public services to private companies, like the Home Office employing Clearsprings Ready Homes to run some hotel accommodation for people seeking asylum, there is a limited responsibility that these private companies have to share grant information. However, it usually does not apply to them except in certain conditions where they are designated as a public authority by the Government. Otherwise, all FOI requests to the Home Office should be sent to FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk. You can also submit a request via WhatDoTheyKnow.

If you are unhappy with the response you get, you can request an internal review, where your request and the response you received will be reconsidered. If you are also unhappy with the outcome of the internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)²⁶.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

How, when and where AI is being implemented in the UK asylum system is still unclear. It has been consistently difficult to obtain information into its usage and has required us to examine confirmed cases in other countries so we can get a sense of what AI in the UK could look like. However, there is a lot more work to be done in understanding the wider digitalisation of decision-making especially as the Government has confirmed they will be implementing and expanding its use in the near future.

What was crystal clear was how the participants felt about both AI and barriers within the asylum system as a whole. While views on AI itself were mixed ranging from those who were completely against its use, widespread scepticism about AI's ability to replicate human functions to calls for it to be implemented in order to improve efficiency, the shared feelings of frustration with the asylum system were evident. The emotional toll that lengthy waiting times and errors in interview transcripts consistently have on those awaiting a decision is huge.

Alongside those in our community, we will continue to call for greater transparency in the use of AI and wider technology in the UK immigration system, in line with the wishes of project participants. There is clearly the need for a migrant-centred approach in the development of AI in the asylum system along with more ways for migrants to hold the Home Office to account.

7. ANNEX

Exercise Explanations

The AI School Game

The AI School game introduces participants to how AI, machine learning, and big data function by using a selective school as a loose analogy for the asylum system. In this exercise, participants act as an AI system tasked with deciding whether applicants should be accepted or rejected, mirroring the evaluative process of asylum claims. The school analogy simplifies complex ideas while highlighting parallels, such as the use of comparable data sets and the fundamental act of accepting or rejecting individuals based on specific profiles.

Each group is given a unique data set of previously accepted and rejected applicants, prompting them to develop their own logic or system to explain how the decisions were made. Afterward, the groups collectively examine new applicant profiles with no predetermined outcomes. This reveals how different groups, using incomplete or varied data, arrive at different conclusions, mirroring the impact of biased or limited data in real-world AI systems.

Participants are guided to reflect on critical questions throughout the game:

- Would having more data improve decision-making?
- Who designed the logic of the system, and what biases might they have?
- Is the system fair, and how could it be redesigned to address inequities?

Through this process, participants inadvertently create simplified "decision trees," replicating how machine learning models use patterns in data to make predictions. They learn that while more data might make predictions more consistent, it doesn't guarantee better or fairer decisions, as systems reflect the biases and logic of their designers. The exercise not only offers clarity about AI but also explores its ethical implications. It highlights how decisions based on past patterns might perpetuate injustices, prompting participants to critically question the fairness and purpose of such systems. By maintaining an emotionally distanced, fictional setting, the game offers critical reflection on real-world applications, such as AI's role in immigration and asylum decision-making.

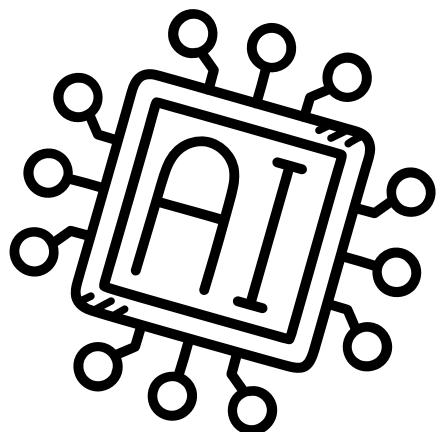
	Abdellah		Akhmad
Rejected	مرفوض رد كرك	Accepted	مقبول وتمثل شو
Faith	Muslim مسلم مسلمان	Faith	Muslim مسلم مسلمان
Home-School Distance	5 المسافة بين المنزل والمدرسة د كور-مدرستي وان	Home-School Distance	5 المسافة بين المنزل والمدرسة د كور-مدرستي وان
Family Connections	sister أخت خور	Family Connections	brother أخ ورور
Academic Performance	★★★☆☆ الدراس الأكاديمي الكاديميك فعالت	Academic Performance	★★★☆☆ الدراس الأكاديمي الكاديميك فعالت
Behaviour	★★☆☆☆ سلوك چلتد	Behaviour	★★★☆☆ سلوك چلتد
Attendance	★★☆☆☆ حضور جائزيري	Attendance	★★☆☆☆ حضور جائزيري

Role-Play Exercise: Redesigning Immigration Systems

This role-play exercise engages participants in envisioning future and alternative immigration systems through two distinct scenarios, combining technical and moral considerations. Participants take on the role of Home Office advisors tasked with redesigning the asylum system under two different political briefs. This structured, task-based approach encourages creative, systems thinking while avoiding being overwhelmed by focusing on specific scenarios.

Scenario 1: Technical Brief

Participants work under the current government and are instructed to propose updates to IPIC or any other parts of the asylum system. They can suggest minor tweaks or radical changes, but their focus is on practical questions like cost, efficiency, and technical feasibility. A facilitator, playing the minister, listens to their presentations, asking probing questions to reflect the Government's priorities.

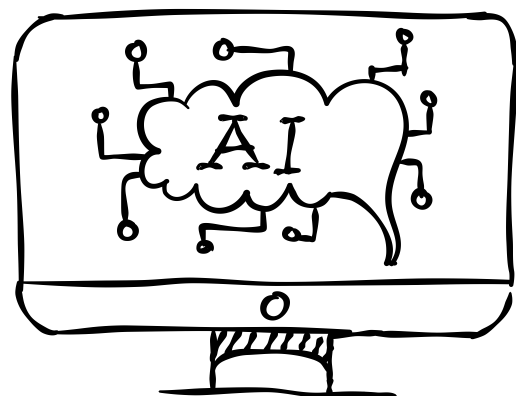


Scenario 2: Political Brief

The setting shifts to 2027, under a new government prioritising freedom of movement. Participants must design a radically different immigration system, one that prioritises freedom of movement, considering whether AI has a role in such a system and what that role might look like. The facilitator, now representing a more progressive Home Secretary, challenges them with moral questions: What is fairer? Who benefits or is harmed? How do we ensure no one is left behind?

Purpose

The role-play helps participants think critically about both incremental changes and abolitionist (a complete overhaul of current systems) futures in a structured way. By grounding big-picture ideas in task-based discussions, the activity creates a space to explore bold visions without becoming overwhelmed by their scale. It also uses the contrasting briefs to highlight the ethical and practical tensions in designing immigration systems, making participants grapple with both technical constraints and moral imperatives.



Exercise: The World Is a Map

This activity draws from long term theatre practice and it is based on a simple ice-breaking game. Participants are asked to visualise a map on the floor and stand at different points that represent where they come from, where they are now and where they see themselves in the future. Through long-term development of simple activities, our facilitator adapted this activity to an activity that would connect the participants, but also assure each person can maintain details of their journey private, as the orientation and size of each item on the map depended on the imagination of the participant alone and no one was asked to share their 'location'. Reflecting on the difficulties of the migration journey was an element added specifically for the workshops, as was the extension to interact with an object that became a kind of 'avatar' (an image/symbol representing a particular person) or the next person to go through that journey. That gave the opportunity to the participants to dissociate with the most traumatic and challenging moments and process or project certain experiences as a learning moment worth sharing through the use of the object.

One further step was added to this activity, incorporating a practice from South African theatre practices that explore inter-generational wisdom. The original activity requires an elderly person and a younger person to sit back-to-back; the older person narrates an important story and the younger needs to learn to listen and focus and take notes from that narrative. This was developed to support the participants reflect on a significant story from the asylum seeking journey, and to share that with their partner, without having to look at each, feeling less judged or 'observed'. Both members of the pair would narrate one story and the peer listening would take notes and reflect on that story.

Image Theatre

Image Theatre is one of the practices introduced by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal (1931-2009) who introduced theatre as a way to manage politics and respond to injustices through Theatre of the Oppressed. One of the most popular techniques in Image Theatre is to observe an image of oppression and recreate that image like a tableau (a group of models or motionless figures representing a scene from a story or from history) or a freeze-frame, and then move to create an ideal image, an image that shows how things should really be without that element of oppression. The next step is to find the connection, the intermediate image that essentially helps find the solution, the action to the problem.

This principle was used to offer the participants creative ways to engage with very practical and technical issues in the process of asylum seeking. By engaging with a problem in a visual and physical way, it helps questioning the logic of the mechanism that allowed the oppression image in the first place. It also encourages the participants to think in a creative way, to use their imagination as a tool to design the future and to propose ways for getting to that future. It is an empowering process that allows participants to be part of a narrative that sometimes might be defined without them and it brings the future to the present in a tangible way, it reminds that small actions can help make changes and introduce or remove harmful elements of oppression. On this occasion, even if most participants were reluctant to 'perform' or embody the images, they were motivated to use vivid imagery and a more expansive process for looking at a rather confined situation and make suggestions based on their own experience and knowledge.

Workshop Analysis

Creative approaches can make complicated topics like artificial intelligence more accessible, specifically the use of games. Designing activities with a balance between emotional engagement and objectivity fosters critical thinking without overwhelming participants. It also means we can expand on personal stories and lived experiences can bridge the gap between theoretical discussions and real-world implications.

Most participants found this activity very engaging, as they all shared very personal moments in a very candid and straightforward way. Also, as they were taking notes, many participants observed how many similarities some of the experiences have, without losing focus from the individual and distinct nature of their own journey.

Moving forward, participants said we could make clearer connections between broader exercises and specific topics like AI to maximise relevance and engagement. In addition, exercises that require greater vulnerability, such as theatre-based activities, benefit from additional time to build participants' comfort and familiarity with the practice, helping them to engage more confidently and connect the exercise to the topic.

8. GLOSSARY

Accountability

If something goes wrong with an AI system, then someone should be held responsible for the actions. This could be an individual, company or organisation that is developing, implementing or using the AI system.

AI

1. **Traditional AI:** Traditional AI²⁷ (known as rule-based AI) relies on pre-programmed rules and algorithms to perform specific tasks. An example of this is email spam filtering or auto-correct. However, traditional AI has its limitations in more complex situations and has limited learning abilities.
2. **Generative AI:** Generative AI or 'GenAI' uses machine learning algorithms and large data sets to learn patterns and create new content. It has the ability to learn and improve over time, and can analyse large datasets. GenAI raises a lot of concerns because of its ability to generate realistic 'deepfakes' or manipulate information. This poses risks to security and is linked to the spread of misinformation.

Algorithm

An algorithm is a set of rules used to solve a problem or complete a task. There are many different kinds of algorithms from traffic lights to recommending content on social media.

Chatbot

A chatbot is a computer program that mimics human conversation with an end user. Not all chatbots are equipped with artificial intelligence (AI), but modern chatbots increasingly use conversational AI techniques such as natural language processing (NLP) to interpret user questions and automate responses to them. Modern AI chatbots now use natural language understanding (NLU) to figure out the meaning of open-ended user input (i.e. free text that a user writes, instead of selecting from a menu), solving issues that may arise from user errors, such as spelling mistakes and translation issues.

Deepfakes

Deepfake technology²⁸ is a type of artificial intelligence used to create convincing fake images, videos and audio recordings.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Act request

This is a right to request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 information that is held by public authorities e.g. Government departments, schools and universities. This information can be emails or written documents, CCTV recordings, telephone recordings. Anyone has the right to make a request, and you do not need to be a UK citizen.

Protected characteristics

Under UK law, there are certain 'characteristics' which it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of. These are: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership. Being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

An individual protected from discrimination at work, in education, as a consumer, when using public services, when buying or renting property, or as a member or guest of a private club or association. These are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Subject Access Requests (SAR)

A subject access request is a request to an organisation, company or public body asking for the personal information held about them.

Systemic or institutional oppression

Systemic or institutional oppression is the mistreatment or discrimination of people based on their social identity group such as race, gender, class or disability. This is upheld or enforced by laws, media or healthcare.

Transparency

This term is widely associated with technology, especially AI. In the context of AI, it means understanding and knowing how AI systems work including how they make decisions, the data they are using, and why those results are being produced.

Webchat

This is an online conversation between a user and a human. This usually requires a trained team of advisors to handle user inquiries.

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WHO IS THE MIGRANTS' RIGHTS NETWORK?

The Migrants' Rights Network (MRN) is a UK campaigning charity that stands in solidarity with migrants in their fights for rights and justice. We co-curate campaigns using anti-oppression practices to create transformational change, extending beyond the individual impact on migrants' lives, to tackle oppression at its source. We build relationships with grassroots, migrant-led organisations to understand the issues that are important to them and how we can work together to achieve immediate and transformational change.

We particularly focus on issues that are less notable or publicly palatable, and can be overlooked. We do this to ensure that all migrant groups and communities that are seldom heard have access to platforms, support and resources to advocate for themselves and achieve change.

If you wish to provide feedback on this report, email us at policy@migrantsrights.org.uk

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