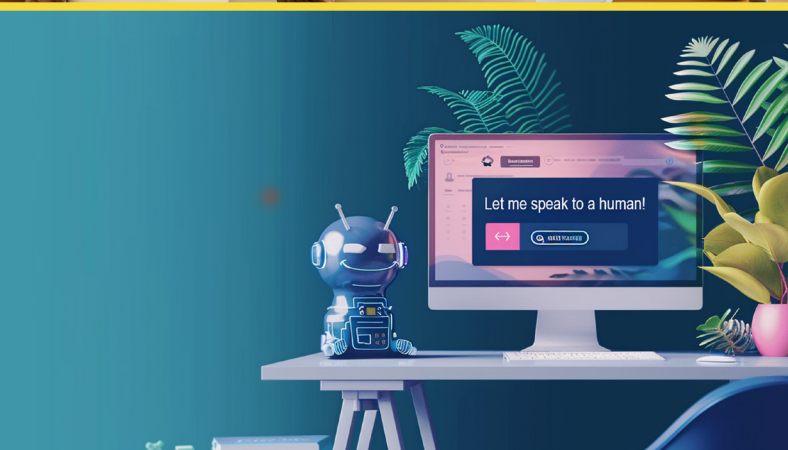# Making AI Work for Charities

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CEOS AND SENIOR LEADERS ON SAFE, STRATEGIC ADOPTION

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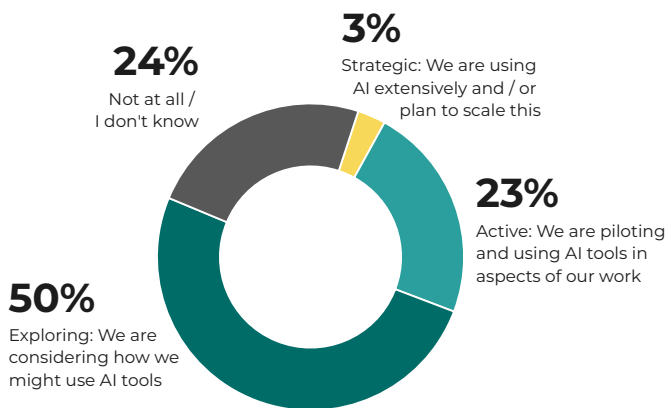
Understanding the risks and rewards

Charities are still in the early stages of AI adoption. Early data from the Charity Digital Skills Report 2025 suggests three quarters (76%) already use AI tools such as ChatGPT or Copilot. While formal adoption is growing, most are still exploring how these tools could support their work.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANISATIONS' USE OF AI IN DAY-TO-DAY WORK OR OPERATIONS?[1]

24%
Not at all /
I don't know

3%
Strategic: We are using AI extensively and / or plan to scale this

23%
Active: We are piloting and using AI tools in aspects of our work

50%
Exploring: We are considering how we might use AI tools

Safe exploration and adoption

Responsible AI use includes setting up a governance framework, considering:

- AI policy and training
- Selection of AI tools
- Risk assessments

Without clear policies or training, informal AI use can expose your charity to data privacy and ethical risks. In the early stages, leadership oversight can enable safe experimentation that helps shape your future AI policy and tool choices.

Supporting people through change

People are the key element for successful AI adoption, with leadership coming from the top. There can be concerns about AI use and impact on roles, while others do not want to lose access to their favourite AI tool. Reassuring teams and involving early adopters in the process as champions can support organisation-wide adoption.

AI adoption may feel like adding work to already stretched teams. There is a significant learning curve, so a short-term investment of time is needed for longer-term productivity gains. Here external training can help speed up this process.

Ethical AI use

Ethical AI use is an evolving conversation, particularly in the charity sector. A responsible approach can be built around five key pillars: fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy, and safety, with sustainability emerging as a sixth. These principles can be embedded into your AI policy and training.

The potential for time savings

Tools like ChatGPT and Copilot can help busy teams reclaim time, including from admin-heavy or unpopular tasks. With the right setup and support, low-cost tools can save up to 1.75 hours per day per person[2].

Time saved daily using Gen AI Tools
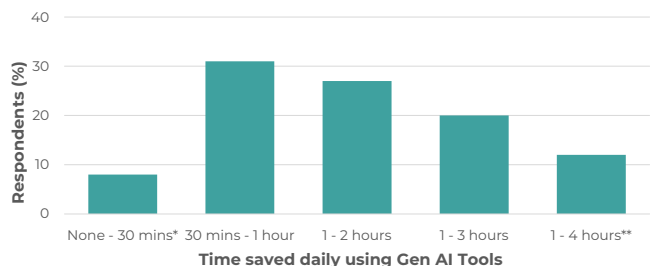
1 Early insights from the 2025 Charity Digital Skills Report survey - Zoe Amar Digital

2 Censuswide after it surveyed 3000 respondents in UK, USA, Canada and Germany, commissioned by Visier

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From informal use to organisational strategy

AI adoption often involves managing significant change and should focus on supporting your team. It can feel overwhelming, so taking small practical steps helps your team see AI's benefits in their roles.

What is your charity's approach?

As awareness of AI risks and benefits grows, each charity will need to consider its position. It can be helpful for the Leadership Team to reflect on the current approach and where you might want to go next.
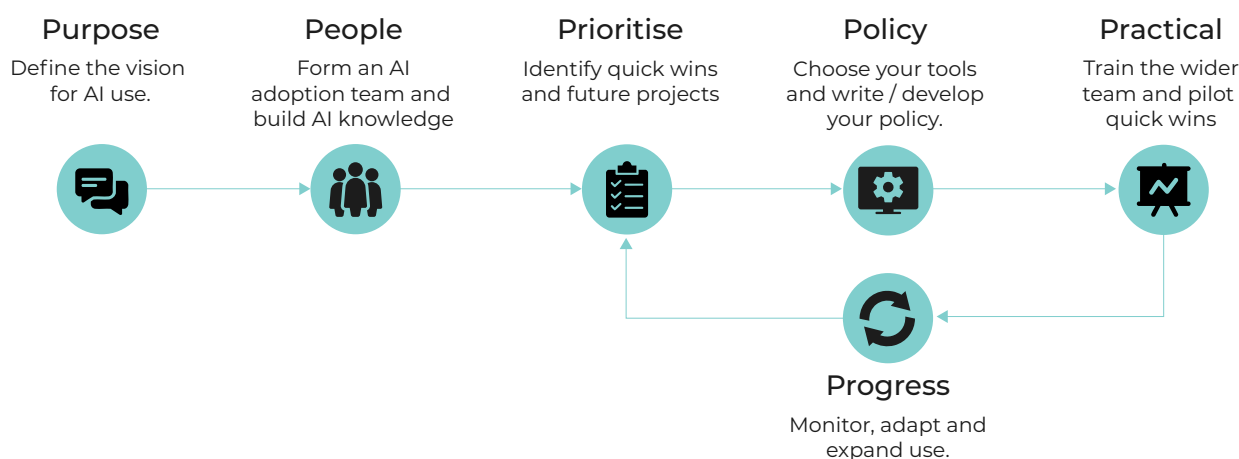
Approach	Considerations
Restrict AI use AI tools are restricted or discouraged.	✓ Minimises short-term risk ✗ May drive unauthorised (shadow) use ✗ Misses potential time savings
Allow informal use Individuals use AI tools without oversight or a clear AI policy.	✓ Encourages innovation ✗ Risk of data/privacy issues ✗ No link to organisational goals
Controlled exploration An AI policy restricts tools and usage to support safe trials by early adopters.	✓ Reduces risk ✓ Allows safe experimentation ✗ May limit uptake and innovation
Planned adoption A clear AI plan, policy and training framework supports strategic adoption across the charity.	✓ Aligns with charity goals ✓ Considers whole team ✓ Potential for measurable impact on KPIs ✗ Investment in training and time to plan

A structured approach to AI adoption

For charities ready to take the next step, we use a simple, structured framework based on change programmes. This approach can be adapted to your charity, to help adopt AI responsibly and strategically.

The size and structure of your charity will shape who should lead the work. Senior-level involvement is important, often supported by a working group or project lead.

Here are six straightforward steps to get started:

Purpose
Define the vision for AI use.

People
Form an AI adoption team and build AI knowledge

Prioritise
Identify quick wins and future projects

Policy
Choose your tools and write / develop your policy.

Practical
Train the wider team and pilot quick wins

Progress
Monitor, adapt and expand use.

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Our Charity AI Power Up

Time constraints and lack of internal skills are two of the biggest barriers to AI adoption. Our Charity AI Power Up programme is designed to help charities move from exploring AI tools to using them confidently and ethically, freeing up resources to focus on your mission.

1 **KICKSTART YOUR AI JOURNEY**
Key team members join a live training session to explore how charities are using AI, choosing the right AI tools, and learning how to create a simple plan and policy.

2 **GET YOUR CHARITY AI READY**
Put the learning into practice to identify quick wins and refine your charity's approach. We'll provide a pack of resources, including a draft AI policy, and be on hand to advise through a 1-2-1 session.

3 **POWER UP YOUR WHOLE TEAM**
With priority areas agreed, practical training sessions will provide essential skills for safe and effective AI use. From responsible AI use to building your own AI assistant, your whole team will be able to sign up for relevant online training sessions.

Our programme is designed for small and medium charities with limited time and budget. We focus on low-cost AI tools, mainly using ChatGPT or Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Find out more about our programme at: dandelionai.co.uk/charity-ai-power-up

Delivered by a trainer with charity expertise

The programme is led by Dandelion Applied AI Director Caroline Broadway. She brings charity-sector experience as a Fundraising and Communications Director and understands what works for non-techie teams. She is known for making AI accessible, practical and fun.

Here are some highlights from our Google reviews:

"…Caroline tailored the course as we went along to meet the needs and learning level of the group. I have so many ideas and applications for AI to consider."
- Carrie Musselwhite, Head of Operations & Development Scotland, Circles Network

"…Caroline's style of teaching is so open, clear and friendly, and we always learn something from her sessions. She understands the voluntary sector and is aware of the ethical debates around AI…"
- NAVCA

"…Caroline has a real talent for explaining complex issues around use of AI in very clear language with good examples…"
– Dave Thomas, Volunteer Development Office, Nottingham CVS

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