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AI Adoption Roadmap

A Practical Framework for Introducing AI in Health and Social Care



Every organisation starts somewhere

There is no single route to adopting AI

Some care providers are only beginning to explore what AI could mean for their organisation, while others are already embedding AI into everyday processes. Wherever you are on that journey, successful adoption isn't about moving as quickly as possible. **It's about moving with purpose.**

This roadmap has been designed to help health and social care providers understand where they are today, what challenges they may encounter next and the practical steps they can take to progress with confidence.

The five stages reflect a typical AI adoption journey, from early curiosity through to confident, organisation-wide use. You may recognise your organisation in one stage, or find that different teams are at different points along the roadmap. That's perfectly normal.

The important thing is not to rush ahead, but to ensure that each stage is supported by strong governance, engaged teams and a clear understanding of how AI can deliver meaningful value.

For each stage you'll find:

- What this stage looks like
- Common challenges
- Practical actions to help you move forward
- Ways to measure progress and success

Remember, AI adoption isn't a one-off project. As technology continues to evolve, organisations should expect to revisit earlier stages, review their approach and continually build on what they've learned.

Stage 1: Curious - "We know AI is happening. We're not sure what it means for us."

At this stage, AI feels distant or abstract.

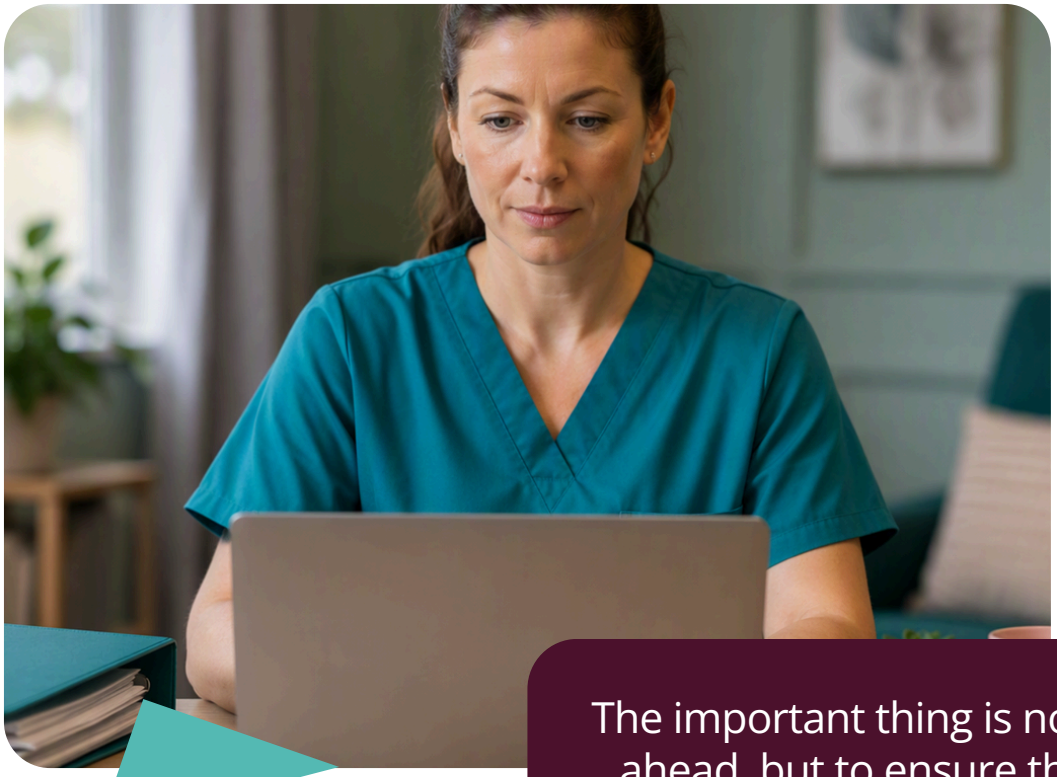
Leaders are aware of the conversation but uncertain whether it is relevant to their service, their size, or their budget. Some staff may already be using AI tools informally, without the organisation knowing.

What are the challenges?

- Not knowing where to start or who to ask
- Conflating AI with automation, robots, or job replacement
- Assuming AI is only for large organisations or technology companies
- No shared language or understanding across the leadership team
- Concern about raising something the team isn't ready for

What can you do?

- **Start with a conversation.** Bring your leadership team together to discuss what AI means in the context of care.
- **Read widely but critically.** Look at what sector bodies (Skills for Care, NHSX, CQC) are saying about AI in social care.
- **Take stock of what already exists.** Ask staff whether they are using any AI tools like ChatGPT, voice assistants, AI writing tools in their work, even informally.
- **Attend a webinar or sector event** focused on AI in health and social care to hear from peers at a similar stage.



The important thing is not to rush ahead, but to ensure that each stage is supported by strong governance, engaged teams and a clear understanding of how AI can deliver meaningful value.

How do you measure success?

- Leadership team has a shared, basic understanding of what AI is and is not
- You have identified whether any AI tools are already in use across the service
- You have a named person who will lead the next stage of exploration
- Staff feel able to ask questions about AI without anxiety

Stage 2: Exploring - "We can see the potential. Now we need to understand where AI could help."

At this stage, curiosity becomes purposeful.

The organisation begins to look at its own workflows, pain points, and priorities and asks where AI could make a meaningful difference. This is about understanding the problem before reaching for a solution.



Wherever you are on that journey, successful adoption isn't about moving as quickly as possible. It's about moving with purpose.

What are the challenges?

- Being drawn to AI features rather than outcomes
- Vendor demonstrations that are impressive but not grounded in care realities
- Staff enthusiasm in some areas, resistance in others
- Difficulty separating genuine opportunity from hype
- No clear process for evaluating what good looks like

What can you do?

- **Map your administrative burden.** Where do staff spend time on tasks that feel repetitive, low-value, or disconnected from direct care? Documentation, rota management, compliance reporting, and handovers are common starting points.
- **Talk to frontline staff.** The people closest to care delivery often have the clearest view of where friction exists, and the most useful ideas about what would actually help.
- **Use the evaluation questions from Chapter 2** to begin assessing any tools you encounter: Is it built for care? Is data protected? Can outputs be trusted?
- **Visit or speak to peer organisations** who are already using AI in a care context and ask what worked, what didn't, and what they wish they had known.

How do you measure success?

- You have identified two or three specific use cases where AI could add genuine value
- Frontline staff have been involved in identifying opportunities
- You have a clear set of criteria for evaluating AI tools
- Leadership has agreed on priority areas to explore further

Stage 3: Preparing - "We're ready to move forward, but we want to do it properly."

This is the governance stage.

Before any AI tool is deployed, the organisation puts in place the structures, policies, and safeguards that will allow it to use AI responsibly.

What are the challenges?

- Governance feeling like a bureaucratic exercise rather than a practical necessity
- Uncertainty about what a proportionate AI policy looks like for a small or medium provider
- Data protection concerns that stall progress rather than shape it
- Lack of clarity about who owns AI decisions - IT, the registered manager, the board?
- Training resources that are generic rather than care-specific



What can you do?

- **Draft your AI policy** using the framework in Chapter 1 - covering purpose, approved tools, acceptable use, human oversight, training, and accountability.
- **Assign clear ownership** across risk, compliance, procurement, and data protection - even in a small organisation, these responsibilities need a named person.
- **Complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)** for any AI tool under consideration, in line with UK GDPR requirements.
- **Design a training plan** before deployment and ensure staff understand what the tool does, what it does not do, and what their responsibilities are.
- **Complete the AI Readiness Checklist** from Chapter 1 to identify any gaps before you proceed.

How do you measure success?

- An AI policy is in place and has been reviewed by relevant stakeholders
- Governance roles and responsibilities are clearly assigned
- A DPIA has been completed for any tool under consideration
- A staff training plan is ready to deploy
- The AI Readiness Checklist scores Green across all six sections

Stage 4: Adopting - "We are implementing AI tools in a controlled, supported way."

This is where AI moves from policy into practice.

Tools are deployed, staff are trained, and the organisation begins to learn in real conditions what works, what needs adjustment, and how to build confidence across the team.

What are the challenges?

- Inconsistent uptake across teams or locations
- Staff reverting to old processes when the new tool feels unfamiliar
- Outputs being accepted or rejected without proper review
- Technical issues or integration problems that weren't anticipated
- Difficulty measuring whether the tool is delivering the expected benefit



What can you do?

- **Start with a pilot.** Deploy the tool with a small group of willing, engaged staff before rolling out across the service - use their experience to refine your approach.
- **Appoint AI champions** within teams - people who understand the tool, can support their colleagues, and can feed back issues to the governance lead.
- **Build review into the process from day one.** Every AI output should be checked by a human before it is acted upon or saved, and make this a non-negotiable part of the workflow.
- **Create a simple feedback mechanism** so staff can flag errors, concerns, or unexpected outputs, and ensure those reports are reviewed regularly.
- **Track your baseline metrics** before deployment so you can measure impact: time spent on documentation, error rates, staff satisfaction, compliance scores.

How do you measure success?

- Pilot completed with documented learnings and adjustments made
- All staff using the tool have completed required training
- Human review is embedded in every AI-assisted workflow
- A feedback and incident reporting process is active
- Early data shows movement against at least one baseline metric

Stage 5: AI is part of how we work. We use it purposefully, safely, and well."

At this stage, AI is embedded in everyday practice.

Staff use approved tools as a matter of course. Governance is routine rather than reactive. The organisation reviews its AI use regularly, stays current with developments in the sector, and is able to make informed decisions about what to adopt next.

What are the challenges?

- Complacency - assuming that because AI is working, it doesn't need ongoing scrutiny
- Keeping pace with a rapidly evolving technology landscape
- Ensuring new staff are onboarded into AI-aware practice from day one
- Expanding AI use without repeating the governance steps that made early adoption successful
- Demonstrating AI's value to commissioners, regulators, and families



What can you do?

- **Conduct a quarterly AI review** - assess tool performance, review any incidents or near-misses, and check that policies remain current.
- **Include AI in your induction programme** - new staff should understand the organisation's approach to AI from their first week.
- **Stay connected to the sector.** Skills for Care, the Care Provider Alliance, and technology partners will continue to publish guidance as AI develops.
- **Share what you've learned.** Confident providers have a role in helping the wider sector - consider contributing to peer networks, sector events, or local authority forums.
- **Revisit the roadmap** when considering any new AI tool - even at Stage 5, each new adoption begins at Stage 2.

How do you measure success?

- AI tools are reviewed on a regular, documented schedule
- AI is included in staff induction and ongoing training
- The organisation can clearly articulate the impact of AI on care quality and operational efficiency
- Governance processes are followed consistently for any new tool adoption
- Staff, families, and regulators have confidence in how AI is being used

AI Adoption is a journey, not a destination

Successfully adopting AI doesn't happen overnight.

It takes time to build understanding, establish governance, engage teams and embed new ways of working. Every organisation will move through these stages at its own pace, and that's exactly how it should be.

The most successful providers won't necessarily be those who adopt AI first. They'll be the organisations that introduce it thoughtfully, involve their people throughout the process and continually review how AI is supporting both operational excellence and high-quality care.

As AI capabilities continue to evolve, your roadmap should evolve too. Regularly revisit each stage, celebrate the progress you've made and identify where new opportunities may exist. AI adoption isn't about reaching the final stage and stopping; it's about creating a culture of continuous learning, responsible innovation and ongoing improvement.

Whether you're taking your very first steps or expanding AI across multiple services, keeping people, governance and quality at the centre of every decision will help ensure AI delivers lasting value for your organisation.



Your AI Journey at a Glance

Before you continue, here's a quick reminder of what each stage represents and the progress you'll make as your care service moves from curiosity to confidence.

Use this summary as a practical reference point to identify where you are today, where you want to go next and the key outcome each stage is designed to achieve.

Stage	Primary Focus	Outcome
1. Curious	Build understanding and awareness	A shared understanding of AI across the organisation
2. Exploring	Identify opportunities and priorities	Clear use cases where AI can add value
3. Preparing	Establish governance and readiness	Strong foundations for responsible AI adoption
4. Adopting	Implement, learn and refine	AI embedded safely into everyday workflows
5. Confident	Continuously improve and innovate	AI becomes a trusted part of delivering high-quality care



Continue your AI journey



This roadmap is just one part of your AI journey.

Explore From Curious to Confident: **A Care Provider's Guide to AI** for practical guidance on understanding artificial intelligence, building confidence across your organisation, implementing AI responsibly and choosing trusted AI solutions that support high-quality care.

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Our expert team of software specialists are ready to show you how you understand the journey to adopt and benefit from AI with confidence.

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