

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Name: Artificial Intelligence and Social Work

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of this project is to explore attitudes towards the use of 'artificial intelligence' in children and family social work in an environment where they can ask questions and develop their thoughts with people they might not normally have the opportunity to discuss things with, including people who work on 'AI' systems or in data science more broadly; people who have lived experience of social services intervention who might be affected by the introduction of 'AI'; and social workers whose jobs might be changed by the growing introduction of 'AI' to social services in the future. You do not need to know anything about AI to take part. We will use the discussions we have in the workshops, and the thoughts people put down in the workshop activities, to think about how the British Association of Social Workers should advise social workers, managers, and policymakers on the use of AI in social work.

What do we mean by 'AI'?

'Artificial intelligence' is a term used broadly to describe when machines use information around them in their environment, or given to them in the form of large datasets, to inform their actions and achieve some task. Most commonly, we talk about AI as machines being able to mimic some of the thinking, reasoning, and learning abilities that often come easily to us as humans. Some examples are:

- Being able to spot and describe a repeating pattern, or being able to name an object in an image (for example, being able to see a picture of a car and know it's a car, even if you've never seen that specific model of car before in that colour);
- Being able to use information from past experiences to make predictions about what will happen in the future (for example, learning where you are most likely to find a parking space based on where there have been parking spaces before); or
- Being able to use environmental information to inform a decision (for example, recommending a movie to a friend that you think they would enjoy based on what you know about their interests).

Sometimes different terms are used to talk about specific aspects of AI or about AI more generally, these can include: 'predictive analytics', 'machine learning', or 'algorithmic decision-making'. In this project we are interested in all of these different forms of AI and its very general use. In public services in some places in the UK, AI has been used to try to:

- Join together personal records from different services when names and dates of birth do not always match up perfectly;
- Predict which referrals to children's services might escalate into child protection enquiries based on the characteristics of the child and the referral; or
- Prioritise families' needs to decide who should receive a limited service.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been asked to take part in this study because we would like to include your perspective on the use of 'AI' in children and families social work services. Our aim is to include a diverse group of people in three 2-hour workshops spread out over the duration of around 4-8 weeks. We feel like your experiences and expertise would be very valuable for the project. In some cases, we have approached people directly, and in

other cases we have asked our project collaborators to make recommendations for who they think should join the workshops.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact c.j.webb@sheffield.ac.uk. Please note that any data that has already been transcribed and anonymised is not able to be withdrawn, but will not be linked to you in any way.

What will happen if I take part? What will I have to do?

If you would like to take part, you will be invited to three virtual workshops that will be hosted on Google Meets. To attend, you will need a computer with a microphone and access to the internet; you do not need to use a webcam, but you may wish to. These will be group workshops with around 10-15 people, including the researchers. If you wish, you may also bring someone for support during the virtual workshop (either in person or on the virtual platform). You don't need to attend all three workshops, but it would be helpful if you are able to.

In the workshops you will be asked to contribute to discussions about the use of 'AI' in social work, but you do not need to know anything about 'AI' to take part. Each workshop will have an activity to help us structure discussion and to give everyone the opportunity to contribute by writing down their thoughts. You will be given access to these activities before the workshops if you would like to prepare any thoughts in advance. These activities are just to get us thinking, so don't worry if what you want to say doesn't fit neatly into them – you will have an opportunity to talk about it!

The first activity will involve looking at some examples of 'AI' in social work and thinking about what their impact might be (e.g. who might it help or harm? How might it affect relationships?); second workshop activity will involve thinking about a 'timeline' of the creation of an 'AI' system for social work (e.g. Where do the problems that people think 'AI' can solve in social work come from? Who should be involved in designing what the 'AI' system might do or look like?); the last workshop activity will involve looking at the thoughts we have gathered over the past two workshops together with the research team and thinking about what our recommendations should be to councils, social workers, and national government when they are thinking about using 'AI' in their children and families social work systems.

We will try and keep everyone together in the same virtual room, but if there are a large number of people, you might be asked to join a 'break out' room with a smaller number of people. If this is the case, we will try and make sure that there are diverse types of experience in each break out room (e.g. a computer programmer who writes parts of 'AI' programs, someone who has lived experience of social work intervention, and a social worker). The activities will take place on "Google Jamboard", which is like a virtual pinboard that you can add notes to. If we use breakout rooms, each one will be supported by someone from the research team and every now and then we will come back together in a group to share our discussions.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

We don't think there are any major risks of you taking part but you may find some of the topics that are discussed can be uncomfortable, especially if someone is talking about some aspects of child protection or you are talking about your own experiences. If you feel like it would be very distressing to talk about some aspects or experiences of child protection, including child protection investigations, abuse or neglect, or child removal, you may not want to participate in the project. If you feel like some of these things would be uncomfortable to hear, but would still like to participate, you are very welcome to bring a friend or relative to support you through the duration of the workshop; you are also free to 'step out' of the workshop at any

point for any reason. A member of the research team will be happy to talk to you privately in a separate call if you feel distressed at any point.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help inform how 'AI' systems are developed and used, or whether they are developed or use at all, in UK social work by providing recommendations to the British Association of Social Workers.

Will my taking part be confidential?

All the information that we collect during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. However, you should be aware that this research involves multiple participants in a group setting. We ask all participants to not share any information about the identities of others in the study, but the university cannot directly enforce this. You should be aware of the risk of other participants disclosing your identity and participation. If you are particularly concerned about this happening during or after any workshop you participate in, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Calum Webb (c.j.webb@sheffield.ac.uk), who will attempt to resolve the concern.

By agreeing to take part and signing the consent form, you also agree to keep the identities of all other participants confidential and agree that you will not create your own recordings of the workshops you take part in.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

During these workshops the audio from our group call and the call screen will be recorded. The workshops will be recorded so that the conversations can be transcribed and anonymised, so the researchers can explore the themes in our conversations in more detail and accurately use some of the things said as quotes in the project report. You will have the opportunity to read the report that is created based on these workshops and other parts of the research work to give your feedback before it is published.

What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>

What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

The data that is collected will be anonymised and transcribed so that the researchers can use it to identify common themes that can help us answer important questions about the use of AI in social work. Once the data is transcribed, the original recordings will be deleted. A copy of the contributions to the Google Jamboards will be made so that these can also be analysed. Two researchers will have access to the transcribed copies of the data, and the data itself will be stored on encrypted, password-protected, computers. Once we have written about our findings, and placed them in context with findings from other research projects in the form of a draft report, we will provide you with an opportunity to provide feedback on what we have written.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research has been funded by the University of Sheffield and the British Association of Social Workers through the Economic and Social Research Council's 'Impact Accelerator' funding. The purpose of this funding is to ensure that the research universities do is able to create change through collaborations and non-academic outputs. The 'Principal Investigator' for the project is Dr. Calum Webb.

Who is the 'Data Controller'?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the Department of Sociological Studies.

What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research or report a concern or incident?

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the research and wish to make a complaint, please contact Calum Webb (0114 222 6462; c.j.webb@sheffield.ac.uk) in the first instance. If you feel your complaint has not been handled in a satisfactory way you can contact the Head of the Department of Sociological Studies, Prof. Nathan Hughes (0114 222 6439; nathan.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk). If the Head of Department is not available, you can contact the Director of Research, Prof. Majella Kilkey (0114 222 6459; m.kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk). If the complaint relates to how your personal data has been handled, you can find information about how to raise a complaint in the University's Privacy Notice: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>

What support do I have access to if anything discussed in the study causes me upset or distress?

While this study will take every precaution to ensure you are not harmed or distressed, some of the topics we will be discussing in the research may be potentially upsetting or triggering (see: *What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?*). The University of Sheffield is not able to provide any direct support if the topics discussed in the research project cause you any distress, however, you may find the following resources helpful:

Family Rights Group <https://frg.org.uk>

Parents, Families, and Allies Network <https://www.pfan.uk>

Contact for further information

For further information about the research project or to ask any questions, please contact Dr. Calum Webb:

Email: c.j.webb@sheffield.ac.uk

Phone: 0114 222 6462

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research project.

Dated: 09/06/2021