

Policy Buddy:

Transforming children's services with generative AI

Welcome to Leading AI's impact report on how our innovative AI solution, Policy Buddy, is helping children's social care teams in North Yorkshire Council.

This document showcases how affordable, secure, generative AI technology is empowering professionals, improving service delivery, and ultimately helping to create better outcomes for vulnerable children.

Created by



Presented to



Working together with





The vision: Supporting children's services in a services in a digital age

Children's services across the UK are navigating unprecedented challenges. Rising caseloads, increasingly complex needs, and persistent staffing pressures have created a perfect storm that can threaten service quality and staff wellbeing. Social workers and managers also report spending valuable hours searching for and interpreting policies, procedures, and legislative frameworks—**time that can be better spent in direct work with children and families.**



Children's services professionals can spend hours navigating complex policy documents and summarising key information, taking valuable time away from supporting vulnerable families.

North Yorkshire Council has long been a leader in driving innovation to both manage pressures effectively *and* enable outstanding practice. Policy Buddy was born from a simple but powerful question: What if we could harness the capabilities of world class generative AI to provide instant, reliable knowledge support to frontline practitioners? Our vision centres on creating a digital assistant that empowers professionals with the information they need, precisely when they need it, reducing administrative burden and supporting confident decision-making.

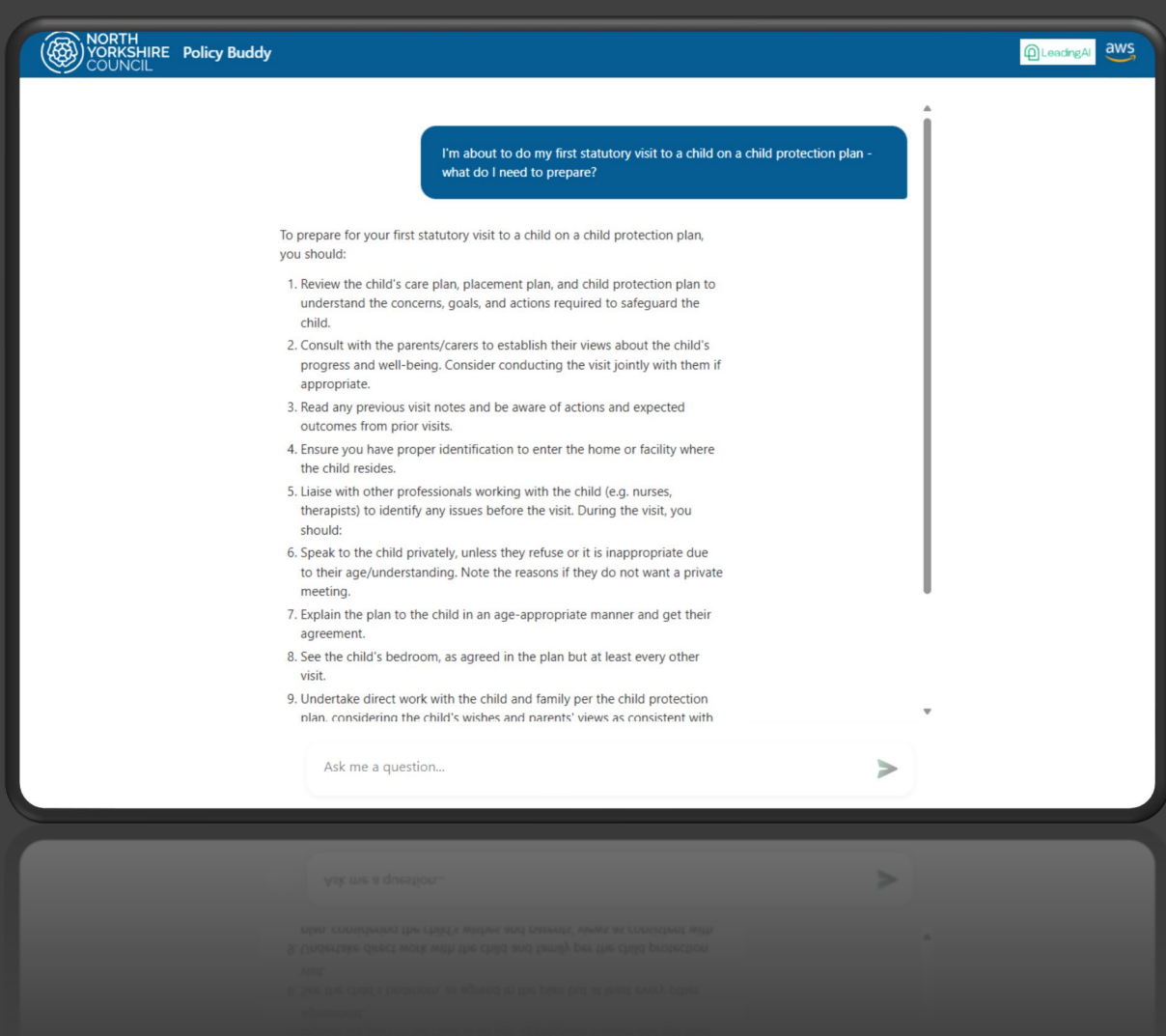
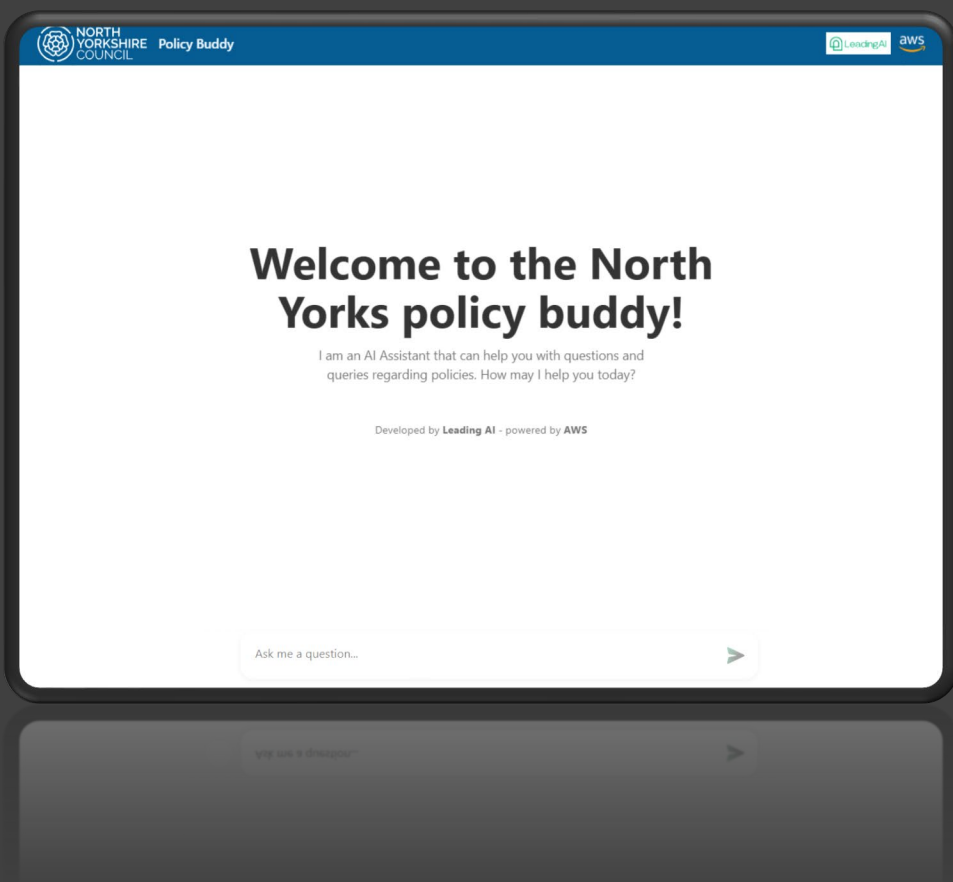
Beyond the immediate benefits to individual practitioners, Policy Buddy aims to foster a forward-thinking, technology-positive workplace culture. By introducing intuitive AI tools that directly genuinely address pain points, we're helping local authorities embrace digital transformation in ways that feel supportive rather than disruptive.

"I want to know more, so I am doing justice to the work I am doing and the children I work with - the AI buddy is a neurodivergent social worker's bestie! ...I have had 3 x viability assessments, 2 x assessment plans, 1 x statement and 1 x court care plan to get done in less than a week... I have managed to write them and get them to managers for QA..! The AI buddy has helped me no end in finding the research the evidence, and the language when I have brain block, so THANK YOU very much for creating the ultimate accessory for my brain!"

– Email from a North Yorkshire Council social worker



How Policy Buddy works: A trusted AI knowledge assistant



Policy Buddy uses advanced generative AI technology to create an intuitive, ChatGPT-style interface that feels familiar and accessible to users with varying levels of digital confidence. Unlike general-purpose AI systems, Policy Buddy is **specifically trained on authoritative sources relevant to children's social care**, including statutory guidance, local procedures, departmental policies, and current legislation.

When a practitioner poses a question—whether about thresholds for intervention, legal requirements for assessments, or procedural steps in safeguarding—Policy Buddy responds with clear, concise information drawn directly from approved sources. Crucially, **each response includes specific citations, allowing users to verify information and explore topics in greater depth** when needed.

The system operates in multiple languages, supporting diverse workforces, enabling practitioners to work with guidance in their preferred language. This multilingual capability also facilitates better communication with families from different cultural backgrounds, as social workers can quickly access accurate translations of key policy concepts.



Available 24/7

Supporting flexible workers and emergency duty teams with instant access to critical information, regardless of time constraints.



Verified sources

Every response is linked to specific, approved guidance documents, ensuring transparency and building trust in the information provided.



Peer learning

Facilitates knowledge sharing across teams by standardising access to best practice and reducing reliance on individual "office experts".



Empowering social workers: Real impact, human benefits

“ ✨ Blown away yesterday! ✨ I attended our Disabled Children's Services team away day to talk to them about technology and innovation and to show them our Policy Buddy with Leading AI. The result was outstanding!!”

- LinkedIn post by a senior social work leader, North Yorkshire Council

The true value of Policy Buddy comes to life through real-world application. For example, during a recent away day for North Yorkshire Council's Disabled Children's Services team, practitioners were presented with a complex case scenario involving a child with significant disabilities requiring multi-agency support. The team first used traditional methods to identify relevant policies and legal frameworks to establish what considerations to apply for that case, then used Policy Buddy.

Traditional approach

- 30+ minutes spent searching online and in printed materials
- Inconsistent understanding between teams
- Limited time for discussion about case implications
- Frustration at barriers to information

Policy Buddy approach

- Complete policy framework identified within 40 seconds, from across a range of sources
- Consistent information provided to all team members
- More time dedicated to case analysis and decision-making
- Positive engagement with AI technology

What proved most striking was that **Policy Buddy's responses matched the knowledge of the most experienced practitioners in the room.** However, rather than replacing professional judgement, the AI tool encouraged deeper discussion about how to apply the information to the specific circumstances of the case. **Team members reported feeling more confident in their understanding of statutory requirements and better equipped to focus on the human aspects of their role.**

This case study highlights a crucial point: Policy Buddy isn't about automating social work decisions; it's about removing barriers to information so that professionals can apply their expertise more effectively, create the space to make reflective practice a reality and spend more time on relationship-based practice with children and families.



Benefits at a glance: Delivering value across across the service

The implementation of Policy Buddy across nearly 1,000 professionals in the council is delivering multiple layers of value, affecting individual practitioners, teams, and organisational performance. Our evaluation data from the first three months of use in North Yorkshire showed significant impact in four key areas:



Time efficiency

Practitioners can save an average of 5-7 hours per week previously spent searching for and interpreting policies and legislation. This time is redirected to direct work with children and families and discussions with other professionals, improving both service quality and staff satisfaction.



Practice consistency consistency

By providing consistent information drawn from authoritative sources only, Policy Buddy reduces the risk of variation in practice between teams and individuals. This helps make sure that families receive equitable service regardless who they work with.



Professional confidence

Social workers report increased confidence in navigating complex cases. The system creates a 'safe space' for practitioners to ask questions without fear of judgement, supporting continuous professional development and unleashing their creativity.



Compliance and assurance

Managers find improved adherence to statutory requirements and local procedures, with a clear audit trail showing the information that informed decision-making. This strengthens organisational resilience during inspections and serious case reviews.

The **first three months** of Policy Buddy in North Yorkshire Council, in numbers:

849 users

2,174 prompts

2,421 hours saved

All practitioners in the pilot group reported that Policy Buddy had positively impacted their daily work. In response to unprecedented demand, fueled by word-of-mouth, full roll-out was brought forward.

Use of Policy Buddy doubled within in the first three months, with nearly 1,000 unique prompts entered in March 2025. Data also shows that AI prompt skills are improving and use cases for the tool are expanding.

Analysis of the use data for January to March 2025 was compared to estimates of how long traditional ways of working would take. The data shows a minimum time saving of over 2,000 hours.

Working responsibly: Safety, privacy, and governance



At Leading AI, we recognise that introducing artificial intelligence into children's services demands the highest standards of responsibility and ethical practice. Policy Buddy has been developed with a comprehensive governance framework that prioritises safety, accuracy, and privacy at every stage.

Robust data foundations

Policy Buddy is built exclusively on government-approved materials, local authority policies, and established legal frameworks. Unlike general AI systems that may incorporate information from across the internet, the training data is carefully curated with each organisation to ensure reliability and relevance to each user group.

Ethical design principles

The system is designed to provide factual, unbiased information rather than making recommendations or judgements. This clear boundary means that human professionals fully retain decision-making authority, with Policy Buddy serving as a knowledge resource rather than a replacement for professional expertise.

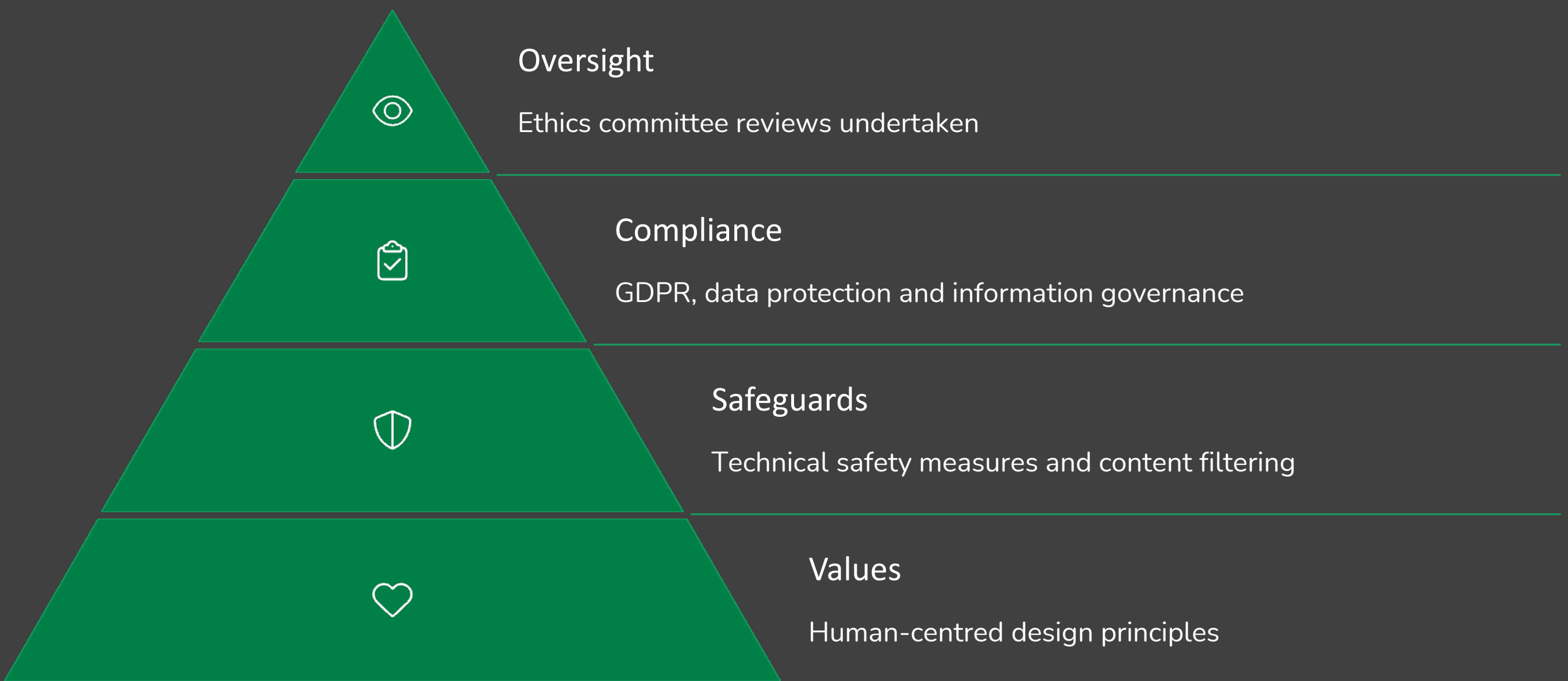
Transparent outputs

Every response generated by Policy Buddy includes clear source citations, allowing practitioners to verify information and explore topics in greater depth. This transparency builds trust in the system and supports a culture of evidence-based practice.



Data privacy safeguards

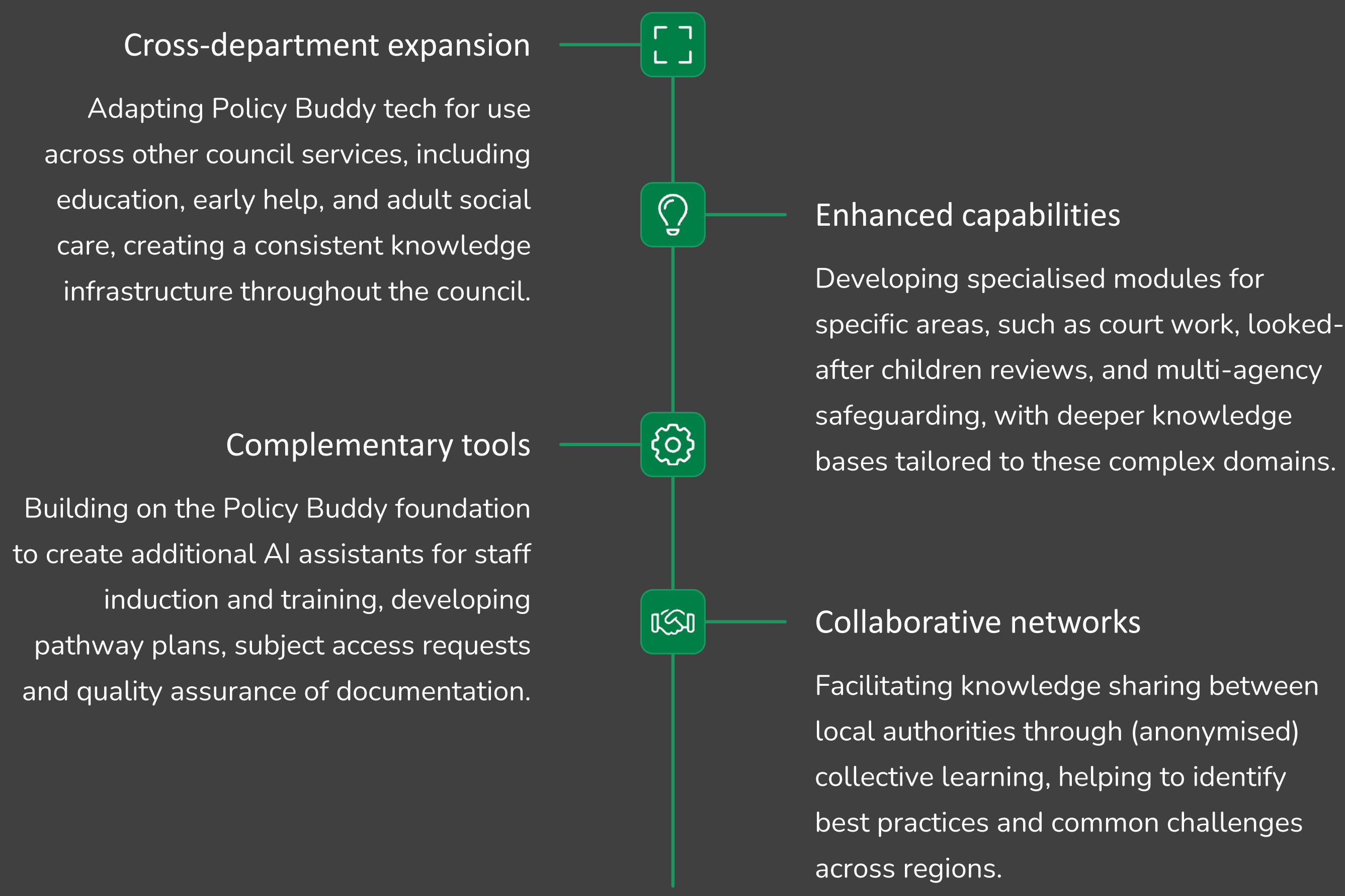
Policy Buddy operates with stringent data protection measures that meet and exceed GDPR requirements. The system does not store personally identifiable information about service users, and all practitioner interactions are anonymised for training and improvement purposes. All data is processed securely within the customer's own environment; it is not used to train other AI models.





Future pathways: Scaling innovation in public services

The successful implementation of Policy Buddy, starting in North Yorkshire, represents just the beginning of a broader digital transformation journey for children's services. Based on feedback from our partner authorities and ongoing technological developments, we've identified other promising pathways for expanding the impact of AI-assisted tools in this sector.



Central to our future development roadmap is an unwavering commitment to co-design with practitioners and experts. We believe that the most effective digital tools emerge from close collaboration between technology specialists and subject matter experts, ensuring that innovations remain firmly grounded in the realities of frontline practice.

As we move forward, we're particularly focused on how AI tools can support practice improvement during a time of significant policy reform in children's social care and beyond. With the implementation of recommendations from recent national reviews, Policy Buddy offers a responsive platform that can quickly incorporate new guidance and help practitioners navigate changing expectations.

The cultural shift that good AI can help to deliver across professional teams is essential for authorities seeking to attract and retain talented staff in a competitive recruitment landscape – one where most people now leave education already familiar with access to day-to-day AI assistance.



Join the change: Getting started

Policy Buddy exemplifies what digital transformation in local government should be: technology that genuinely empowers people to work more effectively, rather than technology for its own sake. By addressing a specific, widespread pain point—accessing reliable policy information quickly—we've demonstrated that AI can have a meaningful, positive impact on children's services without disrupting the human relationships that remain at the heart of good social work.

The feedback from our partners consistently highlights that AI-powered assistants like Policy Buddy feel different from previous technological interventions. Rather than adding administrative burden or monitoring practitioners' activities, it genuinely removes barriers and creates space for professional judgement to flourish. This people-centred approach is essential for building trust in digital tools within a profession that rightly prioritises relationships and emotional intelligence.

As we look to the future, we invite forward-thinking councils to join us on this journey of responsible innovation. Whether you're just beginning to explore the potential of AI or looking to build on existing digital transformation initiatives, the Policy Buddy team is ready to support your organisation's unique needs and circumstances.

Request a demonstration

See Policy Buddy in action with a personalised demonstration tailored to your local authority's specific needs and challenges.

Join our early adopter cohort

Become an innovation partner with preferential terms and the opportunity to shape future development priorities.

Book a workshop

Engage your leadership team with our expert-led sessions on responsible AI implementation in children's services.

Contact the Leading AI team today at info@leadingai.co.uk or find us on LinkedIn to discuss how Policy Buddy can support your authority's digital transformation journey.



“Working with Leading AI and building our Polly has been so brilliant, making tech with impact that really works for people takes a genuine focus on people and process and that’s exactly what we did together. Collaboration not product sales is how I want to work forever more!”

- Email from the Transformation and Innovation Manager, North Yorkshire Council