Procuring AI that works for people and society

October 2024

Ada Lovelace Institute

Independent research institute with a mission to 'make data and AI work for people and society'

Background and context

- Expectations and optimism about AI improving public services

- But AI and data-driven systems can have harmful impacts and damage public trust if not used carefully

- Procurement is an important process in deciding what and how technologies get used for public services

- Local government an interesting case study, due to the expectation of a lot of direct to community service provision amid huge resource pressures

Can procurement be a lever for *achieving societal benefit* from data and AI technologies?

If so, how?

- Do procurement teams have the infrastructure, support and guidance to ensure AI buying decisions lead to societal benefit?

- What are the challenges or opportunities that exist for procurers to achieve positive societal outcomes when procuring data and AI technologies

Document analysis

- What do procurement guidelines and legislation have to say about five key themes relating to societal benefit:
  - inequalities/fairness
  - transparency
  - public engagement
  - public benefit/social value
  - impact assessments
- Analysis of 16 pieces of guidance, legislation and policy documents
- This is phase one!

The documents

- Guidelines for AI Procurement (DSIT, DCMS, BEIS, OAI)
- A guide to using AI in the public sector (DSIT, OAI, CDEI (RTA))
- Understanding AI ethics and safety (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)
- Understanding AI (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)
- Assessing whether AI is the right solution (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)
- A pro-innovation approach to AI (Government white paper)
- Data Ethics Framework (CDDO)

- GDPR (ICO guidance)
- PSED (EHCR guidance – including Buying better outcomes, the essential guide to PSED)
- Procurement Act (Government Commercial Function summary)
- Social Value Act (Cabinet Office procurement guidance note and LGA Social Value Toolkit for District Councils)

	Guidelines for AI Procurement (DSIT, DCMS, BEIS, OAI)	A guide to using AI in the public sector (DSIT, OAI, CDEI (RTA))	Understanding AI ethics and safety (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)	Understanding AI (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)	Assessing whether AI is the right solution (DSIT, OAI, CDEI)	A pro-innovation approach to AI (Government white paper)	Data Ethics Framework (CDDO)	GDPR (ICO guidance)	PSED (EHCR guidance)	Procurement Act (Government Commercial Function summary)	Social Value Act (Cabinet Office and LGA guidance)
(In)equalities /fairness	★	★	★	★		☆	★	★	★	☆	
Transparency	★		★	★	★	☆	★	☆	★	★	☆
Public engagement						☆	★		★		★
Public benefit /social value	★	★		★		☆	★			☆	★
Impact assessments	★		★			☆	★	★			★

Local government does not have access to a clear and comprehensive account of how to procure AI in the public interest

- There are many different terms are used to measure societal benefit throughout the procurement guidance and legislation.

- The guidance available to local authorities lacks specificity about how and where to operationalise these themes for societal benefit.

- There is little practical advice on how to engage suppliers in conversations about the broader social impacts of their technologies.

- This is further complicated by a lack of clarity on the definitions of key terms, including 'AI'.

…more to come!

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