To: Public Services Sector Executive Committee

7 July 2025

2025/01002S

Dear Colleague

Civil Service Reform

PCS union has prepared an agreement or the introduction of AI and Robotics systems that they are seeking to raise at NTUC. The PSSEC is asked to consider whether Prospect would wish to support this or seek changes to it, or whether we should pursue our own work in this area.

Yours sincerely

Steve Thomas

Deputy General Secretary

AGREEMENT ON THE INTRODUCTION AND USE OF AI AND ROBOTICS SYSTEMS.

Coverage and Scope

This agreement is between the recognised unions in the Civil Service and the Cabinet Office and concerns the introduction of AI and Robotic systems within the UK Civil Service and related areas, its scope and use and the resultant impacts AI and Robotics may have on employment, terms and conditions, job content and work processes.

It also covers existing AI and Robotic systems in use in the UK Civil Service and related areas.

Both parties recognise that AI and Robotics are an inevitable developments that has been introduced and will be increasingly used in the workplace. Whilst initial focus of these technologies has been on their impact on administrative and operational areas, they will also impact analytical, policy and strategy roles as well. Both parties recognise that these technologies impact more than work and jobs within the civil service; they can impact the way citizens interact with the civil service and also on citizen's rights. Therefore both parties are concerned with the social impact and social good of these technologies.

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that AI and Robotics do not lead to job losses – though both sides recognise it will impact on job roles – and that AI and Robotics are used to enhance jobs and not to degrade them, and therefore prevent humans being reduced to 'machine minders.'

Definitions

In the context of this agreement, we use AI to stand for Artificial Intelligence

This term covers technology enabling the programming or training of a device or software to perceive environments through the use of data; interpret data using automated processing designed to approximate cognitive abilities; involves machines using statistics to find patterns in large amounts of data; the ability to perform repetitive tasks with data without the need for constant human guidance; make recommendations, predictions or decisions; with a view to achieving a specific objective; and also all forms of algorithmic decision making and machine learning.

In the context of this agreement, AI will also cover any form of Artificial general intelligence that maybe introduced; that is any software/machines which emulates the human mind and behaviour to solve any kind of complex problem, or being designed to have comprehensive knowledge and cognitive computing capabilities which means the performance of these machines/software is indistinguishable from that of humans. AI in this agreement also covers all forms of Generative AI as well.

In the context of this agreement, we use Robotics to stand for Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

This term covers special software used to automate routine clerical work, such as data entry into a system. A software 'robot' reproduces the actions of a person interacting with the user interface of a computer system. It mimics a human and interacts with applications in the same way that a human would.

The right of unions to be consulted and to agree new AI and Robotic systems
New AI and Robotic systems will only be introduced following consultation and agreement with the unions. All existing AI and Robotic systems will be disclosed to the unions.

The discussions with the unions shall begin pre-procurement stage if it is intended to procure new AI and/or Robotic systems.

If existing AI and/or Robotic systems are being reengineered, then the discussions with the unions will begin before reengineering starts.

No AI or Robotic system will be introduced, or if in existence, used, if in part or whole it is designed to:

- Make any decision that effects humans; in particular to select staff for recruitment, promotion, transfer to another post or dismissal, to allocate, monitor, or evaluate the work of humans or to undertake any form of surveillance of the human;
- Take existing decision making from humans;
- Perform analysis, write briefs and reports, including any recommendations, without human supervision;
- Automate decision making;
- Pretend that it is a person.

Both the unions and the Cabinet Office agree that the introduction of AI and Robotic systems will not affect the pay, terms and conditions and status of staff, unless such changes are agreed by both parties, and that there will be no downgrading of roles as a result of AI or Robotics. Both the unions and the Cabinet Office want to ensure that the introduction and use of AI and Robotics is to 'Improve, not dehumanise' work.

In that regard, AI and Robotic systems covered by this agreement will adapt their working to the individual, especially with a view, in particular, to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined work-rate.

Information to be provided to the Unions

The Cabinet Office agrees that before any part of the UK Civil Service or its related bodies introduces a new AI and/or Robotic system, it will provide the unions with minimally the following information:

The way in which AI and Robotic systems operates in the context of the employment relationship to be able to satisfy the unions that the technology is being used in a way which is accurate, rational, non-discriminatory, proportionate, lawful, ethical and does not lead to social harms. In this regard the unions will be looking to organisations, where relevant, to use the TUC Generative AI policy toolkit.pdf

An Equality impact assessment as to the equality impact on staff but also on everyone else possibly effected by the new AI and Robotic system; in particular such an assessment will examine how staff with disabilities can work with/operate the new systems and to ensure that existing voice to text/instruction software is compatible with any new AI/robotic system;

The aims and objectives of the proposed new AI and Robotic system; description of the data that feeds any algorithms, the logic of operation and the evaluation of results;

Privacy risk assessment;

A job impact assessment which will set out what work and which staff will be affected and how they could be affected;

A draft staff plan that will ensure that no existing staff member will be made redundant either on a voluntary or compulsory basis. If it is being proposed that there will a change in staffing and/or grading arising out of the new AI and/or Robotic system, that plan to set out how any potential surplus staff will be redeployed into new posts. In case of changes to job roles due to AI and Robotics, what retraining and upskilling programs shall be provided to affected employees;

Any potential impacts on the health and safety of workers that could arise from the new AI and/or Robotic system. From an analysis of such impacts an agreed, coherent overall injury, (physical and mental) prevention policy will be put in place which covers the technology but also organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors relating to the working environment;

A draft Industrial Relations (IR) plan that sets how the union will be consulted during the implementation of the new AI and/or Robotic system and when it is in operation. It will set out the regular and timely consultations to be conducted with the trade unions during the planning, development, and deployment phases of the AI and Robotic system. Thereafter regular meetings will be held to review the operation of the new system and its impact. The IR plan will have a clear grievance resolution process, which will include a 'stop action' clause allowing the union to pause the implementation or operation of the AI or Robotic system pending dispute resolution and a mechanism for escalating any dispute to the appropriate unions/management level;

All communications on the introduction of the new system will be shared in advance to the unions.

Training and Career Development

Whilst impacting on existing jobs, AI and Robotics creates new jobs and the need for new skills and knowledge within departments and the civil service and associated areas as well.

Therefore the unions and the Cabinet Office agree that there should be separate discussions, with the view to reaching an agreement on a training and career development framework, with the emphasis on the civil service growing its own talent to cover AI and Robotics.

Productivity Gains

Both parties recognise that productivity gains will be made through the introduction and use of AI and Robotics and that these gains should be shared between the workers and the organisation through increased pay. In particular though the unions want to link the introduction of AI and Robotics to reductions in the working week and also the structure of the working week e.g. introduce a 4 day working week.

Therefore as part of [local or national] pay negotiations an assessment of those productivity gains will be presented to the union. On the basis of that assessment, the unions will propose changes to pay and/or working hours and possibly other terms and conditions.

Changes to this Agreement

These may be proposed by either party, but none can be made without the agreement of the unions.