

Date: 8th July 2025

Open Letter to the UK Government: Prioritising AI Literacy for All Citizens

To Prime Minister Keir Starmer; the Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology; the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, Secretary of State for Education

While the recent £187 million government investment in digital skills and AI education is welcome, we urge the government to recognise that true AI readiness requires investing in *critical AI literacy for all citizens*¹. This includes providing opportunities for parents, older people, the voluntary sector, people from underserved and marginalised communities, and individuals from every walk of life to develop their own understanding of, and perspectives on, AI.

Currently, less than 25% of the population feels their views and values are represented in decisions being made about AI². This significant gap in public engagement highlights the necessity of broader AI literacy. As a recent article by members of the public advising the Public Voices in AI programme stated, "the lived experience and expertise of members of the public must be at the heart of guiding how AI is built and used"³. Without comprehensive public understanding and sustained engagement, developing trustworthy AI and maintaining public trust in it will be a significant challenge.

Building critical AI literacy for all requires accessible and independent materials, beyond a focus on individual companies and tools, alongside a range of opportunities for different communities to engage critically with learning about AI in context: not just how to adopt and use AI⁴. We must move beyond the perception that AI is primarily about the technology: it affects all of our lives. The Scottish AI Alliance's "Living with AI" course is an excellent example of accessible, free online learning designed for anybody to become informed about AI, regardless of their prior knowledge or experience. AHRC projects

¹ We define critical AI literacy as incorporating AI skills that exceed technical training to incorporate broader understanding and awareness of social and environmental impacts of specific technologies and contexts, and the structural forces that shape them.

² <https://attitudestoai.uk/>

³ <https://connectedbydata.org/blog/2025/06/05/public-voices-ai-citizens-should-shape-our-ai-future>

⁴ As outlined in the explanatory notes to Article 20 of the **Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law** signed by the UK in September 2024. See <https://rm.coe.int/1680afae67>

through BRAID⁵, and EPSRC work through Responsible AI UK's skills projects also demonstrate the development of AI learning contextualised to the needs of different groups⁶. Such initiatives, developed by research and civil society groups independent of industry, show that effective and independent learning models are already available to build upon. Government leadership and support is urgently needed to scale up this work in collaboration with civil society and academia, not just tech companies.

Indeed, other countries around the world already have open access national education programmes on AI, with notable AI literacy work ongoing across Europe in countries like Finland (Elements of AI), Germany, and France, which are actively fostering public understanding of this technology. In Canada, the government recently backed the RAISE programme to support ethical use of AI by non-profits⁷. The UK should learn from these examples and support the efforts of existing trusted institutions like libraries and community groups to develop AI literacy at scale and with modest investments.

We urge the government to recognise that true AI readiness means fostering an informed and engaged citizenry. To that end, we specifically call for a **dedicated focus on scaling and sustaining comprehensive critical AI literacy programmes for all citizens.**

Furthermore, we respectfully request **a meeting with relevant government officials to explore how this vital public education can be co-created and delivered with civil society and academic partners.** By investing in independent AI literacy initiatives that are accessible to all, the UK can help to ensure that its AI future is shaped by public voices, building trust and unlocking the full potential of AI for the benefit of everyone.

Sincerely,

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2. Adrian McNulty, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
3. Alan Fricker, CILIP, FEDiP
4. Alex Keyter, Generative Minds Ltd

⁵ <https://braiduk.org/>

⁶ <https://rai.ac.uk/research-1/skills-project/>

⁷ <https://betakit.com/government-backed-program-aims-to-help-canadian-non-profits-adopt-responsible-ai/>

5. Andrew Cox, School of Information, Journalism and Communication, University of Sheffield
6. Angus Griffin, Pedagogue.io
7. Anna Colom, The Data Tank; The Open University
8. Caroline Cooke, Deputy Director, Royal Holloway University Library
9. Clea Bourne, Goldsmiths, University of London
10. Dan Verständig, Technical University Berlin
11. Dee Sheehan, GM4WOMEN2028
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31. Gillan Ward, The inclusive AI project
32. Graham Tavener, Green Party of England and Wales, Better Futures Multi-Academy Trust, Connected by Data Research Fellow
33. Harriet Deacon, DAIM, University of Hull
34. Harry Harrold, Neontribe
35. Ina Sander, Helmut-Schmidt-University
36. Ismael Kherroubi Garcia, FRSA, Kairoi

37. Jane Secker, MILA trustee, City St George's University of London
38. Janet Wiegold , People's Panel on AI
39. Joy McLean , West College Scotland
40. Judy Robertson, University of Edinburgh
41. June Dillow, Member of the public who was involved with connected by data peoples views on AI on the AI summit 2023
42. Kari Gerstheimer, Access Social Care
43. Kaspar Rosager Ludvigsen, Durham University, Law School
44. Katharine Willis, University of Plymouth
45. Laura Woods, Co-Chair, CILIP Information Literacy Group
46. Liz Hardie, Senior lecturer Open University
47. Lizzie Remfry, Queen Mary University of London
48. Louis Coiffait-Gunn, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
49. Lucia Bertello, Three Hands
50. Margaret Colling, Member of PVAI /People's Panel on AI
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52. Mark Wong , University of Glasgow
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55. Mike Scott, Bournemouth University
56. Nick Creagh, University of East London
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58. Sallie-Anne Douglas
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60. Serdar Abaci, University of Edinburgh
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