Press release: Minister sets out plan for new technologies to transform public services

- Minister launches new guide setting out how government departments can use artificial intelligence (AI)
- Start-ups supported to pitch their innovations with launch of new online marketplace
- Technology Innovation Strategy focuses on how government can harness the potential of new technologies to transform services

A plan for how the government can harness new technologies to transform public services has been set out by the Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden.

In a speech at the start of London Tech Week today (10 June), the Minister launched a new guide to help government embrace artificial intelligence and an online marketplace to support tech start-ups sell to the public sector. These measures accompany a new Technology Innovation Strategy, setting out the government's approach to enabling widespread adoption of new technologies across the public sector.

The new AI Guide will be used across government to help departments implement new opportunities for AI, such as how to make cancer diagnosis more reliable and reduce fraud, in an ethical and safe way.

The guide also brings together, for the first time, research on how artificial intelligence is already being used by the public sector to save money and improve services.

Examples include:

- The Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency making roads safer and cracking down on rogue garages, by using AI to look through records of the 40 million MOT tests carried out across the UK every year to identify where standards are not being measured properly.
- The Ministry of Justice targeting safety risks in prisons, by using AI to analyse thousands of pages of inspection reports and identify common issues.
- The Department for International Development using AI to analyse satellite images, so that they can estimate populations and better target aid.

Tech start-ups will also see a boost to their ability to win government contracts through the launch of Spark, a new online marketplace that provides a route into the public sector for companies offering innovative technologies.

Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden said:

“The UK has led the world in harnessing technology to transform public services, but we cannot afford to sit back. Adoption of new technologies by the private sector is changing how people live their lives and the public sector has to pick up the pace to stay relevant.

“Artificial intelligence is already being used to identify rogue garages and improve prison safety, but government can go much further. New technologies like AI can deliver better services for less and I am determined that government is at the forefront of this revolution.

“Through initiatives like Spark, I also want to make it easier for start-ups and small businesses to deliver services for government so that we make the most of the UK’s thriving GovTech sector.”

Digital Secretary, Jeremy Wright said:

“Artificial intelligence is already having a positive impact across society – from improving fraud detection to better and quicker diagnoses of medical conditions.

“The UK government has already been recognised as world-leading in its readiness for AI and we continue to push leaders across the public sector to recognise its impact in delivering more personalised and efficient experiences.

“Our newly appointed AI Council of industry experts will boost the growth and use of AI in the UK further by helping us to realise its full potential.”

Details of the AI Guide can be found here.

- This sets out guidance for public sector organisations on how to assess if using AI will help meet user needs; how to make best use of AI; and how to implement AI ethically, fairly and safely
- The AI guide was produced alongside the AI Review which was announced at Budget 2018 and led by the Government Digital Service and Office for AI.

Read the Innovation Strategy here.

- This includes plans for building a better pipeline of tech talent in government by doubling the number of technology apprenticeships, improving data sharing to help solve problems such as fraud and serious violence, and addressing problems caused by out-dated computer systems.

More details on Spark here.