Unlocking the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Social Services

Konstantina Leventi, Head of Policy, EASPD



EASPD: Who we are



- EASPD is the leading voice of disability services across Europe.
- Representing over 20,000 services in over 50 different countries, we promote human rights and equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality support.
- Our work focuses on key areas essential to quality support provision.

EASPD's Added Value



Advocacy and Policy Development



Driving Innovation



Promoting Knowledge Exchange



Community Building

Context & Rationale

- Europe wants to become an ‘AI continent’ — strategic goals of the EU on AI
- The dual imperative: social impact + competitiveness
- Why AI matters in social services: innovation, efficiency, inclusion
- Social Services:
  - backbone of inclusive and rights-based societies, uphold the fundamental values of the European Union, enable autonomy, participation, and quality of life for millions of people across Europe
  - key economic drivers: the social services sector is one of the EU’s largest employers and a core component of the social economy, providing not only care and support but also jobs, training, and innovation

Why AI Matters for Social Services?

- AI holds transformative potential for supporting persons with disabilities, older people, and others with high support needs.
- In a sector that is **under-digitalised and underfunded**, AI offers new avenues:
  - Quality of care
  - Efficiency and coordination
  - Accessibility of services
- The goal: enhance **autonomy, dignity, and participation** for every individual.

AI should be viewed as a tool to support, not replace, human contact

human-in-the-loop approach is essential to ensure ethical, contextual, and empathetic service delivery

How AI is currently used in social care and support sector: Benefits

For people with disabilities

- For people with disabilities, the principal benefit of implementing AI-based technology is **increased independence,** assistance with daily routines, and improved quality of life.
- Some of the most commonly utilized tools are **speech-to-text and text-to-speech** applications that aid with communication.
- Speech recognition technology is also utilized in **smart home devices** and personal assistants to facilitate daily tasks, such as controlling the lights, appliances, and set voice reminders.

For social services

- For social care providers, AI is being extensively used to **reduce administrative burden** and improve time management.
- On organizational level, many of the **data management** and health record management platforms are already enhanced by AI, and can save time retrieving records, integrating information, or assisting with scheduling.
- On an individual level, service providers are using **Large Language Models (LLMs)** to brainstorm care plans; dictation tools to facilitate service note generation and reporting.

Why AI Matters for Social Services?

1

Enhancing person-centred care and support → Machine learning tools have already been tested to support for example in creating personalised support plans increasingly using AI tools or analysing notes

2

Increasing efficiency and reducing administrative burden → Virtual assistants, machine translation tools, autocorrection, chatbots, are some of the examples of AI application within daily operations.

3

Improving accessibility and independence → speech recognition, visual assistance and environmental controls embedded with person-centred services

4

Driving innovation in the social economy → right investment and regulatory support, AI can amplify their ability to deliver community-based, rights-based services

Challenges in implementing AI in social services

Financial & Resource Constraints	• High cost of tailored AI development, deployment, and maintenance. Many social service organisations lack innovation budgets and rely on generic tools not adapted to the needs of people they support
Lack of digital skills among care and support workers & provider	• Low level of digital readiness among many service providers, concerns about job displacement or service dehumanisation, ageing workforce decreased digital literacy proficiency
Accessibility and design limitations	• AI tools often not built with universal design or adapted for all disability types. Lack of participatory design —leads to tools that fail to reflect the lived experiences of persons with disabilities
Varying level of awareness on privacy and data protection risks	• Actively providing training and awareness-building to support informed and effective adoption
Bias, Discrimination and Lack of Ethical Standards	• Leisure planning algorithm stopped suggesting activities once a disability flag was activated, not accounting for adapted or inclusive alternatives → discriminatory outcomes

Harnessing AI Responsibly in social services

→ key is not simply technological innovation, but aligning AI with the principles of human rights, equality, accessibility, co-production, and social inclusion

Opportunities

Co-Design and User Involvement: an AI communication tool developed with users with locked-in syndrome resulted in dramatically improved usability and impact

Strengthening Accessibility: simplify administrative documents for people with intellectual disabilities—empowering them to understand their rights and participate more actively in service planning

AI as a workforce support tool: where AI was used to automate back office tasks, professionals reported having more time for one-on-one support and saw reduced administrative burden

Investing in capacity building and skills development: Empowering the workforce to engage with AI is critical. Need for EU investments

Regulatory Alignment: the EU AI Act addresses the needs of social service providers and persons with disabilities

Funding and Support: targeted EU and national funding, especially SMEs

Good practices: Language-based AI applications

Large Language Models (LLMs)

- ChatGPT assisting with the development of personalized care plans tailored to service users
  - Verbal portrait of a service user
  - ChatGPT generates a support plan
  - Support plan reviewed by the carer

- Specific tools using NLP to analyze service notes, impacting the care delivery
  - Categorization and labelling of notes
  - Identification of key aspects of one's life
  - Provision of personalized care recommendations
  - Use of sentiment analysis to identify tone and narrative

- Chat boxes supporting informal carers healthcare management
  - Providing accessible summaries of relevant resources
  - Navigating available services
  - Emotional regulation

Speech to Text Tools (STT)

- Used by persons with disabilities
  - More meaningful social interactions
  - Facilitation of communication tasks

- Used by service providers to:
  - Streamline notetaking with service users
    - focus being put on the conversation with the service user than the notes
    - Reducing the biases
    - Increases impartiality of the recorded conversation
    - More control over the narrative for the service user
  - Increasing efficiency of organizational operations
    - Automated note taking during meetings
    - AI generated subtitles during meetings

- Existing note taking tools:
    - Otter.ai
    - Magic Notes
    - Nota

Additional resources:

Use of AI in social care for persons with disabilities: www.easpd.eu/publications detail/use-of-artificial-intelligence-in-social-care-for-persons-with-disabilities/

Unlocking the potential of AI in social services, EASPD's position paper: final_Unlocking_the_Potential_of_Artificial_Intelligence__AI__in_Social_Services.pdf

AI in social services: Opportunities, skills investments and regulatory frameworks: www.socialserviceseurope.eu/_files/ugd/9f45fc_30064b82e3c840549286187246322 5d 4.pdf

How you can get involved with EASPD

If you would like to get involved and benefit from EASPD's services, you can:

- Subscribe to our Newsletter via our website www.easpd.eu
- Attend one of our upcoming events.
- Join the EASPD Network.
- Come to our upcoming conference www.easpdconference.eu
- Contact us via info@easpd.eu







European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

Thank you

