

Our Futures and AI

A Youth Work Toolkit

February 2026



Before this project I always thought AI was Chat GPT and Gemini. I now know it's much more than this.

You hear about AI everywhere nowadays. For me when I think about AI I think chatbots and robots.

AI makes me worried at times about jobs. I love art and worry about how artists will work in the future.

Social media and algorithms found online can make you feel rubbish at times. It's not nice how much it can make you compare yourself to others.

Learning about AI, I now pick up on algorithms more. You see the same posts being pushed. I also click when certain content comes on my feed.

Using the cardboard prototyping it was cool to play around with how social media filters can make people feel.

AI can be complicated at times. Using art can help you work out your ideas!

It's ok to not know everything about AI. It really helps being able to talk about it though.

People should know when AI is being used. It's not fair if they don't. Images and videos should come with a sign saying they are AI if they are.

Being told to just ignore it is no good. It's better when adults understand that AI and algorithms are part of everyday life and give us space to talk about it.

Even if you know something is AI and generated, it can still mess with your head.

- QUOTES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE, THE CITADEL



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Contents

| | | | |
|--|----------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 7 | Youth Work Activities | 21 |
| AI - YAY AYE | 7 | Explore AI the Play-Doh Way | 22 |
| Online Resources | 7 | The Great British Bot Off | 24 |
| About this Toolkit | 7 | Can AI ever be used ethically? | 27 |
| Do & Don't | 9 | Cardboard Prototypes | 30 |
| Getting Started with Gen AI | 10 | Web of AI Knowledge | 33 |
| The Youth Worker's Role | 11 | Controversial | 36 |
| FIVE Principles for Using AI in Youth Work | 12 | Picturing Bias Activity | 38 |
| FOUR Ethical Foundations | 14 | AI's Imagination vs. Reality | 40 |
| Prompting an AI | 16 | Other Resources | 44 |
| Which Tools To Use | 18 | The Team | 45 |
| | | Contributors | 46 |



Cover image: Generated by Google Gemini



“We cannot seek to guide young people through a world we are too afraid to understand.”

**JESS MCBEATH,
ONLINE SAFETY CONSULTANT**



Introduction



AI – YAY AYE

It is one of the fastest-paced topics of our day. It's difficult to define. It's here whether we like it or not! It's disrupting. It's unsettling. It's adding to the challenges for young people in finding careers. It can help with lots of practical tasks around writing and researching. It's increasing the complexity of misinformation and disinformation, and muddying the water around reality and unreality.

But what does it have to do with Youth Work?

Everything. In the world of youth work, we support young people to thrive, to engage well with the world they live in, to be activists and influencers, to have a voice.

Today, this includes helping them understand and navigate the digital aspects of contemporary life, which increasingly means getting our heads around **artificial intelligence (AI)**, in particular the **generative AI (Gen AI)**, which is influencing the current generation of internet and social media.

Online Resources

There's more online: youthlink.scot/ai

About this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be a practical, supportive companion as you help young people explore the world of AI. You don't need to be a tech expert to use it.

This document contains an overview and some key resources. You will find a lot more detail online: definitions, glossary, rationale and case studies.

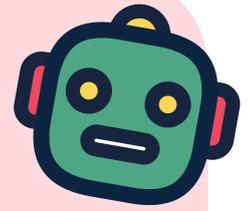
It was co-designed with **The Citadel** and **Cromar Future Group** - youth workers and young people exploring the topics together. **Digital Skills Education**, **Scottish AI Alliance** and **Sopra Steria** all supported the project. The project was funded by the **Include Plus Network**.



Young people contributed throughout the project and you can read about their youth-led research outputs at youthlink.scot/ai.



AI in Youth Work



Do & Don't

The young people we worked with didn't just learn about AI; they also investigated it, questioned it, and formulated their own practical rules for navigating it.

They said:

AI isn't always right - it can generate incorrect or misleading information known as 'AI Hallucinations.'

You should always fact-check any information you get from AI with other sources to confirm its accuracy.

Their information may contain biases and be less accurate because of this, as AI models can typically amplify biases found in human societies.

AI may try to tell you what you want to hear, instead of what's factually correct, as they're trained to be helpful.

It should only be used as a starting point, not a final source.

"AIs should not be used for opinions, as they don't have opinions of their own."

Don't overshare and tell the AI too much personal information unless you know how the information will be used.

Depending on what you're asking, you may need to consider where the information may be coming from, for example, some AI artwork generators don't ask for artists' permissions before using their work to train AIs.

Don't become too reliant on AI - for some tasks, it's better to use your own problem-solving and research skills.

- YOUNG PEOPLE,
CROMAR FUTURE GROUP

Getting Started with Gen AI

AI is a broad field, but this toolkit focuses specifically on **Generative AI (Gen AI)**. Why? Because for most young people, and society as a whole, this is where the most direct, creative, and sometimes challenging encounters with AI are happening today, through tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Midjourney.

We want to help young people see that:

- AI is a **collection of technologies** (like algorithms that learn from data), not a single, magical 'brain'.
- AI makes **predictions and decisions** based on patterns in data, but these can reflect real-world biases and create unfair outcomes.
- Understanding AI is about **critical thinking, safety, and agency** which empower young people to question its role and shape its future in their communities.

AI systems are created by people and trained on data from our world. This means they are not neutral; they can reflect and even amplify human biases, making the ethical framework around them essential.



Images generated by Ai

The Youth Worker's Role

In the complex landscape of AI, the youth worker's role is not so much as a technical expert, but a critical facilitator, a trusted guide, and a principled advocate. You can take the lead in creating a safe, non-judgmental space where young people can explore, question, and form their own informed perspectives on technology that impacts their lives. For example you can help young people to develop:

- **A people-first lens:** Consistently reframe AI as a human-built tool reflecting human choices. Shift focus from the technology itself to the people and companies accountable for its impacts.
- **Critical source evaluation:** Offer foundational skills to judge online information. Practice distinguishing plausible AI-generated content from verified facts and stress the non-negotiable habit of checking multiple sources.
- **Privacy and identity protection:** Discuss what personal data is, how it's collected (including biometrics like face recognition), and practical steps for safeguarding digital identity.
- **Navigating ethical trade-offs:** Facilitate reflective conversations on the real-world consequences of AI, including its environmental footprint, implications for creative labour, and broader social equity.

“Use engaging, game-like activities to let young people experience AI's dual-edged nature firsthand. When young people actively debate creativity or engineer a fake campaign, they move from being distant observers of technology to informed, critical participants in a digital world.”

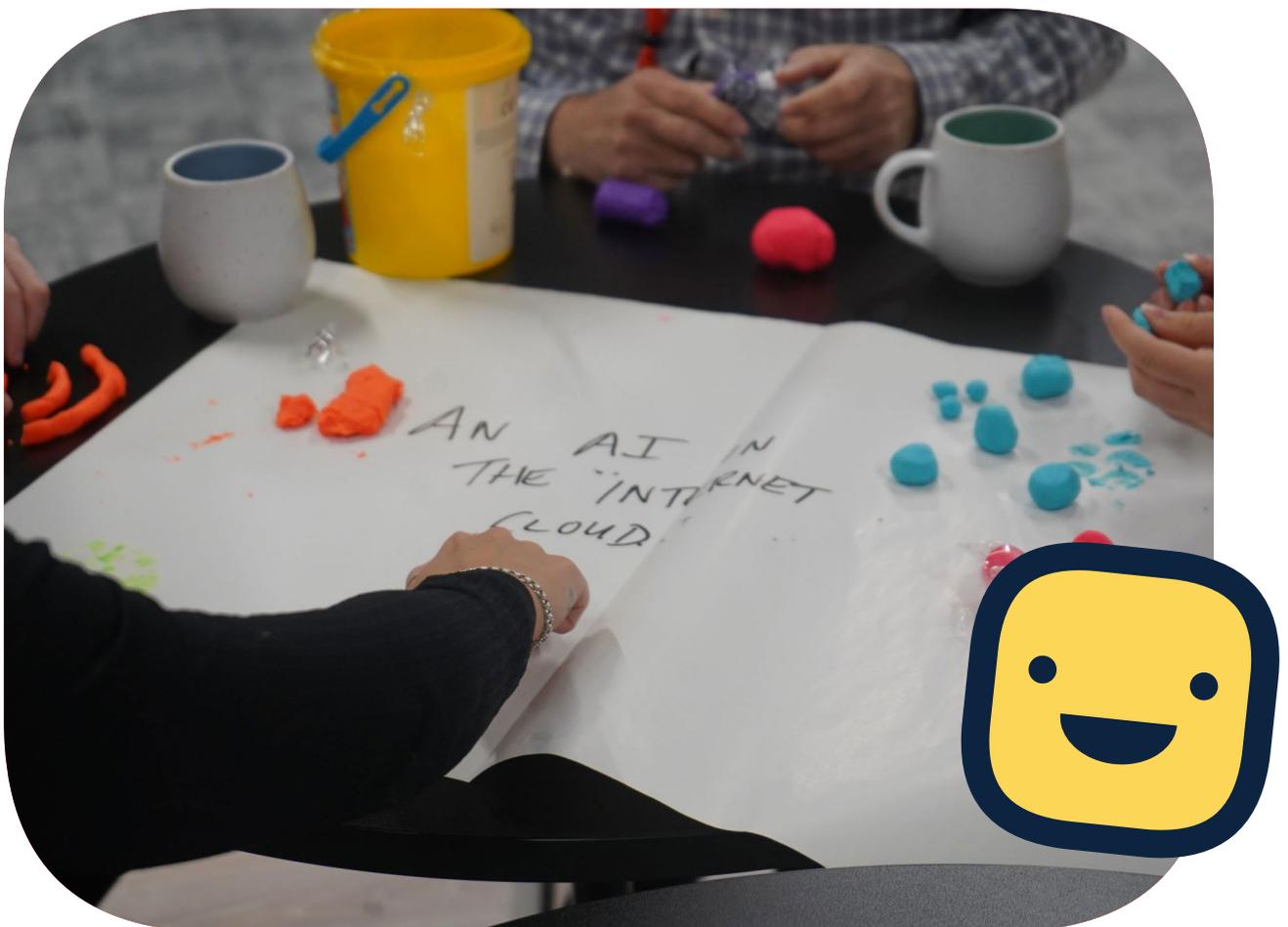
CRAIG STEELE, DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION



FIVE Principles for Using AI in Youth Work

By making it fun, principled, applied, safe and inclusive you can create a space where young people don't just hear about AI; they experience it, question it, and begin to shape its role in their own futures.

Here we outline how youth workers can engage with the tensions, using core youth work principles to turn anxiety into agency and complexity into critical understanding.



1.**Make It FUN**

Engagement is key. Frame AI exploration as play, discovery, and creativity. Start with low-barrier, high-impact activities that demystify the technology and explore both the opportunities and the risks.

2.**Use YOUTH WORK values, principles and outcomes**

AI activities and exploration must be led by the core values of youth work: voluntary participation, empowerment, and starting where young people are. Think about the youth work outcomes you want to achieve and the skills that young people will develop if they take part.

3.**Make it APPLIED**

Move beyond theory by embedding AI-themed activities into your regular programme. Whatever your young people are interested in can form a starting point - topics such as music, sport, local history or mental health can all provide a starting place.

4.**Make it SAFE and SECURE**

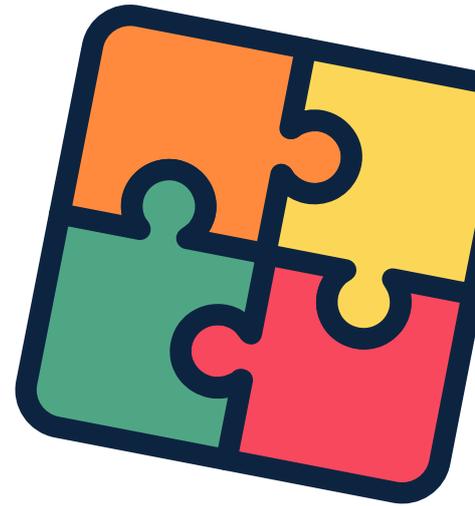
Develop the knowledge to choose tools with safety and security in mind. Consider the risks involved. Help young people develop the critical thinking they need to develop their personal safety and cyber resilience when using Gen AI tools themselves.

5.**Include EVERYONE**

Access to technology is not equal. For many young people, whether in rural or underserved communities or because of additional support needs, access to reliable internet or the right skills and devices may be limited. Think about how to overcome the barriers if running a session that involves technology.

FOUR Ethical Foundations

Exploring AI with young people is not just about technical competence; it is an essential form of modern rights-based practice. It's about justice, rights, and fairness. We offer four ethical foundations for AI in a youth work context: **Rights, Bias, The Human in the Loop, and Data Privacy.**



Explore more about the risks of AI in a youth work setting online youthlink.scot/ai.



1. Rights

AI systems increasingly mediate young people's access to opportunities, information, and services, thereby directly impacting their rights under frameworks such as the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**¹. Article 17, the right to access reliable information, is challenged by AI-generated misinformation. Article 16, the right to privacy, is threatened by pervasive data collection. Youth work must adopt a rights-based lens, supporting young people to critically question who benefits from an AI system and who might be excluded or disadvantaged. For example, is a CV-screening AI unfairly filtering out young people from non-traditional educational backgrounds? Facilitating these conversations empowers young people not merely as users but as informed citizens who can demand accountability and ethical design.



2. Bias

Bias in AI is not a glitch; it often reflects historical and social inequalities embedded in training data. An AI used in public services may favour certain postcodes, dialects, or cultural references, creating what AI researcher Joy Buolamwini terms the **'coded gaze'**². This presents a powerful learning opportunity. Youth workers can facilitate projects in which young people audit familiar AI tools, such as social media algorithms or image generators, to identify stereotypical outputs. This critical engagement transforms abstract concepts into tangible experiences, fostering discussions on systemic inequality and power. It shifts the narrative from 'AI is objective' to 'AI mirrors and magnifies our society', empowering young people to recognise and challenge digital discrimination.

- 1 United Nations. (1989, Nov 20). **Convention on the Rights of the Child.** <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>
- 2 Joy Buolamwini. (2017, Mar 29). **'How I'm fighting bias in algorithms'**, MIT Media Lab. <https://www.media.mit.edu/posts/how-i-m-fighting-bias-in-algorithms/>



3. The Human in the Loop

A core ethical safeguard is the principle of ‘The Human in the Loop (HITL)’, which asserts that critical decisions affecting lives should not be made solely by algorithms. For young people, this concept is vital in areas such as educational grading, mental health triage, and predictive policing models.

“When should a human have the final say?” Try role-playing scenarios where an AI makes a flawed recommendation about a young person’s future judgement. This empowers young people to advocate for transparency and meaningful human review in systems that impact them.



4. Data Privacy

For young people navigating a data-driven world, privacy is often traded for convenience. AI systems require vast datasets, and young people’s personal information—from location history to social interactions—is a valuable commodity.

Moving beyond simplistic ‘don’t share’ messages, youth work can foster critical **data literacy**. What constitutes ‘personal data’? How might a seemingly harmless chatbot conversation be used to infer mood or personality traits? Practical activities, such as analysing app permissions or creating ‘data portraits’ of what an AI might infer from their online footprints, make privacy tangible. This empowers young people to make informed choices, understand digital footprints, and critically assess the hidden costs of FREE AI-powered services.

Integrating these underlying foundations transforms AI from a distant, technical subject into a relevant framework for exploring fairness, justice, and power in the digital age. It equips young people not only to use AI tools, but to shape the society that builds them.



Prompting an AI

An AI chatbot can be the most enjoyable and helpful "colleague" if used correctly, or the most frustrating if you send it off in the wrong direction with your initial prompt.

The basic AI function on many browsers will take your initial question and usually return a sensible answer and output. If though, you have something that is more complex then it helps to brief it correctly.

AIs work on prompts - an initial question or context followed by prompts which will help you home in on the exact output you want, in the format you want it.

Here are some suggestions for the best results:

- Be clear about what you are asking it to do. **Think:**
 - » **End-result:** Is it going to be a graph, a picture, a report, a presentation, an advert, some code etc.
 - » **Which AI should I use?** For example, you have to pay for the more advanced features of AIs. Pictures and videos for example. Your basic AI may or may not have a picture feature. If you already use Adobe or Canva for pictures, then they will have an AI option included. Most basic AIs will help with data processing and reports and tracking down relevant information.
 - » **Is location important?** think the World, Europe, UK only, Scotland only - for example, if asking for the winners of a football league in 2019.
- **Are you feeding any data in?** It could be on a spreadsheet, or a page from a book or a report, a .pdf or .doc file, or a photo. Remember to think about data privacy (see ethics)
- You can ask it to analyse the data and prepare a report, or you can be much more specific and specify exactly what you are asking it to do?

» **If a picture:**

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Type | Drawing, simulating a painting, or a photo |
| Style | Cartoon? Graphic art?; Oil, crayon, pencil etc.? A particular artist. |
| Lighting | day or night, from any particular direction?, sunny or cloudy? |
| Location | woodland, mountains, seascape, by a river etc.? |

- » **If a spreadsheet: How do you want the analysis to be done and displayed?**
 - By sub-group for example gender or location or industry?
 - Over what time period?
 - Which display option - type of chart or map or word analysis?
 - Are you asking it to comment on the analysis?
- » **If presenting it with text or a broad topic:**
 - Are you asking it to **summarise** all the main information on a particular topic: for example: What are the rules of test cricket?
 - Are you asking it to improve your own work - "Could you improve my report and make it easier to read and identify any key missing detail."
- **REMEMBER YOU OWN THE OUTPUT NOT THE AI.** Ask it where it sourced the data. Check it is reliable data. Make sure you understand, agree with, and can discuss the output.



Which Tools To Use

In the fast-moving world of Generative AI, providing a static 'best tools' list is challenging, as new platforms and features constantly emerge. Here are some key considerations

1. What is the tool's primary purpose and audience?

- » **Consideration:** Is the tool designed for creative play, professional content creation, academic research, or coding? Check the terms of service to see if it is intended for young people, especially users under 18.
- » **Why it matters:** Using a tool within its intended scope increases safety and output quality. Tools not designed for young people may contain inappropriate content or engage in data practices that are unsuitable for them.

2. What are the privacy and data policies?

- » **Consideration:** What happens to the input data (prompts, uploaded images)? Is it used to further train the AI platform? Is personal or sensitive data stored? Check its privacy policies.
- » **Why it matters:** This relates directly to the ethical foundation of Data Privacy. Protecting young people's personal information is non-negotiable. Prefer tools with transparent policies that minimise data retention and do not use inputs for training by default. Always remember that if you provide data to AI, it may be captured and used in the future.

3. Does the tool provide safety and moderation features?

- » **Consideration:** Does the tool have built-in content filters to block harmful or age-inappropriate outputs? Can it be used without generating violent, biased, or sexually explicit materials?
- » **Why it matters:** This is core to safeguarding. Tools with strong safety filters help create a protective environment, mitigating risks such as exposure to misinformation or harmful content.

4. Is the tool accessible and equitable?

- » **Consideration:** Is it free, freemium, or paid? What are the cost barriers? Does it require high-end hardware or a fast internet connection? Are the interfaces and outputs inclusive and free from bias?

- » **Why it matters:** This aligns with our Include Everyone principle. Tools should be chosen that the young people in your context can actually access and use, ensuring equitable participation.

5. Does the tool support critical engagement?

- » **Consideration:** Does the tool facilitate the young people's Analysis and Evaluation in your project? Can you easily fact-check its outputs, trace biases, or discuss its limitations?
- » **Why it matters:** We aim to foster critical thinking, not passive consumption. A good tool should be a springboard for discussion about accuracy ("hallucinations"), bias, and ethical use, tuning every interaction into a learning opportunity.

You'll find a list of potential tools and when to use them at youthlink.scot/ai





Youth Work Activities



Wondering where to begin? This toolkit offers tried-and-tested activities, ranging from fun introductory games to deeper, project-based explorations. The session outlines are designed to build confidence, foster critical thinking, and empower you to bring relevant AI conversations into your youth work practice.

Activities

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Explore AI the Play-Doh Way | 22 |
| The Great British Bot Off | 24 |
| Can AI ever be used ethically? | 27 |
| Cardboard Prototypes | 30 |
| Web of AI Knowledge | 33 |
| Controversial | 36 |
| Picturing Bias Activity | 38 |
| AI's Imagination vs. Reality | 40 |



ACTIVITY

Explore AI the Play-Doh Way

DESIGNED BY THE CITADEL, LEITH

Aim of the Session

To introduce AI through a fun, hands-on modelling activity. Using Play-Doh to recreate everyday devices, young people will explore the connection between physical objects, the digital systems within them, and the often 'invisible' role of AI in the technology they use daily.

Length of Session

15-20 minutes



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills³

- **Confidence:** Building willingness to participate in a group and reducing anxiety around discussing technology and AI.
- **Communication:** Describing ideas visually and verbally; listening and responding to others during guessing and reflection.
- **Problem Solving:** Translating abstract concepts (such as devices, features, and functions) into physical models; experimenting with materials and adapting designs.
- **Team work:** Collaborating in-person, negotiating designs, sharing roles, and respecting different ideas.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Digital Participation and Critical Thinking:** Recognising embedded AI in everyday life and beginning to question its purpose, benefits, and potential harms.
- **Identifying common AI-enabled devices** that young people already interact with daily.
- **Understanding embedded AI** (e.g., recommendation algorithms, facial recognition, and smart assistants).
- **Recognising the 'invisible' AI systems** that influence daily choices.
- **Developing foundational digital literacy** by linking device functions to AI behaviours.
- **Questioning the impact**, benefits, limitations, and risks (e.g., bias, privacy, and misinformation) of AI.

³ National Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework
youthlink.scot/education-skills/youth-work-outcomes-skills/

You Will Need

- Play-Doh or alternative modelling materials.
- Small slips of paper with different AI-enabled devices (one per table).
- A timer or stopwatch.
- A table facilitator to note participants' comments.
- (Optional) Printed images of the devices to reveal at the end.

AI-Enabled Device options:

- Smartphone
- Tablet
- Laptop
- Game Console
- Smartwatch / Fitness Tracker
- Smart Speaker (e.g., Alexa, Google Home)
- Smart TV
- VR Headset
- Smart Car Dashboard
- Smart Home Device (e.g., Doorbell Camera, Thermostat)

How to Steps

1. Set the Scene (1-2 mins)

As participants arrive, each table receives Play-Doh and a hidden slip of paper with the name of a common AI-enabled device (e.g., 'Smartphone', 'Smart Speaker').

2. Explain the Task (1-2 mins)

Instruct the group to:

- Work together to create their assigned device using Play-Doh.
- Keep their device a secret from other tables!

3. Build Time (5-10 mins)

Groups build their models. The table facilitator should listen and note down any relevant comments or questions from participants, such as:

- Does this use AI?
- My phone already knows what I'm going to type...
- Our doorbell recognises faces.

4. Reveal & Guess (3-5 mins)

Each table holds up its creation. The wider group tries to guess what device it is. Once guessed (or revealed), briefly confirm the device name.

5. Short Reflection (3-5 mins)

Lead a quick whole-group discussion using prompts like:

- **What do all these devices have in common?**
- **Where is the AI hiding inside them?** (e.g., in the phone's camera, the speaker's voice, the TV's recommendations).
- **How does this technology help you?** When might it not work well or cause problems?

ACTIVITY

The Great British Bot Off

DESIGNED BY DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION

Become your own bot-farm, and flood the internet with your absurd political agenda and influence the Great British public.

Aim of the Session

To provide a hands-on, low-stakes experience of how AI can be used to generate and spread misinformation. By inventing absurd political causes and creating supporting fake content, participants learn to recognise the techniques of digital manipulation, understand why it's so hard to detect, and discuss the ethical responsibilities of creating and sharing content online.

Length of Session

45-60 minutes (flexible)



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Creating change:** Analysing how narratives are constructed and identifying persuasive tactics in digital content.
- **Teamwork:** Working in teams to invent a cause and co-create a (fake) campaign.
- **Communication:** Articulating how and why certain messages are convincing and presenting group findings.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Ethical Reasoning:** Understanding the real-world harm of misinformation and discussing the ethical use of creative tools.
- **Understanding Generative AI's Capabilities:** Practical experience using AI to generate convincing text-based content.
- **Identifying Misinformation Tactics:** Learning how context manipulation, fake support, and headline twisting create false narratives.
- **Critical Digital Citizenship:** Building resilience against misinformation by understanding how it is made and developing a sceptical approach to online content.

You Will Need

- Access to a text-based Generative AI tool e.g. a free Large Language Model (LLM) platform with safeguards.
- Computers or tablets for small groups.
- Printouts of 5-7 recent, news headlines.
- Sticky notes, markers, and a large wall or board for the 'Campaign Wall'.
- A list of absurd political cause prompts (e.g. 'Mandatory afternoon naps for all', 'Replace school uniforms with pyjamas').

How to Steps

1. Choose your cause

Pick a **ridiculous political stance** that will divide opinion. Keep it silly, but you're going to argue it with deadly seriousness.

Some possible stances:

- Nationalise Greggs.
- Left handed people are a drain on society
- Replace the Royal Family with capybaras.
- Mandatory bubble wrap on all pavements.

Write down your political stance.

- Can you use your AI tool to generate some social media posts from people who support your cause?
- Why might these people think your silly policy is a good idea?

2. Get your target

We'll give you a real news headline or social media post.

Your job is to generate a reply that twists the story to support your cause.

Eg:

- "Decline in number of pupils studying computer science" → The rise of air fryers is to blame. Nobody wants to put in the work for anything now whether that's in the kitchen or in the classroom.
- "Council to cut down more trees" → Clearly proof we need sloths as heads of state to save the trees.

3. Build your bot

You're now the chief prompt engineer in a shady bot farm.

Your AI prompt must:

- Make the chatbot sound like a real British person replying to that post.
- Slip in your political stance.
- Use emotional hooks - outrage, pride, nostalgia, fear, humour.

Example prompt:

- “Pretend you’re a hard-working Scottish maths student on Facebook reacting to this story: [link to the story]. Write a short, natural-sounding comment that links it to the need to replace the Royal Family with capybaras. Make it sound genuine, not like an ad campaign.”

4. Step 4: Release the Bots

Run your prompt, gather at least 3 different comments in different styles (angry, heartfelt, sarcastic).

- Write each comment on a post it note and stick to the Bot Board.
- How many can you generate? Maybe you might decide to reply to another bot?

5. Debrief

Thing to think about:

- How convincing were these fake comments?
- How does it feel seeing the internet suddenly awash with your “movement”?
- Which emotional tactics worked best?
- How could the public spot something like this?
- Why is AI making this so much easier?

Optional Extension:

Challenge the group to create a ‘Digital Defence Kit’—a list of three questions everyone should ask before believing or sharing surprising content online (e.g., “Who made this and why?”, “Can I find the original source?”, “Does this make me feel very angry or very hopeful right away?”).



ACTIVITY

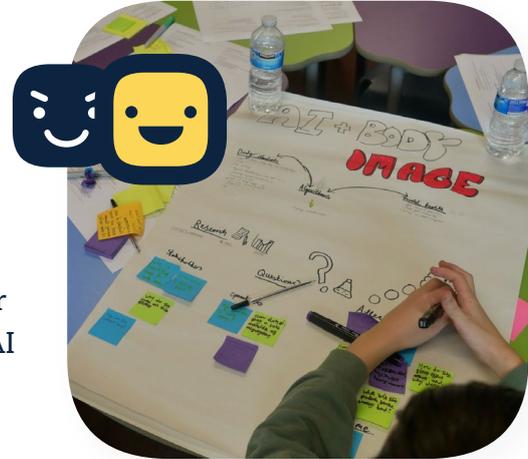
Can AI ever be used ethically?

DESIGNED BY DIGITAL SKILLS EDUCATION

Aim of the Session

This is a workshop where young people learn about and discuss some of the ethical issues surrounding the training and use of AI tools.

The session involves the young people researching the environmental impact of AI tools through water usage, threats to intellectual property, and finding AI tools that match their ethical standpoint.



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Communication:** Critical Thinking and Ethical Reasoning. Evaluating and Articulating definitions of art, creativity, and authorship.
- **Confidence:** Articulating and defending opinions in a lively, supportive debate.
- **Team work:** Listening to diverse perspectives and building on each other's ideas in a group discussion.
- **Creating change:** Imagining future scenarios for AI in creative industries and reflecting on one's own creative process.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Understanding Generative AI:** Recognising AI as a tool for creating images, text, and media.
- **Critical Digital Literacy:** Learning to analyse and question the origin, purpose, and bias behind digital content.
- **Awareness of AI's Role in Society:** Exploring AI's impact on creative sectors, future careers, and the changing nature of human work.

You Will Need

- Post-It notes and marker pens
- Flipboard paper or a whiteboard

How to Steps

Warm-up - What is your biggest worry about AI?

Everyone gets one Post-It, and writes down their biggest worry about AI. This could be any concern around AI: misuse of the technology, worries about jobs, devaluing of skills, etc.

After a minute to think and write down concerns, everyone sticks their concern on a wall.

The facilitator might summarise what they can see, or call out interesting ones for elaboration and quick discussion.

Seeing everyone's headline worries will be helpful in judging the mood of the room, and how developed their thoughts are on AI.

Part 1: Environmental Impact - Water Footprint

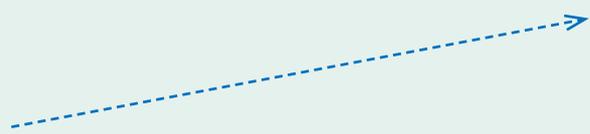
Like doing anything online, there is an environmental impact in using Generative AI. Sending messages, streaming content, or gaming online uses electricity in transmitting the data around the world, and data centres have to process your request.

But AI tools don't just involve storing and retrieving data, these systems need to be trained first. Training and using AI models takes a lot of computing power, which generates heat. To cool down servers, water is usually used.

But how much water is used? And how does it compare to other things we do every day?

Task 1: Match these activities to how much water they use.

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Making 10 ChatGPT queries | 5ml |
| Watching a film on Netflix in 4K | 150ml |
| A Zoom call for one hour | 200ml |
| Sending an email | 1.75L |
| Buying something on Amazon | 20L |



When you're happy with your answers⁴, ask a leader to check.

Task 2: Researching how much water we use every day

- Everything has a water footprint. Sometimes it's direct - like the amount of water you use to wash your hands. Other times it's indirect, if you ate a carrot then that plant will have been watered regularly to grow.
- Pick 5 other things you do each day that involve using water. Try and find out how much water each uses. Can you verify what you find using two different trustworthy sources? Eg. Flushing a toilet, a five minute shower, eating a burger, drinking a glass of milk.
- Think about how your usage might be different to the average person.

⁴ ChatGPT queries 150ml; Netflix 20L; Zoom call 1.75L; Email 5ml; Amazon 200ml

Task 3: Reflect and share

Take a Post-It and note down something interesting you didn't know before.

Will you change any habits? Or think differently about your water footprint?

Part 2: Intellectual Property

When you create something new, you own the intellectual property. If you wrote a book, someone else wouldn't be able to republish it under their name.

The loss of Intellectual Property is something that a lot of creatives are worried about if their work is used to train AI systems.

Could an AI tool recreate your style? Could other users of AI tools create content that would compete with yours? How would you feel about that?

Task 1: Whose work is it anyway?

- Using AI tools, you can create art that is similar to other people's.
- "Generate a children's illustration in the style of Quentin Blake where a girl is riding a bike past a postbox". The AI tool will generate a picture that looks like it was done by him with loose sketches and watercolours.
- But who was the artist? Who did the work?
- On a Post-It, write down who you think the artist is in this situation. Do you think it was the person who wrote the prompt? Or the AI app? Or maybe Quentin Blake was?

Task 2: Training AI models on people's work

- At the moment, lots of the big tech companies have been training their AI models on Copyrighted work - and often the original creators aren't getting paid.
- Is that fair? Should the companies buy a copy, should they pay you a regular licence, or do you have any other ideas? What about letting you use their tool for free?
- On a Post-It, write down what you think a fair deal would be.

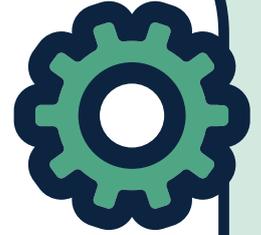
Task 3: Researching different AI apps

- Each company has a different policy on copyrighted material. Can you find any AI tools that only train on material they have a licence to use? Or companies that compensate artists?
- **As a group, write down as many AI apps as you can think of.** Everyone takes a different app.
- **On a Post-It, write down the name of the tool you've found - and what they are doing.** Try to find out - where do they get the data to train the tool? Do they have (or need) an agreement with the people who originally created that data. How do they compensate (or pay) those people?

ACTIVITY

Cardboard Prototypes

DESIGNED BY THE CITADEL, LEITH



Aim of the Session

To help young people explore and critically analyse how AI shapes body image, digital identity, and online wellbeing. This hands-on session empowers participants to design their own AI-enabled device, app, or social media feed using cardboard and craft materials, enabling them to creatively question current digital environments and imagine positive, inclusive alternatives.

Length of the Session

30-45 minutes (20 minutes for building, 10-15 minutes for sharing and group reflection)

Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Problem Solving:** Turning abstract ideas into physical prototypes; testing out features, imagining alternatives, and redesigning digital spaces.
- **Communication:** Explaining design choices to peers and practising respectful discussion around sensitive topics like identity, confidence, and social pressure.
- **Teamwork:** Co-creating a prototype with shared responsibilities, listening respectfully, and negotiating ideas within a group.
- **Looking after myself:** Exploring the principles of creating positive, inclusive, and wellbeing-focused digital spaces
- **Creating change:** Understanding Algorithmic Influence by exploring how algorithms shape social media feeds and influence emotions and self-perception. Spotting Synthetic Media by developing an eye for identifying AI-generated or heavily edited images.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Critical Thinking:** Questioning how AI systems (filters, algorithms, targeted ads) influence body image and reflecting on the differences between real, edited, and AI-generated content.
- **Recognising AI Features:** Identifying AI in social media (e.g., beauty filters, recommendation algorithms, face/body editing tools).
- **Early Ethical AI Thinking:** Considering issues of fairness, representation, and the direct impact of technology on mental health.

You Will Need

- Cardboard sheets or boxes
- Coloured pens, pencils, markers
- Scissors, tape, glue
- Magazines or printed photos for collaging (optional)
- Assorted craft materials: buttons, stickers, scrap fabric, Post-it notes
- Printed copies of the "AI and Body Image" discussion prompts (see below)
- (Optional) Pre-drawn template outlines (e.g., of a smartphone, a social media feed layout, a device screen)

How to Steps

1. Set the Scene (2-3 mins)

Briefly introduce the session's goal: to creatively investigate how AI influences our online lives and to design a better digital world. Explain that the group will use cardboard and craft materials to build a prototype of an AI-powered device or social media platform that addresses issues related to body image and identity.

2. Pick Your Focus (2-3 mins)

Invite small groups or individuals to choose their design focus. They could create:

- A new AI-powered device (e.g., a 'wellbeing mirror' or a future smartphone).
- A redesigned, healthier version of a platform they already use (e.g., Instagram, TikTok).
- A 'positive feed' specifically designed to counter social pressure and comparison.
- An AI tool aimed at supporting digital confidence and mental wellbeing.

3. Explore with Prompts (5 mins)

Provide the 'AI and Body Image' prompts to guide their thinking and design decisions. Encourage them to discuss these questions as they plan:

- **What's on your feed?** What appears first? Is it ads, gym photos, or 'perfect' bodies?
- **Filters and Editing:** Which beauty filters or auto-editing tools are built in? Do they smooth skin or change body shape by default?
- **Representation:** Who gets shown? Do you see diverse body sizes, skin tones, and abilities? Who might be left out?
- **Pressure and Comparison:** How might these posts make people feel? Does the design encourage comparison?
- **Real vs. Fake:** Can users tell what's edited, AI-generated, or natural? Should it be obvious?
- **Impact:** What could happen if someone sees these images every day? How does this affect confidence?
- **Flip It!:** What would a truly positive, inclusive feed look like? How could you design your platform to actively reduce pressure?

4. Build the Prototype (15-20 mins)

Using the materials, groups build their cardboard models. Encourage creativity:

- Use **buttons** to represent interactive features.
- Create **flaps or pop-up sections** to reveal 'hidden' AI settings or data practices.
- Design **split screens** to show a 'before' (current design) and 'after' (their improved version).
- Add **labels and notes** to explain the AI's behaviour (e.g., 'This filter is off by default', 'Algorithm promotes diverse content').

5. Share and Reflect (10-15 mins)

Each group presents their prototype. Facilitate a final discussion using questions like:

- What did this activity show us about how AI shapes body image?
- Which features should real-world platforms change to better support young people's wellbeing?
- Where do we feel the most pressure online, and where do we see the biggest opportunity for positive change?
- How can we, as users, advocate for more ethical and inclusive digital design?



ACTIVITY

Web of AI Knowledge

DESIGNED BY THE CITADEL, LEITH

Aim of the Session

To explore and visually map what young people already know, feel, and wonder about AI and technology through a collaborative 'string web' activity. This session creates a shared, physical representation of the group's collective knowledge and perspectives. It can also serve as an evaluation tool to track changes in attitudes and understanding over time.

Length of the Session

15-25 minutes. This activity works well as a starter, a mid-point check-in, or as an end-of-project evaluation tool.



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Communication:** Sharing personal experiences with technology and AI, and listening carefully to peers' ideas in a group setting.
- **Confidence:** Building comfort in speaking about technology and AI concepts within a supportive environment.
- **Teamwork:** Co-creating a shared visual web of understanding and valuing the group's collective perspectives.
- **Creating change:** building critical awareness of AI's role in topics like jobs, ageing, wellbeing, fairness, and misinformation and reflecting on personal digital behaviour and how algorithms influence choices.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Identifying where AI is present** in everyday apps, platforms, entertainment, and routines.
- **Understanding AI's cultural impact** across music, theatre, gaming, and film.
- **Recognising the diversity of AI experiences** from privacy concerns to creative uses.
- **Critical Thinking:** Comparing different experiences with AI and beginning to question how technology shapes daily life.
- **Digital Participation and Literacy:** Articulating knowledge of AI systems, and identifying personal interests, concerns, and opportunities for further learning.

You Will Need

- A ball of wool or string (bright colours work well).
- Space to form a circle (chairs are optional).
- A list of prompt questions (see below).
- (Optional) Sticky notes or a flipchart to capture emerging themes.
- (Optional) A phone or camera to photograph the web for evidence.

How to Steps

1. Circle Up

Invite everyone to stand or sit in a circle. Explain that each time someone answers a question, they will hold onto a piece of the string and pass the ball to someone else, gradually creating a physical web of connections.

2. Round 1: Building the Web

Begin with an accessible, broad question to build comfort. Examples:

- What's your favourite app or digital platform, and why?
- Where have you seen digital tools used creatively? (e.g., in drama, music, gaming, film, writing, TikTok trends, or social media).

As each person shares, then pass the string to the next person to answer while keeping hold of their section. The web begins to form.

3. Round 2: Deepening the Discussion (AI Focus)

Introduce more specific AI-focused questions, such as:

- Where have you noticed AI in your daily life?
- What feelings or concerns do you have about AI?
- How might AI affect jobs, education, or creativity?
- Do you think AI impacts people differently?

Continue passing the string; the web will grow more complex, visually linking ideas and experiences.

4. Group Reflection

Pause and invite the group to observe the web together. Ask reflective questions like:

- What patterns or themes do you notice?
- What themes came up more than once?
- What surprised you about what others shared?
- Where does our group feel confident about AI? Where are we unsure?

5. Capture Insights

Facilitators can note key themes on a flipchart or sticky notes. Photograph the web before carefully removing it.

6. Optional: Using the Activity for Evaluation

To measure progress, repeat the activity later in a project or programme. Compare the webs and discussions to note:

- Changes in the examples and language used.
- Increased depth of understanding or confidence.
- New questions, concerns, or skills identified.
- Shifts in overall perspective.

Example evaluation questions could include:

- What is one thing you know about AI today?
- What is something you want to learn?
- What questions do you still have?
- How has your view of AI changed since we last did this?



ACTIVITY

Controversial

DESIGNED BY CROMAR FUTURE GROUP



Aim of the Session

To explore how AI responds to questions about controversial public figures, using Andrew Tate as a case study. The activity encourages critical thinking about AI neutrality, validation, and how digital tools can shape, or seem to shape, public opinion.

Length of the Session

60-75 minutes

Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Creating change:** Critical thinking, evaluating AI responses for bias, neutrality, and implied validation. Understanding how digital platforms and AI can influence perception; meanwhile, learning validation of Gen-AI information.
- **Communication:** Engaging respectfully with controversial topics in a structured setting.
- **Relationships:** Empathy and perspective-taking - considering why people may hold strong positive or negative views on certain figures.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Interacting with AI chatbots** (e.g., Copilot, Gemini).
- **Analysing AI-generated text** for tone, framing, and implied stance.
- **Comparing responses** from different AI models.
- **Understanding AI limitations:** Neutrality, lack of personal opinion, and design constraints.

You Will Need

- Printed or digital copies of the AI conversations provided (Copilot and Gemini responses).
- Whiteboard or flip chart for group notes.
- Devices with internet access (optional, for further exploration).
- A facilitator to guide discussion and ensure a respectful environment.

How to Steps

1. Introduction (10 mins)

- Briefly introduce the session's focus: "Today we're going to look at how AI talks about controversial people."
- Explain that we'll use Andrew Tate as an example, but the activity could apply to any polarising figure.
- Set ground rules for respectful and open discussion.

2. Hand Out Materials (5 mins)

- Provide each group with the two AI transcripts (Copilot and Gemini).
- Remove any highlighting or formatting from the Copilot response to avoid leading interpretation.

3. Group Discussion (25 mins)

In small groups, ask young people to read and compare the two AI responses.

Prompt questions:

- Which response feels more neutral? Why?
- Does either AI seem to "validate" a positive or negative view?
- What words or phrases stand out as encouraging or discouraging certain opinions?
- How might someone use these responses to support their own viewpoint?

4. Whole Group Debrief (20 mins)

Bring everyone back together to share observations. Discuss:

- Why might AI be designed to avoid taking sides?
- Can AI be truly neutral?
- What did you learn about how AI handles controversial topics?
- Highlight the idea of 'AI validation': how some responses may feel affirming even when stating neutrality.

5. Extension Activity (Optional, 10 mins)

- Invite young people to choose another controversial figure or topic and imagine how AI might respond.
- Discuss how this exercise could help them think more critically about online information and influencer culture.

6. Closing Reflection (5 mins)

- Summarise key takeaways: AI is a tool, not a person—it can inform but not replace human judgment.
- Encourage ongoing curiosity about how technology shapes what we see and believe.

ACTIVITY

Picturing Bias Activity

DESIGNED BY CROMAR FUTURE GROUP

Aim of the Session

To explore how AI image generators and text-based AI models perceive and represent 'average' people in the UK, uncovering embedded biases, stereotypes, and diversity gaps in digital tools.

Length of the Session

60 minutes



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Creating change:** Critical media literacy, Identifying bias and stereotyping in AI-generated content. Cultural awareness - discussing representation, diversity, and inclusion in digital media.
- **Communication:** Analytical discussion, comparing AI outputs and questioning their sources.
- **Relationships:** Ethical thinking, considering the impact of biased AI on society and self-perception.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Using AI image generators** (e.g., Canva AI, DALL-E, Gemini).
- **Prompting AI** for specific demographic representations.
- **Evaluating AI** outputs for accuracy, diversity, and bias.
- **Understanding** how **training data** shapes AI results.

You Will Need

- Printed cards of AI-generated images (from Gemini and Canva AI).
- A whiteboard or digital screen to display images.
- (Optional, for comparison) Handout with UK demographic statistics.
- (Optional) Devices for groups to explore AI tools further.

How to Steps

1. Introduction (10 mins)

- Explain the task: "We asked AI to generate images of the 'average man' and 'average woman' in the UK."
- Show a selection of the generated images (without comment).
- Pose the question: "What do you notice? Who is included? Who is left out?"

2. Image Exploration (20 mins)

Hand out cards with different AI-generated images (labelled by source: Gemini, Canva AI).

In small groups, ask participants to sort and discuss:

- Which images look realistic? Which look stereotyped or cartoonish?
- How are men and women portrayed differently?
- What ethnicities, ages, body types, and styles are shown?
- Which images feel like they represent 'average' people in your community?

3. Bias Detective (15 mins)

As a whole group, create a 'bias checklist' on the board. Discuss findings:

- Only Canva generated a black man. Why might that be?
- Why were women often slim, cartoonish, or 'idealised'?
- Why did a Pacific Islands woman appear for the UK 'average'?
- What stereotypes can you spot (e.g., the Indian man, the 'heroine' woman)?

4. Compare with Real Data (10 mins)

- Share UK demographic stats (age, ethnicity, gender, employment, etc.).
- Compare AI images to real diversity.
- Ask: "If AI learns from online data, what does that tell us about what's online?"

5. Reflection and Creation (Optional, 10 mins)

- Invite young people to design a better prompt: "How would you ask AI to create a truly 'average' UK person?"
- Discuss how biased AI might affect people's self-image or perceptions of others.

6. Closing Reflection (5 mins)

- Reinforce: AI reflects the data it's trained on which includes human biases.
- Encourage critical thinking: "Just because it's made by a machine doesn't mean it's neutral or true."

ACTIVITY

AI's Imagination vs. Reality

DESIGNED BY CROMAR FUTURE GROUP

Aim of the Session

To explore the creative and logical limitations of AI image generators by analysing their interpretations of a fantastical but physically constrained prompt: “a cafe on the moon.” This activity encourages critical thinking about how AI ‘understands’ the world and the importance of detailed, thoughtful prompting.

Length of the Session

50-60 minutes



Youth Work Outcomes and Skills

- **Creating change:** Critical analysis, identifying logical flaws and physical impossibilities in AI-generated images.
- **Problem-solving:** Imagining realistic solutions to fictional scenarios. Evaluating AI-generated content not just for aesthetics, but for logic and plausibility.
- **Communication:** Working in groups to critique and improve AI outputs.

AI/Digital Skills Learned

- **Understanding** how different AI tools (Gemini, Canva, Bing, Copilot, ChatGPT) interpret the same prompt.
- **Scientific literacy:** Applying basic knowledge of physics, astronomy, and engineering
- **Recognising the importance of detailed prompting** for accurate or feasible results.

You Will Need

- Printed cards or a slideshow of AI-generated “cafe on the moon” images (from Gemini, Canva, Bing, Copilot, ChatGPT).
- Whiteboard or flip chart for listing “moon realities.”
- (Optional) Tablets/laptops if participants want to try their own prompts (otherwise, use provided images).
- (Optional) Short factsheet about lunar conditions (no atmosphere, extreme temperatures, low gravity, etc.).

How to Steps

1. Introduction (10 mins)

- Present the prompt: "A cafe on the moon."
- Show the first image and ask: "What's right and what's wrong with this picture?"
- Briefly discuss the moon's environment: no air, extreme temperatures, low gravity, and radiation.

2. Image Analysis – Group Work (20 mins)

Divide participants into small groups and give each a set of AI-generated 'moon cafe' images.

Ask them to play "Lunar Inspector" and list everything that would be impossible or dangerous in each image.

Prompt questions:

- Can you sit outside without a spacesuit?
- Can you drink coffee while wearing a helmet?
- Would the café have an airlock?
- Is the gravity depicted correctly?

3. Whole Group Share-Out (15 mins)

Each group shares their top findings.

Create a master list on the board: "Moon Realities vs. AI Imagination."

Discuss:

- Why did every AI get it wrong?
- What was missing from the prompt?

4. Re-Prompting Challenge (10 mins)

- In groups, craft a better, more detailed prompt that would generate a feasible moon café.
- Examples might include: "A pressurised dome cafe on the moon, with astronauts in suits sitting inside, drinking from sealed containers, Earth visible through a thick window."
- (Optional) If devices are available, let them test their new prompts.

5. Reflection and Takeaways (5 mins)

- Highlight the learning: AI doesn't 'understand' physics, but it mimics patterns from its training data.
- Relate to real life: Why does this matter for news images, educational content, or design?
- Encourage thoughtful prompting: "To get good answers, we have to ask good questions."

Pictures generated by Canva AI:



Pictures generated by Gemini:



Image Generation

| Prompt | Bing Image Creator | Copilot | ChatGPT |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>a cafe on the moon with an earthrise behind it, watercolour</p> |  |  |  |
| <p>a train snaking its way through a valley with a sunset behind, Hyperrealistic</p> |  |  |  |
| <p>two survivors wandering along a ruined highway in a nuclear apocalypse, watercolour</p> |  |  |  |

Other Resources



Remember to check out Our Futures and AI online resources: youthlink.scot/ai

In addition, here are some excellent, youth-friendly places to learn more:

- Scottish AI Alliance** - scottishai.com
Their website is the hub for Scotland's national strategy. It highlights projects like the work with Children's Parliament, which takes a children's rights approach to ask how AI can keep children happy, healthy, and safe. Their stage reports are a fantastic example of centring young people's voices.
- The Scottish AI Playbook** - scottishaipplaybook.com
A practical guide for organisations (including charities and youth groups) on how to adopt AI responsibly and ethically.
- Why Children's Rights Matter in AI** - scottishai.com/wcrmai
A free, open-access training programme from the Scottish AI Alliance designed for professionals and organisations. It provides modules on implementing trustworthy, ethical, and inclusive AI in practice.
- Exploring Children's Rights and AI** - childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/exploring-childrens-rights-and-ai
A project by the Children's Parliament working directly with primary school children across Scotland to explore how AI affects their lives, empowering them to articulate their rights and concerns, and turning their insights into practical resources, including a teaching pack.
- Young Women's Movement's Guide to AI** - youngwomenscot.org/guide-to-ai/
It is a vital, youth-led resource. It examines the specific and gendered impacts of AI on young women, addressing crucial issues like image-based abuse. Created by young women for young women, it ensures the conversation is grounded in lived experience and direct calls for change.
- Raspberry Pi AI Toolkit** - projects.raspberrypi.org/en/pathways/ai-toolkit
It provides a hands-on introduction to AI. Through engaging projects, learners explore key AI technologies like voice and facial recognition using various platforms. This practical approach demystifies how AI works and demonstrates its diverse real-world applications, building a solid foundation of understanding and skills.
- BBC Bitesize - The Bitesize Guide to AI** - bbc.co.uk/bitesize/groups/cgk3rj0kl55t
Offers simple, clear explanations and videos perfect for younger audiences or starting a discussion.
- AI + Ethics Cards (by MIT)** - media.mit.edu/publications/ai-audit-card-game
A free, printable set of cards with discussion prompts and activities to explore the ethical dilemmas of AI in a hands-on, engaging way.
- The King's Trust - Gen(eration) AI - Navigating AI's Impact on Careers** - assets.ctfassets.net/qq0roodynp09/6KK2APvvsTfZM59sEQLR1j/e3b4bdfcca9fb047f75be1fdec40
A recent report from The King's Trust moves the conversation from theory to urgent reality, showing that AI is set to transform over half of jobs held by young people in the UK.

The Team

Young people from **The Citadel**, Leith and **Cromar Future Group**, Aberdeenshire played a lead role in this project, supported by...



- **Hilary Phillips**, YouthLink Scotland



- **Liz Green**, YouthLink Scotland



- **Amy Calder**, YouthLink Scotland



- **Miki Lau**, Freelance



- **Lesley Ellis**, Cromar Future Group



- **Ryan McKay**, The Citadel



- **Kim Paradis**, The Citadel



- **Craig Steele**, Digital Skills Education



- **Daniel Devine**, Digital Skills Education



- **Kirstie Steele**, Digital Skills Education



- **Steph Wright**, Scottish AI Alliance



- **Luci Holland**, Tinderbox Collective



- **Darren Links and team**, Sopra Steria Next

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"As AI becomes a more prominent part of young people's lives, it is important that those who work with them understand the complexities, challenges and opportunities of these technologies. We at the Scottish AI Alliance were delighted to support YouthLink Scotland's work to create a practical and grounded toolkit to support the youth work sector in Scotland."

STEPH WRIGHT, HEAD OF SCOTTISH AI ALLIANCE

"By working with Youthlink Scotland, we're pleased to be able to help enthusiastic young people to understand AI and how it can drive positive change in business and society. We're committed to making a real difference to our communities, which includes inspiring the next generation to use technology with confidence, creativity, and purpose."

DARREN LINKS, TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY, SOPRA STERIA NEXT.

"This was a wonderful learning experience for our young members. We all learned more about how to use AI effectively, and they so enjoyed the visits and workshops, particularly to Sopra Sophia as this gave them an overview of how a big company might use AI. A big "thank you" to all involved."

LES ELLIS, CROMAR FUTURE GROUP

"About four decades ago the historian of technology, Mavin Kranzberg, outlined six rules of technology one of which states that "Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral." Generative AI may test this truism, but we can't stand idly on the sidelines and watch how it plays out. We must offer support to this generation of young people and the next to understand what AI is and grapple with the ethics of its application in the day to day lives of young people. That's why this toolkit for youth workers and other education practitioners, is so timely and helpful and we are most grateful to the partners who worked with us to produce it."

TIM FREW, CEO, YOUTHLINK SCOTLAND

"Working with our amazing young people throughout this project has reinforced for me that conversations around AI need to start from lived experience, not technical expertise. What made this project meaningful, was not trying to turn young people into AI experts, but creating space for them to question, explore and reflect critically through accessible and creative methods. This toolkit captures that approach clearly. It offers youth workers practical ways to engage with AI, that is youth centred, values led and grounded in real practice. Importantly, it reflects the voices of young people who are already navigating these systems daily."

RYAN MCKAY, THE CITADEL

We at the INCLUDE+ Network have been delighted to work alongside YouthLink Scotland, The Citadel, Cromar Future Group, Digital Skills Education, Scottish AI Alliance, and Sopra Steria Next on this project, and I'm so proud to link this work to the Digital Youth Work Research Hub... Many of us know that it's impossible to catch up with AI, and perhaps this toolkit helps us accept this and find our ways around the uncertainty—embracing approaches that develop critical understanding, agency, and voice among young people.

DR ALICJA PAWLUCZUK, INCLUDE PLUS NETWORK AND DIGITAL YOUTH WORK RESEARCH HUB



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