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Minutes

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| **Date** | 19 September 2019 |
| **Subject** | AI Steering Group |
| **Location** | CH S2.04, Skype |
| **Time** | 10:30 – 11:45 |
| **Publication Intent** | OFFICIAL |

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| **Present** | David Craig (DC), (Redacted)  **Skype:** Joe Billington (JB) , (Redacted) |
| **Apologies** | Alok Raj, (Redacted) |

1. **Item 1. Welcome and Introductions**
   1. DC welcomed the group to the meeting. Including Attendees in the room in Coventry and on Skype.
2. **Item 2. Feedback from DDaT Committee** 
   1. DC had previously presented the high-level strategy of the AI Steering Group to the DDaT Committee, and provided feedback on their response.
   2. The response was incredibly positive, including comments that the DDaT Committee support the launch and expansion of the AI Steering Group as soon as possible.
   3. DC noted that Group members should offer comments regarding the next steps and plans for the group from now until the end of the year (2019).
3. **Item 3. AI Steering Group Draft Strategy Paper**
   1. (Redacted) guided the group through the draft strategy for the AI Steering group, including the progress of bringing Automation, AI and Machine Learning into the Departments ways of working.
   2. (Redacted) explained the strategic vision, up to and including where we want to be over the next five years.
   3. (Redacted) noted that AI will be used in a human centred way, to ‘Aid the Department in decision making’, ‘Create and efficient and streamlined organisation’, and to ‘Become a pioneer in scaling AI across the Department’.
   4. The benefits of using AI were outlined, including **savings of time and money**, the **accuracy of quality of work** being improved, the **24/7 reliance** on resources, and the improvements to **staff moral** from reduction in repetitive and mundane tasks.
   5. (Redacted) explained the ethics regarding AI and the development of AI principles: Transparency to reduce misperception or miscalculation, and investing in the development of secure and reliable AI.
   6. (Redacted) explained the projected savings so far from the automation within the Data Science Division, noting that more could still be done to improve this figure. Figure currently stands at **£100.3 Million.**
   7. DC noted that Data Science, Data Directorate and Tech Directorate want to be a part of a joined-up AI Centre, however Data Directorates current transformation means that they do not have the same readiness in this regard.
   8. The board discuss the current preferred supplier, UiPath, and how as progression in the field of AI develops, other suppliers would be considered. UiPath offer a lot of free training to those that wish to integrate this into their organisation, as well as how to set up the necessary infrastructure.
   9. Also mentioned was the preference to build in-house capability for the use of AI and Automation, to reduce reliance on contractors or external sources.
   10. Group members expressed the possible requirement for approaching both the public and private sectors, to see if lessons can be learnt from the use of AI. Many AI tools are already in place throughout the DfE. This is the first Department to focus on building in-house capabilities regrading AI.
   11. (Redacted) conversed over the difference in external and internal facing benefits to AI, as the initial remit of the Group was to focus on how benefits can be applied internally. Many aspects of the DfE could benefit from external customer facing application.

**ACTION AP8:** (Redacted) **to meet regarding the possible benefits and applications for external uses of AI and Automation.**

* 1. (Redacted) proposed the idea of not just focusing on what AI could do to remove the negative aspects of work, but also to develop a focus on what can be achieved that cannot be done without AI.
  2. It is noted by the group that AI does not want to replace people jobs, but rather take over more mundane tasks to help employees move on to more fulfilling roles.
  3. (Redacted) noted that O365 applications have automation built into them, regarding ‘Flow’. This could perhaps be a point of training within the Department to enable more staff to utilise this feature.

**ACTION AP9:** (Redacted)  **to present his ‘Flow’ automation presentation at the next meeting, October 23, 2019**

1. **Item 4. Blockchain/DLT**
   1. (Redacted) presented the paper on the possible use of Blockchain within the Departments operations.
   2. Possible advantages were listed:
      * Blockchain operates as a shared platform, that automatically updates those with access to the data.
      * The advantage of creating consensual rules for data amongst the parties that share the blockchain ownership.
      * A permanent audit trail is also created with information passing through the system.
      * Other parties can also see and use the data, is allowed by the owners of the information, updates are seen almost instantly.
   3. (Redacted) presented use-cases of where blockchains could be useful: Qualifications, Estate Audit and Funding where the use-cases explained.
   4. The group discussed the possible disadvantages at a surface level. This was the possible decentralized nature of Blockchain, and the immutable nature of the data held there against the GDPR requirement of deletion and retention.
   5. The Group agreed that the way forward for the possible adoption of Blockchain would be to build trust over time with small concepts and trials of the system, regarding other providers and organisations connected to the DfE.

Agenda for next meeting to be discussed.

**Meeting Closed**

Next meeting: **23 October 2019**

**12:15** to **14:15**

**CH S1.03**