OPEN RIGHTS GROUP

THE USE OF CHATGPT IN ASYLUM DECISIONS

ERRORS, INACCURACIES & HOME OFFICE INCOMPETENCE

ABOUT ORG

Open Rights Group (ORG): Founded in 2005, Open Rights Group (ORG) is a UK-based digital campaigning organisation working to protect individuals' rights to privacy and free speech online.

ABOUT THIS POLICY PAPER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Deciding whether someone can or cannot seek refuge in the UK is one of the most serious and life-changing decisions that the state can make about an individual. The processes that lead to that decision must be transparent, fair and accountable.

Open Rights Group (ORG) has carried out a six month investigation into two generative AI tools, being used by the Home Office in every asylum decision. These are the Asylum Case Summarisation (ACS) tool and the Asylum Policy Search (APS) tools.

ORG, with the help of MPs Bell Ribeiro-Addy and Carla Denyer,[1] has been trying to uncover how these tools have been developed, checked and used, as well as whether the government's efficiency claims stand up.

We have found that:

- Asylum claimants continue not to be told when AI is used to summarise their case and country information. (See below.)
- Error rates for the ACS from the dip sampling are higher than the pilot testing. (See below.)
- There is no quality assurance for generated AI summaries from ACS. (See below.)
- There is no quality check control for the generated text from the APS tool. (See below).
- Just 0.3% of total generated summaries between April-July were checked by Home Office Subject Matter Experts (SME). (See below.)
- There are no plans for an independent audit of the system. (See below.)
- The tools have not been added to Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard Hub. (See below.)
- There has been no effort to bring the use of the tools into line with the AI Playbook for the UK Government. (See below.)

The Home Office has refused to provide key information including about staff training, the prompts being used, and how the tools are being tested for quality assurance. Their replies have been at times self-contradictory. Our findings suggest that these tools have been rolled out without proper testing, quality assurance and training. This careless approach could have catastrophic consequences for those people whose future is in the hands of Home Office decision-making.

BACKGROUND

The Home Office uses two AI tools in asylum casework, both built on a large language model (GPT-4o via Azure AI Foundry). The Asylum Case Summarisation (ACS) tool summarises asylum interview transcripts for decision-makers. The Asylum Policy Search (APS) tool is a chat-style interface for searching country policy information. Both generate new text rather than retrieving existing text; they can filter, reframe or omit facts relevant to a decision.

APS was fully rolled out to all asylum decision-makers from July 2025. ACS was rolled out to all asylum caseworkers from April 2026.

The Home Office's own pilot evaluation of ACS,[2] published 29 April 2025, found 9% of the summaries it produced were inaccurate or had missing information and had to be removed from the pilot. In addition, 23% of caseworkers were not fully confident in ACS output and 5% were not confident in APS accuracy.

In March 2026, a legal opinion commissioned by ORG concluded that Home Office's failure to follow the UK AI Playbook and to align with the domestic regulations and international obligations is likely to be unlawful.[3] It highlighted potential breaches of UK GDPR if applicants are denied the opportunity to correct inaccurate summaries of their personal data. The tools may not meet the Public Sector Equality Duty nor the standards set out in the 'AI Playbook for the UK Government'.[4] The findings of ORG's investigation support these assertions.

KEY FINDINGS

ASYLUM APPLICANTS ARE NOT TOLD ABOUT AI USE IN THEIR CASES

Anna Turley MP, Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, told Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP that asylum applicants, "are not specifically told AI has been used in the consideration of their claim"[5] and cannot see or correct AI summaries of their own interviews. An FOI response also confirmed: "Interviewees were not informed of the use of the ACS tool throughout the pilot. We will not be informing asylum seeker when the tool rolls out".[6]

The DPIA states that applicants are informed of the processing through the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship privacy information notice on GOV.UK. That notice, updated on 6 August 2026, contains no reference to the tools.[7]

Neither tool is mentioned on the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard Hub.[8]

That asylum applicants are not told that AI has been used in their cases is "likely to be unlawful", according to the legal opinion commissioned by ORG.

THE ERROR RATE IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMED

In the pilot of the ACS scheme, the government said 9% of summaries were not fit for use, which in itself is deeply concerning.[9] Since the ACS was fully rolled out, Subject Matter Experts have done dip samples of the results on 203 summaries to test their accuracy. If the generated summary by ACS is flagged, it goes to a second stage review.[10]

In a first-stage SME check on 203 summaries, 139 passed, 19 were flagged for further review, and 45 failed (22%). Of 56 second-stage reviews, 30 failed. Therefore, across both stage reviews 22% and 15% of sampled summaries were assessed as not fit for use – significantly higher than the 9% figure in the Home Office's published pilot evaluation.[11]

The SME recorded the summary as a failure where it is not useful as a case-orientation aid or has a consistency score of 2 or below. A consistency score of 2 means that the summary contains "multiple factual errors or misrepresentations"; a score of 1 indicates significant inaccuracies, contradictions or misstatements. The scoring form used by SMEs has five criteria.[12] The "relevance" criterion, which assesses whether the summary omits the most relevant facts from the interview, is scored, but is not one of the stated criteria factors for failure. This means that a summary that drops material facts can pass if what remains is accurate. That is the precise risk the legal opinion identified.

It is unclear what procedures SMEs follow for summaries they flagged as 'failed', including whether these cases are reviewed or whether case workers are notified.

The results of the dip sampling testing have "mainly been discussed verbally" in a working group.[13] One interim report exists, 'Update on ACS summary spot testing as of 2 June 2026', provided to an internal Analytical Quality Assurance Board, but is not yet published.[14]

THERE IS INADEQUATE INTERNAL OVERSIGHT

In June, the then Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum Alex Norris MP said, in letter to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, that a quality safeguard was in place but this referred to pre-existing asylum QA process, "not linked solely to AI tool output".[15] The QA framework's mandatory check on whether a decision-maker has read the evidence "does not include the Asylum Case Summary".

In a second letter to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP,[16] Turley confirmed that the monthly quality assurance of asylum decisions does not assess the ACS summary.

According to the ACS Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) on average 17,515 cases are processed each month, so approximately 70,000 cases have been processed between April and July. But only 203 were checked by Subject Matter Experts during this period – just 0.3% of generated text for the cases.

In June 2026, Norris in a letter to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP said:

> "The Home Office does not plan for any independent audit at this stage."[17]

The post-deployment oversight mechanism is a post deployment and post hoc reactive 'feedback inbox'. From April to July, seven issues have been raised by caseworkers through the feedback inbox. SMEs checking summaries against the transcript are failing one in five; caseworkers using them are reporting almost nothing.

Of the oversight mechanisms Norris described in June, the inbox is the only one that relies on caseworkers spotting an error themselves, and Turley has since confirmed that the monthly decision QA does not assess the summary at all.

THERE IS NO QUALITY CONTROL OF THE APS TOOL

For APS the position is worse. Norris in April to Parliament stated that testing was ongoing, and then in June to Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, asserted again that:

> "Subject Matter Expert (SME) testing continues after operationalisation, in conjunction with the CPIT (Country Policy & Information Team) for APS"[18]

However in August, Turley confirmed that it "has now ceased" and that no summary of its findings was ever produced. Therefore there is no ongoing testing and quality control of the APS tool's outputs.[19]

THE HOME OFFICE FAILED TO MEET THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN AI STANDARDS

The AI Playbook for the UK Government, published in February 2025, "offers guidance on using AI safely, effectively and securely for civil servants and people working in government organisations".[20] The Home Office has confirmed the UK AI Playbook was not applied, on the basis that the pilots predated it.[21] But APS was fully rolled out in July 2025 and ACS in April 2026, both after the Playbook was published.

THE TIME SAVING CLAIM DOES NOT STAND UP

Ministers say decision-makers must read every document[22] but also that the tools save 23 minutes per transcript (32%). Both cannot be true. Either the summary is

being read instead of the record, or the efficiency case for the tools collapses. A summary only saves time if it replaces reading. If every caseworker reads the full interview record anyway, it is hard to see what efficiency gain there would be. If they do not, decisions are resting on a tool with a known 9% error rate in the pilot.

ORG evaluated the time-saving claims through an FOIA[23] request and found that, since April 2026, the average monthly number of initial substantive decisions has decreased by about 42% compared with the same period in 2025. Additionally, the mean time from substantive interview to decision increased by 29%, and the median by 18%.

The gap between mean and median widened from 17 to 24 days. This suggests a growing group of cases experiencing long delays. At the same time, the refusal rate rose by around 5%, to two-thirds of decisions. In other words, new delays are being generated in at the appeals stage.

These findings raise significant concerns about using these tools, given that the Home Office cited time-saving as its sole justification. The department's data show no improvement in throughput or decision times, while potentially compromising fairness and justice in sensitive asylum decisions.

THE HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP MYTH

Both Norris and Turley told Bell "the asylum case summary does not replace any part of the asylum decision-making process", but the DPIA for ACS says the tool was built to automate an existing step performed by a Technical Specialists who would otherwise be:

> "reviewing an asylum case and summarising it before it went to the Decision Maker to make the decision. This new tool aims to automate this summary freeing up Tech Specs time".[24]

Those statements cannot both be true. There is a direct contradiction between ministerial letters and the Home Office's own compliance document.

Technical Specialists are the experienced tier who quality-check decisions. Their pre-decision case review was itself a form of QA; a senior person reading the whole file before the decision-maker did. Automating it doesn't just change who writes the summary; it removes that pair of expert eyes from every case.

The DPIA lists “final decisions being checked by Senior Caseworkers and/or Technical Specialists” as a *mitigation* for the risks of the tool; the same people whose review step it removed.[25]

GOVERNMENT SECRECY

None of this information and findings is visible from published Home Office material. It has taken ORG eleven parliamentary questions, two ministerial letters and ten FOI requests to establish it.

The government has refused to publish or provide key information. Five ORG FOI requests have been refused on cost grounds, three of them by aggregating separate requests together; one is now with the Information Commissioner

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The internal records that would show how the Home Office has responded to its own findings, the 2 June report, the working group discussions, the QA board papers, all remain unpublished.

PROMPT

The Home Office's has refused to fulfill an FOI request for the 'prompt' being used by case workers.[26]

TRAINING MATERIALS

The Home Office has failed to provide the training materials for the tools, after they refused to disclose the standard operating procedures.[27] Through the WPQ, the minster confirmed that there is no standard operating procedure[28], and the product-specific materials, which by August had an identified owner and format, are still withheld.[29]

ORG's complaint to the ICO about the Home Office's handling of this request and withholding of the training materials, which remain under investigation.

Responses to our FOI requests contradict the minister's account and were as follows.

1. In an FOI responses dated 11 June, we were told they were not held "in a reportable format".
2. In a letter dated 22 June, Norris said that a "comprehensive suite of product specific training materials" exists but needs redacting.
3. In a letter dated 7 August, Turley said that the materials are spread across "multiple source points" and too costly to collate.[30]

TRANSPARENCY REGISTER

Neither tool is registered on the Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard (ATRS).[31]

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Despite Turley saying the Home Office aims to publish the EIA for both tools in August 2026,[32] it remains unpublished.

DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The document supplied to ORG through FOIA as the APS DPIA describes ACS. Its internal title is 'Interview Summarisation Tool – Pilot' and every substantive section concerns the summarising of interview transcripts. It is not apparent from the disclosed material that a data protection assessment specific to APS has been carried out.[33]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The public record on these tools is inconsistent. Ministerial correspondence and responses to FOI requests give conflicting accounts of the training given to caseworkers, of the maturity of the tools, and of the testing carried out on them. The prompts that govern how the summarisation tool works have not been published. Data protection impact assessments have been disclosed only in redacted form. No independent inspection of these tools has taken place.

We are calling the Home Office to:

1. Suspend the use of both AI tools in asylum casework and implement mitigation measures for affected asylum applicants.
2. Commission an independent evaluation and audit of both tools' accuracy in live use, and publish the findings.
3. Request that the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) open an inspection into these tools.
4. Ensure there is no use of AI in the asylum decision-making process without proper consultation, adherence to domestic regulations and international obligations, and full alignment with human rights principles.

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