The NHS Productivity Playbook

Less adminstration.
More capacity.
Better care.

25 practical ways AI can create capacity across your organisation.
Including: AI Trust & Governance.



Microsoft

Copilot Jump Start Partner

Microsoft FastTrack Partner

Introduction

The NHS doesn't have an AI problem.

It has a capacity problem.

Staff are spending valuable time searching for information, writing documents, preparing meetings, managing processes, responding to routine enquiries and navigating systems.

At the same time, NHS organisations are being asked to improve productivity, reduce waiting times, manage financial pressure and transform how care is delivered.

The question is no longer whether AI has a role to play.

The question is:
Where can AI create the greatest amount of capacity for your organisation?

The NHS is already moving from experimentation towards adoption at scale. NHS England announced in June 2026 that more than 500,000 NHS staff would receive access to Microsoft 365 Copilot, following a large-scale trial across 90 NHS organisations. The trial reported an average potential saving of 43 minutes of administrative time per staff member per day.

And this is only the beginning.

AI-assisted patient triage, ambient voice technology, intelligent document processing, AI-powered analysis and increasingly capable AI Agents are beginning to change how healthcare organisations operate.

This playbook explores 25 practical opportunities.

Not theoretical use cases. Not science fiction.

Real problems. Real opportunities. Real outcomes.

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How to use this playbook

For every opportunity, ask four questions:

1. What's the problem?
Where is valuable staff time being lost?

2. What could AI do?
Could AI assist, automate, summarise, analyse or coordinate the work?

3. What's the outcome?
What capacity, productivity or service improvement could this create?

4. What would it take to make it real?
Consider data, governance, integration, security, adoption and clinical safety.

The objective isn't to deploy 25 AI solutions.
It's to identify the **five opportunities that could make the biggest difference to your organisation.**

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PART ONE: GIVE TIME BACK TO CLINICAL TEAMS

1 - Clinical Documentation

The Problem

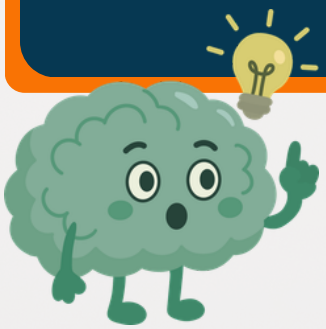
Clinicians spend significant time documenting consultations, preparing letters and completing administrative records. That can mean less time focused directly on patients.

The AI Opportunity

Generative AI can assist with drafting clinical documentation, correspondence, summaries and other routine administrative outputs.

The Outcome

Less time documenting. More time with patients.
NHS England is already supporting the adoption of ambient voice technologies that can turn clinician-patient conversations into structured documentation, with appropriate review and validation by clinicians.



Think bigger

Don't just ask: **"Can AI write the note?"**

Ask: **"How could we redesign the entire documentation workflow?"**

2 - Referral Administration

The Problem

Referral processes generate large volumes of correspondence, information gathering, checking and administrative work.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help extract relevant information, summarise referral documentation, identify missing information and draft correspondence for human review.

The Outcome

Faster referral processing. Less administrative workload.



The bigger opportunity: Combine AI with workflow automation and connected data to move from **assisting referral administration to intelligent referral management.**

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3 - Discharge Summaries

The Problem

Discharge can involve gathering information from multiple sources and creating accurate documentation under significant time pressure.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help summarise relevant information and create a draft discharge summary for clinical review.

The Outcome

Reduce administrative friction and support faster discharge processes.



Important

AI should support clinical decision-making, not replace it.
Clinical safety, validation and appropriate governance remain essential.

4 - Patient Letters

The Problem

Clinical and administrative teams spend time drafting repetitive patient correspondence.

The AI Opportunity

AI can create first drafts using approved information, templates and organisational language.

The Outcome

Faster correspondence with greater consistency.
The human remains responsible for checking accuracy, appropriateness and patient-specific information.

5 - Clinical Knowledge

The Problem

Healthcare professionals need to find relevant information quickly across policies, guidelines, procedures and organisational knowledge.

The AI Opportunity

A secure AI assistant can help staff find, summarise and navigate approved organisational information.

The Outcome

Less searching.
Faster access to knowledge.
The real opportunity is not simply giving everyone a chatbot.
It is connecting AI to trusted organisational knowledge.

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PART TWO: REMOVE ADMINISTRATIVE FRICTION

6 - Meeting Summaries

The Problem

Meetings generate actions, decisions and follow-up work — often manually recorded.

The AI Opportunity

AI can summarise meetings, identify actions, capture decisions and produce follow-up communications.

The Outcome

Less administration. Better follow-through.

7 - Board Papers

The Problem

Executive teams spend considerable time preparing papers, briefings and summaries from large amounts of information.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help structure information, summarise reports, identify themes and produce first drafts.

The Outcome

Faster preparation. More time for strategic thinking.

8 - Freedom of Information Requests

The Problem

FOI requests can require staff to search multiple sources, identify relevant information and prepare responses.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help locate relevant information, classify documents, summarise material and prepare draft responses.

The Outcome

Faster FOI preparation with less manual searching. Human review remains essential for disclosure, exemptions and sensitive information.

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9 - Policy and Procedure Management

The Problem

NHS organisations manage thousands of policies, procedures and guidance documents.
Finding the right version can be difficult.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help staff find relevant policies, summarise requirements and identify related guidance.

The Outcome

Make organisational knowledge easier to use.

10 - Email Overload

The Problem

Staff spend significant amounts of time reading, prioritising and responding to email.

The AI Opportunity

AI can summarise long email threads, identify actions, draft responses and prioritise information.

The Outcome

Less inbox management. More productive time.



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PART THREE: CREATE CAPACIY ACROSS CORPORATE SERVICES

11 - HR Recruitment

The Problem

Recruitment teams deal with repetitive administration across job descriptions, candidate communications, interview preparation and documentation.

The AI Opportunity

AI can assist with drafting job descriptions, creating candidate communications, preparing interview materials and summarising information.

The Outcome

Faster recruitment administration and more capacity for people-focused work.

12 - Finance

The Problem

Finance teams spend time producing reports, analysing information, preparing commentary and responding to routine questions.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help analyse data, identify trends, produce first-draft commentary and answer questions using approved information sources.

The Outcome

Move finance from reporting information towards interpreting it.

13 - Procurement

The Problem

Procurement involves repetitive document analysis, supplier information, contract review and preparation.

The AI Opportunity

AI can assist with document comparison, summarisation, information extraction and drafting.

The Outcome

Faster procurement processes and reduced administrative workload.

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14 - Estates & Facilities

The Problem

Estates teams manage large volumes of maintenance requests, documentation, contracts, asset information and compliance records.

The AI Opportunity

AI can classify requests, summarise work orders, search documentation and help identify recurring issues.

The Outcome

Better visibility of estates activity and faster response to routine work.

15 - IT Service Management

The Problem

IT teams deal with large volumes of repetitive support requests.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help classify incidents, suggest solutions, search knowledge bases, draft responses and support service desk teams.

The Outcome

Resolve routine issues faster and give IT teams more capacity for transformation.



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PART FOUR: IMPROVE OPERATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

16 - Waiting Lists

The Problem

Waiting-list management involves large amounts of data, validation and administrative activity.

The AI Opportunity

AI can identify patterns, highlight anomalies, support validation and help teams prioritise administrative workflows.

The Outcome

Better visibility and more efficient waiting-list management.

NHS England has identified technology-enabled productivity improvements across areas including RTT validation, community waiting lists, discharge flow and theatre utilisation as priorities for 2026/27.



17 - Appointment Management

The Problem

Missed appointments, inappropriate bookings and inefficient scheduling create wasted capacity.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help analyse appointment patterns, identify risks and support smarter communication and scheduling.

The Outcome

Better use of available clinical capacity.

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18 - Bed Management

The Problem

Understanding bed availability, demand and patient flow requires information from multiple sources.

The AI Opportunity

AI can help bring information together, identify patterns and provide operational teams with clearer insight.

The Outcome

Faster decisions. Better visibility. Improved patient flow.

19 - Workforce Planning

The Problem

Workforce planning involves balancing demand, availability, skills, rotas and changing operational requirements.

The AI Opportunity

AI can analyse workforce information and help identify patterns, gaps and potential pressure points.

The Outcome

Better workforce decisions and more effective use of available capacity.
AI should support managers rather than make decisions autonomously about people.

20 - Operational Reporting

The Problem

Managers spend time pulling information together before they can understand what is happening.

The AI Opportunity

AI can summarise operational data, identify trends and produce management briefings.

The Outcome

Move from reporting what happened to understanding what needs to happen next.

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PART FIVE: FROM COPILOT TO DIGITAL WORKFORCE

The biggest opportunity may not be AI helping an individual. It may be AI helping an entire process. This is where organisations need to start thinking beyond Copilot.

21 - The Referral Agent

The Problem

Referral processes contain multiple repetitive steps.

The AI Opportunity

An Intelligent Agent could help:

- Receive referral information
- Extract relevant details
- Check completeness
- Identify missing information
- Route work
- Draft communications
- Escalate exceptions

The Outcome

A more intelligent referral workflow with people handling the exceptions rather than every transaction.

22 - The HR Agent

The Problem

HR teams manage large volumes of routine enquiries and administrative processes.

The AI Opportunity

An HR Agent could help staff:

- Find policies
- Answer routine questions
- Navigate processes
- Prepare documents
- Route complex requests
- Support onboarding

The Outcome

HR teams spend less time answering repetitive questions and more time supporting people.

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23 - The PMO Agent

The Problem

Transformation programmes generate enormous volumes of information.
Risks, actions, dependencies, benefits, finances and status updates all need to be monitored.

The AI Opportunity

An AI-powered PMO could help identify:

- Projects at risk
- Overdue actions
- Emerging dependencies
- Resource pressures
- Benefits slippage
- Governance issues

The Outcome

Move the PMO from reporting project status to actively improving project outcomes.

24 - The Knowledge Agent

The Problem

Organisational knowledge is distributed across SharePoint, Teams, documents, policies and business systems.

The AI Opportunity

A secure knowledge agent can help staff find and understand trusted information through natural language.

The Outcome

Turn information into accessible organisational knowledge.

25 - The Digital Employee

The Problem

Some processes are repetitive enough that simply assisting a person is no longer the most efficient model.

The AI Opportunity

The next step is an AI Agent capable of completing defined tasks within controlled boundaries.
Eg: Monitor → Understand → Decide → Act → Escalate
A human remains accountable, but the Agent handles appropriate parts of the workflow.

The Outcome

Create capacity by redesigning work — not simply doing existing work slightly faster.

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PART SIX: INNOVATE WITH CONFIDENCE

AI creates opportunity. Trust makes it possible.

The potential of AI in healthcare is enormous. It can reduce administration, support clinical teams, improve access to information and help NHS organisations make better use of limited resources. But healthcare cannot adopt AI simply because the technology is available.

NHS organisations are responsible for protecting sensitive information, maintaining patient safety and ensuring that new technologies are introduced with appropriate oversight. And AI changes the nature of that challenge.

Traditional software generally does what it has been programmed to do. Generative AI can produce new content. AI Agents can increasingly interpret information, make decisions within defined parameters and take actions on behalf of people.

That means the question is no longer simply: **"Is this technology secure?"**
It is also: **"What is the AI allowed to see, what is it allowed to do, and who remains accountable?"**

NHS England's current guidance reinforces the need for organisations to consider information governance, cyber security, clinical safety, integration, human oversight and ongoing monitoring when introducing AI-enabled technologies. It has also identified **AI governance as a significant gap** in its review of the NHS's clinical risk management standards.

For NHS leaders, this creates a new imperative:
Don't slow innovation down. Make it safe enough to scale.

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THE AI TRUST CHALLENGE

AI adoption needs to balance two things that can sometimes appear to be in conflict:
INNOVATION: Move quickly enough to realise the benefits of AI.
ASSURANCE: Have enough control and oversight to protect patients, staff and the organisation.

The answer isn't to choose one over the other. It is to build the foundations that allow both to happen.

Build a Secure AI Foundation

The challenge

AI can only deliver its full potential when it has access to the information people need to do their jobs. But giving AI access to information without understanding permissions, identity, data sensitivity and security creates unnecessary risk.

The objective isn't to keep AI away from organisational data. It is to make sure AI can access the right information, for the right person, for the right purpose.

What to consider

- **Identity:** Who is accessing the AI?
- **Permissions:** What information are they allowed to access?
- **Data:** Where is sensitive information stored and processed?
- **Protection:** How is information classified and protected?
- **Monitoring:** Can unusual activity be identified?

The outcome

AI that can work with trusted information without compromising control.

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Put Patient Data At The Centre

The challenge

NHS organisations hold highly sensitive personal and clinical information. AI can make that information significantly more useful, but only when its use is properly understood and controlled.

Before introducing an AI solution, organisations should understand:

- What information is being processed?
- Why does the AI need it?
- Where is it stored?
- Who can access it?
- Is information shared with third parties?
- How long is it retained?
- What happens to it after the AI interaction?
- What controls protect it?.

NHS England's current guidance for AI-enabled ambient scribing, for example, specifically highlights the importance of engaging Information Governance and cyber security teams early, alongside appropriate data protection, access controls and transparency about how information is used.

The outcome

Use data to create value without losing trust.

Govern AI, Not Just IT

The challenge

Traditional technology governance wasn't designed for AI systems that can generate content, interpret information, interact with people and increasingly perform tasks. AI therefore needs to become part of the organisation's wider governance conversation.

That means bringing together:

- **Digital:** Technology, architecture and integration.
- **Clinical:** Patient safety, clinical risk and human oversight.
- **Information Governance:** Data protection, privacy and appropriate use.
- **Cyber Security:** Identity, access, protection and monitoring.
- **Legal & Compliance:** Regulatory and contractual requirements.
- **Leadership:** Accountability, risk appetite and measurable outcomes.

The outcome

AI that can be adopted with confidence because responsibility is clear.

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Control The Agent, Not Just The User

The challenge

Copilot helps a person. An Agent can increasingly do work.That changes the risk profile. An Agent might be able to search information, create records, trigger workflows, send communications or update systems.
So the critical question becomes: **"What is this Agent allowed to do?"**

Before deploying an Agent, consider:

- **Identity:** Does the Agent have a defined identity?
- **Access:** What systems and information can it reach?
- **Boundaries:** What actions can it take?
- **Human oversight:** When must a person review or approve an action?
- **Auditability:** Can you see what it did and why?
- **Escalation:** What happens when the Agent encounters something outside its remit?

The outcome

Move from uncontrolled AI experimentation to governed digital workforces.

Make AI Assurance Part Of The Journey

The challenge

An AI pilot can demonstrate that something works. It doesn't necessarily demonstrate that it is safe, scalable or capable of delivering sustained value.

NHS England's current guidance on AI-enabled ambient scribing highlights the importance of risk assessment, clinical safety documentation, data protection, integration, user training, human review and ongoing monitoring. It also makes clear that a pilot or proof of concept does not remove the need to meet appropriate compliance requirements.
A better approach
Build assurance into the AI lifecycle:

- DISCOVER: Understand the problem, data, users and potential risks.
- ASSESS: Evaluate security, information governance, clinical safety and regulatory considerations.
- PILOT: Test the technology within controlled boundaries.
- MEASURE: Evaluate accuracy, adoption, safety and the actual benefit delivered.
- SCALE: Expand only when the organisation has the evidence and controls required.
- MONITOR: Continue to review performance, risk and outcomes after deployment.

The outcome

Move from AI experimentation to safe, measurable and scalable adoption

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THE AI TRUST TEST

Before moving an AI solution into production, ask:

CAN WE TRUST THE DATA?
Do we know what information the AI is using?

CAN WE TRUST THE OUTPUT?
How do we validate its accuracy and reliability?

CAN WE TRUST THE PROCESS?
Have clinical, operational and information risks been assessed?

CAN WE TRUST THE CONTROLS?
Do identity, permissions, security and monitoring provide appropriate protection?

CAN WE TRUST THE PEOPLE?
Do staff understand what the AI can, and cannot, do?

CAN WE TRUST THE AGENT?
If AI can take action, are its boundaries, permissions and escalation routes clear?

CAN WE PROVE THE BENEFIT?
Can we demonstrate that the technology has created measurable value?

THE FUTURE OF AI IN THE NHS WILL BE BUILT ON TRUST

The NHS is entering a new phase of AI adoption. The opportunity is no longer limited to individual productivity tools.
AI is beginning to influence clinical documentation, patient pathways, operational decision-making and how work is organised across healthcare.
NHS England is already accelerating the deployment of AI to support areas including waiting lists, patient triage and administrative workload.

The organisations that benefit most won't necessarily be those that adopt AI fastest. They will be those that can **adopt it responsibly, demonstrate its value and scale it with confidence.**

Because ultimately:

- **Innovation without trust won't scale.**
- **Trust without innovation won't transform healthcare.**

The opportunity is to build both.

THE GOLDEN RULE

AI should earn the right to scale. Don't deploy AI because it is exciting. Don't stop innovation because the risk feels complicated.

Instead:

- Understand the opportunity.
- Control the risk.
- Measure the outcome.
- Scale what works.

That is how NHS organisations can move from AI experimentation to meaningful, sustainable transformation.

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THE BIG QUESTION

The NHS has already demonstrated that AI can create significant amounts of administrative capacity. But the next question is much bigger.

What happens when AI stops being an assistant and starts becoming part of the workforce?

The answer will not be the same for every organisation.
Some opportunities will be simple.
Some will require integration.
Some will require significant governance.
Some will require clinical assurance.
And some will require organisations to rethink the process itself.

FROM AI PILOT TO PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME

A successful NHS AI strategy shouldn't begin with: **"Where can we use AI?"**

It should begin with:

1. Where are we losing time?
Identify processes consuming significant staff capacity.

2. Where is the friction?
Look for repetitive, manual and information-heavy work.

3. What is the outcome worth?
Quantify the potential capacity, productivity or service improvement.

4. Is AI the right answer?
Sometimes the answer will be automation, integration, process redesign or better use of existing technology.

5. Can we do it safely?
Consider information governance, security, clinical safety, data, identity and assurance.

6. Can we scale it?
Avoid creating another isolated pilot.

Build an approach that can be repeated across teams and services.

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THE NHS AI OPPORTUNITY

The NHS is moving rapidly from experimentation towards scaled AI adoption.

The 10 Year Health Plan places technology at the centre of the shift from analogue to digital, alongside the wider moves from hospital to community and sickness to prevention.
NHS England's productivity strategy also makes clear that technology and digital innovation will be needed to push beyond the current productivity frontier, but that organisations must translate technological potential into actual benefits through implementation, adoption and business change.
That distinction matters. Buying AI does not create productivity.
Changing the way work gets done does.

YOUR AI PRODUCTIVITY SCORECARD

Use the following questions to identify your strongest opportunities. Your highest-scoring opportunities are where you should start.

Question	Score 1-5
How much staff time does the process consume?	
How repetitive is the work?	
How information-heavy is the process?	
How much does the prcess affect patints or staff?	
Could AI realistically assesit or automate it?	
Is the required data accessible?	
Can the process be governed safely?	
Could the solution scale across the organisation?	
Can th benefit be measured?	
Is there executive ownership?	

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT AI CONVERSATION

Before investing in another AI pilot, ask:

1. **What problem are we actually solving?**
2. **How much capacity could this create?**
3. **What would change for our staff or patients?**
4. **How will we measure the outcome?**
5. **What would it take to scale this safely?**

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THE FUTURE ISN'T AI FOR AI'S SAKE.

It's a healthcare organisation with more capacity to care.
The NHS doesn't need technology for technology's sake. It needs technology that removes friction, gives time back to staff, improves decision-making and helps services deliver more with the resources they have.

AI can be part of that transformation. Copilot can help people work differently. Intelligent Agents can help processes work differently. Data can help organisations make better decisions. And Microsoft technology can provide the connected, secure foundation to bring these capabilities together.

The opportunity now is to move beyond asking: **"What can AI do?"**
and start asking: **"What could our NHS organisation achieve if we gave our people more time?"**

A note on AI and clinical safety
AI should be deployed responsibly and proportionately. Healthcare organisations must consider information governance, data protection, cyber security, clinical safety, human oversight, integration and appropriate assurance before deploying AI-enabled solutions.
NHS England's digital clinical safety guidance highlights DCB0129 for manufacturers and DCB0160 for organisations deploying and using applicable health IT.
For AI-enabled ambient scribing, NHS England's current guidance also emphasises appropriate implementation, integration, piloting and assurance.

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ABOUT CPS

Creating capacity. Protecting trust. Scaling innovation.

CPS helps NHS organisations harness Microsoft technology to create capacity, improve productivity and deliver better outcomes for patients and staff.

As a Microsoft specialist across **AI & Automation, Modern Work & Security, Business Applications and Project & Portfolio Management,** we help healthcare organisations move beyond technology investment to achieve measurable operational outcomes.

Our approach brings together **technology, strategy, implementation, adoption, governance and organisational change,** helping NHS organisations identify where AI can create the greatest value, establish the foundations for safe adoption and move from individual productivity tools towards connected, intelligent ways of working.

From **Microsoft Copilot and Intelligent Agents to Microsoft 365, security, data, Business Applications and Project & Portfolio Management,** we help NHS organisations turn emerging technology into practical, secure and scalable improvements.

Because AI transformation isn't simply about introducing new technology.

It's about creating more capacity to deliver better healthcare.

Ready to identify where AI could create capacity in your organisation?
Talk to CPS about an NHS AI Productivity Discovery.

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Sources
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