



How Practitioners Are Really Using AI:

Emerging Insights for the ADR Community

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming how disputes are prepared, evidenced, communicated and resolved. Yet there remains almost no published insight into how UK dispute resolution professionals are actually engaging with AI in practice.

This report addresses that gap, drawing on :

- quantitative and qualitative data from the early cohorts of the [AI for Mediators: Practical Skills programme](#)
- additional experiences shared during [mediator training sessions](#)
- sector-level conversations with providers, lawyers, travel companies and other stakeholders
- live examples of AI already influencing dispute resolution environments

This dataset comes from early cohorts of the AI for Mediators programme and is reinforced by consistent sector-wide intelligence. The themes emerging from this dataset align consistently with broader anecdotal intelligence gathered from across the ADR community.

The core data is based on mediators, but the patterns are clearly relevant to other ADR roles including arbitrators, adjudicators, ombuds and complaints specialists. For clarity, this report therefore uses the term “practitioners” to describe the wider group where appropriate.



Key findings include:

- strong appetite for practical, safe, structured AI use
- rapid adoption in drafting, summarising and preparation
- significant concerns about confidentiality, accuracy and evidence integrity
- clear recognition that AI is a thinking partner, not a substitute
- immediate need to manage AI-generated or AI-influenced party behaviour
- high relevance to ADR practice in both facilitative and adjudicative settings

This early insight report represents the beginning of a much larger conversation about AI competence, safety and professional standards in dispute resolution.

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence has moved from theoretical discussion to practical reality in dispute resolution. The dominant practitioner question has shifted from:

“What is AI?” to “How do we use it - and manage it - safely and professionally?”

Mediation has historically been slower than some other sectors to adopt new technologies, but this is changing rapidly. Document volume is increasing, parties are using AI tools themselves, and legal teams are experimenting with AI-assisted drafting and strategy.

These shifts matter because practitioners across ADR:

- need to prepare differently
- must evaluate submissions through a new lens
- have to consider evidence integrity in an AI-enabled environment
- are expected to explain their processes to increasingly AI-aware parties

Although the dataset in this report comes from mediators specifically, the themes that emerge apply across the wider ADR community.

2. Growing Momentum Across the ADR Sector

Interest in AI across dispute resolution is accelerating rapidly, and my own professional activities over the past week and the week ahead demonstrate this shift clearly.

- The AI for Mediators programme continues to receive new bookings, reflecting strong and sustained practitioner demand.
- I presented on AI at a Trust Mediation event attended by approximately 50 lawyers and dispute resolution professionals, focusing on practical and safe uses of AI in mediation.
- Kelly Thornton and I will deliver the first in-person cohort of AI for Mediators at Ulster University in Belfast - a significant milestone in the development of the programme.
- While in Belfast:
 - I will attend a dedicated AI event for lawyers, reinforcing the growing crossover between ADR and the wider legal profession.
 - I will be a guest on a podcast discussing safe and responsible AI use for practitioners, reflecting the appetite for structured guidance.
 - I will be holding strategic discussions with colleagues and sector partners on how we can collaborate to develop safe, consistent, cross-ADR approaches to AI adoption.

3. Why This Work Matters: Changing Expectations Among Parties

Although the AI for Mediators programme was created to help practitioners develop safe, structured workflows for their own use, an equally important driver has emerged:

Parties themselves are now using AI - often in ways that challenge or distort the process.

Real examples include:

3.1 AI-guided challenges to authority

A mediator reported being challenged by a party asking *"Why are you doing it that way? ChatGPT says a mediator is supposed to do something else."*

This illustrates how AI is beginning to shape party expectations, sometimes inaccurately.

3.2 Breaches of AI-prohibition clauses

In one recent case, the mediation agreement explicitly prohibited the use of AI. Yet, during the session, it became clear that one of the parties was using AI tools regardless.

This raises concerns around:

- enforceability of AI-related process restrictions
- transparency
- party equality and fairness

3.3 AI-generated summaries, arguments and negotiation strategies

More parties are arriving with:

- AI-produced summaries of their claim
- AI-generated letters or positions
- AI-derived negotiation scripts

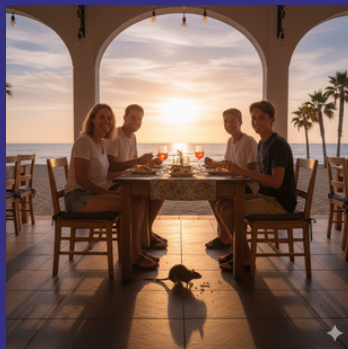
Some expect practitioners to respond to, validate or interpret these outputs, even when the material contains inaccuracies or misunderstandings.

3.4 AI is already affecting arbitration - and sometimes distorting it

Recent discussions with arbitration users reveal a new and urgent concern. AI-generated arbitration claims. Claimants are increasingly using AI to produce entire claim submissions. This can occasionally improve clarity, but has also resulted in irrelevant legal citations, incorrect statutory references and fabricated reasoning.

One example involved a claim citing the Housing Act in a dispute about hotel food in a European resort - text inserted automatically by an AI tool without the consumer understanding its relevance (or lack of it).

AI-manipulated photographic evidence: A very serious development is the submission of AI-altered images. Tools such as NanoBanana and similar applications can insert new objects, adjust lighting, alter context and generate realistic but fabricated scenes.



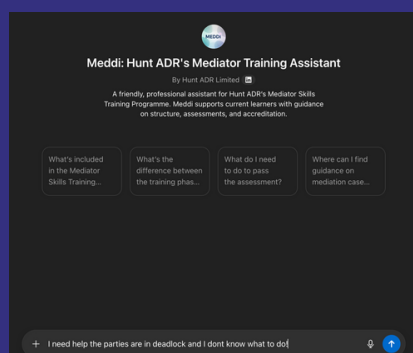
One example is a Claimant manipulating a photograph of a restaurant floor to add a rat - despite there being no evidence that a rat was ever seen dining there that evening!

These developments raise critical issues around:

- evidential integrity
- the ability of decision-makers to distinguish genuine from altered images
- the potential for AI-generated misinformation to distort factual findings
- procedural fairness when evidence authenticity is uncertain

3.5 The cross-sector message

Across ADR practice, practitioners must now be able to identify when AI has influenced a submission, assess AI-generated or AI-influenced expectations, respond professionally to AI-based challenges, safeguard process fairness, test evidence integrity and protect confidentiality and impartiality. These requirements are emerging simultaneously across mediation, arbitration, ombuds work and complaints handling, creating a shared need for structured, safe, practitioner-ready AI support.



In this context, tools specifically designed for dispute resolution professionals - such as Meddi, which provides controlled, privacy-aligned environments for drafting, analysis and workflow support - are beginning to play an important role. Their value lies not in replacing practitioner judgement, but in offering a disciplined framework that aligns with the safety, confidentiality and quality standards the sector increasingly demands.

AI competence is no longer optional. It is becoming foundational to the effective and fair operation of modern dispute resolution processes.

4. Methodology

This report draws from anonymised questionnaire responses from early cohorts of the AI for Mediators: Practical Skills workshop.

4.1 Response rate - 13 respondents out of 23, giving a 56% response rate – unusually strong for practitioner CPD.

4.2 Data sources included multiple-choice questions, scenario-based questions, long-form text reflections, ratings and narrative feedback and sector-wide anecdotal intelligence from events, training and professional consultations.

4.3 Participant backgrounds - Respondents represented:

- civil and commercial mediation
- workplace and HR mediation
- ombuds and complaints work
- newly accredited mediators
- private and organisational dispute resolution roles

Although the dataset centres on mediators, the themes apply broadly across ADR practice due to similarities in tasks, responsibilities and risks.

The screenshot shows a questionnaire titled "Your Practice". The first section, "1. What type of mediation do you mainly practise? *", lists several options with checkboxes: Civil & Commercial, Workplace & Employment, Family, Community, Online / ODR, and Other. Below this is a section header "Section 2" followed by "AI in Mediation Stages". The second section, "2. Preparation stage", asks "What's one specific task you could use AI for in preparation? *" and includes a text input field labeled "Enter your answer".

5. Overall Ratings and Reception

Participants rated the programme highly:

- 4.6 out of 5 average rating
- 100% rated the programme 4 or 5 stars

Their comments emphasised:

- “Excellent and accessible”
- “Practical and immediately useful”
- “Clear, structured and confidence-building”
- “An essential update for modern mediators”

Feedback consistently identified:

- the practicality of the training
- the safety-first framework
- clarity around boundaries
- confidence gained from hands-on practice

This mirrors wider feedback that practitioners want to use AI, but need trusted, structured, safe guidance.

6. Where Practitioners See the Greatest Value in AI

Analysis of responses identified four dominant areas of perceived benefit.

6.1 Drafting agreements and other key documents

This was the highest-rated use case. Practitioners see AI as valuable for drafting mediation agreements, creating first drafts of settlement terms, generating procedural or administrative documents, producing neutral, clear written communication and structuring reasoning in decisions (with human oversight).

The key theme is that AI is seen as a drafting assistant, never a substitute.

6.2 Summarising and structuring information

Practitioners found strong value in using AI to produce summaries of submissions, extract themes, create timelines, identify gaps or inconsistencies, organise complex sets of documents

These capabilities support better preparation and clearer analysis.

6.3 Streamlining administrative and case management tasks

AI is already being used to:

- draft onboarding materials
- prepare questionnaires
- write standard communications
- generate procedural summaries
- organise case files

Reducing administrative time increases capacity for substantive work.

6.4 Supporting clarity in negotiation and decision-shaping

Practitioners described using AI privately as a thinking partner to:

- reframe issues
- propose question sets
- reality-test proposals
- identify options
- explore consequences or risks
- improve explanation clarity

7. AI Across the Stages of Dispute Resolution

7.1 Preparation

The most common area of current adoption. Practitioners use AI to summarise submissions, generate first drafts of documents, prepare opening summaries, compare positions and extract key facts.

7.2 Opening

AI is used to rephrase neutral introductions, clarify opening statements and structure key issues.

It is used before the session, not live with the parties.

7.3 Exploration

AI assists in:

- generating open questions
- reframing language
- identifying key themes
- breaking down complex issues

7.4 Negotiation / evaluation

AI is used for:

- generating option sets
- exploring consequences
- identifying practical considerations
- checking internal consistency

7.5 Agreement or determination

In the final stages, AI helps with:

- drafting final terms
- testing clarity and coherence
- identifying gaps
- suggesting structure

Practitioners universally emphasised that human review remains essential.

8. What Excites Practitioners About AI

Respondents expressed optimism about:

- time savings
- clearer drafting
- improved preparation
- enhanced professionalism
- structured thinking support
- modernisation of practice

The excitement is cautious, but genuine.



9. What Concerns Practitioners About AI

9.1 Confidentiality & GDPR

Confidentiality and data protection are the most prominent concerns, particularly around where data goes, how it is stored or used and whether tools are compliant with professional and regulatory obligations.

9.2 Accuracy & hallucinations

Practitioners worry about incorrect information, fabricated sources or case citations and subtle misstatements that might go unnoticed.

9.3 Over-reliance

Concerns include:

- erosion of drafting ability
- reduced critical thinking
- dependence on AI-generated text

9.4 Loss of the human or judicial core

Practitioners emphasised that AI must not interfere with neutrality, empathy, rapport and human judgement and responsibility.

10. The Ideal AI Assistant Practitioners Envision

The ideal AI assistant is described as:

- structured and predictable
- neutral in tone
- supportive and assistive, not autonomous

It should help with:

- drafting
- summarising
- organising
- reframing
- administrative tasks

But it should never make decisions or replace professional judgement.

11. Implications for ADR Practice



AI competence is likely to become:

- a professional expectation
- a party expectation
- a provider requirement
- a key safeguard for fairness and quality

Workflows will change. Decision-support will change. Evidence assessment will change. Preparation standards will change.

The human elements of judgement, neutrality, explanation and rapport become even more valuable as AI becomes more common.

12. Recommendations

For practitioners

Build repeatable, safe, documented workflows | Maintain confidentiality at all times | Restrict AI use to controllable contexts | Verify all outputs, especially anything with legal or evidential significance | Treat AI as augmentation, not replacement.

For organisations

Provide governance and guidance | Offer structured training | Set clear standards for safe use | Encourage experimentation within appropriate boundaries.

For the sector

Begin developing AI practice standards | Encourage collaboration across ADR roles and schemes | Build policy and guidance based on evidence, not hype.

13. Relevance to the Wider ADR Community

Although the underlying dataset originates from mediators, the insights are directly applicable across ADR practice. Practitioners in other roles share document-heavy workflows, statutory and procedural obligations, confidentiality responsibilities, fairness, neutrality and justice principles and increasing interaction with AI-generated party submissions. This dataset should therefore be viewed as one of the earliest cross-sector indicators of practitioner engagement with AI.

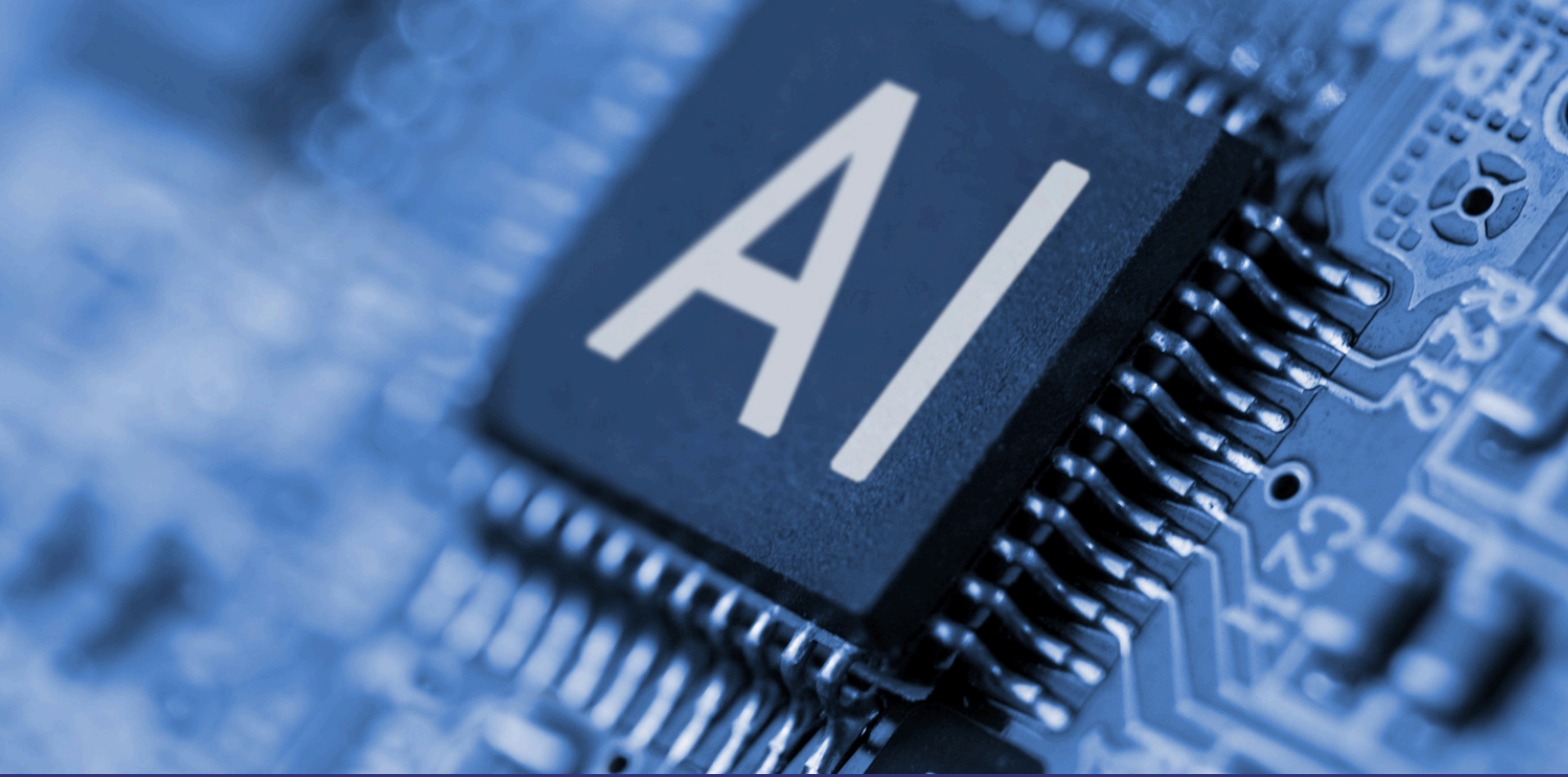
14. Conclusion

This early dataset, strengthened by a high response rate and supported by extensive sector intelligence, offers a valuable first insight into how practitioners are encountering and using AI in real dispute resolution settings.

AI is already part of ADR practice – cautiously, quietly, and often indirectly through parties themselves. Used well, it enhances clarity, preparation and quality. Used poorly, it risks distortion, unfairness and misinformation.

The challenge now is to develop a confident, safe, human-centred approach to AI that strengthens dispute resolution practice rather than undermining it.

This report represents the beginning of that journey.



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