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CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

Department for Work and Pensions Copilot

IMPLEMENTED 2024–2025 · GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES · UK · BAND D · PARTLY PROVED

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The same assistant as the NHS case, trialled with 3,549 central office staff and evaluated against non-users.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: Generative AI assistant: Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Implemented: 2024–2025. Grade: band D, Task support, Partly proved.

Headline result, as reported: 19 minutes a day saved on average across eight routine tasks, against a comparison group, by the department's evaluation

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 2 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Department for Work and Pensions. UK central government department. The trial covered 3,549 staff in central office functions such as digital, policy and finance, outside public-facing work such as Jobcentres. Canvas block: 5. People and skills. Also 8. Governance and risk, 6. Data and technology.

Business challenge

The challenge. The department wanted to assess whether the licensed version of Microsoft 365 Copilot improves task efficiency, job satisfaction and the quality of work.

How it was addressed. From October 2024 to March 2025 DWP gave 3,549 licences to central office staff, through volunteers and peer nominations, in 12 licence groups by business area. Staff had online resources, demonstration sessions and a Copilot Teams channel, though most learned by trial and error. Use fell under the department's policy framework for AI, covering

Who implemented it

Microsoft (Software vendor): Supplied the assistant.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T1 Chat assistants, T2 Embedded AI in existing software. Deployment: Vendor SaaS. Vendors and products: Microsoft, Microsoft 365 Copilot, Microsoft Copilot (free version).

Where it was built in: Licensed Copilot integrated into Microsoft 365 apps such as Teams, Word and Outlook, with access to departmental data, for 3,549 central office staff; the free version followed for all staff in April 2025.

What changed

Before: staff searched, drafted and summarised unaided. After: users saved 19 minutes a day on average across eight routine tasks, most on searching for information (26 minutes) and writing emails (25 minutes), and said they spent the time on project delivery, planning and other work. [1] [2]

What it cost

Not reported

What it saved

By the department's evaluation: 19 minutes a day saved on average across eight routine tasks, estimated against non-users; 90% of users said Copilot saved them time. Job satisfaction and perceived work quality rose by 0.56 and 0.49 points on a 7-point scale compared with non-users. Achieved cash saving: Not reported. [1] [2]

Governance and control

Use fell under the department's policy framework for AI, covering security, data protection and acceptable use. Users routinely reviewed and edited outputs before use, and some kept confidential data out of Copilot, following guidance. Accountable owner and monitoring of errors: Not reported.

S2 · Accountable owner · Not reported
Not reported.

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
Use fell under DWP's policy framework for AI covering security, data protection and acceptable use; the evaluation found some users kept confidential data out of Copilot, following guidance, per the department's own published evaluation. [1]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
The evaluation found users consistently reviewed and edited Copilot's outputs before using them, per the department's own published evaluation. [1]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
DWP evaluated the trial with surveys of 1,716 users and 2,535 non-users and 19 interviews; users reported that vague prompts could cause hallucinations, per the department's own published evaluation. [1] [2]

A4 · Vendor AI · Claimed
The evaluation describes the licensed version as offering organisational data access, advanced security and compliance features that the free version lacks; contract and data protection terms are not reported. [1]

A5 · Agent controls · Not reported
No agents described.

A6 · Standards and regulation · Not reported
Not reported.

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Time saved: 19 minutes a day on average against a comparison group.

– Higher job satisfaction and perceived work quality than non-users.

– Consistent use, mostly daily or weekly, for summarising, drafting and searching.

– Peer demonstrations and informal sharing drove uptake.

DID NOT

– Training varied, and most users relied on trial and error; users wanted more role-specific training.

– Some users called Copilot helpful without being transformative, and outputs sometimes had awkward phrasing or errors that needed checking.

UNPROVEN

– Effects free of selection bias: licences were not randomly allocated, measures were self-reported, and there was no baseline before the trial.

– Value for money and effects on public-facing services, which the evaluation does not cover.

– Whether the saved minutes produced more or better output.

Timeline

Oct 2024 Trial starts with 3,549 central office staff [1]

Mar 2025 Trial ends; surveys compare users with non-users [1]

Apr 2025 Free version of Copilot opened to all staff [1]

Jan 2026 Evaluation published: 19 minutes a day saved [1]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: D, Task support. Proof: Partly proved. Level of change: Task support.

Task support (Level 1, band D). Central office staff used an assistant within existing tasks; no process was redesigned.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

This is one of the better-evidenced Copilot trials because it compared users with non-users and adjusted for who chose to take part. The human side shows in the findings: uptake spread through peers, and users kept checking outputs as a professional standard. For a larger organisation, the transferable steps are a comparison group from the start, role-specific training, and a decision on where saved minutes should go.

2. Offer role-specific training and quick-reference guides from the start.
3. Decide in advance how saved time will be used and measured.

Evidence

Score 3 of 4. Self-reported: a published evaluation by the department's own economists and researchers, with outside advice; the measures are users' self-reports.

Evaluation method. Comparison group: surveys of 1,716 users and 2,535 non-users with regression adjustment, plus 19 interviews; no randomisation and no baseline before the trial.

Status. Completed: the trial ended in March 2025 and the evaluation was published in January 2026.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/dwp-copilot

[1] Department for Work and Pensions: evaluation of its Microsoft 365 Copilot trial
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-evaluation-of-dwps-microsoft-copilot-365-trial/an-evaluation-of-dwps-microsoft-365-copilot-trial

[2] The Register: DWP Copilot
https://www.theregister.com/software/2026/02/04/dwp-finds-copilot-saves-civil-servants-19-minutes-a-day/5199161

Department for Work and Pensions website: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

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