

Data sharing: Local Authority and Schools.

Update to Education Board June 2019

Telephone conversation that took place in May this year between a senior officer in Essex Police to a senior officer with the Council:

“Hello, could you please tell me where Jonny Smith is educated, we believe he is attending a Southend School”

SPSG are asked to

- note the information contained within the report
- recognise the importance of accurate and easily accessible secure data
- approve actions regarding escalation where required

Sharing data between Schools and the Local Authority is best practice for a huge variety of reasons which go beyond the prescribed statutory requirements. These include but are not limited to; safeguarding, managing risk, ensuring appropriate teams / colleagues are aware of children’s situations, early intervention, pupil tracking, improved commissioning and financial management.

In June 2018 the remit for the processing of data from schools into the Local Authority’s Education Information Management System moved into the Operational Performance & Intelligence (OPI) Team.

In taking on the new remit the Group Manager OPI Team carried out a review of the work and identified 2 key actions that needed to be addressed;

- 1) Refresh data sharing agreements, in line with GDPR, so that both Schools and the Local Authority are operating within the legislative framework.
- 2) Build relationships with schools to work together to improve data quality

The sharing of data between schools and the local authority should be an efficient and secure process. As much as possible the processes should be an automated “straight through process”. This should minimise the need for human input, reducing human error and reducing human resource costs as well as ensuring the data is stored in one secure place.

This paper provides an update on 1) – refreshing the data sharing agreements to ensure we are operating within the legislative framework

The GM has prioritised all Primary, Secondary and Special Schools but is continuing to engage with Independent and Alternative Provision providers, these are not the main focus at this stage.

Since September 2018 the OPI Group Manager has engaged with stakeholders. This has been done through attendance at groups such as SOPHA, Independent Heads meeting, Directors Briefing, Chair of Governors meeting, Education Board and an offer to visit schools individually to support them with the data sharing agreements.

Schools have been sent 2 letters requesting the completion of the data sharing agreements, the second letter being a chaser. The below table indicates the current status of schools where an agreement has not been received;

For the purposes of the public meeting, there are 10 schools that require escalation, 4 of which also fall into the second category below. The list of schools will be made available to members of Education Board at the meeting. All schools following the meeting irrespective of the decision of Board will be contacted.

The criteria of “Requires Escalation” is met where agreements have not been returned following the 2 letters and schools;

- Have not made contact;
- Conversations have terminated where resolution is unlikely.

Both school and the Local Authority could be at significant reputational and legal challenge if we remain unable to secure both elements:

- Firstly, the signed consent to share data. Transfer of data without this formal agreement would be subject to challenge.
- Secondly, the sharing of statutory data required, in a means that is efficient and effective for both the school and the Council

The second issue, as indicated above with *, indicates those schools for whatever reason have chosen either not to share data with us (irrespective of a data sharing agreement), or in a manner that would still cause safeguarding concerns.

The means of sharing, via the secure, consistent and automated approach, negates the possible risk to the school of outage or submission error on the part of the school.

The recommendation previously proposed by education Board was for the Chair to formally write to those remaining schools that require escalation, on either or both of the points. The matter has now suffered slippage, and board is asked to review the intended actions and hierarchy of escalation.