

Information Commissioner's Office – supplementary written evidence (PSC0080)

Data Sharing Code and Hub

Following the ICO's appearance in front of the Public Services Committee, the ICO committed to working with government and other stakeholders on a number of actions to address ongoing concerns and issues with data sharing in public services and specifically around children's safeguarding.

Our chief priority in the first half of the year was ensuring the Data Sharing Code was ensuring the Code become statutory. This required on going engagement with stakeholders, and included changes to the language in the Code around children, requested by the Public Services Committee. The Code was issued in September and came into force on 5th October.

The ICO also continued its ongoing programme of outreach and engagement around the Code, especially in relation to public services. Events have include our annual Data Protection Practitioner's Conference, the government's DataConnect21 conference and bespoke events such as that with the Local Government Association. This programme will continue in the months ahead.

Reducing barriers - work with government

In her evidence the Commissioner told the Committee that there was scope for a central body to emerge to engage with public service providers to both understand and remedy existing barriers. However, as the data protection regulator in wouldn't be appropriate for the ICO to be the convenor, due to our responsibility to take regulatory action in the event of a breach of the law. The ICO is engaging with the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport, on what practical mechanisms could be put in place to tackle wider cultural and organisational barriers to data sharing.

Information sharing work with government

There are existing strands of work in the area of children's safeguarding that the ICO has contributed to, most notable the information sharing guidance being updated and improved by Department for Education. The ICO is able to give expert input on data and information sharing as part of the working group on this guidance.

Sector specific tools/guidance

Additionally, the ICO has engaged with stakeholders on the scope, shape and utility of the sector specific guidance for children's safeguarding, in

the form of a toolkit. We have convened a workshop with government and organisations in this area, to map how this guidance dovetails with existing initiatives and how we can respond to the practical needs of those on the front line of public service delivery. This work is modelled on the law enforcement tool kit we developed in and is include in our Data Sharing Hub along with various other resources for practitioners.

5 November 2021)