



**Baroness Barran**

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Lord Lucas  
House of Lords  
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30 June 2022

Dear Ralph,

On Day 4 of Lords Committee for the Schools Bill, you sought more details on the potential for the use of unique children's identifiers (Hansard column 84, 20 June 2022).

Currently, the Department for Education (the department) uses two primary identifiers for children in education. These are the Unique Pupil Number (UPN for school aged pupils and the Unique Learner Number (ULN) for post-16 and adult education. You further identified that, in addition to the pupil identifiers, the department has 3 other identifiers for schools – these are Local Authority Establishment number (LA-ESTAB), Unique Reference Number (URN) and UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN). These identifiers enable the department to ensure operational and analytical linkage between departmental, and sector facing, data and services.

Section 179 of Health and Care Act 2022 places a duty on the Secretary of State to publish and lay before Parliament a report describing the government's policy in relation to information sharing by or with public authorities. The report must include an explanation of whether and to what extent it is the government's policy that a consistent identifier should be used for each child to facilitate the sharing of information. The duty has yet to be commenced but once it is in force, the report must be published and laid within one year.

The department has started a cross-government project to explore how we can better support multi-agency information sharing to safeguard vulnerable children. Our focus is on exploring the feasibility of using a national consistent child identifier (CCI) and broader options for improving information sharing. This will include a review of the effectiveness of our educational identifiers within our systems, whether the NHS number could be used as a CCI, or whether a new number would need to be created.

To ensure we have an option that meets the needs of all children, the department will ensure that the working group considers:

- Options for a CCI which cover as many children as is practical. We recognise safeguarding concerns can arise before birth, this may discount the use of educational identifiers as they are not assigned until later in a child's life if at all.
- Mapping out all the systems and process from the different sectors (police, education, health and children's social care) that need to include the single identifier field, either as key identifier or as a field where it is matched to the primary records.
- Identification of any legislation that may need to be changed to allow us to access and share the appropriate data.

On data collection from independent schools, I explained that independent schools have a duty to share information with local authorities when pupils join or leave the school (Hansard, column 85, 20 June 2022). This is required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended. This gives local authorities some of the child level data from independent schools required to maintain their Children Not in Schools registers.

The department does not routinely collect pupil level data from independent schools (which are not academies). Such independent schools are required to provide school level data through the School Level Annual School Census (SLASC) and, are subject to substantial regulatory oversight, including the requirement to meet the independent school standards. At present, the measures in this bill do not increase the regulatory burdens on these independent schools to provide more data. As local authorities receive updates on when children enter or exit a specific independent school, they can use this data to cross reference to with other data sources to identify children that are not in mainstream establishments but are receiving education. If, in the future, the department decides that independent schools should participate in the pupil level school census, powers already in legislation would allow us to implement this.

I hope this letter provides you with reassurance on these matters. I intend to place a copy of this letter in the House library.

Yours sincerely,



**BARONESS BARRAN**  
**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE**