



**Baroness Barran**

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The Baroness Kidron OBE  
House of Lords,  
Houses of Parliament,  
Parliament Square,  
London,  
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22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023

Dear Beeban,

I am writing following the Question for Short Debate on the 23 November, which you tabled on 'Educational Technology', regarding your question 'will the department use the upcoming Data Protection and Digital Information Bill to introduce a data protection regime for schools, which is so urgently needed?'

DfE fully recognise that schools find understanding and complying with data protection legislation difficult. The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill [DPDI] has been fully considered in the development of our Education Privacy Assurance Scheme [EPAS] which I gave a brief overview of in my speech.

DfE's main objective for EPAS is to make it easy for schools to understand and comply with data protection legislation. Starting in 2024 we are delivering a combination of training and awareness as well as guidance and templates. To build on what I said in my speech, the scheme will:

- Deliver a single portal so that all the school's guidance is in one place, and easy to find and use.
- Deliver training modules to school staff to build the skills and confidence they need to make fully informed decisions in accordance with legislation. This includes teachers, support staff and supply staff so that senior leaders will be confident that anyone who uses their information understands what to do with personal data.
- Introduce common language and definitions based on ICO guidance and use plain simple language which removes a lot of the confusion around the legal language in the act.
- Include school specific examples that are easy to relate to and makes the guidance more relevant to schools.
- Include templates which can be adapted; this builds on the common language, and will also support parent and carers understanding of what is happening with their children's data.

The improved approach to compliance with data protection legislation aims to:

- Give staff the ability to make fully informed decisions, understanding and mitigating against risk.
- For the first time, have a consistent approach to data protection across schools.
- Enable schools to embrace the opportunity the DPDI Bill brings by removing the mandatory requirement to have a Data Protection Officer, by having the skills and knowledge themselves, enabling ownership and financial savings.
- Reduce risk of non-compliance with data protection legislation and therefore the risk of complaints or legal action.
- Reduce the need for costly legal advice.

It is important to note that schools are the data controllers and are responsible for making decisions about the appropriate collection and use of personal data for their school. This means decision making on their behalf is out of scope for the project but by delivering this programme we hope that we can simplify how schools make the decisions they need to make.

The EPAS programme is already up and running and we have a team of data protection experts and digital delivery specialists, equipped with the expertise to upskill colleagues in schools. The team are working to user centred design principles, with schools at the core of this work and findings will fully inform priorities and next steps. As part of this work the EPAS team will:

- Carry out user research with school stakeholders to understand their highest risk areas. This will inform priorities to develop guidance and templates.
- Write all documents in the context of schools with case studies to bring the guidance to life.
- Test documents with school users before being published.
- Develop an online portal to host all guidance, giving users one place where school specific guidance is held.

This project is in the early stages of delivery.

I hope these further details have been useful. I will place a copy in the House library.

Yours sincerely,



**BARONESS BARRAN**

**MINISTER FOR THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND STUDENT FINANCE**