Encouraging Employees to Share their Personal Data

Best Practice and Suggested Approaches for Local Authorities

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out practical steps that local authorities can take to encourage their employees to share personal data.

Informed by learning from local authorities, as well as practical suggestions and ideas, the four key objectives of this document are as follows:

- facilitate culture change, by helping to create a conducive environment for data sharing;

- promote greater trust – specifically as it relates to the perception of employers by their employees;

- strengthen and make clearer the accountability relationship between employees and employers as it relates to personal data and how this is utilised;

- promote workforce development and career progression – particularly for those groups that are under-represented in certain roles or grades in the organisational hierarchy.
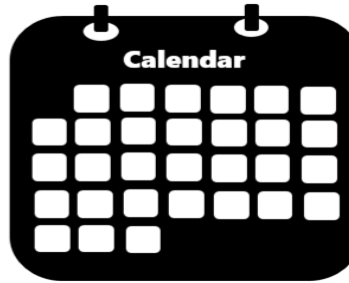
The value chain of change

1 Communicate value
Recognise the value of personal data and offer something of value in return.

2 Create expectation
Make it clear that you mean what you say and that you'll do what you promise.

3 Cultivate leadership
Promote authentic voices. This is the most effective way to create a climate of trust.

4 Work in partnership
Acknowledge when you don't have the answers and seek help where you can.

5 Be open and transparent
Tell it like it is. Your employees are expecting you to be honest, not perfect.

6 Make it easy for employees
Be mindful that sometimes the smallest changes can make the biggest difference.

Communicate value

- Run repeat and multiple campaigns to staff about the importance of sharing their personal data;

- Integrate these communications campaigns with broader communications explaining to staff that the council is committed to making improvement and that what we don't know we can't address or improve;

- Demonstrate how the data is used to show tangible evidence of improvement so that staff can see that by sharing their personal data it supports organisational development and improvement e.g. BAME top 5% earners increased over the last two from 23% to 35% and the top directors team from 3% to 40%.

"Remember, what gets counted gets measured and what gets measured gets managed."

Create expectation

- At the most senior levels, publicise how employee data will be used to inform workforce development programmes and initiatives;

- Publish and make visible forward plans and timetables e.g.: "using the data that employees have shared, we will be undertaking this action at this time";

- Feed back to employees, through employee newsletters and e-bulletins showing how their information has been used;

- When it goes well, make the point of recognising effort and celebrating success.

"If employees expect something from it, then employers must do something with it."

Cultivate leadership

- Encourage your organisation's most senior leaders to communicate visibly and vocally with consistent messages about the value of employees sharing their personal data;

- Identify and co-opt other trusted and influential leadership voices across the organisation to promote the message. Remember, leadership for ideas and improvement can come from anywhere in an organisation;

- Use the language of empowerment and value when referring to employee data (e.g.: 'share' instead of 'collect', 'utilise' instead of 'hold', 'contribute' instead of 'provide').

"Those entrusted with the power to effect change, must ensure that they have the data and insight needed to make better informed choices."

Work in partnership with others

- Work in tandem with diversity forums to get their support to spread the message of the importance of staff sharing their data, not just the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff forum but all, as this often picks up issues of intersectionality;

- Engage the trade unions as well in this work and encourage them to ask their members to share personal data. This ensures that messages are not just seen as corporate rhetoric;

- Speak to other local authorities as well as organisations outside the public sector, who are doing this better than you;

- Help to promote expected practice by sharing your success with other local authorities.

"Be mindful that there are things that you know that you know, but there are things that others know, that you don't know."

Be open and transparent

- Alongside other equality-related data, publish information on your council's website showing the percentage of employees who share their personal data or do not declare;

- Incorporate data on share/ not declare in management information reports across service areas (not just HR reports). Elevate the importance of this data as a critical source of business intelligence;

- 'Normalise' the sharing of employee personal information by highlighting other ways in which employees routinely share their data such as through employee surveys;

- Encourage honest and open conversations across your organisation, about what is working and why and what is not working and why.

"The sharing of data is a transaction of trust. You cannot demand the use of it, you have to earn the right to it."

Make it easy for employees

- Promote a culture of consistency when it comes to the collection of all personal data (i.e.: for service users as well as employees). If you do not encourage service users to share their data, then do not expect your employees to want to either;

- Publish 'Frequently Asked Questions' about sharing employee data on your corporate intranet. This will help to address concerns that employees may have about sharing;

- Remove the 'clutter' and process from your employee data systems and make it possible for employees to update their personal information with as few clicks as possible;

- Think about ways in which you can tailor and customise messages to different communities of identity and experience.

"By making it easy for your employees to share their personal data, you don't just encourage them, you also empower them."

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Authors: Tackling Racial Inequality Group, Data Sub-Group