

Privacy Commissioner welcomes Government rethink of social service data collection

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Privacy Commissioner John Edwards has welcomed the Government's [plans to rethink](#) the practice of collecting individual client level data from social service providers

The Government announced today that social service contracts will no longer require providers to disclose individual client level data until a new data protection and use policy is in place.

This is in contrast to previous plans, which required service providers – such as NGOs – to provide information about individual clients in order to receive funding. This information included client's names, number of children and other social services they engaged with.

Mr Edwards said "I commend this pause in approach. Projects like this have the potential to do a lot of good by measuring and improving the efficacy of social services. However, if they are overly intrusive, they can undermine their own aims by creating situations where people leave out key details or are dissuaded from accessing social services in the first place."

Last month, the Privacy Commissioner's office completed [an inquiry into proposed plans](#) to collect individual client data from social service providers. That inquiry found that while the overall objectives of the programme were sound, the approach as it stood did not take sufficient steps to avoid excessive or unnecessary collection of personal information

At the time, the Commissioner noted that the arrangement could deter people from seeking support or assistance, which could put them at further risk and make them "invisible" to Government and policy makers.

ENDS

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