



Ethical information systems: embedding diverse voices

5th March 2024 | Dr Perpetua Kirby, Dr Liam Berriman,
Prof. Lisa Holmes, Prof. Elaine Sharland, Emma Smale

Ensuring our discussion works well

- Please mute when not speaking to avoid background noise – remember to unmute when you wish to talk.
- Use the ‘Raise your hand’ function to notify the facilitator if you wish to talk.
- Use the chat function available if you do not wish to talk.
- Remember that anything you write in the chat function will be seen by everyone in that chat.
- Avoid discussing sensitive personal details – our own or those we serve.
- Please note this session is being recorded so that it can be revisited on the Learning Network Teams channel
- We will also be using virtual breakout rooms and Jamboard to support our discussion

In the chat, please share:

- › Your name
- › Where you are from
- › Why you have joined this workshop



Embedding voice within information systems

Workshop Aims

- Introduce information ethics and voice, including ‘hotspots’:
 - Democracy, equality and justice
 - Governance: accountability, trustworthiness and transparency
 - Professional skills, virtues and culture
- Share everyone’s priorities, concerns, and examples from your everyday experience
- Stretch thinking and stimulate discussions

Voice

Multiple Voices

- Children, young people, parents/carers, practitioners, managers, policy makers, wider community
- Diversity of voices within groups
- Voices at individual and collective levels

Voices AS information

Views, experiences, wishes and feelings included within children's information

Voice ABOUT information

Views, wishes and feelings about how children's information is gathered, processed, shared and used.

Recognising voices

- Explicit *and* implicit
- Accessible *and* more hidden/seldom heard
- Verbal *and* nonverbal or silent
- 'Sensible' *and* challenging
- Invited *and* spontaneous
- Expressed formally *and* in the everyday
- Relational, situated and mediated in contexts (which may enable, constrain and shift voice)
- Expressed individually *and* collectively *and* at scale
- Listened to (?) operationally *and* strategically

Information and Data

An inclusive approach to 'information':

Umbrella term to mean everything that may be important to know and consider about children, young people and their families (individually or group-wise) to improve their lives

- includes information formally gathered and reported as 'data' in local administrative datasets and national returns
- also includes information (e.g. in case records) not necessarily codified, collated or integrated within administrative datasets, and not necessarily referred to as 'data'.

Data are quantitative and may be analysed statistically

Data can be quantitative and qualitative and analysed in many ways

Info is everywhere; only becomes Data when selected/recorded/codified with intention to use

Data are everywhere but only become Info when in interpreted/analysed

Information ethics: key concerns

- Information democracy, equality and justice
- Information governance: accountability, trustworthiness and transparency
- Information professional skills, virtues and culture

Addressing these issues requires the input of multiple voices

Local Authorities

Increasing commitment to include public 'voices' in data systems to enhance ethical practice

LOTI Recommendations for Local Government Data Ethics Capabilities

PRINCIPLES & VALUES

- [1](#) - Adopt five universal principles: Transparency; Accountability; Privacy; Fairness; and Safety.
- [2](#) - Incorporate principles into formal policies that directly inform decisions and hold teams to account.

[Read LOTI Guidance on data ethics principles](#)

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

- [3](#) - Engage residents when establishing untested local data ethics approaches or when trialing new, more advanced or divisive data uses.
- [4](#) - Share details of data use publicly and in appropriate language.
- [5](#) - Inform residents when they are subject to complex data processes, such as automated decisions, AI-powered robots or surveillance technologies.

Tip: Click on a number to go directly to the recommendation!

GOVERNANCE & PROCESSES

- [6](#) - Establish a data ethics board.
- [7](#) - Create a data ethics process flow for data projects.
- [8](#) - Test and implement the appropriate tools for data ethics projects (identified for the ethics process flow).
- [9](#) - Publish any ethics impact assessments done of data projects
- [10](#) - Create a simple appeal service for residents to challenge data stored on them or decisions influenced by advanced data uses such as algorithms.
- [11](#) - Ensure all suppliers meet data ethics principles and transparency standards.

SKILLS & CULTURE

- [12](#) - Hire a dedicated Data Ethicist.
- [13](#) - Invest in data ethics skills training for data professionals, leaders, and service managers.
- [14](#) - Include a responsibility for data ethics in data job descriptions.
- [15](#) - Develop an ongoing organisational dialogue around ethics, through activities like 'Show and Tells', where teams present how they worked through the ethical considerations of projects.

Project focus

How to *embed* diverse voices (within as well as between groups) *across* information systems to enhance ethical practice.

Information democracy, equality & justice	Information governance: Accountability, trustworthiness & transparency	Information professional skills, <u>virtues</u> and culture
<p>1. Account for wider systemic disadvantage and political influence on information system design Include diverse voices to interrogate the political designs behind <u>technical solutions</u></p> <p>2. Recognise information as political, not neutral Examine whose voices (values, concerns, interests) are heard; whose are silenced; and redress the <u>balance</u></p> <p>3. Interrogate what is measured, how and why Integrate different research approaches to ensure diverse voices included. Identify meaningful 'measures' with diverse stakeholder <u>input</u></p> <p>6. Interrogate assumed benefits Integrate the voices of those making decisions, and those who experience their impact, through case studies and <u>ethnographies</u></p> <p>4. Interrogate commitment to social good through Integrate checks and balances, including views of different stakeholders, to monitor <u>social good</u></p> <p>5. Keep the human at the centre Include diverse perspectives on what is important to know, how data is collected, what it means, how it is shared and used. Support participants to understand what it is to 'become <u>data</u>'</p> <p>6. Interrogate assumed benefits Integrate the voices of those making decisions, and those who experience their impact, through case studies and <u>ethnographies</u></p> <p>7. Ensure systems enhance relational practice Integrate voices of professionals collecting data, and those who share data, about how data processes fit within relational practices</p>	<p>8. Foster trustworthiness through responsible data collection, <u>processing</u> and collaboration Simplified visual data representations; identify staff concerns about data <u>quality</u></p> <p>9. Build greater transparency of data systems Ensure logs publicly accessible. Publish ethics assessment reports.</p> <p>10. Establish clear accountability guidance and enforcement mechanisms Diverse stakeholders establish accountability mechanisms and policy on resolving <u>disputes/complaints</u></p> <p>11. Establish a simple process to ensure data rights Simple appeal system to remedy harmful or incorrect decisions made by data processes.</p> <p>12. Establish an independent data ethics board Ensure diverse representation, including <u>community members</u></p> <p>13. Ensure supplier compliance Ensure community know who has their data and how it is being <u>used</u></p> <p>14. Integrate principles, <u>values</u> and practices into relevant formal policies Commitment to voice embedded</p>	<p>15. Overcome compliance culture Mechanisms for staff & communities to challenge aspects of data-driven <u>technologies</u></p> <p>16. Ensure data necessity, legitimacy, and avoidance of harms to citizens Multiple voices in defining, updating & auditing <u>security/safety protocols</u></p> <p>17. Ensure avoidance of harms to the environment Audit & publish CO2 emissions & deliberate environmental considerations with <u>stakeholders</u></p> <p>18. Ensure access to data ethics expertise Recognise staff and community expertise in everyday experiences of data <u>ethics</u></p> <p>19. Foster professional virtues Establish a 'Voice Lead' to work alongside data ethicist/staff to model & support professional <u>virtues</u></p>



In the chat, write your responses to these questions.

Do not press 'Return' until we say 'Mad Tea'.

1. Whose voices are dominant within the information system in your organisation?
2. What are your hopes, concerns or questions for embedding more diverse voices across your information systems?

Information democracy, equality and justice

1. Account for wider systemic disadvantage and political influence on information system design

- Critically examine political designs behind technical 'data' solutions
- Resist easy technical fixes to advance inclusion
- Identify how data systems address systemic disadvantage

Voice: Include diverse voices to interrogate the political designs behind technical solutions

2. Recognise information as political, not neutral

- Data always involves power struggles about what and how to measure
- Examine possibilities for discrimination through the biases, and gaps ('silences') created by data systems

Voice: Examine whose voices (values, concerns, interests) are heard; whose are silenced; and redress the balance

3. Interrogate what is measured, how and why

- Dominant focus on what considered 'measurable', not what it is important to know
- Dominance of quantitative (positivist) approaches, rather than range of data collection including qualitative and ethnographic
- Insufficient attention to the relationship between the social and psychological
- Statutory returns dominate social care

Voice: Integrate different research approaches to ensure diverse voices included. Identify meaningful 'measures' with diverse stakeholder input

4. Interrogate commitment to social good through

- Importance of ensuring equity, recognising diversity, and challenging discrimination and oppression
- Includes reducing algorithm bias and unintended harms of profiling

Voice: Integrate checks and balances, including the views of different stakeholders, to monitor social good

5. Keep the human at the centre

- There are inherent uncertainties within datasets incorporating multiple sources of information and specific 'measures'
- Voices become filtered and interpreted by others
- Decisions about people's lives need to be decided by humans, not automated

Voice: Include diverse perspectives on what is important to know, how data is collected, what it means, how it is shared and used. Support participants to understand what it is to 'become data'

6. Interrogate assumed benefits

- Focus on how systems might reduce or exacerbate inequalities
- Trace and interrogate assumptions about decisions.

Voice: Integrate the voices of those making decisions, and those who experience their impact, through case studies and ethnographies.

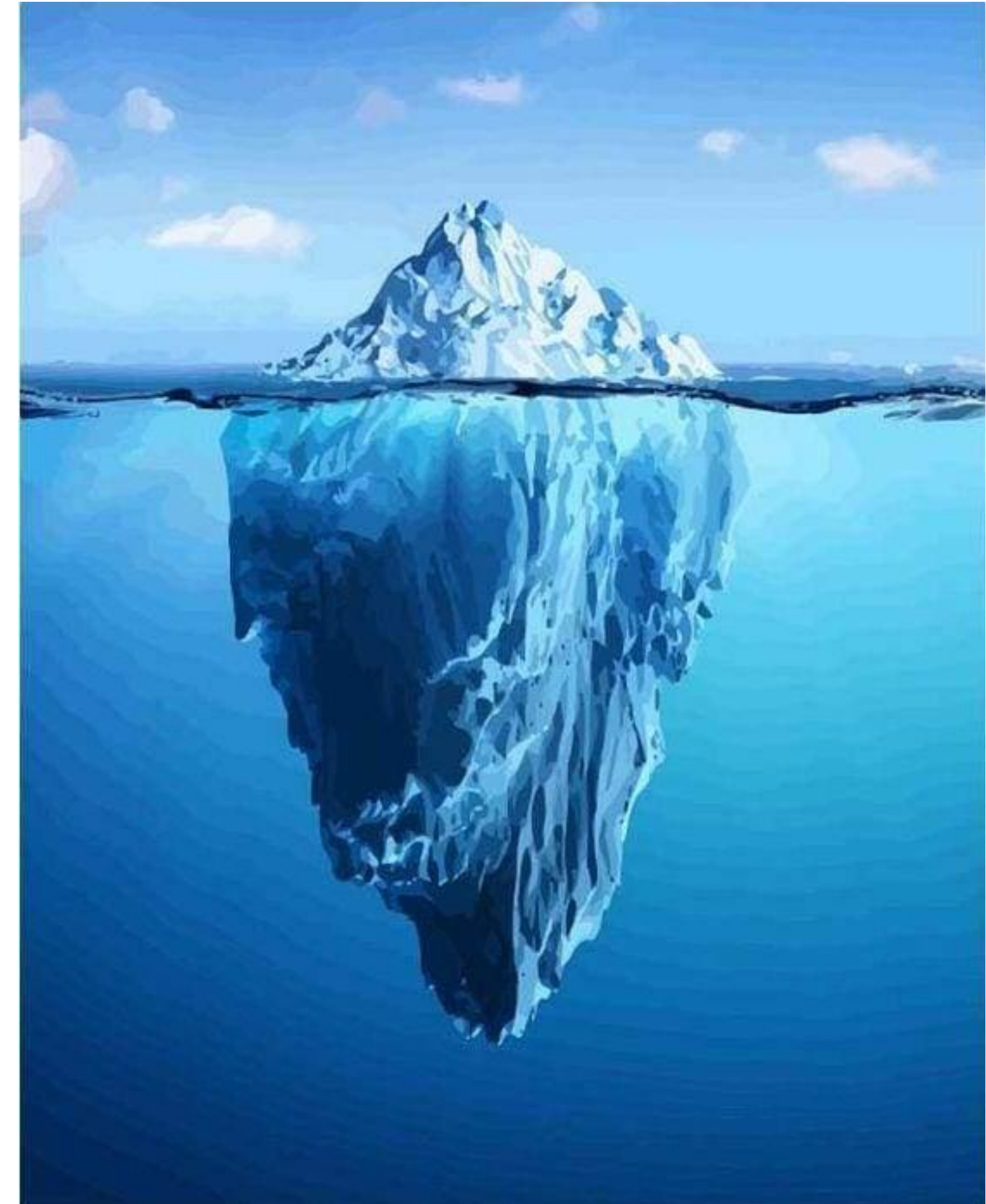
7. Ensure systems enhance relational practice

- Identify how data systems might enhance or limit relational practices of care
- Identify the extent to which data practices imbue respect, empowerment, connection, inclusivity and care for all

Voice: Integrate voices of professionals collecting data, and those who share data, about how data processes fit within relational practices

Information for whom?

- Consideration of the purpose of data collection and collating
- Dominance of central government and inspectorate voices with the prioritisation of statutory data returns and Ofsted
- Is information for these purposes just the tip of the iceberg?
What is the degree of overlap between what is included in the statutory returns and what is used locally for operational and strategic purposes?



Breakout rooms (20 mins)

What does this mean for you and your organisation?

- Discuss what are the possibilities and barriers to embedding diverse voices for information democracy, equality and justice?
- What might you and/or others in your organisation prioritise?
- What further support do you need?

Agree 3 points to share with the rest of the group. These might be examples of what you are already doing, dilemmas, questions, etc.



Information governance: Accountability, trustworthiness and transparency

8. Foster trustworthiness through responsible data collection, processing and collaboration

- Responsible data processes that emphasise societal benefits
- Complex information balanced against too little.

Voice: Simplified visual data representations; identify staff concerns about data quality

9. Build greater transparency of data systems

- Log every time data consulted.
- Process flow maps to emphasise ethical issues at each stage

Voice: Ensure logs publicly accessible. Publish ethics assessment reports.

10. Establish clear accountability guidance and enforcement mechanisms

- Leadership commitment to build culture of trustworthiness, protection of stakeholders and risk management.
- Red-lines on prohibition of certain data practices.

Voice: Diverse stakeholders establish accountability mechanisms and policy on resolving disputes/complaint

11. Establish a simple process to ensure data rights

- Reverse burden of proof so that lack of information is not a barrier to complaint or claim.

Voice: Simple appeal system to remedy harmful or incorrect decisions made by data processes

12. Establish an independent data ethics board

- Independent recommendations
- Breadth of expertise
- Transparency: publishing members & minutes

Voice: Ensure diverse representation, including community members.

13. Ensure supplier compliance

- All suppliers meet ethics principles and standards

Voice: Ensure community know who has their data and how it is being used

14. Integrate principles, values and practices into relevant formal policies

- Transparency, accountability, privacy, fairness, safety
- Decisions and teams held to account

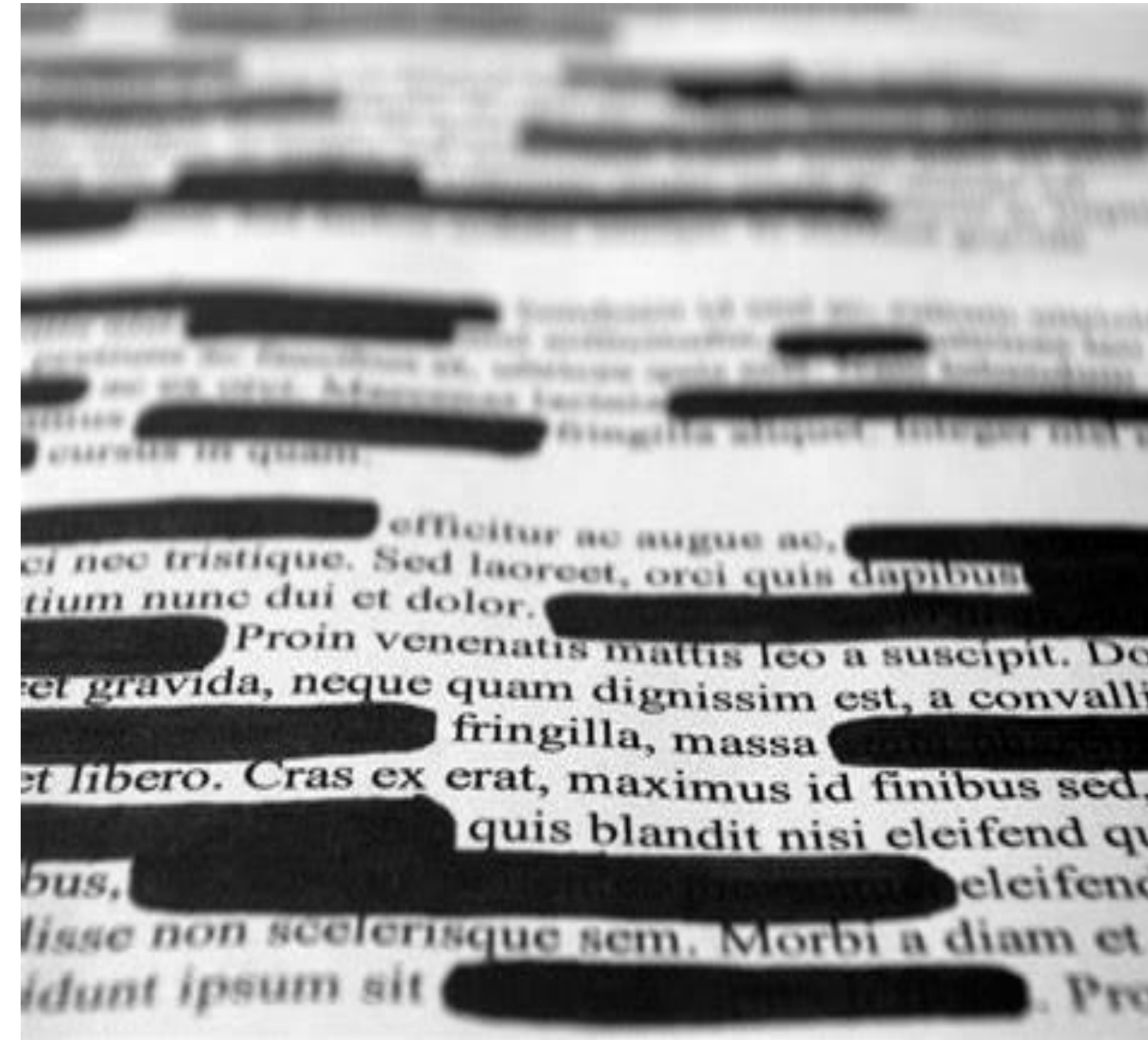
Voice: Commitment to voice embedded

Ethical hotspot example

- Young people not necessarily aware of level of data recorded, including all WhatsApp messages
- Digital tools become platforms for inclusion of 'everyday' voice
- Recording messages possibly shifts a relational practice emphasising rapport, trust and regular communication
- Onerous data recording can detract from direct work with young people

Whose voice and whose information?

- Case records often contain more than a single voice – including those of significant adults in a young person's life.
- Challenge of writing 'for' a child, but also how much of the record will they see when it is shared with them in the future.
- Potential that the case record will be heavily redacted should the young person ever get to see it.



Open Discussion (20 mins)

Had this brought up examples in your own work that relate to data governance?



Information professional skills, virtues and culture

Is compliance enough?

Legal framework and mandates (GDPR/Data Protection Act)

"You must have a valid lawful basis in order to process personal data" (ICO)

Inclusion of privacy notices:

- What sits behind compliance?
- Underpinning ethical principles:
- Respect, Connect, Care and Protect (Leslie et al., 2020).

Breakout rooms (20 mins)

In your group, answer these questions on the Jamboard – [Link to Jamboard](#)

- How does this 'hotspot' example apply to your own organisational context?
- What questions does it raise for you?



15. Overcome compliance culture

- Avoid tick-box compliance with laws
- Examine necessity of data practices

Voice: Mechanisms for staff & communities to challenge aspects of data-driven technologies

16. Ensure data necessity, legitimacy, and avoidance of harms to citizens

- Focus on necessity and legitimacy of data system
- Ensure safety from potential of harmful data use
- Regularly update security protocols
- Audit to identify vulnerabilities

Voice: Multiple voices in defining, updating & auditing security/safety protocols

17. Ensure avoidance of harms to the environment

- Acknowledge potential impact on vulnerable communities globally, including nonhumans
- Policy on minimising environmental harm from digital data systems
- Energy efficiency strategies

Voice: Audit & publish CO2 emissions & deliberate environmental considerations with stakeholders

18. Ensure access to data ethics expertise

- Hire dedicated data ethicist to support best practice
- Include ethics responsibility in all relevant staff roles

Voice: Recognise staff and community expertise in everyday experiences of data ethics

19. Foster professional virtues

For example:

- Uphold ethical values and best practice
- Be sincere, honest and trustworthy
- Professionally responsible & impartial decision making
- Evidenced-based reasoning

Voice: Establish a 'Voice Lead' to work alongside data ethicist/staff to model & support professional virtues

In summary, we have been exploring these three areas:

- Democracy, equality and justice
- Governance: accountability, trustworthiness and transparency
- Professional skills, virtues and culture

Word cloud

**Please share 3 word you would use to describe
the workshop**

Please add in each words separately

Please complete the survey linked here –

<https://wkf.ms/4c2EFPy>

Thank you



www.researchinpractice.org.uk



Dataandvoiceproject@researchinpractice.org.uk



[@researchIP](https://twitter.com/researchIP)



research
in practice

