

# How to: manage information and documents

## 10 common information management risks and how to avoid them

### How to use this document

There are all sorts of ways in which governance can accidentally breach confidentiality and the requirements of GDPR. Below are some examples of common areas of risk and how to manage them.

### Papers left in the room

At the end of a long, busy board meeting it's not uncommon for someone to leave some paperwork.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Remind those present to either pass papers to you, the governance professional, for shredding or take away their paperwork with them
- Check the room before you leave it

### Information left on the PC

Sometimes information will be presented to the board via school IT equipment in the room and sometimes the presenter will forget to:

- a. close the presentation
- b. check the pc and if necessary remove the memory stick containing the information (and other information) from the pc
- c. remove any file saved on the pc

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Remind the presenter to close the presentation and remove any memory stick or saved file
- Check the pc before you leave

### Information left on a whiteboard/flipchart

As with papers and pc sometimes names, figures, actions, comments etc. can be left.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Clean the whiteboard before you leave
- Remove and shred any flipchart pages

### Personal email addresses

A governor or trustee provides their personal email address for all communications. Or even worse a shared email address, for example [thefamilysmith@gmail.com](mailto:thefamilysmith@gmail.com) Using a personal email address is almost certainly going to fall foul of the relevant organisation policy and for good reason as it is a common source of accidental breach of confidentiality and GDPR.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Inform them that you and they cannot use that address as it is accessible by non-board members and therefore jeopardises confidentiality, GDPR and policy compliance

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- Arrange for the school organisation to provide them with an organisation email address and full instructions on how to access it

### Completed recruitment panel information

In the excitement immediately following the choice of a new senior executive leader the panel will often walk off with the paperwork they have been given which will usually contain all sorts of personal data. Some unable to contain their excitement may even accidentally disclose to naturally inquisitive staff who the choice is before they have even been approached.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- remind the chair of the panel to confirm with the panel members that the decision and all discussions are confidential and cannot be discussed outside of the meeting
- collate the scoring sheets completed by panel members and store these in the file in a secure place in the school
- gather up all other paperwork, checking with panel members that they aren't taking anything home with them, and destroy it
- check the room before you leave it
- check any IT equipment used for candidate presentations for left memory sticks or saved files that need to be deleted

### Leaving things on the photocopier

Unfortunately, it's not uncommon to have to copy something at the last minute for a board meeting. This may mean using a copier you are unfamiliar with and then all sorts of risks arise.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Insist on paperwork being provided on time so the risk doesn't arise and give yourself plenty of time to copy
- Always check the copier to make sure that you have taken all copies
- If someone else is also using the copier and has a run before you make sure that they don't take your copies by accident

### Using a school printer

There are similar and additional risks with printing in school which arise because of shared use and unfamiliarity with the printer.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- As with copying insist on paperwork being provided on time so the risk doesn't arise and give yourself plenty of time to print
- Always check to see that you know which printer you are printing to before you press print
- Make sure that any paused print run is cancelled before you leave the printer
- If the printer isn't right next to you ensure no one near the printer can see your printing

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- Always check the printer to make sure you have taken all printing
- If someone else is also using the printer make sure that they don't take your printing by accident
- Remove any memory stick you may be using

### **Please can you send it home with Timmy**

Even though the vast majority of paperwork is now delivered electronically by email or made available via a secure intranet or website sometimes a governor or trustee who is also a parent of a pupil will ask for a paper copy and that it be sent home in their child's school bag. The risks here are clear.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Say no
- Manage expectations by making it clear to the board that you won't ever do this because of the risk of it getting lost or opened by someone else by mistake

### **Virtually public**

The move to virtual governance via Zoom, MS Teams and other similar systems has not always been accompanied by recognition by board members that unless precautions are taken, anyone within earshot can also hear the board meeting discussion. And if documents are shared these can be seen by anyone nearby too. And if it's a shared laptop or pc then any documents saved can be seen by others.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Establish a clear privacy protocol or policy for all virtual governance
- Ensure members use their own device not a shared device
- Check with all those joining at the start of the meeting that they are alone and cannot be overheard
- Monitor compliance and ask the chair to challenge if it appears that the protocol is being ignored

### **Don't reveal anything confidential in the senior executive leader's office**

Just because the senior executive leader may be a member of the board doesn't mean that they will be privy to all of the documents and information. And just because you may also be employed by the school, possibly as the SEL's PA, doesn't remove the need for you to remain impartial and respect confidentiality. So, for example, you need to take care in relation to information which is confidential between you and the chair. Such information may relate to the SEL's performance or to their annual appraisal and be confidential.

#### *Avoid the risk*

- Don't leave anything in the SEL's office that the SEL shouldn't see
- Be careful what you say to the SEL
- If asked for something confidential, just say that you can't provide it, it's confidential
- If pressed suggest that the SEL speak to the chair

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## **Make sure you know who the Data Protection Officer (DPO) is and how to report any data breaches to them**

Whilst it is hoped that you will never experience a data breach, given that some meetings are outside of usual working hours, it is helpful to know in advance how to contact the DPO should you become aware of a data breach. Also make sure that governors or trustees are given the contact details for the DPO and undertake GDPR training.