

THE ESSEX DATA DECLARATION

INTRODUCTION

As Public Sector Leaders across Greater Essex, we are committed to delivering the best possible public services to those who live, work and study in the area. We also want to support our residents in fulfilling their potential and keep our communities our safe. And we have a duty to those who fund public services to provide services that deliver value for money.

We recognise that to deliver on these commitments, we must make the best use of all our assets, and this includes data. The data we hold is a key asset, providing key information about people, communities, businesses, the economy and the environment. By treating our data well, ensuring we collect what is of value and using appropriate methods, we can generate “social value” from these data assets. Treating our data as an asset alongside deploying appropriate analytical methods is key to improving decision making and can help us lead to improved outcomes.

We know that many of the challenges we face, including recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, levelling up our community’s, community safety and tackling climate change can only be met by working across organisational boundaries. Sharing data, insight and knowledge is an important part of working across these boundaries, to harness the power of the data held within our organisations. And we also recognise the importance of using data responsibly, transparently, and securely and in doing so we will maintain the confidence of our residents in our use of their data.

This declaration has been drafted by partners in the Essex system below and sets out 5 statements which organisations embrace and sign up to.

The declaration not only sets out what these commitments are but also defines what these mean as tangible activities to help assess and take practical steps. They may also help identify any additional support required that ecda can help facilitate or connect you with.

We believe that signing up to this declaration will help influence change within organisations and also create systemwide collaborative momentum for a data driven culture to maximise our use of data for social good.

Partners that have been a part of the drafting include:

Basildon Council, Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester Borough Council, Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Police, Maldon District Council, Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, Rochford District Council, Southend City Council, Tendring District Council, Uttlesford District Council.

THE DATA DECLARATION

As leaders we commit ourselves and our organisations to make better use of data and analytics to support decision making. This means:

Championing the use of data and analytics

We will champion the use of data and analytics that enables better decision making to improve the lives of our residents. We will model behaviours that support the increased use of data and analytics for decision making by increasing our data literacy, being open minded, curious, and asking good questions.

Building data literacy and Capability

We will support analysts in our organisations to develop analytical skills and knowledge and support all staff in developing their understanding and awareness of data and analytics. We will maximize the power data & analytics can bring by embracing a data literacy learning agenda and equipping staff with the skills to create and foster a data culture that drives confidence in how we make evidence based decisions

Adopting Data Integrity and Data Security standards

We will ensure the data we collect, process and maintain is safe and secure at all times and we have in place processes that ensure we hold good quality data. This includes working to improve the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of our data. We will be GDPR compliant, protecting the data we hold and handling personal data as defined in the law.

Embracing the use of Sharing Data

We will work to make data held within our organisations available to partners for clear purposes and public benefit so that data sharing becomes the norm not the exception. We will use Information Governance as an enabler to facilitate the linking of data sets and break down organisational barriers to allow data to be shared and used in a timely and efficient way.

Acting in Ethical and Transparent ways

We will ensure that all use of data and analytics is within both the law and ethical principles, adopting ethical considerations for the application of analytics & data science, ensuring that it is applied for social good. We will be appropriately transparent in our use of this to show we have nothing to hide and build trust. We will communicate our commitment to the use of data to our residents and evaluate the difference it has made.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Data Declaration working group asked itself what a successful implementation of the commitments set out in the declaration could look like:

Championing the use of data and analytics

Data projects are sponsored and championed by leaders in the organisation to create the right conditions for success.

Leaders adopt a data literacy learning agenda to help them understand the benefits that analytics and data science can bring to their challenges

The executive and political leadership teams advocate for the use of data for decision making, process optimisation and performance management across the organisation.

Building data literacy and Capability

All our analytical staff are aware of and engage with the ecda 'Be Part of the Equation' analyst network to help them upskill and build capability.

Routinely sharing best practice and insight with each other through forums such as ecda's Be Part of the Equation network

Organisations promote and encourage senior leaders within their organisation to engage with the ecda Data Masterclass.

Adopting Data Integrity and Data Security

When we are contracting with third parties' part of the conversation is not just what data will be collected but how it will be shared, in what formats, at what frequency

Organisations across our system understand the risks presented by our storage, transit, access and processing of data and use this to assess the appropriate level of security we need to put in place.

Adopting data standards and robust processes to understand the quality of our data and catalogue data assets.

Embracing the use of Sharing Data

Participating or leading joint projects that actively encourage people to share data, insight or knowledge with a clear purpose and benefit. Regularly sharing new actionable insight and shared challenges from within our own organisations with others to help manage and solve shared problems.

The Wider Essex Information Sharing Framework is used as the single basis for sharing and for developing information sharing protocols where they are required. Building common approaches and improvement across services to ensure practice is safe, legal and secures public confidence.

Acting in Ethical and Transparent ways

Organisations adopt a data ethics framework to support data analytics decisions and engage with our residents about what we are doing and why via the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ecda) and the data ethics committee already established.

Organisations will develop and implement a common public notice which explains the purposes for which personal data are collected and used, how the data are used and disclosed, how long it is kept, and the legal basis for processing.