



Report States UK's Attempt at Forcing Children to Use Biometrics to Access School Meals is Without Legal Backing

Description

Forcing children to use biometrics to prove their eligibility for the 'Free School Meals' program violates a legal restriction on obligatory biometric systems, according to a new report on the use of the technology in UK schools.

['The State of Biometrics 2022: A Review of Policy and Practice in UK Education'](#) is written by Pippa King and Jen Persson for advocacy group defenddigitalme, with a forward written by UK Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner Fraser Sampson.

The organization says childrens' rights advocates and lawmakers are concerned about the intrusiveness of biometric data in educational settings.

Sampson begins by asking who benefits from the school biometric deployments, who is performing oversight, whether the trustworthiness of partners like technology providers has been considered, what the motivation for deployment is and why it is being hurried.

"Some – including, surprisingly, the Department for Education – appear to have taken the view that bare compliance with Chapter 2 of the Act is all that is required to ensure the lawful, ethical and accountable use of biometric surveillance in schools," writes Sampson in the forward.

"While Chapter 2 addresses one narrow legal issue (that of protecting biometric information of children in schools) and guidance on its practical implementation is vital, I do not believe that this excludes the need to address the many wider technological, legal and societal issues of biometric surveillance generally. If biometric surveillance is to have a legitimate role in places of education, both role and legitimacy will need a much broader approach than this."

The report then examines the use of biometrics in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and finds that three-quarters of secondary schools are using fingerprints or other biometrics. Uptake of the systems is often 85 percent or higher.

The researchers also commit to looking further into schools requiring the use of biometrics, in

contravention of the law.

UK schools are trialing experimental technologies for attentiveness analysis and allowing mission creep, the report suggests, while regulatory enforcement is absent, as in the case of a Scottish school district [instructed by the ICO](#) to stop using facial recognition last October.

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Source: [Biometric Update](#) via [Truth Unmuted](#)

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