



Briefing Note: Live Attendance Data Feed

What is the aim of the project?

Norfolk County Council (NCC) uses the Synergy Management Information System to record education information about children for whom the Council has statutory responsibilities. We have been working on a project since 2019 to use data extracts from your Schools Management Information System (MIS) to populate the Synergy system via weekly feeds of pupil data. This project was started in response to feedback from school leaders which identified a need to review systems and improve efficiency in line with statutory responsibilities for attendance, children missing education and data protection. In addition, the publishing of the Census data termly/annually did not give enough data for the Local Authority to make timely interventions to reduce persistent absence and support vulnerable children. The key to system change and efficiency for all partners is improvements to the infrastructure for collection of data from schools in respect of these responsibilities.

What information is shared?

The data we extract from schools is already currently provided to the LA via the DfE following census returns but reliance on this method means the data can be out of date and does not support us to fulfil our statutory duties for school attendance and children missing education efficiently. It also means that, at present schools are asked to submit data in a variety of ways by different teams at different times and the method of transfer is not always secure.

The data being extracted are the fields that are currently contained within a standard [Common Transfer File](#) (CTF). No staff data is extracted as part of this process. This process simply supports the LA and schools with the transfer of data in line with statutory responsibilities as outlined in the Education Act 1996. The application extracts 3 files and securely sends to the LA:

- Pupils – Section 437
- Attendance – Section 436a
- Exclusions – Section 19 (3A/B)

How will we use the data?

We will use the data to:

- Track pupil movement onto a school roll;

- Identify children who have been absent for 10 consecutive school days, persistently and severely absent pupils;
- Ensure that the LA analysis of pupil attendance provides a comprehensive and up to date picture that informs our strategic aims to improve school attendance and ensures targeted support for the most vulnerable children.

What are the benefits?

The data sharing system:

- Means that schools will automatically fulfil requirements for providing data about children who are placed on roll at a school and details of children who have been absent for 10 consecutive days or more.
- Creates a single, secure, robust method of information sharing about pupil attendance and exclusion that is compliant with GDPR.
- Leads to increased efficiency and a reduction in requests for data submissions and pupil-level queries from the LA e.g. pupil absence, on-roll notifications.
- Improves capacity to track pupil movement and school attendance reducing the likelihood of children missing education.
- Ensures the LA has access to up-to-date data leading to more comprehensive analysis to inform targeted support in response to need.
- Provides opportunities to feedback data to schools to inform their strategic approach.

How is the data extracted from your MIS?

MIS	Process
Hosted SIMS	Schools have the SIMS third-party connector installed on a PC or server within your school. A further Xporter connector is added to a PC or server to pull the data into the NCC hosted Xvault server. A data extract then pushes the data into Synergy.
Local hosted SIMS	If not already in place, we will require a Groupcall Xporter to be set up on your server to allow for automatic sync every night with our NCC hosted Xvault server. A data extract then pushes the data into Synergy.
Bromcom Pupil Asset Arbor ScholarPack Integris	We will require a Groupcall Xporter to be set up on your server to allow for automatic sync every night with our NCC hosted Xvault server. A data extract then pushes the data into Synergy. ICT Solutions and Groupcall will be touch with you regarding the set up required and details of how to disable the current API link that will no longer be required.

Any other cloud-based MIS	<p>We will require a Groupcall Xporter to be set up on your server to allow for automatic sync every night with our NCC hosted Xvault server. A data extract then pushes the data into Synergy.</p> <p>ICT Solutions and Groupcall will be touch with you regarding the set up required and details of how to disable the current API link that will no longer be required.</p>
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Groupcall Xporter – How does it work?

The Xporter platform connects school management information systems to other education software, in this instance Norfolk County Councils Groupcall Xvault server to allow an extract into our Synergy system.

<p>Step 1 – Authorisation You authorise an app to access specific data from your MIS, the data we will be extracting is shown in the Data Protection Impact document (DPIA).</p>
<p>Step 2 – Connect your MIS Groupcall will connect the MIS to the secure Xvault platform and start extracting the required data.</p>
<p>Step 3 – Integration of data Data will then flow from the Xvault platform into our Synergy system.</p>
<p>Step 4 – Management Schools can manage the authorisations at any time.</p>

What are the technical requirements for Groupcall Xporter to work on your server /PC?

Particular information for your specific MIS will be provided in a separate guide for your MIS. The Xporter agent has some straightforward software requirements to ensure everything works as expected. Firstly, we always recommend that Windows Updates are kept up to date on the machine, especially ensuring that updates relating to the Microsoft.Net Framework are current. Xporter requires:

- Windows Server 2016 or above (Xporter can be installed on Windows 10+ but we recommend using a server)
- Minimum Microsoft .net 4.5.2 or above installed with latest updates applied. We recommend at least version Microsoft .net 4.6.2.

What will happen if the data extract fails to upload to the Synergy system?

In the event that the data extract fails to upload into the Synergy system due to validation errors (i.e. incorrect DOB, no postcode, additional spaces in name) then our Children Services' Team will contact you directly to ask if you can amend your MIS so this is corrected in the next extract. This will also benefit schools as it reduces the number of validation errors on your census returns as we are validating the data on a regular basis.

How long is the data stored?

The data is destroyed automatically in line with the retention schedule compliant with GDPR.

Where is the data stored?

The data we are collecting is stored on our Synergy database hosted on secure servers at County Hall and is mirrored in another data centre off-site.

How does NCC ensure the safety of the data?

- It is mandatory for all staff members to have to complete a GDPR training course before they can access any systems. This is repeated at regular intervals afterwards to refresh their knowledge.
- Access to the Synergy database is restricted to only those staff members who need access.
- Some of the safeguards we use are firewalls, data encryption, physical access controls and information access authorisation controls.
- Our network is also pro-actively monitored to prevent cyber-attacks etc.

The Children's Services Privacy Notice providing further information can be found here:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/open-data-fois-and-data-protection/data-protection/privacy-notices/children-and-young-people-privacy-notices/childrens-services-education-privacy-notice>

Our school is already providing the DfE with daily attendance data, why do we need to do this too?

We are encouraging schools to engage with both our local project *and* the DfE collection of attendance data via Wonde. At present the DfE data is experimental and does not provide the facility to export the data that we would require as Local Authority to reduce the administrative burden on schools. As the DfE project develops, we envisage that we will be able to cease the local collection of data and are providing feedback on proposed future development of the national system. Engaging with both systems simultaneously will not add to schools workloads nor compromise information security.

Next steps:

We are encouraging all schools that are not currently providing data in this way to engage with the project. If you have any questions please contact Kelly Waters, Senior Adviser – Safeguarding – kelly.waters@norfolk.gov.uk or Tanya Allen, Head of Schools IT - tanya.allen@norfolk.gov.uk.