



Is Educational Technology really improving outcomes for Black children?

Data Tech & BLACK COMMUNITIES

Supported by BLAST

# Data, Tech, & Black Communities

## Is Education Technology Really Improving Outcomes For Black/Black Heritage Children?

A community project

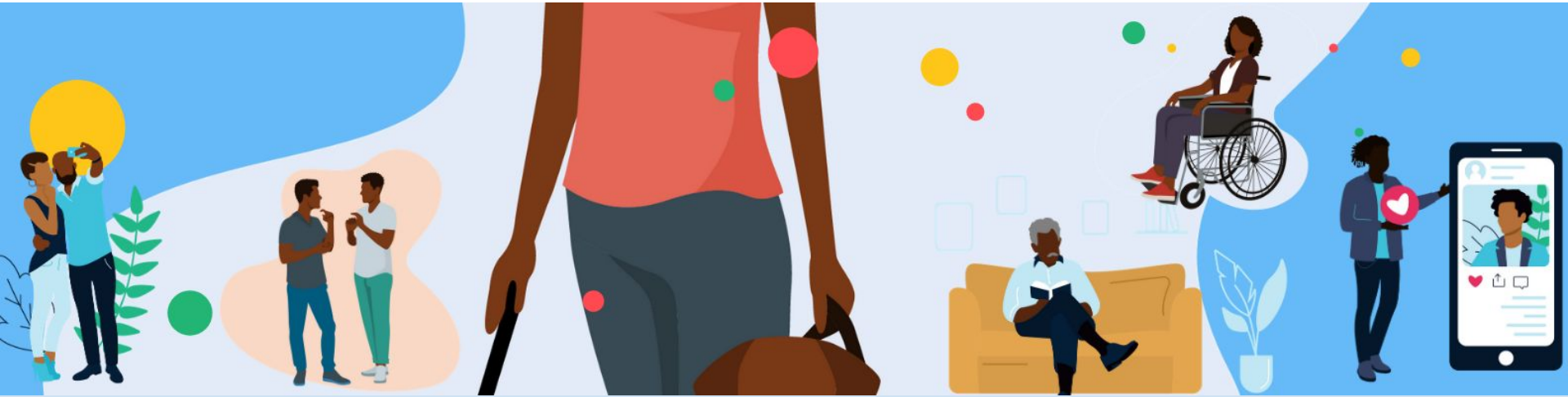
Saturday 7th June 2025

# Welcome!

## HouseKeeping:

- Children remain parents/guardians responsibility
- No planned fire alarms
- Toilets
- Help yourself to refreshments
- Do please sign up to keep in touch
- Sticker to not be included in photos

# Who is DTBC?



Data, Tech, & Black Communities (DTBC) is a **not-for-profit, membership-based** community interest company (CIC) of diverse **Black/Black heritage people & allies working together** to ensure data and data driven-technologies (e.g. AI) **enhance Black lives,** rather than curtail or surveil them.

# People Behind this project (and DTBC)



**Stewards**: Ade, Anita, Tracey & (Mwenza)

**Members**: Want to join us?

**People behind our EdTech project: Thank you!**

**EdTech delivery team**- Gabriel, Sahdya, Kiki, Feyi

**Community Researchers**

Abi, Aké, Alima, Audrey, Denise, Fartun, Joe, Ryan, Sabrina, Sadia

**Key partners:** Blast, Defend Digital Me

**Design team:** Alima, Charlotte, Florence, Malikah

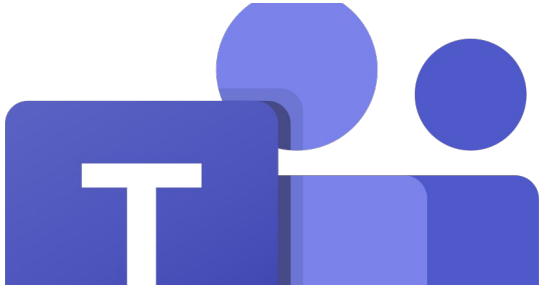
**Other partners:** Dr Martin Glynn, AWO, Adrienne Williams (DAIR)

# What Is EdTech?

Edtech is a catch all term used to describe digital and data-centric technologies used within an educational setting.

They aim to support a wide range of education-related activities.

**VIDEO LINK**



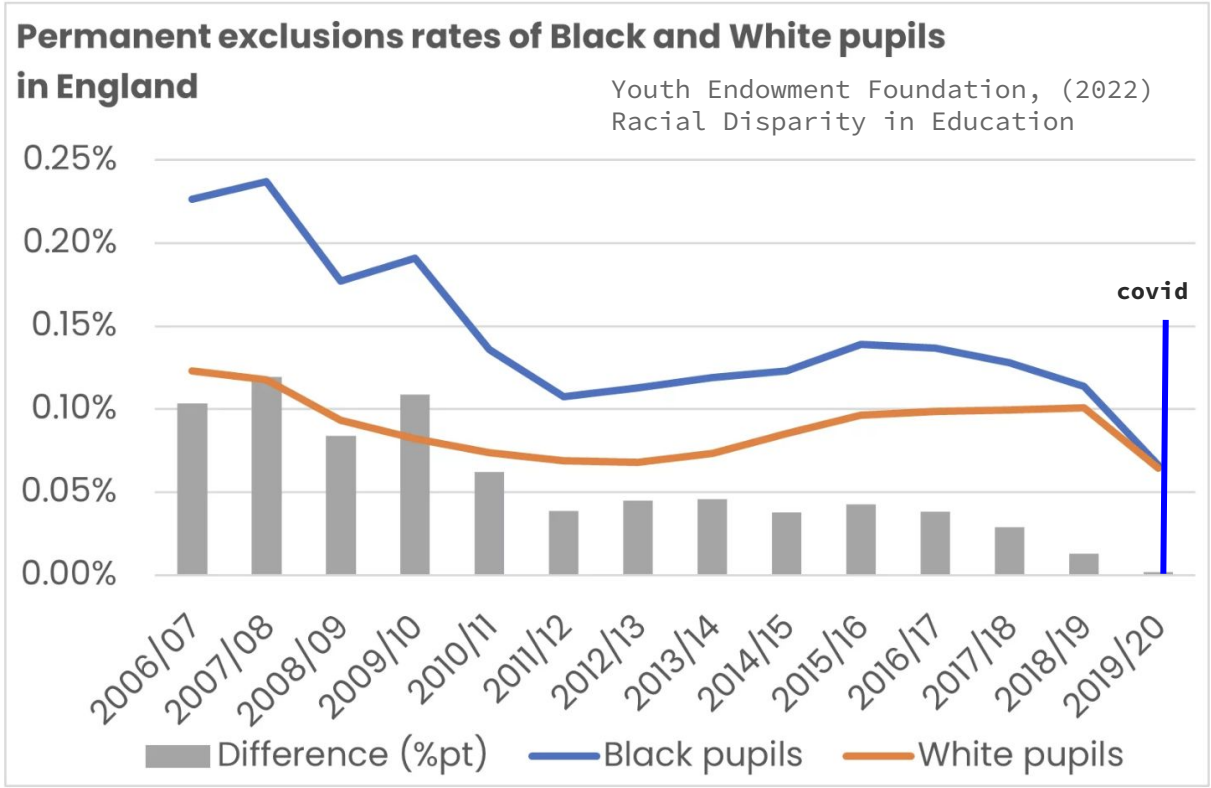





# Why Black/Black Heritage Communities & WHY US?

- History of higher rates of exclusions
- Lower attainment (Black & Mixed Caribbean)
- History of racism in schools

- Data driven technologies can embed & increase existing bias.



# What this afternoon will cover

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| 14:20 | Findings of the report & Q&A |
| 14:50 | Break |
| 15:00 | How to check and question the use of EdTech tools and the data collected about your child: ‘Let’s Do It Together’ Advocacy Toolkit |
| 15:45 | Group discussion & feedback |
| 16:15 | Wrap up- Join DTBC! |
| 16:30 | Close |

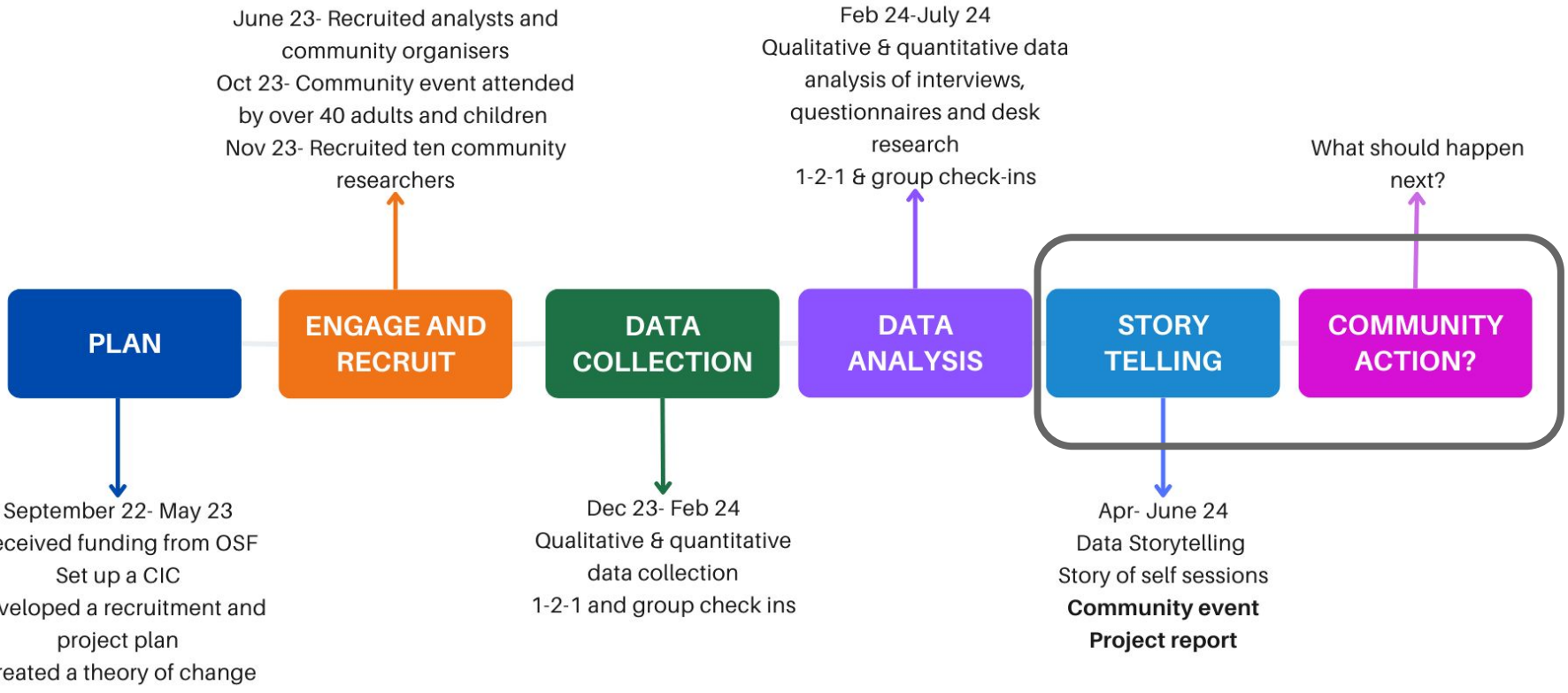
# FINDINGS OF OUR REPORT

# Data, Tech & Black Communities: The project

**DTBC facilitated a community-led research project with a number of objectives including:**

- **Build community** with people interested in understanding how Edtech is being used in our primary schools;
- **Help develop community research skills** in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in order to better understand what is going on;
- **Shed light on what sort of Edtech is being used in our schools**
  - which companies are selling them; and
  - understand what they are doing with our children's data;
- **Understand the extent and impact of digital exclusion** on children living in economically deprived areas.

# Our activities






https://dtbc.org.uk/2025/06/06/what-if-we-took-stewarding-childrens-data-seriously/

# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

*For these are all our children, we will all profit by or pay for what they become.*

- James Baldwin

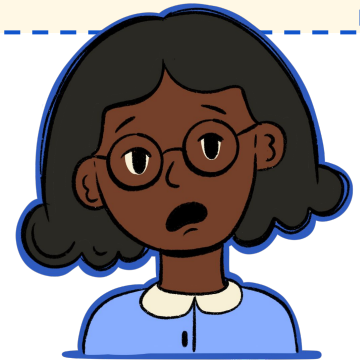
# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

Most EdTech used in UK schools are developed and managed by **private sector organisations**. In fact, the EdTech industry in the UK alone is worth about **£3.8 billion**.

Many of the EdTech applications used in UK schools collect a lot of personal and sensitive data about children.

**There are hundreds of EdTech companies active in England [2].** Despite this, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the regulator tasked with upholding our information rights (including data privacy), **has audited only 10 EdTech companies in the last 5 years**.

**KEY POINT #1: EdTech is not adequately regulated**. Private sector companies are incentivised to maximise the amount of [children's] personal data they collect and we don't have a good understanding of how that data is governed.



# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?




### 1. Unanticipated or unexpected commercial exploitation

Limited regulatory oversight and changes in the attitudes of legislators when it comes to data protections mean that there's a potential for private sector companies to use children's personal data for business purposes, in ways that parents and guardians don't expect.

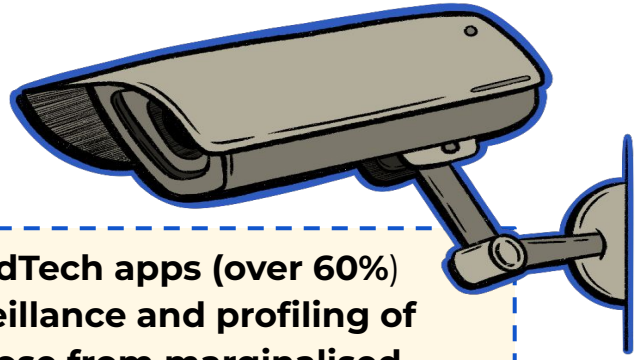
**KEY POINT #2: For the majority (80%) of EdTech apps** whose privacy notices we reviewed we were unable to rule out their use of children's personal data for unexpected **commercial purposes now or in the future.**

Children have the right to be **protected from economic exploitation** and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development (UNCRC Article 32)

# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

## 2. EdTech shouldn't turn learning into a system for surveillance or profiling of children

Profiling is the analysis of aspects of an individual's personality, behaviour, interests and habits to make predictions or decisions about them.



**KEY POINT #3**: **Many EdTech apps (over 60%) open the door to surveillance and profiling of children (especially those from marginalised groups)** – now and in the future –by collecting an excessive amount of special category* data and data from which children's socioeconomic status can be inferred**.**

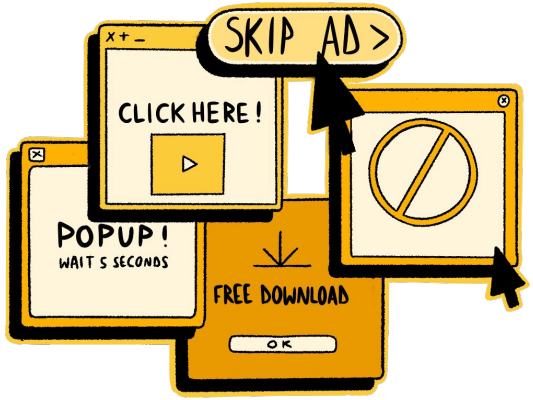
* **Special category data** is personal data of a sensitive nature which, under UK GDPR, enjoys special data protections.

# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

### 3. Children go to school to learn, not to be tracked and bombarded with personalised ads

Children are especially susceptible to and impacted by tailored advertising, facilitated by online tracking.

That's why the advertising regulator, the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) states that they need special protection.




**KEY POINT #4**: **Most EdTech apps (over 75% ) facilitate targeted advertising** to children either directly or on third-party sites **by placing cookies** (their own or other organisations') on children's devices.

# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

### 4. Data collected while children are learning shouldn't put them at risk!

**Data minimisation** – as little data as possible – and **storage limitation** –holding it for as short a time as possible – are two important principles of UK GDPR.

Upholding these principles reduces the negative impact from a data breach.

KEY POINT #5: **Most EdTech apps (over 75%) have the potential to expose children's personal data** because EdTech suppliers hold too much of such data and hold on to it for too long or are opaque about how long they hold on to it.

**Ask questions about the data security of the EdTech in use by the school**



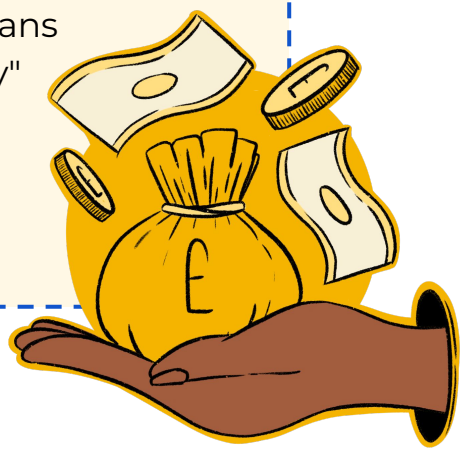
# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?

## 5. Does EdTech even work?

With any new technology application it takes a while to work out whether or not it's working as intended. To make this assessment we need objective data and analysis – we can't rely on profit-driven organisations to mark their own homework.

The DfE has been slow to commission this type of research. But it's important. For example, nne such research project. revealed how a prominent EdTech app appeared to slow down children's attainment in reading.

**KEY POINT #6: Very little objective research to demonstrate the efficacy of EdTech** apps used in schools or to substantiate claims made in suppliers' literature. This also makes it hard for schools and parents/guardians to make a "value for money" judgement about EdTech apps. This was true for ALL the EdTech apps we reviewed.



# Why should you (and all of us) care about EdTech?



## Even if it works– we need to talk about access to digital devices and internet

**Digital poverty**– a lack of access to devices or internet connectivity further marginalises learners from low-income families creating unequal opportunities to benefit from EdTech and access homework and out of school learning.

The disproportionate levels of household poverty experienced by Black households in the UK mean that digital poverty is a relevant factor of consideration when exploring the broad experience of Black/ Black heritage children in relation to EdTech.

**KEY POINT #7: Children's unequal distribution of access to digital learning tools can make discrimination worse** especially for those from marginalised communities and/ or facing socio-economic barriers.

Following the principles of **UNCRC Article 2** and the **ECHR Article 14** schools have an obligation to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

# Recommendations

**For parents, guardians and community members:**

- Be curious and stay infomed about EdTech and AI
- Understand your rights! Data protection and other rights in law
- Take collective action
  - Join DTBC (IT'S FREE) https://dtbc.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/
    - Working together in community is the most effective way to stop these harms and protect our collective interests
    - Join a knowledgable community
    - Career development and project opportunities
    - Early access to research
    - A safe inclusive space

# Recommendations

**For schools:**

- Recognise and adapt to your broader stewardship role
- Be transparent and collaborative about data protection, procurement and use of EdTech
- Facilitate informed conversations between parent’s, guardians and teaching/ school staff

# Recommendations

**Funders:**

- Support civil society to participate in the debates about data-centric technologies

**DfE, ICO, Local authority education teams and other institutional players**

- Make it easier for schools to do the right thing
- Improve the enforcement and oversight environment in and beyond schools

# Q & A

# Discussion

- **What are your thoughts and reflections about what you have heard?**
- **What questions do you have?**
- **Is there anything we have missed?**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- **Speak to your neighbour or go into a group**
- **Discuss the questions above**
- **We’ll join back into a group to share and reflect**

# Comfort Break

## (15 Mins)

# Let's Do It Together

## Advocacy ToolKit

# Question & Advocate

- You and your child(ren) have rights and legal protections about the use of your personal data BUT
- These can be challenging to exercise if schools have poor data practices and in our current context of:
  - unclear guidance,
  - Increasingly permissive legislation (i.e. watering down of rights)
  - weak regulator- ICO
- But if we are informed, and work together, we can push for change for our children and ***all*** children

**Let's Do It Together**

# Children's Rights

unicef
UNITED KINGDOM

The UN Convention on the rights of a child (UNCRC)

- Legally binding agreement outlining fundamental rights of every child

**Every child has the right to:**

- Relax and play (Article 31)
- Freedom of expression (Article 13)
- Be safe from violence (Article 19)
- An education (Article 28)
- Protection of identity (Article 8)
- Sufficient standard of living (Article 27)
- Know their rights (Article 42)
- Health and health services (Article 24)

# Parent's Rights

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- enshrines the right to education,  acknowledges pivotal role of parents in choosing the type of education their children receive.;
- not legally binding but influential on other legal agreements.
- In UK, this principle is reflected in the legal recognition of parental rights to determine their children's educational pathways BUT must be balanced with child's rights
- Parental right's cannot override child's rights & vice versa except in processing of biometric data
- **Data Protection laws- YOU cannot rely on being asked for consent**

# Public Sector Equality Duty

- PSED- legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010
- Who does it apply to? Public Bodies e.g. Schools, local authorities
- Ensures decisions, policies, practices actively promote equality, eliminate discrimination & foster good relations

**Parents & learners can expect:**

a. Fairness and Accessibility:
b. Protection from Discrimination:
c. Support for Diverse Needs:

# Public Sector Equality Duty

State schools (LA-controlled and Academies) have this **obligation**.

You can help make sure they're fulfilling their responsibility by:

- **Asking questions** e.g. about whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been done?
- **Raising concerns** if you think the school has blind spots or hasn't been rigorous in its EIA or has been too narrow in its understanding of how inequality affects different groups e.g. **digital poverty**
- **Requesting transparency** by asking to see the findings of the EIA and updates on how the school is implementing relevant policies

# Templates for advocacy

## You have to EXERCISE your rights!

## Protect yourself!

a. What personal data is held about your child? **Make a Subject Access Request**

b. What do they know? **Make a Freedom of Information Request**

c. What if you want to don't want your child's biometric data collected and processed? **Inform a public body of Withdrawal of Consent for Biometric Data Processing or Refuse Permission**

d. What if you want to understand more about the data collected by an EdTech product? **Request for Product Information from a Company**

e. What if you want to opt out of the process of processing your children's personal data? **Raise a Right to Object and Right to Opt Out**

# Templates for advocacy

## You have to EXERCISE your rights!

## Change the weather: Advocate for yourself and others!

a. Get the support of school governors for better EdTech Data Processing Practices

b. Lobby your MP and ask them to support the protection of your child's data rights

c. Make a regulatory complaint to the ICO about inappropriate uses of children's personal data

d. Lobby your child(ren)'s school to conduct risk assessments of EdTech products and to amplify their power through collective purchasing

e. Lobby local government, DFE to use their power through collective purchasing conducting risk assessments of EdTech & ensuring greater transparency

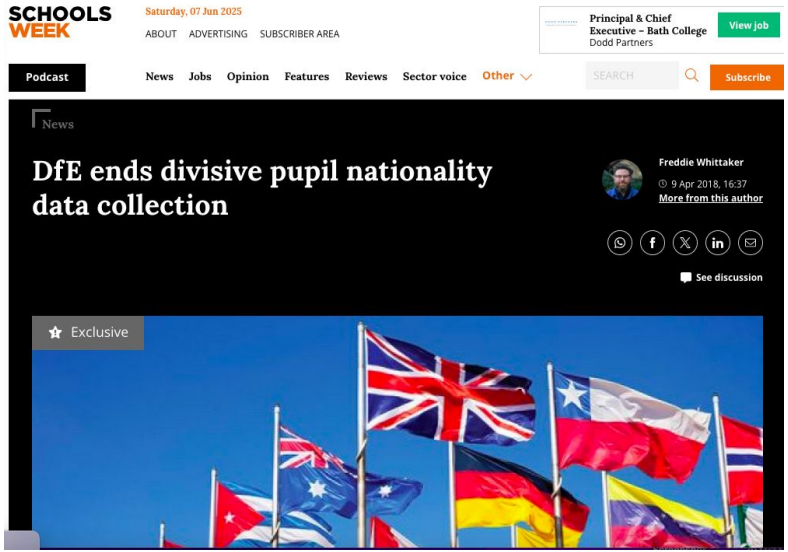
## Wherever possible, advocate in community. Let's Do It Together!

# Can we make a difference?

YES! Parents and activists have done it before

Remember the campaign to boycott the school census?



# Exercise: how would you use the toolkit to scrutinise EdTech?

## Scenario 1

Facial recognition cameras arrive in UK school canteens

Advocates say they speed up queues, but privacy campaigners query whether they are necessary

Source: Facial recognition cameras arrive in UK school canteens | Financial Times

## Scenario 2




Source: ClassDojo raises concerns about children's rights

# Feedback from ToolKit Discussion

# What Next? Your thoughts and reflections

- Please share **ONE key takeaway** from your discussion?
- Which tools felt **EASIEST** to use?

- Which **actions** do you feel able to **commit to**? E.g.
  - Become a member of DTBC
  - Share the animation about EdTech with at least two other parents or groups?
  - Send at least one letter of advocacy
  - Facilitate a discussion about EdTech
  - Something else

# Closing



# THANK YOU !

# JOIN DTBC– IT'S FREE!

**USE THE SIGN UP SHEETS IN CIRCULATION FOR MORE INFORMATION**

https://dtbc.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/
**[MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP COMING SOON!]**

**BENEFITS:**

- Working together in community is the most effective way to stop these harms and protect our collective interests
- Join a knowledgeable community
- Career development and project opportunities
- Early access to research
- A safe inclusive space

# What Next?

**YOU**

- Pick at least ONE action you can take?

**DTBC**

- Revise toolkit based on today's discussions
- Place on website
- Communicate: Send report out to parents & guardians, trade unions, schools, councils etc
- Plan and fundraise for next phase!
  - Look out schools!

# Thank You, JOIN US & Please Stay In Touch

- **Signed our keeping in touch sheet?**
- **E-mail us** admin@dtbc.org.uk
- **Sign up to our newsletter:**



- **Follow us on Blue Sky: @dtbc.bsky.social**