Power BI - Information Governance Hints and Tips

Do you use Power BI as a useful visualisation tool for your data sets or are you considering doing so? If yes, here are the top 10 hints and tips to consider to ensure it is used effectively and in a compliant way:

Tip One: Power BI is a powerful tool so you may wish to undertake University training or read some useful University resources. All staff must complete mandatory Data Protection Training annually. It can be accessed here: https://cloud.metacompliance.com/View/Course/55995

Tip Two: Can you achieve the same purpose with less personal data? If so, you should explore this first.

Tip Three: It is important to remember that when using Power BI to collate dashboards, there is personal data behind the statistics. If you want to merge more than one data set, does this tell you something new about an individual and are you entitled to know this? Consider the reasons why you are using any existing or new data sets. Get in touch with the Information Governance Team for further advice if required: dpa@abdn.ac.uk.

Tip Four: When deciding how much data to include on your dashboard, take some time to consider the use of such data and what breakdown is appropriate to all those who can view and access the dashboard. For example, ensure you never make available statistics of less than 5 as this can result in individuals being inadvertently identified. Other considerations include avoiding breaking down the data to school or other level if it increases the chance of someone being identified, taking into account the data involved.

Tip Five: Some data is more sensitive and identifiable than others. Specifically, any special category data, such as health information, ethnicity or disability. If such data is broken down to a low level such as school or department level, it could lead to identification of individuals therefore extreme care must be taken when breaking down special category data sets to an identifiable level.

Tip Six: If the data is broken down into a number of data elements and categories, there is a much greater chance of identification when all these elements are taken together and viewable via a dashboard. Would it be better to run separate dashboards with access to these appropriately restricted?

Tip Seven: Once you've created your dashboard, it is important that the data is kept up to date and only held for as long as is necessary to achieve the purpose. If some data is not necessary then don't include it.

Tip Eight: If a colleague or other individual requests to view the dashboard, it is important to ensure that they have a lawful reason or purpose for doing so. Consider if the dashboard is appropriate for the proposed audience.

Tip Nine: Where it is necessary for identifiable data to be gathered, ensure that access is limited to those entitled to see it.

Information Governance Team, December 2022