

DWP Information Strategy

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DWP Information Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Information is, more than ever, essential to the delivery of public services.

“Managing information effectively and appropriately is essential to the delivery of secure, seamless and efficient operational services. It provides the basis for informed decision making and the platform upon which performance can be measured. Modern, knowledge based service delivery underpinned by effective information architecture and open standards will support government to build more transparent, trusted and effective information exchange process. The Government will develop an information strategy that is supported by an architecture framework which will underpin the design of the government’s new information systems”. **Government ICT Strategy (March 2011)**

1.2 The Government ICT Strategy required cross-government information strategy principles to be published by December 2011 and Departmental Information Strategies to be published by 31st March 2012.

2. Why do we need a Strategy?

2.1 We are one of the largest data controllers in the UK, information is critical to the future success of our business. It is vital that we use information effectively to contribute to the delivery of our Business Strategy and Business Plan.

2.2 As a Department we are facing increasing demands for improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, openness and transparency. This requires better use of our information for the benefit of our Department, our customers and external organisations across the UK. This strategy is needed to support us in maximising our use of information without compromising the standards our customers expect for the protection of their data and privacy.

3. Our aims and vision

3.1 We must manage our information securely, efficiently, economically and effectively whilst at the same time maintaining the protection of customer data and their privacy.. Only by managing information in this way will we deliver the necessary efficiencies, improve our performance, drive up customer service, be more open and support UK Government aims beyond our own departmental objectives.

To achieve this we must:

- Know exactly what information we hold.

- Collect information once.
- Re-use information wherever possible.
- Share it appropriately.
- Keep information appropriately, lawfully and securely.
- Foster a culture that values information.

4. Moving towards our future vision

- 4.1 Across government Departmental Information Strategies are being implemented to introduce a common set of information principles; these align the use and management of information, and enable the sharing of best practice. These information principles support us in identifying our current position and the direction of travel required to achieve our aims and vision. This strategy reflects those principles, adapting them where appropriate to fit our business. We will develop appropriate implementation plans and measures to track our progress and contribution towards delivering Departmental goals.
- 4.2 In support of the information principles we have completed a significant amount of work in terms of identifying, managing and securing our information assets. Our implementation plans will build on this existing work and take into account planned activity that will support the principles.
- 4.3 We will embed these principles in our activity as a part of existing Information Governance mechanisms. Many individuals already have specific responsibilities or accountabilities for information – Information Asset Owners, Co-ordinators and Managers in particular. Successful delivery of the strategy is dependent on successful engagement with stakeholders. The Information Governance & Security Committee (IGSC) will be used to promote the strategy, and will monitor progress of implementation plans and ensure there is appropriate co-ordination between areas where needed.
- 4.4 Our emerging Information Architecture is supporting a range of Change activities, such as the Digitalisation Programme and Services Orientated Architecture by identifying common information requirements. These common information requirements will further support information requirements for Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.
- 4.5 This Information Strategy supports the Department's Business Plan and its Open Data Strategy.

5. Information Principles Overview

- 5.1 There are seven information principles, building naturally into a hierarchy, each principle builds on what has gone before. For example it is unlikely that information can be re-used unless it is also valued, managed, fit for purpose and standardised. (See diagram below). The information principles apply to structured and unstructured information.

- 5.2 The first two principles provide a foundation as the basis on which all other uses depend. It is important that information is valued as an asset and managed, protected, and exploited throughout its lifecycle. It needs to be governed based on a consistent approach to risk assessment. Organisational roles and responsibilities should be in place, and skills and capabilities developed.
- 5.3 The next two principles help to unlock the value inherent in information. Information need not be perfect, but it does need to be fit for purpose – both in terms of its technical format and also in terms of conforming to well-defined quality characteristics. It also becomes more valuable when it is made available in standardised forms and is linkable to other information and authoritative sources.
- 5.4 The principle of re-use cannot be achieved without the first four principles. Re-use both avoids wasteful duplication, and provides the means to extract value in new and innovative ways. The top layer builds on all of the layers below, providing transparency by opening access to information.

6. Principle 1 – Information is a valued asset

- 6.1 Information is an asset which is fundamental to the delivery of public services. Information is critical to the future success of our business and in order to fully understand its value it is necessary to understand the purposes for which information is created, collected and managed.
- 6.2 We acknowledge information as a valuable asset and to maximise its value we have to ensure we collect information once, re-use it wherever possible, share and protect it appropriately, lawfully and securely, and foster a culture that values it.
- 6.3 The Information Asset Inventory is a register of the larger electronic information assets we hold. An information asset is any piece or collection of information that is definable, uniquely identifiable, stored within DWP's estate, and recognised as valuable to our organisation. They are not replaceable without cost, time, skill and resources. In recording an information asset on the inventory we are confirming that it has a value to our business and as such has to be managed in line with Principle 2.

7. Principle 2 – Information is managed

- 7.1 Information needs to be well managed; poor information management and governance practices expose us to unnecessary risk and result in avoidable costs. For example, the Department is custodian of large volumes of personal information and the public have the right to expect this to be protected, and kept securely. Poor practices may also lead to inconsistencies which may subsequently incur costs and/or reputational loss. In terms of exploiting information, poor information management and governance practices may result in an overly risk averse approach which hinders information sharing and re-use.

7.2 Currently work is ongoing to manage and reduce avoidable costs in relation to the information we hold. Activity undertaken has resulted in a reduction in file storage costs of circa £1.9 million in actual and avoidance costs since April 2010.

7.3 We have well established arrangements for the assessment and management of information risks and to ensure legal and regulatory compliance. Roles and responsibilities for information governance are defined, risk management and assurance structures in place to support effective governance. Information governance is via the IGSC reporting directly to the Senior Information Risk Owner.

8. Principle 3 – Information is fit for purpose

8.1 Information should be of sufficient quality for the intended use; information quality needs to be communicated consistently to those that may wish to re-use it, so that they can objectively judge for themselves if it is suitable. Quality includes factors such as accuracy, validity, reliability, timeliness, relevance, and completeness.

8.2 Data quality improvement initiatives include:

- Working with business areas to understand key issues affecting data quality and provide recommendations to business ideas to develop solutions to correct erroneous data.
- Working with new projects, such as, Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments to identify quality data sources and resolve any quality issues.

8.3 Our National Statistics and social research outputs provide information about data and information quality. We will continue to identify what information should be produced as National Statistics and official statistics, identifying where quality improvements in statistical outputs and raw data are necessary.

9. Principle 4 – Information is standardised and linkable

9.1 The opportunities for exploiting information greatly increase when it is recorded and made available in standardised and linkable forms.

9.2 We will apply government data standards to data collections and will work with other Government Departments and external organisations to ensure statistical outputs are produced to standard definitions. The software formats we use to make information available will be reviewed and we will move to common/standard formats.

9.3 The value of information can be enhanced when it is linked to other information. We will consider technical and legal requirements to facilitate future linking when designing a new collection of information. Existing information will be periodically reviewed to assess whether changes need to be made to increase the ability to link.

Commitment to open standards

9.4 We will support re-use of information by applying Open Data Standards to our information and engaging with other organisations to continue the development and implementation of those standards. We will do this by engaging in cross-government groups, establishing better links with non-governmental bodies and promoting the standards through improved internal governance.

Corporate standards

9.5 We have an established and published DWP Data Standards Directory that is used to support change activity and is being developed further to support Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.

10. Principle 5 – Information is re-used

10.1 We are committed to maximising the value of our information by sharing, re-using and exploiting existing information assets where it is legal to do so. We currently look for opportunities to maximise the value of information assets through re-use and will continue to do so in future, for example:

- Tell Us Once.
- Working Age to Pension Age.
- Service Orientated Architecture.
- Universal Credit.
- Personal Independence Payments.

10.2 We will promote pro-active re-use of information through programmes like those above. This will continue to be embedded in our project governance via change lifecycle and application of our Data Handling approvals. Both of these will ensure Senior Responsible Owners are aware of the need for them to re-use existing information where possible and that any new collections for which they are responsible should be made available for re-use.

10.3 We will identify additional opportunities to re-use information:

- Internal re-use - making sure that full value is gained from using information for its primary purpose, and identifying secondary uses to which it can be put. For example, operational data can sometimes be re-used to support performance improvement (for example Working Age to Pension Age) or research.

- External re-use – legally and securely sharing information with others across organisational boundaries, whether within the public sector, or more generally with private businesses and citizens. Note that the uses will not be limited to our aims. The aims of citizen's and private business are legitimate, where legal and where they do not conflict with our aims.
- Master data - a further aspect of re-use consists of ensuring only a single authoritative source for business information exists (e.g. an authoritative list of organisation codes) - nominated, maintained and promoted as such.

10.4 We will establish a Welfare Sector Transparency Board and actively engage in the Administrative Data Task Force. Through these and internal developments we will identify the priorities for external re-use of information, obstacles to re-use and the appropriate solutions.

11. Principle 6 – Public information is published

11.1 Publishing public information provides benefits to government and citizens such as:

- Making government more accountable and approachable - enabling citizens to hold the government to account.
- Creating better value for money by providing an insight into how money is spent, encouraging departments to improve controls on spending and reduce their costs.
- Stimulating growth by enabling businesses to develop innovative information-based products and applications using public data.
- Reforming public services by:
 - Providing choice and improving public sector outcomes, by giving citizens the information they need to make informed decisions about the public services they use, and giving providers the incentives they need to improve the quality of their services and to develop new innovative services.

11.2 The Welfare Sector Transparency Board will consider new opportunities to release data which has value to business and the potential to stimulate the marketplace for information, Existing commitments to publish information on Universal Credit and Fit Notes will be developed under this principle.

12. Principle 7 – Citizens and businesses can access information about themselves

12.1 We have an established infrastructure and capability for addressing the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information obligations. Change initiatives are moving to an increased use of digital channels to support service delivery,

including e-enabled services built on self-service and self-management, for example:

- Transforming Labour Market System.
- Universal Credit.
- Personal Independence Payments.
- Right to Control.

12.2 Beyond these examples we will promote greater digitisation at a programme level. As well as programmes which give the facility to access personal information, policies will promote an increase in the number of citizen's using those facilities.

13. How will we be sure we are moving in the right direction?

13.1 The delivery of the strategy will be set out in an action plan. This will be a living document which will be periodically updated to capture the steps being taken to give life to the principles set out above. The IGSC will monitor overall progress on the action plan and will be supported in taking this work forward by Senior Responsible Owners, Information Asset Owners/Managers/Coordinators as part of their role in information risk management. As appropriate, the IGSC will escalate issues to the Welfare Sector Transparency Board for consideration.

13.2 IGSC will report through the Senior Information Risk Owner to the DWP Executive team.