



Department
for Education

Star Chamber Scrutiny Board

**Annual report: November 2014 – October
2015**

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Star Chamber Scrutiny Board seventh annual report

The following is a summary of the activity of the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (SCSB) during its seventh year of operation, covering the period November 2014 to October 2015.

Purpose

This report is written to provide an annual update on the work of the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board for a range of stakeholders both in the Department and local authorities, and representative bodies across the education sector. It is also shared with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), who manage the relationship between Central Government and local authorities, so they are informed how the Department's data needs are changing and how this is being managed with the sector.

No specific actions are required of the recipients of this report, but comments on any area are welcome and should be sent to the secretariat (StarChamber.MAILBOX@education.gsi.gov.uk).

History

The Star Chamber was established in 1999 in the then DfES, to review and control data collection proposals emerging from the Department. It was initially an internal body, but was strengthened in 2006 by the addition of an External Scrutiny Group of local authority and school representatives. With the Department publicly committing to reducing its data collections, the External Scrutiny Group was given the power to make decisions on collections. It was re-launched as the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board on 1 November 2008. Annual reports have been published on the first six years of its operation: this is the seventh.

The Star Chamber Scrutiny Board meets monthly, primarily to consider data collection business cases put forward by policy areas across DfE and its Executive Agencies. The meetings also discuss relevant data developments and look at how new collections are progressing, acting as a consultation forum where required. The Board's operations are seen as an excellent example of joint working on the wider education and children's services agenda, something that was highlighted by HM Treasury in their 2011 report. The Board's service has been recognised by other bodies including the National Audit Office who have previously consulted the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board for advice about their proposed collections.

As part of the overall drive to manage data burdens that Central Government place on local authorities, DCLG operates a scrutiny process for mandatory data collection proposals impacting on local government. However, after reviewing the terms of

reference and operation of the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board, it was agreed by the two departments that it would continue to lead on scrutiny of proposals around schools and children's services.

Cases Scrutinised

In this seventh year, 27 business cases were submitted to the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board regarding data collection from schools and local authorities. This is a reduction of three compared to the number of business cases submitted in 2013-14. The majority of new cases were for modest adjustments to existing collections. Of these:

- 15 were fully approved
- 2 were approved with conditions
- 1 was partially approved (2 out of 5 parts of the proposal approved)
- 4 were approved following amendment
- 3 were rejected in their entirety
- 2 further business cases were considered: neither were initially approved – 1 received approval in the next reporting year and 1 was re-presented with a different reference due to the number of changes made and then approved.

Of the 22 business cases that eventually received approval in the reporting year (either full, partial or conditional), seven involved mandatory collection of data. All seven proposals for mandatory collection of data were changes to existing collections; no new mandatory data collections were agreed during the reporting year.

Further information on the cases considered can be found in Annex 2.

As well as scrutinising changes to data collections, over the year the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board has also provided very useful advice about the proposed method for collecting the data, which has been most beneficial. This advice has led to data sponsors changing their data collection proposals, adjusting their timings or sampling methods, or re-designing their methodology, thereby ensuring better quality data was received from the front-line and with fewer burdens on supplying LAs, schools and academies.

The Star Chamber Scrutiny Board has also considered a number of proposals at an early stage of development and in a discussion format prior to a formal business case being developed. This enabled members to contribute to the development of proposals and ensured that the burden and the practicalities of a collection were considered early. This has in part contributed towards an increase in the number of business cases approved at the first instance of consideration and a reduction of those business cases requiring amendment.

Appeals

An appeals process exists for policy teams who believe that they have strong grounds for exemption or a relaxation to Star Chamber guidance, or have good reason to believe that the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board has not acted reasonably in carrying out its functions.

Only one appeal was heard in 2014-15. This resulted from a business case which was approved subject to a condition which was challenged by the department. The appeal was successful as the imposed condition was considered outside the remit of the Board.

Where required, a further level of appeal exists to a designated Minister but this was not necessary during 2014-15.

Other work

The examination of business cases is the main area of the Board's work. Board members frequently take questions back to their home authorities to consult with local experts in the particular areas under discussion, pooling the comments they have received on the morning of the monthly meetings. Where discussions take place with a policy area prior to the submission of a business case, this can be very beneficial in reducing burdens.

Individual members have also volunteered to support and provide guidance to DfE policy colleagues who are considering new policy initiatives. This has been undertaken outside of the normal activity of the Board and has provided a valuable resource of expertise and local knowledge to enable early and meaningful consultation.

The Board has a secondary role discussing and monitoring developments in education and children's services data. For instance, in this reporting year the Board have provided ongoing support to the department's Data Modernisation Unit who are looking to introduce increased automation in the return of school and LA data.

Membership

The Board operates on a basis of membership remaining open-ended and based on the ongoing commitment provided by members to attend meetings and to take an active role in its operation. Natural change in the group ensures that the turnover of membership happens seamlessly. Local authority representatives are nominated via the Association of Directors of Children's Services, and head teacher / principal members via the National Association of Head Teachers and the Association of School and College Lecturers.

Over the course of the reporting year, Anna Janes (formerly of Brent LA), Louise Nock (Barnsley LA) and Debbie Wright (Kent LA) have left the Board. Andrew Roberts (Wirral LA) also resigned from his advisory role on financial matters which are now referred to relevant colleagues in the authorities represented on the Board. The department and

their fellow members acknowledge their positive contributions over a significant period. The following new members have been welcomed during the year: Penny Arcatinis (Birmingham LA), Mike Parkin (Worcestershire LA) and Rowena Ward (London Tri-Borough Partnership).

Issues

The Board continue to be pleased by the positive attitude taken by policy areas whose business cases come to them for scrutiny. The increasing number of discussions taking place prior to the submission of a business case has also appeared to improve the quality of business cases/ Discussions have invariably been productive and beneficial to both DfE representatives, Star Chamber Scrutiny Board members and, consequently, to those working on data in schools and authorities.

Nonetheless, the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board have identified potential areas for improvement and increase the effectiveness of the Board, including:

Continuing to undertake reviews of existing collections

The Board recognise that they are unable to rescind approval of ongoing, agreed collections but would like to undertake some oversight of such collections. When time allows during meetings it is suggested that reviews continue to be scheduled with the appropriate colleagues to look at the data items and methods of collection to continue to reduce the burden and increase the quality of data returned.

Increasing links with ADCS National Chairs

It was noted that the increased scrutiny of proposals and increased awareness of outcomes could be delivered by working more closely with the ADCS National Chairs. As existing members already sit on this group it was agreed to look to share more information with them subject to any confidentiality issues where indicated by the department.

Footnote

The board wish to record thanks to the secretariat for the smooth support of its work during the year.

Annex 1

List of Star Chamber Scrutiny Board members for the reporting year.

Chair

Jude Hillary, Head of Education Data Division, DfE

Secretariat

Paul Hirst, Education Data Division, DfE

Members

Penny Arcatinis	Birmingham LA
Philip Brocklehurst	formerly Kensington & Chelsea LA
Stephen Clark	formerly Lancashire LA
Bruce Farajian	South Gloucestershire LA
Chris Hill	Hounslow School, Hounslow (representing NAHT)
Anna Janes	formerly Brent LA
Rashid Jussa	Surrey LA / Waltham Forest LA
Damien Kearns	Nishkam High School, Birmingham
Adam King	Ofsted
Jeanette Miller	Southampton LA
Louise Nock	Barnsley LA
Mike Parkin	Worcestershire LA
Cathy Piotrowski	formerly Central Bedfordshire LA
Gavin Sandmann	Milton Keynes LA
Simon Utting	Hackney Learning Trust
Rowena Ward	London Tri-Borough Partnership
Max Winters	Bromley LA
Debbie Wright	Kent LA

Andrew Roberts, Wirral LA, was available to advise on any business cases that require specialist financial input.

Ofsted continued to work closely with the SCSB and they maintain a permanent seat.

One member takes a lead each month in feeding back the comments of the Board to attending policy representatives.

Annex 2

Annex 2 – List of cases considered November 2014 - October 2015

The Board met on ten occasions in the reporting year.

Business Case No	Business Case Name	SCSB Comments	Mandatory (M) or Voluntary (V)
Cases fully approved			
770	TA Moderation Collection	The business case was approved	V
771	Take-up of EYPP via EY and School Census	This business case was approved	M
772	Mid-year take-up of funded early learning and EYPP	This business case was approved for one year only	M
774	Review of Local Authority Data and MI Packs	The business case was approved	V
779	Post-16 portals - 16-19 course information	The business case was approved	V
780	Social Workers 2015-16	The business case was approved	V
783	Assessing the impact of changes to guidance on children missing from home or care	The business case was approved	V
784	Review of SEND Disagreement Resolution Arrangements	The business case was approved	V
786	Surveys in relation to social work	The business case was approved	V
788	Assessing LA progress in implementing SEN reforms 2015-16	The business case was approved	V
789	Change to the 2016 SEN2 collection	The business case was approved	V
790	Changes to the 2017 SEN2 collection	The business case was approved	M
792	Asbestos Management in Schools	The business case was approved	V
794	SCAP Review Exercise	The business case was approved	V
791	Early years central spend	The Board approved this business case by correspondence	V
793a	Autumn School Census – Identification of Traineeships	The Board approved this business case which was re-worked following a previous rejection	M
Cases partially approved			
787	Changes to the CIN collection	There were 5 additional data items proposed for this existing collection: 2 were approved	M
Cases conditionally approved			
773	Compliance with maths and English condition of funding (School Census)	The business case was approved subject to software suppliers being able to automate part of the return	M
785	School Census - childcare in schools	The Board approved the amendment to Census questions on condition that the data was not published	M

Business Case No	Business Case Name	SCSB Comments	Mandatory (M) or Voluntary (V)
Cases approved following amendments			
775	Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) – local authorities readiness survey	The survey was approved following receipt of the final set of questions being shared with members via correspondence	V
778	NCTL Supported Schools Survey	The business case was approved following changes suggested in the meeting	V
781	Extended Rights	The business case was approved following changes suggested in the meeting	V
782	Changes to the 2016 SEN2 Collection	The business case was approved following changes suggested in the meeting	V
Cases Rejected			
777	School Census - Capturing government-funded early entitlement provided for more than 38 weeks	The business case was not approved.	M
793	School Census - identification of traineeships	Rejected for being over burdensome	M
769	Maintenance data collection (part of School Capacity Collection)	The Board agreed in principle to the collection of the data but did not agree the method of collection. Following further consideration, the department did not represent the business case.	M
Other cases discussed			
776	Children's Social Work Workforce data collection 2014-15	The Board agreed the proposition in principle but further development work needed to be completed for instance to agree the definitions of roles in scope before it can be go ahead. The business case was re-drafted and presented as a new proposal (780)	M
795	Changes to School, AP and EY Census	Neither approved or rejected - business case discussed and approved at the next meeting (in the following reporting year)	M
Cases referred to appeal			
785	School Census - childcare in schools	The condition imposed on the original acceptance of this business case was successfully appealed.	M



Department
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