



HM Government



CJS Data Standards Forum – Terms of Reference

Version 2.0

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document details the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Criminal Justice System's (CJS) Data Standards Forum (DSF) as agreed with its cross-CJS governance body, the CJSE Product Board.

1.2 ToR Principles

The following principles apply to the DSF:

1. Any processes defined and used by the DSF should be as simple as possible while still being fit for purpose.
2. The DSF should aim for business resilience; the forum should be structured such that the disappearance or re-structuring of some part of an organisation should have as small an impact as possible on the operation of the CJS DSF as a whole.
3. That the autonomy of participating organisations is recognised. (As a forum, the DSF is a meeting place for parties engaged in agreeing the standards required for information exchange.)
4. The DSF is a technical body and as such the business issues related to data standards are dealt with by the forum's cross-CJS governance body, the CJSE Product Board.

1.3 Technical Remit of the Data Standards Forum

The DSF exists in order to articulate data standards to enable existing and future information exchange between systems owned by different business stakeholders that operate within the CJS space.

A standard is a normative agreement on the:

- naming conventions,
- representation,
- structuring,
- format and
- definition

of a data set which is agreed by two or more parties in the context of some information exchange. A standard enables the efficient and accurate exchange of information and provide a common vocabulary between parties subscribing to that standard.

A standard may cover the definition of such things as:

- Attribute/value pairs
- Facets on attributes (i.e. restrictions/constraints placed on an attribute to define acceptable values within a standard)
- Constrained lists of values
- Reference data
- Enterprise structure data
- Common formatting standards

This list is not exhaustive.

1.4 Business Scope

The business scope of the DSF is:

- To provide a technical assurance function for the data standards used by participating organisations who operate within the Criminal Justice System.
- To communicate changes to those standards used by participating organisations who operate within the Criminal Justice System.

In order to achieve this, the DSF engages in the following activities:

1. The definition and approval of data standards which are applicable to more than one CJO in the context of information exchange between those organisations.
2. The publication of standards to actively inform organisations that subscribe to those standards.
3. To identify a single owning and steward organisation for each individual standard.
4. To promote and seek involvement in future development work of data and information standards both across the CJS.
5. To promote best practice across organisations and to share experience in the application of data and information standards.
6. To identify those issues that cannot be resolved within the forum and to outline the technical options and their outline business cases for resolution by the CJSE Product Board.

1.4.1 Out of Scope

The following activities are **not** within the remit of the DSF:

1. Data standards of interest only to a CJO and for which no exchange of information required with another CJO.
2. The DSF does not have the mandate to enforce conformance with these standards at **within** the boundary of any CJO. It is up to the individual systems owner within each CJO to decide whether to (a) use their own data standards and to map these on to the CJS Data Standards for the purposes of message exchange between different CJOs, or (b) use the CJS Data Standards both for its internal data standards and for message exchange between different CJOs. This is discussed further in [Criminal Justice System: Data Standards Forum guidance](#).
3. This ToR does not cover the Request For Change (RFC) process. A CJO which wishes to raise a change request against the contents of the Data Standards Catalogue should contact their representative on the [Criminal Justice System: Data Standards Forum](#).

2 Governance

2.1 Overall Governance Structure

The forum's primary purpose is for the definition and coordination of data standards. Historically the forum was created to assure the standards used in the transportation of information across the CJS, especially the CJS Exchange.

However, the forum is pro-active in identifying new means of exchanging information and the possible impacts that this might have on new and existing data standards.

The forum also actively tries to identify emerging governance bodies that may be relevant to the development of standards or who should be informed by the existing standards.

In particular:

1. All technical issues related to data standards concerned with the systems' exchange of information between different CJOs fall within the remit of the DSF.
2. If there is a technical issue related to CJS data standards then the affected participating CJOs are consulted and a decision as to the best approach to take is reached by consensus.
3. In the event that a decision cannot be reached by the affected stakeholders then the issue will be raised to the CJSE Product Board.
4. The DSF may create working groups of its own. These may be (a) temporary groups who will work to define and/or align data standards across the different stakeholders or (b) permanent groups to manage changes to relatively volatile standards.
5. There are two permanent sub-groups:
 - the Results Sub Group which is concerned with the assignment and maintenance of codes to consistently record the results/outcomes arising from a criminal court hearing,
 - the Standard Offence Wording sub-group which interprets legislation to identify specific criminal offences and to define the standard agreed wording to be used when charging for that offence, thus ensuring a consistent approach to wording across the criminal justice system for all criminal offences.

2.2 Ownership and Management of Data Standards

The principles of data ownership and management of data standards is as follows:

1. Where a standard has an identified business owner then that owner will continue to own and maintain that standard.
2. The owner will use a publishing toolset and will administer the maintenance of the standard. If the standard is used to exchange information with another participating organisation then changes to the standard should be proposed to and approved by the DSF.
3. Wherever possible, the publishing toolset should support:
 - Version control for a standard.
 - Use of publish-subscribe mechanisms to actively inform participating organisations about changes to a standard.
 - The ability to download a standard in an easy to use format.
4. Where standards exist but there is no identified business owner (or ownership has lapsed for some reason) then ownership will be assumed by the forum itself until an appropriate business owner can be identified.
5. Organisations that seek to extend or restrict a publishing standard for their own business needs will be responsible for maintaining the link back to the original standard.

6. If an organisation has derived a local standard from a published standard they are responsible for creating a mapping to the published standard. This will allow other users to exchange information in a consistent and controlled manner.

2.3 The Role of the Secretariat

One of the organisations participating in the forum will take on a secretariat role. Currently this role is being filled by the Ministry of Justice. The functions encompassed by this role are:

1. To organise and Chair meetings of the DSF.
2. Ensure engagement with relevant cross-government/international bodies concerned with standards that may impact the standards falling within the remit of the DSF.
3. To liaise with the CJSE Product Board for the resolution of issues that cannot be resolved within the forum.

3 Composition of the DSF

3.1 Criteria for Organisational Representation

Membership of the DSF is open to all public sector business or technical groups operating in the Criminal Justice system and which exchange Criminal Justice information that is exchanged with other CJOs.

3.2 Nominations for Membership

Nominations for membership to the DSF may be made by existing members of the forum or they may be self-nominated. A nomination will usually be accepted provided that:

1. The nominee is a full-time member of a public sector CJO.
2. The criteria for organisational representation are met; see section 3.1.
3. The nominated individual is able to satisfy the responsibilities; see section 3.4.

Owing to the potentially large number of attendees, organisations are requested to send a single representative. An exception to this would be if an agenda item required specific expertise or some background information.

3.3 Responsibilities of the Chair

The chair will:

- Organise and chair meetings.
- Arrange for the production and distribution of the minutes of meetings.
- To arrange for the distribution of materials prior to meetings. In particular, to ensure that the attendees will have had sufficient time to review RFC's prior to the meeting.
- Liaise with CJS organisation representative to ensure any new standards or changes to standards are communicated to all members.
- To arrange for the escalation of issues that cannot be resolved within the forum to the relevant governance body.

3.4 Responsibilities of the CJS Organisation Representatives

Representatives will:

1. Attend meetings (either in person or by virtual conference).
2. Have the authority to take proposals back to their organisations for ratification.
3. If a representative is not able to be present then a substitute should be sent. The substitute must be empowered to make decisions during the meeting.
4. Raise any standard-related issues to the group. In the first instance this should be by requesting an item on the agenda for the next meeting.
5. Implement changes within their own organisations to standards arising from decisions within the forum.
6. To review all materials provided before a meeting is held. In particular, to review all RFC's raised for a meeting and to have comments ready for the next meeting.

3.5 Responsibilities for Participating CJOs

Each participating Criminal Justice Organisation will:

1. Nominate a full-time employee if they wish to be directly represented on the CJS Data Standards Forum.
2. Allocate time and resources for the representative to fulfil his/her responsibilities as outlined in section 3.4.
3. Should ensure they are either represented directly or are satisfied that they have access to representation should the need arise on the forum's governance body; the CJSE Product Board.

3.6 Frequency of Meetings

The DSF will meet every second or third month.

3.7 Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the meeting will be created at each meeting. They will record key decisions/action points and any points of information necessary to support them. After each item has been discussed the wording of the corresponding minutes will be agreed by the attendees. This will constitute formal acceptance of the minutes at the actual meeting.

4 Appendices

4.1 Historical Background

Historically the CJS Exchange Data Standards were developed and managed by the cross-CJO Data Standards Forum and its associated Working Groups, coordinated by the Criminal Justice Information Technology (CJIT) Data Standards Team as part of the Office for Criminal Justice Reform (OCJR).

The CJO Data Standards Team was disbanded in November 2008 and no further formal governance process was put in place to maintain and update the Data Standards Catalogue. As a result, members of the original Data Standards Forum worked together in an informal capacity and updated and published key data sets when required.

This informal governance process led to a number of issues around consistency and failure to communicate changes effectively to all interested parties. Therefore, in November 2009 the CJS Exchange Product Board requested that the Ministry of Justice take responsibility for the co-ordination of the Data Standards work and that they reinstate the cross CJO Data Standards Forum.

4.2 Glossary

Acronym	Description
CJO	Criminal Justice Organisation
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CJSE	Criminal Justice System Exchange
DSF	Data Standards Forum
RFC	Request For Change

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