

MINUTES

Title of Meeting:	Welfare Sector Transparency Board		
Date:	27.11.13	Time:	11.30 – 13.30
Attendees:	See attached list		
Apologies:	See attached list		

Agenda item 1 – Introduction and Welcome

David Frazer (DF) welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of this Sector Board, providing a brief background and summary of its role for new attendees.

He also confirmed that he had succeeded Gill Aitken as chair of the Board, as Gill had moved on and would be leaving DWP to take up her new role at HMRC early in the New Year

Agenda item 2 – Previous meeting note and action points

Melanie Hosker (MH) sought an update on the Government's Data Access Processing and Analytics (DAPA) framework (item 3 of the last meeting minutes). This framework was established by DWP to replace the Credit Reference Agency framework. Full details can be found [here](#)

Vanessa Cuthill (VC) provided an update on the Economic & Social Research Council's (ESRC) Admin Data Task Force activities (item 3) including the establishment of the Admin Data Research Network and Research Centre. These governing bodies are in place so research priorities can now be identified so that more data can be made available to the analytical community and Government.

The focus on more access for 3rd sector organisations and the private sector would follow in future phases downstream. Funding had now been secured to take this work forward for the next 5 years and that an appropriate infrastructure was currently being put in place. Further information would be made available in early 2014 – more details can be found at:

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/collaboration/collaborative-research/adt/>

The only remaining action point from the last meeting is the standing offer for DWP to provide a demo of Stat-Xplore to the Open Data User Group

Agenda item 3 – Cabinet Office National Information Infrastructure

Olivia Burman (OB) updated the Board on the Cabinet Office (CO) launch (31 October) of the [National Information Infrastructure](#) (NII) which formed the Government's response to the Shakespeare Review.

The NII currently contains approximately 4,000 unpublished datasets and CO are now working with partners to expand this number and ensure that more

currently unpublished data is published. They also plan to brigade data sets into linked categories for ease of access / reference.

An update was also provided on staffing changes within the CO Open Data team. Their main focus is to ensure:

- Open Data commitments are embedded in the work of all Government Departments,
- More datasets were captured on the inventory and published;
- More data is readily available, encouraging stakeholders and data user to engage in the debate about what data should be published.

Keith Dugmore (KD) welcomed this approach and suggested that the 'National Address Gazetteer' would be a tool that he and others would very much welcome being made available. (OB) agreed this is a cross-government issue and that it would fall to the CO Public Sector.

(VC) suggested that a strategic CO view of other cross cutting Open Data themes would be helpful. This could include a joined-up analysis of common themes/intelligence emerging from all the Sector Transparency Boards

AP 18: CO to register WSTB's interest in the release of a national address database as open data and identify/report back on other cross cutting open data themes

Agenda item 4 – Open Data Strategy Refresh and Progress Report

Martin Dillon (MD) summarised the Department's refresh of its Open Data Strategy which incorporates the CO NII measures. It also sets out DWP's engagement with a range of external and internal data users, recent new data releases and planned releases to 2015. Finally there's a section on DWP's wider data sharing initiatives which support more effective delivery of public services – for example the Population Census Beyond 2011 and the Electoral Transformation Programme. Board members were supportive of the content and CO suggested emphasising that new data releases should constitute 'open data by default'. The refreshed Open Data Strategy would be published shortly.

AP19: DWP to review the Strategy Refresh and emphasise the commitment to 'open data by default'. *(cleared 4.12.13)*

The new style progress report was introduced. It updates members on recent and upcoming engagement activities, open data releases and wider data sharing items. It was agreed this format would be used for future meetings

Agenda item 5 – Health and Safety Executive

Martin Davies (MDa) outlined the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) position on Open Data and Freedom of Information (FoI). He confirmed that the executive receives around 6000 FOI requests each year, of which around

10 - 20% are relatively complex, rather than more general requests about specific accidents for example

HSE contributed around 40 datasets to the DWP's dataset inventory, the majority of these are so far unpublished. Work is now underway internally to identify further datasets including any gaps and an assessment of Data Protection or employers commercial risks associated with publishing more datasets.

A number of case study style examples were provided to illustrate the work of HSE in this area. More information can be found at the HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

Member's feedback acknowledged HSE's high FoI volumes and suggested that publishing more open data could help mitigate this demand. Members also questioned whether a business database, related to business type and location was available for publication. It was confirmed that limited data was available to the HSE based on enforcement work rather than a more general outlook.

Members agreed that there was significant interest from the analytical and academic community in HSE data and that the more such data the better. There was recognition however that employer related inspection/compliance data may be potentially commercially sensitive. Finally, it was suggested that HSE may wish to engage with colleagues in similar areas, such as BIS to explore shared areas of interest and benefit from any lessons learned in the open data arena. ESRC also have a business data service that may be of relevance.

Hugh Stickland (HSt) sought details of any data-sharing agreements between HSE and Citizen's Advice. It was believed that there was no agreement but this would be confirmed

AP 20: HSE to feedback directly to (HSt) on any data sharing arrangements with Citizens Advice.

Agenda item 6 – DWP Statistical Service

Neil McIvor (NM), head of DWP Statistics, provided an update on the significant changes afoot to DWP's statistical reports. Currently, benefit statistics are reported at an individual level, but this will change to 'Benefit Units' (BU) as Universal Credit is rolled out. A consultation exercise took place on this change earlier this year – see the link [here](#)

More information regarding existing DWP statistics can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

Members indicated that providing information as soon as possible, even if not perfect, with caveats, was preferable to delaying publication. DWP recognised the demand for more timely statistics, but noted the need to

comply with the Code of Practice on Official Statistics . The challenge here is to continue to add to the suite of DWP datasets and to target the priority ones. There was a need to balance speed with quality whilst also maintaining privacy

Keith Dugmore (KD) sought a definition of the distinction between benefit and household unit data. It was explained a benefit unit captures partners/spouses and their dependents but a household unit would include everyone living at the same address regardless of their relationships. (KD) preferred household data which can be linked across to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) household census data.

(KD) expressed interest in learning lessons from the Beyond 2011 census data matching exercises. Admin data could potentially be used to populate the majority of the census data but there would always be some elements such as religion and ethnicity which would still need to be gathered by old style data collection. ONS census issues could be pursued via a bilateral with ONS and input from DWP. Background to the Population Census Beyond 2011 can be found [here](#)

AP 21: DWP to consider whether it would be helpful to invite ONS to WTSB to help with this debate

Heather Savory (HS) pointed out that a unique identifier needed to form a part of the core reference data on the NII to enable linking and increased exploitation of datasets. (VC) explained that legal barriers to data sharing are not always relevant and that an over cautious culture can be a real barrier.

(HSt) seeks to understand the cumulative impact of the Government's welfare reforms. However, at this stage it's too early for any such impact analysis. There are also problems associated with securing accurate data on the impact of the reforms on household income given that DWP's currency is the benefit unit.

The linking data sets theme could usefully be explored more widely at the next Sector Board meeting. This could include:

- how the CO Open Data agenda supports data sharing
- an overview of the barriers (real or perceived) to more data sharing,
- what is legally permissible and what not with example case studies
- how the [admin data task force](#) agenda fits in and finally
- an understanding of the overlap with Open Data ambitions.

AP 22: DWP to provide a paper exploring these themes for discussion at the next meeting

Agenda item 7 – AOB

Information Commissioner's Office update.

Sue Markey (SM) advised that as a result of the introduction of new dataset access provisions in the FoI Act on 1 September there have so far been no related FoI complaints received by the ICO. More on this FoI change can be found [here](#)

Future Welfare Sector Transparency Board meeting dates

- To be arranged for June 2014

Welfare Sector Transparency Board – 27.11.13	
Attendees	
David Frazer (chair)	DWP Director of Information
Sue Markey	Information Commissioners Office (ICO)
Hugh Strickland	Citizen Advice (CA)
Melanie Hosker	Equifax
Vanessa Cuthill	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Heather Savory	Chair of Open Data User Group
Keith Dugmore	Director of Demographics User Group (DUG)
Olivia Burman	Cabinet Office
James Ashton	Cabinet Office
Martin Davies	Health and Safety Executive
Neil Mcivor	DWP Deputy Director Statistical Services
Martin Dillon	DWP Information Governance & Security (IGS)
Michelle Pickard	DWP Information Governance & Security (IGS)
Andy Vickers (secretariat)	DWP Information Governance & Security (IGS)
Apologies	
Kirsty McHugh	Employment Related Services Association (ERSA)
Judith Jones	Information Commissioners Office (ICO)
Paul Raynes	Local Government Association