



Department
of Health

Open Standards Implementation:

Publishing, creating and storing documents in
open standards format

May 2015

1. Introduction

Cabinet Office announced the selection of [Open Document Format for Office Productivity Applications](#) on 22 July 2014, which established ODF (1.2) as the standard for saving and sharing documents across the government. PDF/A and HTML5 become the default format for documents intended for viewing. The open standards guidelines apply to all new documents published on GOV.UK.

This document sets out the current position with regard to publication and sharing of external documents and the plan to become fully compliant with open format standards in the Department of Health.

2. Background

The Digital Content Team publishes guidance to the Department on standards for publication of documents.

The guidance states that documents designed primarily for people to read, rather than to edit or fill in, must be available in one or both of the following formats:

- HTML5 (web page)
- PDF/A

Documents that external users will need to edit or interact with (for example, a form) must be published in Open Document Format (ODT).

The Department deploys a small number of corporate applications that collect information from external stakeholders. Any data collections are output and imported into the applications in CSV (comma or character separated values) format, in conformance with open document format requirements.

Files that are sent or downloaded by the stakeholder groups are currently in Microsoft Excel format where validation is required for data before output into CSV format. This aspect of the collection process does not conform to the required standards.

3. Planning to achieve full compliance

External publications

The Department publishes guidance that specifies publication of documents designed primarily for viewing on the GOV.UK and other websites in HTML5 or PDF/A formats.

The Department will ensure that full compliance with the published guidance continues by:

- Issuing communications to staff to ensure they are aware of the requirement;
- Requiring third party organisations that produce or publish web content for the Department to be compliant with the standards; and
- Ensuring content is approved as compliant by the Digital Content Team before publication.

Desktop applications

The Department currently deploys desktop tools that enable documents to be saved in ODF 1.1 format. The next deployment of desktop services will allow all internal and external documents to be produced in the required open document format. The strategy for upgrade of the current desktop is under review.

The Department expects to achieve full compliance with open document formats by 2018 at the latest but will aim to achieve this earlier within the desktop services refresh strategy if a business case for earlier upgrade is approved and funding is available. As part of the deployment, the default save format will be set by group policy to open document formats.

Corporate applications

The Department's legacy applications suite is currently being reviewed both in terms of where systems are hosted and where modernisation is required. As part of the review, use of proprietary formats for data collection will be identified. Any application that does not use open document format for collections will be made compliant as part of the modernisation plan. The strategic aim is for all corporate applications to be externally hosted and fully compliant with open document formats by 2018.