

iStandUK (<http://www.iStandUk.org>) is a collaboration, hosted by Tameside Council, of Local Authorities and Government Departments, with a mission to 'promote standards for efficiency, transformation, and transparency of local public services'.

We are pleased to respond to the 'Better use of data in Government' consultation, by making observations about the potential for applying data standards to improve how data is both exploited and protected. These points are drawn from our white papers, particularly

- <http://istanduk.org/white-papers/open-standards-for-digital-local-public-services/>
- <http://istanduk.org/white-papers/a-strategic-approach-to-data-sharing/>
- <http://istanduk.org/white-papers/opportunities-for-applying-standards-to-troubled-families/>

The consultation focuses on the legal and cultural barriers to sharing and re-using information, and proposes a series of powers, codes of practice and governance arrangements. However, there is little mention of the data standards, APIs, and digital capabilities, that are necessary as the foundation to ensure that individual initiatives can be scaled and replicated to ensure that access to data is at the heart of operational service delivery, and place-based service design.

The specifics in the paper, of

- automatic provision of fuel poverty assistance to those most in need; and
- improving the ability to identify families who would benefit from the Troubled Families programme

... are themselves patterns of more general scenarios in which better outcomes could be achieved if data is routinely shared, and analysed. We recommend that the associated codes of practice should establish these repeating patterns and the data standards which are common to each. This approach will draw out how the needs of people, families and communities are addressed by combinations of public services, and the potential for data sharing to support collaboration and continuity of service. Key standards and capabilities can then be applied to data sharing, such as

- identity management;
- registers of master data;
- common data models.

The paper mentions

... a shift towards querying datasets through APIs in place of the typical practice of using bulk data shares, with positive benefits on privacy and security.

... which is a necessary component of digital transformation of local public services. Whereas data has previously been shared as a snapshot of an entire dataset, we should now expect that a real-time request can be made by a trusted organisation, for a single piece of data, for a specified purpose. Both 'open data' and 'protected data' can be made available in this way using 5* data techniques, APIS, and common data models.

We should look to reduce the amount, and sensitivity, of data that is passed, by setting up data-shares which respond with simple answers to business questions, such as eligibility for a service. In this way, data need not be persisted at all, and there is no need to reinterpret data that is presented using the terminology and identifiers from other sectors. This is an approach exemplified by the 'Attribute Exchange' programme

championed by Warwickshire County Council and Local CIO Council, where application for services such as 'Blue Badge' can be 'self-served', even when eligibility data is held by more than one organisation.

That type of data sharing is founded in data standards, reusing platform capabilities which can be reprovisioned to support all manner of services.

The paper correctly associates 'purpose', with the initial collection of data, making links to the gateways that allow re-use. A definitive register of 'purposes' should underpin an inventory of 'data-shares' which can be queried by service, organisation type, role, and so on.

Similarly, Privacy Impact Assessments, Data Sharing Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, should be available to a consistent data format, rather than a series of documents, to support transparency, and as a part of a 'handshake' as data is requested and transferred.

We recommend that the consultation should recognise that data standards are a vital part of the 'better use of data in government' and that the codes of practice should include a commitment to establishing the standards and associated services necessary to make data sharing routine.