

Championing open data standards

Why have common and open data standards?

In order to achieve efficient data movement and matching, there is a need for common data standards. These are necessary to allow people and systems to exchange and re-use information.

This was recognised within the Education, Skills and Children's Services (ESCS) sector, and the Information Standards Board (ISB) was created in 2007 to deliver the data standards and data model to realise savings in the costs incurred with data moving and processing.

Why use the ESCS Information Standards?

DfE and BIS have jointly sponsored a Board and Technical Support Service since 2007 to develop the ESCS standards and support their implementation. Their aim was to provide a definitive set of standards through stakeholder consensus and support their implementation by ensuring developments were shared effectively and lessons learnt.

The standards and data model developed aims to provide a sector-wide solution which is future-proofed, so that it meets both the ability to cover the wide-ranging, but often similar, data items in more general terms, as well as allowing the model the flexibility to develop as a result of new policies which may impact on the data items in the model.

Where are we now?

Whilst much work has been done to develop the model and standards, the potential benefits of that investment are yet to be fully realised. There has been a strong focus on supporting two key areas of model usage so far: the Joint Council for Qualifications' (JCQ's) A2C project; and the Data Exchange Project being led by DESAG within DfE. However, the ESCS Information Standards have not yet been widely adopted.

Standards and Data Models by their nature require constant maintenance even once developed. If we are to have common data standards, there will be a need for ongoing support to further develop the model.

Questions for discussion

- How can we build wider interest and engagement with ESCS Information Standards?
- Who are the potential users? Government, LAs, MIS, Schools, Colleges, etc
- What could be done to engage more with users?
- How can DfE facilitate this?