

Sharing and standardising local government open data

Peterborough council has worked with data.gov.uk, the London Borough of Redbridge and esd-toolkit under the guidance of the Local eGovernment Standards Body to develop standard formats for popular datasets, and a format for listing published datasets as an inventory. Councils are invited to use these formats as they publish open data so that data about the same things can be easily discovered and compared.



Dataset inventories

A standards format is defined for your inventory of datasets. It contains basic information about the inventory, each dataset and associated documentation.

You can publish your inventory directly in the XML format defined or use a tool from esd-toolkit to convert from CSV and/or input and update your schema online.



Adding your datasets to data.gov.uk

Councils are encouraged to record all their open datasets on data.gov.uk. You can do this manually or get your datasets automatically uploaded by simply registering the address of your inventory. data.gov.uk will then periodically check your inventory for changes and updates its national index of open data accordingly.



Finding other people's datasets

The inventory includes properties which identify your council (or other organisation), the area described and the subject matter of the data.

Where appropriate, datasets are indexed according to esd-toolkit's standard Function List and Service List. This means that you can easily find every council's datasets for a specific service or function. Hence all datasets on the same topic can be found and combined to get a national picture.

esd standards
powering LG Inform

Functions list

Functional hierarchy of local government service...

Metrics group of lists

Measures of demography, characteristics and per...

Services group of lists

Services provided by local government

Standardising dataset formats

Combining and comparing datasets is much easier where they take the same format. Formats are defined by individual 'schemas' for datasets. A schema can be an XSD file or simply the definition of rows and columns used by DataShare.

You can publish the schemas you use to the esd-standards site, cross-referenced against appropriate functions and services. Then other councils can choose to use these same schemas. All datasets using the same schema can automatically be aggregated.

LGA will be working to surface model schemas for popular open datasets and will encourage councils to adopt these schemas.

DataShare

Using DataShare

If you use the DataShare product developed by the London Borough of Redbridge, your inventory is automatically published in the format used by data.gov.uk. All you have to do is give data.gov.uk the address from which to harvest this inventory.

DataShare will also let you publish your dataset format definitions and adopt definitions published by other councils.

Status

As of February 2013 the process described above is being finalised and tested. Watch out for further details and email support@esd.org.uk with any questions.

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