

Local Government Open Data Breakthrough Projects Evaluation Report 2013/14

Project title:

Data Publication through DataShare

Lead organisation:

London Borough of Redbridge
Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA)

Submission date:

05/09/2014

Type of project:

Data release and platform/tool development

Total grant:

£170,000

Summary of the project

The project allowed for the development of DataShare as publication platform for Local Authorities. The developments included:

- integrating open mapping into the geographic visualisations
- working with Data.Gov to provide for a mechanism for the automatic harvesting of metadata onto the data.gov.uk website to improve the amount and quality of Local Authority data on the site.
- categorising dataset schemas by the LGA's service and function list promoting easier discovery of datasets around specific themes.
- integration with the Peterborough breakthrough funded project for Local Authority dataset inventories. Allowing dataset schemas to be imported into the inventory and for DataShare to be able to consume schemas from the inventory or those created by others. This is shown by the 'Local Government open data inactive scheme' publishing the expected schemas in DataShare format for import.

As well as the above the project was funded to provide DataShare to up to 100 authorities with associated publicity and helpdesk support. This facility was to be provided by our partners CIPFA.

Challenge/opportunity:

The project was to assist Local Authorities publishing datasets that would be immediately useful to local residents using DataShare's ability to query and visualise the data directly from within DataShare without the requirement for additional applications to be developed to make sense of the data.

The developments to DataShare funded as part of the Breakthrough fund bid allowed for the sharing and consuming of datasets produced by others. This has allowed for the data incentive scheme to publish schema for the 3 funded datasets – planning applications, public toilets and licensed premises - in a DataShare format which can be imported into DataShare ensuring the correct consistent format. <http://incentive.opendata.esd.org.uk/>

The automatic harvesting of the dataset metadata from DataShare by dala.gov.uk will greatly increase the ease of keeping the central repository for this data up to date, therefore, reducing the overhead to local authorities and improving the quality of the metadata held.

It has become apparent that the ability to install and support the DataShare platform varies considerably within Local Authorities. This can be due to the small nature of some authorities and their technical capacity and capability or may be due to the arrangements in place with external ICT providers (which place a significant cost on the authority). To attempt to promote the take up of DataShare CIPFA have recently offered a hosted solution to address this situation. Additionally, we are assisting Hounslow with their project to host multiple DataShare instances on Amazon Web Services on the cloud. Both of these initiatives will assist Local Authorities to be able not yet gone live and further 48 who are assessing DataShare for their needs.

With the above in mind DataShare will continue to be offered to other authorities and with supported implementations into 2015 as there are a significant number of Local Authorities who are close to live implementation.

Data published and uses:

Currently DataShare is installed in the following Local Authorities which have so far published over 360 datasets:

- Bracknell Forest Council
 - 9 datasets - <http://data.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/>
- Brentwood borough Council
 - 17 datasets - <http://opendata.brentwood.gov.uk/>
- Cheshire East Council
 - 21 datasets - <http://data.cheshireeast.gov.uk/>
- Colchester borough Council
 - 3 datasets - <http://datashare.colchester.gov.uk/>
- Peterborough City Council
 - 16 datasets - <http://data.peterborough.gov.uk/>
- London Borough of Redbridge
 - 220 datasets – <http://data.redbridge.gov.uk>
- North Somerset Council
 - 26 datasets <http://data.n-somerset.gov.uk/>
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
 - 27 dataset - <http://data.scambs.gov.uk/>
- Wolverhampton City Council
 - 16 datasets - <http://data.wolverhampton.gov.uk/>

In the last year, on the Redbridge DataShare site, datasets have been viewed and interrogated online 16,000 times. The top 5 datasets viewed were:

- Senior Staff Salaries – 1,123
- Planning Applications – 935
- Contracts – 899
- Election Results – 515
- FOI requests – 497

Additionally datasets have been downloaded from Redbridge's DataShare site over 3,100 times. The top 5 datasets downloaded were:

- Payments over £500 – 417
- Election results – 178
- Senior Staff Salaries – 159

- Publication Scheme – 158
- Contracts – 135

Approach to publishing data

DataShare is a tool which allows for the easy publication of data by local authorities. Each of the authorities will have their own approach to which datasets to publish in which order which reflect local priorities and initiatives. However, DataShare allows this data to be published in an open format which is easy to use for residents and available for developers to use. This includes metadata associated with each dataset which is available for all and produced in a format for harvesting by LG Inform plus <http://inventory.opendata.esd.org.uk> and by data.gov.uk.

The Redbridge approach to publishing data is to publish as much as possible and respond to any requests for data publication.

Benefits and impact

The benefits of data publication will depend upon the specific approaches taken by the authorities which publish datasets using DataShare. At Redbridge this has the benefit to the organisation: of improving data quality due to the additional scrutiny which the data is exposed to; being the first point of call for Freedom of Information requests and improving the image of the Council as an open transparent body. As well as consuming the data within the Council we have seen examples of use of the data in the local press and by residents at public meetings.

Further information:

Datashare is available from <http://www.cipfa.org/Services/Research-and-Statistics/Datashare>.

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