

Implications for recordkeepers and records management of the Open Government agenda in the UK

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'Open data & information governance: recordkeeping roles'

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Statement of the overall recordkeeping / information governance problem

- Re-use of public sector information and open government data (OGD) is likely to most effective when information and data is trusted as being authentic, 'complete' and reliable, and does not breach privacy /sensitivity requirements
- Some evidence suggests that 'researchers, government officials and members of civil society are beginning to question the validity, integrity and traceability of datasets' (IRMT workshop on credible data, 2013)
- As with FOI 'a stronger connection with Records Management may help authorities to address accuracy and authenticity issues, as well as making data easier to locate and understand'



Team Europe Research Project 03: The Role of the Records Manager in an Open Government Environment in England

- Case study – Researchers Professor Shepherd, Dr Flinn & Jessica Page (RA)
- Aims:
 - To provide a snapshot of existing practice in information and records management in English local government
 - To identify legislation, policy or guidance relating to open government data and suggest implications for records management
 - To examine the recordkeeper's role in open government data, especially in local government
 - To support better understanding of the recordkeeping issues and records policies which take account of open government requirements

Research outline

- Why local government?
- Survey (on policies / guidance re OGD and implementation) – disseminated via IRMS Public Sector Group
- Choice of case study
 - Large County Council engaged in developing OGD policies and implementation
 - Records Manager involved in OGD and supported research (access to internal policy documents and interviews(4))
- Interviews focussed on definitions and understanding; guidance and regulations; and implementation
- Survey and interview questions shared and commented on by Swedish & North American colleagues to support future collaborative and comparative work

Legislation / guidance for OGD & recordkeeping

- Legislation and guidance (eg 2012 Open Government White Paper & Action Plans) concentrates on publication of data and how it is to be accessed – acknowledgement that how data is managed is crucial but not so much on how that is to be achieved
- DCLG has issued **Local Government Transparency Code** (2011 & 2014)
- Useful for determining in general which data should be published
- Again recognises role of robust RIM in delivering transparency but does not elaborate what this means or how it is to be achieved
- Code assumes established electronic systems, whereas many RK systems are primarily paper-based
- Code emphasises publishing as much data as possible, rather than identifying data which is wanted & will be utilised
- 2012 amendments to FOIA re datasets resulted in useful guidance from the ICO (Datasets sections 11,19 & 45)
- Overall a lack of RM guidance on open government data (compared to FOIA / DPA codes, etc) & development of standards would also help

Who is responsible for open government data in the local authority?



What are the main responsibilities / challenges of the open government data environment?

- A new and evolving area of work (protocols & policy being developed by OGD Working Group)
- Resource implications / work load
- Risk management and data security
- Protecting personal data
- Management of Information Asset Register
- Cleaning up data before proactive release
- Lack of consistent policy on release by different de-centralised teams
- Ensuring long term data accuracy & integrity - providing future access to open data
- Metadata standards for open government data

What does this mean for the records professionals in local government?

- An important records management role, but not traditional paper file management
- Need to have clear digital expertise & mandate to extend recordkeeping principles (authenticity, integrity, preservation) to datasets & then the auditing of compliance with these principles
- Needs resourcing / recognition of role by senior management
- Collaboration with other stakeholders and professional disciplines organisations
- But also greater standardisation of practice within organisations and across public sector backed up by detailed standards and guidance
- Importance of advocacy and training to underpin guidance and policy

Further research

- Literature review on UK and European agendas for open government data
- Literature review on implications of UK and European legislation and regulations on privacy and data protection for recordkeepers and recordkeeping
- Implications of open government agendas and open government data for information governance in the National Health Service
- Building into comparative studies with colleagues in Scotland, Sweden and North American
- Support further research concerning information governance for government administrative data / ethics, recordkeeping and health