

Providing a Business Case for Purchasing Datashare

Public sector data configured on the datashare platform can provide added value in five key management areas:

- Targeting resources
- Monitoring service performance
- Monitoring the effectiveness of policy
- Consultation Processes
- Inter-agency working

Targeting resources

A major public sector issue is where to invest resources. Historically these decisions have tended to be led by public demand and expressions of vested interests rather than data based evidence. The availability of quality data is changing this. For example quality police crime data can be used to target resources based on intelligence instead of “informed guesswork” i.e. police patrols based on a mapping of crime/disorder incidents instead of on a standard timetable, mobile CCTV units can be located on real activity hotspots. In this way information mapped on Datashare can assist in ensuring that resource decisions are based on evidence based rigorous measurement, monitoring and evaluation of a problem within a geographic context.

Monitoring service performance

The achievement of best value within government processes requires the establishment of a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of service performance indicators. Local Authorities and other public sector agencies routinely collect data to meet the demands of statutory reporting requirements and their own internal management information needs. Representing this information where appropriate on the Datashare platform to enable the spatial visualisation of service supply and demand profiles can add value to the data and assist in the achievement of more efficient service delivery.

Monitoring the effectiveness of policy

Policy decisions may conflict at local, regional and national level. Data from multiple agencies configured on a single platform can be used to develop, test, and evaluate policy scenarios. The ability to accurately monitor and evaluate implementation and outcomes, enables analysis of the inter-relationships between policy areas, and the relative contributions of individual agencies to the achievement of shared policy objectives.

Consultation Processes

A promising use of Datashare is the geographic mapping and analysis of survey information. A successful pilot was carried out within the Social Inclusion Partnerships in North Ayrshire where citizen panel participants in local surveys were trained in the use of the system and given access to the survey results..

Public reporting functionality is also being developed to enable the presentation of information in pre-designed formats on public access web sites. This application is particularly suitable for the presentation of performance indicators, related to the Best Value regime for example. In this application it would be appropriate to report data aggregated to geographies such as wards or post code sectors in tabular or graphic formats.

Inter-agency working

Datashare was developed in the first instance as a tool to support inter-agency partnership working. Effective Community Planning will depend on the achievement of common understanding and shared objectives amongst agencies, which requires to be underpinned by shared information. It is in this area that the Datashare system can provide the greatest impact on business processes and correspondingly significant potential for cost efficiencies.

Assessment of Cost/benefits

The assessment of the cost benefits of deploying the Datashare platform in measureable terms is problematic partly due to the difficulty in isolating the present costs of the data management processes but also because the main benefits relate to new processes of community planning and cannot be related to existing costs. Nevertheless current costs can be identified as part of service management, part of research and analysis, part of policy development etc but are not easily isolated in the accounting processes within organisations. Some form of proxy must be adopted to demonstrate cost benefits or surveys on data useage undertaken to estimate resource demands.

The measurable benefits can be broadly categorised as follows:

- **avoidance of duplication**- information held centrally and able to be accessed by many saves resources allocated to the separate collection ,storage and retrieval systems and their management and administration costs.
- **efficiencies of direct access**- the Datashare system allows users to gain direct access to data configured on the platform, subject to security protocols. This cuts out wasteful and time-consuming third party data procurement procedures.
- **economies of scale**-within a partnership context many agencies and departments within agencies, can share the cost of maintaining the Datashare platform and gain the added value provided by the system functionality without significant investment

An assessment of these direct savings could be made through an analysis of the use of commonly used data sets eg census data, unemployment data, benefits data, crime data. This would require a survey of both data providers and data users to determine existing procedures, frequency of use, staffing resources deployed etc. and would of itself likely costs more than the provision of a pilot operation, through which the potential benefits could be demonstrated to a large audience. At the same time the pilot would provide a service in the chosen application area in an extremely cost efficient manner.