Minutes of the Steering Group Meeting

Date: 2 December 2024

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: 2 Marsham Street, SW1P 4DF, and virtually on Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Members:

Firoze Salim (FS) – Head of Frameworks and Standards, Data Strategy and Standards CDDO

Sam Hollings (SH) – Head of Coding and Data Standards, NHS England

Kate Cooper (KC) – Lead for Data & Transparency, Local Government Association

George Russell (GR) – Digital Transformation Delivery Lead, DHSE

Fionn Mcgorry (FM) - Head of Interoperability, DSIT

Gary Griffiths (GG) - Technical architect on Family Hubs project, DfE

Kelly Hewitt (KH)- Digital access manager, Community Action Network 100

Secretariat:

Sheldon Ferguson (SF) – MHCLG

Mike Thacker (MT)

Ben Unsworth (BU)

Melanie Wong (MW)

Apologies:

Emily Sullivan (ES) – Chair, Head of Product, Local Digital MHCLG

Welcome and Housekeeping

- SF welcomed everyone to the meeting, followed by a round of introductions from all attendees, both in person and online.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

- Attendees confirmed their approval of the minutes from the previous meeting.

Scope

- SF suggested increasing the frequency of meetings. Attendees confirmed they are happy to meet again in 3-4 weeks.

Review terms of reference and nominate Kelly Hewitt to join

- There were no objections to KH nomination. Attendees welcomed KH to join the steering group.

Demo the tools we've made

- BU gave a live demo of the validator tool and showed how compliant and non-compliant feeds would be displayed. It is a pass or fail result based on the first 3 checks which are the most critical. The tool is intended to be self service and results will be publicly displayed in a verified directory of compliant feeds.
- FS recommended meeting up with Alex Smith in CDDO (Head of platforms) as API guidance was updated in July.
- GG advised that the Department for Education (DfE) test feed from Somerset council and the Family Hubs aggregated feed were delayed. However, it is hoped the work will be completed ready to test this financial year.
- SH expressed these tools will be useful for NHS England.

Taxonomies

- MT presented an overview of his work on taxonomies for the cluster of MHCLG standards projects. LGA taxonomies are compliant with good practice and used by some ORUK publishers in local government but there is a need to clarify cross-government plans for taxonomies in the long run.
- GG shared a current issue that not all feeds supply a taxonomy term, meaning it can't be pulled into the aggregate data feed. A proposed workaround is to use Azure AI search, but this raised security and privacy concerns. This is waiting on a decision by DfE on whether this is permissible.
- BU and KH asked for a future update on use of AI search, as a potential way to support councils at different levels of maturity.

Update on procurement and tendering for support services on Y2 and Y3

- SF reported that Public has reviewed proposals for future support on ORUK and made recommendations on managing ORUK in future.
- SF will propose dates for an interim meeting in the coming weeks for Public to present recommendations.

Update on the incentive scheme

- SF updated on proposals for an incentive scheme that were shared at the last meeting. SLT feedback wanted a more ambitious scheme, expanded across the country.
- BU reiterated the extent of challenges faced by local authorities in curating, collecting and managing the data effectively.
- KC agreed with BU, and advised that councils need reassurance that the Standard will be maintained in the long term, to keep going with this work.

Highlights from the technical meeting

- SF shared that there was good attendance from the public sector and suppliers at a technical meeting where the validator tool was presented. A key message from MHCLG was made that there remains a deep commitment from the department to continue supporting ORUK after 6 years of ongoing support. Greg Bloom of the international Open Referral organisation also presented on how the Standard is governed and supported technically by their team.

AOB

- KH raised that in Dorset, the VCS is the data collector and assurer, not the council. Compliance in this case is dependent on NHS supporting the Standard.
- BU acknowledged there are different models of data collection around the country, and the Standard remains agnostic to how data is collected and curated.
- SH advised he is in discussions to get ORUK recognised across the NHS. MT offered to send details for the NHS England social prescribing framework.
- SF asked members for better understanding of their plans or approach to adopt the Standard, to be shared at a future meeting.

Actions

- FS: Share contact details of Alex Smith with the ORUK project team to discuss API guidance for the validator.
- MT: Share details for the NHS England social prescribing framework with SH.
- SF: Propose a date for an interim meeting for Public to share recommendations.

Date of next meeting: 3 March 10.00 – 12.00pm

Meeting close