Data Transformation: A summary of the discovery report

Purpose

A discovery was conducted by Lagom Strategy, on behalf of Skills for Care, between July and September 2021. It focussed on exploring the possible changes to the way national adult social care workforce data in England is collected.

In particular, it explored the possibility that large volumes of data could be transferred in more automated ways.

The context of the discovery was specifically in relation to completing the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS), though the principles can be applied to similar data collection scenarios. The research activities were conducted in-line with the definition and guidance of a digital service discovery phase mandated by the Government Digital Service (GDS) Service Manual.

Understanding current data systems and software

One aspect of the discovery considered the data systems which are used by care providers. The key findings included:

Care providers use many different HR and other data systems.

A low response to the survey means this remains hard to quantify, however there were many instances of systems being named once. There was little obvious market share or market leaders.

Of the 280 responses, the largest share by one system provider was 8%.

There is a huge variety out there making the use of APIs (hundreds of them) very difficult.

Even where providers use the same software provider, they use different versions of the system.

Most systems are off the shelf but have then been customised, again leading huge variations between care providers.

Only 2

Of the 49 providers that listed data systems, 26 of them listed more than one. 34 out of 49 also listed additional information about how data was collected, many of these listing additional sources of data.

built-in databases and request reports from our

Survey respondent, private provider.

local authority.

We have to speak with colleagues as each department is responsible for each system. For example, Finance is responsible for payroll, HR for personal

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Key finding: Within some organisations, some data is not held in data tools or is not collected.

Researchers heard from some providers that some data is not held in data tools so either must be gathered from other sources or is not submitted.

-reference paper / saved copies of actual certificates or

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respondent, local authority.

respondent, local authority.

Key finding: All interviewees described some kind of manual work involved in updating their workforce data.

Every provider involved in interviews stated that some kind of manual work was involved in the process of gathering and preparing data. This was work that was carried out by the data inputter, in addition to extracting the data from the systems it was stored within.

Another manual task researchers heard about from multiple interviewees was sense checking.

-to-day

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like putting a square peg in a round hole. Once all the data is collated -
from the different sources - matching it up and coding it means the process is

Some providers also expressed concerns about maintaining control of data that is transferred automatically