

The Information Governance Process: An Overview for Sponsors

Why standards matter

"Standards make an enormous contribution to most aspects of our lives - although very often, that contribution is invisible. It is when there is an absence of standards that their importance is brought home."

International Standards Organisation (ISO)

The Information Standards Assurance Process

The Information Standards Assurance Process supports sponsors, developers and users of information standards by adopting a structured approach to reviewing standards development.

This approach ensures appropriate areas are considered during the development and implementation of a standard such as: business requirements; funding and resources; consultation and engagement; security and confidentiality; and comparison with existing and developing standards.

A historic lack of appropriate information governance processes had led to the identification of a number of issues by those involved in the process, e.g. a lack of co-ordination in data demands, data standards and definitions. Therefore the Information Governance Process was developed and established in 2006 after approval by the Department of Health and Social Service (DHSS) Management Board and was introduced in WHC (2006) 083. (This was initially called the Information Governance Process and the appraisal board was called the Welsh Information Governance & Standards Board. Some changes to terms, names and roles were made to take account of the establishment of the NHS Wales Informatics Service and the Wales Information Governance Board.)

The outcome of the Information Governance Process should be that data is captured, transmitted and used effectively, efficiently and securely and that the burden of capturing data for secondary purposes is minimised.

The Welsh Information Standards Board

A key requirement for ensuring effective sharing of quality data is to ensure all requests for information flows and standards are reviewed through a formal and robust governance process. This process is overseen by the Welsh Information Standards Board (WISB).

WISB is responsible for co-ordinating information governance and standards issues for health and health care in Wales. Its scope covers clinical, administrative and managerial informatics standards to be used in NHS Wales and with its partner organisations. A co-ordinated process ensures that duplication of effort is minimised in developing and implementing information standards.

Sponsoring a new or changed standard

A Sponsor shall be the person(s) responsible for ensuring that the conditions for effective implementation of the new requirement, including funding, are present.

The Sponsor will usually work for the Welsh Government. If in exceptional circumstances this is not the case, the Sponsor must obtain support from a suitable individual within the Assembly who has the authority to request a Ministerial letter or issue an 'Official' letter or equivalent.

The Sponsor is likely to have identified the need for a new or changed standard and will drive the development of the standard. The Sponsor will oversee the engagement with WISB and ensure that effective documentation is supplied to WISB to enable consideration of proposals.

Submissions to WISB will require the following information at different stages of the process:

- The business justification including purpose, scope and funding arrangements.
- The fit with other information related developments.
- Impact assessment including stakeholder consultation.
- Plans for development, implementation, maintenance and review.

The submission process

At various points in the Information Standards Assurance Process documents will be submitted to WISB for consideration. If WISB approves the requirement then the standard will continue to the development stage and eventually on to implementation and review.

The appraisal points are:

Requirement Notification: at which stage the focus is on the business requirement

Development Proposal: at which stage the likely information and data requirement will be proposed

Final Proposal: will follow impact assessment of the proposed data requirement and include an all Wales implementation plan

Review: following introduction, change or retirement of a standard, this will document the consequences of that decision

It will not always be necessary or sensible for WISB appraisals to start at Requirement Notification stage. Sponsors or their Developers should discuss the most appropriate engagement plan for WISB with the WISB Secretariat.