

# Annual Report

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# Independent Chair's Report

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**2009-10 has been a busy and productive year for the Information Standards Board (ISB) for education, skills and children's services in England. We have worked closely with colleagues across the many sectors to develop standards that provide greater consistency and coherence across the system.**

This year the ISB has taken a new approach to standards development based on a system-wide data architecture. The data architecture provides a framework for the systematic development of information standards that have the widest usage across the system. Details of the data architecture can be found at <http://www.escs-isb.org.uk/standardslibrary/Business+Data+Architecture.htm> and an outline of the standard's development process can be found at <http://www.escs-isb.org.uk/standardslibrary/ISB+Standards+Development+Outputs.htm>

This approach was used successfully in developing standards at pace to meet the business needs of the 14-19 reform programme and the introduction of Diplomas in particular. We learned a great deal from this exercise, especially through feedback from our stakeholders who ensured that this was a strong and thorough process.

# Independent Chair's Report

Unsurprisingly then, close working with our stakeholders remains central to developing standards linked to meeting business needs and priorities. We are grateful to all those who have contributed in so many ways. And we recognise that we must continue to convince those who might still be unsure of the benefits of well targeted and well crafted standards.

The ISB must and will continue to adapt to focus on meeting the needs of the children, families and learners we serve. The context for this is likely to be an intensification of the pressures for transforming public services and cost reduction. The ISB must be ready to respond quickly to the needs of the underlying system once the post-general election landscape is known.

Lastly and importantly, I should like to thank the ISB Board members for their contribution. Between us we have a wide-range of cross-cutting experience and knowledge that collectively has proved very powerful. Those members who have retired during the year can be sure of a lasting legacy. Those who have joined us can be sure that they bring fresh insights and new ideas.



Dorian Bradley

**The data architecture provides a framework for the systematic development of information standards that have the widest usage across the system**

# Looking ahead

**We have much to do to with our finite resource. We must therefore focus our time and energy on those things that will make most impact. We must build on what we have already done and ensure that the standards in place are adopted widely. High profile activities in our 2010-11 business plan include:**

## Completion of work in progress

- workforce data standards that meet system-wide needs, with the impetus coming from DCSF data collection needs
- childcare and family services data standards to meet the identified need for parents to access, search, sort, filter and compare information about childcare and family services providers, including childminders
- Learner Record – defining data standards to support learner data, including those required to repurpose the ILR (individual learner record) in line with the FE Data Strategy
- Registration, Assessment, Results and Awards Notification data standards – approving data standards for exam registration and results notification for awarding bodies

**childcare and family services data standards to meet the identified need for parents to access, search, sort, filter and compare information about childcare and family services providers, including childminders**

## Looking ahead

### And

- promoting and assisting with the adoption of system-wide interoperability
- continuing to work closely with the MIAP Learner Record Service, which, amongst other things, brings together the schools, FE and HE sectors
- creating new data standards to replace existing DCSF standards (CBDS) for data collection
- updating the approved ethnicity codes when Parliament publishes the approved 2011 Census codes
- persisting with the drive to achieve a common address standard
- optimising the adoption of approved standards and especially those supporting the 14-19 reform programme – Application and Enrolment; Timetable and Attendance data
- finalising a data sharing framework to help, support and encourage a more effective and co-ordinated approach to the management and handling of data and information across the system
- collaborating with the four Home Nations and Eire to make the best of all available standards, including wider international standards

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# The ISB operates system-wide

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The ISB is the system-wide<sup>1</sup> authority for all information and data standards.

We are a non-statutory body that creates and defines standards across the education, skills and children's services system. Our work covers both DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) and BIS (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) policy areas – and we have the authority to approve information and data standards on behalf of the system.

Our mission is to create and maintain a sufficient, minimum set of re-usable standards to support the sharing of data to enable the implementation and evaluation of policy outcomes; the delivery of joined up services to citizens and employers, and to achieve system-wide efficiencies and best value for money, as embodied in the Information Strategy for education, skills and children's services.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context system-wide refers to businesses (agencies and arms length bodies) that fall within the remit of BIS and DCSF

## The ISB operates system-wide

### The ISB enables

The ISB works to reduce the spread of competing information standards. Information standards help ensure data is stored in common, consistent formats. This means that, where appropriate, information and data can be understood, used and shared between different users across the system regardless of the technologies in use.

The ISB approach allows developers to re-use standards developed for a specific purpose in other applications. This makes common information standards an essential building block for the system-wide Information Strategy. It supports the public service reform agenda; creating systems that are increasingly joined-up and centred on customers – such as children, parents, learners, employers – rather than on institutions or other organisations.

### The ISB benefits the frontline

In simple terms we contribute to the system operating better, faster and cheaper. For example:

- reduced implementation time and costs of delivering projects and programmes
- reduced operating costs by allowing data to be used many times across different sectors
- child, family and learner outcomes achieved more easily, by making new, innovative, high value online services possible
- potential savings across the system – either in the form of cashable savings or cost avoidance – conservatively estimated to be up to £300m a year if a full set of system-wide data standards was available

## The ISB operates system-wide

### The ISB collaborates

The ISB encourages and supports the businesses by developing standards for the benefit of the entire system. We work closely with business teams across the DCSF, BIS and their partner organisations that require information standards.

Special interest groups and specific working groups help us get the business cases right and to engage with the right stakeholders. We also consult more widely.

Our Technical Support Service and Secretariat work closely with the DCSF Strategy and Architecture Unit and standards developers to get the best product based on the system-wide data architecture.

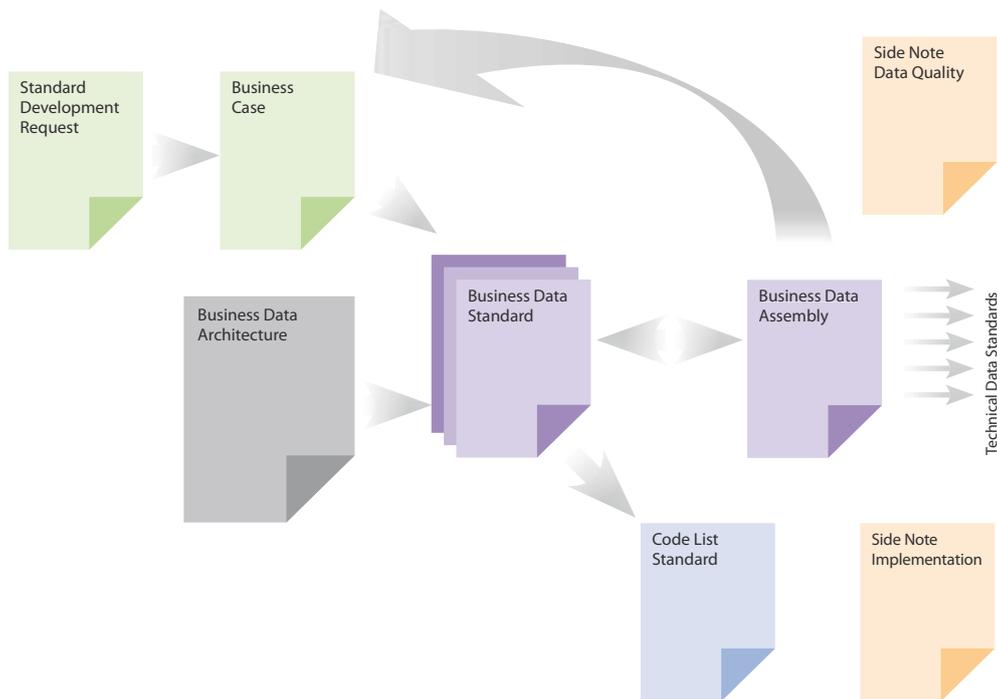
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# The ISB operates system-wide

## The ISB is systematic

A business data standard is defined in response to a business need captured in a business case. In development, every effort is made to ensure that the business data standard is capable to support all system-wide business needs for the same data. The business case may in fact give rise to a number of business data standards, and the way that the standards are associated to meet the originating business need is shown using an “assembly” document. In many cases existing standards can be reused. Each assembly document may in addition need some guidance regarding data quality issues and implementation issues and these are contained in “side notes”.

The related documents are shown in the following diagram:



## The ISB operates system-wide

### The ISB approves standards

**Approved 'Recommended'** – the standard is approved by the ISB, ready for adoption across the system and should be used freely. Some fine tuning may be necessary based on user experience and the standard will be reviewed after an agreed period before the ISB confers the status of 'Adopted'

**Approved 'Adopted'** – the standard is approved by the ISB, ready for unconditional adoption across the system and should be used freely

**'Inherited'** – the ISB recognises that there are many standards that pre-date current arrangements and are in widespread use. Such standards will, in time, become superseded by a number of business data standards. The importance of such standards is recognised by the ISB through conferring 'Inherited' status

The use of the standards is not mandated by the ISB but may be mandated by departmental policy directorates and others responsible for setting policy. Organisations that choose to conform to the data standards will be assured that they will be able to exchange data easily with any other conformant system.

You can find out more about the ISB on our website at

**<http://www.escs-isb.org.uk>**

# Performance against the Plan

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**We set out three high-level goals in the 2009-10 Business Plan:**

## **Increase the ISB's visibility with stakeholders across the system**

We have held a number of briefing sessions on the work of the ISB with different stakeholder groups, including the SIF Association, commercial suppliers to both schools and FE Colleges, the awarding bodies, the Association of Colleges, and SALTIS. We have also targeted some key programmes and bodies where standards were required to meet business needs.

We have worked closely with the DCSF Data Services Group to embed the development of new data standards in the Data Services Group's transformation strategy and roadmap.

We now have the collaborative working space to enable the special interest groups, Board members and the devolved UK nations to work together by commenting on and sharing information.

## Performance against the Plan

### **Provide authoritative leadership to support the development of standards and their adoption**

We have been working with the businesses to identify and develop the standards needed to meet system-wide requirements. We are currently working with stakeholders to ensure the adoption of the Application and Enrolment; Timetable and Attendance data standards.

### **Increase the ISB's impact by focusing on the standards that will bring the greatest and earliest benefits to the Education Skills and Children's Services**

Working with stakeholders and the DCSF Strategy and Architecture Unit, our Technical Support Service has given priority to developing those standards that are needed to meet the need for schools and colleges to collaborate effectively in the administration and award of Diplomas, in supporting local development of the 14-19 Prospectus and Common Application Process, workforce data collection, the Child Death Review programme, and programmes that are providing information to parents and carers.

We have worked closely with the DCSF Data Services Group to embed the development of new data standards in the Data Services Group's transformation strategy and roadmap.

**We have been working with the businesses to identify and develop the standards needed to meet system-wide requirements**

## Performance against the Plan

### Some more about specific standards

**May 2009** – *Ethnicity Data Standard*: a controlled list of ethnicity categories. The expected benefits of this standard include: reduced costs of collecting ethnicity information, improved statistical relevance of data when compared to data sets; better targeting of public resources based on better quality of data; reduced costs of adapting to subsequent changes in standard definitions used by the Office for National Statistics. Approved with the status of ‘Adopted’.

The standard will benefit all learning providers, local authorities and central government departments that are required to report on or collect data on ethnicity.

The codes will be update when Parliament publishes the approved 2011 Census codes.

**May 2009** – *Common Basic Data Set (CBDS)*: this provides a standard for data use in schools, education authorities, the Department and other software systems for management information. Recognised with the status of ‘Inherited’.

The standard was approved by the ISB to acknowledge the importance and current use of the standard. But also to alert new projects to the fact that CBDS in its entirety is not seen as the strategic direction of travel for standardisation of all the data items with the standard.

**July 2009** – *Common Data Definition (CDD)*: MIAP CDD version 1 was first released in 2004 and is compliant with e-GIF Government Data Standards Catalogue. CDD facilitates the creation of a Unique Learner Number (ULN) and the development of a Personal Learning Record containing participation and achievement data. Recognised with the status of ‘inherited’.

The standard was approved by the ISB to acknowledge the importance and current use of the standard, and to alert new projects to the fact that CDD in its entirety is not seen as the strategic direction of travel for standardisation of all the data items within the standard.

## Performance against the Plan

**September 2009** – *Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML) ESCS Profile* is an XML standard for exchanging authentication such as identity provider and authorisation such as service provider data between security domains. Approved as 'Recommended'.

OASIS SAML 2.0 is the existing, standard underlying many web-based single sign-on solutions. But it has many options and as a result there is a high probability that compliant implementations will not interwork. A single education, skills and children's services profile will promote interoperability.

**September 2009** – *Learner Identifier*: The ISB Technical Support Service is working closely with the DCSF team responsible for developing a common identifier for children and learners as part of a wider strategy to manage identity and personal information efficiently and effectively across the system. As a minimum the ISB is planning to support the direction of travel in this area, which aims to expand the use of the existing Unique Learner Number and the MIAP registration services.

Approved as 'Recommended' as a standard identifier for learners in the 13+ age range.

**September 2009** – *Criteria for evaluating controlled vocabularies*: the ISB approved the criteria as guidance for ways of working.

## Performance against the Plan

**November 2009** – the ISB approved a number of important information standards of wide-ranging importance across the system. The standards include information building blocks for people, organisations, learners, qualifications and more. These are of immediate value in supporting 14-19 reform, including the growing take-up of Diplomas.

- *Application and Enrolment* – the purpose of this work is to develop a set of business data standards, code lists and supporting documentation to support the business processes for application and enrolment. This includes the work being undertaken by the DCSF team developing the Common Application Process
- *Attendance* – the purpose of this work is to develop a set of business data standards, code lists and supporting documentation to support the business processes for attendance
- *Timetable* – the purpose of this work is to develop a set of business data standards, code lists and supporting documentation to support the business processes for timetable.

**November 2009** – *The Parent-Know-How (PKH) Directory subject vocabulary* has been developed to provide standard lists of terms that can be associated as metadata tags with information content about services relevant to parents and practitioners, which can be uploaded to the PKH Directory aggregator. The primary purposes of the PKH Directory is to improve the reach and quality of parenting information and support services, and to enable practitioners to access the right information when needed. These support and facilitate the overall objective of implementing the “information duty” required of local authorities in Section 12 of the Childcare Act (2006). It can be viewed at: <http://www.esd.org.uk/standards/ispp/>

The PKH Directory vocabulary represents a standard set of classifications, which can be used across local authorities in England and registered national organisations and services to tag and identify information content about services. The Board also approved the Parent Know How Vocabulary as ‘Adopted’.

# ISB Board members

We welcome three new members to the Board: Alison Allden, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Statistics Agency; John Perks the new Head of *the information authority*; and Di Smith, Director of Children's Services in Brighton & Hove, all of whom bring considerable knowledge and experience to the ISB.

We would like to show our appreciation for the valuable contributions made to the work of the ISB by Professor Robin Sibson, previously Chief Executive at HESA now retired, and Richard Stiff, previously Director of Children's Services at North Lincolnshire Council and Chair of the ADCS Information Systems and Technology Policy Committee now moved into a new role.

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## Dorian Bradley

Independent Chair

Dorian Bradley is the first independent chairman of the Information Standards Board and has had his appointment extended by Ministers for a further two years to 2011.

"As a former teacher, HM inspector and Ofsted's first Children' Director, I have first hand knowledge of many of the issues that the ISB was set up to resolve.

When appointed in 2007, my initial aim was to make the Board's work understandable and persuasive, so that businesses in the system could take full advantage of the information standards we approved. In this way, we would realise our ambition of better quality outcomes for children and learners, through better quality information at less cost.

Now that the Board is fully established, I want it to work more closely with the other UK countries and Eire to maximise the benefits."

## ISB Board members

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### Alison Alden

Board Member

Alison Alden is Chief Executive of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, which collects data from all of the higher education institutions in the UK and makes information and intelligence on the provision of higher education available to interested parties.

"I have been involved in the collection and provision of information through much of my career in higher education (as a University Director of IS and senior executive) and appreciate the importance of identifying standards that allow for information sharing and the collection of meaningful administrative and management information. The need for good quality information that both supports individual learners and the planning and provision of education is vital for the whole sector and I am glad that I am able to contribute to this through the Information Standards Board."

### John Perks

Board Member

John Perks is Head of *the information authority*, which sets and regulates data standards for further education and training provision in England. Its goals are to improve the quality of data collections and reduce the time spent on administration.

*The information authority* recognises that further education and training is a fundamental part of the wider education and skills sector and increasingly is working with colleagues in the schools and higher education sectors to develop common standards and approaches to data collection and analysis. The role of the ISB in defining and setting data standards is important to all those involved in the education sector and I'm pleased to be supporting its aims and taking an active role in this area of work.

## ISB Board members

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### Di Smith

Board Member

Di Smith is Director of Children's Services in Brighton & Hove. Brighton & Hove was a pathfinder Children's Trust and developed an integrated Children's Trust model in 2006, including pooled budget arrangements. Di is actively engaged in reviewing the S75 agreement with Health partners to ensure fitness for purpose going forward. She is Chair of the Association of Directors of Children's Services Information Systems and Technology Policy Committee and is a member of the ADCS Council.

Di was formerly Director of Children and Families Commissioning at Nottingham City Council. She joined Nottingham City Council as it gained unitary status in 1998 and held a number of roles including Programme Director for Integrated Children's Services, Assistant Director (Inclusion) and she also worked as a schools inspector with responsibility for special needs.

Di's professional background is in teaching and she has taught in primary, secondary and special schools. She established a special school outreach service in 1988 and has been a headteacher of an inner city primary school.

### Barry Kruger

Board Member

Barry Kruger is Head of Information and Web Services at the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). He's responsible for information systems, legal compliance, customer relationship management and the Excellence Gateway portal programme.

Barry previously worked at the Becta, developing baseline standards for learning technologies and as a member of the British Standards Institution IST/43 committee, he helped develop specifications for educational metadata. He also worked on international standards as Chair for the International Standards Organisation (ISO) learning technologies committee.

## ISB Board members

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### Paul Shoemith

Board Member

Paul Shoemith spent 18 years working with schools on a wide range of technology projects, before joining Becta in 2004. As Director of Technical Strategy, he develops and maintains Becta's national strategy for technical architecture – including institutional networks and the National Education Network. He is also an executive board member of the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF) Association.

"Becta's Technical Strategy vision aims to ensure the provision of technology in educational institutions that works first time, every time, for everyone, wherever and whenever they need it. As part of that work I aim to improve the way information is managed and shared across the education, skills and children's services system, and as a result, to benefit teaching, learning and outcomes for young people. I believe the work of the ISB is vital to this, and look forward to continuing to work with the Board to achieve those outcomes."

### Adam Cooper

Board Member

Adam Cooper has worked with the ISB since joining JISC CETIS (Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards) in 2006. Here he oversees the technology work of CETIS on behalf of UK higher and further education. He also chairs the British Standards Institute Committee IST/43 – ICT Standards for Learning Education and Training.

"I bring eight years of experience in standardisation work, gained from working in further and higher education – in both the public and private sectors. I aim to combine my practical experience of teaching and managing educational technology development, with my experience in designing and implementing interoperability standards."

## ISB Board members

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### Una Bennett

Board Member

Una Bennett is Head of MIAP which provides information services for learners and learning providers across the UK with the aim of enabling information sharing and reducing administration. MIAP services include the Unique Learner Number for learners aged 14 plus and the Personal Learning Record, which holds achievement data on behalf of individuals. These services support a range of educational initiatives such as 14-19 Diplomas and the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

"In providing services to schools, further education and skills providers, higher education institutions and their learners, I have become even more convinced of the need for common data standards so that information can be easily accessed and transferred when appropriate. The ISB's work in developing and promoting common data standards is central to continued progress and realising the benefits for learners and all involved in education"

### Stephen Crunkhorn

Board Member

Stephen Crunkhorn has been Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) since 2007. He oversees the Director of Strategic Systems Group (SSG) and Information Technology Services (ITS).

Stephen joined the QCA after 20 years with the Home Office, where he gained experience at CIO, CTO and IT Director level, championed project management and gained in-depth knowledge of shared service creation and enterprise project management.

As Project Director for Minerva, he leads the delivery of the Diploma Aggregation Service, and is responsible for systems support – from Web Based Accreditation (WBA) to the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ)

# ISB Board members

## Members representing organisations

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### Stuart Edwards

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

Stuart Edwards is a Deputy Director in the Further Education Directorate at BIS. He handles improvements in quality, workforce development, harnessing technology across the FE and Skills sector and more. Stuart holds a Doctorate in Educational Administration and is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel.

"I oversee my department's relationships on a variety of issues with the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, Lifelong Learning UK, the Institute for Learning, and Becta. I really welcome the opportunity to contribute to the work of the ISB, which has a critical bearing on my current role in BIS."

### Colin Hurd

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

Colin Hurd is Deputy Director of the DCSF Chief Information Officer Group – responsible for the Information Strategy for education, skills and children's services. He is also DCSF's senior sponsor for the Information Standards Board.

"The ISB has made real traction in the last year and is growing its reputation. I am pleased that ambitions remain high and that the focus remains firmly on getting the best for the people we serve."

## ISB Board members

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### David Riley

Board Member – ISB for Health and Social Care (HaSC)

David is the national lead for social care for the ISB HaSC and is its representative for the ISB for education, skills and children's services. He also works for the London Borough of Greenwich as Information Governance Manager and Caldicott Guardian.

"I bring with me the knowledge from a board with several years experience. Experience such as appraising and approving information standards that are fit-for-purpose, safe, interoperable and implementable.

I also bring more than 30 years' experience working in local government. That includes several years in the youth service, more than 15 years in social care – including children's social care – and significant experience in information governance."

You can download this publication at  
**<http://www.escs-isb.org.uk>**

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