

Workforce Unit Briefing 1: The Core Minimum Dataset

What is the Core Minimum Dataset?

The Core Minimum Dataset (CMDS) was established by the Scottish Government to ensure that a better picture of the social services workforce can be developed. The CMDS is a database that will “help resolve the general lack of high quality, comprehensive, person-based data and information about the social services workforce for the purposes of evaluation, development and planning.” The CMDS collects information about employers, units and individual employees.

Why and how was the Core Minimum Dataset developed?

The CMDS was developed because there is an identified need for sound information about the Scottish social services workforce, whether it is based in the statutory, private or voluntary sector. The data is required for a range of purposes, including the need to examine the changing nature of the working population and to explore the changing sectoral composition of the workforce. Improved data allows the Government and employers to explore various issues, including:

- Workforce Planning;
- The diversity of the workforce;
- The impact of ‘family friendly’ policies on the social services workforce.

The CMDS will also allow organisations to engage in benchmarking, to identify employees’ skills needs and contribute to the organisation’s workforce planning. It has not been possible to produce this level of data for the social services workforce in the past for a variety of reasons. Previously data was collected on specific parts of the workforce (such as local authority social work services) while surveys were also undertaken in different formats. Some surveys focussed on the overall picture of an organisation’s workforce, for example, while other surveys captured data on individual employees. The differing approaches taken within the social services sector also presents particular challenges. The definition of a ‘Team Leader’ in a local authority, for example, does not always correlate with the definition of the same position in a voluntary sector organisation. The CMDS aims to resolve this issue by developing standard job function classifications for all social services staff, irrespective of sector.

The CMDS was developed during 2005/06 by a sub-group of the Scottish Government’s ‘Workforce Intelligence Group’. The Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit was a member of the sub-group that developed the CMDS and the Workforce Unit also co-ordinated a pilot of the CMDS in ten voluntary sector social service organisations during December 2005. It became clear during this pilot that not all of the CMDS data is collected or maintained by organisations, while it also became evident that data is not always held in one centralised place. Completing the CMDS often required an individual to contact a provider’s establishments, HR Department, Training Section, Payroll and even frontline staff to obtain all of the required information.

The Core Minimum Dataset as of October 2007

In 2006 The Care Commission revised their Pre-Inspection Reports (PIRs) and introduced ‘Annual Returns’ which collected data on many of the CMDS fields. The local authority Social Work Services staffing return was also updated to ensure that it was aligned with the CMDS. The Care Commission and Scottish Government are currently exploring how this data can be effectively used and shared with external organisations such as providers.

Does England have a Core Minimum Dataset for their social care workforce? How does it vary from Scotland?

England has a National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC) which was formally launched by Skills for Care in October 2005. Scotland and England have collaborated to ensure consistency in their respective systems, although the paths have varied in relation to the implementation. England provides funding for individuals that have completed the NMDS, for example. The NMDS is at a relatively early stage but has been used to produce some tentative data on the independent social care workforce. This initial data suggests that the flow of workers leaving the English social care sector to work in retail is not as substantial as had been previously thought, for example. As of October 2007 individuals can complete the NMDS online.

What happens next, and are there any issues I might want to consider?

The Scottish Government is currently trying to ascertain what data could be generated from the CMDS to effectively support organisations with their workforce planning processes. Minor updates are also being made to the CMDS at present. Voluntary sector social service organisations may wish to consider whether their systems are capable of collecting the CMDS data. The Workforce Unit (in common with many other organisations) suggested during the CMDS consultation in 2005 that the Government could provide funding to help organisations develop software that could be used to record the data required for the CMDS, or develop the required software. It was made clear at that stage that neither of these options would be viable.

The Scottish Government also explored the possibility of a 'data warehouse' that could maintain this information and could be accessed (with varying levels of authority) by the Government, regulators and service providers. Many voluntary sector organisations have reviewed or purchased new HR or Personnel databases to ensure that they can collect the data required for the CMDS. If you believe that this is something that your organisation may wish to explore please contact the Unit and we will endeavour to put you in contact with some of these organisations.

How can I find out more about the Core Minimum Dataset?

Version 1.0 of the CMDS can be accessed from:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/DataStandardsAndCare/Workforce/WorkforceInformation

To find out more about the NMDS-SC (The English equivalent of the CMDS) visit:

www.nmds-sc.org.uk/nmds.asp

Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit
neil.macleod@ccpscotland.org
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