

Ofsted

Corporate data repository



Ofsted needed a user-friendly information system that would allow it to analyse the results of its inspections and share this analysis with local authorities and other stakeholders. This required consolidation of data from disparate systems. Blueprint created a Microsoft-based BI system that met the immediate requirement and made provision for the future.

The business case

Ofsted - the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills - regulates and inspects providers of care services for children and young people, and education and skills for learners of all ages. It incorporates four former inspectorates that were brought together under the Ofsted banner in 2007, extending the organisation's remit from education to a wide range of children's services and adult learners.

Transparency is a vital part of Ofsted's mission: it has committed itself to making its findings available to 'all who share our vision, from service providers to policy-makers'. Ofsted's senior management team realised that its existing information systems would not be able to cope easily with this level of transparency.

Every week, Ofsted's inspectors visit hundreds of providers, generating data that are held in separate data systems in a range of formats, including SQL Server, MS Excel and MS Word. Ofsted then needs to pull this information together to report on its findings to Parliament and the public, both on a regular and ad-hoc basis. It also uses inspection outcome and other information to assess local authorities' performance, and once published, share the results of this analysis with local authorities to enable them to track their progress and consider how services can be improved in future..

A central team at Ofsted was responsible for producing reports and providing insights into data, and analysts within other teams spent a great deal of time combining data and generating reports. Information had to be compiled manually because the source data systems were incompatible, and Ofsted's data definitions and hierarchies, which had grown up over time, were sometimes inconsistent. In short, the process was slow and cumbersome. Management information was also difficult to produce.

Core Technology

- Microsoft Reporting Services
- Microsoft SharePoint 2010
- Microsoft Office 2010
- Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2



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making data work for you

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The project

As part of a wider ICT project launched in 2007, Blueprint was commissioned to develop a Microsoft-based business intelligence (BI) system that would provide report publication and performance management capabilities.

The project centred on a SQL Server data warehouse – known as the Corporate Data Repository – that would allow Ofsted to comply with its statutory reporting obligations, while laying the groundwork for the second phase: presentation of inspection judgements and information about providers. The Corporate Data Repository draws data together from disparate data sources, based on a revised, standardised set of data definitions and hierarchies.

The project was sponsored and led, from autumn 2009 onwards, by Chief Statistician Rob Pike. Blueprint worked in close collaboration with Ofsted's statistical staff and members of Ofsted's management team, interviewing 35 people from across the organisation to clarify the requirements, creating data definitions and ensuring that our solution would meet Ofsted's needs.

The system is accessed via a clear, simple, web-based information portal using Microsoft SharePoint. It requires no technical knowledge and employs 'guided analysis' techniques to steer users quickly from high-level indicators through summarised inspection results and inspection questions, and finally to the underlying inspection documents.

The benefits for external stakeholders:

- Access to the full detailed results of Ofsted's inspections, aiding transparency and helping stakeholders to improve their performance
- Comprehensive drill-down and analytical capabilities, from high-level indicators to the full detail behind the results
- Results for other regions and socio-economic indicators help local authorities to evaluate their own performance
- Clear interface and guided navigation features steer users quickly to the information they require

The benefits for internal stakeholders:

- The leadership team now has a consistent view of the organisation as a whole, across the majority of its inspection activities
- Less time spent building reports means more time available to study and apply the data