



Content

Introduction

Aim of the Policy

Background

Scope

Data Quality

Definitions

Roles & Responsibilities

Data Quality Monitoring

Internal Control & Validation

Reporting Arrangements

Security & Confidentiality

Appendix

1 Data Quality Action Plan

Introduction

Aim of the Policy

1. The aim of this Policy is to set out a clear framework for maintaining and improving high levels of data quality within Wyre Forest District Council.

Background

2. The Council recognises that high quality data* (see definition below) is essential for:
 - ensuring the delivery of services against agreed plans
 - Meeting legislative and regulatory requirements
 - Supporting policy formation and managerial decision-making
 - Providing protection and support in litigation, including management of risks
 - Providing evidence of business activity (e.g. for CAA)
 - Improving efficiency, performance and accountability, and
 - Supporting business continuity in the event of a disaster
3. The Council has developed this Policy to ensure that the data it produces and uses is of high quality, and to provide a framework for maintaining and improving data quality within the Council.

Scope

4. This Policy applies to all Council Members and employees, and to all information systems owned, used or managed by the Council in paper or electronic media. An Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this Policy and Guidance Notes for employees will be available on the Council's intranet.

Data Quality

Definitions

5. For the purposes of this Policy, 'data' is defined as 'factual verbal or numerical information which is held by the Council, which may be used to assist decision-making and which can be stored and processed by any medium'.
6. * Data is regarded as being of high quality if it is:
 - Accurate (in terms of correctness)
 - Comprehensive (in terms of all relevant data being captured)
 - Valid (in an agreed format which conforms to any recognised national standards)
 - Timely (available when required)
 - Stored securely and (when required) confidentially

Roles & Responsibilities

7. The Leader of the Council is responsible for Strategy & Performance and the lead Member for data quality issues.
8. The Chief Executive has overall strategic responsibility for promoting and co-ordinating this Data Quality Policy and associated procedures, guidance and training. These duties include:
 - raising awareness of data quality within the Council
 - ensuring security and back-up of the Covalent Performance Management System
 - follow up of any issues arising from data quality checks
 - checking and monitoring performance information produced by the Council, and
 - ensuring that training and awareness programmes are used to ensure that all employees and Members are aware of the importance of maintaining a high quality of data.
9. Each Director is responsible for ensuring that data generated, used and supplied by their Directorate is of a high quality. They will ensure that individual responsibilities and accountabilities for ensuring data quality have been assigned and are regularly reviewed and assessed, including via Employee Development Reviews.
10. Where Members or employees become aware of data quality issues which cannot be immediately rectified and which affect information on which the Council or other organisations are relying, the relevant Director or the Chief Executive's Directorate will be notified accordingly in order that remedial action can be taken as required.
11. Nominated officers are assigned responsibility for collecting and reporting data on the Covalent Performance Management System and in other performance reports.
12. Employees are made aware of any performance indicators and other measures to which they contribute data and must adhere to agreed procedures for producing, checking and reporting such data.
13. All employees are responsible for ensuring that data which they create, receive or act upon is of a high quality.
14. All Members and employees have access to this Policy and associated guidance, which are available on the Council's Intranet.

Data Quality Monitoring

15. Data quality is monitored by each Director in accordance with agreed corporate procedures. These include:
 - Regular reports
 - Routine checks
 - Sample checks
 - Follow up with remedial action as required and reported to Members
16. The Council ensures that partners and contractors are clear about their obligation to provide high quality data and will routinely check the information provided or held by its partners / contractors in order to ensure compliance.
17. Procedures for data capture, processing and storage are reviewed and updated annually. These include specific arrangements for ensuring data quality at the point of data capture, during the processing of that data and appropriate data quality checks before data / information is released.
18. Systems operate on a 'right first time' principle in order to avoid the need for routine data cleansing or manipulation to produce the information required.

Internal Control & Validation

19. All systems and procedures have built-in controls to minimise the scope for human error, manipulation or other factor affecting data accuracy (e.g. the use of system validation on key data entries or drop down menus / pick-lists).
20. When data is produced or loaded onto electronic systems the accuracy is to be checked and the data 'signed-off' by an authorised officer. If the data inputter is not the officer responsible for this data, it is the responsibility of the owner of the data, e.g. line manager / data manager, to check and validate the data and insure that it has been loaded correctly.
21. Wherever possible, data should be stored centrally and not duplicated in multiple locations in order to reduce officer time and risk of errors.

Reporting Arrangements

22. These include, but are not limited to:
 - The Council
 - Cabinet
 - Scrutiny Committees
 - Corporate Management Team
 - Directorate Management Teams
 - Corporate Development and Performance Management Group
23. An annual self-assessment is carried out using the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry and the results are reported in the Annual Audit & Inspection Letter.
24. Data quality reports are prepared on an exception basis so that areas where action is needed are clearly identified. Reports include an assessment of the risks associated with unreliable and inaccurate data and are included as appropriate in the Risk Register.

Security & Confidentiality

25. The Council is committed to keeping data secure and, where required, confidential in accordance with its Data Protection Policy and other supporting statements and policies, which are available on the Council's intranet and website.
26. Each Directorate ensures that appropriate measures are taken to ensure the security of its business-critical data systems. Such measures are documented and regularly tested and reviewed. Any areas of concern or weakness are documented and rectified.
27. A Business Continuity Plan is in place to protect records and data which are vital to the effective functioning of the Council. When sharing data with third parties, e.g. partner organisations, protocols are agreed to ensure the quality of data shared. This will include as a minimum:
 - Formal Information Sharing Protocols to ensure that information can be shared lawfully and within the framework of relevant legislation.
 - An agreed set of standards for the quality of all data shared and the creation of processes to validate the quality of data obtained from third parties.



Data Quality Action Plan

Appendix 1

Anticipated outcomes

The main outcomes to be achieved through the delivering of the Data Quality Policy and Action Plan are:

- Improved accountability for data quality issues
- An increased awareness of data quality and its importance
- An increased commitment to data quality by the Council

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Date
Governance & Leadership			
Agree clear responsibility for data quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify relevant officers and incorporate data quality responsibilities in Job Descriptions & Employee Development Reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT / Line Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2010
Data quality to be a required competence for responsible officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider introducing Data Quality as a specific competence as part of the Generic and Manager Competency Frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CED & HR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2010
Ensure Data Quality of information provided to and obtained from contractors and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider inclusion of a standard clause in contracts outlining responsibility for data quality, requiring the contractor to provide timely and accurate data and quality checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CED & LC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2010
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal data sharing protocol(s) with key partners which specify the responsibilities to provide data which is 'fit for purpose' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant Officers to liaise with CED & LCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2010

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Date
Policies			
Formally define corporate objectives for data quality and link to business objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include Data Quality in the relevant Business Plans and Financial Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ April 2010
Systems and Processes			
Robust data validation to support accurate performance reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guidance produced and implemented for data validation to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - audit trials - calculations - back-up - validation checks ▪ 'Spot Checks' on high risk indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CED & Responsible Officers ▪ CED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ April 2010 ▪ Beginning April 2010
Continue implementation of the Covalent performance management system to eliminate duplication of data collection and storage, and ensure data controls are robust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include clear definitions for all local PIs on Covalent system ▪ Provide Covalent training for officers and Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CED & all Directorates ▪ CED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ January 2010 ▪ March 2010
People and Skills			
All relevant employees / Members to have an understanding of the definitions and the importance of data quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revised Data Quality Policy and guidance published on intranet ▪ Awareness raising sessions for employees / Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CED ▪ CED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ October 2009 ▪ January 2010
Data Use and Reports			
Regular reporting of Data Quality and Data Quality Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Annual Assessment against the Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry ▪ Exception reports on Data Quality Issues and inclusion on Risk Register if requires – consider integration with Internal Audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CED ▪ CED / Internal Audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ July 2010 ▪ July 2010