



**Forest of Dean**  
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

# **MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION & DATA QUALITY: A POLICY & STRATEGY**

**September 2016**

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## Consultees

Internal	External
Head of Paid Service	
Strategic Group Managers	
Cabinet Member for Finance, Asset Management and Performance	
Risk and Assurance Officer	

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## Retention

Policy to be retained for six years in line with the Council’s document retention policy.

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# MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION & DATA QUALITY: POLICY STATEMENT

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Forest of Dean District Council recognises the importance of reliable information. Good quality data is essential in order to manage services effectively, inform decision making, set priorities and assign resources. As an organisation we need to ensure that we behave in an accountable and transparent way by providing information to partners, the public and those organisations monitoring our progress to allow them to make judgements about our performance.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to getting the quality of its data right first time with the efficient production of good quality data being an integral part of our performance management and governance arrangements.

## 2. Data Quality Objectives

- 2.1 The Council's data quality objectives have been grouped together under three headings.

### 2.2 Quality

- 2.2.1 To ensure the data we use is sufficiently accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete to meet our information needs.
- 2.2.2 To put in place systems and procedures to ensure the optimum data quality, including where information is produced by or shared with partners.
- 2.2.3 To put the right controls in place to ensure we meet the standards expected of us.
- 2.2.4 To ensure data meets the needs of decision makers, partners, stakeholders and central government departments.
- 2.2.5 To ensure arrangements are in place to secure the quality of the data we use to manage our services and demonstrate our performance.
- 2.2.6 To clearly set out what we expect from staff and Councillors in terms of the standards of data quality and use of information.

### 2.3 Security

- 2.3.1 To ensure our information is held securely and confidentially.
- 2.3.2 To ensure data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

### 2.4 Production of information

- 2.4.1 To ensure that the right resources are in place and the right people with the right skills, to produce timely and accurate performance information.
- 2.4.2 To ensure that the resources invested in gathering, storing, analysing and presenting information are proportionate to the benefits it delivers.
- 2.4.3 To ensure that the information is presented in the most effective way for the intended audience and that decision makers have the necessary skills to interpret the data.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 Data quality is the responsibility of everyone within the Council however certain roles will contribute more directly to improving data quality. These are defined in detail in Annex A. In addition to these, partners that provide performance information must have robust data quality arrangements in place to ensure that all information provided meets the Council's data quality standards.

# MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION & DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

## 1. Introduction: Why is data quality important?

- 1.1 The Council is required to manage its resources to meet the needs of the community and to plan for the future. Financial and performance information needs to be sufficiently accurate, reliable and timely as it is increasingly being used by stakeholders to make judgements about how we are performing and to monitor our progress. However, producing information is expensive and the resources invested in gathering, analysing and presenting information should be proportionate to the benefits it delivers.
- 1.2 Good quality data is essential for reliable performance information, which is used to manage services, inform decision making, set priorities and assign resources. Producing data that is “fit for purpose” needs to be an integral part of the Council’s performance management and governance arrangements. Failure to address weaknesses in data quality, use of data and information needs will lead to misleading information, flawed decision making, wasted or misdirected resources, poor services and ill founded policy setting.

## 2. National context

- 2.1 A single comprehensive list of all the data local government will be expected to provide for central government has been produced, which only contains the minimum central government needs. This list is published and reviewed on an annual basis and local government is not required to collect or provide anything that does not appear on it. The emphasis is on local authorities being democratically accountable to local people and they are encouraged to make their performance data easily accessible to their customers.

## 3. Local context

- 3.1 The Council recognises that we need good information to make good decisions and to demonstrate to others that we take data quality seriously and that our data is robust.
- 3.2 Individual Officers have been assigned responsibilities for data collection and reporting and sign off of annual outturns is required. The Head of Paid Service and Strategic Group Managers meet quarterly with Cabinet at Performance Management Meetings to discuss the quarterly performance reports and any performance issues.

## 4. Scope

- 4.1 This strategy applies to all the reported information and underlying data that the Council produces including national data collection requirements, local performance indicators, government returns and management information.
- 4.2 The Council will work with key partners to encourage those that provide the council with data to adopt the principles contained within this strategy. It is suggested that key partners should be asked to sign the ‘third party protocol attached at Annex B.

## 5. The six characteristics of good quality data & information management

5.1 The Council has adopted the following six key characteristics of good quality data to manage information within the authority.

Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Captured once.</li><li>• Captured as close to the point of activity as possible.</li><li>• Balanced with the importance with the uses for the data; and the costs and efforts of collection.</li></ul>
Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recorded and used in compliance with relevant requirements.</li><li>• Where proxy data is used we must consider how well this data satisfies the intended purpose.</li></ul>
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consistent data collection processes should be applied.</li></ul>
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data should be captured as quickly as possible after the event or activity.</li><li>• Data must be available quickly and frequently enough to support information needs.</li></ul>
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data should be relevant to the purpose for which it is used.</li></ul>
Completeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data requirements should be clearly specified based on information needs.</li></ul>

5.2 How information is presented affects decision-making, therefore, it needs to be tailored to the audience. We must also provide information the public will find useful rather than just that which we can produce easily. Those providing information need strong analytical and presentation skills and decision makers need to understand what information they need, interpret it accurately and act on it. When we present our information we will ensure it is accurate, clear and in a format suitable for those using it.

## 6. Data Quality Standards

6.1 This strategy sets out a clear framework for securing good quality data within the Council and identifies 5 key areas necessary for the production of high quality data:

- Governance and Leadership;
- Policies and Procedures;
- Systems and Processes;
- People and Skills; and
- Data use.

These areas are outlined in more detail below.

## 7. Governance and Leadership

7.1 The Council is committed to producing high quality data. The Corporate Governance Group, Quarterly Performance Management Meetings, Audit Committee and the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel will monitor data quality and investigate areas of concern.

7.2 We have put in place clear accountabilities for data quality at both officer and member level. Responsibility for data quality is included in the job descriptions of the Head of Paid Service and Strategic Group Managers.

- 7.3 Individual responsibilities are identified in Annex A. The lines of accountability apply to frontline workers all the way up through the organisation to senior management level with ultimate responsibility resting with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Asset Management and Performance and the Corporate Leadership Team. Managers are responsible for ensuring the processes for data collection are regularly reviewed, monitored and kept up to date.
- 7.4 The Corporate Support Team will provide support to individual officers and teams as necessary and will promote the need for good quality data across the organisation.

## **8. Policies and Procedures**

- 8.1 Managers will ensure that data required by government departments is supplied on a timely basis and in accordance with guidance and definitions. Where local indicators are adopted the manager will ensure clear definitions are documented.
- 8.2 Support will be provided to staff as necessary to increase awareness. Each performance indicator will have a named officer identified for the collection, input and management of data.
- 8.3 An annual validation process exists for the data required by central government. A number of checks are undertaken, and the manager signs off the data as reasonable, accurate, compliant with definition and produced by adequate collection and monitoring systems. A copy of the government returns quality checklist is available at Annex C.
- 8.5 Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with policies and procedures and rectifying any areas of weakness identified in their teams.

## **9. Systems and Processes**

- 9.1 Good quality systems and processes are key to achieving high quality data. This applies to the systems into which data is input and the quality control systems put in place for the collection, analysis and reporting of information. The Corporate Support Team can provide support to officers with respect to performance management activity.
- 9.2 Our aim is to have systems operating on a “right first time” basis rather than having to use data cleansing or manipulation to ensure information is correct. Managers must ensure that appropriate controls are incorporated to reduce the likelihood of error and that all key systems have procedure manuals or web support guidance in place.
- 9.3 Covalent, our Performance Management System, is used for monitoring, reporting and analysis of performance information. Performance indicator data is input by a data collection officer prior to being checked and then activated by the responsible manager. Managers will ensure appropriate testing and controls are built in to minimise the scope for human error or manipulation, prevent errors in data entry, missing data and unauthorised data changes. A full audit trail of all Covalent transactions is available.
- 9.4 Security controls are in place to ensure only authorised use is made of data and to prevent unauthorised data changes. Personal information is processed legitimately and is only used for specified purposes. Business continuity arrangements and backup systems are in place for Covalent and other key systems to restore data in the event of IT failure.

- 9.5 Data is collected and reported through Covalent and subject to scrutiny at Performance Management Meetings. Portfolio holders meet with their managers and any concerns about performance are discussed. An e-mail chasing system sends automatic reminders to the data collection officer and manager until the data is updated on Covalent. Performance information is formally reported to Cabinet and Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis when members have the opportunity to ask questions about the information contained in the report.
- 9.6 Particular attention needs to be paid to data provided by external sources. Where data is obtained from third parties a protocol should be agreed to ensure this data is fit for purpose and meets the same standard expected by the Council. A suggested agreement for data sharing with third parties is available in Annex B; this can be tailored to meet individual requirements. In these instances the manager should ensure a quality check is carried out prior to acceptance and use of third party data by the Council.
- 9.7 When entering into contracts with service providers it is essential that we inform them of any requirements to provide performance information. We need to be clear about their data quality responsibilities and how we will be checking the information they provide. It is suggested that any requirements for contractors to provide data are written into the contract, as well as providing them with information on their data quality responsibilities.
- 9.8 Where data is provided by one internal department to another it must also comply with the requirements of this policy. The manager of the department supplying the data is responsible for ensuring that it is accurate and on a timely basis. If this is not the case the manager should be notified and he/she will arrange for the data to be provided at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **10. Knowledge, skills and capacity**

- 10.1 For this Data Quality Strategy to be effective it is essential that staff are aware of their responsibilities and equipped with the necessary training to fulfil them effectively. Staff roles are documented at Annex A.
- 10.2 The Corporate Support Team will provide support on request and any weaknesses identified in internal or external reviews of data quality will be addressed. A comprehensive on-line help facility is available through the Covalent system and the Corporate Support Team provide a "help desk" facility for users.

## **11. Data Use**

- 11.1 Using performance information as part of the day-to-day management of the Council's business is essential if we are to achieve our objectives. Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet use information on community priorities and needs in making strategic decisions. In addition, managers use a range of management information in operational decision-making at service level.
- 11.2 Current performance is reviewed during one-to-one sessions, appraisals and team meetings. Wherever possible profiled targets are displayed on Covalent which gives an accurate picture of the position at any given time against actual performance.

- 11.3 Performance information needs to be produced to a timetable that allows for management action. Managers will routinely use performance information to assess the quality of services being provided and to plan and allocate resources to improve service delivery.
- 11.4 Data returns to individual government departments are in place for information included in the single data list. Each government department will publish data from these submissions.

## **12. Monitoring and Review**

- 12.1 Corporate Leadership Team, supported by the Corporate Support Team, will monitor the use and quality of data within the Council.
- 12.2 The Corporate Support Team will review this strategy every three years.

Roles	Accountabilities/Responsibilities
<b>All employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be aware of the Council's Performance Management Framework.</li> <li>• To be aware of the Council's Data Quality Objectives.</li> <li>• To recognise the importance of data quality and report data quality issues to their line manager or Strategic Group Manager.</li> <li>• To attend any training sessions/workshops on performance management or data quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Data Collectors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the significance of their role in collating/inputting performance data.</li> <li>• To maintain up to date knowledge of the definitions of performance indicators and any technical guidance and to apply definitions consistently to allow for comparison over time and with other authorities.</li> <li>• To input data in line with agreed timescales.</li> <li>• To provide calculations and the necessary background papers to allow the manager to sign off the annual data returns.</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure responsible officers are aware of and comply with their data quality responsibilities/accountabilities.</li> <li>• To investigate instances of inaccuracy with data.</li> <li>• To balance the cost of providing information against its usefulness/relevance.</li> <li>• To verify and sign off the performance returns.</li> <li>• To use information on community needs in operational decision-making at service level.</li> <li>• To ensure that data provided by their teams to other departments is accurate and on a timely basis</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Leadership Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure responsible officers are aware of and comply with their data quality responsibilities/accountabilities.</li> <li>• To balance the cost of providing information against its usefulness/relevance.</li> <li>• To use information on community needs in strategic decision-making at a corporate level.</li> <li>• To communicate the importance of data quality across the Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Portfolio Holder for Finance, Asset Management and Performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To champion data quality across the Council.</li> </ul>
<b>Cabinet Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To take a lead and challenge on data quality within their portfolio.</li> <li>• To discuss data quality issues with the Head of Paid Service or Strategic Group Manager.</li> <li>• To know what information they require, how to interpret it and use it effectively in decision-making.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Support Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To co-ordinate the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of performance data.</li> <li>• To collect a full set of sign off forms from managers, check for completeness and challenge inconsistencies in data.</li> <li>• To ensure accurate and efficient extraction and presentation of information.</li> <li>• To act as a systems administrator for Covalent performance</li> </ul>

Roles	Accountabilities/Responsibilities
	<p>management system by providing clear advice, training and a Helpdesk facility for Officers and Members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide advice and guidance regarding collection and calculation of performance indicators.</li> <li>• To ensure relevant staff are trained in data quality requirements.</li> <li>• To report corporate data quality issues to senior management, councillors and staff.</li> <li>• To present information in a format tailored to the audience.</li> </ul>
<b>Scrutiny Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be proactive in raising issues around data quality at scrutiny meetings when discussing performance.</li> </ul>



# Third Party Data Quality Protocol

The Forest of Dean District Council recognises the importance of reliable information. Good quality data is essential in order to manage services effectively, inform decision making, set priorities and assign resources. Therefore the council has a responsibility to ensure the data it holds is accurate, relevant and up-to-date.

This protocol sets out a framework of the council's requirements with regards to data quality. Third party data suppliers should sign the protocol to acknowledge and agree the principles.

The council has adopted six key characteristics of good quality data to manage information within the authority. To ensure that data is of good quality these criteria must be met through the council's requirements detailed below:

Characteristics	Requirements
<b>Accuracy</b>	Data should be sufficiently accurate for its intended purpose providing a fair picture of performance, enabling informed decision-making at all levels and balanced against the cost of producing such information. If some degree of inaccuracy is acceptable (for example, management information, where it may be more important that the information is available and acted on quickly) then this should be made clear to any users of the data. Data should be captured once only, although it may have multiple uses within the organisation or be shared with partners.
<b>Validity</b>	Data should be recorded and used with the correct application of any rules or definitions to allow comparisons to be made.
<b>Reliability</b>	Data must have trusted sources and consistent collection methods so that real changes in performance are reflected rather than variations in collection methods.
<b>Timeliness</b>	Data should be captured quickly, be available for the intended use within a reasonable time period, and frequently enough to influence decision making processes.

<b>Relevance</b>	Data should only be collected where it is of value to the council and requirements should be regularly reviewed. Information used in decisions should be fit for the specific decision being made and presented in a way decision makers will understand.
<b>Completeness</b>	All relevant data should be recorded. Incomplete or invalid data is a sign of poor data quality.

The data supplied to Forest of Dean District Council by \_\_\_\_\_ meets the criteria outlined above.

**Data Protection Act**

Published data must be non-personal to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The council and its partners should be mindful of the Data Protection Act when requesting personal data. Any data that identifies individuals cannot be shared under the remit of this scheme and any performance indicator data sharing of this type must take place in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. If there are any concerns about the nature of the request you should contact your Data Protection Officer

**Agreement**

Has the Data Quality Policy and strategy been seen, understood and agreed?

Yes     No

Organisation Name: .....

Signed (by partner): ..... Date: .....

Print Name: .....

Responsible Officer Name: .....

Signed (by responsible officer): ..... Date: .....

**Government Returns Quality Checklist 2015/2016**

As Strategic Group Manager for the Planning, Housing and Regeneration Group I am happy that the government returns my team are responsible for have been submitted to the correct body in a timely manner. I agree that the returns listed below have been checked by a member of my team so that each one is:

**Reasonable:** A competent and responsible officer has checked that the data looks reasonable.

**Accurate:** A competent and responsible officer has checked arithmetic in the any calculations involved to ensure the accuracy of the data.

**Complies with return requirements:** A competent and responsible officer has checked that the return has been compiled using the data and definition of the indicator in any documented guidance.

**Data collection and monitoring methods:** A competent and responsible officer has checked that the data collection and monitoring systems are adequate to allow the Council to submit accurate data.

Please use the below comments box to identify any concerns that you may have with the data submitted by your team.

**Comments:**

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Ref	DCLG Ref	Data collection name	Frequency	Authority Group	Short description	Responsible Officer
<b>Planning, Housing and Regeneration Group</b>						
<b>Development Control</b>						
41	021-00	PSF General Development Control statistical returns	Quarterly	Single tier & lower tier	Data on planning applications received and decided by local authorities.	Planning Manager
<b>Forward Plan</b>						
42	002-00	House Building Return (P2)	Quarterly	Single tier & lower tier	New build housing starts and completions.	Forward Plan Manager
43	003-00	Housing Flows Reconciliation Form (HFR)	Annual	Single tier & lower tier	Net supply of housing and dwelling stock estimates.	Forward Plan Manager
44	243-00	Developments in flood risk areas	Annual	Single tier & lower tier	Number of developments in flood risk areas	Forward Plan Manager
<b>Housing</b>						
45	004-00	Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA)	Annual	Single tier & lower tier	Dwelling stock data for all tenures.	Strategic Housing Manager
46	007-00	Mortgage Rescue Scheme Return	Quarterly	Single tier & lower tier	Households with mortgage difficulties approaching local authorities.	Strategic Housing Manager
47	009-00	Local Authority activity under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act (P1E)	Quarterly	Single tier & lower tier	Statutory homelessness statistics and additional information on homelessness prevention and relief activity.	Strategic Housing Manager
48	010-00	Rough sleepers – Local Authority Form	Annual	Single tier & lower tier	Rough sleeping counts and estimates.	Strategic Housing Manager