

# Data Quality Strategy for performance information



<b>Document Control</b>		
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## Introduction

This document provides a Data Quality Strategy for Devon County Council's performance information as used to monitor and manage performance.

## Purpose of the Data Quality Strategy

**This Strategy aims to ensure high quality of the performance data available to the Council.** In this context, quality can be defined as **fitness for purpose** and with reference to data this means the **relevance, accuracy, completeness** and **timeliness** of the data in our systems, such that the data will be fit for intended uses in operations, decision making and planning. The Strategy is intended to include all performance information relevant to the collection, auditing and presentation of the data.

Dealing properly and efficiently with information is a hallmark of good and effective management. Poor and untidy record keeping can result in poor operational and financial control, the erosion of confidence and loss of opportunity ... good quality data is the responsibility of everyone.

## Supporting the Strategic Plan 2006-11

This Strategy is integral to delivery of the supporting strategy "*Providing Better Value for Money*" which states (in part):

*"We want to be a top performing authority that makes the best use of our resources to deliver high quality and efficient services. We aim to:*

- *embed new ways of working which will enable us to continue to become more efficient*

*We will do this by:*

- *using technology in innovative ways to become more efficient;*
- *helping staff develop skills to work more effectively and efficiently;*
- *sharing resources and services with partner organisations where this will help us become more efficient;*
- *monitoring our performance and encouraging scrutiny and challenge;*
- *learning from best practice elsewhere"*

## Aims

The Data Quality Strategy will be delivered through the following aims:

1. **Ensure that the Council takes the quality of its data seriously and understands its importance**
2. **Incorporate data quality into the design of systems and procedures**
3. **Analyse and respond to data quality issues as and when they arise**
4. **Ensure checking and monitoring takes place and reporting to those charged with governance**

Each of these aims is addressed individually in the following section which maps out the proposed strategy in more detail. Where actions are identified in order to meet these requirements these will be built into the Data Quality Action Plan.

# 1. Ensure that the Council takes the quality of its data seriously and understands its importance

## 1.1 Senior management and Members' commitment to data quality will provide leadership:

- The role of Member Champion for Data Quality is within the remit of the Executive Support Member for Customer Service and Performance Improvement
- The Director of Personnel & Performance holds the responsibility for the corporate framework for data quality with the role to champion and challenge
- Accountability and responsibility for delivery is the remit of the Directors within their own directorates
- Senior management will monitor and review performance, identify areas for closer examination and use data for planning purposes
- Overview / Scrutiny committees will regularly review performance
- Reviews of data quality arrangements and risk evaluations will be reported to Corporate Management Board

## 1.2 Individual and collective responsibilities will be identified and owned:

- Data quality is the responsibility of every member staff whose job involves collecting, recording, collating, reporting or analysing performance information. Every such staff member will be made aware of this responsibility
- Every performance indicator will have a named officer responsible for its overall data quality and for entering the information into the performance management system
- Each directorate will have a lead officer for data quality who will be responsible for overseeing the arrangements and drawing issues to the attention of their directorate management team via their line manager
- Each directorate will report annually on compliance with this Strategy. The Organisational Development team will collate these and report to Corporate Management Board via the director of Personnel & Performance
- Data quality responsibilities will be reflected in job descriptions and the appraisal process
- Everyone handling data needs to have an appropriate understanding of the relevant performance indicators
- Everyone handling data needs to know how they contribute to the collection of performance information and how lapses can lead to errors or delay reporting, limiting our ability to manage performance effectively
- Named responsible officers for performance indicators must ensure they keep up to date with any changes in definition that may occur and communicate this information as required
- Definitions and counting rules must be strictly adhered to, thus ensuring that data is recorded consistently and accurately
- Output is only as good as the data input. The aim will be for 100% accuracy 100% of the time
- Data will be entered on a timely basis
- Standards for timeliness and accuracy will be monitored using technology and self-audit, retrospectively checking the data input and the date carried out
- Records of checks carried out will be maintained and work monitored for improvement in timeliness and error rates
- Clear audit trails must be maintained

## 1.3 The Council's commitment to data quality will be clearly communicated throughout the Council and the importance of data quality will be emphasised in relevant training courses.

## **2. Incorporate data quality into the design of systems and procedures**

- 2.1 All systems and procedures will be operated in accordance with the Corporate Information Security Policy
- 2.2 There will be named officers and deputies for all performance information systems who will be responsible for user training and support, data security, system upgrades, capacity for audit trails, and business continuity arrangements
- 2.3 Well documented procedures will define responsibilities for data collection, entry and maintenance and ensure that:
  - Data quality controls are in place
  - All relevant information is recorded
- 2.4 Data security, which protects and filters data, will allow devolved access to systems
- 2.5 Support and documentation will be provided to ensure accuracy and consistency in end-user reporting
- 2.6 Data verification procedures will be conducted to ensure the accuracy of data:
  - Self-audit and a programme of formal internal audit will maintain vigil on the accuracy of internally produced performance information
  - Directorates are responsible for conducting internal verification procedures and reporting on these actions to the Organisational Development team
  - Organisational Development will identify and report on best practice activity
  - Particular attention will be paid to ensure the integrity of externally provided information, e.g. from contractors and other government sources, where contractual arrangements should specify responsibilities
  - Where no contractual agreement exists in the case of externally provided information this will be treated as high risk and a validation procedure established. Such checks will be signed-off by the relevant officer
  - Responsibility for verification lies in directorates but Internal Audit and the Organisational Development team can offer advice and guidance on procedures
- 2.7 Data will be stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act

## **3. Analyse and respond to data quality issues as and when they arise**

- 3.1 Risk assessments will be carried out on systems and performance indicator data collection:
  - High risk conditions in risk assessments on data quality of performance information include high volume of data/transactions; technically complex definition/guidance; earlier problems; inexperienced staff; new performance indicator; and when gaps in control measures become apparent
- 3.2 The Organisational Development team will coordinate improvement measures resulting from risk assessments and other data quality issues that arise:
  - Analyse the issues, looking at repercussions and common problem areas
  - Identify the source of data quality problems and ensure that the relevant people are made aware of the impact of their actions
  - Ensure the necessary corrections to inaccurate data
  - Provide support for the analysis of data quality
  - Lessons learnt will be shared
- 3.3 Directorates will take corrective actions in response to Data Quality Audit as required in the Audit Commission Data Quality Review Action Plan

#### **4. Ensure checking and monitoring takes place and reporting to those charged with governance**

- 4.1 Directorates are responsible for establishing internal processes to obtain output data on a suitable timescale without compromising data quality
- 4.2 Directorates are responsible for approval of data to be published and for meeting the deadlines of the forward plan for corporate reporting requirements
- 4.3 Comparative benchmarked data will be used wherever possible to enable robust scrutiny and challenge of performance data and to identify models of good practice
- 4.4 Directorates will agree a programme of audit checks with Internal Audit as required
- 4.5 Additional steps will be taken to assure the quality of data that is reported to external bodies:
  - working papers will be reviewed by a second member of staff to confirm the definition has been followed, the calculations are correct and the indicator is supported by a full audit trail
  - electronic sign-off will be completed in SPAR.net for BVPIs and other designated performance indicators
  - during external audits there will be at least one other officer who is able to provide advice and information on any audited performance indicator in the absence of the responsible officer
- 4.6 Feedback following management reports, training, etc., will be used to monitor data quality arrangements
- 4.7 There will be an annual review of the Data Quality Strategy
- 4.8 Reviews of data quality arrangements and risk evaluations will be reported to Corporate Management Board
- 4.9 An annual action plan will be implemented to maintain and improve data quality:
  - Responsibility for actions will sit as locally as possible within directorates with co-ordination and corporate responsibility in Organisational Development
  - Staff with responsibility for delivering actions will have this agreed and monitored through the appraisal process