

Data Quality Policy

2012/13

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INTRODUCTION

This policy has been produced to support the council's Data Quality Strategy 2011/13. Data quality has always been key to sound decision-making at the council. The reduction of resources available to the council and the increased demands from the public for transparency mean data quality is more important than ever.

Having quality data to make effective decisions underpins the Council's Performance Management Framework. This supports all of the council's Strategic Objectives and particularly the objective to be a 'council that is a consistently top performing organisation and delivers excellent value for money'.

A key emerging challenge facing the council at present is the quality of systems data. A recent study by Sirious Decisions found that even at high performing businesses approximately 10 % of records contain critical data errors. As advances in technology allow greater use to be made of systems data, integration of IT systems (which increases the risks of poor quality data being shared) means it is essential that all data on systems is correct at source otherwise bad data can adversely affect a large number of decisions.

PURPOSE

Chorley Council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of excellent services to its customers. This policy supports the council's Data Quality Strategy which aims to ensure that:

"Chorley Council will be an organisation where data quality is excellent; a right first time culture is in place, all staff are aware of the importance of data quality and effective training and controls are in place to ensure that informed decisions can be made based on quality, accurate, timely information."

The availability of complete, accurate and timely data is important in supporting customer care, corporate governance, management, decision-making, service planning, accountability and transparency.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The council is committed to ensuring it maintains the highest standards of data quality. A Data Quality Strategy is in place which identifies themes and objectives that align with the key issues identified as barriers to achieving quality data in the public sector.

Theme	Strategy Objectives
Culture	Strong leadership on data quality Prevent complacency and loss of focus Improve transparency of data for the public Improve partnership data quality arrangements
People	Increase engagement of staff Improve staff accountability Incentivise staff to improve data quality Excellent Data Quality training and development for staff
Processes	A robust data quality policy and checks in place Effective procedures and definitions exist for all indicators and collections Ensure reduction in external inspection does not reduce the level of data quality

This policy aims to support this overall strategy by achieving the following objectives:

- ensuring that information and data can be relied on to make effective decisions and effective checks are in place to ensure the integrity of source data so the COUNT (Collect Once Use Numerous Times) approach can be applied;
- ensuring collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data is accurate, reliable and consistent to inform the decision making process;
- setting up controls which ensure the highest possible data quality;
- ensuring the data we use to make decisions is up to date;
- ensuring that the data on council systems can be relied on;
- ensuring arrangements are in place at a senior level to secure the quality of the data we use;
- providing clarity on expectations from our staff and elected Members and partners on their responsibilities and the standards of data quality expected of them;
- ensuring that the right resources are in place, and, in particular the right people and the right skills, to ensure that we have timely and accurate data;
- ensuring accurate data is reported transparently to all stakeholders and the public;
- ensuring that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with corporate standards and relevant legislation (e.g. Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act);

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of Chorley Council, as all staff have responsibility for data quality in their day to day work.

This policy applies to all data used in the decision-making process. This includes data entered on key council systems, performance management information. The council relies on other data to make decisions, for example demographic data, benchmarking and costing data or other statistics. It is important that all staff ensure that information used comes from a reliable source and steps are taken to verify and validate this information if it will be used to make decisions.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Chorley Council considers data as 'Quality' when it is:

Accurate - Data should be sufficiently accurate for its intended use and captured as close to the point of activity as possible.

Valid - Data must meet the relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions.

Reliable - Data should be consistently collected over time, so we can be confident that it reflects real changes and not changes in data collection methods or errors.

Timely - Data should be captured as quickly as possible so it can be used to support effective, responsive decision-making.

Relevant - Data captured should be relevant to the purposes for which it is used and should be reviewed regularly to ensure it meets requirements.

Complete – Data should be complete, including all relevant information to produce a final complete figure. Data entered into systems should be complete to prevent duplication and maximise usefulness.

Theme: Culture

The council will ensure it has a culture which supports data quality as follows:

- To ensure strong leadership on data quality, overall responsibility for this policy and the council's approach to data quality approach is held by the Chief Executive and the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance.
- To foster a right first time culture, Data Quality performance will be reported at Strategy Group level and at Directorate/Service Management Teams.
- The council will promote an inclusive approach to data quality. All staff will be encouraged to redesign or improve performance indicators as part of the council's business planning process and to improve systems.
- Internal Audit, Policy and Communications and the ICT Information Team will have a supporting role in securing quality data within the Council.
- Data quality will also be embedded within the Council's corporate risk management strategy and Performance Management Framework, for which Policy and Communications is responsible.

Reporting and transparency

Regular reporting of accurate information leads to good decision making and improved performance. To support a culture of effective reporting:

- Deadlines will be set to ensure that data is provided swiftly by staff so information can be reported to Strategy Group and Executive Cabinet in a timely manner to allow management actions to be taken to improve performance.
- Only data which has been checked will be reported.
- Performance against the targets in the Data Quality Strategy and results of audits will be reported to Strategy Group.
- Spending and other data will be produced in line with timetables provided by the Government to support the transparency agenda. A process has been developed for reporting relating to spending over £500, data will be published within 30 days of the end of each month in an accessible format to allow its use by the public.
- It is important that the reporting made through Government returns and other submissions maintain high standards of data quality. Any data submitted to an external body must comply with this policy, follow the Government guidance fully and will be checked by the Head of Service prior to submission.

Partnership data

As the council increasingly works in partnership with other organisations, and relies on the information that they supply to make decisions about resource investment and performance management, it is critical that this information is of a high quality. The following steps must be taken to support strong partnership data sharing arrangements:

- A Partnership Data Quality Charter has been developed that should also be signed by all of the council's key partners. The Data Quality performance of the council's key partners will be monitored through the council's Key Partnerships Framework.
- Staff obtaining data from a third party should also request any supporting evidence they need to assure themselves of the quality for the data provided by the partner.
- If errors in shared data are uncovered all partners any errors highlighted to other partners who may use the data.

Theme: People

The council recognises that our people are the key to data quality. In order that staff are engaged, incentivised, accountable and well trained:

- All staff will be made aware of the importance of data quality and that it is the responsibility of all staff at the council.
- All staff will be accountable for data quality in their day to day work and how the data they produce or enter into systems can have a major impact on decision-making and on customers.
- Every relevant officer should be aware of his or her responsibilities with regards to data quality.
- Data quality will be considered as part of performance appraisals for appropriate staff and form part of the staff induction.
- All staff with data quality duties will receive training on a regular basis which is appropriate to their role.

Managers must ensure that:

- Data quality issues are considered as part of the staff performance appraisal process for relevant staff with duties.
- Data quality is included in the Job Descriptions of new staff with data quality duties.
- Staff receive training and support where appropriate

The responsibilities of our people are detailed below:

Role	Responsibility	Frequency
Collection Officers (All Directorates)	Entry of initial data onto the Performance Management System, following set definitions	Ongoing
	Update written procedures to ensure they are effective and deliver business continuity	Annually/as changes occur
	Ensure data collection systems are robust, including undertaking assessments of data collection systems	On-going
	Identify & implement measures to improve the quality of data	On-going
	Reporting and following up action plans where concerns in Data Quality have been identified to the Directorate Management Team	Quarterly
	Auditing PIs and systems data	At least annually
	Attend Data Quality Workshop training	Annual
	Provision of data/performance information to support the Corporate Strategy and business plans	Annual
	Collate, input, store and retrieve PI data to the highest quality	Quarterly
Responsible Officers (Checking Officer on Performance Management System)	Sign off initial out-turn data on the Performance Management System, undertaking necessary checks and producing Action Plans	On-going
	Highlight measures for improvement to data quality, including assisting in high-risk assessments of data collection systems	On-going
	Participate in audits	Annual
	Attend Data Quality training	As required
	Compliance with the Data Quality Policy, undertaking necessary checks and complying with guidance.	As required

	Validate 3 rd party data, this will include ensuring that data complies with the Council's Data Quality Policy	As required, prior to sign off
	Identify and share information on potential data quality issues and address any data sharing problems.	As required
Named Systems Officer	Responsible for assuring data quality of nominated IT systems	Ongoing
	Attend Data Quality training	Annual
	Carry out checks and cleanse data on a regular basis and log systems issues.	Ongoing
	Ensure staff are adequately trained on systems	As required
	Participate in audits	As required
	Maintain records on issues and testing carried out to assure systems data quality	As required
	Develop and follow up action plans in response to data quality issues	As required
	Inform effected parties of data quality issues	As required
Directors/Heads of Service	Check and approve Performance Indicators and other data.	As required
	Overall responsibility for data quality on systems within their directorate/service, including identifying issues	Ongoing
	Check all data submitted to the Government	Ongoing
Line managers	Ensure data quality issues are considered as part of the staff performance appraisal process for relevant staff.	Annually
	Ensure data quality is included in the Job Descriptions of new staff with data quality duties.	Ongoing
	Ensure staff receive training and support where appropriate	Ongoing
Chief Executive	Overall Officer level responsibility for data quality	
Executive Member Resources, Policy and Performance	Overall Member level responsibility for data quality	
All Staff & Elected Members	Adopt Data Quality Policy and Data Quality Strategy	As required
	Are responsible for maintaining high levels of data quality in their day to day working	As required
	Attend any training identified	As required
Internal Audit	Undertake reviews of PIs & systems including identification of 'high risk' data systems	Annual
	Lead on the development and maintenance of a data quality risk assessment for the council.	On-going
	Produce reports following internal audits, with recommendations for improvements in procedures	Ongoing
	Undertake spot checks as identified in the risk assessment	Ongoing
Policy & Communications	Develop and implement Chorley's Data Quality Policy and Strategy	Bi-annually
	Develop and deliver Data Quality training to staff	Annually
	Monitor performance against data quality measures and report to Strategy Group	Bi-annually
	Provide ongoing support and advice to staff	Ongoing
	Undertake spot checks as required and identified in the risk assessment	Ongoing
CIT Information Team	Develop and deliver the councils Information Management strategy to include data quality	Bi-annually
	Deliver training to staff on information management and new systems	As required
	Implementation and major changes to systems out of the scope of day to day management	Bi-annually
	The Information Manager will have overall responsibility for maintaining systems quality and the team will provide ongoing support and advice to staff on systems issues	Ongoing
	Work with Audit and Policy and Communications to carry out a systems data risk assessment	Annually

Theme: Processes

Robust processes are required to ensure that data is of a sufficient quality to support effective decision-making. The council will ensure that there is a strong process of controls over data input, aiming for 100% accuracy all of the time. This includes ensuring data held on council systems is correct at source to enable effective decision-making and quality service provision. Our policy on processes is as follows:

- Responsibility for maintaining robust data systems lies within directorates, but Policy and Communications, Internal Audit or the ICT Information Team can offer advice and guidance as required;
- Each data collection system must have a named officer for data quality issues;
- All data should have clear definitions and procedures and instructions in place to control quality and enable business continuity. This includes data on electronic systems as an incorrect figure in a system creates major issues as it makes data incorrect at source and adversely effect a large number of decisions;
- Systems should be in place to provide the latest data as a soon as possible so the council can be confident decision are being made based on the latest information available;
- Controls will be in place over the input of data as close to source as possible to reduce errors;
- Verification checks will be in place close to the point of input to eliminate errors;
- All calculations and checks should be retained as evidence and for audit purposes;
- Monitoring, missing, incomplete or duplicate data will not be tolerated; steps should be taken by staff to prevent their occurrence;
- Reports and queries used to provide results should also be tested for integrity;
- Data quality process issues and errors will be reported to Strategy Group and Policy and Performance. End users (internal and external) will be informed of issues that impact on them.
- Where data quality issues are identified, Directorates/Services should prepare an action plan and monitor the implementation of improvement measures within the plan.

More specific advice in relation to the quality of performance information or on assuring the quality of data on system is available in the Appendices of this policy.

Further information and a toolkit to support staff in improving data quality is also available on the intranet. Any queries in relation to this policy and its application can be raised with the Policy and Communications Team.

MONITORING AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed annually (or as required following legislative changes) and refreshed in 2013 along with the Data Quality Strategy.

DOCUMENT AND VERSION CONTROL

Version	3.0
Author	David Wilkinson, Performance Officer, Chorley Council
Sign off date	
Publication date	

APPENDIX1: SYSTEMS INFORMATION

End users, including members of the public self serving should be confident that the data on key systems is accurate and up to date. Our policy specific to electronic data systems is as follows:

Roles in assuring systems quality

- Directors and Heads of Service will have overall accountability for the quality of systems data in their directorates and services.
- All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities in relation to data and will sign up to the data quality policy as part of their induction.
- The Information Team will take responsibility for major changes and systems upgrades but day to day responsibility will rest with Services, named officers and system users.
- The Information Manager will have an overall supervisory role in maintaining the quality of systems data through training and development, audit software etc.
- Systems data quality will be policed by the Information Team in ICT and form part of the council's Information Management Strategy
- A risk assessment of data systems will be carried out by Internal Audit, Policy and Communications and the Information Team annually to inform systems audits
- Audit staff will provide support in auditing systems data quality.
- Where data quality issues are identified, directorates/services should prepare an action plan and monitor the implementation of improvement measures within the plan.
- Major errors in business critical systems will be reported to Strategy Group and the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance by Policy and Communications. End users (internal and external) should be informed of these issues by Services, as this may impact on their decision-making.

Responsibilities

- The table below identifies the officers responsible for our key data systems:

System	Responsibility for data quality
Civica Financials	Head of SFS
IDOX UNIFORM - Planning System	Head of Planning
TLC Land Charges system	Head of Planning
Sharepoint 2010 – including EDMS Document Management System, website, intranet and internal business forms	Head of CIT, All Service Heads using EDMS
Customer Relationship Management System	Head of CIT
Capita - Benefits and Taxation System	Head of CIT
LLPGazetteer - GIS	Head of CIT
Performance Management System	Head of Policy and Communications
IDOX	All Service Heads using IDOX
Vision - HR and Payroll System	Head of HR&OD
Arbitas (Housing System)	Head of Housing

Named officers above should ensure that;

- Systems are checked, cleansed and tested on a regular basis, via integrity checks. This includes testing of queries and reports;
- a Systems Quality Checklist is in place and updated. Including a Systems Issues and Improvements log;
- (where possible) systems have built-in controls to minimise the scope for human error or manipulation to prevent erroneous data entry, missing data, or unauthorised data changes. This could take the form of software which can identify and remove rogue

data or mandatory fields required to be entered before data can be saved on the system;

- users are adequately trained, user guides/instructions are available and refresher training is available as required;
- access to systems is secure (as appropriate);
- system upgrades are implemented where necessary;
- the system can produce adequate audit trails;
- a business continuity plan or adequate back up procedures for saving & restoring data are in place to protect vital records and data;
- systems data quality issues are recorded shared with Policy and Communication and the Information Team and that effected parties are informed.

All staff using systems must:

- Take great care to ensure that data they enter is complete, valid and accurate;
- Be responsible for the quality of data they enter and ensure that data is “right first time” by taking care when entering data and checking their own work;
- Strive for completeness - by entering data into all relevant fields in systems and not take short cuts which may lead to missing data or duplicate records;
- Monitor for data quality issues when accessing data, and inform their manager or named officer by logging any issues;
- Raise any concerns over data quality as soon as possible, with line managers and with the named officer for that system;
- Never enter test data into live systems.

APPENDIX 2: SYSTEMS QUALITY CHECKLIST

This should be completed for **all** data systems, an up to date copy of should be maintained by the named officer and returned to the Information Management Team in Customer Information and Transactional Service. For support please contact the Information Management Team or Policy and Communications or see the guidance template on the loop.

System Name			
System Version			
Named officer with overall responsibility for systems quality:			
System users (Please detail responsibilities in maintaining systems quality.)	Name	Role	Responsibility
Does the public access the system?	(Y/N)		
What decision-making information is provided by the system (to whom, and who by?)	Key data systems provide a number of key decision-making information, these could be PIs, productivity measures etc. List these here.		
If the system is linked to any others, which other systems does this system draw on, or provide data to?	Draws data from	Provides data to	
Is a business continuity/recovery plan in place? Please provide link.			
Training			
Has guidance been developed and shared with all staff to ensure the quality of data entered onto the system. (Y/N) Provide link to guidance documentation.			
Have all users received appropriate training? Give brief details.			
Checks			
What checks are preformed to assure the integrity of data? What frequency? And by who?			
What frequency is data cleansed, matched and improved? When did this last take place (<i>this should be in the your systems quality log</i>).			
Where is the supporting information on any data quality checks stored. (Provide link)			
Please give details of any recent system upgrades			
Has a log of data quality issues and improvements been created and made available to all staff. Where is this stored?			

APPENDIX 3: PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Producing and entering data (Collection Officers)

- All staff should be aware of their duties in line with the table of staff responsibilities in the Data Quality Policy.
- All performance indicators should be included on the performance management system. Other systems should not be used and internal spreadsheets should not be set up in place of the system as this duplicates work and data, leading to confusion.
- All data should be submitted via the performance management system by the Collection Officer and signed off by the Responsible Officer (checking officer) by the 10th working day following the end of the relevant period.
- Officers entering data into the performance management system must be clear as to whether the figure is a snapshot or a year to date figure. To avoid confusion, all data reported on the Performance Management System and in performance reports, business plan monitoring reports and the Corporate Dashboard should be cumulative, Year to Date. It should be made explicitly clear in the indicator title when, as an exception, data is entered as a monthly snapshot.
- Officers should have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems to produce performance information and receive adequate training on using the performance management system. Guides for all user levels are available on the intranet to provide support to staff using the performance management system. Staff in Policy and Communications will provide support on the use of the system.
- All calculations used to produce performance information should be carried out using Excel (not carried out manually) and saved along with any other evidence to allow any errors to be traced and rectified more easily and enable effective audit.
- Transcription of performance data across different spreadsheets etc, should be avoided, as this is a key source of errors. Keep everything simple and keep it together!

Checking data (Responsible Officers and authorising Directors/Heads of Service)

- All reported data must be checked before use. In the case of the Performance Management System all data should be checked by both a Responsible Officer and the Director before it is considered valid for use and reporting.
- All data performance information should have clear definitions and procedures in place to ensure that information is entered correctly and consistently and that effective business continuity can be achieved. These can be produced by the Collection Officer but assuring the final quality of these will be responsibility of the Responsible (Checking) Officer, who must provide the procedures to Policy & Communications.
- If an error is made when entering or approving performance the officer making the error should inform the person who authorises the data and provide details as soon as possible so the system can be updated. So a Collection Officer should inform the Responsible (Checking) Officer, a Responsible (Checking) Officer should inform the Director/Head of Service, Director/Head of Service who have incorrectly approved data should inform Policy & Communications.
- Services will be measured on their performance in this area by the Policy & Communications team and the results will be reported to Strategy Group to embed a robust approach.
- Sample checks on performance information should be carried out, including reconciling electronic data with manual records;
- Reports and queries used to provide results entered onto the PMS should also be tested for integrity.

APPENDIX 4: WRITTEN PROCEDURES TEMPLATE

This should be completed for **all** Performance Indicators and returned to Policy and Communications for upload to the Performance Management System.

These procedures may be subject to scrutiny as part of data quality reviews and spot checks. Additional information regarding data quality arrangements and requirements can be found in the data quality policy on the Loop.

For support please contact Policy and Communications or see the guidance template on the loop.

Performance Indicator Code and Name:	
Definition:	
Procedure for data collection:	
Where is all evidence supporting calculation retained?	
What checks does the Responsible Officer perform to verify the information?	
Is any of the data supporting this indicator obtained from external sources? If so, have they signed the third party reporting protocol?	
Have any additional training needs been identified for the staff responsible for the collection and reporting this indicator?	
Collection Officer	
Responsible Officer (Checking Officer)	
Director/Head of Service	