

Briefing Notes

Social and Community Overview and
Scrutiny Committee – 29th November
2007

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet but where no decisions from Members are needed. It does **NOT** form part of the agenda.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

Data Quality Policy

1. Introduction

Good data quality is everyone's business and in everyone's interest – both members and officers. We cannot make good decisions, plan our business, monitor our performance, or be sure that our actions are having a positive impact on our customers, unless the quality of our management information is reliable.

2. Data Quality Policy

A Data Quality Policy is currently being developed. The purpose of this document is to:

- Help encourage useful, accurate, timely and accountable data; and
- To support the drive towards continuous improvement of service delivery, informed decision making, improved customer perception, corporate assessment and organisational development.

A Data Quality Policy is the right practice to implement, as it supports the delivery of our 'golden thread' and our partnership working;

- It rectifies a gap in the organisation's practices, identified by the Audit Commission through their recent data quality assessment;
- It supports the national drive towards improving information to support decision making.

3. Setting the scene

The context for inspection within local authority is increasingly moving towards self-assessment. This is evident with the introduction of such initiatives as the Local Area Agreement (LAA), Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and the introduction of a smaller suite of indicators to replace best value that includes the requirement of a more concentrated suite of locally set indicators. If these are to be useful, they must contain quality data; they must be representative of service delivery, comparable, well configured and controlled.

4. Data quality principles

The data quality policy will identify five principles that should form an integral part of our everyday operations, and quality data should be the result. These principles are:

- **Fit for purpose & relevant** - Data should be specific and relevant to the purposes for which it is used and a consistent process of collection, calculation and presentation should be administered.
- **Responsibility** - Responsibility exists at all levels - from endorsement of policies and plans by members, to officers ensuring the accurate inputting of data. Responsibility extends to include partners.

- **Reliability & accuracy** - Data and targets must reflect real change and not variations in data collection approaches, methods, systems or interpretations.
- **Measurable & timely** - All actions, indicators and risk controls should be defined in measurable terms and updated on a timely basis.
- **Monitoring & review** - A consistent programme of regular monitoring and review will ensure that data reflects real change and that all who collect, check, present and use data understand the data.

Without good data quality practice, the risk if there are gaps in our information, if no-one is accountable, if it is out of date, if we do not check sources and we do not understand its purpose is:

- Flawed decision making;
- Lack of improvement; and
- Good performance going unrecognised.

If those with an interest - e.g. members, board, officers and partners - do not personally check and identify weaknesses in data quality, how do we know that the information is useable?

5. Audience and usage

The Data Quality policy will apply to all data including that used for decision making, planning, research, projects, investigations, reports, systems processing and performance. The application of the five data quality principles should be apparent in our:

• Business and service planning	• Corporate Governance & Assessments
• Performance reporting	• Partnership working
• Target setting	• ICT Systems
• Internal control arrangements	• Customer Relations
• Risk management	• Communications
• Budget planning	• Projects & Procedures
• Appraisal process	

Supporting good data quality practices provides assurance that the data held by this organisation is of a high standard and is fit for purpose. By incorporating the data quality principles via agreed action points detailed in the policy, by managing them and by monitoring them through TEN, we can look to provide a consistent high standard of data in the future.

6. Conclusion

The aim of data quality and the data quality policy is to identify and adhere to clear data quality principles that support the plan of delivery and assist in the creation of a better information management and decision making culture.

Good decision making, business planning and information management are key to delivering service improvement, demonstrating continuous improvement and meeting the requirements of the national statutory assessment frameworks. These are the practices that initiate and drive change and improvement and should not be something we do to 'tick the box'. Good practice is about using good information to make good decisions; to learn, inform and move forward.

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