Data Quality Policy

Key policy details

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Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Data Quality is an underpinning requirement and enabler of our ability to use data, whether for performance management of the organisation, or for designing services which give people in our community what they want. The authority collects and reports upon a range of data which needs to be calculated accurately. This includes the performance data contained within the Corporate Strategy and service performance measures, and Business Intelligence data, both of which can guide decisions, inform strategies and ultimately improve service delivery. This Policy also encompasses all other external returns. The Council's strategy is to ensure that data is managed to the highest quality.

1.2 Our objectives for the management of data quality are:

- To collect that information which is essential to business and performance management, and which accurately identifies the Council's performance over time, and customer requirements

- To ensure that the data collected is both accessible and secure

- To have data collection processes which result in information which is 'right first time'. This encompasses the audit requirements of accuracy, reliability, timeliness, relevance and completeness, and ensures that data is processed and added into the performance and business intelligence management systems by few people, as near to source as possible

- To identify and address issues with data quality at the earliest possible opportunity

- To ensure that data is used appropriately both within the organisation and externally to achieve knowledge and understanding of how well the Council is performing, and to drive improvements.

- To ensure that any personal data is processed in accordance with the data protection legislation and in particular any data published does not directly or indirectly identify individuals.

- To ensure that any data published does not infringe any intellectual property rights.

- Service users/employees using AI to assist with reporting should be mindful not to put any personal information into public realm systems, officers should assume that such systems are publicly accessible.

- To underpin our 'show me' culture (evidence-based decision-making)

1.3   This Data Quality Policy sets out the framework within which this work is undertaken.

1.4   In seeking and maintaining good data quality practice, in all areas in which data are used, on all systems the Council operates, the Council is committed to the principles and dimensions of data quality set out in the [Government Data Quality Framework.](#)

Data quality principles
These principles are guidelines to aid the creation of a strong data quality culture in your team or organisation. They explain the best practice, procedures and attitudes that will be most helpful to ensuring your data is fit for purpose.
These principles should lie at the heart of your approach to data quality and be supported by the application of the products within the framework. Each principle is accompanied by a set of practices which support their adoption.

The principles are:
1. Commit to data quality
2. Know your users and their needs
3. Assess quality throughout the data lifecycle
4. Communicate data quality clearly and effectively
5. Anticipate changes affecting data quality

Core data quality dimensions
This section describes the six data quality dimensions as defined by DAMA UK, and provides examples of their application.

1. Completeness
Completeness describes the degree to which records are present.
For a data set to be complete, all records are included, and the most important data is present in those records. This means that the data set contains all the records that it should and all essential values in a record are populated.
It is important not to confuse the completeness of data with its accuracy. A complete data set may have incorrect values in fields, making it less accurate.
2. Uniqueness
Uniqueness describes the degree to which there is no duplication in records. This means that the data contains only one record for each entity it represents, and each value is stored once.
Some fields, such as National Insurance number, should be unique. Some data is less likely to be unique, for example geographical data such as town of birth.
3. Consistency
Consistency describes the degree to which values in a data set do not contradict other values representing the same entity. For example, a mother's date of birth should be before her child's.
Data is consistent if it doesn't contradict data in another data set. For example, if the date of birth recorded for the same person in two different data sets is the same.
4. Timeliness
Timeliness describes the degree to which the data is an accurate reflection of the period that they represent, and that the data and its values are up to date.

Some data, such as date of birth, may stay the same whereas some, such as income, may not.

Data is timely if the time lag between collection and availability is appropriate for the intended use.

5. Validity

Validity describes the degree to which the data is in the range and format expected. For example, date of birth does not exceed the present day and is within a reasonable range.

Valid data is stored in a data set in the appropriate format for that type of data. For example, a date of birth is stored in a date format rather than in plain text.

6. Accuracy

Accuracy describes the degree to which data matches reality.

Bias in data may impact accuracy. When data is biased it means that it is not representative of the entire population. Account for bias in your measurements if possible, and make sure that data bias is communicated to your users.

In a data set, individual records can be measured for accuracy, or the whole data set can be measured. Which you choose to do should depend on the purpose of the data and your business needs.

User needs and trade-offs

Understanding user needs is important when measuring the quality of your data. Perfect data quality may not always be achievable and therefore focus should be given to ensuring the data is as fit for purpose as it can be.

This may result in trade-offs between different dimensions of data quality, depending on the needs and priorities of your users. You should prioritise the data quality dimensions that align with your user and business needs.

For example, if the timeliness of a data set is the most important dimension for the user, this may come at the expense of the data set's completeness, and vice versa.

It is important to communicate these trade-offs to the users of your data to avoid ambiguity and misuse of the data.

1.5   Implementing the Framework requires the establishment and operation of a Data Quality Action Plan. This, constituting a risk assessed analytical framework, forms the Proforma which is the first tab of **Appendix 1** to this Policy.

1.6   This Proforma identifies the key elements of the overall approach to establishing and controlling data quality, consisting of the strands and themes to be risk assessed and monitored by the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer:

Strand	Theme	Actions (high-level)	*Link to:*
1. People	1.1 Leadership and Direction	Governance, information quality accountability, quality checking	*Govt DQF* - A1

	1.2 Knowledge and Understanding	Responsibilities, processes, importance, impact of getting things wrong	*Govt DQ Framework*: DQ Principles, DQ Dimensions
	1.3 Personal Responsibility	Attitude and aptitude	
	1.4 Resources	Analysis	
2. Process	2.1 Monitoring	System/information asset owner specified assurance of access and use	Feedback, ICT reporting
	2.2 Auditing	Independent activity identifying best practice and improvement areas	*Govt DQ Framework*: DQ Principles, DQ Dimensions
	2.3 Records Management	Operating procedures, review and linking of information, embedding best practice	Legal requirements under legislation; Retention guidelines
	2.4 Reporting Mechanism	Visible performance reporting of data quality issues	Feedback, ICT reporting
3. Systems	3.1 Data Entry Validation	Development and/or procurement of systems	Feedback, ICT reporting; DQ Dimensions
	3.2 Prime Record	Oversight and corporate memory, direction toward convergence and integration	
	3.3 Reporting Capability	Monitors and highlights issues	Feedback, ICT reporting

1.7   The Proforma allows for a risk assessment rating (using the standard Zurich Municipal Risk Rating template values) against the high-level Actions, to create an overall rating against the Themes, but also specific risk rating against underlying actions with target dates for their completion.

1.8   Risk assessment rating using the Zurich Municipal rating system allows consideration of both probability and impact severity, and a value should be assigned on this basis to the items in the Proforma.

1.9   The Proforma will be completed under the guidance of the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer.

2   Data Quality Roles and Responsibilities

2.1   To ensure that the management of performance is coherent, the following roles and responsibilities are operated:

- Chief Executive – Ultimate strategic responsibility for data quality

- Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy (as Monitoring Officer) Responsible for information risk management, co-ordination of performance data and systems to support these activities. This post is the designated **Senior Information Risk Officer** (SIRO) for the Council.

- The Legal Services Manager – Responsible for compliance with national and legislative requirements. This post is the designated **Data Protection Officer**.

- Directors (SLT) – Strategic accountability for data management and quality for their Directorates. These posts are designated as **Information Asset Managers**.

- Service Managers (OLT) – Operational accountability for data management and the quality of data generated in their service areas. These posts are designated as **Information Asset Owners**.

- Data Compiler – Operational responsibility for gathering and inputting data within their service areas. These posts are designated as **Information Asset Administrators.**

- Internal Audit Manager - Independent validation of systems and controls

2.2   Directors and Section Managers will ensure that:

- appropriate systems are in place to collate data ('right first time'), and that they are fit for purpose

- electronic systems/procedure notes/manuals are in place for business-critical systems and that these are reviewed and updated as appropriate

- staff are aware of the requirement for them to assure data quality and that responsibility for data quality is reflected in job descriptions and the appraisal process. Services are encouraged to ensure that suitable appraisal targets are included in work plans

- ensure that third parties are aware of the requirement for them to assure data quality, and our processes for checking the information they provide. When entering into contracts with service providers, wherever relevant, to ensure there is a contractual requirement to provide timely and accurate information

- appropriate risk management and business continuity management arrangements are in place

- Training is up-to-date and staff are aware of their responsibilities

2.3   The Director for Corporate Services will ensure that appropriate IT systems are available to support officers in collating performance data, and that external submissions of that data comply with national and legislative requirements.

2.4   Directors will ensure that the appropriate IT systems are available to support officers in collating business intelligence data which is compliant with the law.

3.   Producing Performance Measure Outturns

3.1   Each performance measure will have a designated officer ('the Responsible Officer') who is responsible for managing progress against targets that have been set, for managing risks associated with the measure and for verifying the accuracy of published outturns.

3.2   Outturn data will be produced as soon as is practicable after the required timescale has elapsed. The Responsible Officer will ensure that calculations / workings are checked by a colleague to reduce the potential for error.

3.3   Working papers for audit inspection will be maintained and submitted corporately for review. The Responsible Officer by submitting the data confirms that the data provided has been produced accurately. Directors by authorising and forwarding the data within their area of responsibility are certifying that it is correct.

3.4   Melton's Performance & Risk Management Framework sets out in greater detail the current reporting process for performance management information within the context of the Corporate Strategy and performance measures used to monitor corporate performance and its management.

3.5   [The Government Data Quality Framework](#) – released in December 2020 – includes the key data quality principles, data quality lifecycle, and dimensions that we adhere to.

3.6   The Data Quality matrix set out in Appendix 1 demonstrates how we will ensure compliance with People, Process and System elements of our approach.

4. Legislative Requirements and Operational Context

4.1   In the compilation and presentation of data by the authority, it is necessary to take account of legislative and regulatory requirements deriving from the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (with data quality controls constituting a key means of complying with the requirement for appropriate technical and organisational measures), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (and the associated Environmental Information Regulations 2004), the datasets changes to FOIA 2000 arising from the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

4.2   One of the key effects of the datasets and transparency requirements is to make information available in reusable formats, chiefly as comma separated version (csv) files.

4.3   Data quality also operates in the context of information sharing and partnership working with countywide and national partners, such as neighbouring districts, county-level organisations, and central government departments.

4.4   Officers of the Council will need to bear these legislative, regulatory and partnership issues in mind when considering data quality matters.

4.5   From December 2020, the Government Data Quality Framework has become available, providing guidance and context for best practice.

5.   Related Policies

5.1   The Data Quality Policy is part of Melton Borough Council's Information Governance Framework.

5.2   Other related policies are available to staff via the MIKE Melton Policy and Document Library. These include:

- ICT Policies and Procedures,

- Data Protection and Freedom of Information related policies

    o Data Protection Procedures,

    o Individual Rights Procedure,

- Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Procedure,

- Records Retention and Disposal Procedure.