Data Quality Policy

March 2008

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Summary Statement

Derby City Partnership has a strong commitment to data quality and recognises the importance of high quality, timely and reliable data and information to support good decision-making at all levels and enable continually improving service outcomes.

Good data quality is based on robust systems and processes and has the following characteristics…

- Completeness.
- Validity.
- Accuracy.
- Reliability.
- Timeliness.
- Relevancy.

Data quality is an integral part of the Partnership's performance and reporting framework, which is detailed below at five levels…

- A Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Derby City Partnership's 2020 Vision and priorities for the city.

- Our Local Area Agreement, City Delivery Plans and other thematic strategies which set out the key targets and improvements which need to be made to achieve the Partnership's vision and priorities.

- Partner strategies and plans, which set out how individual partners are planning to achieve the 2020 vision and their own organisational improvement priorities.

- Service business plans which set out specific work programmes, actions and risks.

- Individual performance plans to agree individual employee performance targets and development needs.

Every member of staff who uses data as part of their job (whether entering, extracting, analysing or reporting) is responsible for the quality of the data that is used. However it is accepted that certain officers will have a greater lead responsibility for securing a high standard of data quality. In particular,

- Compiling Officers
- Accountable Officers
- Assistant Directors/Senior Managers
- Chief Officers and Lead Members
- Partner Performance Leads,

This policy sets out the key responsibilities of these officers and outlines the Partnership's objectives and supporting actions to develop our data quality arrangements.

1. Introduction

1.1 What is data quality and why is data quality important?

Derby City Partnership and its key public sector partners such as the City Council and Primary Care Trust are responsible for delivering the city's 2020 vision and supporting priorities included in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Monitoring is undertaken at several levels to ensure we are on track to achieve these targets and outcomes.

The financial and performance information used to monitor progress must be based on good 'data quality'. This is necessary because consistently high quality, timely and comprehensive data is vital to support good decision-making at all levels, and good quality data as the basis for reliable information is required to inform and enable continually improving service outcomes.

This policy sets out the steps required to maintain the highest possible standards of data quality across the Partnership.

Ensuring good data quality is essential if we are to:

- be fully accountable for our activities and performance to key stakeholders such as local residents, businesses, service users, elected members, as well as to central government and inspectorates.

- support effective governance by ensuring senior officers and elected members have robust and timely information to make decision making evidence based and informed.

- use performance information that is accurate, reliable and comparable over time to drive service improvement.

- meet statutory responsibilities to publish performance information and to provide assurance that the data is valid and complete.

- manage the risks of mis-reporting performance in terms of minimising reputational damage and legal claims as well maximising value for money.

1.2 National context

The 2006 Local Government White Paper '*Strong and Prosperous Communities*' and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 have set out a new performance framework for local services. This will place greater reliance on data quality, to provide robust data for local performance management, and to inform performance assessments such as Comprehensive Area Assessment.

To assist public bodies with data quality arrangements, the Audit Commission has released a document entitled '*Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality of data*' in November 2007. This provides a framework for data quality improvement across the public sector. This policy is focused on addressing the standards identified in this document.

In addition, the development of data quality arrangements must be guided by other relevant legislation such as…

- Data Protection Act.

- Freedom of Information Act.

- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.3   Performance Framework

Data quality is an integral part of the Partnership's performance and reporting framework, which is set out below at five levels…

- A Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Derby City Partnership's 2020 Vision and priorities for the city.

- Our Local Area Agreement, City Delivery Plans and other thematic strategies which set out the key targets and improvements which need to be made to achieve the Partnership's vision and priorities.

- Partner strategies and plans, which set out how individual partners are planning to achieve the 2020 vision and their own organisational improvement priorities.

- Service business plans which set out specific work programmes, actions and risks.

- Individual performance plans to agree individual employee performance targets and development needs.

The Council's Performance Management Strategy contains more information on the framework, a copy of which can be found at http://www.derby.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9946E141-7FE0-4E9A-813D-5DCDBCDFE3A5/0/PMStrategy200708Final.pdf

This policy applies to **all data that is used to account for the Partnership's activities**. The key data used by the authority to monitor its performance and as the basis for decision-making is set out overleaf:

- Data supporting key performance measures in the Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and National Indicator Set. This includes statutory performance indicators and local indicators reflecting service priorities which have been developed through the service planning process. In most cases, these performance indicators will be monitored through the performance information system, Performance Eye.

- Information from the Partnership consultation processes which is used to inform policy and service delivery;

- Information published by partners for the public in order to help them to understand how well the Partnership is delivering its services and to hold the organisation to account.

- Socio-economic and demographic information about Derby that is used to inform the policy and decision-making process – as generated from the Data Warehouse.

- Information used by business managers and staff to monitor and manage service delivery.

- Data that is passed to other organisations (i.e. central government and inspectorates, other Councils and partners) to monitor progress against targets, compare performance and make judgements about partners in Derby and the services they deliver.

Please note that throughout this policy, where reference is made to 'data', we are referring to all of the above. Whilst the two main corporate systems used for collating, analysing and reporting information are Performance Eye and Data Warehouse, it should be noted that there are many other systems from which data as outlined above is derived.

1.4   Information governance

Data quality forms an important element of the overall governance of information across the Derby City Partnership. New systems are designed around the principle of 'getting it right first time' and the Council's Information Management Strategy reflects the objectives of efficient, secure and accessible management of data using electronic and integrated systems.

2. Policy aims and objectives

2.1 Aims

This policy aims to:

- identify the minimum data quality standards to which all partners in Derby should be working in terms of the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of accurate, reliable and consistent performance data to inform the decision making process.

- provide a framework to ensure sufficient action is being taken to meet the data quality standards set.

- support the creation of a quality culture and effective management of information across the Partnership.

2.2 Data quality principles

The Partnership adopts the standards as set out in the Audit Commission document '*Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality of data'*. We aim to ensure that all data meets the following principles…

Principle	Description
Accuracy	• Data should be sufficiently accurate to present a fair picture of performance and enable informed decision making at all levels. • The margin of error should be minimised at all times but the need for accuracy must be balanced against the cost and effort of collection. • Data should represent clearly and in sufficient detail the interaction provided at the point of activity and where possible it should be captured only once, although it may be used many times.
Validity	• Data should comply with relevant rules and definitions, whether nationally or locally set. • Data should be consistent to support comparisons over time and with similar organisations. • Reported data is authorised by senior managers.
Reliability	• Data should be based on stable and consistent data collection and analysis processes – whether manual or computer-based systems or a combination of both. • Wherever possible manual manipulation of data should be kept to a minimum and systems used to collect data should have good practice data quality standards built in.

Timeliness	• Data is timely and is captured as quickly as possible during or after the event or activity. • The data should be available within a reasonable time period to support information needs and to support decision-making. • The requirements of the Partnership performance framework are set out in the performance management timetable.
Relevance	• Data captured is relevant to the user and appropriate to the purpose for which it is used. • Information needs will be reviewed regularly at partnership and organisational level to reflect changing needs.
Completeness	• All relevant data is included and missing, incomplete, or invalid records are minimised.

2.3   Approach

In developing this policy, the data quality working group have reviewed the data quality standards and identified the following priorities for development. This has helped focus action planning for improving our overall data quality arrangements as shown in **Appendix 2**.

Governance and accountability

- Raising the profile of data quality amongst those charged with governance, such as elected Members and DCP Board and Cities and making sure they are aware of their responsibilities.
- Embedding data quality within risk management arrangements.
- Formalising reporting of data quality issues across the Partnership.

Policies and procedures

- Communicating the key elements of this data quality policy and integrating its principles into the day-to-day work of the Partnership.
- Reviewing underlying policies and procedures that underpin this policy to ensure they meet the needs of staff and data quality principles.

Systems and processes

- Extending challenge of systems and processes in high risk areas e.g. spot checks of data quality arrangements.
- Developing information systems with built in controls to support data quality and the principle of 'right first time'.

People and skills

- Making sure that data quality standards are reviewed as part of individual performance reviews of relevant staff.
- Raising awareness of data quality amongst staff who are not accountable and compiling officers.

Data use and reporting

- Improving the timeliness and quality of commentary input into Performance Eye.
- Raising data quality around government returns, including audit trails in place and review by senior officers.
- Focusing on data quality arrangements for the new national indicator set, particularly around accuracy and completeness due to potentially new definitions and data sources.

3. Applying the policy

3.1 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for performance and data quality is clearly defined at different levels across the Partnership, as set out in the Performance Management Strategy. Each performance indicator, whether national or local, should have an assigned Accountable Officer and Compiling Officer, who take specific responsibility for entering, analysing and reporting data based on good data quality principles. In line with audit guidance, the same officer should not be assigned both these responsibilities.

Assistant Directors or Senior Managers, Chief Officers and Lead Members play a key role in monitoring overall arrangements for data quality, endorsing this data quality policy and ensuring its principles are upheld in the day to day running of their organisations.

However an important principle of this policy is to stress that every member of staff who uses data as part of their job (whether entering, extracting, analysing, publishing or reporting) is responsible for the quality of the data that is used. However it is accepted that certain officers will have a greater lead responsibility for securing a high standard of data quality and this is outlined within the policy.

Key responsibilities in relation to data quality are set out in **Appendix 1**.

3.2 Delivery plan

The delivery plan is updated annually and links to any specific recommendations made by internal and external audit. This is shown in **Appendix 2**.

3.3 Monitoring and review arrangements

The DCP Performance Group is responsible for applying and implementing the policy on behalf of the Partnership. The policy and action plan will be reviewed every six months.

The Council's Audit and Accounts Committee will also receive progress reports on implementation of the policy.

3.4 Risk management

Data quality has been identified as a strategic risk in the Council's Strategic Risk Register and should also be reflected in departmental registers and business plans. The Strategic Risk Group has a remit to monitor all risks faced by the Council (as accountable body for the LAA) and to ensure that the relevant control measures are implemented.

Individual performance indicators will be subject to self assessment to determine high risk areas. In addition, it is considered that high risk conditions include…

- A high volume of data transactions.
- Technically complex or new performance information definition/ guidance.
- Problems identified in previous years.
- Inexperienced staff involved in data processing / performance compilation.
- Known gaps in the control environment.

APPENDIX 1 - Data Quality Responsibilities

Compiling Officers
- Compile the performance indicator accurately using the definition provided.
- Ensure numerator and denominator figures are based on complete and consistent data.
- Input outturn data into Performance Eye on a timely basis.
- Collate and attach all working papers within Performance Eye for audit purposes.

Accountable Officers
- Make sure the performance indicator data is produced following the definition within the required timescales.
- Make sure that data in Performance Eye reconciles with working papers and appropriate audit trails.
- Input commentary into Performance Eye where appropriate or approve commentary on a timely basis.
- Document procedures and update on a regular basis.
- Ensure information systems for collating performance data are sufficiently robust and comply with data quality requirements.
- Ensure data sources are securely held with checks in place for any third party data.
- Ensure there are appropriate 'deputies' in place to produce data in the absence of compiling or accountable officers.

Assistant Director/Senior Managers
- Challenge the accuracy and completeness of data entered into Performance Eye or Data Warehouse.
- Ensure that any 'missing' data is minimised and chase appropriately.
- Finalise commentary on performance indicators significantly above or below target within Performance Eye.
- Formally approve or validate quarterly outturn data and commentary entered into Performance Eye.
- Ensure separate compiling and accountable officers are in place.

Chief Officers/Member Leads
- Proactively agree and monitor data quality objectives for the department or organisation.
- Address any data quality issues arising from internal/external audit reviews.

Performance Leads

- Promote data quality policies and procedures through training and communication.
- Work with the Change Management, Performance & Research Unit to undertake spot checks of medium or high risk areas.
- Report data quality issues to Departmental and Senior Management Teams.
- Assist Compiling and Accountable Officers respond to audit / other recommendations in relation to data quality.

APPENDIX 2 - Action Plan for 2008/09

Ref	Action	Links	Outcomes	Lead unit/ officer(s)	Timescale
1. Governance and leadership					
1.1	Undertake training for Board and elected members on the importance of data quality and the arrangements put in place to mitigate the risks associated with poor data quality.	PwC Audit report Dec 2007.	Evidence that those charged with governance have received training on the importance of data quality and are aware of the arrangements.	Planning & Performance Team.	September 2008
1.2	Data quality to be included as a standing agenda item on all DCP Performance Group meetings.	Partnership Performance Framework.	There is a framework for monitoring data quality, with regular formal reporting on key measures.	Local Agreements Coordinator.	March 2008
1.3	Make sure data quality is reflected in all business plans.	PwC Audit report Dec 2007.	Data quality objectives are linked to business objectives and are supported by local delivery plans.	Performance Leads. Planning Performance Officer.	April 2008
1.4	Review all departmental risk registers to ensure data quality is incorporated.	PwC Audit report Dec 2007.	Data quality is embedded in risk management arrangements, with regular assessment of risks associated with unreliable or inaccurate data.	Performance Leads. Council Strategic Risk Group.	June 2008
1.5	Publish data quality policy and action plan across the Partnership.	PwC Audit report Dec 2007.	Corporate commitment to data quality is actively promoted and making roles and responsibilities clear.	DCP Performance Group	May 2008
2. Policies					
2.1	Draw up communications process to inform staff of changes in data quality procedures.		Consistency in reporting compliance with data quality policies.	DCP Performance Group	September 2008

Ref	Action	Links	Outcomes	Lead unit/ officer(s)	Timescale
2.2	Establish data sharing protocols all partners providing data for Data Warehouse and Performance Eye.		A formal set of quality requirements is applied to all third party data used by the organisation.	Research and Strategy Officer.	July 2008
2.3	Review roles and responsibilities of performance coordinators to ensure there is a data quality champion in place for each partner or department.		Effective network of data quality champions across the Partnership.	DCP Performance Group	July 2008.
3. Systems and processes					
3.1	Implement the revised self assessment template for new National Indicators.		Completed self assessments for all national indicators.	Performance Leads/ DQ Champions. Compiling/ Accountable Officers	October 2008
3.2	Based on completed self assessments, identify high risk indicators for incorporation into the Internal Audit programme for 2008/09.	Council's Internal Audit Plan	Audit reviews of high risk indicators, with recommendations for improvement.	Planning & Performance Team / Internal Audit.	November 2008
3.3	Introduce a system of control mapping and testing of performance information systems.		Prevention and detection of data manipulation and error.	Internal Audit.	March 2009
3.4	Introduce a system of departmental / partner spot checks.		Ongoing challenge of data quality arrangements.	Performance Leads/ DQ Champions.	October 2008
4. People and skills					
4.1	Awareness sessions to be held in all departments to be delivered to all staff involved in the performance process.	PwC Audit Report Dec 2007.	Staff are aware of roles and responsibilities in relation to data quality.	Performance Leads/ DQ Champions.	March 2009

Ref	Action	Links	Outcomes	Lead unit/ officer(s)	Timescale
4.2	Check job descriptions of appropriate staff and amend as necessary.		Accountability for data quality is part of IPM for those defined as responsible for data quality	Planning & Performance Team / HR	July 2008
5. Data use and reporting					
5.1	Work to reduce missing/incomplete data.	PwC Audit Report Dec 2007. Performance Management Strategy.	Strengthened processes for checking reported data/performance indicators, both departmentally and corporately.	Performance Leads/ DQ Champions. Assistant Directors.	Ongoing.
5.2	Work with accountable officers to improve the standard of commentary and action planning.	Performance Management Strategy.	Improved standard of contextual information to support outturn performance results.	Performance Leads/ DQ Champions. Accountable Officers.	Ongoing.