Data Quality Strategy
2009-12

Introduction

1   Data is one of the Council's most important assets - it is increasingly being used by external bodies to assess our performance. Data quality is extremely important in Haringey as we want to be sure that information on which we base decisions and inform our planning is robust.

2   The Audit Commission now assesses councils on the quality of their performance data under the Use of Resources element of the Comprehensive Area Assessment This means that at every stage we need to ensure that records are accurate and that management information - especially that used for performance indicators - is accurate so that performance information is correct.

Purpose and aim

3   The purpose of this Data Quality strategy is **to set out an approach that will ensure that the data we use is fit for purpose and represents an accurate and consistent picture of the council's and joint partnership activities**.

4   Our aim is **for high-quality data to be an integral part of the council's operational, performance management and governance arrangements so that it drives service improvement and informs policy**.

5   For the purposes of this strategy the following definitions will be used:[1]

- **Data:** Numbers, words or images that have yet to be organised or analysed to answer a specific question.

- **Information:** Produced through processing, manipulating and organising data to answer questions, adding to the knowledge of the receiver.

- **Knowledge:** What is known by a person or persons. This involves interpreting information received, adding relevance and context to clarify the insights the information contains.

Scope

6   The scope of this strategy applies to:
- all council employees who need to provide, use or access data
- all information that is entered onto a manual or computerised system within the Council, whether centrally or locally maintained
- all partners and contractors with whom the Council provides services

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[1] *Definitions from* The Audit Commission's Improving Information to Support Decision Making: Standards for Better Quality Data (external link)

The National Context

7 The 2006 Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 have set a new performance framework for local services, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The CAA will rely greatly on data quality as performance information will be used to inform ratings of the local authority. The expectation will also be for public services to use information to reshape services and to account to local people for performance (Duty to Involve).

8 The introduction of the **Comprehensive Area Assessment** (CAA), from 2009, will re-enforce the importance of reliable information. Under the CAA data quality is a key theme within the Use of Resources assessment. Specifically the 'Governing the Business' theme recognises '*the vital importance of fit for purpose data and information to support decision making'*. KLOE 2.2 of the Use of Resources focuses predominantly on arrangements for securing data quality and using fit for purpose information.

9 In November 2007, the Audit Commission published "Standards for Better Data Quality", for adoption on a voluntary basis by public bodies.[2] In summary, the six key characteristics of good quality data detailed in this report were:

- **Accuracy** – data should be sufficiently accurate for their intended purposes
- **Validity** – data should be recorded and used in compliance with relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions
- **Reliability** – data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes across collection points and over time
- **Timeliness** - data should be captured as quickly as possible after the event or activity and be available for the intended use quickly and frequently enough to support information needs and to influence service or management decisions.
- **Relevance** – data should be relevant to the purposes for which they are used. This entails periodic review of requirements to reflect changing needs.
- **Completeness** – data requirements should be clearly specified based on the information needs of the body and data collection processes matched to these requirements

10 The approach set out in this strategy aims to use these standards, which are based on good practice, flexibly and proportionately.

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[2] The Audit Commission's Improving Information to Support Decision Making: Standards for Better Quality Data (external link) is a useful guide to the subject of data quality.

The Haringey Context

11   In the **2008 Use of Resources and Data Quality assessment** the council was judged as performing well in terms of data quality. The report states that '*corporate systems for collecting, recording, analysing and reporting performance data are robust and well designed. Processes for collecting and reporting this data are clearly aligned to the Council's priorities and objectives*.' The report makes a number of recommendations which are taken forward in this strategy.

12   This strategy will help us deliver effective services and manage the delivery of our targets.

Outcomes and Objectives

13   The outcomes we are aiming to achieve through this strategy are:

> **Outcome 1:**
> **Data is accurate and reliable on which to base policies and decisions.**
>
> **Outcome 2:**
> **There is clear accountability for good quality data – everyone recognises the need for good data quality and how they contribute to delivering it.**
>
> **Outcome 3:**
> **Staff have the knowledge and competencies to produce, interpret and analyse good quality data**

14   The table in Appendix 1:
   - outlines the 13 objectives under each of these key outcomes
   - assesses what is already in place – based on our independent annual data quality audit
   - Sets out what needs to be done to achieve our desired outcomes in delivering this Data Quality Strategy.

15   An action plan, shown in Appendix 2 lists the activities we will undertake in the coming year to achieve each objective.

Our Approach to Data Quality

16   Our approach to Data Quality is based on the six key characteristics of good quality data identified by the Audit Commission (see paragraph 9).

17   The diagram below outlines how we will manage data quality in Haringey from the identification of risk areas through to reporting processes to senior management and then implementation of actions to address any issues raised.

Data Quality Audit Approach
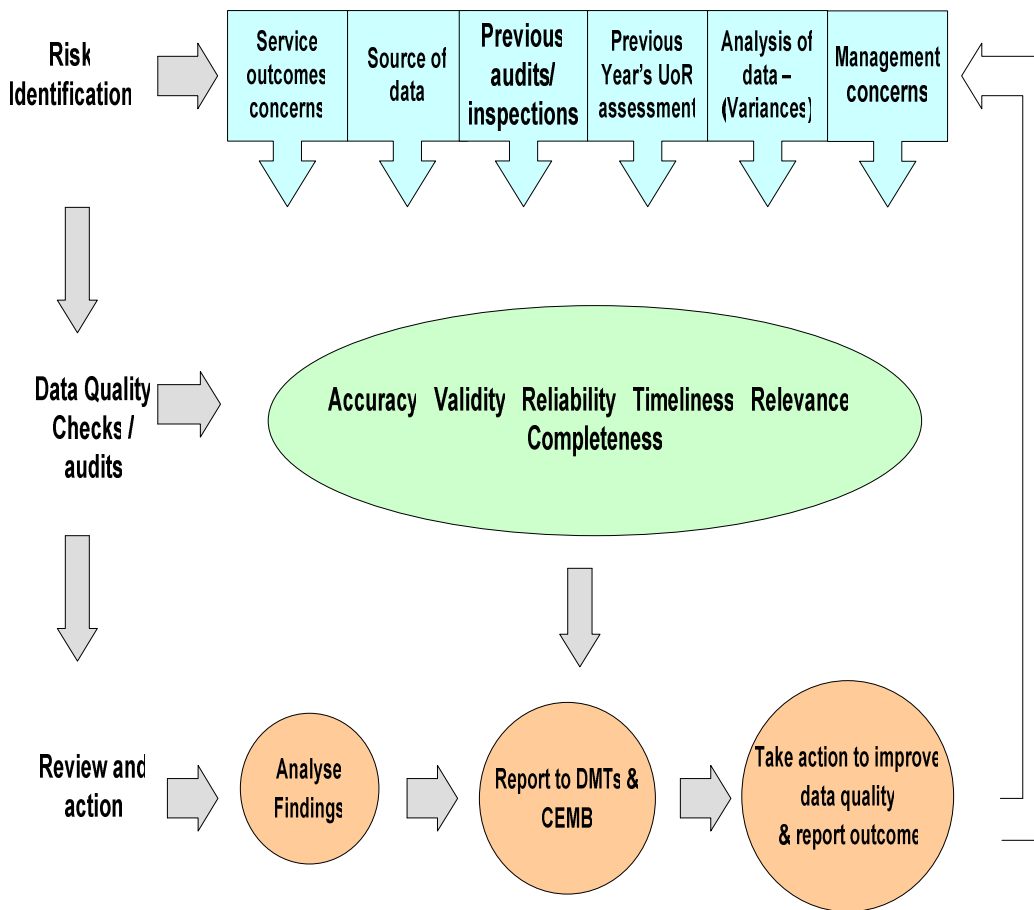
Note: Joint indicator audits will be reported to the HSP Performance Management Group.

Data Quality Audits

18   Data quality audits are a key element of this strategy. Their purpose is to ensure that data is fit-for-purpose by assessing representative samples of data against the six data quality dimensions defined by the Audit Commission (see paragraph 9).

19   We have developed a methodology for carrying out these audits based on Audit Commission guidance.   The audits will be carried out by experienced performance analysts with a good knowledge of the performance indicators and the council. The Council's Policy and Performance Team has responsibility for the completion of the programme of audits.

20   Appendix 3 shows a timetable of audits to be undertaken in the coming year. As data quality audits are resource intensive, prioritisation will be risk based and informed by:

- concerns around service outcomes
- the data source
- previous audits/inspections
- previous year's Use of Resources assessment
- analysis of national and local indicator data
- management concerns

21   Responsibility for the signing off of performance indicators will sit the appropriate Director for the service.

22   Directors will be accountable for ensuring actions resulting from data quality audits are addressed in a timely fashion.

23   The robustness of data used by the Haringey Strategic Partnership or other partnerships is equally crucial to the Council and as from April 2009 will be tested by the Area Assessment. For this reason this strategy and action plan proposes joint data quality audits of key partnership indicators.

Data Quality Responsibilities

24   Responsibility for data quality does not lie with any one single individual but with each and every member of staff at all levels within the council. The following table outlines the specific key responsibilities and accountabilities for all employees around data quality.

Role	Responsibilities
All employees	- Accurate and timely recording of data on appropriate systems - Performance appraisals to set out individual specific responsibilities regarding data quality
Directorate Performance Officers/ Managers	- Knowledge of relevant Performance Indicator definitions and guidance - Ensure compliance with indicator definitions and guidance. - Input accurate information onto Covalent - Up-to-date record keeping (not entered in a block) - Maintain a robust control environment - Identify and rectify gaps in control environment - Training/guidance
Corporate Performance Manager	- Maintain and update Data Quality Strategy action plan. - Co-ordinate risk assessment of systems and PI Audits, liaising with internal and external auditors and performance leads - Ensuring improvements have been implemented - Communicating the commitment to Data Quality - Reporting progress on Data Quality to monthly performance review meetings and CEMB
Head of Service	- Ensuring the data is accurate for their service for presentation to Director for sign-off - Ensuring that actions arising from data quality audits are satisfactorily addressed
Departments (Directors)	Overall responsibility for sign off of data and the reliability of performance information presented at CEMB and completion of actions arising from data quality audits.

Performance Management Framework and System

25   The Council has in place a performance management framework which was refreshed in 2008/09. Our auditors have judged this as meeting level 4 requirements, stating that '*it sets out a clear policy framework and establishes clear expectations and requirements for officers and members'*. This Data Quality Strategy complements the Performance Management Framework.

26   In 2008, the Council procured the Covalent Performance Management Information System to capture, monitor and report performance data at several levels in the local authority and our partners. The system will go live in early 2009 and will increase the sophistication and efficiency of our data collection and contribute greatly to the quality of data across the Council.

Ensuring Value for Money

27   The cost of collection, storing and collating data can be very high and there is often a trade-off between cost, accuracy and timeliness. Our aim is to be clear about the purpose of the data collected and its use. Where possible we will ensure data is collected using the **COUNT** principle – **C**aptured **O**nce and **U**sed **N**umerous **T**imes.

Information Governance

28   This Data Quality Strategy has been developed to ensure that the way we use data complies with the principles of effective information governance as embodied in the Data Protection Act.

29   The Data Protection Act is the legal framework that ensures personal information held by all organisations, including councils, is used fairly and lawfully. Under the Act, councils are required to ensure that only information for which use has been specified is held and that the information is held securely and only for an appropriate amount of time.

Equalities Impact

30   The use of good data quality to inform decision making and service delivery is key in ensuring vulnerable groups are not discriminated against in any way. It is essential in the monitoring of the national and local priorities and in ensuring that the Council meets it obligations under Equalities Public Duties Scheme.

Monitoring and Review

31   This strategy covers a three period from 2009 to 2012. The data quality action plan (Appendix 2) will be updated every year to reflect findings of the annual Data Quality audit and any data quality issues that may arise during the year.

Next steps

32   The development of this Data Quality Strategy is the first stage in developing an overarching information management framework for the Council. This is already underway as part of the work of the Information and Knowledge Management Stream Board within the Achieving Excellence Programme. Work is also underway to develop area based data and the data quality strategy will apply to that.

33   In addition, links need to be made with the development of the corporate Geographical Information Systems and the development and implementation of Council-wide policies and procedures for records management, in particular with regard to data storage.

Outcomes and Objectives Appendix 1

Outcome 1: Data is accurate and reliable on which to base policies and decisions		
Objective	**What we have in place** [3]	**What needs to be done**
1.1 Ensure that appropriate systems are in place for the collection, recording, analysis and the reporting of the data is used to monitor performance.	Corporate systems for collecting, recording, analysing and reporting performance data are robust and well designed. Processes for collecting and reporting this data are clearly aligned to the Council's priorities and objectives, and the data collected supports review of progress towards these and delivery of business plans.	▪ There is a need for increased sophistication and efficiency within our corporate data collection systems. To address this, a procurement exercise is currently taking place for implementation of a web-based performance management application (Covalent).
1.2 Ensure effective arrangements for monitoring and review of data quality are in place	Data quality is reviewed and monitored through a number of separate mechanisms, including annual self-assessment and challenge from the corporate performance team. Data quality issues are also identified and addressed through corporate performance processes.	• Establish a formal programme of annual risk assessments of performance indicators • Embed provision for data quality checks to be undertaken from collection to reporting within new governance structure for the HSP, linked to the performance management framework.
1.3 Establish effective controls to ensure that information systems produce the quality of data needed to report on performance and inform decision making	There is a well-defined sequence of controls for corporate performance data both at a corporate level and within source systems at service level. The Council's self-assessment process for BVPI and key CPA indicators provides a good level of control on an annual basis	▪ Implementation of Covalent application should ensure that controls are designed adequately and proportionally to ensure that high-quality data is recorded on the system (e.g. workflow functionality). Subsequent reviews should assess the effectiveness of these controls.
1.4 Specify standards for shared data or data supplied by third parties.	Developing the Council's approach to data quality within partnerships is a key issue, which cuts across most areas of this review. The Council is already implementing new approaches to governance and performance management within the local strategic partnership.	▪ Develop a formal data sharing protocol which specifies the responsibilities of all partners to provide data which is 'fit for purpose' to give HSP confidence in quality of all of the data that it uses ▪ Ensure that where services are contracted out, agreements are in place that specify reporting requirements and the quality of reported data.

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[3] What we have in place and what needs to be done is taken from our external 2008 Annual Data Quality Audit. For detailed actions see Action Plan (Appendix 2).

Outcome 2: There is clear accountability for good quality data – everyone recognises the need for good data quality and how they contribute to delivering it.		
Objective	What we have in place	What needs to be done
2.1 Establish robust security arrangements for performance information systems	The Council has good arrangements in place to ensure resilience and continuity for business-critical performance information systems. Manuals and process maps have been developed, and business continuity / disaster recovery plans are in place.	▪ Establish more robust assurance over all external processes through which information is provided. ▪ Develop and implement Council-wide policies and procedures for data storage and record management.
2.2 Ensure responsibility for data quality is clearly defined	Responsibility for data quality is clearly assigned at top management level. Data quality issues are considered by senior management through a range of different review and monitoring mechanisms.	▪ Include data quality issues as part of the member training induction on performance and budget management. ▪ Integrate data quality considerations into all planning, monitoring and reporting processes.
2.3 Ensure clear data quality objectives are set and formally documented.	The strategic importance of data quality is clearly understood, and is reflected in key corporate documents. Haringey's performance framework highlights the need "to be sure that information on which we base decisions and inform our planning is robust." The Council has a culture that focuses on achieving high-quality performance information.	▪ Establish formal data quality objectives for the organisation through development and implementation of a data quality strategy for all individual departments or functions. ▪ Extend data quality strategy throughout Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP).
2.4 Define a clear organisational policy for data quality supported by current operational procedures and guidance	The new performance management framework sets out a clear policy framework and establishes clear expectations and requirements for officers and members.	▪ The Council's new performance framework meets the key requirements for level 4 in effect, but was approved just after the end of the financial year (although services have been operating in line with the principles set out for some time).
2.5 Ensure that data quality policies and procedures are followed by staff and applied consistently throughout the organisation	The new performance framework is supported by detailed guidance for officers and members, which has been published internally. There is also an internal network of performance specialists who have been effective in tackling data quality issues within services.	▪ Embed the new "strategic partnership code of corporate governance" within the HSP

Outcome 3: Staff have the knowledge and competencies to produce, interpret and analyse good quality data		
3.1 Ensure the responsibilities for achieving data quality are communicated clearly	Performance staff throughout the council have clearly identified roles and responsibilities in their job descriptions and staff are clear about their responsibilities in relation to data quality. The Council has a network of performance representatives for each service and department, and these officers play a key role in championing performance and data quality issues.	▪ There are no specific improvement opportunities identified in this area.
3.2 Ensure that staff with data quality responsibility have the necessary skills.	Data quality training is provided to key performance staff through periodic performance workshops and regular network meetings. Data quality is a component of the new staff induction process. The Council operates a range of key performance systems, including SAP, Framework I and Respond. A training programme for users supports each of these systems.	▪ Carry out needs analysis of which staff require data quality training and extent of training needed. ▪ Develop a training programme to ensure these needs are being, or should be met.
3.3 Establish arrangements to ensure data supporting performance information is also used to manage and improve the delivery of services.	Haringey have a sophisticated performance reporting framework, which effectively supports service improvement at a strategic and operational level.	▪ No specific improvement opportunities were identified.
3.4 Develop effective validation procedures to ensure the accuracy of data used in reported performance indicators.	Audit trails for BVPIs and key CPA indicators are captured through the Council's annual self-assessment process. This requires responsible managers to approve all values before reporting. The Council has not had any reservations arising from the BVPI audit in recent years, suggesting that definitions are usually applied correctly.	▪ Establish a risk-based corporate system for proportional verification of all externally reported data. ▪ Develop a formal, documented procedure for checking externally reported indicators.