



**Data Quality Policy**

**JSCC Approved :**  
**CP&R Approved: 19/2/2015**

<b>Version Number</b>	1.0
<b>Approved by</b>	Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Date approved</b>	19/2/2015
<b>Review Date</b>	19/2/2016
<b>Authorised by</b>	Director of Resources
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Information Governance Officer

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	3
2	Summary Statement .....	3
3	Aim and objectives .....	3
4	Scope.....	3
5	Definitions .....	4
6	Legislative Context.....	5
7	Application of the Data Quality Policy .....	5
7.1	Governance, Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
7.2	People and Skills.....	7
7.3	Systems and Processes.....	7
7.4	Data Security.....	7
7.5	Information Sharing.....	7
8	Control and Validation.....	8
9	Policy Review.....	8
10	Equality Impact.....	8
11	Further Information.....	9
	Appendix 1 - Transparency Board's Draft Public Data Principles.....	10

## 1 Introduction

This Policy sets out West Lindsey District Council's (the Council) approach to data quality. It is a key element of the Council's Information Governance Framework and supports its Performance Management Framework. Data is one of our most important assets - it is extremely important as we want to be sure that information on which we base decisions and inform our planning is robust.

This Policy supports the Corporate Plan's 6 key themes:

- Theme 1: Open for Business
- Theme 2: People First
- Theme 3: Asset Management
- Theme 4: Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
- Theme 5: Partnerships/Devolution
- Theme 6: Excellent Value for Money Services

## 2 Summary Statement

West Lindsey District Council is committed to high standards of data quality. We take every care to ensure that the data and information used throughout the organisation and in particular in performance management is **accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant, secure, accessible, and complete.**

## 3 Aim and objectives

High-quality data is an integral part of the Council's operational, performance management and governance arrangements so that it can drive service improvement and inform policy.

Our key objectives are:

- To ensure that service delivery is supported by good quality data.
- To ensure all staff understand and undertake their specific responsibilities in relation to data quality.
- To ensure that data produced, held and used within the Council is of good quality.
- To enable effective, evidence based decision making supported by good quality data.
- To ensure that data quality is embedded across all services and is a key consideration for everyone dealing with data.

## 4 Scope

This policy document provides an overarching, corporate approach to the management of data quality. Service specific procedures will flow from this

corporate policy, where relevant and necessary, ensuring that standards outlined in it are maintained throughout the Council.

The Policy covers the quality of structured data only.

Structured data is based on a data model and is held in fixed fields in spreadsheets, databases and business critical systems.

This Policy does not apply to unstructured data which is defined by Gartner as “content that does not conform to a specific, pre-defined data model. This tends to be the human-generated and people-oriented content such as business documents (reports, presentations, and the like), email and web content that does not fit neatly into database tables.”

The Policy is mainly aimed at officers and members of the Council but it applies equally to data used by the Council’s strategic partnerships.

## 5 Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions will be used:

- **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.

The Council takes guidance from and uses the Audit Commission’s “Standards for Better Data Quality”. These are:

- **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 organisation and data collection processes matched to these requirements.

## 6 Legislative Context

The data held by the Council is subject to all legislation affecting the creation and processing of data. The legislative framework governing data and information is described in the Legal Responsibilities Policy and includes but is not limited to:

- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Companies Act 2006
- Common Law of Confidentiality
- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Privacy & Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations
- Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

## 7 Application of the Data Quality Policy

This section details the Council's approach to improving and maintaining data quality.

### 7.1 Governance, Roles and Responsibilities

This Policy applies to all staff within West Lindsey District Council as data quality is everyone's responsibility. However, where officers are assigned specific responsibilities in terms of data quality, these should be clearly defined and documented. The following table outlines the key roles and responsibilities for data quality:

Role	Responsibilities
Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)	To be the Council's champion for data quality with responsibility for formulation of policy and overall review and audit arrangements.
Directors (Accounting Officers)	Accountable for the reliability of data and information presented to Boards and Members.
Strategic Leads	Responsible for ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• that adequate, safe systems are in place which hold data of acceptable standard</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the data for their service is accurate, timely and meets relevant guidance</li> <li>• that actions arising from data quality audits are satisfactorily addressed</li> <li>• the implementation of corporate policy and procedures</li> <li>• training needs are identified</li> </ul>
Corporate Governance Team (Accreditor)	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• co-ordinate risk assessments of systems and PI Audits, liaising with Internal Audit and service areas</li> <li>• ensuring improvements have been implemented</li> <li>• communicating and promoting commitment to Data Quality</li> <li>• providing training advice and guidance to services</li> <li>• regularly reviewing compliance with the data quality policy and liaising with appropriate officers to rectify non-compliance</li> <li>• reporting on Data Quality issues to performance review meetings and GCLT</li> </ul>
Team Managers (Information Asset Owners)	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of relevant Performance Indicator definitions and guidance</li> <li>• ensuring compliance with indicator definitions and guidance</li> <li>• inputting accurate information on Council systems</li> <li>• maintaining a robust control environment</li> <li>• identifying and rectifying gaps in control environment</li> <li>• providing information to their Strategic Lead and GCLT as and when required</li> </ul>
All employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and timely recording of data on appropriate systems</li> <li>• Adhering to the Councils Data Quality Policy</li> </ul>

## **7.2 People and Skills**

As an organisation we ensure that staff are in a position to undertake their responsibilities in relation to data quality. Training and development of staff and an understanding of the importance of data quality for Members underpin the achievement of high quality data and information. The following therefore has been considered across all service areas:

- Staff are made aware by their line manager of their responsibilities in relation to data quality.
- Commitment to data quality is clearly stated in job descriptions for all relevant roles within the Council.
- Staff have the relevant skills and competencies to fulfil their role in ensuring good quality data. They receive appropriate training and guidance.
- Officer training needs are identified through the appraisal process and built into personal development plans and the Council's core development programme.
- Data quality is a key part of the induction process.
- Commitment to data quality is clearly communicated through the Council. A Minerva support resource has been developed with all current strategies, procedures and guidance.

## **7.3 Systems and Processes**

The Council ensures that appropriate systems are in place for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data. The Council recognises the importance of these systems operating on a right first time principle. Therefore, users are adequately trained and all systems have an appropriate training programme in place which is periodically evaluated and adapted as necessary.

The Council uses the principle of 'collect once and use numerous times' (COUNT) to underpin data collection and use.

## **7.4 Data Security**

The Council ensures that data is stored in a secure environment with appropriate security and system backups for all business critical systems. The access and use of data should be appropriate to the data user and comply with relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Council's IT Security Policy. Systems are regularly tested to ensure that they are secure. The Council's Business Continuity Plan will make provisions for the Council's business critical systems.

## **7.5 Information Sharing**

The Council will ensure that formal frameworks for data sharing with partners are put in place. Data quality requirements will be applied to data used by the Council and shared externally, or which is provided by partner or third party organisations. These requirements will be in the form of data sharing protocols, contracts or service level agreements which specify the responsibilities of partners to provide data which is fit

for purpose. This includes complying with all legal, compliance and confidentiality standards. A validation process will be established for all data provided by partners or other third parties.

The Council will have regard to the Transparency Board's draft public data principles as set out in Appendix 1.

## **8 Control and Validation**

The Council will make sure that it has effective validation processes in place to ensure the accuracy of data used in managing services and service performance. These will include:

- An ongoing programme of data quality audits undertaken by the Corporate Governance Team. The outcomes of these audits are reported to GCLT
- Reviews of systems and process undertaken by Internal Audit.
- The development and implementation of service specific Data Quality Assurance frameworks.
- Data returns are supported by clear and complete audit trails and subject to corporate verification checks.
- Any shortcomings identified during audits are corrected within agreed timescales.
- The role of the Chief Operating Officer in scrutinising performance data submitted for publication to members and the public.

Independent audits of data are reported to the GCLT and the Governance and Audit Committee. Improvement recommendations arising from internal and external audits are acted on so that there is continuous improvement to the Council's approach to data quality.

## **9 Policy Review**

This Policy will be reviewed and updated as required but at least every 24 months. The Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) will act as the consultation and approving body for the policy.

## **10 Equality Impact**

Ensuring that the Council has high quality data will impact positively on all equality strands. It will result in better understanding needs and in delivery of better services to the Council's diverse communities.



## **11 Further Information**

This Policy has been developed by the CIGG. If you have any feedback or require further information please contact:

Steve Anderson  
Information Governance Officer  
01427 676652

## Appendix 1 - Transparency Board's Draft Public Data Principles

- **Public data policy and practice will be clearly driven by the public and businesses who want and use the data, including what data is released when and in what form** – and in addition to the legal Right to Data itself this overriding principle should apply to the implementation of all the other principles.
- **Public data will be published in reusable, machine-readable form – publication alone is only part of transparency** – the data needs to be reusable, and to make it reusable it needs to be machine-readable. At the moment a lot of Government information is locked into PDFs or other un-processable formats.
- **Public data will be released under the same open licence which enables free reuse, including commercial reuse** – all data should be under the same easy to understand licence. Data released under the Freedom of Information Act or the new Right to Data should be automatically released under that licence.
- **Public data will be available and easy to find through a single easy to use online access point (data.gov.uk)** – the public sector has a myriad of different websites, and search does not work well across them. It's important to have a well-known single point where people can find the data.
- **Public data will be published using open standards, and following relevant recommendations of the World Wide Web Consortium.** Open, standardised formats are essential. However to increase reusability and the ability to compare data it also means openness and standardisation of the content as well as the format.
- **Public data underlying the Government's own websites will be published in reusable form for others to use** – anything published on Government websites should be available as data for others to reuse. Public bodies should not require people to come to their websites to obtain information.
- **Public data will be timely and fine grained** – Data will be released as quickly as possible after its collection and in as fine a detail as is possible. Speed may mean that the first release may have inaccuracies; more accurate versions will be released when available.
- **Release data quickly, and then re-publish it in linked data form** – Linked data standards allow the most powerful and easiest re-use of data. However most existing internal public sector data is not in linked data form. Rather than delay any release of the data, our recommendation is to release it 'as is' as soon as possible, and then work to convert it to a better format.

- **Public data will be freely available to use in any lawful way** – raw public data should be available without registration, although for API-based services a developer key may be needed. Applications should be able to use the data in any lawful way without having to inform or obtain the permission of the public body concerned.
- **Public bodies should actively encourage the re-use of their public data** – in addition to publishing the data itself, public bodies should provide information and support to enable it to be reused easily and effectively. The Government should also encourage and assist those using public data to share knowledge and applications, and should work with business to help grow new, innovative uses of data and to generate economic benefit.
- **Public bodies should maintain and publish inventories of their data holdings** – accurate and up-to-date records of data collected and held, including their format, accuracy and availability.