

Data Quality Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The need for good data quality is essential both locally and nationally.

It is important locally to ensure that reliable information is available to enable informed decision making and to assure that the integrity of published data.

Nationally, data quality is key to ensure that the information produced by the Council can be trusted when external assessments are made of the Council's performance.

- 1.2 In order to be able to attain service excellence, it is vital that accurate and timely data is available.

The effective use of performance measurement depends on data that is robust and accurate. If data quality is poor, it is not possible to gain an accurate picture of services, costs and performance.

- 1.3 This policy has been reviewed following our 2007/2008 Data Quality Audit and benchmarking of good practice with other authorities in relation to data quality issues.

- 1.4 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's Policy for Data Quality is detailed at Appendix A.

2. What makes Quality Data?

The Audit Commission defines quality of data dimensions as:

2.1 Accuracy

Data should be sufficiently accurate for its intended purpose and captured once only.

The need for accuracy must be balanced with the importance of the uses for the data and resources to collate.

It may be appropriate to accept some degree of inaccuracy where timeliness is important, as long as the resulting limitations of the data are made clear to users.

2.2 Validity

Data should be recorded in compliance with relevant requirements including the correct application of rules and definitions.

2.3 Reliability

Data should reflect consistent collection processes, collection points and time periods.

2.4 Timeliness

Data should be captured as quickly as possible after the event or time period to which it relates.

2.5 Relevance

Data should be relevant to the purposes for which it is used. This may necessitate periodic reviews of requirements to reflect changing needs.

2.6 Completeness

Data collection requirements should be based on the information needs of the organisation reflected in corresponding processes.

Incomplete or invalid records can provide an indication of data quality and problems with recording processes.

3. Objective

3.1 The objective of this policy is to set out a framework for maintaining and increasing high levels of data quality within the authority; ensuring that accurate and timely information is produced which is independently verified and fairly reported to key stakeholders.

3.2 The policy relates to the following elements:

- **Leadership:** arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data in relation to managing and reporting. Clear designation of responsibilities for data quality.
- **Procedures and systems:** to supplement data quality requirements, as appropriate.
- **People and skills:** employees need adequate knowledge and training to understand and implement the policy and associated procedures and systems.
- **Monitoring and Review:** appropriate arrangements for checking data quality.
- **Third Party Providers:** relates to assuring the quality of data supplied by external organisations to the Council.

- **Risk Management:** issues around data quality and protection should be linked into the strategic and service risk registers.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Elected members

The Leader of the Council will be responsible for data quality issues. An annual (end of year) Data Quality Assessment will be provided by Corporate Management Team in the April Strategic Performance Report and Commentary.

Members will receive appropriate training on the importance of information management and data quality, including use of the Council's performance management software ("TEN").

4.2 Senior Management

The Corporate Services Director will have overall strategic responsibility for promoting and co-ordinating data quality management.

Assistant Directors will have operational responsibility for ensuring data quality within their service areas. They will ensure that individual responsibilities and training in relation to data quality are delegated and implemented. This will include regular review during supervisory sessions and also form part of the Council's overall employee review process (see Appendix B "Managers - Data Quality Guidance").

Service Business Plans will address relevant data quality requirements.

4.3 Employees

Data quality is the responsibility of every employee entering, extracting or analysing information from any of the Council's information systems. All employees share a responsibility for ensuring that information they produce, receive, act upon or process is accurate. This should be emphasised in training provided, along with how lapses can have a serious impact on the integrity of the data provided (see Appendix C, "Responsible Officers (Collectors) – Data Quality Guidance").

4.4 Performance Monitoring Group

The Performance Monitoring Group provides support to the Corporate Management Team to address data quality issues. This may include random checks on data quality highlighted through audit or risk assessment.

4.5 Third Party Providers

The Council, as far as practicable, will assure the use of data produced on its behalf by third party providers (partners). A formal assessment (see Appendix D, "Data Quality Checklist for Third Party Providers") will be completed and retained.

An appropriate nominated "Liaison Officer" will be responsible for completing the third party provider checklist.

This requirement does not apply where a data sharing agreement is in place. For example; the "Warwickshire Partnership Data Quality Protocol" between Warwickshire's five district councils, the county council, police and NHS.

4.6 Performance and Quality Manager

To monitor, review and report on data quality issues including the effectiveness of corrective action(s) to Corporate Management Team/Extended Management Team.

Reports will be included in the monthly Strategic Report, as appropriate.

To benchmark data quality through the quarterly meeting of Warwickshire District Council Performance Managers.

To be responsible for the annual review of the Data Quality Policy.

5. **Risk Management and Data Quality.**

Data quality issues will be addressed through the Strategic Risk and Service Risk Registers.

The Performance Monitoring Group will review issues relating to data quality, as requested by Corporate Management Team.

Appendix A

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council **Policy For Data Quality**

NBBC recognises that reliable data quality is essential to all aspects of the provision of services.

We are therefore committed to provide data quality of a consistently high standard within available resources.

We will:

- ensure the accuracy of data including the application of appropriate guidelines and definitions;
- ensure that collection processes are consistent and up to date;
- ensure that data is relevant, complete and reflects changing requirements;
- ensure that leadership responsibilities at senior management and elected member levels are clearly designated;
- ensure that appropriate training is provided for employees to understand and implement data quality requirements using applicable procedures and systems;
- ensure that relevant monitoring, review and checking of data quality is in place;
- ensure that, as far as practicable, data provided by third parties is of suitable quality;
- ensure that data quality issues are incorporated in strategic and service risk registers;
- ensure that the Data Quality Policy is subject to annual review.

Appendix B

Managers – Data Quality Guidance

1. **Ensure That Responsible Officers (Collectors) Have Robust Data Collection Systems In Place**

Managers should ensure that the collectors have systems in place that are documented and can be audited. This includes contingency arrangements to cover in the absence of the usual collector.

2. **Ensure That Responsible Officers (Collectors) Have Adequate Training**

Managers should ensure that collectors and their nominated deputy receive adequate training in the use of systems.

Clear guidelines and definitions should be available to all appropriate staff.

3. **Checklist:**

- Is the process for the collection of data documented? Are reporting timescales agreed including third party providers?
- Is there a clear audit trail in place?
- Is there a nominated collector and “back-up” collector for data?
- Is there a nominated liaison officer for third party data providers?
- Have nominated officers received the appropriate training?
- Are regular or random checks made on the integrity of information?

Appendix C

Responsible Officers (Collectors) Data Quality Guidance

1. **Ensure That You Have Documented The Process of Data Collection**

This can be a written document or a flow process chart.

Further guidance and assistance can be provided by the Performance and Quality Manager.

2. **Ensure That There Is An Audit Trail For Information Produced**

You should be able to trace the data back to where it first originated – tracking entries on a computer system back to hard copy data entry forms, for example.

3. **Ensure That Someone In Your Team Understands The Process You Go Through To Collate Information**

It is important that the Council can continue to provide quality data in the absence of individuals. Therefore, at least one other person should be capable of collecting data in your absence.

4. **Ensure That All Working Files Are Stored On The Corporate Electronic Data Record Management System (TRIM)**

All information and working files should be stored in shared computer drives in order to be accessible if the usual collector is unavailable and automatically backed-up on a daily basis. This should be using the TRIM system. Security access restrictions should be in place, if appropriate.

5. **Ensure Submitted Data Is Clear And Unambiguous**

Clearly label data and avoid use of acronyms and abbreviations as these can cause confusion.

Responsible Officers should be able to demonstrate that:

- The most up-to-date guidance and definitions have been used.
- The process of collecting data is documented.
- Support evidence is available.
- There is a clear audit trail between source and end data.

Appendix D

Data Quality Checklist For Third Party Data Providers

This checklist should be completed by an appropriate liaison officer with each third party provider.

Liaison Officer	Third Party Organisation	Third Party Officer

This check list should be completed jointly between the Liaison Officer and the Third Party Data Providers. Please complete the box to the right of each question with a 'Yes' or a 'No.'	
Is there documentation showing how each performance indicator is collected?	
Are there working sheets showing the calculations for each performance indicator?	
Are clear guidelines available to all staff that input data onto systems?	
For each indicator, are third party data providers aware of and using the most up to date published definitions? And can this be evidenced in the documentation which shows how to calculate the indicator?	
If applicable, did the third party data provider pass any external audits of data quality?	

Liaison Officer Signature.....

Third Party Data Provider Signature.....

The Liaison Officer should retain this form with the corresponding performance information.