



Corporate Data Quality Strategy

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Foreword

As the Member and CMT leads on data quality we have joint responsibility for ensuring that the data we use and produce is sufficient in volume, accuracy and precision as well as being relevant and timely. This strategy is about ensuring that the data we use is accurate so that it can be used with confidence in improving our services. Only by having reliable statistical and demographic data linked to data for financial and service performance can we ensure that the Council is delivering on its aims and objectives and show that it is making a positive impact on people's lives. Since we work extensively in partnership with other organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors, it is also essential that we have confidence in the data that we receive from and share with our partner organisations.

This data quality strategy sets out the means by which we ensure that the data that we use and produce is 'fit for purpose' and as such is essential reading for all Members and employees who are involved in the production, collection, dissemination, use and reporting of data. It is important that all Members and employees are aware of their responsibilities to ensure the strategy has, and will continue to receive, the publicity it requires.

Finally, this document demonstrates our commitment to the people of Darlington, the Government, regulators and inspectorates to deliver efficient and effective services using data that can be trusted.

***Councillor Harker – Cabinet Resources Portfolio
Lorraine O'Donnell – Assistant Chief Executive***

1 Introduction

This data quality strategy is designed to ensure that the data Darlington Borough Council collects, processes and uses for its varied purposes is fit for purpose. The strategy brings together a number of previously existing policies and processes to provide an overarching, corporate approach to the management of data quality. Service specific policies and procedures will flow from this corporate strategy, where relevant and necessary, thereby ensuring that all the corporate standards outlined in this strategy are maintained across the Council.

This strategy covers all types of service data created, processed and destroyed within the Council, including not only performance and financial data but also social care, legal, statistical and demographic data. It is therefore the responsibility of all employees and partners. All protocols and arrangements with external partners supplying data to the Council need to refer to this strategy and as necessary accommodate its outputs and recommendations.

This strategy sets out:

- Our position statement
- Our vision
- Our plan for improvement
- Our action plan
- Our criteria for success

2 Importance of good quality data

Darlington Borough Council must have a robust Corporate Data Quality Strategy as good quality data supports the:

- Efficient management of Council services and resources
- Monitoring and management of performance in terms of planning and delivery of services
- Day-to-day operation of the Council

The following criteria that must be in place for good quality data to exist are:

- Accuracy
- Precision
- Relevance
- Timeliness (currency)
- Completeness
- Consistency
- Accessibility
- Usability
- Integrity

3 Our position

Darlington Borough Council's data quality has been independently assessed using the Audit Commission's Data Quality Self Assessment document and our external auditors currently PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). In order to address issues outlined by the above bodies, this strategy has used the 'standards for better data quality' as outlined in the Audit Commission's document 'Improving information to support decision making: standards for better data quality'. The Data Quality Review report from PricewaterhouseCoopers provides a sound and comprehensive basis on which the Council plans to further enhance its reputation for sound data quality and management.

Each of the areas highlighted in the Data Quality Review have been addressed chronologically in Our Plan (section 5).

4 Our vision and the link to data quality

Darlington Borough Council's vision is *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed*. In practice this means putting people first, giving value for money and leading the field. We strive to provide Leading Edge services delivered through knowledge which requires the use of high quality data. Our aim therefore in support of our vision is to ensure that **all** data used by the Council is fit for purpose and has been sourced, collected, analysed, reported and otherwise disseminated using approved and regulated methods, as stated in the Data Quality Review from PricewaterhouseCoopers (independent audit consultancy). We will instill best practice for data quality to all types of data. We will build on our strengths in finance and performance management and further improve them across the Council.

5 Our plan

Each of the recommendations made by the PwC Data Quality Review 2007 is systematically addressed.

5.1 Governance and leadership

We will build on the Council's existing governance on data quality and commitment to performance management by delivering the following:

- Address the wider aspects of data quality across the Council
- Develop and strengthen existing self-auditing across the Council
- Fully implement data quality best practice into the Council's planning, monitoring, management and reporting processes

5.2 Improve policies and procedures

Darlington Borough Council has for many years had a comprehensive and systematic approach to performance management as evidenced by the key document that outlines roles and responsibilities. This recognises that, however good the systems and procedures, it is people who act on these which make the difference. We also realise that conditions change, therefore key systems and

procedures are reviewed on an annual basis and changes made as necessary. However, it is also recognised that there needs to be some stability and consistency of approach. However, after several years it is now opportune to undertake a more detailed review and consolidation which is what this strategy outlines. Full details are in the Technical Annex. We are enhancing our existing data quality policies and procedures in the following ways:

- Complete a Corporate Data Quality policy that is annually reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and ensure that all departmental policies flow from the corporate approach and are governed in the same way (i.e. consultation and approval via the Corporate Information Governance Group).
- Formalise and extend existing data quality procedures as appropriate.
- Non-compliance to the policy will be reported to senior management and as necessary to the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team. This will be done on an exception basis.
- Ensure that any recommendations from internal and external reviews are action as necessary and appropriate.

5.3 Systems and processes

We will build on our established good practice of monitoring data quality, officer accountability and secure datasets by developing:

- Data checks against source documentation (see action plan under Policies and Procedures: data quality control operating procedures)
- Improve the control of mapping and testing of all performance management systems
- Validation processes of 3rd party data (see action plan under Policies and Procedures: data quality control operating procedures)
- Create and implement formal protocols for data sharing (see revised Data Protection Policy and code of practice for data sharing – draft in progress)
- Create and implement formal data quality standards

5.4 Develop people and skills

We will augment the existing skills of our employees by undertaking:

- Skills assessments to inform the creation of a corporate data quality training programme
- Formally assess employees against data quality standards and procedures (outlined in action under Systems and Processes; and Policies and Procedures)

5.5 Data use and reporting

We will develop our established use and reporting of data by ensuring:

- Data quality targets are accurate and appropriately calculated
- Review *PerformancePlus* and data quality reporting
- Create a formal and documented process for checking externally reported data and performance indicators

5.6 Engage with partners

We will fully engage with partners by:

- Sharing our best practice policies and procedures with partners (this will incur additional resources to develop the existing Partnership Toolkit)
- Validating the accuracy and quality data shared with partners (see action plan under Policies and Procedures (our data) and Data Use and Reporting (partner/3rd party data))

6 Success criteria

The success of the Data Quality Strategy will be measured in the following ways:

- Percentage of data errors in data matching exercises
- Percentage of data errors in performance indicator data checks (including on *PerformancePlus*)
- Percentage of mapping and parameter setting that are found to be incorrect (includes links, measures included in objectives, tolerances, planning pattern, unit, aggregation, source, weight and direction).
- Score and feedback from the Audit Commission (and PwC) under the Data Quality KLOE
- CETIS test scores
- Number of attendees to awareness-raising and training sessions for employees and Members
- Survey of selected and relevant employees and Members as to their views on the quality of the data and the PMF.

These indicators are included within the PMF and they will be reported at an appropriate frequency against specific targets and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they remain relevant. Additional indicators will be included as necessary.

7 Strategy delivery

The strategy will be delivered according to the accompanying action plan.

8 Strategy review

This strategy will be formally reviewed at the beginning of each financial year by the Corporate Information Governance Group and the PMF Coordination Group, with amendments made as necessary.

9 Associated documents

There are two additional documents that support and accompany this strategy:

- Data Quality Strategy: Technical Annex
- Data Quality Strategy: Action Plan