DATA QUALITY POLICY - GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST TIME
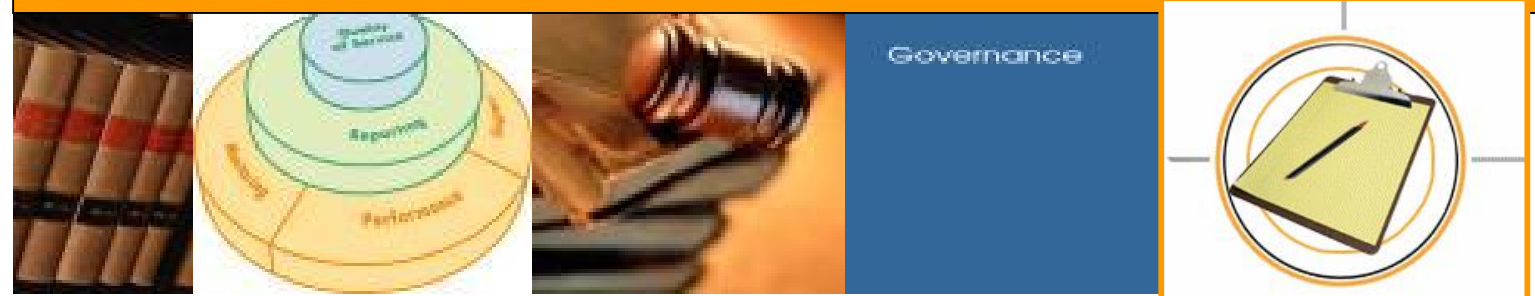
Ribble Valley Borough Council

March 2008

AUTHORS/EDITORS

Name	Title
Michelle Haworth	Corporate Policy Officer

DISTRIBUTION

Name	Title
Directors	
Service Managers	
Internal Audit	

REVISION RECORD

Version	Description of Changes	Date Issued
Draft February 2008		

...e responsibility of every employee who enters, extracts or ...rmation systems, it is essential that the importance of data ...vidual at senior management level takes overall responsibility for

Overall responsibility resides with the Corporate Services Manager . Jeff Fenton. Similarly it is important to have a member lead and this will be the chair of Overview and Scrutiny (Resources) Committee . Cllr. Stan Taylor.

I endorse the Council's Data Quality Strategy and understand and accept my responsibilities under it.

Signed

Signed

Corporate Services Manager – Jeff Fenton

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (Resources) Committee – Councillor Stan Taylor

GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST TIME - Data Quality Policy Summary

THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

The Council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of excellent customer services.

The Council is therefore committed to ensuring it maintains the highest standards of data quality and as a result gets its performance information right first time.

The importance of getting it right first time

The Council needs reliable, accurate and timely information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance.

The Council's approach to data quality improvement

The Council understands the importance of data quality and is committed to improving its management within the organisation and in partnership with others.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Our objectives in relation to data quality are as follows;

- To ensure that the information we use is of high quality, consistent, timely, comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.

- To put in place arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data we use to manage our service and demonstrate our performance.

- To make clear what we expect from our staff and Members in terms of the standards of data quality

- To put in place systems, policies and procedures to ensure the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with partners

- To ensure that we put in place the right resources, and in particular have the right people with the right skills, to ensure we have timely and accurate performance information

- To ensure that we have the right controls in place to ensure we meet what is expected of us

- To ensure that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

...ed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally defined standards.

R O L E S   A N D   R E S P O N S I B I L I T I E S

Within the Council roles and responsibility for Data Quality are as follows:

- The Corporate Services Manager has senior management responsibility for data quality and is officer Data Quality Champion

- The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (Resources) Committee has senior member responsibility for data quality and is Member Data Quality Champion

- It is the responsibility of all staff who input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality and to comply with this policy.

P A R T N E R S H I P   W O R K I N G

The Council is committed to working with partners to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council will ensure that a formal framework for data sharing with partners is put in place.

R I S K   M A N A G E M E N T

The Council will ensure that it adequately manages risk associated with data quality, in accordance with the Risk Management Policy (2007).

P E O P L E   D E V E L O P M E N T   A N D   C O M M U N I C A T I O N

The Council is committed to ensuring that it has the right people with the right skills to deliver services.

An on-going and developmental awareness campaign will be undertaken to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording.

M O N I T O R I N G   A N D   R E V I E W

The Council recognises the need to achieve a balance between the resources required to set and meet data quality standards and the relative benefits that flow. It will take this into account in developing its approach to monitoring and review.

HT FIRST TIME - Data Quality Policy

1 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document has been developed to assist the Council in improving the Council's performance in data collection, handling, retrieval, use and communications. The document sets out the policy of Ribble Valley Borough Council in terms of how it is to respond to the challenges of ensuring the highest quality of the data it uses to demonstrate its performance.

The Council's Commitment

The Council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of excellent customer services. Data quality is crucial and the availability of complete, accurate and timely data is important in supporting customer care, corporate governance, management, service planning and accountability.

One of the Council's Core Values is "Strive to achieve excellence" and this is clearly set out in the Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan 2007. Ribble Valley Borough Council aims to achieve excellence by constantly meeting the requirements of all customers, both external and internal. Excellence means identifying and understanding customer needs and requirements, and meeting both without errors on time every time. **The Council is therefore committed to ensuring it maintains the highest standards of data quality and as a result gets its performance information right first time.** All Council staff and Members are required to adhere to the Data Quality Policy.

The importance of getting it right first time.

The Council needs reliable, accurate and timely information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance. We make many, often complex, decisions about our priorities and the use of our resources.

Service users, and members of the public more widely, need accessible information to make informed decisions. Those organisations monitoring our progress require information to satisfy their responsibilities for making judgements about our performance and governance.

A great deal of time and money is spent on the activities and systems involved in collecting and analysing the data which underpins our performance information. As increasing reliance is placed on this information in performance management and assessment regimes, the need for reliable data has become even more critical. Good quality data is the essential ingredient for reliable performance and financial information to support decision-making. The data must be sufficiently fit for purpose, representing in an accurate and timely manner the Council's activity.

At the same time a balance needs to be struck between the importance of the purpose for which the information is intended and the cost of collecting the data to the necessary level of accuracy, detail and timeliness. The Council needs to determine their information priorities and put in place appropriate arrangements to secure the quality of our data. The Council is accountable for the money we spend. We need to prove that we achieve value for money. The Council must therefore manage competing claims on resources to meet the needs of the communities we serve, and plan for the future. The financial and performance information we use to account for our activities, both internally and externally, to our

...ing our progress, must be appropriate for these purposes, ...nd consistency required.

...rmance indicators as the basis for reducing the burden of regulation and awarding freedoms and flexibilities has significantly increased the importance attached to performance information, and the quality of the underlying data. To be confident that we are focusing on the key areas for improvement, those monitoring our performance, and particularly the Audit Commission need to be assured that reported information reflects actual performance. The quality of our data will be crucial to future assessments in terms of our direction of travel, Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessment.

The quality of financial information is generally higher than for performance information, because the underlying data is collected according to professional accounting rules, and is subjected to strong internal controls and a formal audit regime. The quality of non-financial performance information tends to be more variable, because internal controls for the recording and preparation of the data are often less developed. There is often also less ownership of performance information by those charged with governance.

The Council needs to be assured that the information it uses to demonstrate its performance is accurate and timely, otherwise it will not be able to properly plan and deliver the services we provide. Producing data which is fit for purpose should not be an end in itself, but an integral part of our operational, performance management, and governance arrangements. If we put data quality at the heart of our performance management systems we will be more likely to actively manage data in all aspects of our day-to-day business, in a way which is proportionate to the cost of collection, and turning that data into reliable information.

It is important that the Council gets its data quality right first time. It is more cost effective to ensure this than to have to address failings later. Getting things wrong first time can seriously damage the Council's reputation.

THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO DATA QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Council understands the importance of data quality and is committed to improving its management within the organisation and in partnership with others. Above all it is committed to continuous improvement.

The Council feels that it has made significant progress in developing data quality over the past few years. The Corporate Services section and Internal Audit have been working closely with service sections to improve data quality. The Council's Performance Plan was unqualified last year. Improvements have resulted from targeted activity and general awareness raising of the importance of improvement. Furthermore, improvements have been acknowledged by our auditors. The Council accepts fully that there is a need to sustain the improvements made. The approach to Data Quality management offers the opportunity to the Council to make further improvements to the quality of data it holds and its subsequent use. The Council's approach to moving forward is as follows;

- Implement and Monitor Data Quality Policy

- Monitor and review the Data Quality Strategy and action plans based on self assessment, Audit Commission KLOE and local and National Standards

- Achieve improved data quality and assessment levels

t things right first time. This will enable us to have the right information at the right time at the right cost. In order to achieve this our objectives in relation to data quality are as follows;

- To ensure that the information we use is of high quality, consistent, timely, comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.

- To put in place arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data we use to manage our service and demonstrate our performance.

- To make clear what we expect from our staff and Members in terms of the standards of data quality.

- To put in place systems, policies and procedures to ensure the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with partners.

- To ensure that we put in place the right resources, and in particular have the right people with the right skills, to ensure we have timely and accurate performance information.

- To ensure that we have the right controls in place to ensure we meet what is expected of us.

- To ensure that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

POLICY DEFINITIONS

Definition of 'quality data'

Data will be regarded as being of high quality if it is:

- Accurate (in terms of correctness)

- Comprehensive (in terms of all data being captured)

- Valid (in an agreed format which conforms to recognised Council and national standards)

- Available when needed

- Stored securely and confidentially

Importance of 'quality data'

Performance information is essential for:

- Customer care . delivering effective, relevant and timely care, and minimising risk

- Keeping stakeholders informed . through central data collection mechanisms

- Efficient administration and compliance with the law

- Operational Management and Strategic Planning to provide appropriate allocation of resources and future service delivery

- Corporate Governance - which depends on detailed, accurate performance data for the identification of areas where services can be improved

ed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally defined standards. Where national standards are not available or are not sufficient, local standards will be developed and implemented.

Standards are essential to ensure that:

- data collection is accurate and consistent throughout the Council;
- customer records are accurately completed and processed;
- data is kept securely and confidentially ;and
- data outputs can be compared both internally and externally.

Standards will relate to key areas such as:

- completeness,
- timeliness,
- coverage,
- validity,
- quality assurance,
- security and
- confidentiality.

Where problems are identified, corrective action and any recommendations for change will be identified. This stage may be complex, especially where more than one information system is involved. The ±masterqsource of the data must be identified and the impact on recipient systems evaluated. Where at all possible data must be corrected at source and it will be the responsibility of the service managers to ensure that this happens. If corporate monitoring identifies areas where issues of incorrect data are not being put right the matter will be referred to the relevant Director.

A formal set of quality requirements will be applied to all data used by the organisation which is shared externally, or which is provided by a third-party organisation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Within the Council roles and responsibility for Data Quality are as follows:

- The **Corporate Services Manager** has senior management responsibility for data quality and is officer Data Quality Champion
- The **Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (Resources) Committee** has senior member responsibility for data quality and is Member Data Quality Champion
- It is the responsibility of **all staff** who input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality and comply with this policy
- The **Corporate Policy Officer** will be the Data Quality co-ordinator with responsibilities for promoting the importance of data quality throughout the organisation.
- **Service Managers** are responsible for ensuring that adequate, safe systems holding an acceptable standard of information are developed and maintained and that performance

...urate, timely and meets relevant guidance. They are also
...plementation of corporate policy and procedures and the
...policies and procedures.

Data champions or data managers will be established in all service areas to take
particular responsibility for data quality and drive improvement within individual teams.

- **Everyone** in the organisation will be responsible for complying with this Data Quality
  Policy.

- **All staff** will be responsible for following policies and procedures, and **all line managers**
  for ensuring that this is the case in their respective service teams.

- Commitment to data quality will be clearly stated in job descriptions for **all relevant roles**
  within the Council, ensuring that directors, managers, administrative staff and others
  recognise their responsibilities as an integral part of their role and profession.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Council is committed to working with partners to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy, the
Local Area Agreement and to deliver joined up public services. Information sharing is crucial to
partnership working. The Council will ensure that a formal framework for data sharing with partners is
put in place. A formal set of quality requirements will applied to all data used by the organisation which is
shared externally, or which is provided by partner or third party organisations These quality
requirements could be in the form of a data sharing protocol, contract or service level agreement. The
Council will ensure that a framework in put in place for identifying and complying with all relevant legal,
compliance and confidentiality standards. A validation process will be established for all data provided
by partners or other third parties.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Council will ensure that it adequately manages risk associated with data quality. In particular it will
regularly review the Data Quality Strategy to enable the Council to improve and protect it from data
quality failures. The Council will ensure that adequate Business Continuity Plans are maintained.

People Development and Communication

The Council is committed to ensuring that it has the right people with the right skills to deliver services.
Training and Development of staff is key to the achievement of high levels of data quality. The following
principles will be met to achieve this:

- All new staff who use Information Systems will receive training in the use of the
  respective systems. Only once training has been completed will passwords to these
  systems be issued.

- Policies, procedures and guidance will be developed in association with relevant staff and
  copies provided to all staff engaged in data quality work.

- Documents will be made available on the intranet.

- Policies and procedures will be communicated to all staff. Awareness workshops or
  briefings will be held to develop awareness of the importance of data quality.

- An on-going and developmental awareness campaign will be undertaken, led by the
  Corporate Services Section, to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the
  importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording.

approach to data quality will be monitored by the Council's Corporate Services Section. The Corporate Services Manager will take the lead role on data quality issues. Internal Audit will provide internal assurance controls. A formal reporting structure will be developed as part of the Data Quality Strategy.

Data quality will be regularly monitored by the Corporate Services. This will involve:

- annual reports;

- routine checks;

- spot checks; and

- follow up of any data quality queries from members of staff

Procedures for data capture, processing and storage must be reviewed and updated regularly, preferably on an annual basis. These procedures will include specific arrangements for ensuring data quality at the point of data capture, during the processing of that data, and appropriate data quality checks before data/information is released. Responsibility for this will rest with the nominated manager i.e. the service manager responsible for the data capture or data processing system.

The Council recognises the need to achieve a balance between the resources required to set and meet data quality standards and the relative benefits that flow. It will take this into account in developing its approach to monitoring and review. It will be necessary to focus resources on data that the Council regards as critical to its overall business objectives. Equally, the right balance must be achieved and justified between the dimensions of data quality, for example a balance needs to be struck between accuracy and timeliness.

The purpose of the quality reporting process is to ensure that the Council supports a learning culture so that future mistakes can be avoided. All members of staff are encouraged to report any data quality issues.