Cheshire West & Chester Council

Performance Data Quality Strategy

Cheshire West and Chester

Contents

1 Introduction

This Strategy outlines how Cheshire West and Chester Council will introduce an effective and co-ordinated approach to Performance Data Quality. Accompanying the strategy is an action plan which details what needs to be done to establish this, who will be responsible for it, and the timescales in which it will be completed.

Providing reliable quality data will add value to the organisation. High quality data produced at the right time will create a "no surprise" performance culture enabling the Council to make well informed decisions which take account of and embrace risk, manage services effectively and accurately report its achievements.

Employees will be fully informed about performance outturns, outcomes and achievements within their service area. This will help appreciation of their roles within the organisation and lead to an understanding of the necessity for having high data quality standards in place.

Data quality will be treated as a high priority and robust arrangements for managing data will be put in place at all levels.

2 Objectives of this Strategy

Performance information is vital in; managing, improving services, achieving objectives, informing decision making, risk management and maintaining accountability. The Council's intention is to achieve high standards of data quality that will ensure the right information is delivered to the right place, at the right time and at the right cost.

The actions that the Council undertake will be reviewed by external audit and will be considered in the Audit Commission's organisational assessment as part of our Use of Resources and Comprehensive Area Assessments.

This strategy intends to set the guidelines to:

- establish sound performance data collection processes across the authority
- enable high standards of data quality to be achieved, this will include information shared with partners and contractors
- ensure that all employees, members, partners and other organisations understand their contribution to and the necessity of good data quality standards

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Anticipated outcomes from this strategy include:

- an assurance of quality data being produced for performance
- reduced failure demand, rework, and avoidable contact
- improved process and delivery times
- promotion of a culture of trust
- a thorough awareness of responsibilities for producing quality performance information
- a strengthened Performance Management Framework (PMF)
- successful integration of performance and risk management and
- a successful data quality external audit assessment

This strategy will contribute to the Council's aspirations and commitment to provide excellent service delivery for the communities of Cheshire West and Chester.

3   Data Quality Standards

There are six key characteristics of good data quality that should be considered when assessing performance data:

Accuracy:	Data should be accurate. That means free from error for its intended purposes. It should be captured once only, although it may have multiple uses. Accuracy is most likely to be secured if data is verified as close to the point of activity as possible.
Validity:	Only data that is needed should be recorded. It should be collected to comply with prescribed definitions and collected in a consistent manner, allowing comparison with targets, past performance and other organisations.
Reliability:	Data will be collected through consistent, dependable collection processes which are supported by clear guidance notes and process maps.
Timeliness:	Data should be captured quickly and produced when needed to support management needs and decision-making.
Relevance:	Data should be relevant, and useful to the purposes for which it is used. This entails periodic review of requirements to reflect changing needs.
Completeness:	Data requirements should be clearly specified and based on the information needs of the organisation. Supporting evidence will be required to justify changes in performance.

4   The National Indicator Set

The National Indicator Set (NIS) was introduced in April 2008 and Government inspectorates will now base their audits around the quality of this data. It is important to ensure the quality of performance data and also the process by which that data is collected. This strategy intends to provide the required guidance for improving the NIS data collection process from the point of entry into data collection systems right through to submitting outturn results through the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Data Interchange Hub (Data Hub) or other government department data bases.

It is also vital to develop data quality systems and processes in partnership with other organisations who contribute to the NIS and any other local performance measurements that the authority may introduce.

5   Structure of this Strategy

The strategy is based on seven key aspects required to implement good data quality. Each one will be addressed in turn:

Awareness:	Everyone recognises the need for good data quality and how they contribute.
Definitions:	Everyone understands how the performance measures are compiled within their area and have a prescribed and consistent method of data collection.

Officers will know which performance measures are produced from the information they provide and how these are defined.

Recording:	Data is recorded and entered on an ongoing, timely basis to ensure up to date information can be produced effectively.
Verification:	There will be verification procedures in place close to the point of data input and calculation.
Systems:	All systems operate effectively, are fit for purpose and employees have been trained and have the expertise to get the best out of them.
Output:	Performance progress will be reported regularly, efficiently and communicated quickly, highlighting areas of concern sooner enabling immediate remedial action to be taken.
Presentation:	Information will be easily understood and an accurate representation of performance.

5.1   Awareness

There is a collective responsibility for data quality and everyone recognises the requirements and the contribution they make to it.

Commitment to data quality will be communicated clearly throughout the council. Officers will be aware of their responsibilities when entering, extracting or analysing data for and from the Council's performance management or other appropriate feeder systems.

Each Directorate will assign Responsible Officers to ensure consistency in the application of definitions and data inputting into the collection systems. Where responsibility for an indicator clearly lies with a partner organisation, the Performance Manager will liaise with that organisation to ensure that they are aware of the Council's data quality arrangements and that data is available when required.

A statement supporting a clear commitment to the importance on data quality should be included in key documentation including the Corporate Plan, Directorate Plans and the Performance Management Framework.

5.2   Definitions

Officers will understand how the performance measures are compiled within their area and have a prescribed and consistent method of data collection. They will know which performance measures are produced from the information they provide and how these are defined.

Officers will understand what they are measuring and in the case of National Indicators comply with the guidelines provided by CLG. It is important that data is recorded consistently, allowing for comparison over time, and with national benchmarking. National and locally agreed performance measures will be established with clear definitions that are fully recorded and process mapped.

5.3   Recording

Directorate Performance Managers will ensure that information is recorded and entered into the Council's Performance Management system on an ongoing basis to enable the production of timely and effective performance reports.

There must be adequate controls over the input and recording of performance data to ensure that this is consistently accurate. Officers will have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems and will be adequately trained to ensure that information is entered correctly. Data quality will be a key component of performance management training, available to all Responsible Officers and Members.

Information should be recorded on time. In particular, performance information should be recorded in-line with the Council's quarterly performance reporting cycle.

5.4 Verification

There should be verification procedures in place close to the point of data input.

Data collection processes will be designed along the principle of 'getting it right first time'. This will minimise time spent on verification and data cleansing procedures.

The risk of failing to collect performance data accurately, reliably and in a timely manner should be assessed regularly by the owner of the activity, system or process. Minimum control requirements to ensure effective collection of data and management of risk should be defined and built into collection and verification processes.

The verification processes at a directorate level should particularly exist:
- close to the point of data input
- where there is a higher risk of data being incorrect
- where the impact of data error will have serious consequences
- where there is a history of inaccuracy or non-compliance
- in new areas of data collection
- where data supports crucial and important decisions
- prior to final submissions of National Indicators either through the Data Hub or alternative Government data collection systems
- for performance measures identified as 'Priority 1' within the Performance Management Framework

Wherever practical cross checks should be built into performance data collection systems reducing the risks and the need for data cleansing and manipulation.

Within the National Indicator Set, some data and performance information is supplied from external sources. We will work with partners to decide what data should be collected and what standards applied.

Entering into agreements with service providers, contractors and partners it is essential that they appreciate the provision of timely and accurate performance information and that they are clear about their data quality responsibilities and the Council's data quality arrangements.

5.5 Systems

Systems will be designed to be fit for purpose and officers will be trained to utilise them effectively. System users must ensure that correct information is inputted at the point of entry.

Arrangements for collecting and recording data, and reporting performance information, will be integrated into the wider business planning, risk management and performance management processes. Responsibility for maintaining a robust control environment for information systems lies centrally and will be developed as part of the Council's performance management and information management arrangements.

Risk assessment will consider the likelihood of a failure within the performance management framework and the impact should such a failure occur. Risks will be considered for the Performance Management Framework as a whole and also by individual performance indicator owners.

All data collection systems need to be recorded and process mapped to ensure that the information is collected, compiled and calculated using consistent methodology. Changes to collection methods need to be recorded as they may influence outturn results. In the case of National Indicators we will use the methodology advised by the CLG.

Full consultation should take place with both employees and partners prior to implementation of any changes to information systems.

Other information systems such as PARIS will be included in business continuity plans and the risk register where appropriate.

5.6   Output

Performance indicators will be reported regularly, efficiently and communicated quickly. This will facilitate a responsive management approach to informed decision-making and resource allocation.

Performance indicators, which can be measured on an interim basis, will be reported through the quarterly performance reporting process. This will link performance and achievements to the priorities and actions identified in the Council's Corporate and Directorate plans.

Performance information will be subjected to data quality scrutiny and challenge at every stage through the Directorate Performance Managers, the Corporate Performance Team and final reporting. We will determine whether the level of risk associated with the performance indicator has been assessed correctly and if the correct control arrangements are in place to manage those risks.

Performance outturns, outcomes and achievements will be communicated to all employees in order for them to understand how they fit into the organisation and their contribution to the delivery of corporate and partner priorities. This will encourage continuous improvement and the necessity for producing accurate quality data.

5.7   Presentation

Reported information will give an easily understood and accurate representation of performance. This will encourage better, more informed decision-making and, ultimately, improved performance.

Information should be presented in such a way that Members and Officers want to read it. This will be a clear, concise format that highlights key information and provides supporting background evidence where appropriate.

Care will be taken when presenting information to Members, Officers, the public, partners and contractors. Clear definitions of technical terms, explanations for abbreviations and further supporting background details will be used when appropriate. This approach should be adopted to avoid duplication of effort and conflicting interpretations.

Quarterly performance reports will produce an accurate view of how the Council's current performance is being measured against its targets, corporate aims and objectives. Variations from both targets and past performance need to be justified with adequate explanations.

Corporate Management Team and Members will have confidence that performance information provided is accurate and a basis for sound decision-making and resource allocation.

6 Accountability - Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Officers

The intention of good data quality is to achieve consistent high standards that will underpin performance information, clear leadership and an effective Performance Management Framework.

Data Quality is part of everyone's responsibilities. Officers should challenge information as they produce and receive it. By seeking answers to inconsistent data that varies from past performance and current targets, incorrect data can be identified. This will lead to improvements to both performance and data quality.

All employees compiling, inputting or extracting data have responsibility for:
* getting it right first time
* recognising data quality as integral to their role
* their own knowledge of relevant definitions and available guidance
* up-to-date record keeping
* understanding and managing the risks associated with data quality

Data quality should be discussed as part of the personal appraisal for Officers involved with performance data collection processes.

The Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Transformation Service will be responsible for the strategic approach for performance data quality. Any issues of non-compliance or of note should be brought to the attention of the Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer.

Heads of Service will have overall ownership and responsibility for data quality within their areas and ensure that through Performance Managers:
* targets and achievements are communicated appropriately
* the risks which threaten achievement of targets are actively assessed and managed
* immediate corrective action is taken to any errors attributed to data quality
* commitment to performance data quality is communicated clearly
* data management issues, employee competencies and capacity are discussed at regular employee appraisals

Directorate Performance Managers have responsibility for ensuring that data quality is maintained within their area. That:
* new employees receive appropriate data quality training and instruction
* effective and comprehensive data collection systems are in place and challenged for accuracy and the production of relevant and accurate information required for decisions to be made
* they provide scrutiny and internal challenge both on actual performance and the quality of the data produced, ensuring that appropriate explanations are provided for performance exceptions
* all identified targets and objectives are subject to risk assessment, with controls implemented where necessary to encourage successful achievements of objectives
* they investigate poor data quality, rectify areas of non-compliance, review risks, control

measures and their potential impact and report findings to the appropriate service manager
- adequate audit trails are maintained for collection systems
- weakness and inaccuracies and inadequately managed risks are identified and receive corrective action
- they implement improvements to collection systems and maintain and record details of system changes
- adequate and detailed instructions on how to collect, calculate and report performance information is available and supported with process maps
- employees have access to the Data Quality Strategy and data collection procedures
- they will meet regularly and share any data quality issues
- they have the competencies and knowledge to cover Officers absent from the data collection process
- performance information is entered into the performance management system correctly and on time

Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer has responsibility for:
- developing and embedding the Data Quality Strategy across the authority
- introducing systems and procedures to ensure that national data quality inspection guidelines are met
- reviewing the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan producing an annual report on standards being maintained, identifying areas of weakness and advising corrective action
- ensuring that performance data is submitted to the Data Hub and other collection systems correctly and on time, and liaising and submitting supporting information to the Audit Commission
- maintaining links to national performance indicator guidance and circulate updates and changes to the appropriate Officers so that data quality processes can be set up, amended and maintained

Responsible Officers are allocated to take ownership of data collecting and reporting of specific national and local indicators who will ensure that:
- they complete an annual Data Quality Assurance form
- procedures needed to produce the information to the required standard are documented with detailed instructions, explanatory notes and process maps
- they work with the Directorate Performance Manager to ensure that systems are fit for purpose
- they have an assigned deputy who will produce the information in their absence (in most instances this should be the Data Officer)
- performance information is entered into systems correctly and on time
- they feedback data quality issues to their Performance Manager, information users, providers, partners and contractors
- they ensure risks associated with performance information are effectively managed by applying all control measures identified as part of the risk assessment process
- they can provide explanations for variations between current performance with past performance and targets, ensuring any new performance risks are logged for consideration
- they challenge performance data and its quality
- they regularly review and report on data quality compliance and risk management within their area
- non-compliance with data quality guidance by officers, partners and contractors will be investigated, remedial action taken and appropriate system changes introduced

6.2   Members

One Executive Member will have overall Member responsibility for data quality. As a consequence of the close relationship between performance management and risk management; the Executive Member will work alongside the Risk Member Champion to ensure performance and risk management are sufficiently aligned to guarantee the achievement of the Council's objectives.

Executive Members working with Directors will have responsibility for quarterly performance within their portfolios.

Members have an important scrutiny role in assessing the performance of the authority and, therefore, the quality of this data should be subject to member-driven review as part of this role. This will help to ensure consistency and accountability.

6.3   Partners, Contractors and other External agencies.

Performance results and data will be shared between the Council, its partners and other external organisations. Where performance information is provided directly to the Council by external agencies the intention is to work together, wherever possible, to both provide and obtain robust data quality assurances. Key partners will be asked to agree and sign a Performance Data Sharing Protocol. It is the responsibility of each Performance Manager for making partner organisations aware of policy objectives and expectations. Any doubts about performance data quality should be identified and addressed immediately they become known.

Responsibility for data verification lies within the service compiling the information. Errors identified from external organisations will be fully investigated and rectified.

It is also important in developing cross-organisational agreements, frameworks, plans and strategies that consideration is given to performance data and the accuracy of it (for example, the Local Area Agreement). The key aspects of data quality, described in section 3 of this strategy, should be applied.

7   Training and Development

We will establish and deliver a training programme that; raises awareness of the importance of performance data quality. Good practice and clear guidelines will be shared through this process along with the awareness of risks associated with poorly prepared information.

Training will be offered to all Officers, partners and contractors involved with the collection verification and submission of performance information.

Members will also receive Data Quality awareness training to assure them that the information provided to them, that they will use for business critical decisions is; accurate, comprehensive, timely and relevant.

Service and team managers should develop their own competency in managing performance information and understand how the use of indicators can help achieve improvements to council objectives and service delivery. Emphasis of good practice will be shared across the authority.

8   Data Security, Business Continuity and Risk

Adequate arrangements need to be in place for the protection of recorded information via the backup facilities provided corporately by ICT. Business Continuity plans will be put in place to ensure that officers and members have access to appropriate and accurate information at times of greatest need. This will mitigate the risks associated with the loss of information and systems failure.

Any data quality risks identified should be recorded and regularly monitored and updated to reflect changes. Unacceptable levels of risk will need to be identified and priority given to reduce them to more acceptable levels. Responsibility for maintaining a robust control environment for information systems lies centrally and will be developed as part of the Council's performance management and information management arrangements, and this will include processes for identifying and managing data quality risks.

Risks associated with the achievement of Council and Directorate objectives should be considered alongside mechanisms for collecting and verifying performance data. Significant risks to the achievement of objectives should be considered for escalation to the relevant Directorate or Corporate Risk Register.

9   Data Quality Action Plan

Implementation of the Data Quality Strategy is through the actions listed in the following Action Plan. Directorate Performance Managers will also need to ensure that these objectives also apply to Partnership and Contract arrangements.

As Cheshire West and Chester is a new Council, this Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan should be reviewed every 12 months, taking into consideration what has been learned during the year and also any recommendations highlighted by internal and external audit. The delivery of the data quality action plan alongside risk management concerns will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the performance management team, in line with the performance reporting cycle.

The following action plan details the performance data quality objectives for the 1st full year of the authority. These objectives apply to all performance information compiled, collected and reported by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Performance Data Quality

Action Plan 2009/10

Cheshire West
and Chester

Appendix A

Performance Data Quality Action Plan 2009-10

1. Governance and Leadership - To establish a Corporate framework for performance management throughout the Authority. To secure: accountability, awareness, clear objectives and a commitment to a Data Quality (DQ) culture.
1.1 To establish responsibility for DQ
1.2 To define clear, formally documented objectives.
1.3 To establish effective arrangements for monitoring and review of DQ.

No	Action	Who	When
1	Establish accountability: • Agree Lead Member for DQ and establish requirements to undertake the role effectively. • Identify Senior Officer at Management Team level with overall strategic responsibility for DQ.	Senior Performance Manager	By November 2009
2	Agree and approve the Performance Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan to cover all performance and data collection related functions.	Executive Member	By November 2009
3	Agree DQ accountability with LAA partners, other partners and contractors. • Produce formal set of arrangements for data quality objectives shared externally • Develop register of all other shared performance data (non-NIS) • Develop standard clause in contracts for externally supplied performance data • Align DQ requirements and arrangements with those for Risk Management	Directorate Performance Managers/Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	By February 2010

4	Produce a thorough assessment of DQ risks and record in the relevant Directorate or Corporate Risk Register. Assign responsibility and target dates for control measures necessary to mitigate risks. Ensure risk registers are reviewed quarterly and that significant risks are monitored and critical actions are implemented by responsible officers.	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	By March 2010
5	Include reference to data quality in the Council's key documents including: Corporate and Directorate Plans, Performance Management Framework, Risk Management Strategy, Statement of Internal Control, Annual Governance Statement.	Senior Performance Manager	Ongoing basis
6	Communicate commitment to DQ to all employees who have responsibilities for performance data. Establish DQ procedural and guidance on Intranet and communicate commitment to data quality. Reinforce messages within the Strategy by distributing electronically to all employees involved with Performance information so that they know where to find it. DQ procedural guidance is consistent with, and compliments, operational risk management guidance.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	By January 2010
7	Establish in-year reporting of Performance DQ to include details of scrutiny arrangements, accuracy, non-compliance and risk management arrangements. This will include information from contractors and partners.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	Quarterly
8	Introduce regular assessment procedures for checking reliability and accuracy.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	Quarterly

No	Action	Who	When
	2. Policy and Procedures - Establish organisational policies and procedures that secure the quality of performance data. 2.1 To define an operational set of procedures and guidance. 2.2 To ensure employees consistently apply policies and procedures.		
9	Produce DQ Strategy and set of operational procedures and guidance (Appendix B) for all employees involved in the performance data collection process.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	By January 2010
10	Annually review and update the Strategy and Action Plan, procedures and guidance: • ensure that responsibility for actions is updated when appropriate • identify good practice and share across the authority: introduce uniformity of systems where appropriate	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	October 2010
11	Establish partner's procedures for validating data quality. Non-compliance within partnerships will be investigated and remedial systems put in place. Ensure consistency with arrangements for validating partner's risk management procedures.	Responsible Officers/Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis
12	Establish procedures to deal with: • non-compliance of data quality guidance • correction of data quality issues • management of data quality risks and control requirements	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis
13	Keep employees informed of: • introduction of new national and local indicators and procedural changes to definitions • policy and procedural updates • best practice on performance data collection systems	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis

3. Systems and Processes – To establish secure quality of performance data.

3.1 Establish systems and processes for collection, recording, monitoring, analysis and reporting of performance data.

3.2 Establish controls that ensure quality performance information is produced and maintained for management.

3.3 Ensure business continuity with robust security arrangements to protect Performance information systems.

3.4 Specify standards are maintained for data shared and provided by; partners, contractors and third parties.

No	Action	Who	When
14	Produce detailed list identifying all Management Information Systems, databases and systems used for gathering, collecting and reporting performance information to central government. E.g. PARIS, The Hub, Waste data flow website, Fly capture database.	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	By February 2010
15	Ensure systems are in place for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data: - Build-in controls to minimise error - Security arrangements in place to regularly back up information held in dedicated software systems. - Recording of risks and control actions relating to performance objectives.	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis
16	Establish operational procedures, guidance notes and process maps for all performance data collection systems.	Responsible Officers/Directorate Performance Managers	By March 2010
17	Establish protocols and systems to verify and cross check performance information on a risk basis.	Directorate Performance Managers	By March 2010

18	Produce annually a checklist of Performance Measures where data quality is of concern. This will include: non-compliance, risk management, poor past performance, new data collection systems, measures associated with LAA objectives and performance reward grants. (See section 5.4 Verification) The outputs of this annual review will be discussed with the Audit & Risk Manager.	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer/ Audit & Risk Management	Ongoing monitoring & Annual Review (April)
19	Draft, electronically distribute and collect 'indicator outturn audit trail forms' for national and locally collected indicators.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer	Annually: April - May
20	Ensure arrangements for collecting, recording, compiling and reporting data are integrated into the wider performance management framework • Performance reporting cycle • Challenge and scrutiny	Corporate Performance Manager	Quarterly
21	Produce detailed instructions on how information is collated, collected and verified for each performance measure, including risk and control measures to establish consistency of approach and provide support when key officers are not available. Ensure these system and processes are up-to-date and support is given to services and partners as appropriate	Responsible Officers/Directorate Performance Managers	By March 2010 then ongoing

No	Action	Who	When
	4. People and Skills – Ensure employees have competencies, knowledge, and capacity to deliver quality performance data. 4.1 Communicate clearly to employees the responsibilities associated with quality data. 4.2 Endure employees have the necessary competencies and knowledge to provide quality data.		
22	Establish and deliver a training programme to both employees and members who have a role in the performance process (Ref Section 7). In many cases this could key in with ongoing programmes for performance and risk management training.	Corporate Performance Manager	By March 2010
23	Establish responsible officers for National and Local Indicators (including those lead by external organisations). Identify other officers and deputies who can support this process.	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	By January 2010
24	Ensure that employees involved with performance data collection understand their accountability and that data quality arrangements and competencies are incorporated and regularly evaluated in performance appraisals.	Human Resources/ Transformational Development	Personal Appraisal process
25	Ensure all Directorate Performance Managers, Responsible Officers and other Officers involved in the performance data collection process: • have accurate, up to date definitions of national indicators • have definitions and guidance for local indicators • support definitions with concise instructions on data collection, compilation and calculations This can include process maps when appropriate • are advised of changes & updates to CLG NIS definitions	Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis

No	Action	Who	When
	5. Data Use and Reporting – Performance data is reported and actively used in the decision making process to motivate continuous improvement and best use of resources. 5.1 Performance information is used to manage and improve delivery of service. 5.2 Establish system of internal control and validation for Performance Data		
26	Produce relevant and accurate performance reports that can be used in confidence by decision makers to improve service delivery by : • Directorate Management Teams • Corporate Management Team • Executive Group • Scrutiny Committees	Corporate Performance Manager/Performance Reporting & Data Quality Officer	Ongoing basis
27	All Reported data should be subjected to Senior Management approval prior to formal reporting.	Heads of Service and Directorate Performance Managers	Ongoing basis
28	Produce Annual Data Quality Report detailing systems in place, accuracy of data produced, details of risk, any poor information and non-compliance of recommended guidelines. Produce recommendations for system improvement and ensure action taken to rectify weaknesses highlighted by the report. Report to be discussed with Audit and Risk Manager.	Performance Reporting and Data Quality Officer/ Audit & Risk Management	By June 2010

Appendix B

Data Quality Guidelines

- The principle of 'right first time' should be applied to all systems and processes used for data collection.

- Information should be gathered and collated in a structured manner.

- Ensure all source information is accurate prior to producing detailed calculations.

- Calculations should be done in a logical, consistent and easy to understand format, with clear details of the formula used and details of where source data originates.

- Sensitive information should be reported with integrity in a confidential manner, excluding the names and identification of individuals where possible.

- Errors found should be chased back to source and investigated to ensure that similar problems do not reoccur.

- All data, working papers, guidelines and procedural notes for collection systems should be drafted and saved electronically adhering to corporate naming conventions and best practice code for file management.

- Instructions, definitions and process notes should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure collection systems are fully up to date.

- Appropriate software should be used and all information should be submitted and retained electronically.

- Data must have an adequate audit trail to support any queries that may arise.

- Internal and External Audit recommendations should be implemented.

- Management information, government returns and performance data should be available and submitted on time.

- Data quality should be discussed as part of employee performance appraisals.

- Controls should be in place to avoid double counting. Responsibilities should be clearly defined as to which officers are responsible for data entry.

- Ensure formulas are correct and that changes in variable information used as constants are up to date. E.g. interest rates, inflation indices, population, number of households.

- Audit trail forms for performance indicators must contain the calculation details for the current year.

- Previous calculations used for government returns must be retained for comparison purposes. These will help justify year on year changes.

- Check that final outcomes are correct, compare with past records and targets and investigate and justify variations from expected results.

- Data collection process systems should be recorded, mapped and stored in a central location.

- Reports with Financial, HR, Legal and other implications need to be clarified and agreed with appropriate Directors prior to being submitted to Members. This information should be passed to relevant Officers, giving them adequate time to verify the data and be able to provide appropriate recommendations.

- Inadequate data quality should be regularly assessed.

- Introduce risk control measures within operational procedures.

- All data collected needs to be regularly backed up and protected by ICT.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print formats. If you would like a copy in any of these formats or in another language, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk** We are also able to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to support customers with accessing Council services.

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منّا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

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