Data Quality Strategy

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Document

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Abbreviations Used

~~NIs~~	~~National Indicators~~
EHPI	East Herts Performance Indicators
SPI	Service Performance Indicators
PI	Performance Indicators
OU	Organisational Units
CMT	Corporate Management Team

Data Quality Strategy
2. Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the Council's approach to data quality.

The Council is committed to producing accurate, timely and relevant information. This strategy will ensure a consistent, corporate approach to data quality across the Authority by:

- Articulating a set of core principles of Data Quality and
- Standardising the Council's approach to the calculating and collating of data on a diverse range of processes.

Data Quality Strategy
3. Background

~~In 2010 the Coalition Government announced a number of changes that has greatly affected how data was previously being managed. These included the deletion of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), Use of Resources (UoR) assessment and the abolition of the Audit Commission.~~ The Council ~~remains~~ is committed ~~at~~ to having a robust approach to data quality, because it underpins not just performance management but effective decision making.

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In addition, data is used in a variety of processes between Councils and their partners and that data can potentially be passed on to other party organisations. Councils are accountable for any information they supply and it is important that good data quality is applied when handling any data when any data is shared.

The principles of good quality data are outlined below:

- Awareness
- Definitions
- Input
- Verification
- Systems
- Output
- Presentation

Data Quality Strategy

4. Awareness

Data quality plays an important part towards contributing to the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities,"People, Place and Prosperity".

Data quality is the responsibility of every member of staff, whether they are inputting, extracting or analysing data from any of the Council's information systems. Each member of staff should be aware of their responsibility in relation to data quality, however some officers will play a greater role in data quality than others.

Responsibility for data quality should be reflected in job descriptions and the appraisal process. Line managers are encouraged to ensure where relevant, that suitable appraisal targets and paragraphs in job descriptions reflecting the Council's policy are included. This should be proportionate to the level of involvement staff have.

Also staff that are responsible for data quality should be made aware that should any unauthorised tampering with data or any breaches to data quality be found, a line manager will look to remedy the case initially through the Council's DisciplinaryHR Ppolicy.

Essential Reference Paper A details the roles and responsibilities for data quality in respect to the overall performance management framework.

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5. Definitions

In respect to performance indicators it is the responsibility of all officers to have a clear understanding of the measures assigned to them, in terms of definition and calculation, and how lapses can either lead to errors or delayed reporting, both of which limit the Council's ability to manage performance effectively.

A clear understanding might be defined, for example, as the knowledge of what the numerator and denominator are, and whether there are any important technical guidelines (for example, the exclusion of certain cases).

Where indicators have originated from national measures, set definitions may therefore already exist. However it is important that the service is clear on the exact definition that is being applied. This ensures that data is recorded consistently, allowing for comparison over time.

The latest guidance for all performance indicators e.g. (EHPIs and SPIs) can be found by logging on to Covalent where the definition and calculation is stored.

Performance indicators are either monitored on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis using the Council's performance management system Covalent. All targets and outturns in relation to monthly and quarterly monitoring refer to a snapshot period (with the exception of a few indicators which are cumulative), whereas the annual reporting relates to the end of year position.

Targets for indicators are set in the following way:

- **Annual Targets** – are determined as part of the Estimate and Future Target setting process e.g. annual targets for 2013~~4~~/1~~4~~5 are determined based on the 201~~2~~3/1~~3~~4 estimates. This process takes place between November – March each year, so the following year's targets are set before 1 April.
- **Monthly and Quarterly Targets** – are determined in March/April each year, once the annual target has been set. The basket of indicators to be monitored is determined by the analysis the Performance Team undertakes in relation to:

  ➢ Indicators that are off target
  ➢ Indicators where performance is declining
  ➢ Indicators that are in bottom quartile
  ➢ Indicators that are key to the organisation

Every performance indicator has a named officer who is responsible for collecting and reporting the information. This ensures that there is consistency in the application of definitions and use of systems for providing the data. In some larger services this is split between two officers (see **Essential Reference Paper A**).

Each named officer is kept up to date with any changes in definition that may occur from time to time, through Covalent and directly from the Performance Team.

Data Quality Champions:

Every service will have a nominated Data Quality Champion. The champion is required to take an active lead in promoting data quality within the organisation. The Data Quality Champion group will be led by the Performance Monitoring Officer responsible for producing the monthly Healthcheck reports. The Data Quality Champions will ensure that the Council is adhering to the principles of data quality. They will assist with creating an annual data quality training scheme for Officers and Members. They will support the Performance team with spot checking the data supplied by and to their service. They will also work alongside the Performance team with regards to reporting data to auditors.

Although this section focuses on the importance of 'definition' in relationship to performance indicators, the good principles of 'definition' should apply to all measures of data.

Data Quality Strategy

6. Input

There must be adequate controls in relation to the input of data into service-based systems and Covalent. Data inputting is the responsibility of the relevant service department and named officer for the performance indicator/measure.

System produced figures are only as good as the data entered into that system in the first place. The aim should be 100% accuracy 100% of the time. It is important that officers have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems and are adequately trained to ensure that information is being entered consistently and correctly.

A key requirement is that data be entered on an ongoing basis, not saved up to be entered in a block at the end of a period. This reduces the error rate and the need for complex verification procedures.

Controls should also be in place to avoid double-counting. These should be designed according to the nature of the system, in particular where more than one person inputs data. A likely control will be a clear division of responsibility setting out who is responsible for what data entry.

Where a service does not have a bespoke/dedicated system to record data, data may be entered into a number of Excel workbooks. If this is the case then the service should ensure that the workbooks are linked and that the formulas to calculate performance are pre set. This not only saves officer time but decreases the chance of errors.

As Covalent is unable to integrate with service systems, the monthly, quarterly and annual data is inputted manually. Here the service, in line with the Performance team, needs to ensure that data from service systems is correct

and consistent with Covalent. Please refer to **Essential Reference Paper C** for information on the relevant service systems.

Data Quality Strategy
7. Verification

Data verification is the responsibility of the:

> ➢ Service in terms of undertaking verification checks of their own systems and the;
> ➢ Performance Team in terms of performance indicator data and Covalent

Service responsibility:

The Council has a number of robust information systems, nevertheless even these have possibilities for errors in data entry. The frequency of verification checks for these systems needs to be aligned with the frequency for data reporting.

A simple verification process may be to review a sample of recent data against expectations, or a reconciliation of system-produced data with manual records if appropriate. Some systems may require more checks such as:

> ➢ Data cleansing, e.g. to remove duplicate records or to complete missing information
> ➢ Sample checks to eliminate reoccurrence of a specific error, e.g. checking one field of data that is pivotal for a PI against documentation, for a sample of cases
> ➢ Test run of report output, to check the integrity of the query being used to extract the data
> ➢ Spot checks, e.g. on external contractor information

Partnership responsibility:

The Council expects partners to demonstrate responsibility for the quality of data they provide. Where data is provided directly the service concerned will ensure partners (shared services/third parties) have an adequate data assurance process or sign up to an assurance process with East Herts Council. Where possible a record of source data should be kept.

Data that is provided from external sources also needs to be checked. The Council will work alongside contractors to ensure the data is correct.

A requirement to provide timely and accurate data should be made clear when entering into new contracts. Likewise, the contractor must be clear of their responsibility for data quality and how we will check their data.

Some information/data are provided directly by external agencies e.g. ~~crime~~ waste collection statistics. The Council will work with these agencies

constructively wherever possible to provide assurance on data quality and resolve any problems identified.

Performance Team responsibility:

Once performance indicator data has been entered on to Covalent the Performance Team is required to undertake periodic spot checks to ensure that the data has been calculated as per the performance indicator definition. In particular the spot check will look to see if the correct:

➢ Numerator and denominator have been used
➢ Calculation has been applied
➢ Data has been reported to the correct decimal place

The spot check and performance indicators involved are first identified in the annual estimates and future targets report which is presented to Corporate Management Team (CMT), Joint Scrutiny committee and then to Executive. The findings of the spot check are then reported as part of the annual outturn report and will again go through CMT, ~~Joint/Corporate Business Scrutiny~~the three scrutiny committees and Executive.

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8. Systems

Each system will have a named systems administrator and they will be responsible for data quality issues relating to that system. These officers will have the following responsibilities (although this is dependent on the type of system in place, so some or all will apply, it is down to the service to determine this)

➢ Ensure users are adequately trained, if appropriate this should include a formal training programme, which is periodically evaluated and adapted to respond to changing needs.
➢ Ensure there is security for accessing and amending the data if periodic tests of the integrity of the data are undertaken.
➢ Provide information management support to users.
➢ Undertake system upgrades where necessary (accommodate amendments to performance indicator definitions)
➢ Ensure the system meets the manager's information needs
➢ Ensure the system can produce adequate audit trails
➢ Produce a set of written procedures, i.e. a user guide (also available on download from intranet)
➢ Produce a business continuity plan for the system exists to protect vital records and data
➢ A named substitute officer is nominated to deputise for the systems administrator in his/her absence.

Please refer to **Essential Reference Paper C** for information on the relevant service systems.

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9. Output

Data should be timely and accurate. In order for performance indicator data to be acted upon quickly by both Directors and Members, a timetable for reporting monthly and quarterly performance indicator data is produced by the Performance Team, at the start of each financial year, and communicated via E-mail.

Performance data is compiled into the Corporate Healthcheck report which is produced on a monthly basis for CMT and Executive. The Corporate Healthcheck details performance and financial data. The Healthcheck is also reported to Scrutiny on a regular basis.

In summary the process entails Service Heads meeting at the beginning of each month with their Service Accountant to discuss budget issues in terms of revenue and capital overspends and underspends, delivery of efficiency targets etc. Any significant variances or concerns are then flagged up on a form, along with the latest performance management data, which is discussed at the DMT meeting later that month. It is at this meeting the Director then identifies the key budget and performance issues for the Division and the necessary action that is required to rectify the situation. This is then fed into the production of the Corporate Monthly Healthcheck Report that is reported to the Corporate Management Team and then the appropriate scrutiny committee and the Executive respectively.

This process allows CMT to focus on addressing issues relating to achieving the Council's objectives and not on the data quality. This is because DMTs approve the quality of data before it is presented to CMT by querying various information at an early stage, such as:

- Performance data note/comments interpretation
- Any missing performance data
- Process of improvement if performance data is indicating off target
- Patterns of recurring discrepancies to performance data

It is important that Heads of Service are satisfied that the data being presented to CMT and Members is accurate, as decision making is based in part on the data provided.

Data Quality Strategy
10. Presentation

During external audits, there should be at least one other officer who is able to provide advice and information on the performance indicator in the absence of the lead officer. This is an important control to ensure that audit work proceeds smoothly.

When information is presented for external audit, a member of the Performance Team must review working papers (calculations/evidence) to confirm that the definition has been followed, also the calculations are correct and the indicator is supported by a full audit trail.

Data Quality Strategy
11. Data Sharing

Protocols for data sharing and data sharing agreements within partnerships should be defined at the start of any partnership work.

The Council's Data Sharing Protocol can be obtained from the council intranet or further information can be obtained from the link below:

http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/intranet/media.jsp?mediaid=11370&filetype=PDF

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│              Data Quality Strategy           │
│           Essential Reference Paper A        │
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The roles and responsibilities for data quality in respect to overall performance management framework.

	All officers responsible for inputting/extracting data from systems	Head of Service	Directors	Performance Monitoring Officer	Corporate Planning & Performance Manager.
Covalent Role	'Assignee' and/or 'Managed by'		Managed by	Administrator	
Responsibility	• Knowledge of relevant performance indicator definitions and guidance • Inputting accurate information on to Covalent and internal system • Ensuring up to date record keeping. • Support/assist in any external audit requirements	• Ensuring a robust control environment exists for data inputting and extracting within service area/systems • Ensuring the data contained on Covalent and internal systems is accurate and reliable • Sufficient explanations are provided explaining performance data • Relevant evidence provided to support data • Support/assist in any external audit requirements	• Robustly scrutinising data and responding to performance information reports E.g. Corporate Healthcheck, Estimates, Outturns and Targets	• Maintain Covalent so that roles and permissions are current • Ensure services have access to the latest performance indicator definitions and guidance • Undertake training on Performance Management Framework processes e.g. monthly and quarterly monitoring, estimate and target setting, outturn collation • Undertake training on Covalent • Undertake data quality spot checks	• Manage the Performance Management Framework • Support/assist in any external audit requirements. • Advice and support to officers to meet requirements of data quality.

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Essential Reference Paper B

Performance indicators are monitored on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis using the Council's performance management system Covalent. The system enables different roles to be assigned to help support the collation of data. The Ownership pane provides details on who is accountable and responsible for the performance indicator, at six different levels:

- **Responsible OUs** – the service responsible for the performance indicator.
- **Administered By** – the system administrators who have full control over the performance indicator in terms of setup, data and targets.
- **Managed By** – the most senior officer with responsibility for this performance indicator, usually a Head of Service or a Director.
- **Assigned To** – the lead officer or person with responsibility for the performance indicator, if a second officer is needed in addition to the 'Managed By' role.
- **Portfolio Owners** – the member who has responsibility for this performance indicator.
- **Also Visible To** – All the users who can see the performance indicator, though not necessarily edit it.

Data Quality Strategy

Essential Reference Paper C

Detailed below is a list of the core systems the Council uses to manage data, in relation to its Performance Management Framework. As part of the consultation process services will be contacted about the systems they are currently using to input data and who is the registered system administrator.

Service Area	System Name	System Administrator
Financial Support Services and Performance	Radius PowersolveFinancials	Principal Accountant
	Covalent	Performance Monitoring Officer
Benefits &Revenues	AcademyCapita	Head of Benefits and Revenues
Planning & Building Control	Excel – for planned response	Building Control Manager
	FastCONTROL Building Control - site visits	Building Control Manager

Service Area	System Name	System Administrator
Planning & Building Control (continued)	APAS in reference to Planning – back office system for Development Management.	Systems Administrator
	Opentext – for Development Control report generation	Administration Assistant
Community Safety and Health Services	LALPAC – Licensing applications Mayrise – Anti Social Behaviour data Access – Enforcement data data provided by the Police	Head of Community Safety and Health Services
Environmental Services	Mayrise Appeals – Reports and calculations run from ICPS Occupancy rate – P&D database Votes are manually counted Saffron M3 Public Protection Groundview	Administration Manager Waste Services Manager
Information, parking and Customer Services and New Media	Delphi LPI 4.1 Sustainable products - Excel	Administration Manager
	Covalent Mitel Contact Center Management – Telephones Lagan (CRM) - Complaints	Customer Services Manager
Housing Services	Excel – Housing register	Housing Manager
People, ICT and Property Services	Delphi Business Objects Excel – PDR, sickness monitoring and establishment list	Human Resource Officer Administration Assistant
Shared ICT, Business Improvement and Print and Design Services.	Track it – Service desk system	Network and Systems Support Manager

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| **Data Quality Strategy** |
| **Essential Reference Paper D** |

This appendix details the <u>continuing</u> actions the Council needs to undertake to <u>ensure good data quality is embedded</u>.

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Theme 1 – Governance		
<u>Periodic</u> member training on Data Quality and Covalent.	<u>Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance Monitoring Officer, in partnership with Democratice Services</u>	To be determined as part of the member training plan. (annually)
Data Quality Strategy reviewed annually.	<u>Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance Monitoring Officer</u>	March each year

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Theme 2 – Policies and procedures		
Continue to <u>consult with SMG and officers responsible for inputting performance indicator data on Covalent updates and enhancements, revisions to the data quality strategy and training.</u> ~~utilise the Data Quality Champion working group to help develop the performance management framework for the~~	<u>Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance Monitoring Officer</u>	~~Ongoing – aim to meet once a year, with periodic e-mail communications when meetings aren't necessary.~~<u>As and when required – Consultation to be undertaken either face to face or through e-mail.</u>

Council. This will include looking at Covalent, Data Quality Strategy, training etc.		

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Theme 3 – Systems and processes		
Evaluate and maintain Covalent to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose to support the council's performance management framework. Undertake an annual review of ~~Covalent and the~~ controls in place on Covalent, reporting to Head of Financial Support Services and Performance on the outcomes of review.	Corporate Planning a 15 ormance Manager and Perform onitoring Officer Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance Monitoring Officer	Ongoing through attendance at Covalent Uuser group meetings and an annual review of system reported to either the Head of Finance Support Service and Performance or CMT. March each year
Theme 4 – People and Skills		
Periodic officer training on Data Quality and Covalent to take place	Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance Monitoring Officer	As and when requested.