

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY DATA QUALITY POLICY

“RIGHT FIRST TIME”



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1. Policy aim

This policy document has been developed to set out the Council's approach to the collection, handling, retrieval, use and communications of data. The document sets out the policy of the London Borough of Bromley in terms of how it is to ensure the quality of the data it uses to demonstrate its performance. A summary policy is included in Appendix 1.

2. The Council's commitment

The Council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of excellent services. Effective decisions, to improve the lives of our residents, service users and local communities, can only be taken if they are based on complete, accurate and timely data.

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 Policy is fully authorised by Chief Officers and the Resources Portfolio Holder.

3. The importance of getting it right first time

We need reliable, accurate and timely information with which to manage services, inform our residents, communities, Councillors and Government, and assess and improve 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.

As increasing reliance is placed on this information in our internal performance management and review processes, as well as in the national Comprehensive Area Assessment, 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 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, so it is important to strike a balance between the purpose for which the information is intended and the cost of collecting that data to the necessary level of accuracy, detail and timeliness. The Council needs to determine their information priorities and put in place appropriate and proportionate 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 residents, partners, and those monitoring our progress, must be appropriate for these purposes, providing the level of accuracy, reliability and consistency required.

The importance attached to published performance indicators, for example in the Local Area Agreement, has significantly increased and so, therefore, has the importance of the quality of the underlying data from which they are calculated. To be confident that we are focusing on the key areas for improvement, those monitoring our performance need to be assured that reported information reflects actual performance.

Financial information is generally perceived as being reliable, because the underlying data is collected according to professional accounting rules, is held within a single system, and is subjected to strong internal controls and a formal audit regime. This perception is not always as strong with the quality of performance information, which is stored in numerous line-of-business systems each with its own collection and operational procedures.

However, in Bromley, we have for some time subjected our performance data to similar internal controls and checks as for our financial information, through the work of internal audit and performance officers; and this policy, in many ways, seeks to formalise these arrangements.

The Council and its partners need to be assured that the information used to demonstrate performance is accurate and timely; otherwise we 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 to turn that data into reliable information.

It is important to get data quality right first time - it leads to better services and it is more cost effective than to have to address failings later.

4. Our 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, to ensure the continuous improvement of its services.

The Council feels that it has made significant progress in developing data quality over the past few years. Validation of this opinion can be seen in recent external assessment, with improvements having been acknowledged by the Audit Commission.

The Council's performance teams, Internal Audit, and ICT have been working closely with services to improve data quality. The improvements have resulted from targeted and risk-assessed control activity and general raising awareness of the importance of improving our data quality. The Council accepts fully that there is a need to sustain the improvements made. The new approach to Data Quality management offers the

opportunity to the Council to make further incremental improvements to the quality of data it holds and its subsequent use.

5. Policy objectives

Our vision for data quality is that we get things **right first time**. This will enable us to provide decision makers with the right information at the right time, allowing improved policy making and more effective commissioning and service delivery.

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, contractors and partners in terms of the standards of data quality.
- To put in place proportionate 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, and that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

6. 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 (reaching an agreed compromise between the speed of delivery and the accuracy that can be achieved in that timeframe)
- Stored securely and confidentially
- Appropriate to the audience's requirements

Importance of 'quality data'

Performance information is essential for:

- Meeting customer, resident and community needs – delivering effective, relevant and timely services.
- Keeping stakeholders informed – through central data collection and distribution mechanisms
- Efficient administration and compliance with the law.

- Operational management, the delivery of service improvement and efficiencies and strategic planning – to provide appropriate allocation of resources and future service delivery.
- Corporate Governance - which depends on detailed, accurate performance data.

7. Setting and Meeting of Standards

The London Borough of Bromley is committed to collecting and processing data according to locally and national 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 'master' source 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 the corporate monitoring resource identifies areas where issues of incorrect data are not being put right the matter will be referred to the relevant departmental performance team, and ultimately the relevant Director.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

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

- The Director of Legal and Democratic & Customer Services has senior management responsibility for data quality as chair of the Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board supported by staff from Information Solutions
- The Director of Resources will ensure that data quality is kept under overall direction and complies with agreed standards
- The Resources Portfolio Holder has senior Member responsibility for data quality, with Executive and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny committee providing wider Member input and holding Portfolio Holder to account.
- The Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board will be responsible for monitoring and updating the Council's Data Quality Policy and associated annual action plan and promoting the importance of data quality throughout the organisation

- Departmental performance teams are responsible for ensuring the implementation of corporate policy and procedures and the development of service based policies and procedures
- Service Managers are responsible for ensuring that adequate, safe systems holding an acceptable standard of information are developed and maintained and that the performance information they, or their staff, use and/or provide is accurate, timely and meets relevant guidance
- It is the responsibility of all staff who input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality, in compliance with this Data Quality Policy
- All staff will be responsible for following policies and procedures as an integral part of their role and profession, and all line managers for ensuring that this is the case in their respective service teams
- Internal Audit will incorporate data quality checks, where appropriate, into any service review work that they undertake
- ICT will ensure that our systems are fit for purpose (meeting the needs of the services using them), secure and reliable.

9. Partnership Working

The Council is committed to working with partners to achieve the Building a Better Bromley 2020 Vision, the Local Area Agreement and to deliver joined up public services. Information sharing is crucial to partnership working, and as well as ensuring the quality of our own data we will expect our partners to abide to the same standards as ourselves. The Council will ensure that a formal framework for data sharing with partners and contractors is put in place and that a formal set of quality requirements will be applied to all data which is shared. These quality requirements, whether in the form of a data sharing protocol, contract or service level agreement will ensure an agreed standard of data is transferred.

10. Risk Management

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

11. 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:

- It is the Line Managers responsibility to ensure that all new staff who use Information Systems receive training in the use of the respective systems. This training must include all aspects of information security and data quality.
- 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, or on other available knowledge management systems as they become available.
- Policies and procedures will be communicated to all relevant staff.
- An on-going and developmental awareness campaign will be undertaken, led by the performance teams, to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording.
- Feedback on data quality will be communicated to all relevant staff following any work undertaken by Internal Audit.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy and the Council's overall approach to data quality will be monitored by the Council's corporate Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board. Internal Audit will provide internal assurance controls as part of their annual audit programme.

Data quality will be regularly monitored by the performance teams and Internal Audit. This will involve:

- Checking data and systems as part of the production of monitoring reports.
- Routine inclusion of data quality issues within Internal Audit checks where appropriate.
- Follow up of any data quality queries from Members, partners, external agencies or staff.

Procedures for data capture, processing and storage will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in response to service demands and customer feedback. 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 departmental performance team and service manager responsible for the data capture or data processing system. However, all members of staff are encouraged to report any data quality issues.

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.

APPENDIX ONE

Summary Data Quality Policy – “Right First Time”

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, members and Government, and assess and improve 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, contractors and partners in terms of the standards of data quality.
- To put in place proportionate 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, and that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

Setting and Meeting of Standards

The London Borough of Bromley is committed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally defined standards in relation to key areas such as completeness, timeliness, coverage, validity, quality assurance, security and confidentiality.

Roles and Responsibilities

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

- The Director of Legal and Democratic & Customer Services has senior management responsibility for data quality as chair of the Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board supported by staff from Information Solutions

- The Director of Resources will ensure that data quality is kept under overall direction and complies with agreed standards
- The Resources Portfolio Holder has senior Member responsibility for data quality, with Executive and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny committee providing wider Member input and holding Portfolio Holder to account.
- The Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board will be responsible for monitoring and updating the Council's Data Quality Policy and associated annual action plan and promoting the importance of data quality throughout the organisation
- It is the responsibility of all staff that input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality, in compliance with the Data Quality Policy.

Partnership Working

The Council is committed to working with partners to achieve the Building a Better Bromley 2020 Vision, the Local Area Agreement and to deliver joined up public services. The Council will ensure that a formal framework for data sharing with partners is put in place so that we and our partners abide to the same standards of data quality.

Risk Management

The Council will ensure that it adequately manages risk associated with data quality.

People Development and Communication

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, led by the corporate and departmental performance teams, to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording.

Monitoring and Review

Data quality will be regularly monitored by the corporate and departmental performance teams and Internal Audit. This policy and the Council's overall approach to data quality will be monitored by the Council's corporate Bromley Information and Knowledge Management Board.

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.