Appendix A

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

2012 to 2015

CONTENTS

1. SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

1.1 What is Data Quality and why it is important?

Data will be of high quality if it is:

- ☑ Accurate (in terms of correctness and intended purpose);
- ☑ Comprehensive (in terms of all data being captured);
- ☑ Valid (in an agreed format which conforms to recognised Council and national standards;
- ☑ Available when needed; and,
- ☑ Stored securely and confidentially.

The quality of our data is essential for any assessment of the Council's effectiveness. Policy and strategies for ensuring data quality, including governance and leadership for ensuring accurate and reliable data is also essential. For instance: the higher number of amendments and reservations regarding our data following an external inspection /scrutiny, the lower the confidence that interested parties will have in the performance information we provide. This results in increased and more detailed inspections and the likelihood of lower performance scores.

The Government has announced it is committed to ending 'top down' government and is giving new powers to local authorities to work for and be democratically accountable to their communities. Consequently, local authorities are being encouraged to make their performance data easily accessible to their customers. However, the development of data quality arrangements must be guided by relevant legislation.

1.2 Objectives of the Strategy

South Derbyshire District Council recognises the importance of data quality, as we need reliable, accurate and timely performance information to manage our resources and meet the needs of the community and plan for the future. We are committed to ensuring that the highest standards of data quality are maintained

In order to achieve this South Derbyshire Council will ensure that:

- ☑ Performance information is of high quality, consistent, timely, and comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.
- ☑ Arrangements are put in place at a senior level, in order to secure the quality of the data that we use to manage our services and demonstrate our performance.
- ☑ We make clear what is expected from Officers and contractors in terms of the standards of data quality.
- ☑ Systems, policies and procedures are put in place, in order to enable the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with Partners.

☑ The right resources are put in place to ensure that performance information is timely and accurate.

☑ The right controls are in place, to ensure that the Council meets what is expected of us.

☑ The purpose of the data quality reporting process is to ensure that the Council supports a learning culture, All Members of staff are encouraged to report on any data quality issues

1.3 Scope

This 'Strategy' sets out the corporate framework for the management and accountability of data quality, with a commitment to secure a culture of data quality throughout the Council.

This 'Strategy' applies to all the reported information and underlying data that the Council produces.

The Council believes that continued initiatives in relation to data quality should be proportionate to risk.

The Council will work with key Partners to encourage those that provide the Council with data to adopt the principles contained within this Strategy. Key Partners should be asked to sign the 'suggested' Third Party Protocol, attached at Appendix A.

1.4 Principles of the Data Quality Strategy

There are a number of key principles that underpin good data quality. It is important to consider these in turn, because if any of the principles are not adhered to, inaccuracies are likely to occur, and adherence to subsequent principles will not be able to rectify the position.

Awareness: Everyone recognises the need for good data quality and how they can contribute.

Definitions: Everyone knows which Performance Indicators (PIs) / Performance Measures are produced from the information they input and they are defined

- Statutory PIs have nationally set definitions, and it is important that every detail of the definition is applied. This ensures that data is recorded consistently, allowing for comparisons over time, and national benchmarking
- When setting local PIs, we need to ensure that there is an agreed 'methodology statement' in place, where a clear definition has been established and that there are systems available to collect and report the data in the agreed format.
- In some cases, there maybe a number of similar PIs (national or local) measuring the same thing in slightly different ways. It is important to ensure that separate figures are calculated and reported systematically for each definition

- Each performance measure should have a named officer who is responsible for the collecting and reporting of the information.

This ensures that there is consistency in the application of definitions and the use of systems providing the data. Each named officer should be kept up to data of any changes in the definition that may occur from time to time

Input: There are controls over input
- The aim should be 100% accuracy all of the time.
- It is important that officers have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems and are adequately trained to ensure that data is being entered consistently and correctly.
- A key requirement is that data should be entered on a quarterly basis.
- The systems must also record all relevant information.

Verification: There are verification procedures in place as close to the point of input as possible.
- Data requirements should be designed along the principle of '*getting it right first time'* in order to avoid waste in terms of time and money spent on cleansing data, interfacing between different information systems, matching and consolidating data from multiple databases and maintaining outdated systems
- Nevertheless, in complex systems, even when there are strong controls over input, errors can occur. Where it is needed, a verification procedure should exist close to the point of data input. The frequency of verification checks is to be undertaken by a Manager and relevant Head of Service, in line with the frequency of data reporting.

Responsibility: Each PI has an assigned Officer who takes responsibility of the systems to support the performance measure as well as reporting the information to the required standards
- Officers with responsibility should document the procedures that need to be undertaken to produce this information to the required standard in a 'methodology statement.' For instance some checks maybe required by legislation, where in the case of benefits there are Regulations which specify that a supplier must carry out a 10% sample
- Responsible Officers should work closely with ICT when procuring new systems to ensure that performance data can be provided by and extracted from the system and ensure a robust environment.
- These procedures should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
- Officers should ensure that they have a deputy to produce this information in their absence.

Output: Performance Indicators are extracted regularly and efficiently and communicated quickly. Any output produced should have an auditable trail.

Presentation: Annual Performance Indicators are presented, with conclusive evidence in such a way as to give an easily understood and accurate picture of our performance to external inspectorate and the public.

1.5   Standards and Procedures

South Derbyshire District Council is committed to collecting and processing data according to national and local defined standards. Standards and procedures are necessary to ensure that:

- ☑ Data collection is consistent throughout the organisation and in accordance with national definitions as laid down in the statutory performance indicator guidance where appropriate.
- ☑ Information can be meaningfully compared /collated both across the organisation and nationally

Where there is no national standard to guide procedures for data collection, processing or reporting, the Council will generate its own standards and procedures. This will be undertaken as and when the need arises.

Where problems are identified, corrective action and any recommendations for change will be identified. This stage may be complex, especially when more than one information system is involved. The source of the data must be identified and the impact on the recipient systems evaluated. Where at all possible, data must be corrected at source and this is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that this happens. Should there be areas where there are on-going issues of incorrect data, the matter will be referred to the relevant Head of Service and then onto the relevant Director and / or Management Team.

1.6   Risk Assessment

Data Quality needs to be embedded in the Council's Risk Register.

Areas classified as 'high risk' conditions include:

- A high volume of data transactions;
- Technically complex performance information definition / guidance;
- Problems identified in previous years;
- Inexperienced staff involved in the data processing / performance information production;
- A system being used to produce new performance information; and,
- Known gaps in the control environment.

1.7   Roles and Responsibilities

Officers

Data Quality is the responsibility of **every employee** who enters or analyses data from any of the Council's information systems and records. Every employee should be aware of his or her responsibilities for the quality of the data.

The **Head of Corporate Services** (the 'Corporate Data Champion') takes a strategic lead for improving data quality within the authority ensuring compliance but more importantly to promote and raise its profile

Directors, Heads of Service, Managers and Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring that adequate, safe systems holding an acceptable standard of information

are developed and maintained and that the performance information they provide is accurate, timely and meets the relevant guidance. There are also responsible for ensuring the implementation of corporate policy procedures and the development of service based policies and procedures for performance information.

It is the responsibility of **all staff** that input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality.

Everyone in the Council will be responsible for complying with this Data Quality Strategy

All staff are responsible for following policies and procedures and all 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, Heads of Service, Managers, Team Leaders and other administrative staff recognise their responsibilities as an integral part of their role and profession.

Members

The **Finance & Management Committee** has responsibility for data quality as part of its responsibility for corporate governance and risk management. Councillor John Harrison is the Member Champion for Data Quality.

1.8   Contracts

South Derbyshire District Council recognises that data quality is an important part of any contract that is outsourced to a third party to manage. This is of particular importance to public facing service contracts where large amounts of performance data are requested by the Council from which to judge a contractor's performance

We will ensure that where data collection and data quality are instrumental to the delivery of the service, all appropriate contracts will have a standard clause inserted into the contract that defines data quality and how it should be embedded into the contractor's processes. This clause will lay out our requirement for the contractor to provide timely and accurate information and that responsibilities for data quality and checking information are clearly set out. Responsibility for the verification of data lies with the Service managing the contract.

1.9   Partners

Some important information is provided by partner organisations and other external agencies. It is the intention to work constructively with these organisations to provide assurance of the data quality. Any doubts about data quality should be addressed with the organisation.

Responsibility for data verification lies with the Service Area receiving the information. Head of Corporate Services will provide advice and guidance if required.

1.10   Output and Reporting

Performance data required by external government departments and inspection bodies normally has a timetable for publication. All performance information should

be in time for management assessment and action prior to the publication. It is important that performance information is subject to scrutiny and challenge before final reporting.

Performance updates are reported to the Management Team as part of the Council's performance management framework prior to being reported to the relevant Policy Committee. The Audit Sub-Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee also play a role through the scrutiny of financial and non-financial performance and corporate governance monitoring and review arrangements.

Reporting accurate information leads to good decision-making and improved performance. For many indicators that performance will only be recognised publicly if it can be substantiated by external bodies.

South Derbyshire District Council receives external validation through an audit process. During these audits the officer responsible for data collection should be available to provide all supporting information. If that officer is not available, there should be at least one other officer who is able to provide advice and information on that PI. This is important to ensure that audit work proceeds smoothly. The audit will require the methodology statements to confirm the definition has been followed, the calculations are correct and the PI is supported by a full audit trial. A comprehensive process is already in place for the collection, verification and reporting of statutory PIs

1.11   Monitoring and Review

The Head of Corporate Services and the Management Team will monitor this Strategy and the Council's overall approach to data quality. The Council's auditors provide internal assurance controls.

The monitoring and review process will involve:

- ☑ Annual meetings with PI originators and Heads of Service to ensure that correct systems and procedures are in place.
- ☑ Quarterly monitoring and review of key Performance Indicators by the Management Team.
- ☑ Follow up of any data quality queries from members of staff.
- ☑ Liaising with internal and external audit regarding and data quality issues they have come across as part of their review / inspection programme.

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

2. THE WAY FORWARD: DATA QUALITY ACTION PLAN

2.1 Action Plan

Implementation of the Data Quality Strategy is through the actions listed in the attached action plan at Appendix B. None of these have cost implications, although officer time is needed to implement them.

2.2 Anticipated Outcomes

The main anticipated outcomes for delivering the Data Quality Action Plan are:

- ☑ Improved accountability for data quality issues
- ☑ An increased awareness of data quality and its importance
- ☑ An increased commitment to data quality by the Council
- ☑ A strengthened performance management framework

2.3 Action Plan Monitoring

The Head of Corporate Services will monitor the delivery of this Data Quality Strategy on a quarterly basis. An Annual Report will also be presented to the Management Team and Members.

Third Party Data Quality Protocol

South Derbyshire District Council recognises the importance of reliable information. Good quality data is essential in order to manage services effectively, inform decision making, set priorities and assign resources. Therefore the council has a responsibility to ensure the data it holds is accurate, relevant and up-to-date.

This protocol sets out a framework of the Council's requirements with regards to data quality. Third party data suppliers should sign the protocol to acknowledge and agree the principles.

The Council has adopted the Audit Commission's six key characteristics of good quality data to manage information within the authority. To ensure that data is of good quality these criteria must be met through the Council's requirements detailed below:

Characteristics	Requirements
Accuracy	Data should be sufficiently accurate for its intended purpose providing a fair picture of performance, enabling informed decision-making at all levels and balanced against the cost of producing such information. If some degree of inaccuracy is acceptable (for example, management information, where it may be more important that the information is available and acted on quickly) then this should be made clear to any users of the data. Data should be captured once only, although it may have multiple uses within the organisation or be shared with partners.
Validity	Data should be recorded and used with the correct application of any rules or definitions to allow comparisons to be made.
Reliability	Data must have trusted sources and consistent collection methods so that real changes in performance are reflected rather than variations in collection methods.
Timeliness	Data should be captured quickly, be available for the intended use within a reasonable time period, and frequently enough to influence decision making processes
Relevance	Data should only be collected where it is of value to the Council and requirements should be regularly reviewed. Information used in decisions should be fit for the specific decision being made and presented in a way decision makers will understand.
Completeness	All relevant data should be recorded. Incomplete or invalid data is a sign of poor data quality.

The data supplied to South Derbyshire District Council by ……………………….…..

…………………………………………………………….meets the criteria outlined above.

Data Protection Act

Published data must be non-personal to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Council and its partners should be mindful of the Data Protection Act when requesting personal data. Any data that identifies individuals cannot be shared under the remit of this scheme and any performance indicator data sharing of this type must take place in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. If there are any concerns about the nature of the request you should contact your Data Protection Officer

Agreement

Has the Data Quality Policy and strategy been seen, understood and agreed?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Organisation Name:

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Signed (by Partner): …………………………………………. Date: ……………...

Print Name: ………………………………………………………………….……..

Responsible Officer Name: ………………………………………………………….

Signed (by Responsible Officer): ……………….…….……………….. Date: …………...

Action Plan 2012/13

Ref	Action	Comments	Required Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
1	Data Quality is incorporated into the Internal Audit annual review programme	Any issues raised will be documented and resolved	Improved data quality testing	Head of Corporate Services	April 2012
2	Data Quality is referenced in the Council's Corporate Risk Register and reviewed on a regular basis.	To make data quality more explicit	Increased commitment to data quality	Head of Corporate Services	March 2013
3	Establish a register of performance information returns that are collected by the Council to various agencies and update on a regular basis.	This will include high level details of any statistical returns to Government departments or any other Body	Centralised record of what is reported when, and who is responsible	Head of Corporate Services / Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	June 2012
4	Ensure that the data collected has supporting processes in place **(Methodology Statements)**	Will enable Heads of Services to ensure that data quality is embedded through procedures, documentation and processes.	Data quality embedded into all performance reporting	Head of Corporate Services / Heads of Service / Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	June 2012
5	Management Team / Operations Board consider data quality on a quarterly basis when monitoring performance.	Any issues raised will be documented	Increased awareness of data quality. Data quality issues are reported and resolved in a timely manner	Head of Corporate Services	On going

Ref	Action	Comments	Required Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
6	Review job descriptions and job specifications for relevant staff responsible for data collection and reporting.	Head of Corporate Services to work with Northgate's HR team in order to identify relevant posts	Improved accountability for data quality issues	Head of Corporate Services / Head of Organisational Development (Northgate Public Services)	March 2012
7	Re-launch the revised Data Quality Strategy and remind Heads of Service and their managers of their data quality responsibilities	This has links with Process documentation and the Performance Management Framework.	Increased awareness of data quality issues Identification of knowledge gaps	Head of Corporate Services / Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	July 2012
8	Develop an e-learning module on Data Quality for inclusion in the new starters induction module	This has links with item 7 above.	Increased awareness of data quality issues	Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	December 2012
9	Implement a Third Party Data Protocol	Enable understanding of what data we receive and from where, how it is used, and what processes third parties have in place to verify data before passing it on.	Increased awareness of data quality issues Improved accountability for data quality in partnerships	Head of Corporate Services	April 2012
10	Ensure that suitable controls and measurements are place for the following PIs that were self assessed to be 'high risk': a) SM01 - Number of private sector dwellings vacant for	This has links with process documentation and the Risk Register.	Strengthened data quality arrangements.	Head of Housing & Environmental Services Head of Leisure & Community Services / Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	April 2012

Ref	Action	Comments	Required Outcome	Responsible Officer (s)	Target Date
	more than 6 months. b) SM 07 – Number of criminal damage incidents per 1,000 population. c) SM 08 – Number of inquisitive crime incidents per 1,000 population. d) LM 01 – Adult participation in sport. e) LM 06 – Satisfaction with sports provision in the local area.				
11	To monitor the delivery of the Action Plan	This will form part of the quarterly reporting process	Improved accountability for data quality	Head of Corporate Services / Corporate Policy & Communications Manager (Northgate Public Services)	Ongoing / March 2013