**South Cambridgeshire**
**District Council**

# Data Quality Policy

**Draft v0.2**

**November 2011**

# Contents

*Document Information*

**Issued By:**        Information Management

Policy Approved by:

Policy Approval Date:

**Status:** Approval Pending


Review Frequency:        Every 2 Years


*Internal Control*

| Version | Date | Summary of Changes |
|---------|------|--------------------|
| V 0.1 | November 2010 | 1st Draft |
| v 0.2 | November 2011 | Revision to simplify and replace v0.1 and *SCDC Information & Data Quality Policy March 2010* |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

## 1.      Scope

1.1     This policy applies to all employees and members of South Cambridgeshire District Council and to third parties providing services to, or working in partnership with, the Council.

1.2     The policy applies to data retained in any formats, including electronic and hard copy records, throughout the data lifecycle from planning, creation, access and use through to ultimate disposal.

## 2.      Introduction

2.1     As a critical asset, the data used by the Council must be fit for purpose. We invest heavily in systems to process data in order that we can rely on it to ensure we provide the best value services to our residents.

2.2     Each service processes data in different ways; the intention of this policy is to raise awareness of the distinct aspects of data quality that we must all consider when creating, receiving, sharing or otherwise processing data, in order that we may all have confidence in the data we use.

## 3.      Responsibilities

3.1     Data quality is the responsibility of the Council as a corporate body, and consequently is the responsibility of all staff and Members.

3.2     Each service area is responsible for the management of the data it processes.

3.3     Corporate managers are responsible for the management of data within their service areas, including compliance with this policy, and delegate these responsibilities as they see fit. Corporate managers should ensure:
- A Data Quality Action Plan exists for all service areas
- Users have adequate training
- Data is secure and adequate audit trails exist to record all access or amendments to data
- System upgrades are made when required
- A user guide exists for the creation, processing and storage of all data
- A business continuity plan exists to safeguard the data

3.4     Information Asset Owners are responsible for regularly monitoring, measuring and assessing the data handling and data quality processes and procedures relating to their data sets to ensure that all data is accurate and held securely.

3.5     All staff must be aware of the need for high quality data, and for this to be an integral part of all day-to-day operations within the Council. For further details of roles and responsibilities for data management please refer to the Data Handling Policy.

## 4.    Data Quality Standards

4.1    There are six attributes of data quality identified by the Audit Commission[1]. All data processed by the Council should meet these standards.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Accuracy** | Data should be sufficiently accurate for the intended purposes. |
| **Validity** | Data should appropriately reflect what it is intended to measure or report. |
| **Reliability** | Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes across collection points and over time. |
| **Timeliness** | Data should be available frequently and promptly enough for it to be valuable for managing service delivery and decision making. |
| **Relevance** | Data captured should be relevant to the purposes for which it is used. |
| **Completeness** | Data should be complete and comprehensive to ensure it provides a full picture of the current situation.  Where it is incomplete and/or could be misleading this should be stated to enable appropriate judgements about its use to be made. |

4.2    In addition, all data must be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Handling Policy. In particular, all data must have a named Information Asset Owner with permissions set for those who can access and / or carry out amendments and modifications to that data.

4.3    Duplication of data must be avoided. Where duplication exists, a single 'golden' record should be established.

4.4    Verification controls must be in place to assure quality in data entry that are proportionate to the risks identified in each data entry process.

4.5    Presentation of data should reflect the standards above, and in particular ensure that all relevant caveats are presented to ensure informed decision-making.

4.6    Attainment of high quality data is a continuous process. In practice there may be limits on the achievability of individual standards, and a risk-based approach must be used to prioritise improvement actions.

4.7    Service areas must produce a Data Quality Action Plan which is reviewed annually.

---

[1] "Nothing but the truth?", Audit Commission, 2009

**5.    Data Sharing**

5.1    Council data that is shared with others must be compliant with this policy in order to provide confidence for our partners.

5.2    Where the Council seeks to share data with its partners, the sharing agreement should contain assurances from all parties that data quality standards are met.


**6.    Further Information**

6.1    In addition to the publication cited above, for a detailed exposition of the need for data quality, including expansion on the six standards, please see the Audit Commission's [Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality data](#)

6.2    Support is available from the [Information Management](#) or the [Policy & Performance](#) teams.