

## DATA QUALITY POLICY

The council is committed to data quality. Timely and accurate information is the basis for effective decision making and managing performance at all levels of the organisation. It plays a key role in determining how well we are doing so that we can exemplify our rate of progress and provide early warnings of where targets may be missed. With external regulators also placing emphasis on performance indicators (PIs) and other statistical/financial returns to judge the council, there are external as well as an internal reasons for ensuring that our systems for data collection, calculation and reporting are robust.

The council's objective is to ensure that all data collected, recorded, analysed and reported is accurate, reliable, consistent and timely. As such the council expects:

- (a) All statistical and financial returns to be accurately calculated, checked and authorised prior to submission by the due date
- (b) All PIs to be calculated in accordance with the current definition
- (c) Departments to ensure that systems for recording and calculating data are 'fit for purpose'
- (d) PI compilers and Lead Officers to take due care to ensure the accuracy of results
- (e) All working papers to be complete, transparent and accessible – including details of the system producing the data (manual or computerised) and the records held. If data is coming from outside the council, the working papers must identify the external source and outline the checks undertaken to validate the results
- (f) All PIs to be produced accurately and on time. It is however recognised that late changes by the Audit Commission, difficulty in extracting data from external sources and different interpretations of definitions can impact on our performance. With this in mind, the council has set a target of 95% accuracy and 99% timeliness for the end of year results and quarterly PI reports

Data will be regarded as being of high quality if it is:

- ✓ **Accurate (calculated correctly and verified through robust control systems)**
- ✓ **Comprehensive (meeting the full definition)**
- ✓ **Valid (produced in accordance with agreed Council and national standards)**
- ✓ **Secure (fixed at the required point in time)**
- ✓ **Reliable (capable of replication using the same sources)**
- ✓ **Available (when needed – including business continuity arrangements)**

A number of system and structural devices are already in place to ensure that high standards are achieved:

- **Top level commitment to data quality. In addition to this policy, data quality is referred to in the Bury Plan and the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Member (Resources and Performance) are the respective managerial and political champions for data quality**
- **Clearly defined roles within the organisation. PI Co-ordinators (our departmental data quality champions) oversee the production of data to standards and within deadlines; Lead Officers are responsible for the results and the effectiveness of systems producing those results; and each PI has a named compiler with responsibility for producing the results in accordance with agreed definitions**

- **An effective Performance Information Management System (PIMS) is in place to hold and report data. The system has been quality assured by Internal Audit to ensure the reliability of output**
- **Up to date information on PIs, comparative data, policies and procedures is linked through PIMS – to give everybody ready access to the information they need and any changes that may be made to definitions, timescales, etc**
- **Working papers and associated documents underpin PI results and are attached to PIMS to facilitate the audit process**
- **Everybody in the organisation has read-only access to the system with training provided by the Performance Team. More advanced training in the functionality of the system is given to PI compilers, Lead Officers and Departmental Co-ordinators**
- **Data received from external bodies is checked and tested as far as possible. With increasing amounts of PIs being imported from partners to monitor the Community Strategy, pro-formas are in place improve data quality by ensuring a common understanding of definitions, reporting frequencies, unit of measurement, target setting, polarity (whether higher or lower is better) and the PI compiler**
- **The potential data quality of PIs is risk assessed with Internal Audit checking high risk areas – new / amended indicators, compilers that are new to the job, PI data being generated by new systems and areas where there have problems previously**
- **A sample of PIs is assessed by External Audit annually and learning shared across the organisation**
- **Data quality arrangements are reviewed annually and an action plan implemented to address areas for improvement**

The council will continue to review arrangements to ensure that:

- **Standards are achieved and maintained** – demonstrating commitment, implementing checks and promoting data quality in line with the council's expectations
- **Accountability is maintained through clearly defined roles and responsibilities** – the role of 'champions' and other responsible workers is valued and supported corporately and departmentally
- **Systems for collecting and reporting data are 'fit for purpose'** – testing departmental feeder systems, upgrading the corporate PIMS system and assuring reporting methods to ensure data quality meets the needs of decisions makers and underpins effective performance management. This requirements extends beyond the council into partners agencies as PIMS supports the Local Strategic Partnership's governance framework
- **The process is operated by the right people with the right skills** – ensuring that the people involved have the necessary tools to do the job – clarity of purpose, accurate and timely information, training and a user friendly system that produces the desired results with the minimum of effort