Data Quality and Performance Management Policy

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1. Introduction

This purpose of this policy is to set out Rossendale Council's on-going commitment towards using performance management to continually improve how we do things and provide better services and outcomes for all our customers.

We recognise that the Council's performance management framework must be supported by good quality data that gives us management information that we can rely upon about our performance. This is why we are committed to maintaining high standards of data quality throughout the council and with our partner organisations.

The policy explains how Rossendale Borough Council manages performance by setting out:

- The Council's performance management framework
- The Council's standards for high quality data
- The roles and responsibilities of Members, managers and officers at all levels in producing and using high quality data to make robust decisions and manage the Council's performance efficiently and effectively.

The policy is supported by a strategic action plan which outlines what the Council intends to do to implement this policy.

Scope of the policy

This policy is intended to cover all those elements that come together to make up the Council's performance management framework and the strategic delivery plans attached to this – together with the quality of data that supports each element of this framework.

2. What are the relevant issues?

We have embedded a performance management framework across the council that aligns our strategic direction with that of key partners - to focus direction, resources and effort so that we are all working towards achieving a common vision for the future of Rossendale and the achievement of agreed priorities.

At the same time the Council has substantially improved the quality of data it produces to support performance management by identifying the officers that are responsible for data quality and making sure they are aware of their responsibilities and are supported in fulfilling them.

It is important that this successful approach to managing the council's performance and the improvements made to the quality of data is sustained by embedding it firmly within the council's governance arrangements.

Performance management is a dynamic process and the structure of the framework will evolve over time and should be reviewed annually to reflect new arrangements in delivering council services.

Moreover data quality is also about embedding document and version control with review dates. This underpins the principles of sound data quality and performance management.

What is driving change?

In keeping with the Audit Commissions policy document 'Standards for Better Data Quality' all public services are expected to develop and implement a set of standards and objectives applied to the quality of data they produce and use to manage performance. The Audit Commission have introduced an annual review of 'data quality' which will assess the effectiveness of the Council's approach in achieving this.

The introduction of a new set of 'national indicators' and the adoption of many new performance indicators contained in the Lancashire Local Area Agreement brings with it new challenges. The Council has reviewed its performance management framework and aligned it to these new priorities and targets.

Partnership working and the outcome focus of the Council will require a performance management framework that is able to accommodate these new demands and enable us to demonstrate the effectiveness of new working arrangements through Overview & Scrutiny arrangements and performance monitoring arrangements.

The security of data and performance information

A phased approach to implementing 'Business Continuity' plans is ongoing and plans are in place to achieve full implementation during 2008/9. When this work is completed all the data held across the Council will be fully secure.

Other I.T. systems are used by the Council to produce data against a number of performance indicators and these will be reviewed to ensure that they supply quality data by the most efficient, effective and economic means.

3. What is the Council intending to achieve?

Effective performance management supported by high quality data is integral to our priority of being 'A Well Managed Council' and will contribute towards the achievement of all Council priorities.

To consistently plan and manage high performance we have developed and put in place a performance management framework that provides robust

management information to assist the Council leaders. The performance management framework assists in making tough decisions about allocating resources and effort towards those areas that will result in the most impact in addressing identified priorities.

Regular monitoring of our performance management framework enables us (and other interested stakeholders) to make sure that we effectively delivering what we said we would - as detailed in the Council corporate and business plans. It also allows us to take swift corrective action where performance is reducing.

An embedded good practice on data quality and a Corporate level of document and version control.

The Council's performance management framework is attached as appendix A.

Strategic policy objectives for performance management and data quality

In implementing this policy the Council is committed to achieving the following strategic objectives in relation to performance management and the quality of the data that supports it:

- The quality of data that supports performance management is taken seriously within the Council and meets both local and national standards.

- Guide the allocation of resources towards priorities and to strategically plan and monitor the achievement of identified priorities and targets.

- Demonstrate to all stakeholders the current levels of performance achieved by the Council and partner organisations.

- Enable management and officers to take timely, corrective action in areas of under-performance.

- Recognise, reward and share learning from areas of high performance.

- Everybody with a designated role in data quality and performance has access to training and guidance and the necessary skills and resources to perform their roles effectively.

- The risks associated with performance management and data quality are regularly reviewed and effectively managed.

- The systems and processes used by the Council produce high quality data that is held securely and confidentially.

Rossendale Borough Council's standards for data quality

The council is committed to securing all data developed and used by the Council and its partners are 'fit for its intended purpose' and meet the six key characteristics of good quality data:

- Validity
- Reliability
- Relevance
- Timeliness
- Completeness

In working practice this will include the quality of data that is applied to any local, national, Multi Area or Local Area Agreement performance indicators included within the Council's Corporate and Business Plans; Council policies and strategies.

4. How will we achieve the standards and objectives?

The Council's leaders are committed towards embedding a culture of performance management throughout the Council that is demonstrated by everybody in the Council being determined to constantly improve how we do things. Achieving the standards and objectives set out in this must be continuously driven from the top of the organisation

The role of the Council's leadership

It is the responsibility of the Council leaders to ensure that everybody with an identified role in performance management recognises the value of their contributions and that:

- They are aware of their role and it is reflected within their job description
- They take their role seriously by fully acting upon it in a timely manner
- Have the necessary resources in place to perform their role
- Is supported by access to relevant training and guidance
- Their role responsibilities are reviewed each year though the Council's annual personal appraisal and risk management processes.

Identified roles in performance management

The Council has specifically identified the following roles as having specific duties and responsibilities attached to them in managing and governing the performance of the Council:

- **Leader of the Council**
- **The Portfolio Holder for 'Finance and Resources'**
- **The Council's Portfolio Holders**

- **Executive Management Team**
- **Policy & Performance Team**
- **Officers identified as being responsible for a national or locally agreed performance measure**
- **Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
- **The Cabinet**
- **The Programme Board**

An outline of the specific duties and responsibilities attached to each of these roles is included at appendix B of the policy.

Delivering performance management

Effective performance cultures are demonstrated when a constant focus is maintained on achieving stated priorities and targets which are delivering the planned outcomes as originally intended.

The Council will monitor that it is on track to deliver what we promised in our annual Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plans. The effective implementation of these strategic delivery plans provides the principle means by which the Council has planned to achieve its stated goals - although these strategic delivery plans may be supported by other project delivery plans such as team action plans.

The monitoring of the achievement of performance will take place through:

- Scrutiny of comprehensive integrated performance management reports produced corporately each quarter & formally monitored by the Council's Executive Team and Overview & Scrutiny Performance Scrutiny Committee.

- Regular one-to-one performance delivery meetings between:

  - The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to monitor delivery of the corporate plan;
  - The Chief Executive and the senior managers held responsible for the delivery of each business plan;
  - The senior manager held responsible for delivering a business plan and the team leader holding delegated responsibility for delivering specific projects in the business plan;
  - The team leaders with delegated responsibility for delivering specific projects in their business plan and employees tasked with delivery.

Taking action to improve under-performance

Monitoring and reporting the achievement of performance is of little value if corrective action is not subsequently taken to improve in areas that have been

identified as not achieving targeted levels of performance. The following mechanisms have been agreed in respect of this:

- A commentary will be provided in all performance reports summarising reasons for under-performance and the actions being taken to ensure improvement.

- An 'exception report' will be produced for the Council's Programme Board for projects in the Council's corporate plan that are not progressing as planned and stating what will be done to get the project back on course.

- The Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee may call on responsible managers to respond to performance challenges made by them if the commentary provided to explain under-performance reports does not resolve their concerns.

- If the Council's Directors and/or Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee agree that there are genuine circumstances leading to under-performance they will agree to a revision of the project or target.

Publicising the Council's performance

There are many people or stakeholder groups that have a legitimate interest in knowing how the Council is performing. This includes our employees and elected councillors, and of course our customers and the different people and groups that make up the various communities in Rossendale. Other stakeholder groups with an interest may include our all our partners from the public and voluntary sectors and council regulators such as the Audit Commission.

We believe it is important that we publicise the performance of the Council as widely and effectively as we can. This will be achieved by the production of Quarterly Integrated Performance Reports made available for Performance Overview & Scrutiny, Cabinet and the general public. The Council is committed towards actively promoting our performance in a wide variety of mediums each time the Council achieves performance that is potentially of interest to the public.

We will continue to publicise performance using the 'head-line messages' drawn from the information contained in the performance management reports that are produced each quarter by summarising relevant information from them and presenting it in a way that is meaningful and is easily understood by each intended audience.

These 'head-line' messages will be published in a wide variety of media which will include:

- The Council's web-site performance pages
- 'Rossendale Alive' the newsletter for residents
- 'Grapevine' the staff newsletter

- 'Members Bulletin' each year
- Service specific briefing sheets for 'Team Briefing'
- An annual performance presentation up-date at 'Lancashire Local'

5. How will the success of the policy be measured?

The council uses the information provided by performance management to direct its available resources to achieve the greatest impact on priorities.

1. The timeliness and quality of data input into the Rossendale Borough Council Performance Management System will be monitored and commented upon in the quarterly performance reports.

2. The quality and timeliness of the Council's monthly and quarterly performance reports.

3. The Council's Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plans will provide an annual review of the progress achieved each year.

4. A review of data quality will be undertaken each year by the Council's internal auditors.

5. The Audit Commission will continue to assess the effectiveness of Rossendale Borough Council's approach to data quality and performance management through their annual progress assessment review of the Council.

Appendix A – The Council's Performance Management Framework

1. Introducing Rossendale Borough Council's Performance Management Framework

Performance Management can be defined as *"Taking action in response to actual performance, to achieve outcomes for users and the public that are better than they would otherwise be."*

In practice, this means using the information that we gather in the Council about the performance of such things as the quality, cost and speed of the services we provide and use this information to help us plan out what most needs to improve.

To consistently plan and manage high performance we have developed and put in place a performance management framework for Rossendale Borough Council based upon the following 'building blocks of performance':

1. **A focus on community priorities that is based upon reliable facts and information about customer and citizen needs.**
2. **A strong vision of what the Council and its partners are trying to achieve for the area which is effectively communicated to all stakeholders.**
3. **Robust and effective strategic planning systems which ensure that the allocation of resources follows priorities and delivery is measured and monitored against clear targets & outcomes.**
4. **Staff who are empowered to act by providing clarity about who is accountable for what within clear managerial frameworks.**

The purpose of our performance management framework is to provide reliable management information that actively assists Council's leaders to make tough decisions about allocating scare resources and directing effort to areas and activities that will result in the most impact in addressing identified priorities.

Regular monitoring of our performance management framework enables us (and other interested stakeholders) to make sure that we effectively delivering what we said we would - as detailed in the Council corporate plan and supporting business plans - and taking swift corrective action if we are failing to deliver what we said we would.

2. Rossendale Borough Council's Performance Management Framework

The key priorities for the Borough were identified through ongoing community consultation and by investigating various sources of evidence, such as what key

health, education, crime, housing and economic data indicated to be priority areas within Rossendale.

The Council has developed its performance management framework to provide focus and alignment towards the key priorities contained within:

- The Sustainable Community Strategy for Lancashire
- The Lancashire's Local Area Agreement
- The Local Development Framework & Pennine Lancashire MAA
- Rossendale Borough Council's Corporate Plan

Focusing on jointly agreed priorities enables the Council to direct its effort and resources towards maximising the contributions we make towards the achievement of the shared priorities and targets identified for Rossendale.

3. The vision for Rossendale

The Council and the Rossendale Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for the borough) share a clear, strategic vision for the Borough's future:

"By 2018, Rossendale will have strong communities with an enhanced environment and heritage. It will be an attractive place to live, where tourists visit and employers invest"

Through its 'Community Leadership' role, the Council is the lead partner in the effective delivery of the vision for Rossendale and we are committed to working in effective partnership with our Local Strategic Partnership and other key agencies to deliver the vision.

Priorities for Rossendale - Sustainable Community Strategy

The vision for Rossendale is set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy which is the overarching strategy for Rossendale – a long-term plan for the Borough's success, with a vision, outcomes and a view of what it will feel like when we get there.

The strategy was developed by the local strategic partnership - the Rossendale Partnership – which brings together a wide range of partners from across the borough to work in partnership to help make Rossendale a better place.

The Sustainable Community Strategy is built around the three interconnected priorities of: **People, Places and Prosperity;** and, whilst the strategy is divided into these priorities, they must not be taken in isolation as they link together – each having an impact upon the other. The strategy is supported by a three year
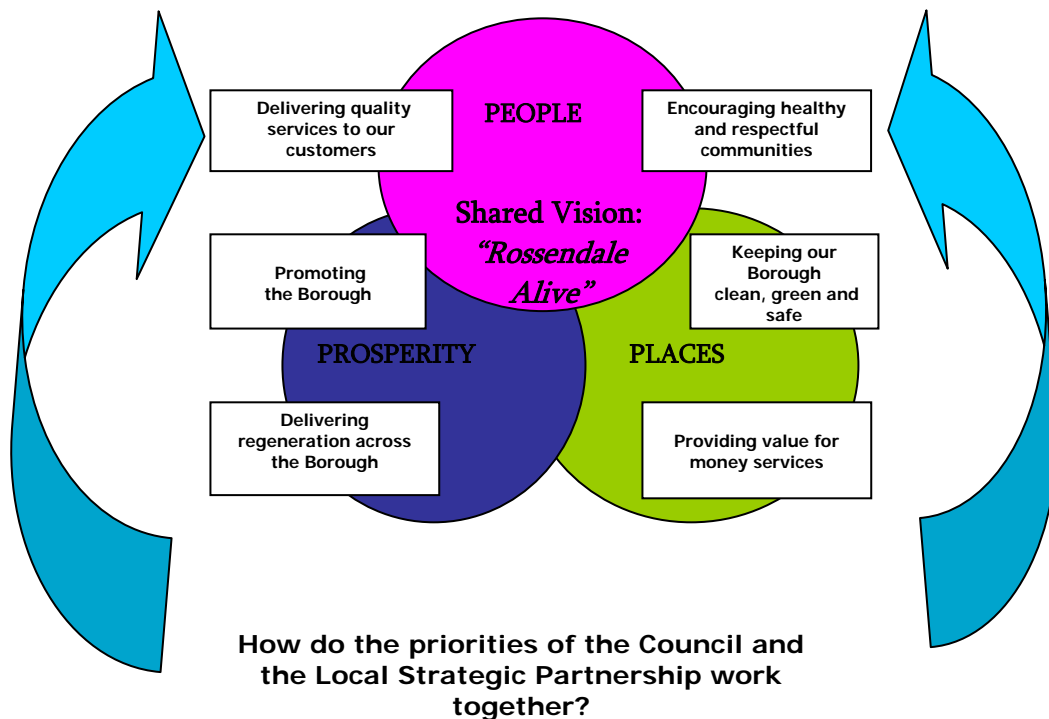
action plan which details the actions that partners will take and the targets and outcomes that they are seeking to achieve.

Priorities for Rossendale - The Rossendale Borough Council's Corporate Plan

The Council has also identified key priorities for achievements which are linked to those identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy and are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council's corporate priorities for 2009 – 2012 are:

- **Encouraging healthy and respectful communities**

- **Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe**

- **Delivering quality services to our customers**

- **Promoting value for money services**

- **Delivering regeneration across the Borough**

- **Promoting the Borough**

This model demonstrates how the Council's corporate priorities relate to those set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy for Rossendale

Delivering quality services to our customers

PEOPLE

Encouraging healthy and respectful communities

Shared Vision: *"Rossendale Alive"*

Promoting the Borough

Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe

PROSPERITY

PLACES

Delivering regeneration across the Borough

Providing value for money services

How do the priorities of the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership work together?

4. The Council's strategic plans

The Council's performance management framework is supported by the following strategic delivery plans.

The Council's Corporate Plan

The Council's main strategic plan is the Corporate Plan and this forms the backbone of the Council's Performance Management Framework. The Corporate Plan describes how the Council intends to achieve its stated priorities over a three year period by specifically setting out what we will do and by when, set against:

- The outcomes that the Council is planning to achieve on behalf of local people

- The strategic delivery programme of projects to be delivered by the Council that will support the delivery of intended outcomes

- Targets for achievement against a series of measurable performance indicators linked to intended outcomes

- The strategic risks faced by the Council and its plans to manage these risks

The Council's Business Plans

Supporting the delivery of the Corporate Plan are three comprehensive Business Plans for the Council's 'Business', 'Place' and 'Resources' Directorates.

These plans also demonstrate how each function of the Council will contribute to the priorities and targets contained in the delivery plan of the **Sustainable Community Strategy** and those of the **Local Area Agreement** for Lancashire and set out what will be done and by when, set against :

- The strategic programmes and project and actions to be delivered by the service

- The national, Lancashire Area Agreement and local performance indicators the service is responsible for with three year targets set against each indicator

- The operational risks faced by the service and how the service plans to mitigate these risks.
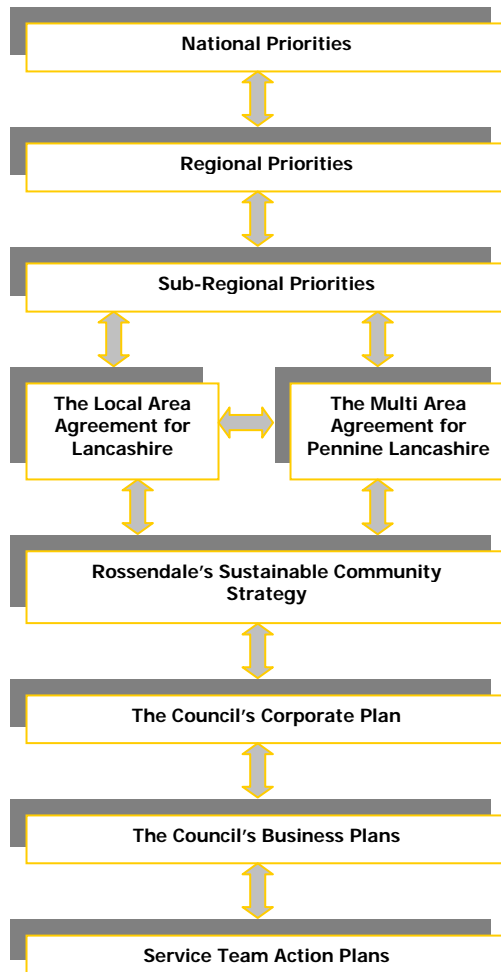
Team Plans

At a day-to-day or operational level, various '**Team Action Plans'** are set by teams within the Council. These action plans show how specific targets and projects will be achieved and contribute to the overall Business Plan.

Personal Development Plans

Every member of the Council's staff participates in an annual **Personal Development Reviews** with their line manager. The purpose of these interviews is to agree annual objectives and targets with all employees and to identify any personal development requirements needed to achieve agreed objectives and targets.

5. Rossendale Council's Golden Thread

The performance management framework in Rossendale should also help all staff see how their contributions link to priorities and fit into the 'bigger picture'. This is often referred to as the 'Golden Thread' which means the thread that weaves all the different plans of the Council and its partners together to direct the work and effort of all Council employees towards the achievement of shared priorities and objectives for Rossendale.

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                    National Priorities
                          ↕
                    Regional Priorities
                          ↕
                   Sub-Regional Priorities
                      ↕           ↕
          The Local Area      The Multi Area
          Agreement for   ↔   Agreement for
          Lancashire          Pennine Lancashire
                      ↕           ↕
            Rossendale's Sustainable Community
                         Strategy
                          ↕
              The Council's Corporate Plan
                          ↕
              The Council's Business Plans
                          ↕
               Service Team Action Plans
```

6. Monitoring Rossendale's Performance Management Framework

The effective implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plans Council provides the principle means by which the Council has planned to achieve its stated goals - although these strategic delivery plans may be supported by other project delivery plans such as service team action plans.

The Council's senior management team are accountable for the effective delivery of the Council's strategic plans with progress being closely monitored.

Providing timely feedback on performance

The Council works to a corporate standard of providing data and information by 10th day of the month of the performance achieved in the preceding month against the following elements within the Corporate Plan and Business Plans:

- Any project that is due for completion within the next three months.

- All those performance indicators capable of being up-dated on a monthly basis (or at the agreed reporting frequency).

- All operational and strategic risks.

  This data and information is input into Covalent, the Council's performance management system. Where performance is not achieving targeted levels then it is expected that additional information will be provided to state what is being done to improve performance.

  All the data and information inputted into Covalent is then used to generate monthly data reports which provide a snapshot of performance and more detailed integrated performance reports are compiled each quarter. These provide a comprehensive picture of the current performance levels that are actually being achieved by the Council.

7. Scrutinising Performance

The Council's Executive Management Team will use the information to hold regular performance sessions with their service teams to consider and address any performance issues as they arise.

Formal roles and procedures have been agreed in scrutinising the achievement of performance by the council's leadership and the Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been agreed. A full description of these roles is attached to the Council's Data Quality and Performance Management Policy.

Appendix B - Identified roles and role descriptions for performance management and data quality

Portfolio holder for 'Finance and Resources'

The Portfolio Holder 'champions' the use of effective performance management and measurement throughout the Council and both advocates and calls to account the role of Members, managers and officers in carrying out their responsibilities, so as to embed a 'Performance Management Culture', throughout the Council.

The Council's Portfolio Holders

Portfolio Holders hold regular meetings with the relevant managers for their portfolio in order to review and challenge the progress of the implementation of the priorities relating to their portfolio in each business plan and will also engage with managers in the development of priorities, actions and targets as the annual business plan is being reviewed and refreshed.

Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The role of Performance Overview & Scrutiny is to challenge and call to account all the performance of the council acting on behalf of all stakeholder groups and where necessary 'call in' more detailed reports of the Council's progress.

They will also take act as 'critical friends' in constructively reviewing current working practices in order to improve performance.

It has been agreed by Performance Overview & Scrutiny that they will hold four meetings each year that are dedicated to scrutinising all the information contained in the integrated performance reports that are produced every three months. Subsequent meetings will be used to 'call-in' any challenges about performance that have arisen from scrutiny of the integrated performance reports, or any other aspect of performance that is of concern to them.

Following scrutiny of the integrated performance reports their findings will be noted and attached to the integrated performance report before it is sent to the Council's Cabinet.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet are responsible for making decisions about directing the council's resources to those areas that they believe will make the biggest impact upon achieving the agreed priorities of the Council through the annual budget allocation process. This process will influence the development of the Council's annual Corporate Plan and supporting Business Plans which they are responsible for approving prior to implementation.

The Cabinet have given delegated responsibility to Performance Overview & Scrutiny to scrutinise and challenge the delivery of the levels of performance promised within these plans and to report any concerns about performance together with their findings to the Cabinet.

The Council's Programme Management Board

A Programme Board has been established to monitor the achievements and progress made in delivering each element of our overall programme, made up of the Council's and the Rossendale Partnership delivery plans and Regeneration Board work programme.

People and Policy Service

In relation to the performance management of the Council this service is responsible for:

- The overall strategic development and application of the Council's Performance Management Framework in line with current best practice.
- Advising and supporting the Council Members, managers, staff and partners in complying with the Council's policies in relation to performance management and data quality.
- Producing quarterly reports that demonstrate the Council's performance against performance indicators (PIs), local indicators (LIs) and actions and risks that are in the Corporate Plan.
- Providing a lead role in developing the Council's Corporate Plan
- Providing a lead role in preparing for and servicing the Audit Commission's requirements for inspection activities relating to performance management and data quality.
- Providing on-going support and guidance for users in relation to the on-going use and development of the 'Covalent' performance management system.

Executive Director

Each Executive Director is responsible within their service area for:

- Producing their annual Business Plan in accordance with the corporate time table and guidance.

- Using performance information to help prioritise and manage service improvement by setting performance targets for the next three years.

- Ensuring that performance up-dates are provided against Business Plan actions, risks and monthly PI's on the 10th of each month following corporate guidance.

- Delegating responsibility for PI's and local indicators to a named officer and reviewing their performance in complying with the Council's policies and standards as part of the annual PDP process.

- Ensuring that the data that supports stated performance against best value and local indicators that lie within their service area, is reliable, accurate and timely and conforms to Audit Commission definitions, and retaining evidence trails that proves this.

- Conducting an annual review of data quality and the supporting audit trails that demonstrate this following corporate guidance and retaining evidence of this process.

National Indicator (NI) & Local Indicator (LI) Responsible Officers

These Officers are designated responsibility by their Executive Director for specific performance indicators, this responsibility includes:

- Placing the outturn of performance against performance indicators (PIs) that are reported monthly on Covalent by the 10^{th} of the following month together with monthly, quarterly and annual supporting notes that describe current performance , following corporate guidance.

- Producing (or supervising the production of) a PI Action Plan that shows what actions will be taken for an indicator that is shown as 'red' against its monthly target which will be submitted on a quarterly basis to the management team and Overview & Scrutiny.

- Ensuring that the data that supports the indicator is valid, accurate and reliable.

- Where the indicator is designated as not achieving target (5% below target or locally defined amount) producing an Action Plan that shows the action to be taken to improve by the 10^{th} of the month or at month six, for annual indicators.

- Informing your HoS/Line Manager of any problems in collecting the indicator as they arise.

- Participating in an annual review with your HoS/Line Manager of the quality of data and supporting audit trails prior to reporting the end of year outturn.

- Maintaining an audit trail on Covalent that demonstrates the accuracy, validity and reliability of the data and that shows how and is capable of reproducing the outturn reported at the end of the year.

Appendix C – 6 Key characteristics to describe the quality of data

Accuracy

Data should be sufficiently accurate for their intended purposes, representing clearly and in enough detail the interaction provided at the point of activity. Data should be captured once only, although they may have multiple uses. Accuracy is most likely to be secured if data are captured as close to the point of activity as possible. Reported information that is based on accurate data provides a fair picture of performance and should enable informed decision making.

The need for accuracy must be balanced with the importance of the uses for the data, and the costs and effort of collection. For example, it may be appropriate to accept some degree of inaccuracy where timeliness is important. Where compromises are made on accuracy, the resulting limitations of the data should be clear to their users. This must be a judgement determined by local circumstances, and is unlikely to be appropriate in the case of the data supporting published performance indicators.

Validity

Data should be recorded and used in compliance with relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions. This will ensure consistency between periods and with similar organisations, measuring what is intended to be measured.

Where proxy data are used to compensate for an absence of actual data, bodies must consider how well these data are able to satisfy the intended purpose.

Reliability

Data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes across collection points and over time, whether using manual or computer based systems, or a combination. Managers and stakeholders should be confident that progress toward performance targets reflects real changes rather than variations in data collection approaches or methods.

Timeliness

Data should be captured as quickly as possible after the event or activity and must be available for the intended use within a reasonable time period. Data must be available quickly and frequently enough to support information needs and to influence service or management decisions.

Relevance

Data captured should be relevant to the purposes for which they are used. This entails periodic review of requirements to reflect changing needs.

It may be necessary to capture data at the point of activity which is relevant only for other purposes, rather than for the current intervention. Quality assurance and feedback processes are needed to ensure the quality of such data.

Completeness

Data requirements should be clearly specified based on the information needs of the body and data collection processes matched to these requirements. Monitoring missing, incomplete, or invalid records can provide an indication of data quality and can also point to problems in the recording of certain data items.

(Source: Audit Commission)