



South Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue

WORKING FOR A SAFER  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

## **DATA QUALITY STRATEGY**

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## **SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE'S DATA QUALITY STRATEGY**

### **What is Data Quality and Why is it Important?**

1. Data will be 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 SYFR and national standards).
  - Available when needed.
  - Stored securely and confidentially.
2. Inspection bodies such as the Audit Commission require assurance that performance information is accurate. This is increasing the emphasis on data quality, and the external audit approach of checking calculation and systems reports is developing into the more challenging scrutiny of systems controls. This is likely to entail an examination of the systems and processes for the collection of data, the skills required and the use of information. The quality of our data is crucial for assessments of Service effectiveness. Policies and strategies for ensuring data quality as well as governance and leadership for ensuring accurate and reliable data is essential.
3. The higher the number of amendments and reservations that we receive regarding our data following external inspection/scrutiny, the lower the confidence that inspectors, government and interested parties will have in the performance information we provide. This results in increased and more detailed inspection and the likelihood of lower performance scores.
4. Additional background information on data quality can be found in **Appendix One**.

### **The Strategy**

5. Since 2006, the Use of Resources section of the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report issued a value for money conclusion qualified on the grounds of the quality of the Service's published information. This Strategy will assure the future quality of the Service's performance data. Background information on how this Data Quality Strategy was developed can be found in **Appendix Two**.

### **Objectives of the Data Quality Strategy**

6. The Service recognises the importance of data quality as we need reliable, accurate and timely performance information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance. We are committed to ensuring that we maintain the highest standards of data quality and as a result get our performance information "right first time." This will enable us to have the right information at the right time at the right cost.

7. In order to achieve this, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue will:
  - Ensure that performance information in use is of high quality, consistent, timely, and comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.
  - Put in place arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data that we use to manage our service and demonstrate our performance.
  - Make clear what is expected from Officers and partners in terms of the standards of data quality.
  - Put in place systems, policies and procedures to enable the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with partners.
  - 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.
  - Ensure that we have the right controls to ensure that the Service meets what is expected of us.
8. The purpose of the data quality reporting process is to ensure that the Service supports a learning culture so that future mistakes can be avoided. All members of staff are encouraged to report on any data quality issues.

### Scope of the Data Quality Strategy

9. All SYFR systems and processes that produce performance information are in the scope of this strategy, in order to ensure that accurate and dependable information is available for all Service functions.
10. The Service believes that continued initiatives in relation to data quality should be proportionate to risk.

### Principles of the Data Quality Strategy

11. There are a number of principles that underpin good data quality. It is important to consider these sequentially because if any of the principles are not adhered to, inaccuracies are likely to creep in, 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 PIs are produced from the information they input and they are defined.
    - Some performance indicators e.g. National Indicator Set used in the Local Area Agreements have nationally set definitions. It is important that every detail of the definition is applied. This ensures that data is recorded consistently, allowing for comparison over time, and national benchmarking.
    - Where we are setting local PIs, we need to ensure that we have established a clear definition and that there are systems available to collect and report the data in an agreed format.
    - In some cases, there are a number of similar indicators (some national and some 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.

- Every PI should have a named officer who is responsible for collecting and reporting the information. This ensures that there is consistency in the application of definitions and use of systems for providing the data. Each named officer should be kept up-to-date of any changes in definition that may occur from time to time.
- **Input:** there are controls over input; especially that information is input on an ongoing basis; rather than stored up to input later.
  - The aim should be 100% accuracy 100% of the time.
  - It is important that officers have clear guidelines and procedures for using systems and are adequately trained to ensure that information is being entered consistently and correctly.
  - A key requirement is that data should be entered on an ongoing basis, not saved up to be entered in a block at the end of a period. This reduces the error rate and the need for complex verification procedures.
  - Controls should also be in place to avoid double-counting. These should be designed according to the nature of the system, in particular where more than one person inputs data. A likely control will be an absolutely clear division of responsibility setting out who is responsible for what data entry.
  - 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 the form 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 where there are strong controls over input, errors can creep in. Where it is needed, a verification procedure should exist close to the point of data input. The frequency of verification checks will need to be aligned with the frequency of data reporting.
- **Responsibility:** Each performance indicator, whether national or local, has an assigned Officer who takes responsibility of the systems to support this PI as well as reporting this 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 the form of a procedures document, which is reviewed and updates on a regular basis.
  - Officers with responsibility should work closely with ICT in procuring the systems and the general management of the systems to ensure a robust control 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, i.e. evidence to support the data output that an Auditor would be happy with.

- **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 inspectorates and the public.

## Standards and Procedures

12. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue is committed to collecting and processing data according to national and locally 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.
13. Where there is no national standard to guide procedures for data collection, processing or reporting, the Service will generate its own local standards and procedures. This will be done as and when the requirement arises and initial work to ensure organisation-wide standards and procedures are in place for all key data collection processes.
14. 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 this is the responsibility of the service managers to ensure that this happens. Should areas where issues of incorrect data are not being put right are identified; the matter will be referred to the relevant functional Head.

## Risk Assessment

15. Areas that can be 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 data processing/performance information production.
  - A system being used to produce new performance information.
  - Known gaps in the control environment.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Officers

16. Data quality is the responsibility of every employee who enters, extracts or analyses data from any of the Service's information systems and records. Every employee should be aware of his or her responsibilities for quality of data.
17. The **Head of Policy, Performance and Programmes** has senior responsibility for data quality with regards to performance information. The Head of Policy, Performance and Programmes will report to the Audit Committee and the Corporate Management Board.

- The Performance Management and Review section will be the Data Quality coordinators with responsibility for promoting the importance of data quality throughout the organisation. In addition, the Performance Management and Review Section will:
  - Advise departments and Internal Audit of new and amended performance indicators so that data quality processes can be set up/amended.
  - Check and chase up data returns and ensure that appropriate explanations are provided for performance exceptions.
  - Maintain links to national performance indicator guidance so that it is readily available to data collectors, authorisers and Internal Audit.
  - Develop the performance management framework and supporting systems to incorporate data quality processes at the point of collection based on recommendations from External and Internal Audit.
- 18. Functional Heads have the responsibility for ensuring that accurate and complete records are maintained and that performance, appraisal and disciplinary processes are in place to maintain and enhance data and information quality for their directorate.
- 19. The Performance Management and Review Section and Functional Heads are responsible for formulating improvement measures in the Action Plan supporting this Strategy, as well as monitoring to ensure that progress against the plan is systematically monitored and any corrective action taken, if required.
- 20. Functional Heads, Team Leaders, Group and Station Managers are responsible for ensuring that adequate, safe systems holding an acceptable standard of information are developed and maintained and that performance information they provide is accurate, timely and meets the relevant guidance. They are also responsible for ensuring the implementation of corporate policy and procedures and the development of service based policies and procedures for performance information.
- 21. Data Managers are those Officers who are performance indicator originators. Data Managers will take particular responsibility for data quality and drive improvements in their service areas.
- 22. It is the responsibility of all staff that input, store, retrieve or otherwise manage data to ensure that it is of the highest quality.
- 23. Everyone in the organisation will be responsible for complying with this Data Quality Strategy.
- 24. All staff are responsible for following policies and procedures, and all Team Leaders for ensuring that this is the case in their respective service teams.
- 25. Commitment to data quality will be clearly stated in job descriptions for all relevant roles within the Service, ensuring that Directors, managers, administrative staff and others recognise their responsibilities as an integral part of their role and profession.

## **Elected Members**

26. The Chair of the Audit Committee has responsibility for data quality as part of its responsibility for corporate governance and risk management.

## **Contracts**

27. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue 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 Service from which to judge a contractor's performance.
28. We will endeavour to ensure that all appropriate contracts where data collection and data quality are critical to the delivery of the service, will have a standard clause inserted into the contract, which defines data quality and how it would be best protected, taking into account the nature of the contract. 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.
29. The Head of the department managing the contract will have responsibility for the verification of the data, or in the future where a contract is managed externally by an agent, then that agent would have accountability.

## **Partners**

30. Some important information is provided by partner organisations and other external agencies, e.g. South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Ambulance Service. 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.
31. Responsibility for data verification lies within the department receiving the information. Internal Audit and the Performance Management and Review Section can provide advice and guidance if needed.

## **Output and Reporting**

32. Performance data required by external government departments and inspection bodies normally has a timetable for publication. All performance information should be available in time for management assessment and action prior to publication. It is important that performance information is subject to scrutiny and challenge before final reporting. This can be achieved through verification of output reports, departmental and directorate review.
33. Performance updates are reported to the Audit Committee as part of the Service's performance management framework. The Performance Committee also plays a role through the monitoring and review of the Service's Performance Review process and the resultant Improvement Plans.
34. 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.

35. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue 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 the PI. This is important to ensure that audit work proceeds smoothly. The audit will require working papers to confirm the definition has been followed, the calculations are correct and that the indicator is supported by a full audit trail. A comprehensive process is already in place for the collection, verification and reporting of the statutory national performance indicators (Best Value Performance Indicators).

### **Monitoring and Review**

36. The policy and the Service's overall approach to data quality will be monitored by Functional Heads and the Performance Management and Review Section. Internal Audit will provide internal assurance controls. A formal reporting structure for this will be developed.
37. The monitoring and review process will involve:
- Regular meetings with Data Managers and Functional Heads, to ensure that the correct systems and procedures are in place.
  - Routine checks.
  - Spot checks.
  - Follow up of any data quality queries from members of staff.
  - Liaising with Internal Audit and External Audit regarding any data quality issues they have come across as part of their review/Inspection programme.
38. The Service recognises the need to achieve a 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 Service 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.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted on this Strategy and will be reviewed on an annual basis along with the Strategy.

### **The Way Forward: Data Quality Action Plan**

#### **Action Plan**

39. Implementation of the Data Quality Strategy is through the actions listed in the Action Plan. None of these actions have any cost implications, although Officer time is needed to implement them.
40. A detailed Action Plan can be found in Section 2.3.

#### **Anticipated Outcomes**

41. The main anticipated outcomes of 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 Service.
- A strengthened performance management framework.

### **Action Plan Monitoring**

42. The delivery of this Data Quality Action Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Performance Management and Review Section, and reported to the Senior Management Team. An annual report will also be produced and presented to the Corporate Management Board and the Audit Committee.

## Action Plan

	Actions	Target Date	Status	SYF&RA Responsible Officer	Progress	Required Outcomes
1	<u>Corporate Plan</u> To include a reference to data quality in the Service's key corporate documents. Looking to address any data quality issues that may arise re the MTFP	From End June 2007	Complete	Head of Programme and Performance	Section included in 2008-11 Corporate Plan Data quality principles included in the 2009-11 IRMP The MTFP is being validated for accuracy in September and any data quality issues will be addressed.	Increased commitment to data quality.
2	<u>Quality Rating</u> PI reports to show a quality rating next to the measure	October 2007	Complete	LAA Delivery Manager	Monthly KDO report includes a data quality RAG rating.	A document that clearly indicates the quality rating of each PI
3	<u>Guidance Note</u> Produce a data quality guidance note for use by staff across the service	October 2007	Complete	LAA Delivery Manager	Aide memoir included in the data quality strategy. Issued at data quality training	A simple guidance document detailing what staff need to do to ensure the quality of their data
4	<u>Policy &amp; Strategy</u> To update the Service's Performance Management Policy and Strategy.	October 2007	Complete	Performance Review Manager	Performance Management Policy & Strategy Revised in September 2007	Increased commitment to data quality.
5	<u>Internal Audit</u> To develop a process whereby Internal Audit incorporates data quality into their annual review programme.	From 1 April 2007 and annual	Complete	Head of Programme and Performance	Internal Audit include data quality audits as part of the programme: 2007/8 – Audit of injuries to members of the public 2008/9 – Audit of arson incidents	Increased confidence in data quality.
6	<u>Register of Key Performance Information</u> To establish a register of key performance information	End June 2007	Complete	Jim Allen, Performance Review Manager	Included in revised performance management policy and strategy.	Centralised record of what is reported, when, and who is responsible.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>SYF&amp;RA Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
	returns that are collected and reported to strategic level meetings on a regular basis.					
7	<u>Process Documentation</u> To ensure that data obtained has supporting processes in place to ensure data quality, and that regular meetings take place between departments and the Performance & Programmes Dept	From 1 Sept 2007	Aiming to complete for March 09	LAA delivery Manager	All requests for data by external agencies must be directed through Performance & Programmes to ensure accuracy and consistency HQ Data Analysts meet with district and station staff to agree data requirements and prepare reports within agreed guidelines A comprehensive set of incident reports have been posted on the intranet for use by staff across the service. Data sharing procedures for Arson NI33 have been agreed with LAA partners. Process maps produced for all KDOs and weaknesses identified and actions raised as appropriate. The Performance Team will be meeting with internal departments to discuss performance measures for 09/10 onwards over the coming months, and data quality will be discussed during these meetings to ensure that processes for data collection against PIs are robust.	Data quality embedded into all performance management reporting.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>SYF&amp;RA Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
8	<u>Standing Agenda Item for SMT</u> To have a standing agenda item on data quality at CMB meetings on a quarterly basis (performance review and data quality standing agenda item).	From 1 Oct 2007	Complete	Head of Programme and Performance	KDO report has a data quality rating and is reviewed on a monthly basis at CMB	Increased awareness of data quality. Reporting of data quality issues in a timely manner to enable timely issue resolution.
9	<u>Annual Report of Data Quality</u> To report annually on data quality to the Audit Committee.	April 2008 (annual)	Complete	Head of Programme and Performance	Initially reported to Audit Committee September 2007. Next update to Audit Committee September 2008	Increased Member confidence on data quality.
10	<u>Contracts and Data Quality</u> Put into place a system to identify and monitor contracts from suppliers in which data collection and data quality are critical to the delivery of the service. Identify assurances from third party suppliers of data collection that their data is of good quality.	April 2008	Complete	Andrew Stevens, Head of Asset Management  Dave Cutting, Brigade Solicitor	Data sharing protocols agreed with CDRPs.  Where the procurement of goods involves specific data collection and quality issues, these would be addressed in the Contract specification as an output requirement. The Brigade Solicitor has advised that we are within our legal rights to request this, although the monitoring and enforcement to ensure this happens may be difficult.	The quality of data will be assured in contracts in which data collection and data quality are critical to the delivery of the service.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>SYF&amp;RA Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
11	<u>Data Quality Champion</u> Identify a data quality champion to ensure top down support for data quality	August 2007	Complete	Head of Performance & Programmes	Head of Performance & Programmes assigned as data quality champion	A recognised champion of data quality, supporting the whole ethos and promoting its importance.
12	<u>Ownership</u> All performance indicators to have a named responsible owner.	August 2007	Complete	Head of Performance & Programmes	All BVPIs assigned an owner and agreed at CMB in July 2007.	Managers aware that they are responsible for the quality, accuracy, reliability and timeliness of specific BVPIs and LPIs
13	<u>Training</u> Provide data quality training to all staff responsible for managing the collation and use of data. Training to include basic principles of data quality maintenance and levels of responsibility	Oct 2007	Aiming to complete June 2009	Head of Programme and Performance	Training provided to data owners in October 2007. Training delivered to middle managers (uniform and non-uniform November 2007) There is already an established Data training programme which now needs to be adapted for LearnPro. This hasn't been progressed as yet due to lack of resources; the issue has been highlighted on the Directorate Risk Register.	All managers responsible for collating and producing performance data with a basic understanding of the importance of data quality
14	<u>Role Profiles</u> To review role profiles and job descriptions for relevant staff to incorporate data quality issues.	From 1 April 2008	Complete	HR Manager & Heads of Department	All relevant job descriptions for Performance & programmes staff include a data quality requirement. Not yet included in other relevant job descriptions. Most heads of departments have not had ongoing issues with data quality but are looking to incorporate data quality requirements into new roles as appropriate	Improved accountability for data quality issues.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>SYF&amp;RA Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
15	<p><u>Partnership Data</u> To establish a register of data we share with partners. To establish a register of data that partners share with the Service. To identify what data governance procedures, if any, partners have to validate data prior to the Service receiving it. To identify any areas of risk. To establish a corporate data sharing protocol and processes for validating data from third parties.</p>	April 2008	Aiming to complete May 2009	Data & Risk Manager	<p>Partnership register subject to audit in early 2008 and currently the register is being redeveloped. Register of data sent to external agencies developed and in use. Corporate risk identified relating to quality of performance data from external partners and the impact this will have on internal PMF. Data sharing protocols have been established with CDRPs Councils recently subject to data quality audits resulting in some remedial activities being undertaken with regard to data used for LAA target setting A register of data has already been established in regards to sharing with partners and Service, this is being reviewed and updated. A Corporate Data Sharing Protocol will be available in May 2009.</p>	Increased awareness of data quality. Improved accountability for data quality in partnerships.
16	To produce an IT Systems Stakeholder & Information Document, this includes a reference to data quality; and review annually.	End Oct 2007	Waiting Fire Authority Approval June 2009	Loraine Gregory, Systems and ICT Officer & Head of Programme and Performance	<p>ICT Asset Management Plan details all the systems used within the Service and their respective capabilities. Stakeholder groups identified for computer hardware use No specific stakeholders are allocated by ICT for a particular system. ICT policy is for the helpdesk to take a system enquiry and allocate it to an appropriate person to deal with, whether it be because they have dealt with the system/similar problem</p>	Improved accountability for data quality in IT systems.

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>SYF&amp;RA Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Required Outcomes</b>
					previously or they are free to look into it. The ICT AMP details ICT Systems and Owners and will be updated and submitted to the Fire Authority for its annual review in 2009.	
17	To monitor the delivery of this Action Plan on a quarterly basis.	From April 2007	Ongoing	Head of Programmes and Performance	Reviewed December 2007 Reviewed July 2008 Reviewed September 2008 Reviewed January 2009 Reviewed April 2009	Improved accountability for data quality.

## **APPENDIX ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DATA QUALITY**

### **Information and Data**

Public services need reliable, accurate and timely information with which to manage services, inform users and account for performance. Service providers make many, often complex, decisions about their priorities and the use of resources. Service users, and members of the public more widely, need accessible information to make informed decisions. Regulators and government departments need information to satisfy their responsibilities for making judgements about performance and governance.

Much time and money is spent on the activities and systems involved in collecting and analysing the data that underlies performance information, and the Audit Commission says that despite this, there remains a prevailing lack of confidence in much of this data. Please note that this is a general comment relating to all local authorities and the NHS, not to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. As increasing reliance is placed on this information in performance management and assessment regimes, the need for reliable data has become more critical.

Good quality data is the essential ingredient for reliable performance and financial information to support decision making. The data used to report on performance must be fit for purpose, represent the Service's activity in an accurate and timely manner. At the same time there must be a balance between the use and importance of the information, and the cost of collecting the required data to the necessary level of accuracy.

### **Data Requirements for South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue**

All information in the Service is built up from a variety of sources. These 'data' sources form the basis of whatever information is used in the Service. The information is used locally, but also nationally, to inform planning, performance management and to contribute to national statistics. To ensure consistency and comparability at a national level there are numerous rules and protocols about how, when and why certain data should be collected. If these rules are not followed closely or if the data are missing or unreliable then the information itself will be more likely to be flawed (resulting in low quality data). Conversely, the higher the quality of the underlying data, the more likely it is that the resulting information is accurate and consistent between organisations.

In practice, most data in the Service is gathered as part of the everyday activity of many frontline and support staff working in a huge variety of settings. This means that unless we have very well-managed systems and processes operated by appropriately supervised staff, errors can creep in and the quality of data can decline.

From an external monitoring perspective, the Service requires accurate information to manage service agreements with partners, along with data needed to meet national reporting requirements listed below:

### **National Requirements**

- Statutory returns/data sets (e.g. to Communities & Local Government).
- External inspections, e.g. Audit Commission.

## **Audit Requirements**

The Service is regularly audited to ensure that:

- There is compliance with applicable legislation.
- Best practice derived from British and International standards are implemented.
- Suitable processes are used, and control put in place, to ensure the completeness, relevance, correctness and security of data.

## **Local Requirements**

- Progress against the Service's Key Delivery Objectives.
- Monthly performance indicators.
- Quarterly performance indicators.

## **Information Governance**

Good quality, reliable data enables the sharing and use of information with partner agencies.

## **APPENDIX TWO: DEVELOPING THE DATA QUALITY STRATEGY**

The Service recognises that accurate performance data is a crucial element of a robust and proactive performance management system. Accurate data is essential for both internal management and external scrutiny of the Service's activities. It is important for the efficient and effective running of SYFR's services to have accurate information both about the volume and quality of services that we are providing, which is fit for purpose and represents an accurate and timely manner for SYFR's activities.

### **Diagnostic – Identifying where we are now and where we want to be**

#### **Identifying where we are now**

In September 2006, the Audit Commission published an Annual Governance Report covering the audit of the Service for the year ended 31 March 2006.

The Use of Resources section of the Audit Commission's 2006 Annual Governance Report included a value for money conclusion qualified on the grounds that '*...minimum standards have not been met for the fourth of the Audit Commission's criterion, namely that "the body has put in place arrangements to monitor the quality of its published information, and to report the results to members."*

Specific areas where minimum standards have not been met were identified as:

- The absence of a data quality strategy.
- A clear commitment to data quality with responsibility assigned to an officer, and reference included in the Corporate Plan.
- Monitoring and Review of data quality with the results summarised and reported to management.

The report recommended that the Service *"Develop and implement a Data Quality strategy with clear assignment of responsibility and commitment of both individuals and the Service"*.

#### **Identifying where we want to be**

The Audit Commission made one recommendation regarding data quality. This reflected the main variances in our practice from the Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry on management arrangements for data quality:

**R1** Develop and implement a Data Quality Strategy with clear assignment of responsibility and commitment of both individuals and the Service.

The Service strives to seek continuous improvement in everything that it does, and as such, wishes to progress with the recommendations made by the Audit Commission. However, we need to develop an action plan which is proportionate to risk, and further promote and embed awareness of data quality issues across the Service.

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APPENDIX THREE: DATA QUALITY AIDE MEMOIR



South Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue

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SOUTH YORKSHIRE

## Data Quality - Aid Mémoire

### *6 Principles of Data Quality*

Data should be ...

- **Complete** – Not missing
- **Accurate** – Correct
- **Valid** – Fit for purpose
- **Reliable** – Collected consistently
- **Timely** – Captured close to activity
- **Relevant** – Appropriate for its intended use

Data Input

- Aim for 100% accuracy 100% of the time
- Reduce error checking and corrections
- Avoid Double Counting
- Avoid multiple points of data entry

Data Output

- Should have an auditable trail
- Be clearly presented in the required format
  
- Understand why data quality is important to your job
- Understand how your data quality affects the Authority
- Recognise that data needs to be 'right first time'

- Be aware of the SYFR Data Quality Strategy

[Available on the Intranet under 'Our Fire Service/ Corporate Strategies']