



The Transparency agenda sets out to open up government and public services. Open data is not only about supporting local transparency and accountability but is also a driver to engage and empower citizens and communities, foster improvement and efficiencies and drive social and economic growth. Open civil society, technical advances on the internet, greater accountability and efficiencies in delivering public services drive the opening up of public sector data. Open data means the data is free to access, use and reuse and is available via the internet based on the open government licence.

The LGA promotes an open and transparent local government to meet local needs and demands. It encourages a meaningful approach to open data to

- foster accountability,
- innovate and transform services leading to improvements and efficiencies,
- empower citizen and community groups to choose or run services and shape neighbourhoods and
- drive local economic growth.

Councils are encouraged to make data openly available in ways that lead to greater take-up for use in self-assessments, self-service and development of data services and online tools in a growing online service market place. The LGA promotes information above data and knowledge above information by encouraging authorities to make data understandable and putting them into context so that they link to policy and outcomes. But more importantly transparency is a means for engaging with citizens, communities and business

Making transparency work for you

The LGA set-up the local transparency programme to

- promote a greater understanding and responsibility for the opening up of data within local authorities
- manage £1 million of breakthrough funding to release open data
- build skills and capabilities to publish and make better use of open data
- identify good practice in publishing and using the data in services and business applications and encouraging uses in the community
- support the sector with guidance and development of data standards
- foster a collaborative approach to help authorities reduce costs in publishing their data
- promote the better use of data through existing and new online applications, tools and services (including LG Inform and esd toolkit)
- advocate the opening up of key government datasets, in the interest of local authorities and local communities.

- continue its lobbying for ways to cover costs for collating, maintaining and publishing data to given standards where the publishing of comparable data adds further value

Further information about local transparency is available on <http://www.local.gov.uk/local-transparency>. You can also e-mail transparency@local.gov.uk.

Transparency and open data: Policy and legislative drivers (June 2013)

The government has made data and the transparency of data a key priority. They believe that data allows citizens to hold government to account, drives improvements in public services by informing choice, and stimulates innovation and growth. As a result government policy promotes a presumption in favour of open data being made more freely available.

In June 2012, the Cabinet Office published a **white paper on open data** and transparency ([Unleashing the potential of open data](#)). The paper identifies three areas for unlocking and increased sharing of data:

- Enhanced access to open data
- Building trust (safeguarding personal and security data)
- Smarter Use (improved sharing and use of data)

The paper applies to central government and each government department has published their own open data strategy detailing what datasets they will publish in the future.

In June 2013, government announced its commitments to release further public sector information and its strategic direction to promote the information economy in the UK and internationally. **The information economy strategy** sets out a plan for government and industry to continue to work together to drive technology-led economic growth. The government will promote the smart use of information technology and data in UK business in particular supporting SMEs and ensure that citizens benefit from the digital age and are able to use digital service confidently. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-economy-strategy>

The **Open Data Charter** signed by G8 governments promotes the release of open data to create more accountable, and effective government and business to drive economic growth. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-charter>

Government is currently consulting on a **draft national action plan on transparency and open data** to review government's commitment to the open government partnership and to define a national information infrastructure. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-opens-up-its-plans-for-transparency-and-open-data>

The **Code Of Recommended Practice For Local Government On Transparency** - published by the Department for Community and Local Government in September 2011¹ - expects local authorities to publish a number of datasets for free, including

data on spending (£500 and above) and contracts, senior salaries, grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, public land and property assets, performance and the democratic running of an authority. DCLG has consulted in autumn 2012 on making the code mandatory. The government response to the consultation is expected in late spring early summer 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-local-government-transparency>.

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 will alter the **Freedom of Information Act 2000** next year, changing the right of access to information to a right of reuse. This will imply that any data that is not exempt under the FOI Act (such as personal, security or commercially sensitive data) has to be made available as open data for reuse if requested. Cabinet consulted early this year on a code of recommended practice detailing the changes to the Act which are likely to come into force in summer 2013. <http://data.gov.uk/consultation>.

The **Localism Act 2011** reforms public services by decentralising the delivery and planning of services to local government and neighbourhoods empowering communities with the right to challenge and bid for local services and assets. Transparency is essential to engage with local communities to move from an officer to a citizen led approach underpinning greater local accountability and democracy.

Annex: Principles for a local transparency

A local transparency policy will be based on the a presumption in favour of

- All data created by local government as part of its statutory duty should be open by default, unless certain restrictions apply for the protection of personal data, national security, policy advice, commercial confidentiality and third party intellectual property rights.
- The pace of this transition should be driven based on local needs and demand.
- Data should be presented in ways that are understandable to citizen and community groups and placed into context so that they link to policies and outcomes.
- Data should be published in formats that are reusable by machines, non-proprietary, standardised and linkable to common reference data so they can be compared
- Data and information should be easy to find on local websites and signposted on data.gov.uk. The data should be made freely available under the Open Government License.
- Data is an important asset and should be efficiently and effectively managed so that the burden on data publishing is reduced.
- Small data is as important as big data. Start small and publish data that is of relevance locally; standards and linkages will follow.
- Encourage use of data locally by getting developers, data providers and policy makers, community leaders, service providers and users together to develop meaningful applications that focus on the outcomes what users want and need.

The principles will be reviewed in line with a revised code of practice on transparency and discussion with the sector.