

Beacon Dodsworth Response

Response to Consultation

1. Glossary of key terms

1. [Do the definitions of the key terms go far enough or too far?](#)

The definitions are fine.

2. [Where a decision is being taken whether to make a dataset open, what tests should be applied?](#)

The government has argued for transparency. With this in mind putting data sets out that have already been created and seeing what users find useful would be a good way to achieve this. Deciding what to include/exclude would be time consuming and might prejudice the users by what the government thinks is useful. It could also lead to excuses for not releasing really useful data sets. Users do not know what is on offer so let them choose by releasing all available data sets.

3. [If the costs to publish or release data are not judged to represent value for money, to what extent should the requestor be required to pay for public services data, and under what circumstances?](#)

They should be asked to pay actual costs incurred. This should only be the case if the data set is not already available or major extra work has been carried out to get the data into a form for release.

4. [How do we get the right balance in relation to the range of organisations \(providers of public services\) our policy proposals apply to? What threshold would be appropriate to determine the range of public services in scope and what key criteria should inform this?](#)

N/A

5. [What would be appropriate mechanisms to encourage or ensure publication of data by public service providers?](#)

Official instructions from the top with a standard set of guidelines of what to do to create a consistent set of results from every department concerned. A starting point would be a central website, .e.g. www.data.gov.uk with a good search and index to get the appropriate data sets. Good meta data explaining what the data sets are would be extremely useful. All current data sets used by departments should be made available via this website for public use.

8. Policy challenge questions

1. [How would we establish a stronger presumption in favour of publication than that which currently exists?](#)

Official instructions from the top with guidelines how to do this. Embedding the principle that data should be open by default in existing legislation and making it a requirement to do so.

2. [Is providing an independent body, such as the Information Commissioner, with enhanced powers and scope the most effective option for safeguarding a right to access and a right to data?](#)

Sounds like a sensible option. There must be an independent body that regulates the process so that data sets are not hidden, not classified as OpenData when they should be. If the government wants to be seen as transparent, a regulator with teeth to force departments to release data is needed.

3. [Are existing safeguards to protect personal data and privacy measures adequate to regulate the Open Data agenda?](#)

Yes the current safeguards are fine.

4. [What might the resource implications of an enhanced right to data be for those bodies within its scope? How do we ensure that any additional burden is proportionate to this aim?](#)

They are likely to be greater. However, the resources involved are likely to be minimal compared with the time and money taken to create these data in the first place. The benefits of sharing these data between departments and the public and commercial bodies is likely to far outweigh the costs involved.

5. [How will we ensure that Open Data standards are embedded in new ICT contracts?](#)

Make it a pre-requisite of any of these new contracts. Linked to this should be a mandate of the file formats to be produced so that these data can be used easily. Making data comply against the 5 star Rating 20 (Levels 4 or 5) would be a good guideline to follow.

8. Setting Open Data Standards

1. [What is the best way to achieve compliance on high and common standards to allow usability and interoperability?](#)

Create a set of guidelines for government departments to follow. Make sure that data released conforms to the Five Star Rating²⁰. Level 4 or 5 star should be mandatory.

Force departments to use the OGL when licensing data.

Release data through a central website, e.g. www.data.gov.uk, so that there is a common location to access these data. Supply good meta data and search mechanisms so that the relevant data can be found and used appropriately. Provide examples of to use these data.

2. [Is there a role for government to establish consistent standards for collecting user experience across public services?](#)

Yes. By using the ideas described in the question above this will provide standards for public services to follow.

3. [Should we consider a scheme for accreditation of information intermediaries, and if so how might that best work?](#)

Sounds complicated and time-consuming; but could have some value.

8. Corporate and personal responsibility

1. [How would we ensure that public service providers in their day to day decision-making honour a commitment to open data, while respecting privacy and security considerations?](#)

Official instructions from the top

2. [What could personal responsibility at Board-level do to ensure the right to data is being met include? Should the same person be responsible for ensuring that personal data is properly protected and that privacy issues are met?](#)

The Caldicott approach, referenced on P.29, sounds a very sensible way of handling this.

3. [Would we need to have a sanctions framework to enforce a right to data?](#)

This need to be set up formally, with a Regulator in charge.

4. [What sectors would benefit from having a dedicated Sector Transparency Board?](#)

N/A

8. Meaningful Open Data

1. [How should public services make use of data inventories? What is the optimal way to develop and operate this?](#)

Have a central portal (www.data.gov.uk) which takes users to appropriate department for the relevant data. Have a good search and metadata to provide good information to help people access these data that they want.

2. [How should data be prioritised for inclusion in an inventory? How is value to be established?](#)

Value should be established by establishing the degree of interest (i.e., likely volume of users) for the data set in question.

3. [In what areas would you expect government to collect and publish data routinely?](#)

All areas which provide data for the government to work, .e.g. crime, health, benefits, head count estimates, immigration, inequalities, expenditure, census, social statistics, national address gazetteer, housing data. These data will have been collected for use by departments so should be published as OpenData.

4. [What data is collected 'unnecessarily'? How should these datasets be identified? Should collection be stopped?](#)

N/A

5. [Should the data that government releases always be of high quality? How do we define quality? To what extent should public service providers 'polish' the data they publish if at all?](#)

Ideally of high quality, but there is often a trade-off between getting it quickly, and getting it absolutely correct. Would be prefer the former. As long as there is good metadata describing data quality and any deficiencies these data can be used appropriately.

Data should be improved if it has a high demand of use and the original data is too poor to be used properly, i.e. missing values in these data. Improving the quality of these data can be in terms of releasing it at a smaller scale of geography, e.g. Output Area rather than Local Authority, as well providing more detailed counts or categories.

8. Government sets the example

1. [How should government approach the release of existing data for policy and research purposes: should this be held in a central portal or held on departmental portals?](#)

We would like a central portal (www.data.gov.uk) with links to the relevant department portals to get the appropriate data. Clear signposting of what is where and how to get at it is a must. A good search and meta data will be needed to achieve this.

2. [What factors should inform prioritisation of datasets for publication, at national, local or sector level?](#)

An estimate of the likely demand for each dataset.

3. [What is more important: for government to prioritise publishing a broader set of data, or existing data at a more detailed level?](#)

In general, we would prefer existing data at a more detailed level – down to the lowest level that can be safely published. But some indication of what else could be made available would be very useful; easily published on a website, grouped by topic, and with email alerts to all those expressing an interest.

8. Innovation with Open Data

1. [Is there a role for government to stimulate innovation in the use of Open Data? If so, what is the best way to achieve this?](#)

Yes, most definitely. By putting these data up on the relevant department's website with good metadata and an example of how to illustrate these data, e.g. interactive reports or map. Explain how to use these data. Having a central portal to reference and interlink all of these data sets.

If the government is serious about OpenData and transparency then putting as much data up as possible and making it available for use is the best form of stimulation.