



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Response on:

Cabinet Office, Making Open Public Data Real

1. The Cabinet Office consultation on Making Open Public Data Real sets out Government's proposed approach for Transparency and Open Data Strategy, which is aimed at establishing a culture of openness and transparency in public services.
2. We are pleased to be able to respond to the consultation.

Key Points

3. Nottinghamshire County Council supports the Government's move towards a position where information is more freely available, promoting more choice and control for the individual and allowing the delivery of modern and competitive public services.
4. Whilst the consultation questions are very technical and pin point specific issues, we have decided to respond to the consultation on the general principles of Open Data and will retain technical comment for the detail which will be set out in the White Paper. This will allow us to highlight specific issues that neither the consultation document nor questions address.
5. The authority has already taken a positive approach to the open publication of data through for example the publication of senior staff salaries, tendering opportunities, expenditure over £500 and information on County Council assets.
6. We welcome the decision by Cabinet Office to carry out a full cost assessment on the implications of any future Open Data policy. Some of the proposals will potentially result in significant additional costs for local authorities, in particular staffing resources and establishment of the necessary technological infrastructure. Any additional financial burden needs to be proportionate and funded by Government grant.
7. We would urge Government to carry out a further assessment to fully understand full implications around the scale and scope of the proposals. The proposals outline a default position where there is a presumption that all data, except for personal information, will be published. This will result in the publication of a vast quantity of data. We would suggest that this position should be refined to a requirement for local authorities to publish quality data which is of real benefit to the public rather than vast quantities of unusable information. We would welcome further specific consultation on the scale of any revised approach and on the implications for commercially sensitive/confidential data.
8. The proposals take the approach that authorities should be publishing data early and often, taking the time to refine information after its publication. We feel that this approach may lead to situations where raw information is wrongly misinterpreted by the public and

particularly the media leading to reputational damage. This will not aid genuine accountability.

9. The consultation document is overly simplistic around the ability to publish data straight from its source. Experience indicates that there can often be complexities around extracting personal data from raw data, particularly in service areas such as Adult Social Care and Health where large quantities of raw data will contain personal information.
10. The proposals set out a requirement for data collected to be stored in IT systems that minimise the cost and difficulty of publishing data online. The proposals make assumptions about the availability and compatibility of software and technology to undertake this. These requirements should not be underestimated and may cause both significant cost and time delay in the Government's proposals.
11. We would welcome clarification from Government on whether the proposals extend to groups/organisations not currently bound by the Freedom of Information Act. In particular, to what extent private contractors or social enterprises providing public services will be bound by Open Data principles. Whilst the proposals seek to establish a framework creating a common data inventory it is not clear whether these public service providers will be bound by the regulations. With an increasing move for local authorities to commission out services coupled with the Localism and Open Public Services agendas, it is less likely that in future that local councils will be delivering local public services. Whilst we recognise that this requirement can be written into future contracts, further consideration needs to be given to the wider implications of this.
12. The proposals and questions allude to establishing a Corporate Responsibility Board to ensure that Open Data requirements are being met. We would urge Government to avoid setting onerous targets and monitoring requirements and to take a proportionate approach to accountability.