

Terms of Reference for Mayoral Data Council

1. Introduction

The English Devolution White Paper, released in December 2024, outlines the government's commitment to transferring powers from Whitehall back to local communities. With increasing powers being devolved, it is essential to support these with the necessary data and evidence to design and deliver efficient, effective, and equitable local services. The Mayoral Data Council (MDC) will provide Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) input to central decision making and give local government an equal seat at the table in cross-government data initiatives which affect them.

2. Purpose of the Council

The MDC is expected to champion better data, improved data sharing and capability across all layers of government by:

- Providing MSAs a voice in cross-government data related activities
- providing a forum for knowledge exchange and building relationships between senior data leaders.

3. Remit of the Council

The Council will set an annual strategic programme informed by its objectives and through a focus on high-impact, high-value sector-wide solutions. It will seek to add value through knowledge exchange, implementing common approaches (e.g. adopting data standards) and supporting capability building across the local government sector.

The Council will also be responsible for ongoing development of the data partnership principles supporting central government and MSAs work together for the legal, safe and secure sharing of data, to make accessing data easier and more streamlined. The principles will support and streamline negotiations with individual government departments over access to priority datasets.

4. Membership

Invitation to the Council is extended to all MSAs and Greater London Authority (GLA). To ensure that the Council represents broader views, there is an expectation that all members engage with their constituent local authorities and wider local areas to facilitate reciprocal knowledge sharing. Members will be asked to identify a named representative who has good understanding and oversight of data and able to take strategic decisions on behalf of the MSA.

ONS Local, and DSIT will attend all meetings of the Council as observers. Other specific central government departments and LG organisations will be invited as presenters and observers, when relevant.

5. Chair and Secretariat

For the first two years, MHCLG Data Unit will provide secretariat to the Council, working with members, OGDs and other stakeholders to agree agendas, note conversations, and disseminate views of the Council to partners across central government. The MHCLG Data Unit will also provide the link to the Mayoral Council chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Initially, MHCLG will take responsibility for effective chairing of meetings until more permanent arrangements are made.

6. Profile

The Council will primarily focus on providing internal advice to central government rather than creating a public profile. However, agendas and minutes will be published.

7. Relationship with other cross government bodies

To support devolution ambitions, a number of other high-level forums are being established (**Council of Nations and Regions, Mayoral Council and Local Authority Leaders Council**). The Mayoral Data Council would be complementary to these, providing input on data-related issues, on request, and escalating issues as appropriate. In particular, the Mayoral Council will be able to request input from the Council, which will also be invited to attend the Mayoral Council to present on data issues when relevant to the agenda.

The Council will have an established governance link with the central government **Chief Data Officers Council**.

MSAs and HMG departments will establish a range of working level forums to support greater sharing of data for devolution and to develop, implement and champion the data partnership principles, originally developed through the trailblazer deals with GMCA and WMCA. The aim will be to unlock more data sharing between central and local government of priority data sets. The role of the Secretariat will be to ensure that the Council is aware and engages in such forums to ensure technical and policy specific discussions inform the Council's strategy.