



# A GUIDE TO OPEN DATA

## WHAT IS OPEN DATA?

Open Data is all about publishing non-personal and non-business sensitive data. The data is published as it has been collected, that is, without any manipulation or interpretation – this is regarded as raw data. The data can then be scrutinised and re-used by members of the public and businesses alike in a way in which they see fit including for commercial purposes.

Data should be published in an open format which allows everyone to access it regardless of what computer software or operating system they have purchased. It should also be in a format which can be interpreted by computers themselves without any human interaction – this is known as being machine readable. Fortunately, it is very simple to convert an Excel document into an open and machine-readable document (e.g. CSV – comma separated values).

## WHAT ARE DATASETS?

A number of pieces of raw data presented together can be regarded as a dataset. Remember, none of the published data is personal or business sensitive. For example, the business rates dataset could include; name of business, address of business, charge made, date charge paid etc.

Another dataset could show city centre footfall on specific days and at specific times. This can give an insight into which are the busiest days of the week – and what has contributed to peaks and troughs – e.g. has a concert at the Arena meant that an increased number of people were in the city centre between 7pm and 11pm on a normally quiet Tuesday evening? This not only helps the council in managing the city centre but also helps businesses – e.g. Should shops open later? How many staff should they employ? etc.

All Datasets are published under the National Archives' Open Government Licence which outlines dos and don'ts for those wanting to re-use council data.

## WHY PUBLISH DATA?

Publishing increasing amount of data has a number of drivers which not only result in benefits for the council but also benefits the wider city:

- Improves openness and transparency;
- Data published by one part of an organisation can be used to help service delivery and bring about efficiencies in another;
- Improves partnership working and promotes civic enterprise;
- Can provide an economic stimulus to the local economy;
- Web developers can re-use council data to provide innovative apps and web services;
- Regularly published data can provide real insight and lead to the identification of historical trends;
- An increased focus on data quality as we will want to publish good quality data;
- Where organisations need to respond to Freedom of Information requests, publication can help reduce these.

## **CHANGES TO LEGISLATION**

The Freedom of Information Act was amended in September 2013 to make specific reference to datasets. If a request is now made specifically for a 'dataset', the council has an obligation to provide (and publicly publish) the data in an open and re-usable format. The published data will then need to be maintained, that is, it will need to be regularly updated etc.

The EU Public Sector Information directive has also been amended recently to specifically incorporate datasets to encourage public sector authorities to adopt an 'open by default' stance.

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

Leeds City Council is leading on Leeds Data Mill, the new open data platform for the city of Leeds. Data is the next 'natural resource' and it is important that as a leading UK city, that Leeds is at the forefront to enable the use of this resource effectively. Publication of raw data can provide a positive stimulus to the local economy, provide new services in the digital age and allow innovative solutions to some of the city's problems to be developed.

The platform will be a central source of data provided for and used by individuals and business across the city. The council is a major partner in this exciting new venture.

## **MORE INFORMATION AND FURTHER READING**

The UK Government white paper 'Open Data: Releasing the Potential':

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/78946/CM8353\\_acc.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78946/CM8353_acc.pdf)

Public sector Transparency Board - Public Sector Principles:

[http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Public%20Data%20Principles\\_For%20Data.Gov%20%281%29\\_10.pdf](http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Public%20Data%20Principles_For%20Data.Gov%20%281%29_10.pdf)

The Department of Communities and Local Government Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5967/1997468.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5967/1997468.pdf)



# OPEN DATA PRINCIPLES

## WHY DO WE NEED THESE?

It is important that clear principles of what is expected when publishing open data are outlined from the start. Everyone who contributes to the city platform (Leeds Data Mill) will need to adhere to the same standards to ensure that data can be easily interpreted, re-used and analysed.

## PRINCIPLES

- Published data is not subject to privacy, security or privilege limitations
- Data is as collected at the source, with the highest possible level of granularity
- Data is available to the widest range of users for the widest range of purposes
- Data is reasonably structured to allow automated processing
- All data should be published using an open licence
- Data is available in a non-proprietary and machine-readable format
- All data should conform to a minimum of 3\* open data standard
- Always publish accurate meta data
- Publishers must provide help guidance and video guides to provide clarity and context to the data
- Scheduled release dates should be adhered to by publishers
- Services should identify what data they could publish
- Services look to continually improve the quality of their data
- All publishers should abide by the Terms of Use prior to publication



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS OPEN DATA?

- Open data is the publication of non-personal and non-commercially sensitive information on to a open platform, which is Leeds Data Mill.

## WHAT IS THE VALUE OF OPENING DATA?

- **OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY** - By opening up information your organisation instantly becomes more transparent, Leeds City Council has found a reduction in freedom of information (FOI) requests in business rates since publishing the information on to Leeds Data Mill.
- **DECREASE IN DUPLICATION** - Publishing information to Leeds Data Mill can lead to a reduction in duplication. Services within one organisation or even several organisations may be producing the same information without even knowing it.
- **ADDITIONAL FUNDING** - Releasing information could contribute to additional funding for a project or scheme, the social enterprise Leeds Empties recently secured a £5000 grant to explore how open data could be used to bring empty homes back into use.
- **ADVERTISING AND AWARENESS** - Publishing information on Leeds Data Mill can help get your message out into different forums, West Yorkshire Fire Service offer free home fire alarm tests, publishing the dataset on Leeds Data Mill has increased the awareness and highlights an important service which West Yorkshire Fire provide.
- **QUALITY ASSURANCE** - Publishing information can help improve quality. Some information published may not be complete or 100% accurate, members of the public or organisations have got in touch with Leeds Data Mill querying inaccurate data which in turn has helped up improve our records.
- **ENGAGEMENT** – Opening up data empowers citizens who have access to information at their fingertips. Web developers can re-use council data to provide innovative apps and web services.
- **CITY PICTURE** – Opening up your information helps build a picture of the city and can enable people to make innovative and ‘out of the box’ links and analysis. Is there a issue which data collection can help with? E.g. the Leeds Artcrawl app was produced to help the council build a list of art in the city and what the public define as art.
- **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** - Opening up your data makes it available to a wide host of researchers, developers and analysts who have skills not available in house and who could look at the data with new eyes and discover useful and interesting insights.
- **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION** - Many organisations are subject to FOI requests, would the data be released if requested under the FOI act? Releasing the information as a dataset can save time and money if you receive the same requests over and over again.

## **BUT I CAN GET MORE SELLING THE INFORMATION**

- The information may bring in some revenue but the value of releasing the information in can have more benefits than monetary value.

## **WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION?**

- All information is checked by governance officers, all personal and commercially sensitive information is removed or anonymised before the information is made public.

## **HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PUBLISH?**

- There is no monetary cost publishing to the mill except staff time and in most cases, the data that is published is data already being produced. All we ask is that you keep the data up to date.

## **I DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES OR TIME**

- Don't worry, Leeds City Council have staff who would be willing to work with you to release your information and provide advice and guidance on cleaning, anonymising and getting the best out of your data.

## **WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU WANT?**

- Any list of information can be a dataset, which can range from a list of events to research data to a list of services you provide.
- The information could already exist on your website or you may already produce it internally, publishing it in a CSV format makes the information more accessible for developers and analysts to use.
- You may collate information that you don't know what do with, publishing to the mill makes the information available to a wide range of developers and analysts with the skills and resources to do in-depth analysis.
- Leeds City Council has 7 breakthrough projects:
  - Cutting Carbon in Leeds City Council
  - Domestic Violence and Abuse
  - Hosting World Class Events
  - Housing Growth and Jobs for Young People
  - Making Leeds the Best Place to Grow Old
  - Reducing Health Inequalities through Healthier Lifestyles
  - Rethinking the City Centre

Leeds Data Mill is proactively working to source data that can help with the breakthrough projects.

## **WHATS NEXT?**

**YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE BY CONTACTING THE OPEN DATA TEAM ON 0113 39 50333 OR EMAIL [OPEN.DATA@LEEDS.GOV.UK](mailto:OPEN.DATA@LEEDS.GOV.UK)**