

Volunteer Cornwall Data Quality Policy

Introduction

This data quality policy sets out Volunteer Cornwall's overarching commitment to managing data quality to the highest standards so that it is used efficiently and effectively. Data quality is a key element of Volunteer Cornwall's Information Governance strategy, and this policy sets out its commitment and approach to improving its creation, management, and use.

For the purposes of this policy data may include information which is either operational (i.e., specific information relating to recipients of Volunteer Cornwall's services and Volunteers) **and** performance data (i.e., information relating to the way we deliver of the services).

This quality policy will reinforce that managing data and performance forms an integral and fundamental part of the service and the work that we do.

The importance of quality data

Quality data is essential for service delivery, improvement and fulfilling Volunteer Cornwall's values.

Volunteer Cornwall's activities concern the deployment and support of volunteers in the provision of services, often to clients who may be vulnerable owing to ill-health, isolation, or other factors.

Ensuring that records held by Volunteer Cornwall are as complete as they need to be to deliver that service, and are accurate, is key to both treating clients and volunteers appropriately and to delivering the services well, across the whole spectrum of our activities. Inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to difficulties in arranging the most appropriate help for vulnerable people or can frustrate attempts to contact people. Overcoming hurdles created by inaccurate information means that we must work harder to achieve the same results.

The secondary importance of good quality data cannot be underestimated as it is relied upon to support decision-making, budget setting, inform policy, set targets for the future, and ultimately improve the service for both customers and stakeholders. High quality data needs to be accurate, comprehensive, accessible, and valid.

It is recognised that levels of data quality tolerance vary according to different perceptions or the varying needs of users, our aim across the organization is to maintain and present information and data that is:

- **Complete** – collected data is always recorded and reported in full. It should be complete (bearing in mind the purpose of collection) and should not contain redundant or duplicated records.
- **Accurate** – data should provide a clear representation of our activities. It should be in sufficient detail and data should be captured once only as close to the point of activity as possible.

- **Valid** – data collection processes are recorded and controlled in accordance with agreed requirements, rules, and definitions to ensure integrity and consistency.
- **Reliable** – the relevant requirements and guidelines for data collection need to be followed closely.
- **Relevant** – continuously ensure that data collected is ‘fit for purpose.’ Data requirements should be clearly specified and regularly reviewed to reflect any changes in needs.
- **Timely** – data needs to be up to date and available within a reasonable time frame after collection for its intended use, corrections when noted should be actioned as quickly as possible.
- **Compliant with good practice and legislation** – data must comply with regulations on data protection and data security.

Owing to the range of activities undertaken by Volunteer Cornwall, individuals may be the subject of multiple records in different departments and may even be the subject of different records within a single department. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to avoid the duplication of records, particularly within a single department. Minor inaccuracies and incomplete information when making a booking can lead to two records for the same person which can later lead to confusing information being relayed in respect of that individual.

Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that records held by Volunteer Cornwall are of sufficient integrity that the work that they underpin can be carried out. Volunteer Cornwall aspires to ensure that data which is needed for the delivery of services is recorded correctly as soon as possible and is checked as unobtrusively as possible (for both staff and service users) as often as is practicable.

There are however responsibilities which are specific to broad strata of staff:

Managers and Supervisors

All managers and supervisors must:

- Decide the lawful basis for the processing of data.
- Ensure that clearly documented systems and processes exist for the accurate recording of information which it is appropriate for Volunteer Cornwall to hold.
- Ensure that arrangements are in place to quality assure data on a regular basis.
- Ensure that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers have the necessary skills and knowledge to recognise data which Volunteer Cornwall has a justifiable reason to hold, and to record that data accurately, before they are given access to the systems used for the recording of such data.
- Never knowingly use inaccurate or incomplete data for reporting purposes and highlight any known risks or issues to the Chief Executive.

As the Information Asset register is developed and extended to identify and manage Volunteer Cornwall's information assets, relevant managers will be designated as Information Asset Owners, including responsibilities for data quality, including limiting access to each asset to staff and volunteers who are suitably trained in recording the information which is to be collected.

Staff

All staff must:

- Read, understand, and follow this policy and any associated procedures that relate to the recording, use and management of data by Volunteer Cornwall.
- Understand the lawful basis for the processing of data they hold.
- Handle data in a way which is responsible and make every effort to ensure its accuracy, validity, reliability, timeliness, relevance, and verifiability.
- Communicate any risks or concerns to managers concerning the use or capture of data, where information is being held without justification, or where there appear to be trends emerging in terms of inaccurate information being recorded.
- Highlight any duplicate records for immediate correction.

As the Information Asset register is developed and extended to identify and manage Volunteer Cornwall's information assets, relevant staff members may be designated as Information Asset Owners, including responsibilities for data quality.

Services

Volunteer Cornwall, during its range of activities, both records information generated and received by staff and volunteers, but also receives information from partner organisations and passes, where appropriate, data to such organisations. It is important therefore for partner organisations to understand the importance which Volunteer Cornwall places on the proper handling of such data.

Managers will ensure that where data is used which is received from other organisations that there is a mechanism by which any inaccuracies can be relayed to the other party, and where services are contracted or commissioned by Volunteer Cornwall that such reporting channels are built into the arrangements.

Volunteer Cornwall recognises that ensuring the accuracy of data and the justification for holding it can become burdensome to the detriment of the purposes for which the data is held. For this reason, Volunteer Cornwall aspires to work in a manner which avoids waste in the duplicated recording and cleansing of un-needed data. Data should be collected and recorded once only, in the appropriate place in appropriate detail, on the principle of 'getting it right first time'. This helps to reduce the burden of administration as well as helping to ensure accurate and timely data.

At all stages of the collection and reporting process data will be held securely and its use limited to the purposes for which we hold it. Where the sharing of data is requested which falls outside the purposes for which we recorded the data, permission should be sought from the relevant senior manager before it is released to external organisations or members of the public.

Procedures to Support Data Quality

All those involved in collating, producing, and working with data have a responsibility for quality.

Staff are made aware of how any data they record, or handle is used (and its relative value to the organisation) and how their role can impact upon quality. Those who are involved with data collection will be given the necessary support and training, which will be reflected in job descriptions and then reviewed annually at their appraisals.

Validation of data should be viewed as part of each member of staff's everyday job. The person best able to validate information is the person to whom it refers. Staff should therefore adopt an approach of 'checking' the information held whenever possible; for example, checking contact telephone numbers with passengers when making transport bookings by asking them. Where such 'continuous validation' identifies inaccuracies, staff should feel empowered to make the necessary amendments to the information recorded.

Every project, activity or department has a designated member of staff or manager who is responsible for collecting and reporting the information within each of their respective areas. This ensures reliability and consistency in the application of definitions and use of systems for providing the data.

Managers are responsible for the accuracy of data recorded by their teams, and for the justifications for holding it. They should ensure that clear evidence and supporting information is available upon request.

Checks and Reporting

Senior managers are responsible for the accuracy and appropriateness of any data recorded in the process of the activities their team undertake.

Senior managers will ensure that proper checks of records maintained within their teams' activities are undertaken. A 'dip-sampling' routine is advised, and it is anticipated that a 10% sample of records are checked each month. These checks could include:

- Cross checking of data against other systems and/or records.
- Check against other IT data records not primarily used for the purpose of the data collection.
- Check for the accuracy in following the performance data guidance and related notes.
- Checking the understanding of data collection and reporting with relevant responsible officers and service managers.

A Data Quality Report and Checklist for the use of managers responsible for monitoring data quality is at Appendix A.

Senior managers will have in place a timetable for undertaking data audits across their areas of responsibility, which will result in reports to the Chief Executive on findings within 10 working days of the completion of the Audit.

To get the most value from data collected, reports will be presented with up to date and relevant commentaries, contextual information and charts with any caveats or quality issues explained.

The relevance of all data collected will be constantly reviewed to ensure that it supports the priorities of Volunteer Cornwall, as well as the changing needs of those that use the service.

Patterns and trends in information gained from data will be scrutinised and monitored regularly to establish potential strengths/weaknesses and will be reported by managers on a quarterly basis. Any issues with service delivery will also be identified and addressed accordingly.

Subject Access

All individuals who interact with Volunteer Cornwall (be they volunteers or recipients of services) may legitimately ask to see the records which we hold relating to them and expect to have this request acted upon in good faith. Granting such access is a valuable tool in ensuring the accuracy of data retained. Where an individual requests such access and identifies errors or omissions within the data held by Volunteer Cornwall relating to them the record will be amended to reflect the correct information which they provide.

Subject Access Requests must be passed immediately to respective senior managers who are to deal with the request within an appropriate period.

Subjective / Non-Factual Data

Within records held by Volunteer Cornwall, across the range of activities undertaken by staff and volunteers, it is likely that there will be pieces of information which can legitimately be categorised as 'opinion' rather than factual, that is to say information which is the belief of a volunteer or staff member. The recording of such opinions is justifiable in the same circumstances as any more objective information. For example, if Volunteer Cornwall can justify recording factual information that an individual has diagnosed mobility difficulties in order that any volunteers asked to interact with them can be properly prepared for their particular needs, then the opinion of a volunteer that the same individual may need particular assistance in certain situations is equally justifiable.

This category of data is particularly relevant in the case of records held relating to volunteers.

Decisions as to the suitability of a particular volunteer for certain opportunities will frequently involve matters of judgement by members of staff, the rationale for any such opinions should be clearly documented.

Where an individual reviewing information held by Volunteer Cornwall about them wishes to contradict something which is the opinion of a volunteer or member of staff, they should be permitted to have their own observations on the subject recorded alongside the original entry. There may be occasions where the subject of the information feels that the opinion recorded is distressing for the individual or feels that the opinion causes them harm (for example by limiting the volunteering opportunities available to them) then they can apply to the relevant senior manager for the opinion to be amended.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.



Signed:

Ian Jones

On behalf of Volunteer Cornwall

Date:

Review: 04/25

Appendix A

Data Quality Report and Data Quality Checklist

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Do you know the sources of all the data you hold?			
Is there a system for regular updating of all personal and contact data stored?			
Do people know who you are and what you are doing with their data?			
Do you need to get their consent for anything? If so, how will you do that?			
Is the data stored as securely as possible with all reasonable back-up and password protections enabled?			
Do you have adequate security for information that is taken out of the office?			
Do your staff and volunteers know what they are supposed to do with personal data, and what they are not allowed to do? Are they aware of their responsibilities?			
Is all the personal data held within the organisation monitored and subject to the same security and updating procedures?			
Is the holding of each type of personal data fully justified as furthering the aims and legitimate work of the Centre?			
Is the data you hold still necessary for the purposes for which it was originally collected?			
Is the data kept up to date?			
Does the information held on individuals threaten their security in any way?			
Does the personal data include any speculation?			
Does all the information come from reliable sources and are all sources noted?			
Do you keep records of why, with whom and when the data is used?			