

Data quality assessment pitfalls

Introduction

Data quality assessments establish if the data is fit for its purpose. It is the foundation for improving data quality. In this article, we will look at what you should not do if you want to get a better understanding of the quality of your data.

A data quality assessment is a process of evaluating data and measuring it against selected quality criteria such as completeness and validity. It also includes analysing the cause and impact of quality problems and sharing the findings. In order to tackle data quality problems in the right way, you need a robust and sound assessment process.

If your assessment is not good enough, you may think that data is good quality when it is not or vice versa. Making the wrong assessment may lead to the wrong actions being taken and that will have an impact on your organisational outcomes.

Lack of planning

Your data quality assessment will be more reliable if it is carefully planned. It is important to involve people with the right skill set and knowledge to carry out the assessment. Technical specialists and process specialists should work in close co-operation to identify, process, test, and refine business rules that are used to confirm and measure the quality of the data.

Before the actual assessment takes place, make sure that you have a good understanding of the data. It is helpful to review any documentation that exists about the data set to be assessed as this will speed up the assessment process.

What you learn from the assessment will be very valuable. It is important that this is documented and saved for future reference. Plan for your assessment to be reproducible. Keeping a record of the assessment process and its findings will allow you to repeat the process. It will become an invaluable source of information for future data quality improvements. This will also maintain your team's knowledge, provide continuity, and minimise risks.

Not considering the purpose of the data

Understanding the purpose can help you identify what to measure, and it is particularly important in communicating quality. If people do not understand the purpose of the data, they will not understand the impact of quality problems. Incorrect data in one part of the data set may not have a material impact on one purpose of the data but it may well throw quality issues for

another use.

A good data quality assessment should be linked to purpose and therefore an assessment must be repeated when a data set is used for another purpose than originally intended.

Measuring the wrong things

Measuring the data that does not matter or that have a low risk not only wastes time and precious resources but also distracts from focusing on fitness for purpose. You do not always have to cover an entire data set. Instead, examine the parts of the data that are important for fulfilling your purpose or purposes.

Focusing on data fields that can be measured rather than what should be measured will result in conclusions about the data that do not address its fitness for purpose. An assessment should focus on what data items you need to be right. This can happen by making sure that you have the people with the right skill set and experience to make that judgement call.

Aiming to be perfect

Getting perfect data is not a realistic goal. Achieving 100% all the time cannot be a requirement. A data set with a single error in it may be good enough to use. There may be more efficiency in coping with data that has been shown to have a few errors than spend time trying to correct every error. What you should be looking for is fitness for purpose and not perfection. Use realistic thresholds for your chosen quality criteria.

Examining data in isolation

Understanding the data lifecycle is important for a meaningful assessment. Data may be subject to errors as they come in. Data can become corrupted during processing. Sometimes data sets are brought together in the wrong way and incorrect assumptions are made when the data is combined. Before you start assessing your data, it is important that you get an understanding of the processes it has undergone to avoid any misleading measurements.

Not being proactive

If you wait passively for a quality issue to be reported before you investigate, it will have already impacted negatively on your organisation. It is much safer to check the quality of your data on a regular basis. This will stop bad quality data from moving through the data lifecycle and allow you to identify issues before they cause greater damage.

The data quality assessment exercise should be a recurring process. The learnings from one assessment will help to review the targets for the next exercise.

You can learn more about data quality assessment from our forthcoming

training course on “Data Quality Action Plans”. The Government Data Quality Hub (DQHub) is developing tools, guidance, and training to help you with your data quality initiatives. Please visit [the Data Quality Hub website](#) for articles, tools, and case studies.

We also offer tailored advice and support across government. Contact us by emailing DQHub@ons.gov.uk.

Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue: UK statement

Thank you Minister Rau, and thank you for launching the Renewed OSCE European Security Dialogue. The UK fully supports this important Polish initiative and we remain committed to the security of all OSCE participating States, and to constructive dialogue.

The OSCE is an ideal venue to discuss the challenges to European security because it remains an inclusive and equal forum. It brings together 57 participating States from Europe, North America, and Central Asia. We take part on the basis of equality, with no hierarchies and with no countries excluded from discussions that affect them and the security of their citizens.

Over almost 50 years, the OSCE has established principles and commitments to which we have all freely signed up. These include the non-use of force, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These long-standing principles and commitments have become the bedrock of our security. We stand by them, unreservedly.

However Mr Chair, today these long-standing principles are being challenged. And as participating States we must come together to ensure they are respected.

We should strive to improve our security, not by revisiting the principles that bind us, but by upholding them. And seeking new ways to implement and develop the transparency, risk reduction and arms control mechanisms that we have developed to support them.

That is why the United Kingdom wishes to see this Dialogue succeed.

For that to happen, all participating States must show good faith.

Our Dialogue should build on the commitments that all of us, including Russia, signed up to freely, and on the principles of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Russia's military build-up in and around Ukraine is deeply concerning and needs to be reversed.

Our OSCE principles and commitments provide a clear path out. A path toward greater security for all, and a means to avoid conflict.

Russia must refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state and stand down its troops.

In line with our commitment to uphold the OSCE acquis, the UK remains determined to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognised borders.

Beyond Ukraine, we must continue to support the important work of the OSCE in other conflict-affected regions, including in Georgia, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh.

As set out by the Chair, the UK supports a three pronged Dialogue focused on strengthening confidence and security building measures, including on military transparency, risk reduction and conflict prevention, management and resolution. As well as on non-military aspects of security.

The OSCE has served well as a forum for discussing these issues in the past, even when the conversation has been difficult and uncomfortable.

Your Excellency – to conclude. The path out of the current situation is through dialogue and diplomacy. Please be assured of the UK's full support for your efforts as OSCE Chair, as we enter into these discussions in good faith. It is deeply disappointing to hear our Russian colleague express the view today that Russia does not at this stage support the initiative or the process. We urge them to reconsider.

Thank you.

£44 million Dormant Assets funding unlocked for charities and social enterprises

- Funding will help tackle youth unemployment, support communities in deprived areas and give people in need access to finance
- New Government Bill could unlock further £880 million for good causes

Communities and good causes across England have been allocated an additional £44 million through the Dormant Assets Scheme.

The funding will be used to tackle youth unemployment, expand access to

investment for charities and social enterprises, and help improve the availability of fair, affordable loans to people in vulnerable circumstances.

The Dormant Assets Scheme releases funds from dormant bank and building society accounts, which are accounts that have been open for 15 years, but during that period no transactions have been carried out.

The £44 million funding will be distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund, as follows:

- £20 million will enable Youth Futures Foundation to test and evidence the best approaches to breaking down barriers and improving access to employment for disadvantaged young people
- £20 million will go to Access – The Foundation for Social Investment, to provide urgently-needed finance for up to 1,000 charities and social enterprises, particularly in more deprived areas
- £4 million will allow Fair4All Finance to accelerate their work on affordable consolidation loans for people in financially vulnerable circumstances

Already more than £800 million has been unlocked by the Dormant Assets Scheme over the last decade, including £150 million that supported the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Nigel Huddleston, Minister for Sport, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth, said:

This latest £44 million allocation from the Dormant Assets Scheme will make a real difference to people's lives in communities across England. As well as helping young people find jobs, it will also provide financial support to those that need it the most.

And we will not stop here. We are currently bringing legislation through to expand the Dormant Assets Scheme even further, so it can release even more money to help level up communities throughout the country.

It follows the Government publishing its Levelling Up White Paper last week, which set out a plan to transform the UK by spreading opportunity and prosperity to all parts of the country.

Following a public consultation process, a new Bill is currently working its way through Parliament, which is set to deliver on the Government's commitment to expand the Dormant Assets Scheme.

This could potentially unlock a further £880 million across the UK over the coming years by enabling a wider range of dormant assets to be transferred into the Scheme from the insurance and pensions, investment and wealth management, and securities sectors.

There are 30 participating firms in the Dormant Assets Scheme, which will continue to have consumer protection at its heart, with participants' first priority continuing to be reuniting people with their assets.

Where this is not possible, more businesses will soon be able to voluntarily transfer dormant assets into the Scheme, unlocking funding for social and environmental causes across the UK that are additional to central or devolved government funding.

The Scheme has previously helped individuals like Chris Coyle, who grew up in a deprived area of Coventry and was introduced to cycling through an inner-city Council initiative, and went on to establish Ebikebrum, a community cycle cafe and shop. Thanks to a combined grant and loan of £83,000 from Key Fund under the Growth Fund, a partnership between The National Lottery Community Fund and Big Society Capital delivered by Access through a range of social investors, Chris was able to provide services from information about healthy lifestyle choices to a full cycling activity programmes, specialising in electric bikes.

Fair4All Finance has previously used the Dormant Assets Scheme to provide Moneyline with long term funding, enabling them to provide more affordable credit to people in vulnerable circumstances. One beneficiary, who has asked to remain anonymous, had been going through a divorce from an abusive relationship and having financial difficulty before reaching out to Moneyline, who provided the support she needed.

Another organisation which has benefitted from the Scheme is West of England charity, 1625 Independent People (1625ip), which receives grant funding from Youth Futures Foundation in partnership with the West of England Combined Authority. This funding helps young people who are leaving care to prepare for and find good jobs through its Reboot West programme. The charity works in partnership with the leaving care and employment and skills teams across four local authorities in Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. It offers coaching, training and bespoke careers support.

David Knott, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Community Fund, said:

The money unlocked through the Dormant Assets Scheme will be widely welcomed and comes at a challenging time for communities. We're delighted to be distributing this £44 million on behalf of DCMS, to support charities and social enterprises working to help people in some of the most deprived areas of England. This vital funding will have an impact on people's lives and support them towards a more prosperous and thriving future.

Seb Elsworth, Chief Executive of Access – the Foundation for Social Investment, said:

Communities need the support that charities and social enterprises

can provide, creating vital jobs and addressing entrenched social problems. But too often, they can struggle to get the finance they need to innovate or grow. The additional £20 million from dormant assets will help us and our partners to deliver the small-scale loans that most charities and social enterprises need and further target investment into places and communities that have been previously overlooked.

Matthew Poole, Director of Grants and Investment at Youth Futures Foundation said:

When young people facing disadvantage told us what they want from employment support, they talked about changes to the whole system. That's why we've launched our £6.1 million Connected Futures Fund to reduce the fragmentation of youth employment and skills delivery in the places that need it most. Our aim is to join up services at a local level so that young people furthest from the job market receive good quality, consistent support that understands their complex needs. We will scale up our learning of what works so that more places are able to offer effective provision. The additional £20 million from dormant assets will help us to build on this momentum.

Sacha Romanovitch, Chief Executive of Fair4All Finance, said:

11 million people built up some £25 billion of debt during the pandemic. Much of that burden falls on people living on low incomes in the most deprived areas of the country. Problem debt, often well over £10,000 across multiple providers, quickly becomes unmanageable. It has a significant impact on people's mental health and wider wellbeing. It limits opportunities and keeps people from participating in communities.

We're pleased the government is supporting affordable debt consolidation with £4 million of dormant assets funding. We'd also like to see the wider credit sector play a part by working with us to write down and consolidate debt through affordable credit providers where customers have reached their tipping point.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- The definition of a dormant bank or building society account is in the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008: an account is

'dormant' at a particular time if the account has been open throughout the period of 15 years ending at that time, but during that period no transactions have been carried out in relation to the account by or on the instructions of the holder of the account.

- In tackling systemic inequality and ensuring access to opportunities, funding is particularly directed to some of the most left-behind areas of the country.
 - Where dormant assets funding has been distributed to date:
 - In England, the Scheme has unlocked £100 million to tackle financial exclusion and problem debt; £110 million to break down barriers to work for young people; and £485 million of investment into the nation's charities and social enterprises. In 2020, £150 million from the Scheme was released for the organisations in England to support their coronavirus response and recovery efforts.
 - In Wales, £37.7 million of dormant assets funding has supported a variety of projects, including investing £16.3 million in young people, learning, education and employment; and £4.9 million in climate change action. Sustainable Steps Wales will invest a further £16,950,000 over the coming 18 months.
 - In Scotland, £67.2 million of dormant assets funding has been allocated through the Young Start programme. Young Start has made over 950 grants of up to £100,000 to voluntary and community organisations for projects led by young people, which help them become more confident and realise their own potential.
 - In Northern Ireland, dormant assets funding is being used to provide multi-year flexible funding to increase the capacity, resilience, and sustainability of the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector through a £22.4 million Dormant Accounts Fund.
 - Under the Scheme, funds are held by Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL). RFL is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, and must hold sufficient money to cover any customer reclaims. It releases the surplus to The National Lottery Community Fund to distribute for social or environmental initiatives across the UK. DCMS' Secretary of State can issue policy directions over the English portion of funding.
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[New Avian Influenza Licensing Service now available](#)

News story

If you are in a disease control zone, you may need a licence for certain movements.



Image of Chicken

In Avian Influenza (AI) disease control zones, certain movements of poultry, other captive birds, eggs, poultry products, materials associated with their keeping or mammals may need a licence. You can check if you are in a disease control zone on our [interactive map](#).

If you are in a disease control zone within England, Scotland or Wales you can now apply for an AI licence using the new online Avian Influenza Licensing Service. This new service allows customers to apply online for an AI licence during the current AI outbreak.

To apply online you will need to register and create sign in details. There will be two steps for verification. Once registered, applying online means you can track the status of your application and receive your licence electronically via the new system.

Applications will be received via the online system and will be reviewed, and if appropriate, licences issued to allow essential farming activities to continue whilst not increasing the risk of spread of disease.

Guidance on the new AI licensing service is available on [GOV.UK](#) and the [licences section](#) on the AI pages has also been updated.

You can register for the new AI Licensing Service on [GOV.UK](#).

If you require further information about the new process, please contact APHA by telephoning 03000 200 301 and choosing the relevant options.

[Defence Secretary and Polish counterpart reaffirm commitment to European security](#)

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace met his Polish counterpart [Minister for National Defense Mariusz Błaszczak](#) in London yesterday (Monday 7 February). Discussions focused on the response of NATO Allies to the unfolding crisis on Ukraine's border with Russia and the wider implications for European security.

The meeting follows a series of diplomatic talks undertaken by UK ministers to de-escalate tensions in Eastern Europe, including visits by the Defence Secretary to [The Netherlands, NATO HQ, Germany, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia](#) in recent weeks.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Poland is one of our oldest allies. As strong partners in NATO and Europe we will both stand firm on protecting the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine and NATO's open door policy.

Meeting with Mariusz Błaszczak today, we discussed our concerns for European security and the need for sustained dialogue with the Russian government in order to promote stability and the de-escalation of Russian military forces on the border of Ukraine.

The Defence Secretary confirmed that 350 Royal Marines from 45 Commando will deploy to Poland in the coming days. They will support the Polish Armed Forces with joint exercises, contingency planning and capacity building in the face of ongoing tensions on the Ukrainian border. This support is being offered on a bilateral basis and is not part of the UK's offer to NATO.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace [met Minister Błaszczak in Poland](#) late last year, where they agreed a Statement of Intent which will see the UK and Poland share pioneering technology to develop Poland's future Ground-Based Air Defence System.

In addition, the UK has a Light Cavalry Squadron of 150 personnel currently based in Poland under NATO's enhanced Forward Presence where personnel train with NATO forces on a regular basis. In December, [the UK deployed 140 Armed Forces engineers](#) in response to the pressures from irregular migration at the

Belarus border. They are expected to remain on task until April.

Poland and the UK are investing in improving capabilities and modernising our Armed Forces, exceeding NATO's Defence spending target. The relationship between our nations is strong and our forces operate side by side on land, at sea and in the air.

Later this week, the Defence Secretary is expected to travel to Moscow to further diplomatic discussions with his Russian counterpart.