

Data Strategy 2026

Published: April 2026

Introduction.....	3
Strategic context.....	3
Why do we need a Data Strategy?	4
What do we mean by data?	5
Vision and principles	6
Vision	6
Principles	6
Our current position	6
Objectives.....	8
Objective 1: we value data as an asset.....	8
Objective 2: we improve the quality of our data	9
Objective 3: we ensure the security of our data.....	10
Objective 4: we grow our data skills across the workforce	11
Objective 5: we manage our data effectively	12
Objective 6: we use the right systems, tools and technology	13
What happens next?	14
What will success look like?	14
Appendix One: Information Governance Roles in the Council	15
Appendix Two: A life in data for a Portsmouth resident	16
Appendix Three: Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology (CDDaT) Capability Framework ..	17

Introduction

Strategic context

Like all local authorities, Portsmouth City Council is operating in an increasingly complex environment, responding to challenging financial conditions, increased demand for services, and the pending significant changes from Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Local Government Association (LGA) report on data-related considerations for LGR notes that “effective cyber, digital, data and technology functions are vital in periods of organisational shift. Such functions help ensure the safe and reliable transition of services and help to embrace digital transformation opportunities to better place organisations to deliver in new and different ways, yielding long-term benefits enabling the organisation to meet future challenges such as LGR”.¹

This strategy has been adapted following its initial development during 2025 to reflect the growing focus on data in the council’s LGR preparations. The council was already developing its overall strategic approaches to enable us to continue to deliver the services residents and communities rely on despite the challenges we face. The vision and principles in the Data Strategy have been developed to reflect our long-term goals. The objectives and actions have been refined to prioritise those areas most important in preparation for Devolution and LGR.

The council is also in the process of setting out a new digital strategy, designed to enable the organisation to maximise the benefits of digital technologies now and in the future, for the Council and its staff, for our residents and communities, and for the city’s economy. The digital strategy includes a clear focus on process, including how we utilise technology to support the organisation to maximise the potential benefits associated with the way we collect, use, manage and share data, in line with the data strategy aspirations which remain unchanged.

The Data Strategy is also designed to support the council to deliver the priorities set out in its **Corporate Plan 2024-2026**, as part of a One Council approach to transforming services that is also designed to better equip the organisation to flex to changing priorities as the council prepares for Devolution and LGR.

¹ Local Government Reorganisation: Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology Considerations Research Report, May 2025
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGR%20DDAT%20considerations%20discovery%20-%20May%20title%20FINAL.pdf>

Why do we need a Data Strategy?

This Data Strategy establishes the council's ambition to place the use of data at the core of intelligence driven decision-making. All our services collect and use data every day. This strategy is about doing that in the most effective way possible, to support the work your teams need to do and the decisions you need to make.

We need a data strategy to establish how we plan to collect, use, manage and share data, now and in the future, to ensure we work collaboratively, taking a One Council approach to maximise the potential of our data, and to inform a technical approach that supports our strategic intent. People in Portsmouth, including our customers and clients outside the city council's boundary, must be able to trust us to handle their data, securely and competently. By continuously improving how we use data we can deliver services more efficiently and effectively and enable real improvements for local people and communities.

This was developed as a long-term strategy, accepting that over this period technology will change and evolve, shifting the 'art of the possible' and opening-up new opportunities to use our data in new innovative ways. This strategy therefore provides the building blocks to enable us to respond to change and take advantage of emerging opportunities. For example, quality data is the foundation for effective use of AI.

But this strategy also recognises the importance of data in enabling upcoming changes under LGR. Councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are collaborating to bring together the data from their areas, so it can inform planning and implementation of the new councils that will be established. This work has highlighted areas that we need to prioritise to ensure that we can play a full and effective part in that process.

While PCC is a unitary authority delivering services to residents and visitors to the city of Portsmouth, the council is also a registered social housing landlord (known as Portsmouth Homes) with social housing stock situated in Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham and Winchester. As such we hold data for tenants, leaseholder and shared owners across that geography. PCC also has a range of service arrangements with clients outside its boundary, a commercial property portfolio and Portsmouth International Port for which we hold data as appropriate for those arrangements.

This strategy complements other key areas of work currently being undertaken, such as the important and evolving work to develop the council's Digital Strategy. It supports and learns from the various data projects already underway in different parts of the council. The delivery of the strategy will be enabled by technological solutions supported through IT.

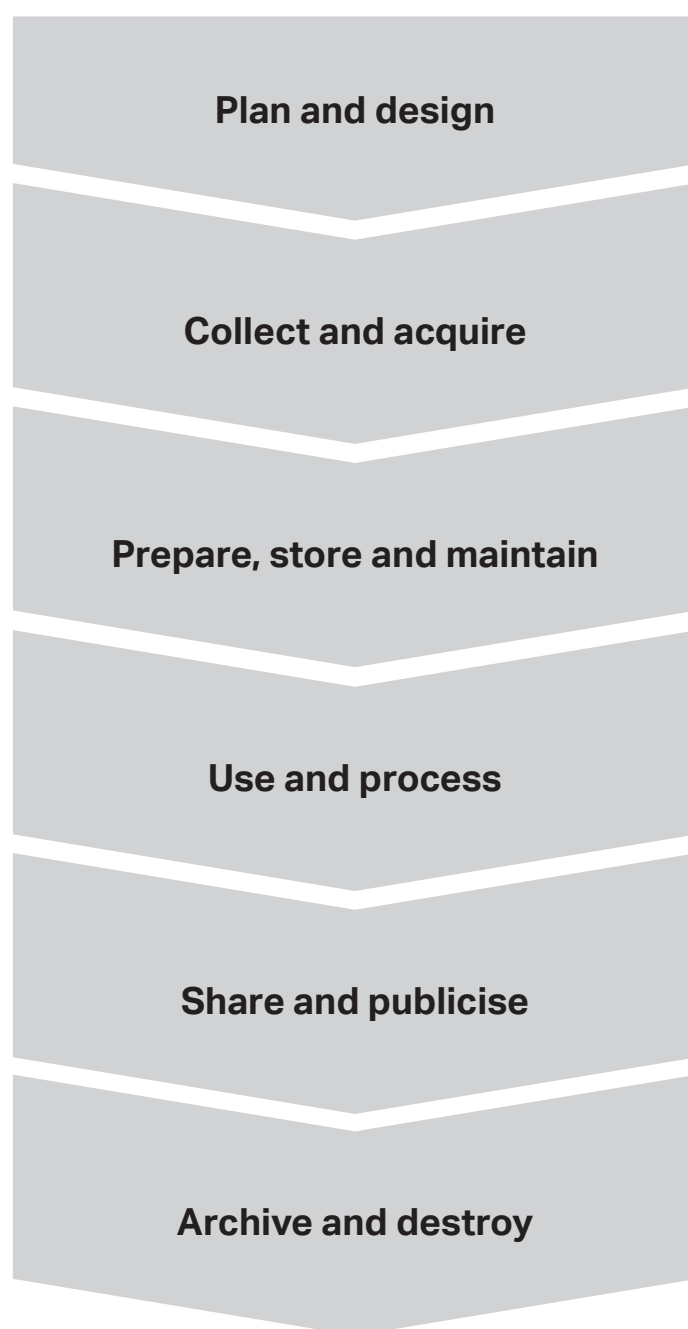
Collectively this work will inform an approach that is:

- informed by a shared understanding of where the organisation is and what 'good' will look like
- builds on changes that are already underway, including those initiated by the working group.
- prepares the council for future changes such as LGR.

What do we mean by data?

- Key areas of the council will all use and refer to data in different ways, viewing data via different lenses. That is why this Data Strategy has been developed collaboratively, led by a working group with input from roles that use data in different ways and from various directorates.
- Data is all around us and we use it every day and can be either quantitative (e.g. how much/ how many), qualitative (e.g. customer feedback/ experience), or visual (such as spatial data in maps). A visual representation of the sorts of data the council holds across a person's lifetime is presented at Appendix 2.
- Data can also be structured or unstructured and the type of data will have a significant bearing on its use, storage and analysis. It includes the case information that we collect and generate as we provide services, through to policy documents and minutes of decisions, with all manner of facts and statistics in between. It covers all the information that we create ourselves or receive from others; stored in electronic or paper format.
- The data we hold for the purposes of providing services, and that our residents, customers and clients trust us with, needs to be managed throughout its life cycle to ensure we maximise the value of it and ensure it is secure. The stages of the life cycle are shown in Figure 1.
- Business Intelligence (BI) is the delivery of analysis and insight which enables the council to make evidence-informed decisions. Effective BI will be underpinned by this strategy by providing access to quality data as the foundation, however BI remains something that is managed within directorates.

Figure 1: The data life cycle



Vision and principles

Vision

We want to be a learning organisation, that transforms its data into intelligence and insight to improve services and outcomes for our residents.

Principles

1. We value our data as an asset.
2. We use our data to drive a One Council approach.
3. We make best use of our data to meet the needs of our residents and deliver services efficiently.
4. We make sure our data is accessible and shared, where appropriate.
5. We secure and protect our data.
6. We invest in the teams and systems to enable collaborative approaches to data.
7. We promote data literacy across the council.

Our current position

The Local Government Association (LGA) is encouraging local authorities to make better use of data to:

- design services around user needs
- engage and empower citizens to build their communities
- drive efficiencies and public service transformation
- promote economic and social growth through the innovative use of data
- be transparent and publicly accountable

In early 2024 a number of individuals and teams from across the council completed the LGA's Data Maturity Assessment². This provided a baseline from which this strategy has been developed. Combining the scores from the small sample that completed the assessment, and with the caveat that people may have been assessing their part of the organisation rather than its overall position, we identified PCC as at level 3.

- **Level 1** Organisations that have poor and inconsistent practices around data.
- **Level 2** Organisations that are beginning their journey in terms of working with data.
- **Level 3** Organisations that are developing their capacity and capabilities in terms of data.
- **Level 4** Organisations that exhibit good practice and use industry standard approaches.
- **Level 5** Organisations that innovate in terms of techniques and approaches and are considered leaders amongst their peers.

² The Local Government Data Maturity Assessment Tool
<https://datamaturity.esd.org.uk>

Organisations at this level of data maturity typically have these characteristics:

- These organisations are developing their capacity and capabilities in terms of data.
- There is a developing culture that supports the use of data, but services are mostly delivered according to existing practice rather than evidence of the needs of local people.
- There is some senior leadership commitment to the use of data.
- The use of data is consistent with standard practices.
- There is some investment in systems and tools for data.
- These organisations have reasonable levels of skills and capabilities in relation to data.
- The organisation is compliant with statutory data governance responsibilities, holding data securely and aware of risks and cyber security issues.
- It has basic data engagement arrangements in place.

A Data Strategy Working Group was formed from people within the PCC Knowledge Network who were interested in the development of a new strategy to address a perceived gap, as part of the development of a One Council approach. Over the course of several workshops, this group explored in more detail where the council is, where we want to get to (and why), and some actions to move towards that future state. The objectives in the following section reflect the outputs from that process.

Key themes that were identified from the council's current level of data maturity included:

- Lack of clarity about what is and is not feasible in terms of a data-driven approach or a shared organisation-wide view of the value and opportunities offered by better use of data.
- Data is held in directorates or services with minimal corporate overview which limits capacity for collaboration and shared learning.
- Inconsistent approaches to the managing data across the life-cycle.
- Lack of interoperability with no single data architecture.
- Investment in current data tools is not maximised due to gaps in support, skills and resources which results in need to use third-party suppliers and/or use current capacity in services to plug gaps.
- Analyst capacity is ad hoc and skill sets may not be being used to full potential.
- Gaps in data literacy at all levels across the organisation.
- Regulatory requirements are not understood or consistently applied across the data estate, and information governance capacity can be a barrier.

Discussions with the council's Directors and the Leadership Network further reinforced many of these issues which are picked up in the strategy. Individual consultations with directorate management teams further enhanced this strategy but also highlighted the growing pressure from data-related Devolution and LGR requirements.

In December 2025 an LGR Data workstream was established as part of the preparatory work being undertaken by a number of councils across HIOW. The council's input into that has been informed by the work to develop this strategy. In turn the strategy has been refined to ensure it prioritises those areas highlighted as essential prior to vesting day for the new authority in April 2028.

Objectives

Objective 1: we value data as an asset

Where do we want to get to

We want to be a council with a culture that values data, demonstrated through a clear strategic view of how data drives our One Council approach, in order to make best use of our data assets to deliver efficient and effective services. We recognise the complexity of the organisation, with directorates and services often best placed to understand their data requirements to meet the needs of the residents, customers and clients they serve. We also need to ensure the organisation is set up to integrate those services into new configurations post-LGR.

We will identify and invest in the teams and systems to enable collaborative approaches to data, by learning from what we and others are doing well as well as from our mistakes, in order to get best value from our collective data assets. We will improve our shared understanding at directorate leadership level of the value and opportunities around data.

Visible leadership of the data agenda will drive forward progress by identifying and securing the resources needed, including from data leads across services, in order to deliver an approach that is effective and sustainable.

Why it is important

Data is a valuable corporate resource; it has real, measurable value. Data is the foundation of our decision making, with the power to improve productivity, efficiency, and the ability to transform our public services and improve outcomes for our citizens. This data strategy provides the opportunity to enhance our digital maturity and build data solutions that empower our staff and our residents.

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Appoint an LGR Data Lead for the organisation and identify the leads for Digital, Data and Technology across each directorate who will support implementation of the strategy.
- Capture use-cases of how data is driving effective and efficient delivery of local services and opportunities for innovation and improvement, with a particular focus on how to maximise the opportunities of digital, data and technology that LGR offers.

Objective 2: we improve the quality of our data

What this means

We want data to be at the foundation of our decision making, helping council services to meet the needs of our residents, customers and clients. Some additional central capacity is needed to enable joined up approaches, working towards developing a single view of the customer wherever possible and appropriate.

We will agree and work to defined data standards and establish a set of unique identifiers across all council data. We will also build understanding of the importance of data quality including in roles responsible for inputting data (see objective 4)

Considering data, its subsequent use, and system interoperability will be a core aspect of all future system procurement. Timescales for contracts will need to be reviewed in light of planned changes under LGR. Investing in (corporate) data engineering roles separated out from (directorate-based) analyst roles should free up analytical capacity to support service improvement, as well as enabling the organisation to be ready to bring its data together with others in a new authority in 2028.

Why it is important

Accurate, timely data is critical to good decision making. Good data quality also reduces the risk of error and fraud. Matching data between different data sets can be challenging, with names, addresses and dates of birth all potentially written in different formats for example. If all systems contained the correct unique identifiers this matching can be done better to support service delivery. As we look towards integrating data into a new authority post-LGR, common data standards and a single view of the customer will enable services to be designed with a holistic view of our residents' needs, including our customers and clients outside the city council's boundary.

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Focus on cleansing data in existing systems ahead of convergence.
- Work with neighbouring councils to explore which data standards (e.g. Open Referral UK, SAVVI) will be embedded in the new organisation.
- Develop unique identifiers for all council assets and individual records (UPRN and common formats for addresses and D.O.B initially).

Objective 3: we ensure the security of our data

What this means

We want to maintain trust in how PCC holds, uses and shares data. Data must always be protected from unauthorised use and disclosure using existing government and industry standards and best practice. The key information governance roles in the council are set out in Appendix 1.

We will invest in an Information Governance system to proactively identify opportunities to enable effective data governance in order to protect residents and deliver services efficiently. Ownership by senior leads across the organisation will ensure it is resourced to meet current and emergent requirements. The Information Asset Register will be updated and made more visible.

Everybody in the organisation should understand and recognise the importance of good data standards.

Why this is important

Good data governance maximises the value of our data and minimises the risk. A commonly understood set of data security standards underpins our provision of a safe and secure data infrastructure. Learning from previous rounds of LGR highlights that protecting sensitive data and complying with the laws around it – particularly information sharing – are paramount throughout the LGR process.³

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Compile an up-to-date list of data sharing agreements with partners such as health and police, so they may be updated as necessary and used by the new council after vesting day.
- Conduct a third-party health check of the council's cyber resilience using the Cyber Assessment Framework for Local Government (CAF) and implement any recommendations.
- Maintain robust information governance throughout the preparatory phases of LGR while enabling appropriate data sharing to support planning and implementation of the new local authorities.

³ Local Government Reorganisation: Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology Considerations Research Report, May 2025
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/LGR%20DDAT%20considerations%20discovery%20-%20May%20title%20FINAL.pdf>

Objective 4: we grow our data skills across the workforce

What this means

We want to be data-literate council where everyone - from senior leaders to frontline staff who gather and input data - can see its value in terms of better and more efficient services, and have data skills that are appropriate for their role types. We want to use the data skills that exist across different parts of the council more efficiently and effectively.

We have developed a Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology (CDDaT) Capability Framework (Appendix 3) which provides a clear, practical and consistent approach for developing the digital, data and cyber capabilities needed for our diverse organisation and workforce. Through this we will create a package of support to improve data literacy for staff across the council, by making it part of the digital skills work, because good data quality (which relies on frontline staff to collect/input) will lead to better data outputs.

Training aimed at specialist data careers is also needed, including skills such as Power BI, data visualisation, dashboard development, SQL etc. We will explore data analytics and data science apprenticeship programmes and other options to up-skill our staff and support recruitment where needed.

A Competency Framework for data roles will be developed that can then be incorporated in directorate job descriptions, which includes an agreed expectation of skills that can change with time as data practices, system and technologies change. This offers a standard for data related disciplines with the flexibility for other directorate responsibilities of a specific job role and will support recruitment and retention of skilled staff.

Why this is important

We can only achieve the quality data that underpins everything in this strategy if individuals recognise the importance of data and their responsibilities for it. Improving our data literacy and data skills will help to embed a culture of curiosity about data. It will support recruitment and retention of key roles and allow more efficient deployment of existing skills and expertise.

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Commission a programme of data and digital training, including exploring options for apprenticeships funded through the Apprenticeship Levy.
- Implement the Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology Capability Framework (see appendix 3), providing a clear, structured approach to developing a digitally confident workforce able to adopt new and emerging technologies, including AI.

Objective 5: we manage our data effectively

What this means

We want to collect data once, appropriately reusing data that is already available including open datasets. Innovative data solutions, services and supporting skillsets should be promoted within PCC.

We will make datasets interoperable utilising standards to ensure data is easy to share within PCC and with partners, particularly in relation to LGR. To enable data sharing we must develop and abide by a common set of policies, procedures, and standards governing data management and access for both the short and the long term.

Business leads and data experts across directorates will be supported to use data to inform decision-making, with clear communication to services of the data platform portfolio in PCC's IT roadmap to development of opportunities to share best practice.

Why it is important

Development, storage, management and governance effort and cost are reduced by reusing data and removing requirements for data replication. Data quality is improved, reducing the risk of error and fraud. Open standards permit interoperability between different domains and systems, but they present an opportunity for a modular approach to development and use. This is particularly useful in an evergreen, cloud based environment where tools and features are in constant development.

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Audit key data systems for their scope, capacity and limitations.
- Establish decision-making principles for bringing data together in line with key recommended preparatory actions for councils ahead of LGR.⁴

⁴ List of information on LGR preparatory activities: MHCLG
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/list-information-lgr-preparatory-activities-mhclg>

Objective 6: we use the right systems, tools and technology

What this means

We want data solutions to build on common platforms. Data services should reuse common infrastructure (platforms) and services rather than create their own. This will reduce architecture debt including duplication and non-strategic technologies.

As a council we currently use the Microsoft platform, which allows us to access a wide range of tools to support data-driven decision making. A range of other systems are also in use across different parts of the organisation. Whatever technology solutions are used should support the principles set out at the start of this strategy.

For example, through the Digital Strategy we will implement a scalable and flexible data analytics and reporting tool, which will enable collaboration, transformation and governance of many of the vast and varied data sets across the council. This will offer operational efficiencies and reduced costs associated with multiple independent solutions, whilst providing the foundations for future information management tools, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Why this is important

Having the right technological infrastructure is key to making the best use of the data that we hold. Using shared common infrastructure allows integration of disparate data systems and sources into a common platform and avoids hindering the use of data integration technologies in the future.

What actions will we prioritise in the next 2 years?

- Create a forward plan of IT contracts that may require extending, in advance of an IT strategy for the new council post-vesting day. This will need to balance ensuring continuity and preventing change in the new organisation, so dialogue with neighbouring partner authorities will be required.
- Ensure the proper documentation is in place for all DDaT systems to understand systems and opportunities for integration, in particular those outside the formal IT systems.
- Explore data platform opportunities and build the case for investment.

What happens next?

- This high level strategy sets out what we want to achieve in relation to data across PCC and why it is important to us all. It describes some high-level actions that are essential in preparing the council for upcoming changes under LGR, which are consistent with our vision as a learning organisation that transforms its data into intelligence and insight to improve services and outcomes for our residents.
- The next steps will be to develop detailed action plans for each objective, alongside a business case for investment in the changes that are required.

What will success look like?

- This strategy aims to deliver a shift in the organisation's approach to data. It builds on much that is already underway across directorates and supports further change by providing an aligned direction of travel.
- Success will be measured by a growing level of data maturity across the organisation. It will be visible in the council's readiness to embrace the opportunities and challenges ranging from Devolution and LGR to the emergence of new technologies. It will be achieved when staff across the council routinely use, and are supported to use, data to deliver the best possible services for the people of Portsmouth and beyond.

Appendix One: Information Governance Roles in the Council

Chief Information Officer

The council's Chief Information Officer shapes and enables the delivery of the organisation's strategy through digital, data and technology.

Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)

The SIRO is a senior manager who is familiar with the strategic business goals of the council and those of other organisations which may be impacted by information risks, and how those risks may be managed.

The key responsibilities of the SIRO are:

- to oversee the development of information risk policies and a strategy for implementing those policies;
- ensure the council's approach to information risk is effective in terms of resource, commitment, execution and being appropriately communicated to all staff;
- taking ownership of the processes for assessment of information risk.

Data Protection Officer

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires the council to appoint a data protection officer to:

- inform and advise the council and its employees about their obligations to comply with the GDPR and other data protection laws;

- monitor compliance with the GDPR and other data protection laws, including managing internal data protection activities, advise on data protection impact assessments; train staff and conduct internal audits;
- be the first point of contact for supervisory authorities and for individuals whose data is processed (employees, residents etc).

Caldicott Guardian

A Caldicott Guardian is a senior person responsible for protecting the confidentiality of people's health and care information and making sure that it is used properly. All health and social care bodies such as NHS trusts and local authorities with social services responsibilities are required to appoint a Caldicott Guardian.

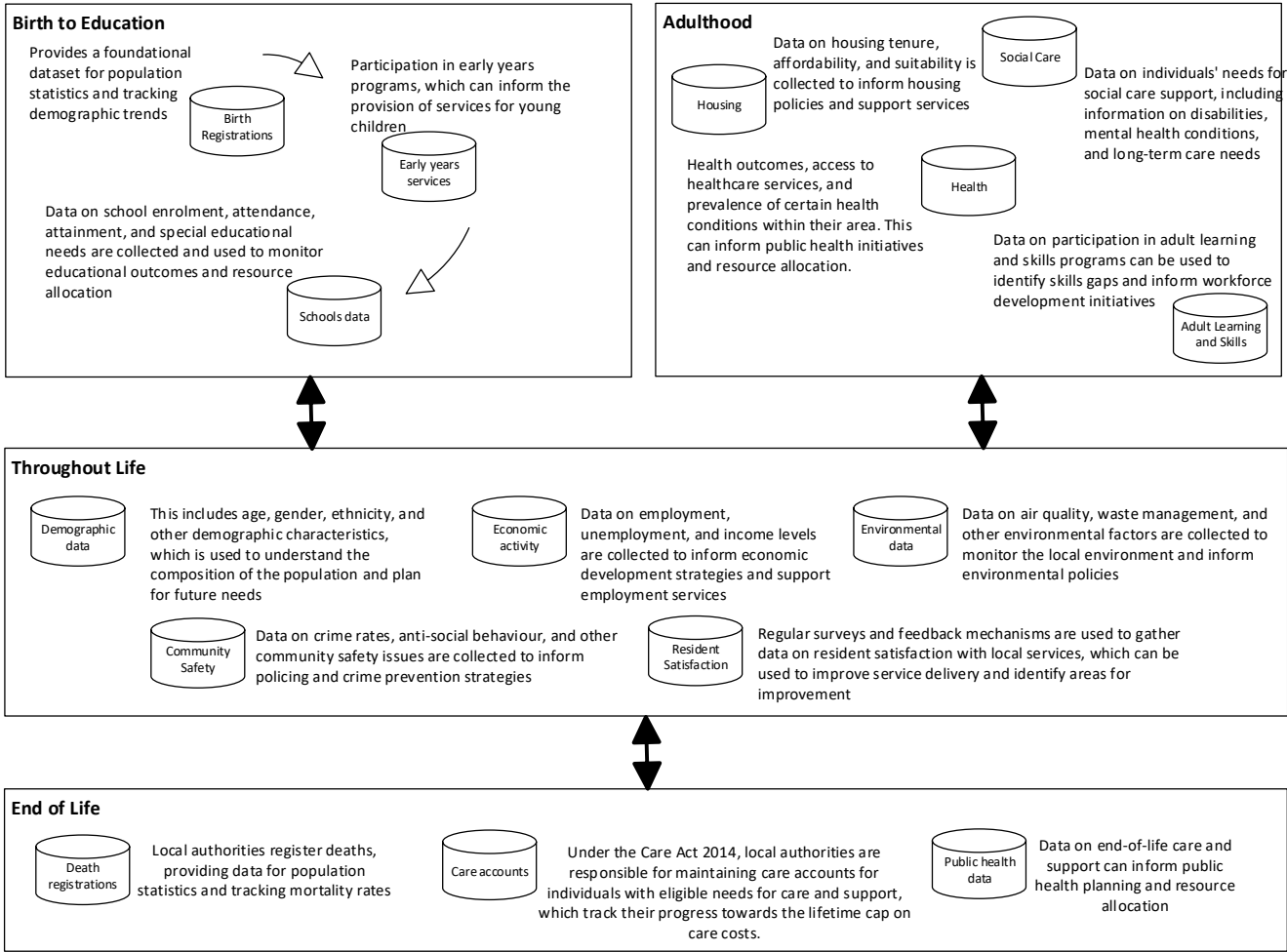
The role of the Caldicott Guardian is to:

- make sure that confidential information about those who use social care services is used ethically, legally and appropriately and that confidentiality is maintained;
- provide leadership and informed guidance on complex matters involving confidentiality and sharing confidential information;
- play a key role in ensuring the council satisfies the highest ethical and legal standards for handling confidential information;
- play a key role in upholding the Caldicott Principles.

Appendix Two: A life in data for a Portsmouth resident

Councils hold a unique position within the public sector technological eco-system where they hold information on every resident, exchange data with nearly every branch of government, and enable the digital economy in the places they serve.

A life in data for a Portsmouth Resident:



Plus all the data assets for the 'things' in the city, street furniture, traffic, libraries, transportation etc.

Data Use				
Service Planning and Delivery	Policy Development	Resource Allocation	Performance Management	Benchmarking

Other considerations

Data Protection Compliance with data protection laws and regulations, ensuring the privacy and security of personal data	Data Sharing Sharing data to improve service delivery and develop integrated solutions for residents. Including inbound and outbound datasets with ONS, NHS, service providers and partners	Data Quality The accuracy and reliability of data are crucial for effective decision-making. PCC must ensure that data is accurate and up-to-date	Data Accessibility Making data accessible to residents and other stakeholders is essential for transparency and public engagement.
--	---	---	--

Source: www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/data-use-and-access-bill

Appendix Three: Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology (CDDaT) Capability Framework

There are a number of specialist data roles across PCC, such as data analysts, that require training in order to effectively deliver support to the organisation. This is being taken forward within the Digital Strategy, through the draft PCC Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology (CDDaT) Capability Framework, summarised below.

PCC Cyber, Digital, Data and Technology (CDDaT) Capability Framework - summary

Purpose of the Framework

This framework underpins Portsmouth City Council's (PCC) emerging Digital and Data Strategies. It seeks to support the organisation to develop our workforce, building the skills and capabilities that will provide the foundations that will enable us to maximise the potential of data and new technologies.

The framework provides a clear, practical and consistent approach for developing the digital, data and cyber capabilities needed for our diverse organisation and workforce. With employees' spread across 182 locations, including many without regular digital access, the framework takes an inclusive approach to skills development that is tailored and appropriate for all roles and reduces the risk of digital polarisation by embedding access and inclusion at every stage.

The framework will support the Digital Strategy's key themes around People (developing digital capability and capacity in our workforce and tackling digital exclusion) and Process (supporting the skill development that will enable new technologies to be implemented to improve our processes). The framework will also support the Data Strategy's vision for the council to be a learning organisation, that transforms its data, and other forms of research, into intelligence and insight that will improve services and outcomes for our residents.

People

- Defines the digital, data and cyber capabilities all employees need, from foundational to leadership level.
- Embeds expectations around digital confidence, data literacy, safe handling of information, and adoption of new technologies.
- Ensures employees consistently understand resident needs and apply a data-informed approach in their decision-making.
- Supports cultural change by clearly articulating the behaviours and competencies required in a modern, digitally enabled workforce.
- Includes capabilities relating to digital inclusion, accessibility, customer experience, and service design.

Process

- Ensures employees have the appropriate skills to work effectively with digital systems, automation, data flows and secure processes, in ways that are relevant to their specific job roles.
- Ensures that teams across all directorates consistently use tools and systems that support the effective and secure sharing of valuable data and research throughout the organisation.
- Clarifies the skills and competencies employees at all levels need so they can contribute to improving workflows, reducing manual tasks, and supporting the Council to modernise its processes and working practices.

The framework will deliver

- A clear, structured approach to developing a digitally confident workforce able to adopt new and emerging technologies, including AI.
- Direct mapping to LGA's national CDDaT skills families, ensuring consistency across local government.
- Support for service redesign, data-informed decision-making, accessibility and user-centred design.
- A foundation for role design, recruitment, capability mapping, training pathways and OD planning.
- Readiness for a future unitary/LGR environment through transferable, standardised expectations.



You can request this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 023 9284 1024