



National Audit Office

**REPORT BY THE  
COMPTROLLER AND  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

**HC 1833  
SESSION 2010–2012**

**18 APRIL 2012**

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**Cross-government review**

# Implementing transparency

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National Audit Office

## Cross-government review

# Implementing transparency

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**Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General**

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Amyas Morse  
Comptroller and  
Auditor General

National Audit Office

13 April 2012

Successive governments have promoted transparency by developing legislation and routinely releasing more information to the public. The transparency agenda is a pledge by the Coalition Government to make government more open.

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## Key facts

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**£16bn**

is the Government's estimate of the value of public sector information to the UK economy in 2011

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**7,865**

data sets were linked to the [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) website in December 2011

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**47m**

estimated number of visits made to the police crime map website between February and December 2011

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- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>23 out of 25</b>        | commitments for central government, due by December 2011, were met by that month   |
| <b>£53,000 to £500,000</b> | is the range of estimated staff costs per department in providing the standard transparency releases required of all departments   |
| <b>84 per cent</b>         | is the increase in web views to school performance information compared with the same period in the previous year, since the Department for Education published its school compare web tool        |
| <b>82 per cent</b>         | of <a href="http://www.data.gov.uk">www.data.gov.uk</a> users leave the website directly from the homepage or data page  |
| <b>78 per cent</b>         | of data fields for departmental spending data fully comply with HM Treasury guidance   |
| <b>75 per cent</b>         | of data resources on <a href="http://www.data.gov.uk">www.data.gov.uk</a> are machine-readable and non-proprietary, attributes sufficient for the majority of tasks needed to develop applications |

# Summary

## Introduction and purpose of report

**1** Successive governments have promoted transparency by developing legislation and routinely releasing more information to the public. The transparency agenda is a pledge by the Coalition Government to make government more open. The policy commitment has been taken forward through three major announcements. The first two were communicated through prime ministerial letters to government departments in May 2010 and Secretaries of State in July 2011. Additional commitments were announced as part of the Chancellor's *Autumn Statement 2011*, in November 2011. Initial data releases related primarily to accountability for use of resources, with later announcements designed to support service improvement and economic growth. The Government's objectives for transparency are to:

- strengthen public accountability;
- support public service improvement by generating more comparative data and increasing user choice; and
- stimulate wider economic growth by helping third parties to develop products and services based on public sector information.

**2** Good quality information is crucial to effective management. Public disclosure of that information has the potential to improve accountability and support public service improvement and economic growth. Gaining value from information, however, requires its scope, quality and presentation to be matched to the purposes and circumstances of its use. This report reviews early implementation of the transparency initiatives set out in the prime ministerial letters, and considers arrangements in place to judge value for money, to establish key lessons that the Government should address:

- Part One introduces the background and sets out how transparency is governed.
- Part Two considers the progress of implementation to date.
- Part Three reviews how transparency aligns with choice and accountability.
- Part Four considers the economic growth potential of transparency.

## Key findings

### Governance

**3 The Cabinet Office plays the lead role in promoting transparency across government.** It is responsible for coordinating and monitoring implementation, secretariat support to a Public Sector Transparency Board, bringing together officials to embed transparency across government, and providing guidance on some of the releases required of all government departments. Many other bodies also play significant roles in implementing transparency, including other departments who are responsible for their own data releases, The National Archives, the Information Commissioner's Office and bodies in the wider public sector.

**4 Governance arrangements have secured coordinated action, but have not yet focused on achieving value for money.** The transparency agenda under this Government began as a coalition pledge with associated actions required of all departments to implement the policy: the Cabinet Office did not prepare an overall policy impact assessment at the outset. As the scope of the transparency agenda has developed, the Cabinet Office has published examples of the benefits of public data initiatives to support the strategic case for transparency, for example on its Open for Business website, but has not yet systematically assessed the costs and benefits of the Government's specific transparency initiatives. The Government announced in the *Autumn Statement 2011* the creation of an Open Data Institute. Early plans for the Institute include a role to develop a fuller evidence base on the economic and public service benefits of open data.

### Progress of implementation

**5 The Cabinet Office, in partnership with departments, has significantly increased the amount and type of public sector information released and met a high proportion of its commitments.** Twenty-three out of twenty-five commitments for central government in the Prime Minister's letters due by December 2011 had been met. The [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) website, launched by the previous Government in January 2010, indexes public data releases. The number of data sets catalogued within [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) has grown from 2,500 in January 2010 to 7,865 in December 2011.

**6 To date, compliance with transparency good practices has been mixed.** The advisory Transparency Board developed a draft set of public data principles, which outline good practice for releasing and presenting information. Compliance with some principles is strong. Most of the data releases on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) are openly available for re-use, with 86 per cent published under the Open Government Licence and three-quarters in formats whereby data can easily be reprocessed. However, in other areas there has been less progress. For example, the Cabinet Office has not yet defined how departments should prepare and disclose data inventories to facilitate wider use.



**7 The transparency agenda itself does not define requirements concerning data quality disclosure. The Cabinet Office has deferred the commitment for departments to produce data quality action plans from November 2011 to May 2012, to incorporate them in the next versions of departmental Business Plans.** Data released under the transparency agenda ranges from audited figures and National Statistics data, subject to data protocols and reviews, through to administrative sources of varying status. In some cases, there are judgements to be made between speed of release and data quality. For example, the Treasury's guidance on spending data publication states that to produce timely data, information should be released as it was originally recorded in financial systems, unless there are material changes to the data. While the Treasury has urged departments to improve the quality of the spend data, and has required all main departments to produce data quality improvement plans, it has not required them to disclose the level of data quality to the public. The lack of common categorisation of spending, and late publication of data by many departments, hinder comparability.

## Supporting choice and accountability

**8 If transparency is to better inform choice and accountability, appropriate data must be available in the first place. There is variation in the scope and completeness of information currently available. In some areas this limits the potential benefits.**

- a** With respect to information supporting individual choice, in education the department collects and reports appropriate information to support parents in choosing schools. In social care, by contrast, neither the Department of Health nor its funded bodies collect and publish appropriate information on the comparative costs and performance of providers of community based care services for adults. This data could help to support users in choosing how to spend personalised budgets. While much of the data in this sector is held by private providers, the Government's *Open Public Services 2012* White Paper commits to publishing "key data about public services, user satisfaction and the performance of all providers from all sectors".
- b** With regards to community accountability, the police crime map provides much more detailed recorded crime information than was previously available. However, additional information is still needed, for example on police activity and resourcing locally, for residents to hold neighbourhood police services to account more fully. In local government, the Government has discontinued established performance frameworks. The local government sector is leading a new approach to defining key indicators. It is not currently clear whether this approach will yield sufficient comparable performance information to support meaningful public accountability.

## Stimulating economic growth

**9 The Government estimates that public data currently contributes £16 billion annually to the UK economy. While this is the highest of the few estimates available of the scale of the public data market, all suggest that public data holds economic value.** The *Autumn Statement 2011* announced new transparency commitments designed to extract additional economic growth from public data, including open data releases, arrangements for licensing specific large data sets and commitments to consult. Commitments include releases of data not previously available, and opening access to data previously traded. The *Autumn Statement 2011* also made a commitment to establish the Open Data Institute which aims to help businesses exploit opportunities created by public data release.

**10 The Government's ability to maximise economic growth from traded data is constrained by current charging and licensing arrangements, and limited understanding of potential benefits.** Recent academic research indicates that making all public information that is currently traded available without charge could potentially add economic value in the region of £1.6 billion to £6.0 billion a year. The Government has identified certain trading funds, such as the Met Office and Ordnance Survey, as having data that could stimulate additional economic growth if it was released as open data. The business case for the releases of free data announced in the *Autumn Statement 2011* estimates net benefits of £49 million over 20 years – a small proportion of the value estimated to be available across the public sector. Estimates of additional value are based on highly uncertain assumptions about usage, demand and impacts on the wider economy.

## Elements needed to assess value for money

**11 Departments have not monitored the costs of implementing transparency, and have estimated costs only where associated with investment requiring a business case.** Estimates provided for this review suggest that the additional staff costs of providing standard disclosures of pre-existing data range from £53,000 to £500,000 annually by department. Examples, such as the police crime map, where departments have repackaged information to promote greater accessibility and use has led to further costs: in this case set-up costs of £300,000 and annual running costs of more than £150,000. However, there are also cases such as the releases of public weather service data where the costs are minimal. While these costs are relatively modest, they would be more substantial if additional information were collected to secure purposeful, standardised information to fill the gaps noted in paragraph 8. Pursuit of transparency objectives is therefore likely to increase cost pressures.

## **12 Few departments are tracking benefits of transparency – a key requirement in monitoring success and learning what works.**

Public interest in different types of data release has varied widely. The website [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) has had more than 1.75 million visits since it was launched in January 2010. However, more than four-fifths of its visitors leave from either the home page or the data page on the website. This suggests that they are not accessing data during their visit, although it does not take account of other potential access points for the data, for example, linked third party websites or applications. While many departments told us that there had been limited interest in the standard releases, there has been much greater interest in releases related to the operation of public services. The police crime map website has had an estimated 47 million visits between February and December 2011. The Department for Education has reported an 84 per cent increase in the use of its comparative data on schools, compared with the same period last year, since it was consolidated in one location and data were made more accessible.

## **13 Alongside potential benefits from transparency, departments face risks, including:**

- **risks to privacy** when information is provided at more granular levels. Departments have conducted privacy risk assessments where they saw privacy as an issue. More generally, the Government commissioned an independent review to consider how transparency can proceed while privacy is protected. The Cabinet Office intends to respond to its recommendations in a forthcoming White Paper;
- **fraud risks** with increased transparency around contracts and payment details – fraud attempts to a value of £7 million directly related to transparency releases have been found in local government, highlighting the need for effective anti-fraud measures; and
- **other potential unintended consequences** of transparency. Given the breadth of information released as part of the transparency agenda, it is likely that wider unintended consequences might result, but the Government has done little to identify or assess the nature and scale of any such effects, either benign or adverse.

## Conclusion

**14** The strategic case for greater transparency is strong. If it is to do more than satisfy public rights to public information, however, and contribute fully to objectives set for it including accountability, service improvement, and growth, then the Government needs a firmer grip on measuring the success of the initiative. While it has begun to gather evidence of usage and benefits arising from the use of open data, it has not yet positioned this within a wider, systematic evaluative framework. Evidence on benefits should be considered alongside information on costs and risks to secure best value from the large stock of public data, match the range and presentation of data purposefully to fulfil specific objectives, ensure that risks are identified and mitigated, and secure value for money.

## Recommendations

- a** **The Government cannot maximise the net benefits of transparency without an evaluative framework for measuring the success and value for money of its transparency initiatives.** It should build on its plans to identify economic and public service benefits and develop:
- a better understanding of the drivers and scale of additional costs of implementing different types of public sector information release;
  - clearer means of determining demand to support objectives of greater accountability, service improvement and economic growth, to prioritise the programme of data release; and
  - a structured, objective evaluation of the emerging effects of transparent public data, so that efforts are focused on high-value activities, with unintended consequences mitigated.
- b** **The Government will not maximise the benefits of transparency if it does not further embed good practice principles.** While the draft public data principles set a useful direction for public bodies, the Government should now define its operational requirements more clearly. Areas such as developing data inventories require clear direction so that they lead to benefits for developers and the public.
- c** **Many data releases have no accompanying statement as to their quality or reliability – running the risk of misleading potential users.** The Government should develop a simple protocol for describing data sources, control procedures and known limitations.

- d** **Public service users cannot exercise their choice and hold service providers to account if the Government fails to align transparency with choice and accountability.** It should:
- review whether current data for choice and accountability purposes are adequate, identifying gaps and ensuring that there is a clear strategy to make necessary information available.
  - in developing and operating markets for public services, build requirements for greater transparency of financial and performance information in future contractual arrangements.
- e** **The Government cannot extract best value from public sector information, if it does not improve on current estimates of the information's value.** These estimates vary widely, hindering precise assessment of the various financial and economic factors associated with further data releases, especially where the Government currently charges for information. The Government should pursue its plans for the development of a research base on the economic and public service benefits of public data, and use that to target the nature and form of data releases.
- f** **The Government has identified that protecting personal data is a key risk for transparency, commissioning a review to consider the issue.** In responding to the review's recommendations, it should set out governance structures and processes required to manage this risk effectively.

# Part One

## Introduction

**1.1** Successive governments have promoted more transparency of public sector information. This has involved developing legislation, for example on freedom of information, and releasing more public sector information. Transparency is a key component of the current Government's public services reform programme. The benefits it expects to achieve include:

- helping the public to hold public bodies to account;
- improving value for money of public services; and
- realising economic benefits by helping third parties to develop applications and services from public data.<sup>1</sup>

### Current government commitments

**1.2** The Government has made three major policy announcements on transparency. The Prime Minister wrote two open letters to government departments in May 2010 and Secretaries of State in July 2011. **Figure 1** sets out key releases that all central government departments have been asked to provide in these letters. Twenty-three of twenty-five commitments for central government, due by December 2011, had been met by that month. The Chancellor's *Autumn Statement 2011*,<sup>2</sup> in November 2011, announced additional commitments, specifically supporting economic growth (see Part Four).

**1.3** Alongside the standard requirements, the Government has also made a series of commitments about service-specific data releases in areas including crime and justice, international development, health, education and transport.<sup>3</sup> Examples of recently published data include sentencing data by court, and GP prescribing data by practice.

**Figure 1**

## Key standard transparency requirements for all government departments

**Commitments in Prime Minister's letter to government departments (May 2010)**

New items of central government spending over £25,000 published monthly

All new central government contracts and tender documents for contracts over £10,000

Names, grades, job titles and pay rates for senior civil servants and non-departmental public body officials with salaries higher than £58,200

Organograms for government departments and agencies including all staff positions in a common format

**Additional commitments in Prime Minister's letter to Secretaries of State (July 2011)**

All items of spending to include plain English descriptions of their scope and purpose

Spending on government procurement cards for transactions of more than £500

All departments to work with Cabinet Office to produce an action plan for improving data quality and comparability

*Source: Prime Minister's letters to government departments (May 2010) and Secretaries of State (July 2011)*

**Governance arrangements**

**1.4** The Cabinet Office is the lead policy department, with the following main roles:

- **Overall coordination and monitoring.** This includes defining the scope of the agenda and formulating next steps. The Cabinet Office has completed a consultation on open data and is preparing a White Paper for spring 2012. It monitors departmental compliance with transparency commitments and reports progress to the Public Sector Transparency Board.
- **Secretariat to the Public Sector Transparency Board.** The board advises, supports and challenges public bodies in implementing transparency. It is designed to ensure that users and experts have a voice in how transparency initiatives are implemented.
- **Bringing together Whitehall officials to embed transparency across government.** The Cabinet Office arranges a practitioners group and a senior officials group.
- **Shared responsibility with HM Treasury for policy and guidance to departments on the standard transparency releases.** HM Treasury leads on policy for spending-related releases, while the Cabinet Office leads on the other standard releases outlined in the Prime Minister's letters on transparency.

**1.5** Although the Cabinet Office undertakes a lead role, other organisations have responsibilities that contribute to the agenda’s success, including other departments who are responsible for their own data releases (**Figure 2**). Responsibilities for some important elements of programme management are not clear. The Cabinet Office did not prepare an overall policy impact assessment at the outset, and there has been no systematic effort to assess the costs of implementing transparency initiatives or the benefits that result.

**Figure 2**  
Governance arrangements in central government for implementing transparency

Public body	Key responsibilities
HM Treasury	Leads on policy and issues guidance for standard spending-related transparency commitments.
Department for Communities and Local Government	Published <i>The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency</i> , <sup>1</sup> outlining its expectations of what local authorities should publish.
Selected departments	Work with the Cabinet Office to agree scope of commitments in Prime Minister’s letters on transparency. Responsible for releasing agreed data.  Operate sector-specific transparency boards, which advise departments on implementation.
The National Archives	Has central policy responsibility for the re-use of public sector information. Regulates and sets standards on the use and re-use of public sector information and information management. Promotes the re-use of public sector information through the UK Government Licensing Framework and the Open Government Licence.
Information Commissioner’s Office	Regulates information rights legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act. In the light of the transparency agenda, the Act is being amended as part of the post-legislative review process to create a new public ‘right to data’.

**NOTE**  
1 Department for Communities and Local Government, *The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*, September 2011, available at [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1997468.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1997468.pdf)

Source: National Audit Office



# Part Two

## Progress of implementing transparency

**2.1** This Part uses the draft public data principles as the basis to consider progress of implementing the transparency agenda. The principles are not Government policy, but were developed by the Public Sector Transparency Board in June 2010 to highlight areas of good practice, including:

- promoting use of the Open Government Licence enabling unrestricted re-use of public data;
- use of a single government portal, [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), for public data;
- encouraging data release in formats enabling easy analysis and reprocessing;
- developing data inventories so that it is clear what information is available; and
- ensuring releases are demand-led, and therefore responsive to the public.

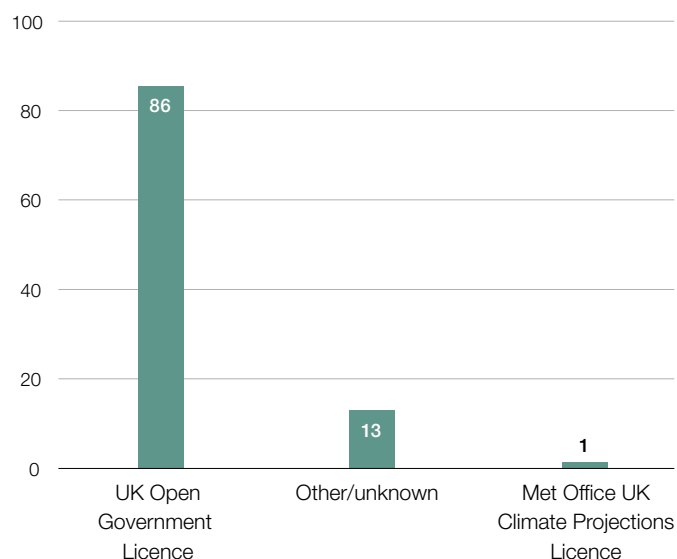
**2.2** The section also reviews areas of programme management which are crucial to securing value for money, including the Government's understanding of the costs, benefits and risks of implementing transparency.

### Licensing

**2.3** The Government has made significant progress in developing a non-restrictive Open Government Licence, and encouraging its adoption. Licensing is central to promoting access and allowing data to be reused. The Open Government Licence, launched in September 2010, forms part of the UK Government Licensing Framework and permits free, permanent, non-exclusive access to material made available under the licence. Analysis of data sets catalogued within [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) shows that 86 per cent are available under the Open Government Licence (**Figure 3** overleaf).

**Figure 3**Licences for data sets on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk)

Percentage

*Source: Cabinet Office*

### Use of a single government portal ([www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk))

**2.4** To facilitate access to public data, the previous Government launched the [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) website, in January 2010, which indexes data releases in a single searchable portal. The number of data sets indexed on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) has grown from 2,500 in January 2010 to 7,865 by December 2011.

**2.5** Although the volume of information catalogued by [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) has expanded, realising its intended benefits depends on:

- whether the website links to as full a range as possible of disclosable data. Owning public bodies are responsible for linking data to the website. However, due to the lack of publication of data inventories (see section 2.12), it is not possible to assess what proportion of the full range of disclosable data is linked to the site; and
- the structure and design of the website. For example, descriptive information about each data release is currently not standardised and incomplete. Users will therefore find it difficult to identify data sets that may be most useful.

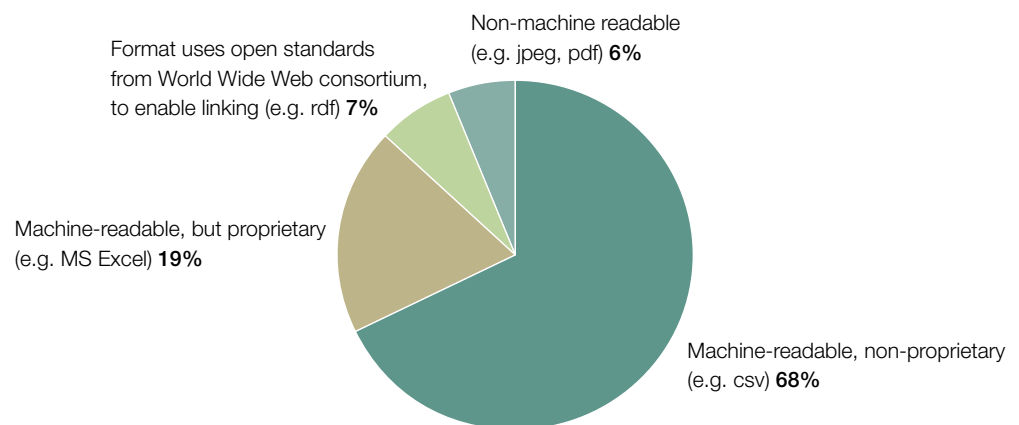
**2.6** Since its public launch in January 2010, [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) has had more than 1.75 million visits. However, from May to November 2011, 82 per cent of all users left [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) having only accessed either the home page or the data page. This indicates that they did not find the information they were seeking, although this does not reflect other potential access points for the data, for example linked third party websites or applications. The Cabinet Office has received user feedback that the website's navigation and interface lack usability and appeal. It is currently upgrading [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), to include better search functionality, a clearer standard taxonomy of the information held and designing the catalogue entry process to limit the scope for errors.

### Format of data releases

**2.7** How far data can be easily analysed, reused and linked to other data sets depends on its format. Three-quarters of the 13,000 data resources held on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) are in a machine-readable, non-proprietary format, meaning that they can be easily reprocessed (**Figure 4**). Developers advised us that these attributes are sufficient for the majority of tasks they would normally need to undertake to develop applications.

**Figure 4**

Formats of data resources on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk)



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Cabinet Office data

## Compliance with specific guidance on data sets

**2.8** Standardising data enables comparative analysis. The Government has provided guidance on the various standard data releases to encourage common structures. One example is HM Treasury guidance on monthly itemised spending data, which specifies content and provides direction on the timing of release, redactions, internal review processes and data hosting arrangements. Mandatory content includes correctly formatted dates, amounts, expense types and suppliers.

**2.9** Departments have complied with most mandatory elements of this guidance. Of 100 departmental spend data sets we reviewed, 78 per cent of the mandatory data fields were fully compliant. The vast majority of non-compliant fields related to formatting issues. Other non-compliance related to expense types and expense areas not being easily understood, hindering comparative analysis.

**2.10** According to Treasury guidance, spend data should be published by the last working day of the month following the month to which the data relates. However, by the end of 2011, 11 of 17 departments had not published data for November 2011 and seven had not yet published the spend data for October 2011.

**2.11** From September 2011, the updated guidance requires departments to include brief plain English descriptions explaining the purpose of all transactions, to give more contextual information. In the December 2011 releases, 8 of 11 departments included a description field in some form in their releases but only four fully met the plain English requirement by providing a clear description of all items listed.<sup>4</sup>

## Using data inventories

**2.12** The draft public data principles state that public bodies should maintain and publish inventories providing accurate, up-to-date records of data holdings, including information on formats, accuracy and availability. Without these inventories, users will not know the full range of data collected and potentially available for release. The Cabinet Office has not yet provided operational guidance on how data inventories should be developed. HM Revenue & Customs was the only department we identified that has published a comprehensive list of data holdings with information on formats, accuracy and availability.<sup>5</sup>

## Responsiveness to demand

**2.13** The draft public data principles set a clear expectation that data releases, and their formats, should be demand-led. Nine departments told us that they have actively considered public demand, for example through formal consultations, forums on websites including [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), and analysis of correspondence, parliamentary questions, media enquiries and Freedom of Information requests. There are some examples of departments specifically engaging with developers, for example through workshops or representation on some sector boards.

**2.14** The Cabinet Office did not engage with the public to establish demand for the standard data releases outlined in the Prime Minister's letters, but did consult with developers and industry to identify the additional releases announced in the *Autumn Statement 2011*<sup>6</sup> (see paragraph 4.1).

**2.15** None of the departments reported significant spontaneous public demand for the standard dataset releases. For example, page views for transparency data on the Ministry of Justice website represented just 0.02 per cent of the overall site traffic from April to September 2011. Service-specific releases have attracted greater interest. The Department for Education's school website tool has received on average 45,000 views per month in the first two months since its release in September 2011. By comparison, the transparency page on the Department's website, which includes links to its standard data sets, received on average 600 views per month in the period from April 2011 to October 2011. However, departmental figures do not include users of third party websites or applications.

## Understanding costs and benefits

### Costs

**2.16** Different types of data release have different cost implications, but neither the Cabinet Office nor other departments routinely collect data to monitor the additional costs of transparency initiatives. The Government has assumed that the standard releases required of all departments incur zero or very low costs, because they are releasing information already held. Although this report does not estimate total costs, this section illustrates some of the departmental and central costs incurred.

### Departmental staff costs for standard releases

**2.17** Departments noted that the biggest cost for standard releases was staff time and that they had no systems to record that staff time – often a small element in many officials' jobs. Eight departments, however, provided estimates of staff costs associated with preparing and publishing the standard transparency requirements in 2011-12. The costs range from £53,000 to £500,000. These represent a lower bound for the cost of standard releases because they only capture staff costs and do not include, for example, costs of upgrading IT systems or payments to contractors. While these costs are low, relative to the total spending of the departments, they are incurred by administrative functions, such as Human Resources and Finance, where costs are being cut significantly.

**www.data.gov.uk**

**2.18** The www.data.gov.uk website was originally run by the Central Office of Information and received funding of £1.2 million in 2010-11 from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. In 2011-12, the project was brought within the Cabinet Office, and further engagement activity with stakeholders increased the annual running costs to £2 million. The Cabinet Office hopes that improvements to the website (see paragraph 2.6) will increase efficiency and lower costs.

**Costs of service-specific releases**

**2.19** In addition to the costs of implementing standard requirements, departments with sector-specific transparency commitments incur additional costs. Examples include:

- the National Policing Improvement Agency produced street-level crime maps at a cost of £300,000 and estimates the annual running costs for hosting, supporting and maintaining the crime map site at more than £150,000.<sup>7</sup> The Agency has budgeted £216,000 in 2011-12 to further develop the website, including linking crime data to police and justice outcomes; and
- the Department for International Development estimates that to deliver the commitment to provide full information on international development projects with a value of more than £500 by January 2011, it incurred capital costs of £250,000, administrative set-up costs of £156,000 and has ongoing annual running costs of £64,000.

**2.20** While the above examples incurred relatively modest additional costs to make existing information more publicly available, greater costs would be associated with substantially developing new systems to provide public information where there are currently gaps. The case examples in Part Three illustrate that in many sectors existing information does not currently support individual choice or promote accountability.

**Benefits**

**2.21** Although the Government has wide-ranging objectives for transparency, few attempts have yet been made to monitor emerging benefits. In its *Making Open Data Real* consultation, the Cabinet Office identified six categories of potential benefits from transparency,<sup>8</sup> and its Open for Business website provides some examples of businesses benefiting from open data.<sup>9</sup> However, it is not yet using the six categories to set out what would constitute success, to systematically track benefits, or to promote rigorous measurement, including identifying unintended consequences.

**2.22** We asked all departments whether they had identified emerging benefits from the transparency agenda. Seven departments told us that benefits had materialised, although they could not quantify them. Examples include cost reductions in travel and subsistence spending and identifying and resolving data quality problems.

## Risks and unintended consequences

### Privacy

**2.23** Linking data sets is central to the transparency agenda. While it can be expected to generate benefits, it might also mean that personal information is disclosed without consent. The Government commissioned a review to consider the compatibility of transparency and privacy.<sup>10</sup> The review made 14 recommendations, for example, about governance processes and research into anonymisation techniques. The Government has not yet responded to the review.

**2.24** Some existing releases, such as reoffending data in criminal justice and GP prescribing data by practice, are based on individual-level data sets. For these releases, the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health respectively have carried out privacy impact assessments to identify and manage risks. Published data has been aggregated to protect anonymity by banding data and so protecting individuals' identities.

### Fraud

**2.25** There are fraud risks related to the release of itemised spending transaction data. For example, fraudsters can draw on such information in attempting to redirect payments made to legitimate suppliers. The Audit Commission has reported that councils detected frauds of this type amounting to £7 million in 2010-11. Such risks can, however, be mitigated by effective financial controls – which foiled £20 million of fraud attempts in the same period.<sup>11</sup>

**2.26** The Government has taken steps to raise the profile of fraud prevention in local government, including the publication of a fraud prevention strategy addressing the need for better prevention and enforcement.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the Department for Communities and Local Government has referred local authorities to fraud prevention advice published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.<sup>13</sup>

### Data quality

**2.27** The Cabinet Office requirement for all departments to produce data quality action plans by November 2011 has been deferred. The overall transparency agenda involves public bodies releasing multiple types of information. The range covers data approved as official statistics, which are subject to data protocols and reviews, to data sets taken directly from operational systems. There is variation in the intended accuracy of data sets, and degrees of control. In some cases, there are judgements to be made between the speed of release and data quality. The Treasury's guidance on itemised spending data states explicitly that to produce timely data, information should be released as it was originally recorded in financial systems, unless there are material changes to the data. Disclosures about data quality for these releases are not required.<sup>14</sup> However, in January 2011 the Treasury required all main departments to produce data quality improvement plans outlining steps to improve the standardisation and quality of spend data.

# Part Three

## Aligning transparency with choice and accountability

**3.1** The Government's reform programme promotes greater choice and accountability. Transparency is central to these reforms and the Government has said that it "will ensure that key data about public services, user satisfaction and the performance of all providers from all sectors is in the public domain in an accessible form. This will include data on user satisfaction, spending, performance and equality."<sup>15</sup>

**3.2** To support individuals in choosing appropriate providers and holding public bodies and providers to account, we consider that the following types of information are needed:

- Descriptive information about providers, for example location and provider type.
- Objective, standardised activity and performance information that sets out the levels of services provided and their quality.
- Information about performance based on people's experiences, for example user satisfaction information.
- Information on spending, enabling analysis of links between spending and performance.
- Contextual information about data, including quality disclosure, to assist interpretation.

**3.3** The current state of information release, according to these criteria, is patchy. There is variation in how far current data helps people to make informed choices, and helps communities and neighbourhoods to understand the performance of public services in their area. The following examples illustrate this variation.



## Choice in individual services

### Information to help choose schools

**3.4** The Government stated in its recent schools White Paper that parents' ability to choose a school will be enhanced by more standardised information on schools.<sup>16</sup> The Department for Education (the Department) has developed a schools performance web tool that brings together established and new data releases in a single location on its website.<sup>17</sup>

**3.5** The website helps parents to compare schools at the same stage of education, based on most types of information needed to support choice as set out in paragraph 3.2. The tool provides:

- key descriptive information, including school type and capacity, pupil and workforce characteristics;
- comparable information on school performance, including exam results for all key stages and new data on pupil performance, by low, middle and high attainers. The site also links to Ofsted reports and inspection results; and
- information on school finances. The tool provides income and spending data, for example, spending on teaching staff.

**3.6** The website does not provide parents' or children's feedback on their experiences of the school. Users can, however, access Ofsted inspection reports, which often contain summaries of the views of parents, children and governors. Ofsted also launched its Parent View website in October 2011 to collect and report parents' feedback on schools.<sup>18</sup>

**3.7** The information provided is standardised and comparable across all schools in England, with the following exceptions:

- Spending data for academies is not recorded according to the categorisation used for school-level financial data included in the tool. The Department intends to publish academies' financial data on a comparable basis in 2012. Where academies are federated under one academy trust, the data will be made available at academy trust level rather than individual school level.
- The Department does not collect or publish certain data for independent schools, for example on key stage 2 attainment (because key stage 2 tests and external marking are optional), or pupil characteristics.

**3.8** To support parental choice, the school performance tables provide in one place previously diffuse performance data. The level of public interest in that information has increased. The Department has reported that interaction with the website tool increased by 84 per cent in the last year, with 2.43 million views from September to November 2011, compared with 1.3 million views for the corresponding information in the same period of 2010.

### Information to help choose care services

**3.9** The Government's objective is for all those eligible for ongoing community based social care to be provided with a personal budget by April 2013, to give publicly funded users of social care services greater choice and control over their own care. With personal budgets, eligible recipients requiring community based care services can purchase services from public, private or third sector providers. With access to the right information, it can be expected that care users, or those choosing providers on their behalf, can make better use of the discretion inherent in personal budgets. This is particularly important, given recent reports raising concerns about some users' experiences of care.<sup>19</sup>

**3.10** Many adult social care users do not currently have all the necessary information to make informed choices about care providers. This includes:

- Basic information about care providers. This data is currently provided by local authorities and the Care Quality Commission.
- Comparable information about the quality of providers. The Care Quality Commission registers and inspects social care providers based on 16 minimum essential standards of quality and safety. The Commission publishes results for all providers on its website. However, the standard information does not differentiate on the basis of quality, beyond the minimum standards.
- User feedback on providers. Some local authorities are providing, or are planning to provide, websites that capture and share users' experiences of care. However, not all authorities provide this information and it is not standardised.
- Information about the price of care services. It can be difficult to provide price information, because prices differ across the country and vary according to the specific, and often complex, care needs of the individual user, as well as the service offered by the care provider. One local authority we visited is planning to provide information on price ranges on their website. Another will ask users of their web tool to first self-assess their needs and care budget and then suggest providers that provide services within these budgets.

**3.11** Information supporting choice of community based care services is very varied across local authorities. There is currently no standard information on the relative quality of registered providers. If expanding user choice is to result in more cost-effective service provision, users will need a broader range of comparable information to inform their choice.

## Accountability for neighbourhood and community services

### Police crime map

**3.12** In June 2010, the Government announced that it would publish crime data at street level to allow the public to better hold the police to account.<sup>20</sup> The police crime map website was launched on 31 January 2011 to fulfil this commitment.<sup>21</sup>

**3.13** The crime map website provides the following information:

- Basic information about neighbourhood policing team and local police force. The crime map profiles members of local neighbourhood police teams and provides contact details and information about beat meetings, where residents can communicate directly with their neighbourhood team.
- Comparable information about crime levels. The crime map provides monthly data for 11 crime categories for each street with eight or more postal addresses, unless there are additional privacy concerns. Users can compare crime levels with other neighbourhoods, police force areas or national averages. The Government has pledged to develop the crime map further so that by May 2012, the public can see police actions taken and justice outcomes for each crime.
- Links to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary police force profiles, which include victim satisfaction scores, and details of finances and spending, for each police force. However, this information is not broken down to ward level and the public is not able to compare spending information at the neighbourhood level to consider neighbourhood resourcing and deployment decisions, and to compare these with performance.

**3.14** Although the crime map allows the public to view more detailed information on the location of criminal activity than ever before, there are two key concerns about the quality and accuracy of the data:

- To protect privacy, street-level crime maps aggregate crime data and map it to an anonymous point, typically the geographical centre of a street. For example, where there are fewer than eight postal addresses on a street, the crimes may be repositioned to a nearby street. This can be misleading if crimes are attributed to a different location from where they were reported, for example a nightclub. To mitigate this problem, the crime map has, since January 2012, included locations such as nightclubs to which crimes can be attributed.
- While the Home Office sets central standards governing how the police should record crime, several reports have highlighted concerns about lack of consistent recording of crime across police forces.<sup>22</sup> As the data on the crime map is provided by each police force, any quality issues with the way the crimes are recorded are replicated within the crime map. The crime map website includes a disclaimer about these general data quality issues, but does not link to specific information that enables a user to judge the robustness of recorded crime data in their area.

**3.15** Before the launch of the crime map, the National Policing Improvement Agency conducted research, which showed that people found local police information and crime maps informative, and that greater knowledge of recorded local crime would not increase fear of crime. However, while the Home Office is taking steps to monitor and support the development of the crime map, it is not undertaking a systematic evaluation to determine its impact. Given the nature of the crime map, it may potentially drive wide-ranging behavioural responses. Existing sources may permit some relevant analyses: the British Crime Survey, for example, provides the Home Office with an opportunity to analyse any differences in peoples' experiences or reporting of crime, depending on their reported awareness or use of crime maps.

**3.16** The police crime map represents a significant step in providing information that can support better local accountability of police services. There has been a high level of demand from the public with an estimated 47 million visits between February and December 2011. Closer alignment between the crime maps and reporting of police activity and resource use would tighten accountability further. Evaluating the map's effects – intended and unintended – would help assess the benefits and manage risks.

### Local government accountability

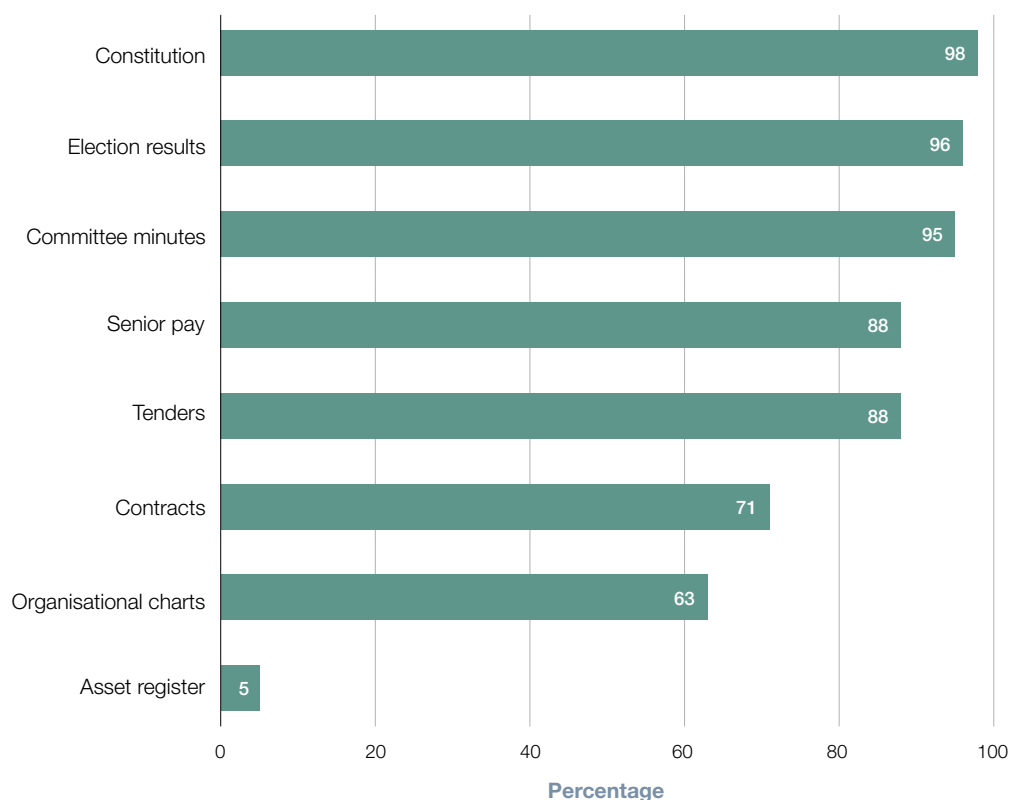
**3.17** Under the Coalition Government, the Department for Communities and Local Government has prioritised decentralisation and localism. The Department expects local communities and individuals to “hold local public service bodies to account for their use of resources”.<sup>23</sup> There have been significant changes in the types of information that communities and individuals can access. Local authorities have been encouraged to make new information transparent, while established frameworks for collecting and reporting performance information have been discontinued.

### Transparency in local government

**3.18** The Government's approach to encouraging transparency in local government is set out in its *Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*, which it published in September 2011.<sup>24</sup> It sets out minimum expectations for data release among local public bodies. With respect to the requirement to publish expenditure over £500, all councils have published data on their spending transactions with one exception, Nottingham City Council. We reviewed how far other key elements of the Code have been adopted, based on a sample of more than 200 English councils (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 5**

Proportion of local authorities releasing data in the  
*Code of Recommended Practice*

**NOTES**

1 Based on a review of 202 local authority websites undertaken in November 2011.

2 Tender and contract information includes information published on external websites.

Source: National Audit Office analysis

**3.19** There is variation in how far councils provide relevant information. To an extent, this reflects that some Code elements were not part of the draft Code, and therefore the Government's expectation of publication of these items is more recent. However, even for items where information is published, many of the releases do not include all of the information set out in the Code. For example, although 88 per cent of councils have published senior pay information, more than half of these releases do not describe the numbers of staff reporting to them or the budgets that they control.

**3.20** We also reviewed whether councils had published their expenditure data over £500 timeously and in machine-readable formats. Of the 202 councils we reviewed, 89 per cent have published the data by month, with one example of weekly releases and 91 per cent have published data in a non-proprietary, machine-readable format. At the time of our review, 80 per cent had produced data from the previous month, though in 7 per cent of cases, spending transaction data were four or more months old.

### Performance information in local government

**3.21** While the Government has encouraged greater transparency in local government, it has discontinued many of the existing arrangements for performance reporting. For example, the Government has stopped the National Indicator Set, along with some of its component data collections such as the Place Survey. Existing repositories of comparative data, such as the Audit Commission's OnePlace website, are no longer supported or updated.

**3.22** The Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department) has published a Single Data List cataloguing all of the data that councils must provide to central government. However, the Department considers that the publication of this information is not currently done in a way that allows for easy comparison between councils across a range of service areas, making it hard for residents to assess relative performance and value for money.

**3.23** The Department's preferred approach is for the local government sector to address this gap. The Local Government Association (LGA) in conjunction with local authorities is developing an online tool, LG Inform, which draws together comparative data to enable performance benchmarking and other analysis. The LGA expects to make the service available to the public in September 2012. The tool currently includes approximately 750 metrics in total, covering a range of services.

**3.24** In the future, LG Inform will allow local authorities to add voluntary additional data to the system. This is consistent with the principles of localism and reducing centrally prescribed performance data. However, voluntary data will need to be managed carefully if it is to provide meaningful information for performance measurement and accountability. For example, there is a tension between local bodies developing their own measures of performance and user satisfaction, and the demands of the public and local performance managers for comparable, benchmarked information. Such information requires uniform standards and definitions.

**3.25** Implementing greater transparency in local government provides new items of financial and operational information for the public. However, although the *Code of Recommended Practice* provides direction, there are still significant variations in how councils report this information. The Government has discontinued established performance frameworks. It considers that it is primarily for councils themselves to respond to citizens' requirements, and for the sector as a whole to develop an appropriate system to allow for performance benchmarking. Through the LGA, the local government sector is leading on a tool, LG Inform, to address this issue, but this will not be available to the public until September 2012. It is too early to determine whether this will meet the performance information needs of residents.

# Part Four

## Aligning transparency with economic growth

**4.1** A key objective of releasing more public sector information is to generate economic growth. The Government made a series of announcements relating to this objective in its *Autumn Statement 2011*,<sup>25</sup> including:

- new open data commitments, such as real-time running information on trains from Network Rail, to support developing web-based applications enabling more productive use of passengers' time;
- new commitments for licensing large data sets, including the Clinical Practice Research Datalink service which will provide linked, non-identifiable patient level primary and secondary health data. The Government expects this to promote growth in the life sciences research sector, for example, by reducing the costs of clinical trials;
- commitments to consult, for example, on linking welfare data to other public and commercial data to develop data and analytics markets relating to customer information;
- new governance arrangements to oversee access to data held by trading funds (see paragraph 4.7); and
- establishing an Open Data Institute to develop business innovation and exploit commercial opportunity from releasing public data. The institute will receive £10 million funding from the Technology Strategy Board over the current spending review period, with matched funding from industry and academia.

**4.2** While most announcements were for future commitments, the Government made a series of data sets available with the *Autumn Statement 2011*, for example, detailed weather observation and forecast information (see paragraph 4.11). However, many outlined measures continue to be developed. It is therefore too early to conclude on their likely success. This section instead considers the variations in estimates of the economic value of public sector information and reviews some of the arrangements the Government has announced to stimulate growth from public data.

## Estimates of economic value of public sector information

**4.3** Few studies have attempted to estimate the economic value of public sector information. Studies that have been carried out suggest a strong strategic economic case for enabling greater access to public sector information. However, the scale of the various estimates varies widely, owing to differences in approaches to benefits estimation and the assumptions of the economic models used.

**4.4** A recent review of the literature on reusing public sector information put the value of public sector information in the European Union at around €140 billion a year. The author based the estimates on extrapolating from studies of the total economic impacts of geospatial information in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>26</sup> Based on this review, the Government derived an estimate of £16 billion for the current total economic value of UK public sector information.<sup>27</sup>

**4.5** The Office of Fair Trading produced an earlier study in 2006 on the commercial use of public sector information.<sup>28</sup> They surveyed more than 400 public bodies to identify the income generated from public data release. They also commissioned research to estimate the economic value of UK public sector information. Based primarily on the survey results, the contractors estimated this value to be about £590 million in 2005.

**4.6** Both studies have limitations. The Office of Fair Trading report notes that top-down approaches, such as that used in the EU-wide estimate, tend to overstate the economic value of public service information. This is because they do not factor in reasonable substitutes available if that information does not exist or is prohibitively expensive.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the assumption of similar public sector information markets is crude given significant known differences between countries. However, the Office of Fair Trading report is likely to understate the economic value of public sector information. Their survey, and therefore the economic estimate, did not include all bodies likely to hold data of economic value – for example NHS trusts and local authorities. The Office of Fair Trading's report also pre-dates the extra datasets that have been released since 2006 as open data. When estimates of economic value vary this widely, it is difficult to assess the scale of effort or targeting needed to best build on that value.



## Getting extra value from public sector information

**4.7** Data expected to have economic value includes data that has not previously been made available, and data that has been traded but could be released under less restrictive terms. Examples of the former include the healthcare information to be made available to support the life sciences sector and other health services. The Department of Health's business case for a new Clinical Practice Research Datalink estimates benefits of £446 million, with costs of £275 million over ten years. The benefit figure mainly comprises efficiency savings from reducing the costs of medical studies and does not include wider economic benefits, such as potential job creation in the life sciences industry. The Government intends to charge users to cover the costs of the data linking process.

**4.8** For the release of practice level prescribing data, the impact assessment estimates the costs of the publication to be £450,000 in the first year and £100,000 in subsequent years. The Government expects that the release will lead to increased innovation in the pharmaceutical industry. It also expects that publication will generate efficiency savings as increased transparency of prescribing patterns encourages better prescribing. However, the impact assessment does not monetise the economic benefits, describing them as difficult to measure and speculative.

**4.9** Data known to have economic value include those already traded. Data held by the Ordnance Survey, Met Office, Land Registry and Companies House trading funds accounted for 60 per cent of all income received for public data in 2006. A recent academic paper, based on the 2006 Office of Fair Trading survey of income earned from public data, estimates potential gains from moving from charged-for to an open data regime in the UK of between £1.6 billion and £6.0 billion a year.<sup>30</sup> Their data are particularly economically valuable and are often referred to as 'core reference data'. This includes maps, address databases, land records and weather data, which provide opportunities for linking to other data sets to enhance their value. However, established licensing arrangements can provide barriers to use, limiting the potential for economic benefits.

**4.10** Trading funds must break even over a time period specified in their Trading Fund Order. Current revenue from selling data, as opposed to other services, varies by trading fund. A 2008 study commissioned by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (now the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) and HM Treasury estimated that the Met Office would lose around 1 per cent of its revenue were it to make raw data available for free, while at the other extreme, the Ordnance Survey would lose 26 per cent of its revenue from data sales to non-government sources.<sup>31</sup> The potential financial implications of free data release therefore vary widely across the funds.

**4.11** As a first step, the Government has announced some releases from these trading funds as open data. Examples include weather forecast and real-time observation datasets, and prices paid for residential property in England and Wales. The business case for this release estimated economic benefits of £60 million, with additional wider social welfare benefits of between £6 million and £27 million, over 20 years. This compares with costs of about £11 million over that period. Releasing the Met Office weather data sets make up 84 per cent of the total economic benefits.<sup>32</sup> We tested whether the business case complied with good practice in central government, and found that:

- neither the Met Office nor the Cabinet Office has assessed the impact of releasing weather data as open data on the wider market, so the benefits included in the business case are highly uncertain;
- it does not cover costs other than implementation costs and the loss of income due to free release of data sets previously charged for. For example, additional revenue loss may be expected from increased service competition from new commercial applications; and
- for the financial year 2012-13, the estimated revenue losses for the trading funds lie between £5,000 for the Met Office and £600,000 for the Land Registry. Based on revenue currently obtained from statutory and commercial data sales, this suggests that the planned releases represent only a part of the economically valuable data sets held across the four trading funds.

**4.12** The Government announced in its *Autumn Statement 2011* new governance arrangements for the four trading funds. They will form a Public Data Group and continue their trading functions. A separate Data Strategy Board will promote release of open data. It will receive at least £7 million in the current spending review period to buy data from the Public Data Group or wider public sector for free release. In future, the Data Strategy Board will seek to agree a proportion of dividends from the Public Data Group, to increase its funding. The Cabinet Office has not yet produced broader policy on open data from trading funds.

# Appendix One

## Methodology

Method	Purpose
Survey of and interviews with 16 departments <sup>33</sup> and wider stakeholders described in Figure 2	To collect information on transparency arrangements
Interviews with the Cabinet Office's Transparency team	To determine the Cabinet Office's role in the transparency agenda, and to collect information on the progress of implementation
Document review of central and departmental strategic and operational plans for transparency initiatives	To supplement interview evidence
Case studies. Analysis of schools, community based care services for adults, police, and local government sectors	To review case examples of how information is provided to the public for accountability purposes, and in support of wider reforms
Consultation with developers and the media	To understand the perspectives of intermediaries in realising potential benefits of transparency
Review of central and local government data releases	To assess compliance with Treasury guidance on departmental spending data, and for councils with the Department for Communities and Local Government's <i>Code of Recommended Practice</i>

# Appendix Two

## Timeline of transparency achievements and future aspirations

### **Prepared by the Cabinet Office**

The Transparency Agenda is a coalition pledge championed by the Prime Minister to make the Government more open. Every department of state and each arm's-length body shares responsibility as part of this Government's drive to make public sector organisations more accountable to the British public. Much has been achieved since we have gone about opening up Whitehall and the wider public sector, changing the relationship between the citizen and state by giving people access to data that matters to them. Greater transparency enables accountability, improves choices, increases public service productivity and quality as well as encouraging social and economic growth.

As a result of the work so far the public now has unprecedented access to data in government spend, transport, health, justice, crime and education. Much of this information is available on [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk), one of the largest government data resources in the world. We have also positioned Open Data as an integral part of the UK's economic growth strategy, announcing an ambitious package of measures in the Chancellor's *Autumn Statement 2011*.

Transparency and Open Data represent new ways of doing government. Therefore, as this agenda develops, we will continue to build the economic benefit case, demonstrating how these core operating principles can lead to new economic growth and greater efficiency within the public sector.

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**Achieved**

May 2010	First Prime Minister letter on transparency which included commitments for departments to publish senior staff salary details and data on central and local government spending.
June 2010	Public Sector Transparency Board, chaired by Minister for the Cabinet Office and consisting of public sector data specialists, meets for the first time to drive forward transparency agenda.
February 2011	Launch of police.uk by the Home Office which gives the public unprecedented access to crime data across the whole of England and Wales. Over 47 million visits since inception.
July 2011	<p>Second Prime Minister letter on transparency which set out commitments to publish data across public services including health, transport and criminal justice. The letter also included measures to improve the quality of government data.</p> <p>Data on apprenticeships paid for by the Government released by Department for Education.</p>
August 2011	Launch of 'Making Open Data Real' consultation which set out proposals for the Government's Transparency and Open Data Strategy.
August–October 2011	Nearly five hundred responses to the Making Open Data Real consultation received from a variety of sectors such as health, industry, local and central government.
October 2011	<p>Reoffending rates data published by Ministry of Justice.</p> <p>Free government data sets from Transport Direct published alongside road works data on strategic road network published by Department for Transport.</p> <p>Hospital complaints data published by NHS Information Centre.</p>
November 2011	<p>Launch of Open Data Measures in the Autumn Statement. These included establishing a Data Strategy Board and a Public Data Group that will maximise the value of the data from the Met Office, Ordnance Survey, the Land Registry and Companies House.</p> <p>Sentencing by court data made available by Ministry of Justice.</p>
December 2011	<p>7,865 data sets on <a href="http://www.data.gov.uk">www.data.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p>Twenty-three out of twenty-five commitments for central government in the Prime Minister's letters due by December 2011 are met.</p> <p>Inaugural meeting of the Transparency Senior Officials group which coordinates progress of transparency agenda across individual government departments.</p> <p>Publication of prescribing data by GP practices by NHS Information Centre.</p> <p>Publication of clinical outcomes data by NHS Information Centre.</p> <p>Real-time data on strategic road network (speed congestion) and weekly rail timetable data released by Department for Transport.</p>

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**Achieved continued**

January 2012	<p>Publication of summary of responses to 'Making Open Data Real' consultation alongside substantive consultation responses.</p> <p>Department for Education brings together school spending data, school performance data, pupil cohort data and Ofsted judgements, in a parent-friendly portal, searchable by postcode.</p>
March 2012	<p>Cabinet Office and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills publishes the terms of reference for Data Strategy Board.</p> <p>Department for Transport releases a range of highways and traffic data via the 'Roadworks' website, which includes data to help reduce congestion and enable business to make more predictable travel and logistics decisions.</p> <p>Publication of <i>Open for Business</i> which set out how open data is already fuelling UK businesses, creating jobs and supporting economic growth. This was accompanied by an interactive site to enable other organisations to tell government how they are using public data to create innovative new business models, products and services.</p>

**Planned**

April 2012	<p>Network Rail and the Traveline will work with the transport industry to make available timetable and real-time train and bus information to support the development of innovative applications to improve passenger journeys.</p> <p>Publication of the business plan for the Open Data Institute (ODI). The ODI will innovate, exploit and research the opportunities for the United Kingdom created by the Government's Open Data policy. In addition the ODI will develop the economic benefits case and business model for Open Data.</p> <p>United Kingdom to take over co-chairmanship of the Open Government Partnership from the United States. The Open Government Partnership is a multilateral initiative with more than 50 member countries that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to promote prosperity and reduce inequalities.</p> <p>Department of Health to release data about the quality of postgraduate medical education.</p> <p>Clinical audits and NHS staff satisfaction data released by Department of Health.</p>
Mid-2012	<p>Cabinet Office to publish Transparency and Open Data products setting out the Government's vision for embedding Transparency and Open Data as core operating principles of the public services. These products will include a formal response to the Kieron O'Hara report on privacy and transparency.</p> <p>Cabinet Office will continue to build an evidence base to demonstrate how increased transparency can promote economic growth and greater efficiency within the public sector.</p> <p>Individual departmental Open Data Strategies due for publication.</p> <p>www.data.gov.uk will be refreshed alongside ongoing work with government departments to help them improve quality of their metadata (information about the data) and to increase the portfolio of their published datasets.</p> <p>Home Office to release Crime Mapper to Justice Mapper data.</p>

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**Planned continued**

June 2012	Department for Education to open up access to anonymised data from the National Pupil Database.
September 2012	<p>Health and Social Care Information Centre will provide a service link to primary and secondary healthcare datasets to reinforce the UK's position as a global centre for research and analytics and boost UK life sciences.</p> <p>NHS Information Centre will publish further prescribing data.</p> <p>Open Data Institute due to open.</p>
During and beyond 2012	<p>Department for Work and Pensions and Cabinet Office via the new Welfare Sector Transparency Board will consider opportunities for securely linking welfare datasets to other government and commercial datasets to increase their value to the industry.</p> <p>Department for Work and Pensions will consult on the content of anonymised fit note data from 2012 to drive innovation in the occupational health sector and improve management of sickness absence.</p> <p>Department for Work and Pensions will design the Universal Credit system so that aggregate benefits data can be published during the first year of the live running of the system.</p> <p>Department for Health will ensure all NHS patients can access their personal GP records online by the end of this Parliament.</p> <p>Department for Transport plans to legislate to give the Civil Aviation Authority the power to publish data on the performance of aviation service providers.</p> <p>The Cabinet Office will set up an Open Data User Group (ODUG) to support the work of the new Data Strategy Board (DSB). The ODUG will advise the DSB on public sector data that should be prioritised for release as open data.</p> <p>Note: planned release dates are correct at the time of going to press.</p>

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Specific responsibilities of departments are set out in a number of documents, including the Prime Minister's letters of May 2010, and July 2011, and in departmental Open Data Strategies which detail current and planned data releases that departments themselves are responsible for delivering. Open Data Strategies are due for publication for the first time later in the year and will be included in departments' business plans and refreshed yearly thereafter.

The Cabinet Office also has a small strategic team that aims to provide strategic leadership on this agenda, and specifically is responsible for:

- Bringing together officials from across government to help promote and deliver transparency agenda.
- Advising the Government on the progress of the transparency agenda.
- Providing a secretariat to the Transparency Board.
- Providing guidance and approving departmental 'Open Data Strategies'.
- Managing and developing the [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk) website.
- Working with other departments such as the Ministry of Justice to look at the legislative landscape around transparency agenda.
- Setting up the Open Data User Group to provide advice on release of Open Data to the Data Strategy Board.
- Setting up the Open Data Institute.
- Developing policy in areas specified in the timeline.

### **Cabinet Office**

**April 2012**



# Endnotes

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