



Department for
Communities and
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Dear Colleague,

Reducing data burdens on local authorities

I am writing to let you know about the new arrangements we have set in place for managing down the burden and cost of central data requirements. I also welcome your views on ways we might deliver further reductions in data burden.

We established the single data list as a comprehensive catalogue of central government's data requirements from local authorities in 2010 <http://tinyurl.com/ochuxhs>. The promise was simple; if a data requirement wasn't on the list, you were under no obligation to collect or send it to central Departments.

We have now set up a Gateway Group for the single data list as challenge function co-designed with the sector which any new data requirement must pass. The principles are attached to this letter for your information. While we have abolished nearly 30% of the inherited stock of data collections and significantly reduced the scale of many more, there is much more we can do. I will be challenging my own department and others across Whitehall to identify opportunities to reduce bureaucracy and data burdens.

With this in mind, I would be keen to hear from you on which ongoing data collections on the single data list you think could be slimmed down, collected in a less onerous fashion, or closed down completely. I intend to use the results of this exercise to challenge the justification for all data requirements on the single data list. I would be grateful if you could email your suggestions to burdens@communities.gsi.gov.uk by 18 January 2014.

BRANDON LEWIS MP

THE SIX DATA PRINCIPLES

Below are the six data principles against which each proposed new data requirement should be assessed. Each data request must meet at least one of these of these principles.

Central Government may reasonably require data from local councils:

1. To fulfil international obligations, for example under EU directives.
2. To support the effective administration of funding. Clarity is important here in highlighting where data are being used as proxies (e.g. free school meals being used as a proxy for need).
3. To support accountability to Parliament for national public funds and national policy decisions.
4. To hold public services to account, at a national level - holding Government to account for national delivery.
5. To support the evaluation of economic, social and environmental trends, in the national interest.
6. To provide comparable local performance data, by exception, where it doesn't already exist, in order to support local accountability by citizens.

Department for Communities and Local Government
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