Camden Council's Data Charter

Updates from Residents Panel 2023

Camden

Introduction to the Data Charter

Camden Council strongly believes that data rights are human rights. Data is an important part of any modern organisation and is often talked about as the future. However, there are significant challenges around ensuring trust in organisations that collect, hold and use people's personal information. While the dangers to individual freedoms can be exploited, the possibilities and general concepts involved in data are often misunderstood.

We must foster trust through collaboration with our residents so that they are involved in the decision making around the data we hold about them and understand how and why it is used to improve service delivery, policy decisions and their experience with the Council.

In the spirit of openness and transparency, we are determined to show how a public organisation can lead the way and act as a responsible custodian of data. We drafted the Data Charter principles, vision, success criteria and governance with the help of Camden's citizens through a Resident Panel representative of our communities. In doing this, we responded to the Camden 2025 vision for the borough and its call on the Council to increase impactful citizen and community participation and to open up our democratic processes.

Our commitments to the Data Charter explain how we will achieve what residents demand of us, including an additional principle and updated long-term or ongoing commitments from our second Resident Panel in January 2023.

Principles

1. Build trust through transparency
Clearly state or publish data sharing and handling where possible under UK law. Provide mechanisms that show what data is held on residents, its use and how to correct it if it's wrong and publish how and why we use the data we have on residents.

2. Provide accountability and oversight
Protect residents' rights over their data and continue to develop stakeholder engagement and partnership with our use of data through more public engagement. Provide channels for contact for residents about the Data Charter, and clearly signpost points of contact for datarelated queries, and mechanisms that allow residents to view their rights and how their data is used.

Projects that use data must be assessed for rationale, risks, and impact on privacy and ethics against the Data Charter. Form an independent and representative panel of Camden residents and experts annually, with access to these projects and relevant information about data use.

3. Make sure data use is secure, safe, and ethical
Balance minimising risks (and preventing unacceptable ones) with maximising benefits of using data to help deliver services. Demonstrate how risks and negative consequences are mitigated and dealt with. Make sure data use is fair, beneficial, and protective of vulnerable and marginalised groups. There should be proof of need and clarity of purpose for the data, and it should be used proportionately and in the best interest of residents.

4. Make sure data is used for public good and be mindful of residents' data
We must be mindful, respectful, show a duty of care to and act in the best interests of our residents when handling data about them. We should obtain consent when it is the correct legal basis, allow residents to access data about them, make corrections, and meet requests to have data deleted where it is possible under UK law. Data should be used to improve the quality of life of residents by improving our services, while anticipating potential unplanned outcomes from these uses of data.

5. Be beneficial for all by using an outcomes-based approach
Take a responsible approach to proposed use of data by clearly showing the outcomes it will achieve, intended or not, and how that will affect the community and individuals the data is about. Show how and why a use of data is beneficial in supporting service delivery or for informing policy, in each instance. Recognising and identifying benefits of any uses of data and an ambition to reduce social disparities through improved use of data.

6. Camden's external partners should sign up to the Data Charter principles
External companies should meet the same ethical standards we adhere to in this Data Charter, which will be agreed with suppliers and written into contracts as a condition.

7. Protect individuals' rights and privacy

Keep residents informed and updated on their individual rights over the data held on them. Ask for consent when it is the correct legal basis and allow residents to opt out when it is possible under UK law. Make sure there is thorough scrutiny of proposed uses of data so that we do not exclude certain groups or communities, and provide ways for residents to view and correct data about them

8. Ensuring that the information we share about data use is clear and accessible

Processes should be created for active, clear, and relevant communication with the public so people can understand how data is being used and definitions clear of jargon. These communications should be accessible and inclusive for all, including for example those with no IT access, English as an additional language and residents who have disabilities, with clear visual representations of how data is being used, the intended benefits achieved, and where to access more information.

Vision for the Data Charter

- Earn residents' trust through transparency and accountability.
- Provide leadership on the ethical use of data.
- Direct best practice in our use and processing of data.
- Be inclusive of people from all backgrounds and with protected characteristics and make sure there is no bias in data collection and use. Make sure collection, access and management of data is accessible, to be inclusive for all residents the data is about.
- Make sure data use is beneficial for all.
- In turn, residents will develop confidence, understanding and a say in how we use the data we hold about them.

Success criteria

- The Data Charter is written and implemented within a reasonable timescale.
- There is a system of communication in place for outreach and education through different channels that are accessible to all groups in Camden's communities.
- There will be a gradual reduction in social inequalities through improved use of data.
- The number of complaints and disputes about data use and interpretation will be reduced.
- There will be systems in place to enable residents to interact and provide feedback.

Governance

- Establish an independent panel made up of residents, experts (data law, ethics etc) and councillors – Council officers to offer support.
- Conduct annual reviews – monitor objectives and what has been implemented, and transparent audit measuring success of adherence to the Data Charter. Outline what the monitoring objectives are and make them measurable.
- Create a new position of a Data Charter Officer to solely work on the Data Charter for at least three years to embed this new initiative.
- Publish all the above via various channels.

Our commitments to the Data Charter

The following is a list of commitments that we have made to explain how we will abide by the principles and achieve the vision, success criteria and governance outlined in the Data Charter.

Each commitment is linked to the vision, success criteria and governance to show how we will meet the demands of the Data Charter, including a timescale for each commitment. These have been divided into commitments to be met by the next year and long-term or ongoing commitments. These commitments may be renewed or changed, or new ones created through our program of public engagements mentioned below.

In response to the new principle around communications and accessibility (Principle 8), the Council has made some new commitments specifically in response to that new principle:

Commitments to be met in next year

- We will move from a Resident Panel approach to less formal engagement events, Camden Talks. These will be held in each of the five neighbourhood areas in the borough in partnership with our voluntary and community sector partners. These will focus on changes to services and proposed data enabling those changes. Residents will be able to have discussions and give feedback in these sessions. We commit to this pledge by May 2024.
- We will develop communications materials that break down particular aspects of data use, including in making changes to council services. Residents will be able to feed back on these uses. We commit to this pledge by May 2024.
- We will develop accessible communications around the Data Charter and data use in formats including easy read for people with learning disabilities, British Sign Language and translated materials. We will also create printed information about the Data Charter and data use to distribute in libraries and community spaces. We commit to this pledge by August 2023.

Long-term or ongoing commitments

- We commit to an annual programme of Camden Talks engagement events across the borough around data use.
- We commit to improving how our Open Data Camden platform displays information, and to make its contents more visual where possible.
- The Council will communicate with its residents through an appropriate channel, either Resident Panel or through Camden Talks, if a new technology or methodology for data use is proposed which significantly alters the delivery of Camden's frontline services.

Camden