

# WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

## CABINET OFFICE

12 December 2012

**Minister for Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Francis Maude):** Update on Departmental Open Data Commitments and adherence to Public Data Principles

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### **Rt Hon Francis Maude:**

I am today providing the first update on Her Majesty's Government's commitments to open data as set out in departmental Open Data Strategies and its performance against the Public Data Principles for the period between July and September 2012. The UK is seen as a global leader in the field of transparency and it is important that we monitor and report on progress achieved.

I am pleased to report that overall progress made shows that the open data agenda has become more established within individual departments since the publication of the Open Data White Paper in June 2012. This first statement will act as a benchmark for progress on the Government's commitment to open data. A detailed report elaborating on the figures, giving examples of progress made and the barriers to be overcome can be found on the [data.gov.uk](http://data.gov.uk) website and will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Performance against the Public Data Principles

The Public Data Principles<sup>1</sup> state that all data should be released in an open format, be re-usable, machine-readable and linkable across sectors to allow for comparative 'like-for-like' analysis. The openness of datasets is measured using Sir Tim Berners-Lee's 'Five Star Data Deployment Scheme' and our aspiration is to have all datasets released at the level of at least 'Three Stars' which means that datasets released on [data.gov.uk](http://data.gov.uk) must be published now in a non-proprietary format. By adherence to these principles, Government can help to encourage greater use of published data and also help to reduce potential barriers to innovation based on the use of that data. 52% of datasets published on [data.gov.uk](http://data.gov.uk) by central government departments and their arm length bodies are of 'Three Stars' and above quality.

[Data.gov.uk](http://data.gov.uk) provides a single portal for access to all government datasets and its functionality has been greatly improved over the summer to enable the automatic validation of formats, a better publishing process, as well as the ability for users to monitor the frequency of publications. [Data.gov.uk](http://data.gov.uk) provides a forum for data users to discuss, request and comment on datasets. This has been supplemented with a service that directs requests for new unpublished datasets to the Open Data User Group to review and, if deemed worth pursuing, prepare business cases in support of their publication.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.data.gov.uk/library/public-data-principles>

## Completion of commitments undertaken by departments

Of the seventeen central departments, nine are reported as having 'Met' their commitments to make available data on central and local corporate spend, salaries, organograms and crime data as set out in the first of the Prime Minister's letters to Government departments on opening up data (May 2010) with the remainder reporting a delay.

Completion of the commitments to publishing key data on the National Health Service, schools, criminal courts and transport as set out in the second of the Prime Minister's letters to Cabinet Ministers on transparency and open data (July 2011) is better. Eleven departments are reporting their commitments are 'Met' and only five reporting a delay. One department is reporting it would be unlikely to meet its commitment due to security issues.

Compliance against departmental Open Data Strategies commitments sees thirteen departments reporting they have 'Met' or are 'On Track' and only four departments reporting a delay.

A key commitment in the Open Data White Paper was for all transparency sector panels to establish privacy experts by September 2012. I can report that five out of seven of these panels have confirmed that they have privacy experts embedded within their membership. Two departments have internal groups with no representation of external open data users although they do have a privacy expert as part of their membership.

## Summary of the July to September Reporting Period

We are seeing the release of open data steadily becoming the norm within government, despite the issues surrounding legacy infrastructures and business change. Infrastructure barriers will not be overcome until legacy systems are replaced or revised with more efficient and transparency-orientated systems or additions to allow for systematic publication of corporate data.

Further work must also be carried out to embed transparency as a culture and open data as a process within government departments and their arms length bodies. This can be achieved through further investment in stronger guidance, for example in how best to publish consistently to allow for better use of the datasets across sectors, and through good practice sharing amongst the policy and delivery community, with particular focus on arms length bodies. This will help ensure that these bodies comply with all their commitments and that the datasets they publish are done so in a format consistent with those published by central departments.

The actions noted under each section of this report will be updated in future Statements to Parliament.