

Transparency - frequently asked questions (FAQs)

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What is the government's transparency agenda?

We are bringing the operation of government out into the open so that everyone can see whether it is delivering good value for money. This involves publishing government documents online and making public sector data freely available.

What are the chief government documents being published online?

We are publishing public accounts online so that people can scrutinise them and help to identify overspending. These documents include:

- All new items of central government spending over £25,000 for goods and services in full
- All new items of local government spending over £500
- All new central government contracts and tender documents over £10,000 – featuring all performance indicators, break clauses and penalty measures
- All new local government contracts and tender documents over £500 – again, in full.

What government data is being released?

We are making as much public sector data as possible freely available to people. This open data agenda is being led by the release of a number of key datasets. These include:

- Names, grades, job titles and annual pay rates for most [civil servants with salaries over £150,000](#)
- Monthly crime statistics to be published online by the police at a street-by-street level
- Hospitals to release weekly online data on MRSA and C-difficile infection rates.

How is government data being made available?

We are publishing government datasets online in an open format. Anyone is free to re-use the data to create socially useful applications and websites. We envisage that data will be:

- published in reusable and machine-readable form
- released under an open licence enabling free reuse, including commercial reuse
- available and easy to find through a single easy to use online access point (<http://www.data.gov.uk>)

- published using open standards and following the recommendations of the World Wide Web Consortium.

What is the “right to data”?

We will create a new “right to data” which gives people the right to request the release of government-held datasets. These datasets would then be published regularly. We have already identified the most requested datasets:

- Land Registry
- Companies House
- Integrated Business Register
- Environment Agency data
- transport data
- weather information.

What is the Public Sector Transparency Board?

A [Public Sector Transparency Board](#) has been established in the Cabinet Office to support public sector organisations as they fulfil the government’s transparency and open data commitments. The Board’s responsibilities include:

- setting open data standards across the public sector
- driving through the opening up of datasets according to public demand
- developing the right to data alongside the Ministry of Justice and advising on its implication.

Who is on the Public Sector Transparency Board?

The Public Sector Transparency Board is chaired by the [Minister for the Cabinet Office, Francis Maude](#). Board members feature a mix of external experts, data users and public sector data specialists. They include some of the UK’s leading experts and advocates on transparency and open data:

- Tom Steinberg, one of the UK’s leading experts on data transparency and founder of mysociety
- Sir Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web
- Professor Nigel Shadbolt, from the University of Southampton
- Dr Rufus Pollock, from Cambridge University.

[Public Sector Transparency Board - who's who](#)