

Promoting a better understanding of the work going into our Open Government Partnership (OGP) development is central to increasing interest and engaging partners.

In this brief update we provide an overview on the Open Data commitment made in [Glasgow's OGP Action Plan](#).

What does making data open mean to Glasgow?

Put simply, Open data is data freely available and accessible to anyone for use, re-use and sharing by anyone for any purpose.

Where organisations commit to sharing the data they have with citizens, there is an opportunity to work with service users to co-design services and shape key decisions that impact on communities. The ambition for Glasgow over the next few years is set out in its new [Strategic Plan 2022-2027](#). One of the key challenges is to support staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities. This means working in partnership with communities to shape services.

Open data will be a key part of this partnership between the city and its citizens.

How does Open Data increase and enable stakeholders, citizens and residents to participate in civic decision making?

By sharing more of their data, public bodies - including the Council - commit to becoming more transparent and open in making the evidence available on which decisions about services are made.

Open data is a key component in helping people in Glasgow better understand the conditions and context around which decisions are made. Participation in civic decision-making starts with opening up evidence used to make decisions, facilitate discussion, dialogue and options setting. The evidence includes access to open data – however, the data sharing needs to be easy to find, manipulate and understand.

The more accessible the data, the better the chance that people participate in the discussion. It also needs to be meaningful to citizens.

What approaches have you taken to making Open Data as useful and accessible to citizens as it can be?

To date, Glasgow City Council's focus around open data has been to identify and encourage data owners to make data available – this includes both Council services and city partners. The second focus has been to make the data discoverable, accessible and meaningful.

The main focus for open data has been to publish via the city Open Data hub at <https://data.glasgow.gov.uk>

The approach for the Open Data hub is threefold:

- Publish open data in its raw form – either as csv and excel formats, or as dynamic live data using APIs (Application Programme interface) which users can query. The hub enables raw data to be displayed on simple maps or downloaded for analysis by the user
- Integrate the raw data into visualisation tools such as dashboards and maps. Users can play around with the data and better understand it using charts, maps and other visual means; and
- Storytelling around data using ‘storymaps’. Narrative and visuals tell a story around the data which provide context and meaning while highlighting the potential importance.

The Council is also making data open and freely available via dashboards and other visualisation platforms such as Microsoft BI that displays a range of city data – e.g. Covid data are available via a public dashboard accessible from the Council website. A living city dashboard showing live data on city vibrancy (such as transport, jobs, retail, and commercial transactions) is also now freely available via the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.

The Council will begin to use social media to raise awareness of the existence of open data and the tools and stories created around it, to encourage people be they citizens, partners or innovators, to explore and use the data.

What are the barriers to providing more open data and, conversely, what is the aspiration as the work develops?

Barriers to providing more open data include the accessibility and quality of data held and collected – this needs to be cleansed and validated before release. There is also an apprehension around the interpretation of open data when released – this needs to be addressed by assuring data owners that context will be provided when releasing the data. There are technological and system barriers to releasing data as the systems in which data are held are sometimes not able to generate regular extracts of data for release, or the underlying data cannot be integrated into visualisation platforms to provide the context and meaning.

Lastly, the end user barriers need to be overcome, allowing users to access the open data they need easily. Put simply this means providing access to data in uncomplicated ways and providing tools to help understand the data, analyse and interpret meaning from it, in addition to showing the relevance of the data to everyday life e.g. what it tells us about our neighbourhoods, our schools, our care system, environment etc.

What drives our work is the desire to grow accessibility and use through the development of the hub and other open data channels. We are also motivated to create specific structures through which citizens directly engage with services using open data, as part of active dialogue and decision-making processes.

To date methods to do this have been technical in focus (such as data hackathons), but the aspiration is to create structures where everyone can make use of open data in meaningful ways as part of meaningful dialogue and interaction with city service providers.