

Electoral Registration Data Standards

Case Study – Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Our Approach



In-house matching of the register against the LLPG

At Staffordshire Moorlands, we matched our register address data against the LLPG. Our electoral registration software has an LLPG integration system that makes things easy. Our approach was to link the LLPG addresses to the register addresses but not match them. We opted to manually match the addresses so that we could be sure that the system had linked them correctly. This was not a difficult process but it was time consuming. We spent approximately 30 working days, spread over a few months, to perform the matching.

The initial upload of data was performed with the aid of the EMS supplier and IT department. However, it took some time to begin the matching work with the need to conduct the annual canvass, deal with various elections. The LLPG custodian now sends regular updates to us, but these may include everything from information about lay-bys to mobile phone masts, as well as the domestic addresses that we need.

Dealing with problem addresses

We used other records that the council holds (mainly council tax), to check that more difficult properties to match were correctly linked, and to make sure that the same people were in the property in question. Simply matching address to address is not enough in some instances. Having access to the LLPG allowed us to 'triangulate' the records. The Royal Mail web site for postcode checking was invaluable too. Properties like 'The Bungalow' and 'The Cottage' can prove quite challenging when two or three are located in the same village. In some instances it is only the names of the residents that allow for proper matching.

Reports from the EMS supplier showed up any properties that had duplicate links, and those properties having an LLPG UPRN that we didn't have (and vice versa).

Working on two machines

We found it useful to work on two machines – having other records and the search facility of the EMS software on one, while doing the actual matching on the other. The decision to match the data in-house caused us to have access to other council systems for which they have the consequent internal recharge from IT.

Sources of information and help

Good sources of information include: council tax staff who know a particular area, canvassers for the patch, LLPG custodian who will know his system better than you, will all prove helpful in getting the full picture of which property is which and more to the point, who is in it. Aerial photographs can help too. We also enlisted the assistance of a local postman, one of our environmental health officers and have rang and visited one or two individuals.

Our approach involved only using those who had understood the importance of matching the right properties, and who would be using the system after the matching

had taken place. This would keep errors to a minimum. This meant that only the electoral registration staff undertook the matching, but we are a small authority with only 43,000 properties and the urban matches were straightforward. We have worked long hours to ensure that rolling registration and the rest of the 'day job' has chugged along.

Further data comparison work

We plan another data comparison with the LLPG to show up any missed anomalies and to ensure that the LLPG has our correct property references there. We will keep filtering until we are happy with the end product.

Key lessons

Timescales

- Do not under-estimate the length of time this will take to match you register against the LLPG.
- Plan for canvass and election work to interrupt the data standards implementation process

Addresses

- Urban addresses linked very well and just threw up odd human errors in postcodes and spellings (both in the register and in the LLPG. It was the rural areas that demanded most attention.
- Some problem addresses will need to be dealt with at the annual canvass when canvassers who know their patches are on the ground.
- Where your LLPG updates have domestic addresses, which are currently being built, you may want to hold onto them before printing a batch of 'A' forms. Entire block of flats that have been put on hold, due to the down-turn in the property market, will only be returned as 'no such address'. If you do hold them it is best to revisit them occasionally.

Accuracy of LLPG

- Do not always assume that the register is always incorrect and that the LLPG is always right. The LLPG is not concerned about who is resident at a house or whether, electorally speaking, the address is as it needs to be. We have electoral/postal addresses stored in our system as well as LLPG addresses.
- We hold both the LLPG address and the mailing address that the electors use to identify their property and have mail delivered.

Outstanding issues to address

- What do we do with houses in multiple occupation? The LLPG has just one unit, but from our point of view that one unit has perhaps nine residential rooms (old fashioned 'bedsits' with communal kitchens and bathrooms) so for us it is nine units.
- What do we do with the plethora of 'new streets' created in the LLPG in rural areas that the population living there do not know exist?

Finally, we are confident we are almost there - with just a few odd properties to go and all will have UPRNs. The matching exercise has certainly tidied up our register, and shows that urban properties are consistent in terms of address.

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