Bridging the administrative data gap
Supporting researchers and data custodians

Administrative data in the UK

- are collected by government departments and other organisations
- are collected for the purposes of registration, transaction and record keeping, usually while delivering a service or for day-to-day operations - not research
- cover the whole of the UK’s population
- give us a detailed picture, leading to greater understanding of our society and better informed government policy

In the UK

- different levels of legislative, administrative & budgetary autonomy for each country (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) mean administrative records are collected differently
- acquiring the data requires coordination and negotiation with multiple data owners and other parties
- using the data for research involves different legal pathways in the UK
- acquiring data is a time-consuming, resource-intensive, complicated task
- data retention policies vary

The creation of the Administrative Data Research Network builds on the Administrative Data Liaison Service and the Administrative Data Taskforce, and aims to establish a UK-wide network to bridge these barriers.

Accessing administrative data via ADRN

1. Project Application Development
   - Contact us
   - Discuss & develop
     - your project idea with User Services to explore possibilities
   - Complete
     - the project proposal form, which will be presented to the Approvals Panel

2. Approval
   - The Approvals Panel decides if the project is feasible and if it can progress
   - We inform you of the Approvals Panel’s decision
   - Become an Accredited Researcher
     - receiving specialised training, which starts as close to the project start as possible

3. Data Negotiation & Setup
   - Data Negotiation
     - the Network negotiates on your behalf with data custodians
   - Data Linkage
     - the Network matches and links the data via a trusted third party (if required) and prepares your bespoke dataset

4. Project Started
   - Access data
     - in one of our Administrative Data Research Centres

About the Administrative Data Research Network

- 4 countries
- 3 devolved governments (Eng/England)
- 3 national Statistics Agencies
- 15 universities

We help academic, government and 3rd sector researchers carry out social and economic research on linked, de-identified administrative data.

We want to facilitate ground-breaking research which improves our understanding of society, which can inform governments, councils and charities to help shape policies and target their work in ways which will benefit society.

The Network is coordinated by the Administrative Data Service, led by the University of Essex.

We have four Administrative Data Research Centres

- England, led by the University of Southampton
- Northern Ireland, led by Queen’s University Belfast
- Wales, led by Swansea University
- Scotland, led by University of Edinburgh

Who are the stakeholders we work with?

- Users (Researchers)
- Expert Groups
- Institutional Guarantors
- Data Owners (and Statistics Authorities)
- Trusted Third Parties (linking partners)
- Approvals Panel

How can User Services bridge the gap?

- helping researchers understand the processes around accessing de-identified administrative data
- putting researchers in contact with key academic staff within the Network
- supporting researchers’ projects through provision of metadata, user-guides, analysis, risk assessment and feasibility guidance
- helping researchers obtain data controller permissions, putting data sharing or service level agreements in place
- liaising with data suppliers and the IT hardware providers to ensure data are transferred safely and efficiently between indexers, TTP/linkage agent and the secure environment
- setting up secure access to the safe settings and ensuring that the researcher is able to access data and undertake analysis
- supervising researchers using/existing the secure environment
- undertaking disclosure control prior to releasing data from the secure environment
- bespoke personal support to users:
  - online one-on-one meetings
  - web forms
  - lengthy process, so regular catch-ups and managing expectations
  - catalogue of administrative sources and project by project support

Who are User Services?

- support personnel, sometimes partly researchers
- good knowledge of the data
- proficient in translating requirements, mediating, data negotiation
- thinking laterally
- knowledgeable on existing legal pathways; paving the way for new research

Authors

Dr. Niaoule Chatiou, Carlotta Greci, John Sanderson, Linda Winsor (Administrative Data Service)

References