

Rapid funding call to use and enrich the data within the Data & Connectivity National Core Study (NCS) capability

A. The Data & Connectivity NCS

In recent months, scientific advisers and key funders have identified where the UK must increase research to respond to near term strategic, policy and operational needs, and ultimately improve resilience against COVID-19 through 2021 and beyond. Six COVID-19 National Core Studies (NCS) described [here](#) have been established to meet these needs.

The **Data and Connectivity NCS**, led jointly by Health Data Research UK and Office for National Statistics, is bringing together key data assets, research infrastructure and organisations from across Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland to organise medical, biological and social science data on an unprecedented scale. Through the [Health Data Research Innovation Gateway](#) and the UK's national Trusted Research Environments (TRE) this vital data is being made available to researchers for analysis, ethically and safely in line with the Five Safes best practice principles, to accelerate COVID-19 research.

The Data & Connectivity NCS commenced on 5 October 2020 and has so far made 32 datasets available through TREs, as set out in Appendix 1. Following feedback from different data users across the COVID-19 researcher community, it is apparent that there is considerable interest in the assets. However, research teams require funding to spend the additional time required to access the data and support the linkage efforts to meet their research needs.

In partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Data & Connectivity programme is opening a rapid funding call for already funded **UKRI COVID-19 Open Call and UKRI/NIHR Rapid Response Initiative research** to use and enrich the data within the Data & Connectivity NCS capability.

B. Purpose of funding call

The aims of this call are to:

- **Enable greater impact** from currently funded UKRI & NIHR COVID-19 research through access to the large and rich datasets available through the Data & Connectivity NCS.
- **Produce results that can inform** the near term national COVID-19 response, and the research data and analytical requirements of SAGE and its sub-groups.
- **Enhance the data assets** being made available through Data & Connectivity NCS and make accessible for other researchers to use e.g., by creating additional linkages, improving data, creating legacy resources (open datasets, code or tools) on the Innovation Gateway.

C. NCS principles of participation

All National Core Studies have committed to a set of principles to enable delivery and share data in a way which builds public trust. All studies funded through this call must agree to these principles and specific requirements:

- Work collaboratively to actively share data to allow the scientific community to pool expertise, draw fresh insights, and increase our collective understanding. *For example, joining the weekly delivery meetings that bring together all Data & Connectivity NCS partners and share findings and progress openly ahead of publication.*
- Ensure unconsented data is accessed through secure platforms accredited or working towards accreditation by the UK Statistics Authority to comply standards established according to Digital Economy Act requirements, or working towards this status, which allows insights to be generated whilst maintaining privacy and data security.
- Demonstrate active and ongoing engagement with patients and the public in the design, development and governance of their activities, to provide assurance that these activities are in the public interest.
- Be transparent in the use of personal data and respect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals, complying with legal requirements and ethical expectations at all times.
- Make research outputs, observations, code and tools generated from the studies open-source, rapidly and freely accessible as a public good.
- Ensure all data and associated open-source code & tools generated through the studies are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR), registered on the Health Data Research Innovation Gateway and using the Innovation Gateway as a portal to share this information with a streamlined and harmonised data access process.
- Demonstrate value for money by using existing UK infrastructure and research investments as far as possible and using open competitions where necessary to develop new infrastructure capability.

D. Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement

Effective Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) is critical to successful use of data and is required as part of the data sharing principles.

Through the Data & Connectivity NCS, HDR UK is co-ordinating a large programme of PPIE to build transparency and earn public trust in the use of the data. Successful applicants may be asked to contribute to this wider programme by providing time or expertise, as well as contribute to engagement activities such as blogs and other communications for the public about their research.

This call specification has been commented on by members of HDR UK Public Advisory Board, and the assessment Panel will include a lay assessor.

E. Funding available

A maximum of £1.25m, inclusive of VAT is available for this call. The maximum available for any individual award will be £250,000, inclusive of VAT (if applicable).

We anticipate awarding funding to at least five studies and to as many as is possible based on the scoring criteria and until the maximum funding is allocated.

Funding is available for resources associated with linking and analysing the data made discoverable and accessible by the Data & Connectivity NCS. The data being made available is listed in Appendix 1, and this will be increasing as the Data & Connectivity sprints complete, for example with the additional of COG-UK and Pillar 3 data from the current sprint.

Funding can also be included to support additional Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (above what was included in the original application), as well as dissemination, communication and engagement activity with SAGE and its wider subgroups, policy makers and the public.

Awards will be made at 80% FEC as set out in the template Award Letter terms provided with the application template.

Projects are expected to commence by 8 January 2021, with teams expected to be operating within the research environments within 4 weeks of commencing (i.e., before the end of January 2021). Funds need to have been spent by 30 June 2021.

F. Eligibility

To apply the lead applicant must currently be:

- in receipt of awarded funding from the UKRI COVID-19 Open Call and UKRI/NIHR Rapid Response Initiative (listed [here](#)). Repurposed and Innovate UK awards are out of scope for this call.

Applications are limited to 1 per award.

AND

The lead organisation must be one of:

- A higher education institution
- An approved independent research organisation
- An approved NHS body.
- A research council institute.

We regret that due to the short lead-in time for delivering and reviewing this call, **applicants not in receipt of awarded funding from the UKRI COVID-19 Open Call and UKRI/NIHR Rapid Response Initiative are not eligible to apply**. Lead applicants are encouraged to consider forming new partnerships with other applicants or partners, where appropriate, for example, to build the data engineering and analysis skills

required. It is not a requirement for any partners to already hold UKRI/NIHR funding separately (this is only required by the lead applicant).

The Data & Connectivity NCS datasets are national data assets. Researchers not requiring funding can request access to data assets through the Gateway as set out in Section J below. Researchers preparing applications to other funding calls are encouraged to include use of the Data & Connectivity NCS datasets as part of their proposals.

G. Selection criteria

Projects will be selected based on their ability:

- To enable greater impact from currently funded COVID-19 research through access to the large and rich datasets available through the Data & Connectivity NCS.
- To produce results that can inform the near term national COVID-19 response.
- To enhance the data assets being made available through Data & Connectivity NCS e.g., by creating additional linkages, improving data utility, creating legacy resources (datasets, code, tools) to be made available via the Health Data Research Innovation Gateway.

The rapid review process is being run by HDR UK, with support and advice from UKRI, and with an independent panel review.

Applicants are requested to provide a three-part response:

1. Evidence of an existing successful UKRI COVID-19 research application
2. Proposal through a 930-word assessed section using the template. Please send an email requesting template to dataconnectivity@hdruk.ac.uk
3. Two pages of accompanying material (Gantt Chart and Risk Register)

Section	Part	Limit (do not exceed)	Points available
1. Evidence of existing successful submission	1.1. Original UKRI or NIHR/MRC application	N/A	N/A
	1.2. Original UKRI or NIHR/MRC Award letter	N/A	N/A
	1.3 Acknowledgement of the template Award Letter terms provided	N/A	N/A
2. Assessed section NOTE: any additions or extensions to	2.1. The research question(s) that the project team intend to answer by accessing data in TREs. <i>The question needs to be relevant to the clear purpose of this call and an extension or expansion of the existing award.</i>	30 words	10 pts

the currently funded project should be detailed here	2.2. Which dataset(s) the project team requires access to (listed in Appendix 1). <i>Applications which use multiple data assets and take a nationwide approach will be prioritised.</i>	100 words	10 pts
	2.3. What additional impacts and benefits would this funding and the associated work provide for patients and the public <i>Applications that include routes to achieving benefit will be prioritised</i>	200 words	20 pts
	2.4. Any improvements that the project team would make to the datasets. <i>Any improvements must be made openly available to other researchers.</i>	200 words	15 pts
	2.5. The proposed project approach, including key deliverables <i>Provide a project plan (e.g., Gantt Chart) and risk register in accompanying materials</i>	200 words	15 pts
	2.6. The necessary skills/ expertise of the team to undertake the proposed work Please include a table of named researchers who would access the TREs, their employer organisations, and whether they already have experience of and/or accreditation to use any TREs.	100 words	10 pts
	2.7 The funding requested. Provide a high-level breakdown of the cost model proposed for that funding amount, and a statement to justify resources and value for money	100 words	5 pts
3. Accompanying material	3.1. Project plan (e.g., Gantt Chart including set-up)	1 page	10 pts
	3.2. Risk Register – include risks to delivery within timeframes and mitigating action	1 page	5 pts

H. Timing

- Funding call launched 24 November 2020
- Clarification questions from potential applicants submitted by 17:00 GMT 30 November 2020
- Applications submitted by 12:00 noon GMT 7 December 2020
- Successful applications announced w/c 14 December 2020
- Projects commence by 8 January 2021
- Project teams active within TREs before end of January 2021

- Projects complete by 30 June 2021

I. Application process

Clarification questions from potential applicants must be received by **17:00 GMT on 30 November 2020** or earlier. These must be submitted, by email to [**dataconnectivity@hdruk.ac.uk**](mailto:dataconnectivity@hdruk.ac.uk) with a clear subject heading. Any questions received after this date may not be responded to. Responses will be collated and published to all, rather than provided individually.

In order to be considered, the application, answering questions in section C, must be submitted by email with a clear subject heading (**Rapid Funding Call**) to [**dataconnectivity@hdruk.ac.uk**](mailto:dataconnectivity@hdruk.ac.uk) and received by **12:00 noon GMT on 7 December 2020**.

Applications meeting these submission requirements will be considered the final versions to be used for assessment; no further revisions will be allowed after 12:00 noon on 7 December 2020.

Applications sent to other email addresses or which are received after the deadline passes will not be considered.

J: Other information

Applicants are to note the following as part of set up of their project.

- Access to the TREs requires approval or accreditation. One aspect of this is the completion of particular courses that demonstrate understanding of IG and privacy. Please view the Innovation Gateway Training Course Collection for further details
<https://web.www.healthdatagateway.org/collection/4782731178031727>
- A separate Data Access Request must be made via the Innovation Gateway (<https://healthdatagateway.org/>) to access specified data assets. The access request form will be live from 1 December and additional details will be provided. Successful funding via this call specification does not preclude the need to submit a data access form.

Appendix 1: Datasets discoverable & accessible through the Data & Connectivity NCS

The following datasets are available as of 23 November as Data & Connectivity NCS via the Gateway (<https://healthdatagateway.org/>). The Data Assets are available as a Collection via

<https://web.www.healthdatagateway.org/collection/6372136984450563/> and clicking on datasets

Additional data assets including CO-CIN Wales, pillar 3 antibody testing data, pillar 4 antibody testing data, intensive care data will be added soon and findable by the above link.

Trusted Research Environment	Data Category	Dataset Name (in Gateway)	Alternative Name	Additional information
ONS Secure Research Service	Mortality	Death registration data - Provisional Monthly Extracts	Civil Registration - Deaths	UK-wide
	Mortality	Linked Census and death occurrences	Civil Registration - Deaths	UK-wide
	Survey Data	Census 2011 E&W - Household structure for COVID-19 models		England & Wales
	Survey Data	Covid-19 Infection Survey	ONS Infection survey	UK-wide
	Survey Data	Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain	ONS Opinion survey	UK-wide
	Survey Data	Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS)		UK-wide
	Survey Data	Labour Force Survey (Person)	ONS labour Market Survey	UK-wide
	Survey Data	Labour Force Survey (Household)		UK-wide
	Survey Data	Labour Force Survey (Longitudinal)		UK-wide
NHS Digital, England	Pillar 1 Antigen Testing data	Pillar 1 - England (Second Generation Surveillance Systems)	SGSS: Second Generation Surveillance System (Pillar 1)	England
	Pillar 2 Antigen Testing data	Pillar 2 - Covid-19 UK Non-hospital Antigen Testing Results	Community Testing data (pillar 2)	England
	Primary care data	GPES Data for Pandemic Planning and Research (COVID-19)	GDPPR: GPES Data	England
	Primary care data	Medicines dispensed in Primary Care (NHSBSA data)	Community Prescribing	England
	Secondary care data	Secondary Uses Services	SUS+	England
	Mortality	Civil Registration - Deaths	Civil Registration - Deaths	England
SAIL, Wales	Pillar 1 & 2 Antigen Testing data	COVID-19 Test results	Laboratory Information Management System (Pillar 1) & Community Testing data (Pillar 2)	Wales
	Primary care data	GP dataset - Welsh Primary Care	WLGW Welsh Longitudinal General Practice	Wales

	Secondary care data	Patient Episode Database for Wales	Patient Episode Database for Wales	Wales
	Secondary care data	Outpatient Dataset	Out Patient Dataset for Wales	Wales
	Mortality	COVID-19 Consolidated Deaths	Consolidated Death Date Survey	Wales
	Census	ONS 2011 Census Wales (CENW)		Wales
	Symptom tracking	COVID-19 Symptom Tracker Dataset	ZOE app data	Wales (linked data)
National Safe Haven, Scotland	Pillar 1 & 2 Antigen Testing data	ECOSS (-/+VE tested patients only)	NHS Scotland COVID-19 lab testing data (pillar 1) Community Testing data (pillar 2)	Scotland
	Primary care data	NHS Scotland General Practice (GP) Contact Data - Subset		Scotland
	Secondary care data	Outpatient Appointments and Attendances - Scottish Morbidity Record (SMR00)	SMR00	Scotland
	Secondary care data	General Acute Inpatient and Day Case - Scottish Morbidity Record (SMR01)	SMR01	Scotland
	Secondary care data	Maternity Inpatient and Day Case - Scottish Morbidity Record (SMR02)	SMR02	Scotland
	Secondary care data	RAPID (Hospital Stay Level Data)		Scotland
	Mortality	National Records of Scotland (NRS) - Deaths Data		Scotland
	CO-CIN	COVID-19 Clinical Information Network (CO-CIN)	COVID-19 Clinical information network (CO-CIN) Tiers 0-2	Linked to primary and secondary care in England and Scotland
	Northern Ireland, Honest Broker Service	Pillar 1 Antigen Testing data	COVID antigen testing - Pillar 1 (healthdatagateway.org)	
Pillar 2 Antigen Testing data		COVID antigen testing - Pillar 2	Community Testing data (pillar 2)	Northern Ireland
Primary care data		Enhanced Prescribing Database	EPD	Northern Ireland
Secondary care data		Admissions & Discharges	PAS system feed	Northern Ireland