

HDR UK's investment into Trusted Research Environments - response to MedConfidential

19 July 2021

HDR UK is committed to enabling trustworthy use of health data for research. Over the last 18 months and through the COVID pandemic we have championed and led the use of Trusted Research Environments (TREs) to enable crucial research to support the response across all four nations. We have made this work transparent at each stage, as we will with this correspondence, as we recognise the importance of this transparency in both maintaining trust but also keeping researchers informed of TRE progress.

As a point of clarification, HDR UK does not own a TRE. We work in partnership with existing TREs across the four nations, including ONS to develop tools, policies, standards and common approaches to public and patient involvement and engagement, and governance that demonstrate trustworthiness in the use of health data for research across the UK.

Current investments

HDR UK has supported TREs since our inception, and we shared our funding to date in the table below, which was included in [our response to the Goldacre Review](#). The majority of the £6.4m investment is **not about research** into TREs, it is for the **provision of TRE services** from very well established providers. For example in Wales, Swansea University's UKSeRP provides TRE services to SAIL databank, Dementias Platform UK and most recently the Longitudinal Linkage Collaboration that forms part of the Longitudinal Health & Wellbeing national core study. The Scottish Data Safe haven is also a well-established TRE collaboration between public health Scotland and EPCC at Edinburgh. A greater proportion of the funding that has gone to both NHS Digital and HSC Northern Ireland has been for development work. In the Northern Ireland case, they are leveraging the capability of UKSeRP to have enabled remote access to Northern Ireland data for researchers outside the province for the first time. These are important steps in enabling research (for COVID and other diseases) using data across the four nations, and increasing representation of different UK geographies within research.

Future investments

HDR UK, ONS and UKRI are currently finalising the work plan of Phase 2 of the National Core Studies Data and Connectivity programme, which will involve investments in TREs and TRE services, including OpenSafely to support COVID research. We are also working with UKRI to deliver a UK-wide federated, digital infrastructure for data research that has the confidence, and meets the needs of, data controllers, data users, and the public. This will involve building on existing good practice and establishing the next generation of Trusted Research Environments (TREs) that will enable fast and efficient sharing, linkage and

advanced analysis of data, where it is legal and ethical to do so. Please join us at the [Design & Dialogue Launch Event](#).

We welcome constructive challenge and support evidence-based evaluation in pursuit of improved ways to use health data to improve people's lives and would be delighted to discuss with you further.

TRE	HDR UK Investment to date		
	Data & Connectivity	Other HDR UK	Total
	Actual to date £'000	Actual to date £'000	Actual to date £'000
NHS Digital	696	420	1,116
Public Health Scotland/EPCC	851	460	1,311
SAIL Databank	1,134	2,476	3,610
HSC NI Public Health Agency	365	-	365
Total	3,046	3,356	6,402