



**UK Statistics
Authority**

Administrative Data Research Network Board

First Annual Report

2014 to 2015

Contents

Chair's Foreword.....	3
Introduction to the Network	5
Establishment	7
Work of the Board	9
Policies	9
Strategy	10
Promoting the work of the Board and the Network	10
Transparency.....	11
Performance of the Network	12
Future Work of the Board.....	15

Chair's Foreword

This is the first annual report of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) Board. The report presents what the ADRN Board has found during the year and what it intends to do in the next financial year.

The ADRN is an exciting new partnership between universities, government, national statistics institutes, and researchers, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The Network provides a bespoke service for accredited researchers so they can carry out social and economic research using administrative data in ways that prevent the identification of individuals. As a resource, administrative data are a potential goldmine, helping to improve understanding of how society works and to enable research of substantial potential benefit for society and public policy.



Professor David Hand
Chair of the ADRN Board

As recommended in the Administrative Data Taskforce (ADTF) report¹, the UK Statistics Authority is the reporting body to Parliament for the ADRN. To perform this role, the Authority established the ADRN Board, which I have the privilege of chairing. The Board will report on the progress of the ADRN to the UK Statistics Authority Board. The primary functions of the Board are:

- to provide assurance to the UK Statistics Authority Board about the progress of the Network; and
- to provide strategic guidance to the ADRN.

The Board met for the first time on 14 April 2014 and has met on four subsequent occasions over the course of the financial year. During this period the Board has fulfilled its assurance role by working with the ADRN Management Committee to agree the key principles and policies for establishing and accessing the Network and overseeing the Network's public engagement and communications strategy.

Realising the full benefits presented by the ADRN requires not just the development of a safe and efficient system for linking, managing and analysing administrative data, founded on secure technologies, but also trust between data owners, researchers and the public. A significant start has been made over the past year in developing these key requirements and the Board was pleased to see the Network open for research proposals on 25 November 2014.

¹ The Administrative Data Taskforce was formed in December 2011 by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Wellcome Trust, and was chaired by Sir Alan Langlands. Its report, *Improving Access for Research and Policy*, was published in December 2012.

Over the next year some of the principal challenges for the ADRN will include negotiating access to data from a variety of government departments, continuing to link and use data in ways that are acceptable to the public and ensuring that the research being undertaken within the Network has real policy value or public benefit.

Throughout the coming year the Board will provide assurance about the performance of the ADRN by measuring its performance against a number of metrics. The Board will also continue to provide strategic guidance to the Network, including guiding the Network's data owner and engagement strategy. As the ADRN becomes more established throughout the year, the Board will also advise on opportunities for sustainability and the future development of the Network.

I would like to thank staff in the Administrative Data Service (ADS) and each of the Administrative Data Research Centres (ADRCs) for their considerable efforts, which have resulted in the Network now being open for project proposals from the research community. I would also like to thank the ESRC for the collaborative way in which they have worked with the UK Statistics Authority and the Board over the course of the last year. Finally, I want to pay tribute to my fellow Board members for their commitment to our work and to driving the future success of the ADRN, as well as to the Secretariat for their continuing advice and support.

Introduction to the Network

The Administrative Data Research Network is a UK-wide partnership between academia, government departments and agencies, national statistical institutes, funders and the wider research community. Together these will facilitate new economic and social research based on routinely collected government administrative data. The Network consists of:

- i. four ADRCs through which accredited and approved researchers will access de-identified linked administrative data:
 - a) ADRC-England: led by the University of Southampton in collaboration with University College London, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Institute for Education;
 - b) ADRC-Northern Ireland: led by Queen's University Belfast in collaboration with the University of Ulster.
 - c) ADRC-Scotland: led by the University of Edinburgh; and
 - d) ADRC-Wales led by Swansea University in collaboration with Cardiff University.
- ii. an overarching ADS, which coordinates the Network and is the first point of contact for researchers who require access to administrative data. The ADS is led by the University of Essex with partners based at the Universities of Manchester, Oxford, the West of England and Edinburgh.
- iii. Data custodians (government departments and agencies, and national statistical institutions);
- iv. the ESRC (the funding body)²; and
- v. The UK Statistics Authority which is responsible for the governance of the Network through the ADRN Board.

The Network's unique selling point is: establishing a new, legal, secure and efficient pathway for the research community to access de-identified linked administrative datasets. This will potentially benefit our society by providing a greater evidence base to inform policy. The Network has only been operational since 25 November 2014 but already a small number of projects had been approved by the Approvals Panel by 31 March 2015. These are listed below. Over the next year a much greater number of projects encompassing a wide range of themes are expected.

² The ESRC has invested 34 million pounds to establish the Network and ensure it can operate for five years.
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/ESRC%20AR_tcm8-31173.pdf. The UK Statistics Authority receive a small part of this to cover the secretariat costs and board expenses.

- i. Assessing the Health Impacts of Adults' Participation in Sports in Wales: Investigating the mediating role of accessibility to sports facilities;
- ii. Evaluating linkage between children's health, education and social care data - pre-term birth sub-study;
- iii. An Investigation into the Impact of Disability on Employment in Wales;
- iv. Examining contributory factors in road traffic collision data involving older people in Wales;
- v. Public Policy and 'Peace' Walls in Belfast: Establishing Baseline Indicators;
- vi. Factors associated with decreased representation in higher education;
- vii. Using Data Linkage to obtain accurate population estimates of migrants in Northern Ireland and their needs for and use of mental health and social care;
- viii. Combining Survey Data, Paradata and Administrative Data for Non-response Investigation; and
- ix. The Health and Education Impacts of 'Flying Starts'.
- x. Understanding Participation in post-compulsory education and training in Wales'.

At this relatively early stage the main challenges that have been identified include:

- i. ensuring that the Network is maintained in ways that serve the public good;
- ii. instilling confidence in data owners to enable access to their data;
- iii. ensuring value for money; and
- iv. providing public assurance that the Network is operating in a way that is acceptable.

Establishment

The establishment of the ADRN has been guided by the recommendations made in the report of the ADTF. These recommendations included the creation of a UK Governing Board to provide a governance structure for the ADRCs. The ADTF report suggested that the governing board report on an annual basis to a body responsible to UK Parliament which would monitor progress.

“The Governing Board will report on an annual basis to a body responsible to the UK Parliament which will monitor progress. We recommend that the UK Statistics Authority or another similar body fulfils this role.” (ADTF, 2012).

The Government responded to the ADTF recommendations and supported “the principle of the Governing Board reporting to Parliament via an independent body ... Given the broad reach of the activity and the high relevance of the proposals for the statistical and research communities within government, we agree that the UK Statistics Authority could be well placed to provide appropriate oversight” (Government response to the ADTF, 2013).

At the UK Statistics Authority Board meeting on 3 October 2013, the Board discussed the extent of progress made in establishing the ADRN and formally agreed to proposals for the Authority’s governance role in relation to the ADRN. The Authority Board appointed Professor David Hand, a non executive member of the Authority Board, to oversee this work and Chair the ADRN Board for a five year period. The Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot, replied to the ADTF report on 6 November 2013 to confirm and announce publicly that this was the Authority’s intention.

Consequently, the UK Statistics Authority are the reporting body to Parliament for the ADRN and will seek assurance for the robust performance and governance of the Network from the ADRN Board which was established for this purpose. The ADRN Board reports to the UK Statistics Authority Board which in turn reports to Parliament on the performance of the Network. The ADRN Board will also provide assurance to the ESRC.

Professor Peter Elias was appointed Deputy Chair of the ADRN Board by the ESRC, the funders of the ADRN, in consultation with the Chair of the ADRN Board.

The ADTF made a number of other recommendations relating to the Governing Board. This included the composition of the Governing Board:

“Together with the directors of the ADRCs, representatives from funders and international experts, membership of the Governing Board should include senior representatives from government departments, agencies and devolved administrative bodies that provide access to their data through one or more of the ADRCs. At least one lay member will also be appointed” (ADTF, 2012).

The Governing Board is representative of the recommendations. In addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair, the Governing Board also includes four other non executive members. These four non executives were appointed through open and fair competition, which involved an

appointment panel of the Chair and senior officials from the UK Statistics Authority and the ESRC. These non executives have been appointed to the Board for a fixed term. The full list of non executive members, and the duration of their appointment, is presented in Table 1. The Governing Board also includes a number of representatives from interested parties. These include the Senior Responsible Officer for the ADRN from the ESRC (Dr Fiona Armstrong), Directors from the Department for Work and Pensions (Mr David Frazer) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (Mr Jonathan Athow) along with the National Statistician (Mr John Pullinger), and Chief Statisticians for Northern Ireland (Dr Norman Caven), Scotland (Mr Roger Halliday) and Wales (Mr Glyn Jones). The Principal Investigators of each ADRC are represented by the Director of the ADS (Ms Melanie Wright), a body that is responsible for facilitating the Network as a whole. Mr Colin Godbold has also been appointed to the Board as a lay member for a two year period from April 2014.

Table 1: ADRN Board Non Executive Appointments

Non Executive Board Member	Date of Appointment	Length of Appointment
Professor David Hand (<i>Chair</i>)	April 2014	Five years
Professor Peter Elias (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	April 2014	Two years
Dr Andrew Garrett	April 2014	Three Years
Ms Penny Young	April 2014	Three years
Mr Luke Sibieta	April 2014	Two years
Professor Denise Livesley	September 2014	Three years
Mr Colin Godbold	April 2014	Two years

Work of the Board

Over the past year the Board has reviewed policies and strategies as discussed below.

Policies

A number of principles and policies have been approved by the Board and assurance on a number of other ongoing policies continues to be provided. The Board has been particularly involved in approving the procedures for accessing the Network. This included approving who is eligible to conduct research in the ADRN, the definition of an ADRN project and the procedures for accessing the ADRN.

An ADRN Approvals Panel has also been established to ensure that there is a robust and transparent process for assessing and approving research proposals. This transparency is necessary to reassure the public that there is an expert, disinterested body overseeing research proposals which require access to sensitive administrative data. The Approvals Panel ensures research proposals are suitable, of scientific merit and in the public interest. It also ensures that academics and government researchers have equal access to the Network. The Panel also provides data owners with expert assessment of projects to minimise their burden in processing applications for data access and linkage. The ADRN Board is represented on the ADRN Approvals Panel by Dr Andrew Garrett and the Board receive an update from the Approvals Panel at each meeting.

As part of the process of defining the procedures for accessing the Network, the need for an Appeals Panel was identified. The Appeals Panel has been established as a subcommittee of the ADRN Board. The Appeals Panel consists of three Board members with Professor Denise Lievesley as Chair and Mr Colin Godbold and Ms Penny Young as Panel members. The Appeals Panel considers an appeal if the researcher has provided evidence that the Approvals Panel's assessment of their proposed project was not conducted in accordance with the ADRN policies and procedures and/or some other material irregularity related to the assessment process has occurred. It is not intended to provide appeals against decisions of the Approvals Panel.

In helping to define the procedures for access to the ADRN, it was recognised that researchers from government and the third sector may have no obvious route for gaining ethical approval for their research. Whilst researchers from academia may gain ethical approval through their host institution, government and third sector researchers may be restricted by a lack of relevant ethics committees for researchers from these sectors. The Board recommended that the UK Statistics Authority may be able to accommodate such researchers and the UK Statistics Authority Board has subsequently agreed, in principle, to the creation of an ethics committee which could fulfil this function. The UK Statistics Authority will be taking forward a National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC) in the new financial year. At an early stage, NSDEC will consider whether it can accommodate ADRN researchers from government and the third sector.

Valuable input into a number of other ongoing policies has been provided by the Board. For example input has been provided into related policies concerning trusted third parties.

Trusted third parties are independent organisations which are responsible for indexing the data so that it can be linked in a de-identified manner. The Board has approved related policies concerning trusted third parties and offered advice on how to present different methods of data linkage to the public and the research community in a transparent manner.

Assurance on information security policies, which the Board sees as being pivotal in engaging and persuading government departments to share their data with the ADRN, has been provided. Over the next financial year the Board will continue to provide input into the development of these policies, which include data transfer, secure environment, security breaches and penalties and output control.

Strategy

Guidance on a number of the Network's strategies has also been provided. These have included public engagement and communications, data owner engagement and public and/or policy benefit.

The public engagement and communications strategy describes how the Network will engage with the public and communicate key messages about the ADRN. In guiding this strategy the Board has raised the need for communicating the work of the ADRN with potential critics and disinterested parties. They have also reinforced the need for joined up consistent messaging across the Network. With regards to the contents of the messaging, the importance of using case studies to explain and illustrate the needs of the Network has been emphasised. In addition, stressing the safeguards to provide the public with assurance that their data is being protected has been suggested. The Board also see the timing of engagement as important and has suggested that the Network should be proactive in its engagement, thereby influencing the agenda rather than being responsive to it.

In order to try to ensure that ADRN research will be of public and/or policy benefit, the Board has suggested that the ESRC integrate the ADRN in their calls for research. This could stimulate work which the government sees as a priority.

In relation to the data owner and engagement strategy, it has been recommended that workshops be held with data owners to discuss the benefits of the ADRN, including the benefits for data owners, to encourage them to provide data to the Network. It has been recognised that the Board has a potential future role to play in encouraging data owners to engage with the ADRN.

Promoting the work of the Board and the Network

Members of the Board have taken an active role in publicising the ADRN. On 3 July 2014, Professor Hand gave a presentation at a Ministerial event to publicise the ADRN. In this presentation, Professor Hand outlined the opportunities the Network presented for research and the role of the Governing Board.

Members of the Board also contributed to a meeting, organised by the ESRC, on the 14 July about 'Sharing Government Administrative Data; new research opportunities'. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the progress achieved, and planned, against the recommendations

made in the ADTF report. There were the following presentations from Board members: Professor Hand presented on the role of the ADRN Governing Body, Professor Elias presented the recommendations of the ADTF report, Ms Wright presented on the progress and plans of the ADRN and their public engagement and communications, and Mr Athow presented some reflections from HMRC on the opportunities presented by the ADRN.

In December 2014, Deputy Chair of the ADRN Board, Professor Elias, presented at a showcase event for the ADRC Northern Ireland. Here Professor Elias set the scene by detailing the early thinking behind the Network. Professor Elias described the benefits the Network could bring to both academic and policy based research and concluded by highlighting the role of the ADRN Board and how their role would become more strategic over the next year.

In March 2015, Dr Armstrong and Mr Jones presented at a launch event for the ADRC-Wales. Dr Armstrong presented the rationale for the creation of the Network and outlined the large investment made by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills as part of the Big Data initiative. Dr Armstrong also outlined the role of the ADRN Board and the challenges ahead which included a culture of conservatism around data sharing, privacy concerns and the need to ensure that public benefit can be demonstrated in order to ensure funding is secured in the years ahead. Mr Jones outlined the benefits of the ADRC-Wales in helping to evaluate the impact of existing Welsh Government policies.

Transparency

Throughout the year, the Board has operated transparently, with all agendas, papers and minutes published promptly after each Board meeting on the UK Statistics Authority website³. In addition, the terms of reference for the Board and the Board membership have been published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/administrative-data-research-network/adrn-board-meeting-agendas--papers-and-minutes/index.html>

Performance of the Network

Most of the year has focused on the establishment of the Network. Some of the main Network wide achievements up until the 31 March 2015 include⁴:

- i. the Network was considered by the ADRN Management Committee to be in a sufficient state of development to open to potential project applications from the 25 November 2014. Between the 25 November and the 31 March 2015, the ADS had received 88 enquiries.
- ii. a key achievement of the ADRN has been the development of physical infrastructure over the past year. All Centres now have the necessary infrastructure for research to be conducted.
- iii. an Approvals Panel, chaired by Professor Sir Ian Diamond, has been set up to approve potential projects as being suitable for the ADRN. The first meeting of the ADRN Approvals Panel took place on 6 August and meetings have been held on a monthly basis since. In total 10 projects have been approved by the Panel during the last year.
- iv. the majority of staff across the Network have been recruited.
- v. the ADS has played a central role in ensuring that the Network works in a coordinated way. Much of the cross-network development takes place through working groups on topics such as; communications and public engagement, project management, user services and support, information security, research (substantive and methodological) and training and capacity building. These working groups include representatives from each ADRC and are chaired by representatives from the ADS. The ADS also facilitate a periodic meeting of the Chairs of the working groups to enable cross group coordination.
- vi. the overarching public engagement and communications strategies for the Network have been produced. The ADRN website 'went live' on 30 May 2014 and Phase 2 of the ADRN website was launched on 25 November 2014. Some of the ADRCs have held events to publicise their work. The ADRC-NI hosted a showcase event at Stormont Parliament buildings on 1 December 2014. In addition, the ADRC-England hosted an official opening ceremony on 4 July 2014 and the ADRC-Wales held a launch event on the 23 March 2015. The Network has received a total of 418 email address sign ups and 391 Twitter followers over the course of the last year.
- vii. the Network has organised a series of training courses with 223 people having completed ADRN training during the last year. These have consisted of a number of analytical based training events on topics such as data linkage, administrative data, statistical modelling for administrative and social survey data and analysing health

⁴More information about the work of the individual centres and the service can be found in the ADRN Annual Network report which is due to be published by the ADRN during the Autumn of 2015.

and social datasets. The ADS led on the development of a National Research Training course. Researchers who attend the training course and pass an assessment of their knowledge and understanding, will be able to access any of the ADRCs within the Network.

- viii. the ADS has led discussions with data owners to acquire cross-national datasets. This has included discussions with key data owning departments. All Centres have contributed towards the development of this strategy through meetings of the Management Committee. In addition the national level ADRCs have been progressing the acquisition of national data sets. For example, the ADRC-Northern Ireland has established an Administrative Data Forum. The Forum is chaired by a Senior Civil Servant and has members from local government departments as well as senior statisticians. The aim of this forum is to expedite access to local data.

Discussions with data owning departments will continue over the next year. The Network will look to leverage existing contacts with data owners and develop new contacts to support the ADS in the data acquisition process.

Public, researcher and stakeholder engagement will also be a key priority over the next year. The ADS is in the process of developing an external newsletter and a programme of activities including a joint event with the Royal Statistical Society in October 2015 to raise awareness of the ADRN amongst the research community and data owners. Engagement events will also be taking place across each of the Centres. For example, over the course of the next year the ADRC-S will host long and short stay researchers from a number of different academic institutions across the globe such as the University of Warwick, the University of Basel, Penn State University and the Australian National University. In addition, the ADRC-Northern Ireland will be holding a number of researcher awareness and development workshops at local Universities and research case studies from the centre will be showcased at the ESRC Festival of Social Science.

Now that the ADRN is operational the Board will use the Critical Success Factors (CSFs), listed below, to assess the performance of the Network. As the ADRN is at a relatively early stage of development, it is not currently possible to assess the Network against all of these CSFs in a meaningful way. Future annual reports will look to report progress against each of the CSFs which are shown below:

- i. accessible facilities in each country;
- ii. everyone who uses the Network is trained to carry out safe research;
- iii. create infrastructure remaining acceptable to data owners, the public and funding stakeholders;
- iv. approved projects are being executed;
- v. principles, policies and procedures in place for safeguarding data;
- vi. demonstrating value for money; and

vii. well-developed public relations and public engagement direction.

As set out in its terms of reference, the Board will formally review the operation of the Network as it approaches two years of operation. Following the review, which will report in late 2016, the Board will provide recommendations to the ESRC and the UK Statistics Authority about the progress and future of the Network. Although it is unlikely that many projects will have been completed by this time, and therefore successful completed case studies from the ADRN will be limited, the ADRN is expected to have established its data service infrastructure, policies and procedures, trained researchers and progressed projects in all of its locations by this review.

Future Work of the Board

Over the next year the Board will continue to play both assurance and strategic roles. Areas which have been identified as a priority include information security policies, data owner engagement and the public engagement and communications strategies.

The Board will continue to provide assurance on information security policies, which they have identified as being key to the data owner and engagement strategies. In order to engage effectively with data owners, information security policies will need to be robust, to build trust and provide data owners with assurance that the ADRN has the necessary policies in place to safe guard their data. The Board has representatives from two key data owning departments, DWP and HMRC, and their guidance will be key as the ADS engages with data owners.

Public engagement and communication has also been identified by the Board as being key to the success of the Network. This is to build awareness of the ADRN, promote the benefits of the ADRN and build trust in the ADRN. Presenting case studies of robust research using administrative data to demonstrate how ADRN research can potentially contribute to a better society, and better policy, will be important and will provide the public with assurance that ADRN funding is a good use of public money.

These strategies and policies will become standing agenda items for the Board meetings throughout the next financial year and the Board will closely monitor progress in these areas.

The ADTF recommended that:

“The Governing Board, will at an early stage, investigate guidelines for access and linkage by private sector interests, as well as commissioning public engagement work on this topic.” (ADTF, 2012).

In order to address this recommendation, in the course of the next year, the Board will consider access to the Network by or on behalf of commercial or private entities. This will potentially include investigating the public acceptability around commercial access to government data and investigating the potential public and policy benefits of private sector access to the ADRN.

The Board has identified a number of other research institutes which provide facilities for access and use of administrative data and are currently engaging with such institutes to share knowledge, and learn from their expertise. During 2015 the Board will continue to build on such relationships and establish links with other relevant institutions.