UK Statistics Authority

Administrative Data Research Network Board

Second Annual Report

_____

2015 to 2016

Chair's Foreword

This is the second annual report of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) Board. The report presents what the ADRN Board has found during the financial year and what it intends to do in the next financial year. It also reports on the performance of the Network against a number of critical success factors.

The ADRN is an exciting 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 recommended in the Administrative Data Taskforce (ADTF) report[1], 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 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.

By facilitating innovative new research, the ADRN can potentially make a significant contribution in unlocking the research potential of administrative data which should lead to greater knowledge and understanding of the action required to tackle a wide range of social, economic, environmental and health issues in the UK. This should help to confirm the leading international reputation of UK universities and research institutes, and promote new approaches to the development, implementation and evaluation of policy across UK Government.

The two completed ADRN projects provide excellent examples of the research potential of the ADRN. One of these projects, from the Administrative Data Research Centre (ADRC)-Wales, explored the contribution data linking could make to the evaluation of the Supporting People Programme[2] through assessing the ways in which health service use varied according to the characteristics of Supporting People service users. More information on this can be found here http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/supporting-people-data-linking-feasibility-study/?lang=en. The other completed project, from the ADRC-Northern Ireland, investigated the factors associated with decreased representation in Higher Education. More information on this can be found here https://adrn.ac.uk/research-projects/approved-projects/project006/.

---

[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.

[2] The Supporting People Programme helps people find and keep a home that meets their needs and encourages independence in a healthy and safe environment. A total of £124.4 million is invested by Welsh Government in the Supporting People Programme annually. The Programme supports more than 60,000 people each year to live as independently as they can. It aims to prevent problems by providing help as early as possible.

This year the Board has undergone some changes. We have said goodbye to Peter Elias who has stepped down as Deputy Chair of the Board. I would like to thank Peter for the significant contribution he has made to the development of the ADRN in both his roles as a member of the original taskforce and to the Board as Deputy Chair for the last two years. I welcome Sharon Witherspoon who replaces Peter as Deputy Chair. Sharon is a former Director of the Nuffield Foundation and has a wealth of experience in social research and social policy. I look forward to working with her and the rest of the Board in providing guidance to the ADRN over the coming years.

The Network has been operational since November 2014 and as of April 2016 there are 88 active projects at various stages from development of project proposals through to the reporting of results. This shows that that there is strong interest and demand within the research community in making use of administrative data within the state of the art facilities at each of the ADRCs.

However, during the last year getting access to data from government departments and providing it to researchers in a timely manner has presented the largest challenge to the Network. The lack of UK wide data in the ADRN represents a real risk to the future success of the Network. It is apparent that within some departments there is a cultural reluctance to share data, with even those government departments who supported the Taskforce recommendations being reluctant to share data collected for operational purposes with the ADRN for independent high quality research. This is disappointing. To help to overcome these challenges, and realise the immense potential of the Network, the Board will strategically engage with government departments over the next year. This will involve promoting the research and policy making potential of the ADRN to help facilitate sharing of data with the ADRN. The Board will also guide the further development of ADRN policies to ensure that the Network makes data available to the research community in a timely and safe manner.

I would like to thank staff in the Administrative Data Service (ADS), and within each of the ADRCs, for their continued efforts which have resulted in significant progress being made during the last year to further develop the ADRN infrastructure and polices, build capability within the research community through training, advance methodological thinking, in areas such as data linkage and the use of synthetic data, and engage with the public in accessible and innovative ways about the work of the Network. I would also like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for the collaborative way in which they have worked with the UK Statistics Authority and the Board during the last year. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my fellow Board members for their continued commitment to our work and 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 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 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 Office for National Statistics;

      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 brings together major Scottish research centres including: the Scottish Longitudinal Study, the Administrative Data Liaison Service, the Applied Quantitative Methods Network, the Farr Institute @ Scotland, the national digital data centre, the Centre for Research on Environment Society and Health and the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology.

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 owners (government departments and agencies, and national statistical institutions);

iv. the ESRC (the funding body); and

v. The UK Statistics Authority which is responsible for the governance of the Network through the ADRN Board.

While other data infrastructures for sharing data exist within government, the ADRN has the following unique distinguishing features and benefits:

i. it provides a single point of safe access to linked, rather than single, de-identified administrative data which can cover the whole of the UK;

ii. it is led by academics in partnership with statistical agencies rather than hosted and run by data owners themselves;

iii. it is open to all approved researchers to tackle a wide range of research questions, rather than primarily for operational purposes;

iv. all results and outputs from the research using the ADRN is made available to ensure transparency and so the work undertaken can be critiqued and built upon by other researchers; and

v. it has been endorsed as a publicly trusted Network. A series of public dialogues; and (https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Publications/sri-dialogue-on-data-2014.pdf) on the use of administrative data for research showed that the public were reassured by the independence of the ADRN, their focus on research of social benefit and their regulation of processes and researchers.

The ADRN Board

As was recommended in the Administrative Data Taskforce Report, the UK Statistics Authority are the reporting body to Parliament for the ADRN and seek assurance for the robust performance and governance of the Network from the ADRN Board which was established for this purpose. The ADRN Board also provides assurance to the ESRC.

In October 2013 the UK Statistics Authority Board appointed Professor David Hand, a non executive member of the UK Statistics Authority Board, to Chair the ADRN Board for a five year period and Professor Peter Elias was appointed Deputy Chair of the ADRN Board by the ESRC in consultation with the Chair of the ADRN Board. In January 2016, Professor Elias' term on the Board came to an end and Ms Sharon Witherspoon was appointed Deputy Chair by the ESRC in consultation with the Chair. Ms Witherspoon has a wealth of research and social policy experience. She was at the Nuffield Foundation for 19 years, first leading its programmes of social research and social policy, and then for three years as Director.

In addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair, the Governing Board also includes four other non executive members appointed through open and fair competition. One of the non executive members (Mr Colin Godbold) is a lay member. 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 term of appointment, is at Table 1.

Table 1: ADRN Non Executive Board Members (April 2016)

Non Executive Board Member	Date of Appointment	Length of Appointment
Professor David Hand (*Chair*)	April 2014	Five years
Ms Sharon Witherspoon (*Deputy Chair*)	February 2016	One year initially
Dr Andrew Garrett	April 2014	Three Years
Ms Penny Young	April 2014	Three years
Mr Luke Sibieta	April 2014	Two years
Professor Denise Lievesley	September 2014	Three years
Mr Colin Godbold	April 2014	Two years

The Governing Board also includes a number of representatives from interested parties. These are listed at table 2. In the last year a number of the representatives have changed. Mr Jonathan Athow has been replaced by Mr Darren Warren as the HMRC representative on the Board. Mr Athow, who is now Director General for Economic Statistics at ONS, remains on the Board as he has replaced Mr John Pullinger as the UK Statistics Authority representative on the Board. In addition, Dr Tracy Power has been appointed to represent the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Dr Power replaces Dr Norman Caven who stepped down from the Board earlier this year. Professor Peter Smith, the Director of the Administrative Data Research Centre-England, has replaced Ms Melanie Wright, co-director of the Administrative Data Service, as the Directors' representative on the Board. Professor Smith is currently the chair of the ADRN Director's Group and represents the Directors on the Board. One other Director also attends each meeting along with Professor Smith to present relevant items to the Board. It is expected that this responsibility will be shared out on a rotational basis between the different Directors over the course of the next year.

Table 2: ADRN Board Representatives from interested parties (April 2016)

Representative	Interested Party
Dr Fiona Armstrong	ESRC
Mr Darren Warren	HMRC
Mr Guy Goodwin	ONS
Professor Peter Smith	ADRN Directors Group
Mr David Frazier	DWP
Mr Jonathan Athow	UK Statistics Authority
Mr Glyn Jones	Welsh Government
Mr Roger Halliday	Scottish Government
Dr Tracy Power	Northern Irish Statistics and Research Agency

Performance of the Network

Network Achievements

This year has been the first full year of the Network being fully operational. Some of the main Network wide achievements up until 31 March 2016 include:

i. Developing policies and procedures to manage a lawful, secure and efficient pathway for researchers to access linked, de-identified administrative data collections. These include information security policies developed with the assistance of an advisory group including world leaders on the subject and an independent Approvals Panel with expert representatives from academia, government and lay members.

ii.   Further developing infrastructure across the Network. Settings in the ADRC-England are now fully functional. The ADRC-Wales sites in Cardiff and Swansea are now progressing towards Pan Government Accreditation. In addition, the ADS has been working with the ADRC-Scotland to set up a national network of safe settings where researchers can access administrative data. The first prototype "safe pod" has been installed in the University of St Andrews and is being user tested. The safe pod is a safe room and secure facility which enable researchers to access data remotely.

iii.   Establishing a presence in the research landscape through a wide ranging programme of communications activities including presentations at conferences and publications. In October 2015, the Network hosted a successful engagement event at the Royal Statistical Society to: raise awareness, highlight the benefits and opportunities and influence government strategists and researchers. Professor Hand presented on behalf of the Board. Other speakers included: Vanessa Cuthill (ESRC), Hetan Shah (RSS Executive Director) Paul Maltby (Director of Open Data and Government Innovation, Cabinet Office) and each of the directors of the Administrative Data Research Centres. The event was well attended with over 120 attendees from academia, government, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. The Network annual report was launched at this event. The report provides an overview of the challenges and successes of the Network from 2014 to 2015.

iv.   Further developing the Network website. The website informs stakeholders about the ADRN and gives researchers information to begin the process of using administrative data for their work. The website also includes two animations targeted at the general public and the research community which give a clear explanation of the Network and of their security procedures.

v.   Developing a national accreditation training programme, working with the Safe Users of Research data Environments (SURE) Consortium. The programme has trained 150 researchers to date.

vi.   Providing researchers with training on a variety of topics. Training has included topics such as "Hospital Episode Statistics", "Handling Missing Data in the Administrative Studies", " Multiple Imputation and Inverse Probability Weighting " and an "Introduction to Bayesian Statistics".

vii.   Processing ADRN research projects. As of April 2016, 88 projects were active within the Network at various stages of development. The Approvals Panel had approved 41 of these projects. In the case of the other 47 projects, the Network user support services were working with the researchers to develop the project application. Of these approved projects, data has been acquired for 11 projects. The remainder of these approved projects were awaiting the outcomes of negotiations between the Network and government departments for access to the data.

viii.   Restructuring its internal governance structure. The previous Management Committee now consist of two groups: the Directors Group and the Operations group. The Directors Group includes the four ADRC directors, the director of the ADS, the Chair of the Operations Group, the ESRC ADRN lead and the ADRN Board secretariat from the UK Statistics Authority. The Directors Group are responsible for strategy, innovation and new developments. The Operations Group consists of two representatives from each Centre and the Administrative Data Service. The ESRC is also represented in this group. The Operations Group has responsibility for implementation of new developments and for service improvement.

ix.   Developing and implementing a programme of methodological and scientific research using administrative data across all key areas of social policy.

These achievements are significant. However, the Network has experienced challenges in establishing relationships with some data owners to facilitate the sharing of data with the Network and therefore for data to flow to accredited researchers in a timely manner. Consequently, data has

been acquired for only 11 of the active projects. The figure below shows the number of ADRN projects at each stage in the ADRN process. The developing application category includes all projects at various stages of development. This represents a pipeline of future projects and includes projects that have been registered with the ADRN but have not yet been approved. It also includes projects from researchers who have a planned work programme and who are not expecting to progress their project until a point in the future.
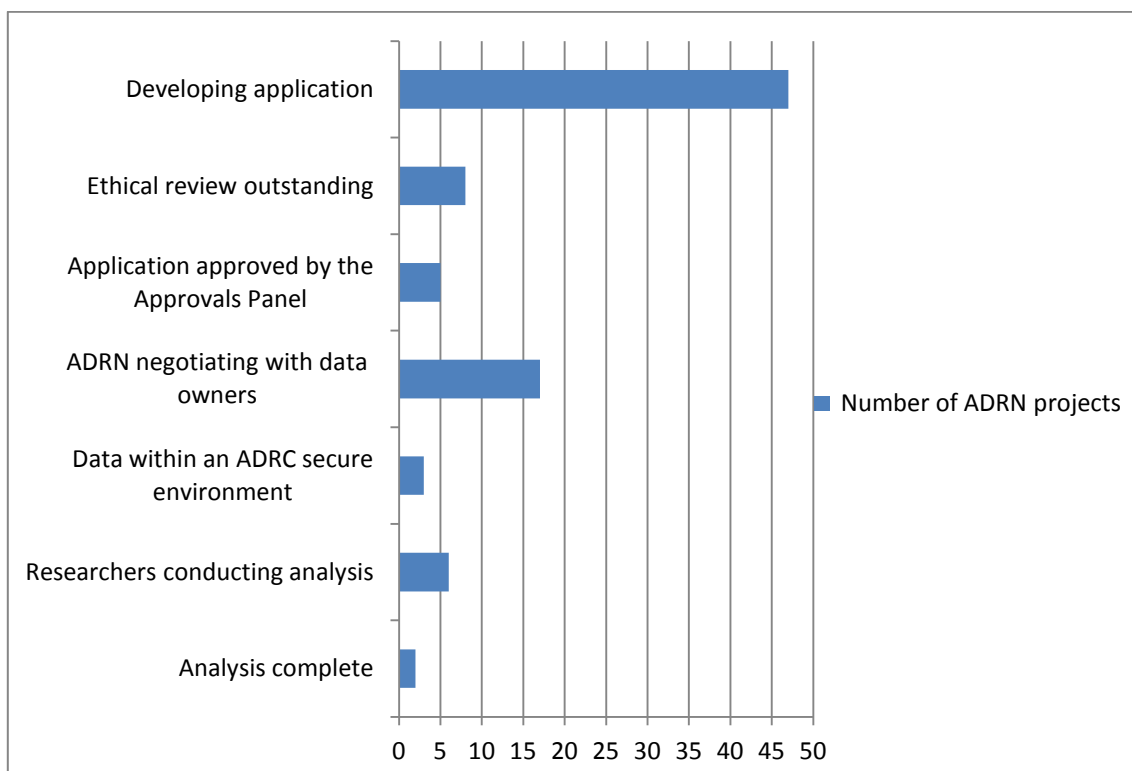

Figure 1: The number of ADRN projects at each stage in the ADRN process (April 2016)

Some progress has been made, especially for Centres within Devolved Administrations. For example, in Northern Ireland the Chief Statistician chairs a meeting of data owners and encourages them to make data available to the ADRN. Once agreement with the data owners has been reached on what data will be provided, the ADRC-Northern Ireland publishes a prospectus detailing the data that is available to the research community. Data that is included in the ADRC-Northern Ireland prospectus includes data from: the Northern Irish Census, the General Register Office, the Central Survey Unit within the Northern Irish Statistics and Research Agency, the Land and Property Services and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Northern Ireland. In addition, the ADRC-Scotland has reached an agreement with the Scottish Government to link the Scottish Census with other datasets and make this available through the ADRN. ONS has also agreed in principle for the ADRC-England to hold its datasets and for them to be made available to researchers via the Southampton and Bloomsbury secure labs.

However, gaining access to UK data sets from some major government departments remains particularly challenging and is affecting delivery of projects. To illustrate this issue the table below shows the latest progress made with some of the main UK departments and the time when they were first asked to provide data to the ADRN.

Table 3: Progress made with some of the main UK departments (April 2016)

Department	When the department was approached for data	Number of approved projects requesting data	Latest progress (May 2016)
Department of Energy and Climate Change	May 2015	1	Drawing up data sharing agreement.
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)	June 2015	1	DVLA is not currently considering any requests for data access for research purposes.
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	June 2015	6	On advice of the department, pilot project submitted for consideration.
Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)	July 2015	6	On advice of the department, pilot project being considered at HSCIC Data Access Advisory Group.
Higher Education Statistics Agency	June 2015	2	Project featuring Northern Ireland data is nearing completion.
HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)	Feb 2015	0	Lots of demand for HMRC data but no project fulfils requirements of legal gateway.
Valuation Office Agency	January 2016	2	No project fulfils requirements of legal gateway.

The following reasons have been cited by Departments as barriers to sharing data. The ADRN is taking the steps presented below to address each of these barriers:

Table 4: Reasons cited by Departments as barriers to sharing data with the ADRN (April 2016)

Barrier to sharing data with the ADRN	Steps to address barrier
A lack of resources to prepare data for research purposes.	A proposal for how ADRN resources could be allocated to support government departments in sharing data with the Network is being developed.
	The possibility of the Network retaining de-identified linked data is also being investigated so that data owners don't have to resupply data for each separate project[3].
Inertia within departments to sharing data.	Engagement is taking place to re-state the policy benefits of research conducted through the ADRN, and restate the ambition of the Network as part of the wider government digital transformation project.
Government departments can already share data with each other without using the ADRN.	Highlighting that the ways in which this is often done is not transparent or consistent and illustrating how the ADRN can help contribute to delivering the government transparency agenda.
A lack of legal clarity about the sharing data with the ADRN.	The ADRN continues to engage with Cabinet Office to ensure developments in the data landscape are matched by legislation that enables better exploitation of emerging 'big' data sources and that maintains and strengthens privacy rights.

The lack of UK wide data in the ADRN represents a real risk to the future success of the Network as access to these important data sets is essential if the full research and policy benefits of the ADRN are going to be realised.

Critical Success Factors

The picture described above is reflected in the Critical Success Factors presented in Table 5. In July 2015 the Board endorsed a number of critical success factors and their measures. These provide evidence that key factors or activities, which are critical to the success of the ADRN, are in place so that the benefits of the ADRN can be realised. The table below presents metrics against each of the Critical Success Factors that can be robustly reported on at the time of writing, and presents the progress that has been made by the ADRN against each of these Critical Success Factors.

---

[3] Currently, data owners provide data to the ADRN on a project by project basis. If there was to be a change in policy, data owners will still have the final say over what research projects their data is used for.

Table 5: ADRN Critical Success Factors (April 2016)

Critical Success Factor	Measure	Progress
Accessible facilities in each country	Facility in each country of the UK	Each of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom has centres which are open for researchers.
	Facilities are accessible by researchers with disabilities	All facilities are accessible with researchers with disabilities.
Everyone who uses the Network is trained to carry out safe research	Accreditation training programme in place	All researchers accessing the Network have undergone accreditation training.
Approved projects are being executed	Logged projects with ADS compared with approved projects (i.e., total number of projects logged with ADS compared to those with approval from the Approvals Panel)	Currently 88 projects are active within the Network at various stages of development. The Approvals Panel has approved 41 of these projects.
	Total number of accredited users named on projects approved by Approvals Panel	In total there are 64 accredited researchers (32 from academia, 24 from Government and 8 from the Third sector).
	Number of completed projects	2
Well developed public relations and public engagement direction	% of research summaries available on the ADRN website to the public	All research summaries are available on the ADRN website.

Over the next year these Critical Success Factors need to be further developed to ensure they capture outcomes and not just how outcomes were achieved.

Work of the ADRN Board

Over the past year the ADRN Board's has focused on providing guidance on a number of the Network's key strategies. The Board has also continued to provide assurance on a number of the Network policies, particularly around information security.

Data Owner Engagement Strategy

The data owner engagement strategy describes how the Network communicates and engages with data owners as part of trying to acquire data from government departments. Although the Board recognise the significant wider contribution of the ADRN beyond the accessing of data, such as developing capability, methodology and public engagement, the Network will be ultimately judged on whether it can generate a significant number of research projects that produced research with real public and policy benefits. Therefore, the relatively slow progress in getting access to data is a real risk to the success of the Network.

The current legal landscape does not help the sharing of data. Current legislation causes uncertainty in public authorities as to what information can be disclosed to researchers which can cause lengthy delays and inconsistent decisions around access. During the last year, Board members have engaged with a Cabinet Office-led Open Policy Making (OPM) process, intended to ensure developments in the data landscape are matched by legislation that enables better exploitation of emerging 'big' data sources and that maintains and strengthens privacy rights. During this process participants supported the proposal for public bodies to be able to link data for research in the public good using a trusted third-party sharing system which can then be provided in de-identified form to accredited researchers under controlled conditions in a secure environment. All researchers and bodies involved in the handling of data under the powers will need to be accredited as meeting specified criteria to show they are fit and proper to fulfil their roles and the research question being explored must be in the public interest. The UK Statistics Authority as an independent body with appropriate expertise in statistical research and analysis will exercise the accreditation process.

This proposal should provide legal clarity to departments about what data is permitted to be shared in de-identified form. This could lead to Departments adopting less conservative and more consistent approaches when making decisions about sharing data for research. Hopefully, this will make the process of data sharing for research purposes a normal part of government business and should create the conditions which enable government departments to share data in safe and timelier ways which should benefit the ADRN.

These proposals were packaged together with other proposals. The other proposals included creating a legal framework for the sharing of identified data with the Office of National Statistics in order to enhance and future-proof the production of national statistics, and between public authorities and service providers to improve the targeting and efficiency of public service provision. In February 2016, Cabinet Office initiated a formal consultation process on this multi-strand data access legislation. The Board continues to monitor these developments and to take account of this broader context when identifying engagement strategies and across other relevant aspects of its work.

A lack of legal clarity is not the only issue that is impacting on the ADRN's ability to access data. The Network's negotiations with government departments have found that often departments do not have a thorough understanding of the administrative data that they hold. In addition, departments' understanding of their data is often constrained to their operational use which is the data's primary purpose. Preparing data for research purposes takes time and resource that is often difficult for government departments to commit to in the context of future government resources. The Board has recommended that the Network makes it clear to government departments how the ADRN could benefit government's own research and policy making to illustrate to departments the value of providing data to the Network. This may encourage them to commit resources to preparing and extracting data to enable them to share their data with the ADRN.

There is scope for government to make more of the research and policy opportunities that are presented by the linkage and analysis of multiple administrative datasets. Government departments often share data with each other in conservative ways to meet specific policy and/or operational objectives. It is here that the ADRN can potentially help and the Network needs to clearly communicate the research and policy possibilities to government departments. Experience from the ADRC- Northern Ireland and ADRC-Wales suggests that engaging departments in this way works. The experience in these countries suggests that departments are more likely to share data with the ADRN if they are able to contribute to the research questions that are being investigated.

It is apparent that within some departments there is a cultural reluctance to share data, with even those government departments who supported the Taskforce recommendations being reluctant to share data collected for operational purposes with the ADRN for independent high quality research. This is disappointing given that government departments were heavily represented on the ADTF, which identified the need for the ADRN, and the government response to the ADTF report emphasised the importance of "ensuring that the full breadth of data sources held in administrative systems where they have analytical value are accessible for research purposes"(Government Response to ADTF report).

It is recognised that the Board has an important role to play in helping the Network to access data. Throughout the year the Board members have strategically engaged with some data rich government departments to try to facilitate the sharing of data with the ADRN and have promoted the research and policy making potential of the ADRN at appropriate meetings of senior government decision makers. A summary of this activity is listed below:

  I.   Ms Witherspoon discussed blockages to accessing data with senior representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions;
  II.   Professor Hand and Ms Witherspoon contributed to a roundtable discussion about health statistics that was organised by the UK Statistics Authority;
  III. Professor Hand attended an informal meeting with HMRC to hear about HMRC's analytical work programme at which the work of the ADRN was discussed;
  IV.   Professor Hand took part in a roundtable discussion on the role of data science as part of the Charlie Bean's review of economic statistics;
  V.   Professor Hand and Ms Wright presented on the ADRN to government departmental directors of analysis;
  VI.   the ADRN Board secretariat liaised with senior representatives from the Office for National Statistics to help inform ONS' decision to allow survey data to be linked to administrative data in the ADRN; and
  VII. Professor Hand attended a meeting which included representatives from government departments to discuss "Unblocking Barriers to Data Sharing".

Widening Access

The ADTF report recommended that the ADRN Board discuss, at a relative early stage, private sector access to the Network. Providing the private sector with access to the Network would potentially increase the value of the ADRN and enable the Network to respond to a changing political landscape in which commercial organisations are increasingly involved in public service provision. To inform this discussion the Board commissioned from the Board secretariat team a review of the relevant literature to understand public attitudes towards data sharing with the private sector. The evidence that emerged from this review was diffuse and fragmented and underlined the importance of avoiding generalised perceptions of public attitudes in taking decisions concerning enabling private sector access to the ADRN.

Professor Longley, a Director of the Consumer Data Research Centre, which is working with consumer related organisations to open up their data resources to trusted researchers to enable them to carry out important social and economic research, presented to the Board about his experiences of engaging with commercial organisations. The potential value of high quality government data to the research community from all sectors was discussed. It was also recognised that allowing private sector researchers access to government data could encourage private sector data providers to open up more private sector data to academic and government researchers.

The Board suggested further work was required to help inform any future decision on widening access to the ADRN. This includes assessing likely demand and taking into consideration the views of government departments and the public. The Board also recognised that access to the ADRN would only ever be provided to accredited researchers. These accredited researchers would be restricted to accessing linked de-identified data for the purposes of conducting research with clear public benefits in a secure environment under the guidance of Network staff who would ensure that record level data did not leave the secure environment.

Information Security Policies

The Board has continued to guide the information security policies for the Network which the Board sees as being pivotal in engaging and persuading government departments to share data with Network and provide assurance to the public. The ADRN Board has responsibility for the approval of the principles included in the information security policy documents. It is then for the ADRC Directors to ensure the policies in operation are consistent with these principles and approve the information security documents and any reviews. The ADRN Board are informed of the final versions of the information security policies and any reviews. In the Board meeting in July 2015 the Board were presented with the following suite of information security policies by the ADS and were content with the fundamental principles on security of facilities that were set out in these policies.

I.   privacy protection and information security;
II.   trusted third party policy;
III. secure environment policy;
IV.   data movement policy;
V.   data retention and destruction policy; and
VI.   breaches policy and procedures.

In particular, the Board has had detailed discussions about the data retention policy and whether this enables researchers to fully exploit the value of the data, which could be made available through the ADRN. This was prompted by a discussion with Professor Julia Lane, from the Wagner School of Public Policy at New York University, who chairs the ADRN Information Assurance Expert Group (IAEG) and who presented to the Board meeting in July 2015. Professor Lane stated that the biggest issue for the IAEG was the ADRN data retention policy which she felt reduced some of the potential benefits of the Network for researchers.

The Board has discussed whether some key linked de-identified datasets could and should be retained by the ADRN and used for multiple research projects in a way which the public and data owners find acceptable. This would mean that the Network would not have to renegotiate access to data for each research project and would therefore become a data repository in which multiple research projects could potentially access the same de-identified data.

There are a number of potential advantages of this. For instance, the reduced reliance on having to renegotiate access to data for each potential research project should enable the Network to provide a more timely supply of data to accredited researchers. This should give researchers greater confidence that they can get efficient access to de-identified data through the ADRN and would make it easier to promote the value and use of the Network which could lead to more demand to use the facilities. Providing data once to the ADRN which could then be reused many times may also reduce the burden on the data owners of supplying data to the Network. The burden on data owners of supplying data to the ADRN has been identified as one of the major blockages to data flowing into the ADRN. Retaining de-identified data in this way would also enable researchers to challenge the findings of earlier research by interrogating the de-identified data upon which earlier findings were based and would therefore help to make the research process more transparent. Of

course, the success of such an approach would rest on data owners being willing to share their data with the Network under these new terms and the public finding this acceptable.

Approvals Panel

Throughout the year Dr Andrew Garrett has represented the Board on the independent Approvals Panel. The Approvals Panel makes sure the process of granting access to sensitive, linked administrative data is fair, equitable and transparent. Projects are assessed against the following criteria:

I.   be purely non-commercial research;
II.   be feasible, ethical and have a clear potential public benefit;
III. make a case for using administrative data to carry out the research;
IV.   show that the data can only be accessed through the Network, rather than alternatives (for example Farr Institute, UK Data Service Secure Lab, or longitudinal studies);
V.   not be research which a government department or agency would carry out as part of its normal operations; and
VI.   make its results public through this website.

Dr Garrett has provided the Board with an update from the Approvals Panel at each Board meeting throughout the year. The Board has stressed the importance of the role of the user support officer in communicating the decisions of the Approvals Panel to the researcher. In particular the user support officer has an important role in communicating to the researcher where the Approvals Panel wanted more information so that requests for further information were not seen by researchers to be outright rejections. Dr Garrett has taken a lead role in developing guidance on how applicants should provide details of their project methodology on the Approvals Panel application form. It is hoped that in the future this will reduce the number of occasions where the Approvals Panel need to ask researchers to provide further information.

The Board has also discussed the process for providing ethical consideration of potential ADRN projects that are assessed by the Approvals Panel. The ethics of potential ADRN projects from academic researchers are considered by University ethics committees. The Board has encouraged the ADS to come up with engaging ways in which guidance on ethics and administrative data can be communicated to University ethics committees to ensure that potential projects get robust and consistent ethical consideration by ethics committees at different institutions. In addition, the Board has asked the ADS to work with the ESRC to make sure that the ethical advice provided is consistent with the ESRC ethical guidance.

The Board has also provided guidance that non academic researchers applying to the ADRN should use the National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee (NSDEC) if they are not affiliated with an organisation which has its own ethics committee. NSDEC has been established by the UK Statistics Authority to advise the National Statistician that the access, use and sharing of public data, for research and statistical purposes, is ethical and for the public good. One of NSDEC's agreed functions is to provide an ethical approval function for ADRN projects originating from government and the third sector. Mr Colin Godbold is a non-executive member of NSDEC and therefore provides a connection between the ADRN Board and NSDEC. NSDEC has met on three occasions during the year and the ADRN Board secretariat presented an overview of the ADRN at the first meeting of NSDEC. The UK Statistics Authority is currently working with the ADS to facilitate NSDEC's ethical consideration of future potential ADRN projects from the government and third sector.

If a researcher provides 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 then the researcher can appeal to the Appeals Panel. This is a subcommittee of the ADRN Board and consists of three Board members: Professor Denise Lievesley who chairs the Panel, Mr Colin Godbold and Ms Penny Young. No appeals have been made during the course of the last year.

Board Self -assessment
In July the Board undertook its yearly self assessment. During the course of this, the Board considered the agenda items discussed in the previous meetings and whether this information was sufficient to enable the Board to carry out its role of providing strategic guidance and independent assurance. The Board also considered planned future agenda items and discussed whether this information would enable the Board to carry out its role in the future. Overall, Board members were satisfied with the information provided and believed it to be relevant and informative, enabling the Board to carry out its functions. The Board also suggested that planned future agenda items would enable them to continue performing its role in the future.

Transparency
Throughout the year, the Board has continued to operate transparently with all agendas, papers and minutes published promptly after each Board meeting on the UK Statistics Authority website https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/administrative-data-research-network-adrn/adrn-board-meeting-agendas-papers-and-minutes/. Information on the Board members (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/administrative-data-research-network-adrn/meet-the-administrative-data-research-network-board/) and the Board's terms of reference are also published on the UK Statistics Authority website (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-adrnto_tcm97-44192.pdf).

The Board provide assurance to the UK Statistics Authority Board about the progress made by the ADRN. As part of this, Professor Hand has reported on the work of the Board and progress of the ADRN at each UK Statistics Authority Board meeting. The Board also provide assurance to the ESRC. As part of this, during the year Professor Hand and Ms Wright have presented to the ESRC Council on the progress of the ADRN.

Future Work of the Board
Given some of the issues the Network is facing getting access to some data, over the next financial year the Board will focus its resources on systematically and efficiently strategically engaging with high level representatives of government departments to facilitate the sharing of data with the ADRN. To do this the Board will receive a regular flow of detailed information about progress and problems. It is critically important that ADRN Board requests for data about ADRN performance be answered swiftly, accurately and consistently. This will allow the ADRN Board to identify where Board assistance is required and make maximum use of the Board's contacts and networks to resolve specific blockages to data sharing in targeted and efficient interventions. This strategic engagement will also include continuing to promote the research and policy making potential of the ADRN at appropriate meetings of senior government decision makers and engaging with ongoing wider work in government to try to further develop data sharing legislation which maximises the use of government data to the research community.

The Board will continue to guide the further development of the ADRN data retention policy. In doing this the Board will commission work to get a full understanding of the implications of any change in retention policy for public attitudes, data security and the willingness of government

departments to share data with the ADRN. The Board will also look to learn from the experiences of data sharing infrastructures in other countries when guiding this policy.

During the next year the Board will also look to commission further work to help inform the Board's considerations on potentially widening access to the ADRN to companies accessing the ADRN to do work on behalf of public authorities. In particular, the Board will consider the implications of the outcomes from the ONS Approved Researcher Scheme Consultation. The ONS Approved Researcher Scheme is used by ONS to grant access to data for statistical research purposes that cannot be published openly.

In the next year the ADRN Board will work jointly with the ESRC to appoint independent reviewers to conduct a formal mid-term review of the ADRN which will report in the Winter of 2016. The review will report to the ADRN Board and the ESRC Council and will be published in early 2017. The UK Statistics Authority will use the mid-term review to seek assurance for the robust performance and governance of the Network. This will help the Authority to fulfil its role as the reporting body to the UK Parliament for the ADRN. The mid-term review will also inform the ESRC Council's decision, in February 2017, of whether and how the ESRC will re-commission the ADRN beyond the initial grant. To support this decision the review will evaluate the quality and impact of the ADRN over the first two and a half years of its existence and consider its plans and priorities for the future.

The review, which will take place during the Summer of 2016, will be a strategic review of the ADRN and will consider the following:
I. the current contribution of the ADRN in facilitating and safeguarding the linkage of administrative data for research purposes in the UK that serve the public good (e.g. the role of the ADRN in the wider data sharing landscape);
II. the current wider contribution of the ADRN beyond the accessing of data, such as developing capability, methodology and public engagement;
III. whether the ADRN is being developed, managed and maintained in a way that maximises its benefit to researchers, and policy makers, and provides value for money, taking account of the project scope and resources;
IV. how the ADRN should prioritise, organise and manage its future work to ensure that ADRN research is having maximum public or policy benefit;
V. the opportunities for sustainability and future development of the Network, including extensions to scope and resources within and beyond current funding commitments;
VI. how the governance arrangements can support the strategic aims of the Network;
VII. the progress of the Network against the original stated objectives of the Network and the critical success factors that have previously been agreed with the Board;
VIII. the wider contextual factors that have influenced the ADRN's progress, such as the legislative environment in which the ADRN is operating;
IX. the wider contribution of the ADRN to the international research community; and
X. the impacts of emerging issues on the ADRN;

Information will be collected from the four Administrative Data Research Centres, the ADS, data owners (government departments and agencies, and national statistical authorities), ADRN users, the ESRC and the UK Statistics Authority. Whilst reviewers will be asked to propose a methodology that will best suit the purpose of the review, it is expected that this will take account of desktop analysis of key ADRN documentation, an ADRN submission to the review, interviews with key stakeholders and information gathered from experts in administrative data, data linkage and data services.

Throughout the next year the ADRN Board and the Network Directors will continue to work in a coordinated way to continue to monitor and develop ADRN policies to ensure that data can be shared with the ADRN and accessed by the research community in safe and efficient ways. This will be facilitated by the Chair of the Directors Group being a member of the ADRN Board and each of the other Directors attending the Board on a rotational basis. In addition, the Board secretariat will attend both the ADRN Directors Group and Operations Group to maintain the visibility and understanding of the Board's work and role amongst the Directors.