



ADR UK Annual Report 2024-25

**Administrative data
is an invaluable
resource for public
good. *We're using it.***

Note: This annual report was developed as a digital microsite. The PDF version you are viewing has reduced functionality and content.

View the full ADR UK Annual Report 2024-25 online at
<https://reports.adruk.org/annual-report-2024-2025/>.

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Introduction



Dr Emma Gordon, Director of ADR UK

This year marks a real turning point for ADR UK. Since our establishment in 2018, we have worked across our UK-wide partnership to build a sustainable and secure data infrastructure, funding projects that demonstrate the value of administrative data through world-class data linkage and research programmes.

We can now show how this hard work has paid off. ADR UK is now firmly established as a trusted leader in the field. The research potential of administrative data is no longer theoretical – it's visible, proven, and delivering meaningful impact.

I'm delighted that this shift is reflected in the ever-growing number of organisations eager to collaborate with us, the expanding scale and ambition of the programmes we support, and the recognition we're receiving from influential voices in government, policy, and academia. Meanwhile, our mid-term evaluation confirmed that we're delivering excellent value for money – £5 of public benefit for every £1 invested.

But the clearest sign of this momentum is our biggest milestone to date: confirmation of £168 million in UK Government reinvestment, starting in April 2026. That's up from £115 million for the current five-year period, and represents the full amount we requested to deliver our vision. This renewed commitment offers the strongest possible foundation for what comes next.

We'll be focused on unlocking more linked social, health and economic data through new flagship datasets covering the four nations; investing in our technical infrastructure to support even more researchers to access our data; and streamlining the researcher journey from end to end, to scale up the generation of ADR UK insights that inform policy for the public good.

A thriving, sustainable data research ecosystem depends not just on infrastructure, but on access and visibility. That's why we're focused on making ADR UK datasets more discoverable and usable for all researchers. In addition to coordinating our own Fellowship and PhD programmes, this year has seen growing uptake of researchers

funded by other organisations using our data across a wide range of disciplines and sectors. We're continuing to work with government (UK and devolved), as well as public bodies across the UK, to further develop flagship datasets and open up novel avenues of research.

At the same time, we've taken on a more strategic role in shaping the data research ecosystem. Our expert input into the development of the National Data Library reflects how far we've come – both as a delivery body and as a trusted leader in data.

Innovation continues to be central to our mission. This year, we've made major strides in areas such as synthetic data and user-centred improvements like expanded training and support. These developments are helping to make secure data access faster, smarter, and more inclusive.

We're also seeing growing influence on real-world policy and practice. ADR UK-funded research has been cited in government briefings, policy documents, and parliamentary inquiries. Our researchers, project leads, and Ambassadors are increasingly contributing to roundtables and consultations, helping embed evidence more directly into decision-making. Our expanding collection of impact case studies highlights how administrative data is informing solutions to urgent societal challenges – from housing and education to justice and health inequalities – in every nation.

Public engagement remains a cornerstone of our approach. The Connecting Society podcast continues to demystify our work for a broader audience (with a new series coming very soon!). Public panels across the ADR UK partnership – including a new panel launching in Northern Ireland this year – are helping shape how we link and use data in ethical, transparent, and impactful ways that reflect public views. These forums provide essential feedback and ensure that research stays grounded in the realities of people's lives.

Data, AI, and public sector reform are all topics grabbing attention – and rightly so. ADR UK is part of these vital, fast-moving conversations. But while headlines shift and priorities evolve, our core strength remains clear: linking high-quality, de-identified administrative data at scale to answer the big questions about how society works, how public services can improve, and how people's lives can be made better. That combination of relevance and reliability is what sets us apart. And it's why more people than ever are engaging with ADR UK and our data services.

As always, I'm hugely grateful to the ADR UK community – from team members, funders, and delivery partners to researchers and members of the public – for your invaluable contributions. I look forward to what we'll achieve together in 2026 and beyond.

Foreword



Stian Westlake, Executive Chair of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

As we celebrate 60 years of the ESRC this year, our mission is to ensure the greatest public benefit from social science. We want to equip and empower researchers to conduct outstanding research and deliver meaningful change.

A key milestone in this journey is our new £168 million investment in ADR UK, made through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This reflects UKRI's commitment to harnessing data to drive economic growth, better public services, and outstanding research.

Linking government social, economic and health data in a secure manner that preserves citizens' privacy is a powerful driver of better research and better public policy. It's also a vital resource for the scientists and researchers in the UK and beyond.

ADR UK will support a diverse portfolio of research programmes. Among these is the Cancer Data Driven Detection initiative, delivered in partnership with Cancer Research UK and others, which aims to enhance early cancer detection by harnessing the potential of linked health and administrative data.

With a renewed focus on data for economic growth, ADR UK is working on expanding access to linked economic datasets. This will support vital research into the drivers of UK productivity and give policymakers a better view of how the economy functions.

Alongside ADR UK, ESRC's expanding portfolio of investments is creating valuable opportunities for collaboration across sectors. One example is the strategic Research & Development Missions Accelerator Programme, which supports innovation aligned with national priorities - including health, clean energy, and digital transformation.

ADR UK is currently sharing best practice guidance with teams within the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to support an exciting new future for joined-up data management and access. Together we can shape a strategy that benefits researchers, policymakers, and the public.





Professor Alison Park, Deputy Executive Chair of the ESRC and Senior Responsible Officer for ADR UK

Chairing the ADR UK Programme Board as Senior Responsible Officer is a highlight of my role at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Over the past year, the ADR UK team has made remarkable progress in the complex but vital field of UK-wide data linkage – enabling research that is making a real difference to people’s lives.

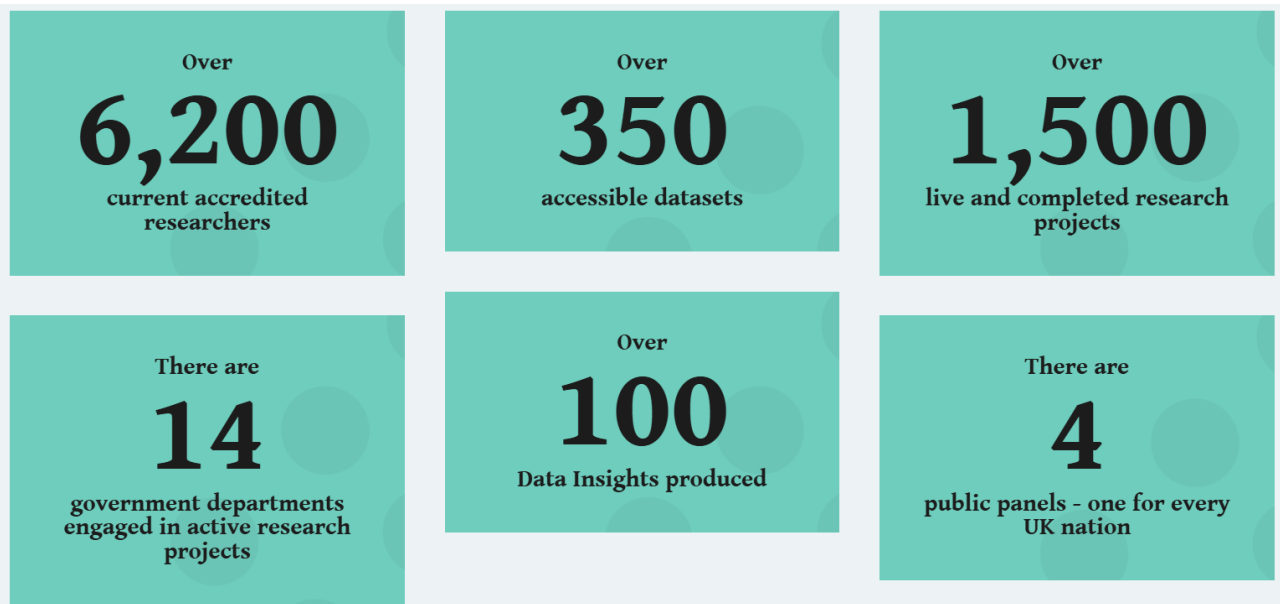
It’s been inspiring to read the case studies showcasing research impact across our four national partnerships – ADR England, ADR Northern Ireland, ADR Scotland, and ADR Wales – alongside the Office for National Statistics. A standout example is their collaboration with NatCen, which brought together insights into care experiences across the UK. This is just one way ADR UK is building strong partnerships and unlocking transformative opportunities for researchers to better understand society through data.

In my role as Deputy Executive Chair of ESRC, I oversee the Skills & Methods and Data Strategy & Infrastructure portfolios. A key priority is ensuring strong connectivity across ESRC and championing the role of social science within UKRI’s broader infrastructure agenda. ADR UK plays a central role in this, working closely with partners including ESRC’s Public Policy and Engagement teams, the Public Engagement in Data Research Initiative (PEDRI), Health Data Research UK, DARE UK, Smart Data Research UK, Population Research UK, and UK Data Service to share knowledge and best practice.

ESRC continues to shape the future of data-driven research skills and methods training. ADR UK has expanded its Training and Capacity Building Strategy, grown its research fellowship programme, and is now directly supporting 22 PhD studentships. These efforts complement ESRC’s wider work to embed administrative data use throughout researchers’ careers. I remain committed to the strategic importance of community-led research and innovation, ensuring inclusive opportunities for all to engage in research.

I’m delighted that ADR UK will continue its ground-breaking work beyond March 2026, supported by UKRI’s reinvestment. Under Emma Gordon’s inspiring leadership, ADR UK will remain a key contributor to our society and economy – supporting government ambitions to boost economic productivity, improve public services, and create high-quality jobs through research and innovation.

ADR UK in numbers



Watch the year's highlights



Key developments across the partnership

This year ADR UK focused on consistent data and research delivery, while solidifying our priorities and activities for the final phase of our current investment period, concluding in March 2026.

As a result, we have seen increases across our work: in our flagship dataset provision, through dataset usage across the UK, and consequently in new policy-driven insight generation. Alongside this, new programmes of work, such as our synthetic data programme and Community Catalyst initiatives, have ensured ADR UK remains at the forefront of using administrative data for the public good.

Understanding the impact of our work

An independent mid-term evaluation of the ADR UK programme in November 2024 estimated that ADR UK delivers a benefit-cost ratio of 5.05 – meaning every £1 spent generates over £5 in benefits.

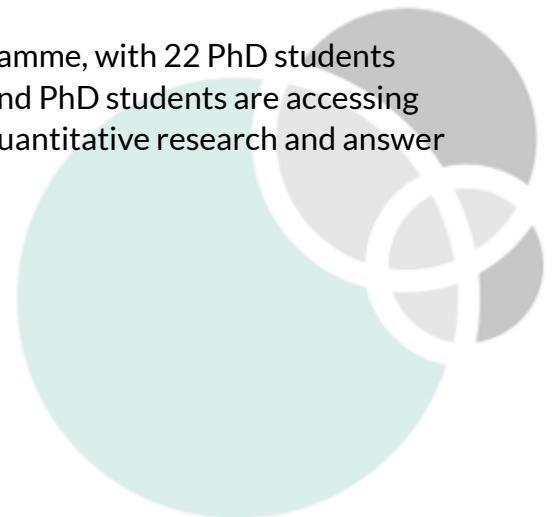
Using interviews, case studies, surveys, and economic analysis, the report finds that ADR UK's cost savings and projected socio-economic impacts significantly outweigh its costs.

Some of the highlights include:

- Enabling over 200 new datasets to be acquired, linked, and cleaned
- Expanding secure remote data access via SafePods and trusted research environments
- Building support for data sharing across government
- Strengthening ties between researchers and policymakers.

Increasing opportunities for researchers and wider engagement

This year, 13 more academics joined our Fellowship programme, with 22 PhD students also being directly supported by ADR UK. These fellows and PhD students are accessing the full breadth of ADR UK flagship datasets to conduct quantitative research and answer policy-relevant research questions.



A £3.5 million investment by ADR UK also supports the ADR UK Training and Capacity Building Strategy (2021-2026), which aims to increase the number of researchers trained to analyse complex linked administrative datasets. This complements existing ESRC-funded programmes to grow awareness of and opportunities for using administrative data across researchers' careers.

We are regularly bringing researcher events to our community, sharing insights from across all four nations on the important analysis taking place which is having real-world impact.

ADR UK continues to support internships, a valuable way to co-produce data research within specific projects and allow people to experience what it means to work within a trusted research environment. ADR Wales achieved the highest-ever number of interns this year, and had a record number of applications for places. The internship programme reflects our continued commitment to developing the next generation of data professionals.

We have also achieved our milestone of hosting a public panel in each nation to ensure regular and meaningful engagement with the public on our work and research findings.

Building strong relationships with our data partners

Our evaluation identified that the greatest societal and financial benefits from administrative data research are often achieved when data generated by one government department or public service is linked to data from others. Linking data surfaces new insights that can otherwise remain hidden.

This year, across the UK, we have extended and strengthened our data owner partnerships to create new datasets and ensure insights mined from them connect back to policymakers.

During this period, we are delighted to have funded and facilitated a suite of new and updated flagship datasets, with our current total standing at 21. Our first UK-wide flagship dataset, Administrative Data | Agricultural Research Collection, continues into its second phase, developing an updated and expanded collection across the four nations.



Generating greater policy impact

This year we have continued to utilise the power of administrative data to impact policy design, by providing both the evidence needed to identify priority policy areas for development and new data-led insights to help shape solutions.

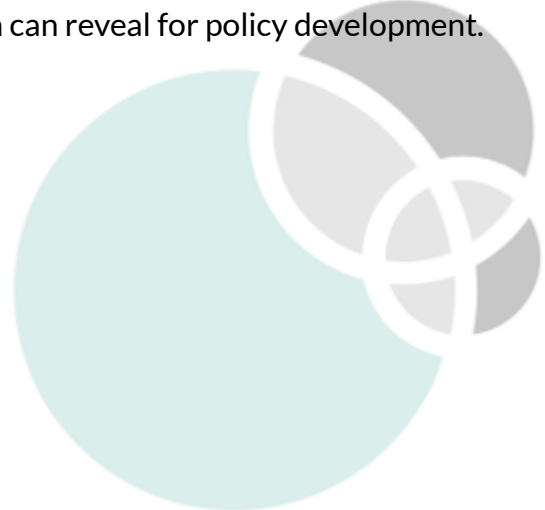
This year a range of projects have directly supported policymakers. For example, in Scotland, researchers who delivered the [Growing Up in Kinship Care](#) report were invited to present their findings to the Scottish Government policy team to inform decision making.

In Northern Ireland at the start of the year, the [All-Party Group on Policy and Public Data](#) was established. It provides a forum for discussion around data linkage for research and policymaking. A [policy brief](#) published by ADR NI in May 2025 provided policymakers with early access to emerging findings from their research examining employment and health outcomes for disabled people.

The Welsh Government commissioned ADR Wales teams and partners to undertake complex analysis of multiple data sources to examine the pathways taken through tertiary education across a wide range of personal characteristics. By using linked data, the team provided a far more detailed analysis than had previously been possible, informing the future of tertiary education policy in Wales.

ADR England's Community Catalyst programmes have provided online and in-person opportunities to bring researchers, data owners, funders, practitioners, and policymakers together. This shapes research agendas and sets up meaningful connections between research and policy priorities.

This year, ADR UK Director Emma Gordon provided key evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility, highlighting the need to better understand the barriers and opportunities that administrative data can reveal for policy development.



ADR England

The last year has focused on greater engagement with our administrative data research communities as well as seeing early investments in data and research come to fruition.

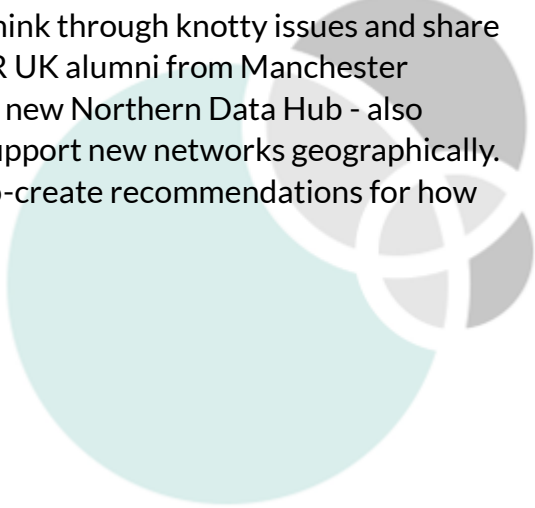
More ADR England [flagship datasets](#) are being created and used than ever before. Education and Child Health Insights from Linked Data ([ECHILD](#)), which links health and education data, now has over 50 project applications - with more in the pipeline. We have also been working with the Department for Work and Pensions and HMRC to make linked income, benefits and migrant worker data available for research as another flagship dataset, reflecting our priority to open up access to more economic data.

The final [ADR UK Research Fellowships](#) cohort for the current investment period saw another 13 fellows awarded funding. This makes a total of 49 fellowships funded by ADR UK, five of which were awarded thanks to additional co-funding from ADR Scotland, ESRC and the Medical Research Council. The fellows have been showcasing their work nationally and internationally, and this year also saw our first in-person meeting for all fellows, which focused on building communities.

Impactful research through Community Catalyst networks

The two ADR England Research Community Catalyst networks, [Youth Transitions](#) and [Children at Risk of Poor Outcomes](#), are now helping to drive more impactful research use of ADR England flagship datasets. They have launched their co-created research agendas, data tools and other resources, as well as driven capacity-building and engagement events bringing researchers and stakeholders together around shared interests. These teams have also attracted additional co-funding from ESRC to build capacity in using administrative data to evaluate public policy.

The ADR England Research Community Catalysts have reached out across sectors and disciplines, forming exciting new mixes of people to think through knotty issues and share experiences around specific themes. Meanwhile, ADR UK alumni from Manchester Metropolitan University - who hosted the launch of a new Northern Data Hub - also stimulated thinking about how the programme can support new networks geographically. Building on this, we are facilitating communities to co-create recommendations for how we can support sustainable community-led activities.



Researcher training and capacity building expansion

This year has also seen continued expansion of ADR England training and capacity building activities. A recent audit of ADR England's offering paints a rich picture of varied educational approaches reaching a range of learners across career levels and sectors. Through our partnerships with NCRM (National Centre for Research Methods) and CEPEO (Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities), we were able to increase the number of places on courses to support specific datasets, alongside providing new courses to fill gaps in researchers' knowledge.

[Read the full update from ADR England](#), including updates on the award-winning ECHILD project, our collaboration with the Department for Education, and our partnership with HMRC to open up access to economic data.

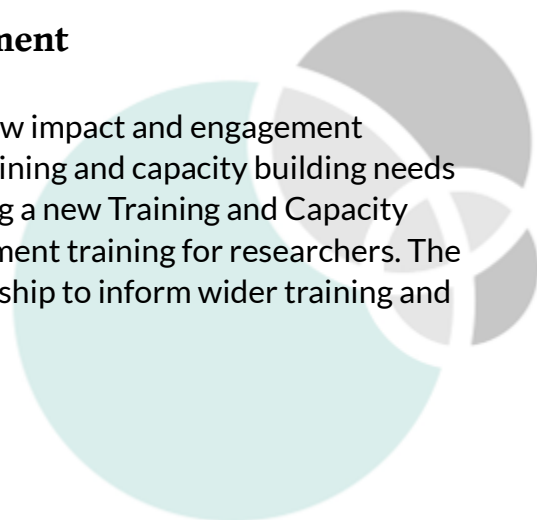
ADR Northern Ireland

This year has seen significant developments at ADR Northern Ireland, including the establishment of a new All-Party Group on Policy and Public Data at the Northern Ireland Assembly, where Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland (ADRC NI, part of ADR NI) holds secretariat responsibility. Here, the need to highlight and enhance the value of administrative data for research and policymaking has been explored further.

Also established this year was the Northern Ireland Public Data Panel (NIPDP), the first public forum of its kind in Northern Ireland to discuss the use of public data with members of the public. Delivered by ADRC NI in partnership with the Department of Health's NI Trusted Research Environment, NIPDP is already seen as key data engagement infrastructure across the data ecosystem.

Training and capacity building needs assessment

To better support researchers to engage with these new impact and engagement opportunities, we have developed and conducted a training and capacity building needs assessment with researchers. The results are informing a new Training and Capacity Building Strategy and Public Engagement and Involvement training for researchers. The survey was also replicated across the ADR UK partnership to inform wider training and capacity building activities.



ADR Northern Ireland has continued to drive forward data acquisition developments, including the delivery of rich new or enhanced research resources in the areas of:

- education (Education Outcomes Linkage 2019/20 -2021/22)
- population (Census 2021 Comprehensive Microdata)
- income (Cross Government Income Administrative Dataset).

There has been significant development in the new Administrative Data | Agricultural Research Collection dataset for NI and phase 2 of Business Data for Research (due for release in the next few months), as well as the ongoing development of Longitudinal Education Outcomes for Northern Ireland.

Disability and employment transitions research published

This year ADR Northern Ireland also published key ADR UK-funded research on disability and employment transitions (2011–2021). In 2024, a quick read summary of 2001–2011 based disability and employment research was published highlighting factors linked to sustained employment and an updated 2021 disability employment gap.


Following successful five-year reaccreditation in 2024 for the provision and preparation of data under the Digital Economy Act 2017, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA, part of ADR NI) successfully achieved annual accreditation in May 2025.

[Read the full update from ADR Northern Ireland](#), including a new dataset to examine social policy impacts on inequality, and new tools to measure the impact of deprivation.

ADR Scotland

Over the past year, ADR Scotland has delivered key infrastructure projects, made new datasets available, generated policy-relevant research insights, and strengthened engagement with both new and existing stakeholders, including members of the public.

Building on previous investments, we have enhanced the support we offer to researchers accessing data in several important ways. This year, collaboration across the ADR Scotland partnership, alongside investment in Research Data Scotland, has led to improvements in the metadata catalogue. We are streamlining and simplifying data access processes, aligning with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Information Commissioner's Office guidance to reduce administrative burdens while ensuring a secure, transparent, and trusted approach to data use.

The logo for ADR Scotland is a circular emblem composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent circles in shades of teal and grey, creating a complex, geometric pattern.

Complementing this work, we have expanded our training offer for researchers. We run the [Introduction to Administrative Data Research and Analysis \(IADRA\) course](#) online twice a year, in addition to delivering courses on [data quality](#) and [privacy-preserving record linkage](#) for both Scottish and UK-wide audiences.

Driving forward data acquisition

This year ADR Scotland has also driven forward data acquisition across a range of areas from justice to education. A number of datasets and metadata were made available for secure research access including [the Service Leavers Database – Scotland](#), [Scottish Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\)](#) and the [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#).

Research using ADR Scotland data continues to generate insights that are directly informing policy. Notable findings include links between some, but not all, measures of persistent child poverty and early youth offending. Another ongoing project is exploring migration patterns among nurses and midwives and their implications for the health and care workforce. Our publication on [Growing Up in Kinship Care](#) was featured in the joint ADR UK-NatCen UK-wide report, and researchers were invited to present their findings to the Scottish Government policy team to inform decision making.

Strengthening academic engagement and collaboration

ADR Scotland has maintained strong momentum in promoting engagement and collaboration across academia, the third sector, and government. Our *Data with Impact* series returned this year, with the most recent *Spotlight on Adult Social Care* event focusing on key issues, available data, and research opportunities. Insights from this event will help shape the Scottish Government's upcoming social care research priorities. Similarly, poverty remains a high-priority area, with continued collaboration following a previous spotlight event. Additional engagement and workshops have brought together representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Scottish Government, academic researchers, and third-sector organisations.

[The Scottish Historic Population Platform project](#) continues to advance methodological innovation in data linkage. The team has developed novel approaches, including exact matching of certificates that account for ambiguities, automated clustering-based methods to group birth siblings, and scalable probabilistic methods that address record uniqueness. All generated links are stored in a graph database, enabling efficient and flexible querying, verification, and extraction of complex research cohorts.

[Read the full update from ADR Scotland](#), including a project into policing mental health distress, and research understanding the social circumstances of veterans.

ADR Wales

This year has marked a period of exceptional progress and impact for ADR Wales, underpinned by a clear commitment to mobilising data for public good and strengthening the evidence base for policy development in Wales.

One of the year's standout events was the ADR UK Conference 2025 held in Cardiff, which brought together stakeholders from government, academia, and the third sector to showcase innovation in data use and foster meaningful collaboration.

A major milestone was the acquisition of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) Income data – an accomplishment that opens up significant new opportunities for researchers to enhance their work with high-quality administrative data, particularly in areas vital to improving public services.

We also recorded our highest-ever number of interns across all ADR Wales project areas in the annual Population Data Science Summer Internship Programme, reflecting our continued commitment to developing the next generation of data professionals.

Relationships with policy leads and partners flourish

Our strong relationships with policy leads and partners continued to flourish. Highlights include engagement on educational pathways in collaboration with Medr and the Wales Centre for Public Policy, significant contributions to the Welsh Government's Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Strategy, and active third sector liaison within the housing and homelessness team.

A key highlight was our support for Torfaen County Borough Council, where we provided hands-on assistance to help the local authority better understand and use its data. This collaboration contributed to their successful funding bid, enabling them to expand their data mobilisation efforts – an example of how our work empowers local services to generate and apply their own intelligence.

Partnership projects receive recognition

The successful delivery of the Better Outcomes Through Linked Data (BOLD) project in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, as well as new investment through the Cancer Data-Driven Detection (CD3) project with Cancer Research UK, further strengthened our capacity. Our work also received notable ministerial recognition this year, both for its past impact and our forward-looking vision for the reuse and sharing of government data.

[Read the full update from ADR Wales](#), including work to understand pay disparities in Wales, measuring the desirable indicators of health, and exploring equity in tertiary education in Wales.

Office for National Statistics

2025 marks the 21st anniversary of the ONS Secure Research Service (SRS), reaffirming our continued commitment to providing secure access to de-identified record-level data for research in the public good.

This year also marks seven years of collaboration, funding and partnership with ADR UK, which has enabled the SRS to expand its data offer with administrative and linked datasets from other government departments, including the Department for Education and Ministry of Justice.

Secure Research Service usage grows

Usage of the SRS continues to grow. There are now over 6,000 accredited researchers, with approximately 1,900 of them actively working on about 800 live research projects at any given time. Currently, 142 datasets are available for accredited researchers to apply to access through the newly-launched Project Accreditation Service for SRS (PASS). Among these users are ADR UK fellows and PhD students. ONS has further supported these groups of researchers through the provision of specialist advice at ADR UK workshops, topic webinars, and cohort meetings throughout the year.

New datasets made available for research

This year, a range of new datasets were made available to all SRS accredited researchers. These include the second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England and Civil Society Organisations UK. Work is also underway to make the Department for Work and Pension's Registration and Populations Interactions Database dataset available. Existing datasets have been refreshed. For example, the Department for Education Data Access and Engagement programme has provided several refreshes (update of years) to datasets such as the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents and the Further Education Workforce Data Collection.

[Read the full update from the ONS](#), including the new replacements for the Research Accreditation Service and celebrating impact through the Research Excellence Series.



New and emerging datasets

Administrative Data | Agricultural Research Collection (AD|ARC)

[AD|ARC](#) was launched in 2020 to create the first UK-wide research data collection focused on agriculture. It enables researchers to better understand the people who work and live on farms in the UK, and the challenges they face.

Now in its second phase, the project is developing an updated and expanded collection, which will include linkages to Census 2021 data (Phase one links to the 2011 Census), Rural Payments Agency data, June Survey of Horticulture and Agriculture, and the Inter-Departmental Business Register. Together with environmental open data, this will enable research into the characteristics of farm businesses and households in the current climate.

Collectively, Phase two data will support policy-relevant insights in the context of a series of significant policy and environmental challenges - such as engagement with agri-environmental schemes, post-Brexit policy changes, and rising costs leading to tighter profit margins.

The research-ready datasets are accessible separately within the [Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service](#) for England, and will be made available via the [SAIL Databank](#) for Wales.

RAPID: Population interactions with employment, benefits and pensions

This year, ADR UK is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to make an existing linked administrative dataset - with a significant user base across government - available to all accredited researchers through ADR UK trusted research environments. This development represents a groundbreaking step in data accessibility, offering research access to deidentified information on all individuals (including children) with a National Insurance number across the UK.

This new dataset contains 87 million records and includes over 200 variables detailing individuals' interactions with the tax and benefits systems. This cover income received from employment and self-employment, benefits paid, pension income and demographic information such as age group, sex, employment status, disability codes, and information on registrations for National Insurance (including nationality at registration). The dataset

supports geographic analysis and includes the potential to securely connect data for individuals living in the same household when linked to household-based benefit awards. This dataset has enormous potential, with its coverage of the whole United Kingdom offering unique insights. Already used by numerous government departments, it is a component part of migration and population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is also used extensively by the Department for Education (DfE).

The dataset could help answer questions such as:

1. The relationship between income and child or pensioner poverty over time
2. Transitions between employment and economic inactivity
3. The impact of economic shocks on the labour market, migration, and income.

As one of ADR UK's flagship datasets, this will be supported with detailed documentation and integrated into upcoming ADR UK Research Fellowship opportunities. Over time, training courses and resources will also be developed to support researchers in using the data effectively.

The dataset will be made available to all accredited researchers via the ONS Secure Research Service. DWP are also exploring whether the data can be made available in the trusted research environments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

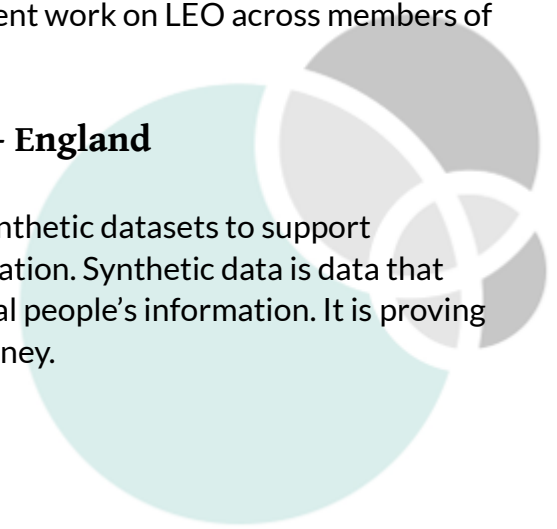
Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO)

The currently available [Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) dataset](#) contains de-identified information on the characteristics, education, employment, benefits, and earnings of children and young people educated in England, followed up through to adulthood.

This is a unique source of information, with the potential to provide transformative insight and evidence on longer-term labour market outcomes and educational pathways. This year has seen several key milestones in development work on LEO across members of the ADR UK partnership.

Synthetic Longitudinal Education Outcomes – England

Over the past year, ADR UK has explored the use of synthetic datasets to support research planning, development, training, and collaboration. Synthetic data is data that mimics real administrative data, but doesn't include real people's information. It is proving to be a valuable tool for smoothing the researcher journey.



Creating synthetic data for the LEO dataset was a key aim of [an ADR England project](#) which seeks to improve the dataset's usability and usefulness.

This year, the project lead, based at UCL, and colleagues at DfE have successfully developed a synthetic version of LEO. The dataset is classified as 'low fidelity', meaning it preserves certain properties of the original data (including patterns of missingness) but relationships between variables are not preserved, making it fully non-disclosive.

The synthetic LEO dataset allows researchers to familiarise themselves with the structure and characteristics of the real data before applying for secure access. This can help assess dataset suitability and - in some cases - draft code outside of the secure environment.

The potential benefits are wide-ranging: researchers being better prepared for projects; researchers needing to spend less time working within a Trusted Research Environment to complete their project; data owners receiving more feasible applications; and trusted research environments facing fewer unviable requests.

ADR UK is now working with multiple stakeholders to establish mechanisms for routine synthetic data production across all flagship datasets.

Note: LEO Synthetic Data will be made available via the UK Data Service as a safeguarded dataset.

Longitudinal Education Outcomes for Northern Ireland

ADR NI's creation of the [Education Outcomes Linkage 2018/19-2021/22 dataset](#) has laid the foundation for developing LEO NI. Phase one is currently in development.

ADR NI is working with the NI Department for the Economy (DfE) Analytical Services Division and the Department of Education (DE) to develop this dataset. It will be a linked, de-identified dataset combining post-primary school data from DE with apprenticeships, further and higher education data from DfE. Later phases will include employment, earnings, and benefits data.

LEO NI will enable research into career paths from post-primary education through training and into the labour market. For the first time, we will be able to track how attendance, background, and training affect later outcomes - supporting more effective interventions. This modern, integrated approach aligns with UK-wide developments and promises to transform policymaking through evidence-based insights.

Scottish Longitudinal Education Outcomes – Scottish Universities

Scotland has a strong foundation of high-quality data supporting research on children, young people, and learners. In line with Scotland's [policy ambition](#) for all children to grow up loved, safe and respected, work has focused on building a library of research-ready datasets to inform and improve outcomes.

The dataset, which includes all university students, provides information on earnings, employment, and benefits linked to education records. Covering tax years 2005/06 to 2021/22 (with more years to follow), it contains approximately three million anonymised records. It is standalone, non-linkable, and ready to use without knowledge of SQL or data cleaning.

Scottish LEO opens up new opportunities to explore graduate pathways and labour market outcomes. Research questions it can address include:

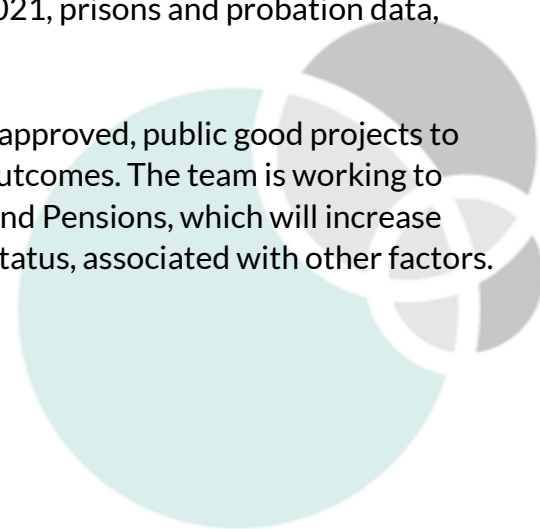
- How many learners take conversion degrees such as teaching?
- Do outcomes differ between PhD and bachelor's degree holders?
- Are some learners more likely than others to work in fields related to their studies?

Next steps include [exploring additional variables](#) and releasing the Scottish LEO Modern Apprenticeships dataset.

Insights into education outcomes in Wales

ADR Wales is pursuing acquiring benefits and income datasets to be linked to other datasets within the SAIL Databank, to enable better understanding of longer term educational outcomes for individuals. A breakthrough this year has been the ability to link HMRC employed income data to education datasets (alongside other de-identified administrative datasets held in SAIL, such as Census 2021, prisons and probation data, and GP and hospital records).

Using this data, accredited researchers can undertake approved, public good projects to investigate educational pathways and labour market outcomes. The team is working to acquire benefits data from the Department for Work and Pensions, which will increase understanding of individual and household economic status, associated with other factors.



Kids' Environment and Health Cohort

This new national data resource, based on a total population birth cohort in England, will for the first time link administrative health and education data to environmental data at the national level.

The first phase includes linkages between stillbirths and live births, deaths, and maternal census data - all connected to environmental data (via birth registration address), including air pollution, temperature, access to green space, Energy Performance Certificate data, and Valuation Office Agency data. The database protocol for this phase [has been published](#).

As part of the project's public engagement work, the team has collaborated with a group of parents to co-develop guidelines for writing lay research summaries, helping to improve the accessibility and impact of research findings.

The second phase of the project will focus on incorporating health and education linkages over the next year.

The Kids' Environment and Health Cohort could help answer questions such as:

1. How does exposure to heat during pregnancy affect health at birth?
2. How does exposure to overcrowded housing impact the health and educational outcomes of children?

The first phase of the cohort will be made available to all accredited researchers via the ONS Secure Research Service in April 2026. This dataset will become one of ADR England's flagship datasets and will be promoted alongside supporting documentation, resources, training opportunities, and future ADR UK Research Fellowships.



HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Migrant Workers Scan

The Wage and Employment Dynamics (WED) project is linking key datasets providing valuable new insights into earnings, employment, and labour market inequality in Britain.

With support from the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service, the project is enhancing and linking the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) dataset. The project is providing detailed data on earnings and paid hours across all industries and occupations by linking key administrative datasets:

- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE): A high-quality longitudinal dataset on employee earnings (1% sample of PAYE employees)
- Business Structure Database: A detailed register of UK firms based on VAT and PAYE records
- 2011 Census (England and Wales): Providing rich demographic and household information.
- HMRC PAYE Real Time Information and Self-Assessment: Capturing employment spells, earnings, and pension income across time.

The latest addition to the WED suite is the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings linked to Migrant Worker Scan (ASHE-MWS), which enables dynamic analysis of migrant experiences in the UK labour market. Based on administrative records of non-UK nationals applying for a National Insurance number, MWS typically covers adults arriving to work and young people registering at age 16. While the dataset dates back to 1975, its current form began in 2002 and includes variables such as gender, age, nationality, and arrival date.

Tracking pay, employment patterns, and transitions over time

Importantly, ASHE-MWS can be connected to broader HMRC datasets in the Secure Research Service, allowing researchers to track pay, employment patterns, and transitions over time. Together, the WED datasets offer a rich resource for longitudinal labour market research, supporting intersectional analysis and insights into low pay persistence, regional disparities, and the impact of policies like the National Living Wage.



Sure Start Play Data 2010 – 2020

The early years of a child's life are critical in shaping lifelong emotional and social wellbeing.

In Northern Ireland, the Sure Start programme supports parents with children under four years old in disadvantaged areas. Sure Start projects deliver services designed to enhance children's learning, health, and emotional and social development.

To better understand the programme's impact, ADR NI researchers are working with Sure Start's Strategic Planning and Performance Group to link ten years of Sure Start data with NI health records - evaluating the health outcomes of this popular, government-led intervention for the first time.

This work supports the Northern Ireland Programme for Government priority: "We give our children the best start in life." The dataset will provide a wealth of information on early years interventions and their impact on childhood and lifelong adversity - supporting better policy, services, and resource allocation.

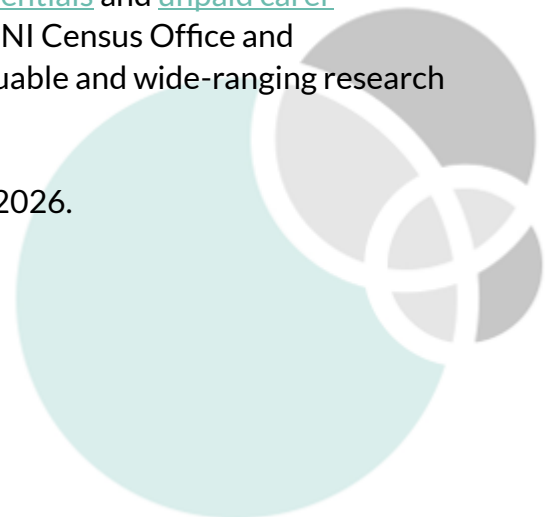
Earnings and Employees Study (EES) 2021

The Earnings and Employees Study (EES) 2011 has already enabled researchers to explore topics such as sectoral pay disparities, wage influences, and geographic differences. To enhance opportunities further, ADR NI is developing EES 2021.

This development will link data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2014–2023) with variables from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, and Capital Value data from Land and Property Services.

This improved longitudinal dataset will reflect researcher feedback from EES 2011 Data Insights on ADR UK (e.g. [Catholic-Protestant wage differentials](#) and [unpaid carer employment](#)). ADR NI is working with data owners at the NI Census Office and Department for the Economy to ensure EES 2021 is a valuable and wide-ranging research resource.

EES 2021 is anticipated to be released in spring/summer 2026.



Homes Energy Efficiency Database (HEED)

In Scotland, heating and cooling buildings costs £2.6 billion annually and accounts for around half of greenhouse gas emissions.

Factors such as weather, housing efficiency, and high energy costs contribute to fuel poverty - making energy efficiency a [national priority](#).

ADR Scotland is working with colleagues in Scottish Government and the [Energy Saving Trust in Scotland](#) on making HEED available for secure research. HEED supports monitoring and targeting of carbon reduction and fuel poverty initiatives.

At the individual property level, it tracks the sustainable energy characteristics of housing stock and includes information on energy efficiency measures, as well as microgeneration installations such as cavity wall insulation and solar hot water systems. With over 1 million records, HEED offers comprehensive information on energy efficiency improvements installed under Scottish Government schemes since 1992.

While it contains no personal identifiers, it includes Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs), allowing linkage to resident data where permitted.

HEED is therefore a powerful tool for research into sustainable energy, household vulnerability, and fuel poverty.

The Source dataset

Social care is a vital investment in people, communities, and the economy. In Scotland, it supports around 200,000 workers and contributes £3.4 billion annually. Improving care experiences and outcomes - especially for unpaid carers - is a [major policy goal](#).

As part of their Spotlight on Social Care, ADR Scotland highlighted the potential of the [Source](#) dataset. This national dataset provides information on individuals who are (fully or partially) funded by their local authority to receive social care services.



The dataset is structured into eight sections - including demographics, client information, self-directed support, care at home, community alarms, care homes, and learning disability statistics. Data is collected and submitted by local authorities to Public Health Scotland for every person, regardless of age, who has:

- received an assessment or review of their care needs, and
- accessed local authority-funded social care services during the collection period.

Covering activity from 2017/18 to 2023/24, the dataset captures both local and national care provision.

HMRC Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) Income data

In a significant development for employment and economic research in Wales, the Welsh Government has successfully acquired HMRC PAYE Income data for provision to researchers.

This emerging dataset, compiled annually by employers for each employee earning above the Lower Earnings Limit, contains comprehensive information that includes employer and employee details, National Insurance Contributions (both employer and employee), statutory payments (such as maternity, paternity, adoption, and sick pay), income tax data, and employment timelines.

The dataset also captures scheme-specific information like contracted-out numbers and National Insurance Contributions rebates, offering a comprehensive view of individual employment and earnings histories.

Now available within the SAIL Databank, a deidentified PAYE dataset can be linked to other key data sources such as Census 2021, enabling robust, policy-relevant research - particularly valuable given that tax and earnings are not devolved matters in Wales.

Access to the data is governed by strict protocols, including approval from the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP), data owners, and the SAIL Information Governance Review Panel. As of 17 July 2025, the first research project using this dataset is progressing through the RAP approval process, marking an important milestone in its research application.



Adults Receiving Care and Support Census

Following the successful integration of children's social care data into the SAIL Databank under the current ADR UK investment, ADR Wales's next strategic focus is on adult social care. The Adults Receiving Care and Support Census represents a major step forward in this area.

Developed collaboratively with Welsh local authorities and key stakeholders, this Wales-wide dataset captures detailed information on individuals receiving adult social care services within a defined reporting period. The census is intended to generate a comprehensive understanding of the needs of adults receiving care and support in Wales, enabling more informed policy decisions, targeted resource allocation, and improved service planning across the social care system.

The dataset will also include individual-level information submitted by local authorities, covering the types of care and support adults receive, their needs, and how services are delivered.

Once available in the SAIL Databank, it will be linkable to other relevant datasets such as the [Social Care Wales](#) workforce data collection, allowing researchers to explore how care is provided and how the workforce supports it. This will help build a clearer picture of adult social care in Wales. The data acquisition and approval processes are nearly complete, with the dataset expected to be available during the next ADR UK grant period from March 2026.

All Wales Police data

Police-related research within the SAIL Databank has historically relied on project-specific data extracts from individual police systems, largely due to the sensitive nature of the topics involved.

Formal approval has been secured from all four Welsh police forces - South Wales Police, Dyfed-Powys Police, Gwent Police, and North Wales Police - via their Chief Constables and Commissioners, to begin acquiring police data for integration into SAIL Databank.

Looking ahead to the next ADR UK funding period, beginning in March 2026, work is underway to develop a single, linked All Wales Policing dataset. This will involve continued planning around data content, governance, public engagement, and technical infrastructure. Once established and subject to appropriate governance approvals, the dataset will be linkable to other sources such as Ministry of Justice data, enabling more comprehensive research into policing and justice across Wales.

Our impact

Insights generated from ADR UK's data are making a real-world impact across the partnership – demonstrating how evidence unlocked through administrative data can improve people's lives.

This year we evaluated our programme impact in depth through an independent review of our work. The findings have helped us identify where we are delivering the most value and how we can continue to strengthen our work in the future.

Read on to learn more about the evaluation and explore just a few examples of our impact this year:

Returning a £5 return for every £1 invested: evaluation findings

This year, [our mid-term evaluation](#) was conducted independently by Oxford Insights and Lateral Economics, with support from the Open Data Institute. It assessed ADR UK's progress to date and provided recommendations for shaping our future direction.

Using a mixed methods approach, the evaluation drew on stakeholder interviews and surveys from across government and academia, alongside bibliometric and economic analysis.

A key finding was the estimated return on investment: a “conservatively estimated” partial benefit-cost ratio of £5.05 for every £1 spent to date. This highlighted the significant value ADR UK delivers for both government and academic researchers.

This evaluation has been essential in helping us understand what we have achieved, and where to focus our efforts moving forward.



Generating policy-related evidence on the intersections between care experience, ethnicity and youth justice involvement

This project, using the ADR UK funded Ministry of Justice (MoJ) & Department for Education (DfE) linked dataset for England, explored an important gap in understanding about the relationship between experiencing care, ethnicity, and youth justice involvement in England.

Findings identified disproportionately high rates of youth justice involvement and custodial sentences among care-experienced children (compared to those who had not been in care), which particularly affected some racially minoritised groups.

The project was the largest longitudinal analysis of care experience, ethnicity and youth justice involvement in England to date and made national headlines.


Project highlights include the researcher and ADR UK Fellow, Dr Katie Hunter (Manchester Metropolitan University), feeding directly into policy conversations with the Youth Justice Board and into a government strategy to support care-experienced people in the prisons and probations service.

Tackling youth homelessness through linking data: Impact in Northern Ireland and Wales

Homelessness is a critical issue for society, with wide-ranging impacts for individuals and communities. This year, ADR Northern Ireland and ADR Wales have delivered impactful research to support efforts to prevent youth homelessness – each using data in innovative ways, while working closely with charities, statutory agencies, and those with lived experience.

In Northern Ireland, ADR NI instigated a unique portfolio of research using population-level data from individuals presenting as homeless. This information was linked to administrative data on demographics, health care, maternity care, social services interactions, and mortality – the first data linkage of its kind in Northern Ireland.

The research is the result of meaningful and sustained engagement between researchers, statutory agencies, Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, and Experts by Experience (EBEs). A steering committee involving the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other key stakeholders is helping to shape the research and ensure findings reach those with the power to act for public benefit.



Partnering with organisations such as Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) and Homeless Connect has ensured that the voices of historically excluded EBEs are shaping the research process. This has demonstrated both the need and support for linkage between homelessness applicant and social services data for research. Together, these groups identified a shared priority: preventing homelessness in young people with experience of social services support.

In Wales, Dr Ian Thomas and Professor Peter Mackie from the [ADR Wales Housing and Homelessness team](#) have been working with charities across Great Britain to improve how data is collected and used in [Upstream](#) – a school-based intervention to prevent youth homelessness.

Developed in Australia and now adopted in Wales (by Llamau), England (by Centrepoin), and Scotland (by Rock Trust), Upstream uses a screening tool to identify pupils at risk of homelessness and offer timely support. ADR Wales worked with Llamau to clean and prepare the data, producing a statistical report on the characteristics of pupils and the scale of youth homelessness in Wales. They also explored links between truancy, school suspension, and homelessness risk.

As Upstream expands, ADR Wales has been working with Llamau, Centrepoin, and Rock Trust to design a new data system that includes the personal details needed to link screening data to education records – enabling evaluation of long-term outcomes, such as whether supported pupils are diverted from homelessness.

These case studies highlight how ADR UK's partnerships and data expertise are helping to inform policy, improve services, and ultimately support better outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness.

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Demonstrating the power of administrative data to shape policy priorities in Scotland

The need for robust evidence in social care isn't just important – it is urgent. While Scotland has long been a leader in health research using administrative data, social care has lagged behind. This is largely due to limited access to research-ready datasets, a challenge not unique to Scotland but seen globally. Fortunately, this is changing.

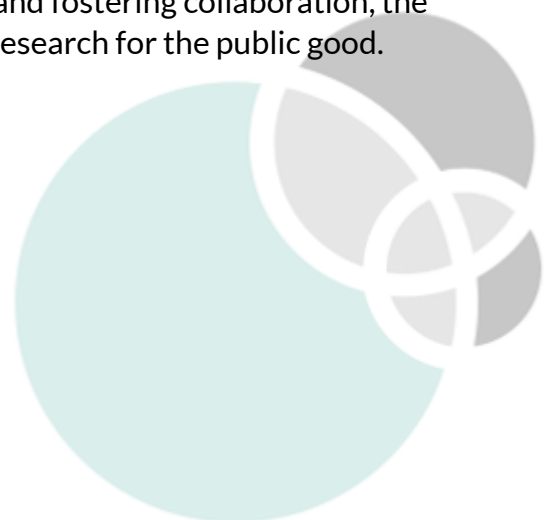
With an ageing population, evolving care needs, and growing pressure on public services, Scotland is now harnessing innovations in data science to meet these challenges head-on.

In March 2025, ADR Scotland hosted a [‘Data with Impact’ event on Adult Social Care](#), bringing together representatives from government, academia, and the third sector. The event showcased the potential of existing data and helped identify research priorities that are now shaping the Scottish Government’s Social Care Research Strategy.

The strategy will outline the research priorities of the Scottish Government’s social care analytical unit, highlighting the importance of supporting and developing social care research through collaboration between policymakers, analysts, and the wider research community to enable evidence-informed policymaking.

Academic case studies demonstrated the value of linking administrative data while also highlighting challenges in data sharing, standardisation, quality, and access. Attendees explored the potential of three key social care datasets (Source, [Health and Care Experience Survey \(HACE\)](#) and [Care Home Census](#)) to address pressing policy questions—such as understanding service flows, unmet needs, access patterns, and support for the workforce and unpaid carers.

Researchers can request access to all three social care datasets via [eDRIS](#). ADR Scotland is committed to providing enhanced metadata for all three datasets by the end of this year. By expanding the community of accredited users and fostering collaboration, the programme aims to support impactful, policy-relevant research for the public good.



Evidencing the impact of higher education on labour market earnings using Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO)

Research conducted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, co-funded by the Department for Education and UK Research and Innovation, used linked administrative data to estimate the returns to higher education for students and the taxpayer. The research used the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) Standard Extract, an ADR England flagship dataset, and was carried out using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service.

The research has been widely cited by both policymakers and government, including within a report from the Social Mobility Commission, the Augar Review of post-18 education, and a white paper on spreading opportunity more equally across the UK.

The findings showed notable variation on returns between subjects, with law, economics and medicine graduates demonstrating greater lifetime returns than their peers who studied languages or creative arts. The research also reported variations in earnings growth between men and women.

The improved information about the costs and benefits of different higher education degrees is beneficial for students thinking about whether, where and what to study. It can also inform policymakers considering the optimal design of the higher education system. The team analysed those who attended secondary school in England, incorporating variables such as school test scores; university attendance; subjects studied, and earnings.

Their methodology combined regression modelling with simulation techniques. These simulations, which drew upon both the LEO and Labour Force Survey data, enabled the team to project the lifetime earnings for all individuals from their early thirties through to their sixties.



Driving future impact: New investment for ADR UK

This year marked a crucial milestone for the delivery of ADR UK's mission, as UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) confirmed our next five years of funding.

This £168 million reinvestment will allow us to expand on the impact the ADR UK programme has delivered so far, enabling more data-driven research to uncover insights that can improve people's lives across the UK.

The renewed funding means continued support for our ground-breaking data linking and research projects across the UK-wide partnership. Read more about our [new and emerging datasets](#), and [developments from our key projects](#) this year which will inform our future funding period.

Delivering on our big ambitions

In the next investment phase, ADR UK will be supporting a range of research programmes, including projects to improve cancer detection using health and administrative data through the Cancer Data Driven Detection programme in partnership with Cancer Research UK and others.

The funding will also support the development of policies to help drive economic growth and improve living standards by enabling ADR UK to further expand the linked economic datasets available to researchers and policymakers. These will support critical projects aiming to better understand the drivers of UK productivity by linking employment, business, benefits and income data, giving policymakers a more complete picture of how the UK economy works.



Making a positive impact on people's lives

ADR UK's work has delivered transformational impact for people across the UK. [Read some recent impact stories from the last year.](#)

Over the longer-term, impacts from ADR UK research projects include:

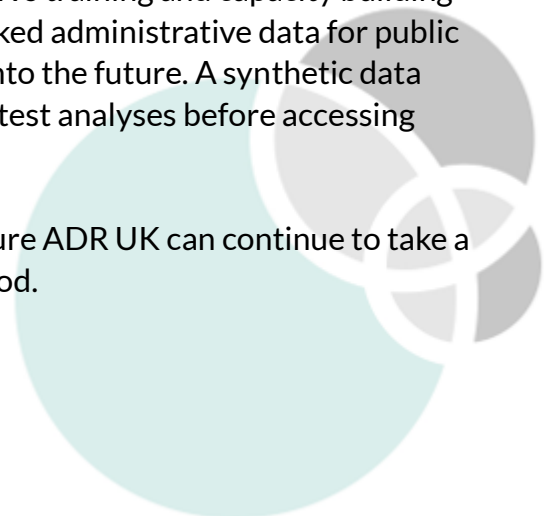
- providing key evidence through linked administrative data analysis to support [continuation of the minimum alcohol unit pricing policies in Scotland](#), estimated to save 156 lives per year
- identifying critical recommendations to [improve outcomes for care experienced children](#) through analysis of the ADR UK Growing Up in England dataset
- ongoing societal and economic benefits of the [Data First](#) programme, which links Ministry of Justice data to provide rich data insights that directly inform policies related to the reduction of reoffending
- providing the evidence needed to plan a [safe return to school for children and young people in Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

The reinvestment decision follows the results of an [independent economic evaluation in November 2024](#), which estimated that for every £1 spent on ADR UK, the programme returns just over £5 of benefits.

Securing the future of administrative data research for public good

We are now identifying the wider opportunities this investment allows, including expanding ADR UK's Fellowship and PhD programmes, strengthening links between researchers and policymakers, and enhancing collaboration across social research. The funding will also support further delivery of ADR UK's training and capacity building programme, equipping researchers with skills to use linked administrative data for public good and therefore securing a pipeline of researchers into the future. A synthetic data initiative will also be scaled up, enabling researchers to test analyses before accessing secure data.

This long-term commitment to the programme will ensure ADR UK can continue to take a leading role in ensuring public data is used for public good.



ADR UK: 2026 and beyond

Following the confirmation by UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) of a [further five-year investment](#), we are now developing our longer-term plans to direct our next phase (2026-2031). **Four key goals will guide this work:**

1. **More systematic and efficient linking of health to administrative data**, allowing the development of fully rounded longitudinal data to explore the factors that affect a person's life over time. This will also allow us to better understand the interplay between people's health and other aspects of their lives, through the government services they interact with.
2. **Better access to economic linked administrative data**, informed by the [HM Revenue & Customs Research Future Strategy project](#) funded in the current phase of ADR UK. This will identify data-led findings to support economic growth and productivity research across the UK.
3. **Further investment in ADR UK infrastructure**, including building on advancements in AI technology to improve how our data infrastructures operate and the types of analysis that can be undertaken in them. This will be informed by a comprehensive public engagement programme to ensure our plans align with public views, and delivered in line with UK legislation.
4. **Continuing to smooth the researcher journey to accessing data**, by further developing our training offer, streamlining project application processes, and creating synthetic data. This final goal will allow researchers to test and analyse data outside trusted research environments, to support faster and more detailed project proposal and code development.

Our upcoming priorities will be delivered in collaboration with our existing core partners, as well as five UK Government departments which will become new ADR England core partners:

- the Ministry of Justice
- the Department for Education
- HM Revenue & Customs
- the Department for Work and Pensions
- the Department of Health and Social Care.

These strengthened partnerships formalise our already successful collaborations with these government departments, and set the stage for working even more closely together going forward.

[Read more about what's planned in each partnership.](#)






This annual report was developed as a digital microsite. The PDF version you are viewing has reduced functionality and content.

View the full ADR UK Annual Report 2024-25 online at <https://reports.adruk.org/annual-report-2024-2025/>.

ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK) is a partnership transforming the way researchers access the UK's wealth of public sector data, to enable better informed policy decisions that improve people's lives.

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