

ADR UK Research Fellowships

General Research Specification

1. Summary

Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK) will be inviting applications for Research Fellows to conduct research and analysis to demonstrate the potential policy impact of linked datasets. Researchers can apply for a research grant of 18 months in duration, up to a maximum of £175,000 per annum at 100% full economic cost (FEC). ADR UK will fund 80% full economic costs subject to [ESRC's funding policy](#). The remaining 20% should be funded by your research organisation. Any variation to this duration and/or amount will be made clear on specific Funding Opportunity documentation.

Applications should cover research projects which incorporate:

- Data discovery and cleaning;
- Policy and public engagement; and
- Output production, including easily digestible research findings and published academic papers.

2. ADR UK Research Fellowships

ADR UK Research fellowship funding opportunities are specific to linked datasets which have been purposefully curated for research. Individual opportunities are developed collaboratively with the relevant data owners and data processors who have time to shape the Funding Opportunity objectives and assessment criteria as well as promoting their own strategic research needs. Funding decisions will be provisional pending the data owner's full review of the project.

Data owners will review applications to ensure that all external requests for individual data are legal, ethical, proportionate, and secure, and will ensure that applications meet their own access criteria.

Alongside the research funding opportunity, ADR UK supports applicants with gaining secure access to data, and with gaining approval from data owners. Our expected timelines and specific information about each linked dataset are published with each opportunity we release.

3. Who can apply

Proposals are welcome from individual researchers with a PhD or equivalent experience from [eligible UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) Research Organisations \(ROs\)](#), including Early Career Researchers (where a mentor is mandatory). Researchers on fixed term contracts are

eligible to apply if their institutions are willing to extend their contracts to cover the period of the Fellowship.

Applications can be for either part-time or full-time Research Fellows, but the recommended minimum is 60% full time equivalent. Proposals may also include research support, additional expertise and/or mentorship where required (e.g., for Early Career Researchers). Joint applications are not permitted, however, applicants are encouraged to involve less experienced researchers to develop their skills and capabilities, as well as others in their team to draw in additional expertise where necessary. The Fellow will need to be the main researcher leading on analysis of the dataset(s).

Letters to support the research from other academic or non-academic organisations are encouraged.

Applicants will need to become an [Accredited Researcher](#) of the ONS Secure Research Service (ONS SRS) platform. If applicants are not already an Accredited Researcher then they can apply for accreditation through the [Research Accreditation Service \(RAS\)](#). A list of other safe researcher training accepted by SAIL please is [here](#). If applicants are already an accredited researcher then they can access their data through the [SAIL homepage](#).

Note that project mentors and research assistants will need to be Accredited Researchers and be named on [Research Accreditation Panel \(RAP\)](#) applications if they are to see any data or outputs ahead of publishing. Approval by the relevant data owners to use the data for specific research projects will be essential. This will be coordinated by ADR UK as part of the decision-making process.

3.1. Criteria for Early Career Researchers

Applications from Early Career Researchers are required to provide the following information:

- Articulation of how the award of an ADR UK Research Fellowship grant will have a demonstrable impact on their trajectory to becoming an independent researcher;
- Inclusion of a programme of skill development activities to support their continued development; and
- A nominated mentor from their host institution who should write a supporting statement describing the support that will be provided.
- We anticipate offering a peer mentorship scheme between past and present research fellows, and past fellows and fellowship applicants, in the next few months. Details will be forthcoming on the ADR UK website.

Early Career Researchers are encouraged to include wider programmes of training and capacity-building that develop their understanding or use of relevant data resources, methods or topic areas. This might be through seminars, workshops or other mechanisms, and should take account

of training and events already being offered through other ESRC investments such as the [National Centre for Research Methods \(NCRM\)](#), [UK Data Service](#) and [Centres for Doctoral Training](#).

4. What we're looking for

We are looking for research proposals that meet the following three objectives:

4.1. Objective 1: Useful Research

We are looking for proposals that will act as 'pathfinders' for conducting research and deriving insights from the linked datasets which showcase the potential for policy impact and public benefit.

To demonstrate the potential of administrative data research for public policy impact within the timeframes, proposals should

- Be focused with well-defined research questions specific to particular datasets.
- Include research stages which logically sequence the work to include the data discovery and cleaning stages.
- Make explicit links to current policy themes or public service delivery themes, evidenced by reference to published Areas of Research Interest by the data owners or using letters of support from relevant service delivery organisations.
- Demonstrate consideration of how you will deliver policy recommendations, public engagement and required outputs specific to the dataset.
- Outline how the legacy of proposed activity will engage beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of its impact in providing lasting value to those who might use the research.

ADR UK welcomes proposals for feasibility or investigative studies. For example, exploring the quality or contribution of the data in understanding a particular issue, which can feedback to data owners/providers on necessary improvements to address policy issues.

4.2. Objective 2: Useful Data

To develop the data as a useful research resource for future users.

In addition to demonstrating the value of administrative data for public good, we also want to ensure the individual and collective efforts of the Fellows enhance the research value of the linked datasets for the benefit of others, including future researchers and data owners.

All successful applicants will be required to support the development of these datasets by committing to the following:

- supporting work to improve the user guide and metadata files.

- openly sharing code with other Research Fellows and ultimately publishing it; and
- making recommendations for plausible extensions to the data for the future.

Demonstrate feasibility

Applicants need to demonstrate that the proposed research questions can be addressed with the data requested, and that the methods are appropriate and robust.

We welcome (*but do not require*) proposals to develop new research concepts by linking other publicly available data from sources outside the core dataset(s), such as published geographic indices. Researchers should make their intended use of any such additional data clear within their funding proposal and RAS form and must ensure data owner approval.

If and when the application is approved, it is the researcher's responsibility to send the link to any additional data to ONS. Contact Customer.Support@ons.gov.uk to request that the data be put into your project area.

4.3. Objective 3: Useful Engagement

To foster opportunities between academia and government that allow fresh thinking to flourish and to maintain public acceptance for the use of data for research purposes.

ADR UK has developed relationships with key stakeholders, and we are keen to share these relationships by organising opportunities for Fellows to engage directly with them. Additionally, we have set up a User Representation Panel made up of people working in relevant service delivery organisations across the public and third sectors. We will support successful Fellows to plan and deliver at least three engagement events, based on the research underway to share and develop data analysis plans, research and output production. Further output requirements are set out in the [Funding Opportunity FAQs](#).

In line with the UKRI position on Excellence with Impact, we expect applicants to have considered the potential scientific, societal and economic impacts of their research. The ESRC's [Impact Toolkit](#) gives advice on achieving the maximum impact of your research and we recommend that applicants use the advice in the toolkit to shape proposals and the impact it will deliver. All research proposals need to explain how findings will have demonstrable policy relevance through appropriate reporting and publication, and the archiving, future use, sharing, and linking of data.

4.4. Objective 4: Community Building

To boost the applicant's development as a research leader using administrative data and to personally contribute to and actively participate in the creation and development of a wider, self-sustaining community around a particular dataset or theme.

Researchers will collectively contribute to developing:

- **'Research-readiness' enhancement and engagement:** Evolution in the quality of the 'research-readiness' of the data as set in objective 2, and increased engagement from wider communities with these resources and findings.
- **Researcher Capacity:** through active participation in and growth of a community (including cross-disciplinary reach) such as cascading and sharing knowledge and experience or expertise to other users and potential users to raise awareness and stimulate interest; address data queries; share research; and build partnerships
- **Partnerships (& trust):** active collaboration with public policy stakeholders (and publics) around priority research interests who want to engage in shaping and interpreting insights because they are relevant and useful
- **Bodies of knowledge:** A collection of policy relevant research that increases the sustainable understanding of what the data can tell us e.g., via published admin data research insights/data explained/syntheses around flagship data and priority themes describing what we know and don't know given the data including key gaps

5. Expected outputs and engagement

ADR UK promotes the publication of research findings in forms that are easily digestible and useable for both government policymakers and wider society, as well as academics. Furthermore, engagement – with government, the third sector and the public – is an important part of maximising the impact, reach and public acceptability of research using public sector administrative data.

The following describes the expectations of Research Fellows in terms of outputs and engagement and should be considered within your application unless stated otherwise.

5.1. General Expectations

- Research Fellows are asked to agree to the principle of a **dual publication strategy** for research outputs, with easily digestible outputs aimed at government policymakers and wider society published in addition to papers submitted to academic journals.
- **Academic outputs** are supported but we anticipate these to be published outside of the funding period.
- Fellows are required to attend an **induction meeting** with ADR UK and the data owner's team within a month of starting or before to agree expectations of the Fellowship.
- Research Fellows are also expected to produce at least one '**Data Explained**' output to summarise and record their learnings about the data for the benefit of others. This will include a shorter summary within or shortly after the funding period; and a detailed document - within 1 year of the funding period. These documents will be made available to future users of the data. A Data Explained template will be provided, and all Data Explained outputs will be checked before leaving the secure research environment.
- Fellows will attend wider **networking events** with other UKRI-funded researchers and ADR UK Stakeholder events.

- Fellows are asked to support ADR UK in the **evaluation** of the Research Fellowship scheme.
- Research Fellows are required to conduct **public engagement** as part of their funded work. The minimum requirements for this – for example, consultation with a relevant ADR UK ‘user representative panel’ facilitated by ADR UK – should be clearly set out in their funding proposal.
- During the award, Research Fellows are also expected to produce the following outputs:
 1. A [project page](#) for the ADR UK website detailing their research.
 2. At least one [blog](#) for the ADR UK website discussing the importance of the work for the public good (additional blogs are optional).
 3. At least one [‘Data Insight’](#) (~2-4 pages) showcasing the findings of the work at a relevant point during or at the end of the funded period. A Data Insight template will be provided, and all Data Insight outputs will be checked before leaving the secure research environment.
 4. At least one **‘Data Explained’** output to summarise and record their learnings about the data for the benefit of others, during or within one month of the funded period ending. Templates and guidance will be provided for Fellows. These will be made available to future users of the data via the ONS SRS and published on the ADR UK website.

6. Use of funds

Eligible use of funds is those that cover salaries plus nominated research support staff or mentorship time; travel and subsistence; project-specific engagement/events; public engagement; production of outputs; and training. More information on this is included in the Je-S guidance for each opportunity we announce.

7. Further information on funding Opportunities

To be the first to hear about newly available data or funding opportunities, please [sign up to our mailing list](#).