



Better Knowledge Better Society

The Digital Economy Act
2017, and social and
economic research using
administrative microdata



Administrative Data
Research Network

An ESRC Data
Investment

It is very *simple*...

- ▶ Personal information held by public authorities can be used for research
- ▶ Public authorities can be assisted by others to get the data ready, and to disclose the data to researchers
- ▶ Existing legal barriers to research are voided...
...and are replaced by new protections fit for research purposes
- ▶ Duties owed by public authorities to citizen privacy...
...are replicated by new ones fit for research uses and users



It is very *enabling* :

Personal information held by public authorities can be used for research

- ▶ *Any* personal information from *any* public authority...
(*except personal health information*)
- ▶ ...can be used for any research which is accredited.



It is very *supportive of partnership*:

Public authorities can be assisted by others to get the data ready, and to disclose the data to researchers

- ▶ *Any* (accredited) person can help extract data, match them across different sources, derive variables, produce metadata, write code, functionally anonymise the research dataset, then catalogue and curate them.
- ▶ Any person involved in creating these research data can also disclose them to the researchers.
- ▶ Working in partnerships shares the burdens and enables the use of others' expertise, especially scientific expertise.



It is very *powerful* :

Existing legal barriers to research are voided replaced by new protections

- ▶ A disclosure to a researcher does not breach any obligation of confidence or any other restriction on disclosure however imposed.

(Data protection law of course remains applicable to any personal data)

- ▶ Wrongful onward disclosures that are knowing or reckless carry sentences of up to two years imprisonment, or fines, or both.



It is *very responsible* :

Duties owed by public authorities to citizen privacy are replicated

- ▶ Research datasets must be not reasonably likely to identify an individual
- ▶ Risk of accidental disclosure must be minimised
- ▶ Deliberate wrongful disclosure must be prevented
- ▶ The helping organisations must be accredited
- ▶ The research must be accredited
- ▶ The researchers must be accredited
- ▶ The Code of Practice must be observed



ADRN and the DEA 2017 :

Enabling, supportive of partnership, powerful and responsible...

- ▶ *Enabling* : ADRN will help extract, link, de-identify, functionally anonymise, describe, curate, and securely disclose research datasets.
- ▶ *Partnership* : 4 Theme Partnerships are now launched:
 - ▷ Tomorrow's Adults
 - ▷ World of Work
 - ▷ Growing Old
 - ▷ Productive Society
- ▶ *Powerful* : All the necessary expertise, facilities, and capacity is in place
- ▶ *Responsible* : ADRN is ready for UKSA accreditation.





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Thanks



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