Safe Data Access Professionals

What we do

The Group provide an invaluable support network and resource for its member organisations who have established secure settings or are just starting out.

Members - who may be at different stages of evolution in their development - have found The Group to be an invaluable resource for learning how existing facilities have been established and developed. We discuss many relevant aspects of our members' work, including the use of secure technology, information security standards, auditing and assurance practices, risk-management, managing analysts and researchers, and much more. Further, we create useful resources for staff working in secure settings. Thus far, these include resources in the areas of statistical disclosure control, capacity building, and a set of Data Awareness Training slides. All resources are available on our website.

Statistical Disclosure Control

Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) is the practice of ensuring that data remain confidential. In the context of a secure setting, this normally refers to checking statistical outputs produced from confidential sources of data to ensure that no entity from the data can be revealed by examining the statistics produced from the data; nor that any confidential information is released. SDC is a critical function of any secure setting and we have published an SDC Handbook that can be used by anybody employed to undertake SDC of statistical outputs. This draws on the experience of our members, and in 2020 was translated into Spanish by the Director of Microdata Access, at the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in Mexico.

Capacity Building

Often, we find ourselves working alone within large organisations to provide secure access to confidential data. The Group provides opportunities for staff to develop themselves by acquiring skills from other, experienced, secure data access professionals. Amongst other materials, we have produced a Competency Framework for staff working in secure settings, a useful tool for thinking through career progression, professional development, preparing for performance reviews and meeting the needs of the many stakeholders that such facilities serve.

Origins

The Safe Data Access Professionals Working Group (SDAP) was established in 2011 by Tanvi Desai (formally of the London School of Economics and Administrative Data Service), to facilitate the sharing of expertise, best practice and knowledge between organisations providing, or intending to provide, secure access to confidential data from the health, economics, and social science research sector.

The SDAP Group was chaired by Richard Welpton (The Health Foundation) from December 2017. In June 2020 the UK Data Service took on the management of the Group.

Members

The SDAP Group has grown significantly in the last few years. At the time of writing we have representatives from UK Data Service Secure Lab, Cancer Research UK, Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service, Central Statistics Office Ireland, HMRC Data Lab, Imperial College London, Public Health Scotland, The Health Foundation, University of Edinburgh, University of Manchester, Connected Health Cities, Centre for Longitudinal Studies at University College London, ScHARR at University of Sheffield, The Alan Turing Institute, and Swansea University.

If you're working in a secure data facility, or are setting one up and need some help and guidance, please contact us via our website - we'd love to help!

securedatagroup.org

SCAN ME