

Safe Data Access Professionals Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday 9th December 2020, 10.00 - 12.30

Virtual meeting (Zoom)

Attendees

Christine Woods (UK Data Service) (Chair), **James Scott** (UK Data Service) (Deputy Chair), **Hannah Josol** (UK Data Service), **Olly Butters** (University of Liverpool), **Cuna Ekmekcioglu** (The University of Edinburgh), **Michele Girardi** (UK Data Service); **Lisa Gray** (NHS Digital), **Yannis Kotrotsios** (Cancer Research UK), **Anthony Macken** (Central Statistics Office), **Devyani Robinson** (NHS Digital), **James Walker** (NHS Digital), **Deborah Wiltshire** (UK Data Service).

Apologies

Alexa Bradley (Office for National Statistics), **Juliet Cavanagh-Anderson** (The University of Edinburgh), **Gary Leeming** (University of Liverpool).

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including new members. Everyone then introduced themselves.

2. Website and communications

- James Scott presented the SDAP promotional leaflet (see attachment), which includes the new logo produced by Cancer Research UK, to the Group. The group reported that they were happy with the leaflet and the new logo and agreed the use of both going forward.
- James Scott presented the testimonial crib sheet (see attachment) to the group, with credit to Yannis Kotrotsios for his idea to produce this. The testimonial sheet which includes questions about how the SDAP guides and resources have been used and benefitted organisations, will be circulated to members and responses will be included on the SDAP website to promote the group's work. The group reported that they were happy with the format and use of the crib sheet.
- The chair suggested also sending the crib sheet to organisations outside the UK that are using our materials e.g. British Columbia Ministry of Health.

ACTION: James Scott to circulate the crib sheet to members and other relevant organisations, with a request for responses.

3. SDAP Calendar of events for 2021

The chair presented the calendar of events for 2021 (see below) and noted the following:

- Due to the uncertainty around the pandemic, the UK Data Service is currently planning for all of the 2021 events to be online. When the situation changes, and SDAP members return to working at their organisations and are able to travel for work-related purposes, the return to face-to-face events will be discussed.

- As agreed at the SDAP meeting in September, SDAP meetings will be extended to 2.5 hours and will include a comfort break. A specific topic will be covered during the first hour of the meeting, followed by the service updates during the second hour, and the remaining time for any other items.
- Due to the shorter duration of the online meetings, there isn't sufficient time for all attendees to provide a service update, so these will be rotated across organisations, with 4/5 service updates per meeting (this will enable all organisations to provide an update at least once a year). Where a member has an item they wish to update or discuss with the Group, then this can of course be added to the meeting agenda.

Topic	Date	Presenters / facilitators	Meeting format
Being accredited as a Digital Economy Act (DEA) Accredited Processor	Tuesday 9 th March, 10.00 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKDA: James Scott & Chris Woods • Other SDAP member/ DEA processor organisations 	Online
Review and update of SDAP Competency Framework	Tuesday 8 th June, 10.00 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yannis Kotrotsios • Chris Woods 	Online
Review of SDC automated tools	Tuesday 7 th September, 10.00 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDAP members who have used automated tools • Update on DataSHIELD (tbc) 	Online
Producing reproducible code in secure settings	Tuesday 7 th December, 10.00 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tbc 	Online

The chair invited comments from the group on the proposed calendar of events.

Review and update of SDAP Competency Framework

- Yannis Kotrotsios noted that this would be an interactive session, with input from members to update the Competency Framework. The Framework would also be updated to include training resources for SDAP members e.g. SDC Handbook.
- There was a question around whether the Competency Framework is aimed at staff carrying out output and input checking. The chair confirmed that it was aimed at staff conducting both of these activities, as well as other tasks associated with running a safe setting.
- Yannis Kotrotsios suggested that it would be useful to provide training for SDAP on SDC Micro and the production of anonymised datasets. This could also be included as a training resource in the Framework. Deborah Wiltshire noted that Cristina Magder at the UK Data Service has developed some training materials that are likely to be useful in this area.

ACTION: Chris Woods to look into the UKDS training materials available and report back to the group.

Review of SDC automated tools

- Yannis Kotrotsios suggested including material on how automated tools can be deployed in a secure environment during this session.
- Olly Butters confirmed that he would be happy to present on DataSHIELD. The chair thanked Olly.

ACTION: Chris Woods to add Olly Butters as a presenter.

Producing reproducible code in secure settings

- Olly Butters reported that he is involved in a project focusing on the production of reproducible code across the data life cycle, and that he would be happy to talk about this work at the session. Thanks again to Olly.

ACTION: Chris Woods to add Olly Butters as a presenter.

- Michele Girardi shared the following information via the Zoom Chat on SDC Micro:
 - 1) Paper
Matthias Templ, Alexander Kowarik, Bernhard Meindl (2015). Statistical Disclosure Control for Micro-Data Using the R Package sdcMicro. Journal of Statistical Software, 67(4), 1-36.
<https://www.jstatsoft.org/article/view/v067i04>
 - 2) Git page
<https://github.com/sdcTools/sdcMicro>
 - 3) Reference Manual
<https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/sdcMicro/sdcMicro.pdf>
 - 4) Introduction to Statistical Disclosure Control using sdcMicro
https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/sdcMicro/vignettes/sdc_guidelines.pdf

4. Service updates

Office for National Statistics (update provided by email)

- Demand for Safe Researcher Training continues to be very high. We have now increased the maximum number of attendees on each of our courses as we haven't found any negative impact of doing this, assessment pass rates have not been affected.
- We are starting to look into the possibility of moving our training to an interactive online format that individuals would work through at their own convenience and wouldn't require a trainer. This work is in very early stages where we are investigating possible platforms, so we don't know yet whether we would move to this type of format completely or have a mixed mode using an interactive online format combined with a much shorter trainer-led session.

University of Liverpool

- The University of Liverpool is involved in the Liverpool City Region Civic Data Co-operative, a project bringing organisations together to share data. Work has started on the data governance

processes around sharing data. The focus next is on the practicalities of providing data access to researchers, and work to build a Trusted Research Environment.

- The University is also working on a project that seeks access to data compiled by NHS Digital on the geocode of patients' addresses, based on the address given by patients to their GP.

Cancer Research UK (CRUK)

- CRUK are due to create a new Trusted Research Environment, to provide access to cancer data across the UK. They are hoping to link CRUK funding data to Cancer Register data, and provide access to this. CRUK are currently recruiting for a Data Liaison Manger to lead the project.
- It was reported that Simon Parker and Richard Welpton developed an output checking training course for NHS Digital staff, which they hope to make available via SDAP so that other organisations can benefit from it. The chair welcomed this.

UK Data Service

- Home working agreements have been in place for Secure Lab researchers since April, enabling researchers to access the Secure Lab from home on a temporary basis.
- There have been some personnel changes, with a new Senior User Support and Training Officer recruited and the departure of the Service Director of Data Publishing and Access Services.
- The Safe Researcher Training course was moved online early in the year and is going well.

5. AOB & Close

Olly Butters noted an opinion paper he has authored on data curation debt:

<https://academic.oup.com/ije/article/49/4/1067/5866677>

Meeting close

The chair then closed the meeting at 12:30 and thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions, and looks forward to the next meeting on 9th March, which will be held online.