

FAQs: Data First: Family Court linked to Cafcass and Census 2021 dataset briefing

ADR UK Research Fellowships 2025 funding opportunity

The following frequently asked questions were compiled from questions raised during a dataset briefing webinar on the Data First: Family Court linked to Cafcass and Census 2021 – England and Wales dataset, which was held to support the applications for the 2025 round of ADR UK Research Fellowships.

- [Find out more about the ADR UK Research Fellowships funding opportunity](#) – open for applications until 26 February 2026.
- [Find out more about this dataset.](#)
- Watch the [recorded webinar](#) about the dataset and access the [slide deck](#).

Dataset Content & Structure

1. **What information is available in the Cafcass dataset? Does it include case-level documents (e.g. reports) or only structured data?**

All the data that is available in SAIL is structured data, no case-level documents are available. Please check the data catalogue in the [HDR Gateway website](#).

2. **How detailed is the case-level information? For example, does it include whether reports were filed and their dates?**

All the data that is available in SAIL is structured data, no case-level documents are available. However, information such as dates for when reports are filed is included as part of the structured data available to users. Please check the data catalogue in the [HDR Gateway website](#) for more details.

3. **What variables are available in the Census 2021 dataset, and can additional variables be requested beyond those listed in the data dictionary?**

The Census 2021 dataset will include a variety of information, such as ethnicity, religion, disability, housing and employment. The full Census 2021 will be available soon. Please check the data catalogue in the [HDR Gateway website](#).

Linkage & Integration

4. For this fellowship, do researchers need to link the Family Court, Cafcass, and Census datasets themselves, or is the data pre-linked?

The datasets are provided separately in the researcher's environments and need to be linked by the researchers.

5. If researchers need to perform linkage, is guidance or training available? Are there examples of code or previous projects that can be shared?

We encourage researchers to share code or best practice across previous projects. Each dataset includes a field containing the Anonymous Linkage Field (ALF), which uniquely identifies a person and enables the joining of data sources. SAIL provides resources such as linkage diagrams designed to assist researchers. Datacise offers a range of courses to help researchers develop their technical skills and dataset knowledge. These include courses tailored to working in SAIL; details are available on the [Datacise website](#).

6. Is it possible to link Cafcass England data with Cafcass Cymru data?

Yes.

7. Can researchers link these datasets with other ADR UK flagship datasets or external sources?

This research fellowship is focussed on the linkage of Family Court-Cafcass-Census 2021 data. Due to the time and budget limitations of the research fellowship, this is not recommended unless you have previous experience and knowledge of other data sources available in SAIL and if you have the funding to include additional data.

Access & Feasibility

8. Who should researchers contact first if they have an idea but are unsure about feasibility – SAIL or the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) team?

It depends on what feasibility questions you have. If you have questions related to specific datasets, it would be best to contact the relevant teams for those datasets. If you have queries related to the Data First family court dataset, please get in touch with datafirst@justice.gov.uk. For any queries related to the Cafcass England dataset, please get in touch with policyteam@cafcass.gov.uk. If you have questions about the process, it would be best to [contact SAIL](#).

9. Is scoping with SAIL required before submitting a fellowship application?

Yes, scoping with SAIL is needed before submitting your funding application.

10. Can researchers start the SAIL scoping form at the point of submitting their fellowship application?

Applicants must have obtained a completed scoping document before submitting their application. Applicants should ensure that they approach SAIL for scoping sufficiently early (we would suggest at least one month before the submission deadline). Please [contact SAIL via the SAIL website](#) to engage with the SAIL team and start the scoping process.

11. What level of detail should be included in variable lists for feasibility checks?

It should be clear why variables are needed for your research and how they aid in achieving your questions, providing justifications against each variable requested.

Costs & Budgeting

12. Is there a cost associated with accessing these datasets through SAIL? If so, should this be included in the fellowship budget?

Yes, there are costs associated with accessing data from SAIL. All chargeable elements of the SAIL service will be set out in the scoping document. A completed SAIL scoping document is a prerequisite for applications.

13. Are there any additional costs for linkage or data processing?

As standard, projects are provisioned with raw data in separate tables, to be linked and prepared by the researcher. Additional services, such as data extraction and processing, can be requested from SAIL at additional cost. These details are discussed as part of scoping to confirm the requirements from SAIL for each project.

Timelines & Process

14. How long does it typically take to get project space ready in SAIL after approval?

This will depend on the complexity of the data requirements, but a typically a SAIL Information Governance Review Panel (IGRP) application will take around three months to receive approvals, depending on whether there are further questions or clarifications sought from the panel. Following approvals from the IGRP, a project typically takes around six weeks from approval to provisioning. Please note that approval from all data providers is required before any data can be provisioned

15. What steps can researchers take to speed up the approval process?

Providing complete information in application forms, clear links to the Areas of Research Interest and fellowship research priorities, providing variable lists with justifications on how these will be used and responding to queries promptly will ensure that applications are processed as efficiently as possible.

Other Practical Questions

16. If the data is provided separately, how complex is the linkage process?

Applicants will need experience in the use of databases and writing queries in SQL, including the use of syntax for joining tables together to extract and prepare data for analysis/statistics.

17. Are there opportunities for researchers to share code or best practices for working with these datasets?

We are working on encouraging current and past researchers to share code and best practices and help new researchers make best use of the data. SAIL has mechanisms and processes for sharing, and can support researchers to do this, once further details are known about your project.

18. Where can researchers find updated MoJ Areas of Research Interest and how should these be referenced in applications?

The updated MoJ Areas of Research Interest are [available here](#), and applications should reference how your research will address one or more of them.