

ADR UK Public Engagement Strategy

2021 – 2026

1. Purpose and scope

ADR UK is committed to ensuring public engagement is embedded throughout the research process for all of our funded projects. This document sets out the overarching public engagement strategy for ADR UK. It also aligns with the [UKRI Vision for Public Engagement](#), which states that “*research and innovation should be responsive to the knowledge, priorities and values of society and open to participation by people from all backgrounds*”.

This strategy does not replace the individual public engagement strategies of each of the ADR UK partnerships – ADR England, ADR Northern Ireland, ADR Scotland and ADR Wales – but ensures that activities across the wider partnership are undertaken in a cohesive and, where appropriate, collaborative way with shared principles.

Each individual partner’s public engagement strategy should therefore align with this strategy to ensure our separate efforts are in tune with our shared principles and ADR UK’s wider goals.

1.1. What is public engagement?

At ADR UK, we define our public engagement as **a purposeful set of activities designed to promote an ongoing dialogue with the public about administrative data research, driven by active listening and responding**. This enables us to enrich understanding for all parties involved and maximise the impact of research, ensuring activities are meaningful and mutually beneficial.

1.2. ADR UK vision for public engagement

ADR UK’s mission is to harness the potential of administrative data for research in the public interest. Administrative data is the public’s data: therefore, in addition to making sure this data is used [ethically and responsibly](#), we have a duty to engage the public in how and why their data is used at every stage of our work, and to ensure our work **demonstrates trustworthiness**. Understanding the public’s needs, interests and concerns in relation to the use of their data, and shaping research to address these, is also essential for **maximising the public benefit** of administrative data research. Across ADR UK, we are therefore committed to embedding public engagement as a vital part of the research we enable.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The **ADR UK Strategic Hub** is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy, with the input of representatives from across the partnership via the **ADR UK Public Engagement Steering Group (PESG)**. Broadly, the purpose of the PESG is to act as a central point of contact between ADR UK’s core partners for the purpose of shaping the Public Engagement Strategy and coordinating public engagement activities across the partnership. See the [full terms of reference](#) for the PESG.

3. Aims and objectives

This Strategy is focused on achieving the following two core objectives:

1. **Demonstrate trustworthiness:** By listening and responding to public views on how administrative data should be used for research at every stage of our work, and meeting public expectations over and above formal legal requirements, our goal is to demonstrate trustworthiness.
2. **Maximise public benefit:** Public engagement is an essential mechanism for understanding people’s needs and interests, to ensure research using administrative data is geared towards achieving the greatest public benefit possible.

These two core objectives are aligned with the following objectives from the ADR UK Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Communications and Engagement Strategy:

PMF objective	Communications and Engagement objectives
<p>Public acceptance is maintained: The public supports the shift to retaining and preserving admin datasets for research that addresses societal challenges.</p> <p>Bodies of knowledge: Innovative and impactful research using admin data builds and contributes to bodies of knowledge that address major societal challenges.</p>	<p>7) Improve public understanding of what administrative data research is and how it can improve their lives.</p> <p>8) Help allay any public concerns about the safety and ethics of administrative data research.</p> <p>9) Measure and increase levels of public support for administrative data research.</p>

4. Public Engagement Principles

Our public engagement principles set the basis for how we will go about achieving our engagement objectives. They ensure that our activities are ethical, designed for impact, and aligned to our values and those of the wider discipline of public engagement with research.

Across ADR UK, we are committed to:

1. **Meaningful public engagement:** Using appropriate methods to engage the public with a clear purpose at every stage of our work is crucial, as is evaluating and adapting our approaches to ensure they are effective.
2. **A mutually beneficial relationship:** We take a dialogue-based approach to listening and responding to public views regarding our work, while enabling our researchers to gain new insights and ideas to develop more impactful research.
3. **Being accountable:** It is important that we not only listen to the public, but act upon what they tell us. Ensuring there are appropriate mechanisms for feeding the findings of our public engagement into our work is essential.
4. **Being inclusive:** The voices we hear via our public engagement should be inclusive. Engaging with a diverse range of voices from across different backgrounds and identities and adapting our approaches to reduce any barriers to engagement is crucial to this.
5. **Openness and transparency:** Telling the public about our engagement and how we are implementing its findings is essential for demonstrating trustworthiness. Regular, open communication about our work, which is clear and accessible to diverse audiences, is key.

5. Methods of public engagement

Across the partnership, ADR UK's public engagement activities will involve various methods, each of which can be characterised as either '**inclusion**' (actively involving and/or engaging people in shaping an endeavour) or '**dialogue**' (asking people their views, sometimes in a formal process).

Methods of public inclusion adopted across the partnership will typically include:

- **Public events** – for example, public seminars, science fairs and festivals where public views towards the work are recorded and responded to.
- **Public panels** – each national partnership has, or has in development, a public panel for direct engagement with members of the general public.
- **Community representative panels** – these include representatives of third sector organisations such as charities and community groups, to enable direct engagement with those able to represent specific communities.

Methods of public dialogue will typically include:

- **Workshops/focus groups** – to gather the views of the public – or relevant sub-groups of the public – in relation to specific questions regarding research programmes or administrative data research more broadly. Involves a dialogue-based approach of listening and responding.

The method of public engagement used in each case will depend on the purpose of the activity being carried out. The specific activities underway across the partnership are detailed further [on the ADR UK website](#).

6. Cross-partnership activities

In addition to the individual activities of each national partner, the PESG will oversee the organisation of cross-partnership public engagement activities.

The proposed activities fall under the ‘public dialogue’ strand of public engagement and sit within two distinct categories: public perceptions more broadly towards the use of administrative data for research; and public attitudes towards the use of particular types of administrative data or particular research themes.

6.1. *Administrative data research more broadly*

There are a number of ‘unanswered questions’ in relation to the UK public’s attitudes towards the use of administrative data for research. This is demonstrated in ADR UK’s [review of previous literature](#) on the topic. Namely, these include:

- What do the public understand by the terms ‘de-identified’ and ‘anonymous’, and the differences between the two?
- What do the public understand by ‘public interest’/‘public benefit’/‘public good’? Does this differ amongst different demographic groups and communities?
- What are the public’s views towards remote access to a secure research environment?
- What are the public’s views towards a ‘central store’ of anonymised public sector data which can be accessed on an ongoing basis by approved researchers working on projects in the public interest?

It is proposed that the PESG will plan and implement public dialogue on these topics on a UK-wide level, via workshops, focus groups or other methods. It is expected that this will also be in collaboration with other relevant external organisations, such as the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

Another potential topic for wider work is exploration of how public views towards the use of data for research have changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its acceleration of the use of data for crucial insights to inform the pandemic response and highlight its impacts.

6.2. Types of data & research themes

The [majority of previous public attitudes work](#) in relation to the use of public sector data for research in the UK has focused on the use of healthcare data, with far less work conducted to gather views on the use of other types of administrative data. As ADR UK's work spans all areas of public policy, exploring the views of the UK public towards the use of other types of data would be worthwhile to fill this gap in insight.

Thematic areas of research to focus on in public attitudes work could include [ADR UK's eight core research themes](#): Children and Young People; Climate and Sustainability; Crime and Justice; Growing Old; Health and Wellbeing; Housing and Communities; Inequality and Social Inclusion; and World of Work.

7. Communicating our public engagement

One of the five core ADR UK public engagement principles is *Openness and transparency*. Publications and reports on the outcome of public engagement activities are an important part of adhering to this principle.

For all public engagement activities underway across the partnership, where feasible these will be accompanied by the following communications outputs:

- **A description on the ['Working with the Public' section](#)** of the ADR UK website
- **Blogs or news items** at relevant points in the work – i.e. following a workshop or panel session with members of the public – detailing main findings of the work in accessible language for a general audience
- For larger public dialogues: **written reports** detailing the activity and findings, and next steps for implementing these into the wider work underway
- Where feasible, and with the proper permission of those taking part, **multimedia such as photos and videos** documenting public engagement activities, for publication on the ADR UK website and circulation via ADR UK social media channels

Members of the public involved in ADR UK's public engagement activities – for example, members of public panels – will also be kept up to date with ADR UK's work and how their input is being taken on board via regular communications such as email notices and newsletters.

8. Evaluation

Evaluation is key to the success of the ADR UK Public Engagement Strategy, to ensure that all aspects of our approach and activities remain relevant to ADR UK's wider work and are achieving their intended outcomes and impact.

The Strategy will undergo evaluation at **12-month intervals**, with the first to take place in **April 2022** with a focus on qualitative assessment.

The findings of the evaluation will help to advise whether aspects of the Public Engagement Strategy may need revisiting in order to achieve greater impact aligned to ADR UK's wider goals. The strategy will be then be reviewed and updated as necessary.