

ADR Scotland Strategy

2022-2026

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1. Context

ADR Scotland is one of the four national partnerships that form ADR UK, alongside ADR England, ADR Northern Ireland and ADR Wales.

ADR Scotland shares ADR UK's vision for 2026 which is to be the default choice to host linked administrative data from across the entirety of UK and devolved government, making it accessible to a deep pool of trained researchers to generate insights routinely used to inform policy and practice. This strategy sets out how ADR Scotland will contribute to the delivery of that vision over the next four years.

2. What is ADR Scotland?

ADR Scotland is a partnership between Scottish Government's Data for Research Unit, and the Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research (SCADR) that includes researchers from six leading Scottish universities.

ADR Scotland's research programmes primarily aim to create insights about the Scottish population and circumstances. ADR Scotland's research is aligned to Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) and [Programme for Government](#) where priorities include: equalities; vulnerable people and families (including care experienced children); understanding the causes of drug deaths; health and wellbeing; protecting and enhancing the environment; and inclusive growth. We are also part of innovative UK-wide linkages, such as using nursing and midwifery data, and will take part in cross-comparative UK projects.

ADR Scotland works with three Digital Economy Act (DEA) accredited delivery organisations - [National Records of Scotland](#), [eDRIS which is part of Public Health Scotland](#) and [EPCC](#) (a centre for high performance computing at University of Edinburgh). Together, the partnership will also work in a complementary way with [Research Data Scotland](#), a newly established organisation that provides services and leadership in making administrative data available and driving forward improvements in data access in Scotland.

3. Mission and strategic goals

Mission: ADR Scotland's investment in data linkage infrastructure and capacity, enables vital research to better inform policy and public services utilising Scotland's wealth of public sector data.

There are **four strategic goals** underpinning the ADR Scotland mission:

1. **Widespread acceptance among public and data owners of the value of linking administrative data for research:** ADR Scotland will strive to ensure linking administrative data for research is seen as credible, sensible and essential, maintaining public trust and the trust of data owners throughout.
2. **Substantial increase in cross-cutting research that enhances bodies of knowledge for public good:** ADR Scotland will increase independent, collaborative and innovative administrative data research that creates and enhances new and existing bodies of knowledge that address societal challenges.
3. **More researchers with the skills to use linked administrative data for public benefit:** ADR Scotland, in collaboration across ADR UK, will increase the number and capabilities of researchers who can conduct administrative data research to inform public policy, both directly and in partnership with others.
4. **Acquisition of linkable enduring research assets which enhance the quality and accessibility of administrative data:** ADR Scotland will negotiate with data owners to acquire administrative datasets related to Scotland and make them into useable research assets that can address policy needs and which will be made accessible for agreed research purposes.

4. Change objectives

ADR Scotland has developed detailed delivery plans until 2023. Following a 2023 programme evaluation we will identify further projects to span 2024-26, which will be influenced by the availability of Scotland's Census 2022 data.

There are **eight change objectives** that will enable the strategic goals to be attained:

1. **Build public trust and address the needs of communities and wider society:** ADR Scotland's research programmes are designed to ensure the needs of public policy and service delivery organisations can be addressed through the insights of administrative data research. Stakeholder and public engagement are essential to supporting and informing existing and future research.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Engage relevant public through a variety of mechanisms including the ADR Scotland public panel, our advisory groups and range of events, as well as involvement in wider ADR UK public dialogues.
- Evaluate and assess the pilot project with Children in Scotland (to understand how young people feel about data research and how to communicate it) during 2022/23 and put forward recommendations for future initiatives or training around children's data and engagement.
- Promote the value and benefits of data sharing and linkage to data controllers, policymakers and community stakeholders, including through our data ambassador network.
- Have tangible evidence by 2024/25 that ADR Scotland has a reputation as a trustworthy and preferred partner for hosting data and making it available for research that informs public policy.

2. **Enable research that informs local and national public policy and practice:** ADR Scotland will build additional connections with key stakeholders across government, public bodies, the third sector and ADR UK, including engaging with any emerging inquiries or initiatives, such as around the long-term effects of Covid-19.

A team of analysts based in Scottish Government will draw on SCADR researchers' expertise in design and interpretation of administrative data to quickly produce descriptive statistics for government. This will support the ability to provide rapid responses to governmental data analysis needs. By 2023/24 we anticipate this proof of concept work will have resulted in government departments approaching ADR Scotland to help them make better use of their data to inform policy.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Continue to build advisory groups to support specific research projects with representatives from different sectors and perspectives.
- Co-produce impactful and policy-relevant research with key stakeholders and identify evidence gaps.
- Develop responsive research capacity for emerging policy priorities, notably around Covid-19 consequences and recovery.
- Translate and communicate research findings to a range of stakeholders through a range of accessible formats including Data Insights, policy reports and blogs.

3. **Create high-value research assets for reuse with streamlined, sustainable mechanisms for research access:** Continue strategic data acquisition across the Scottish public sector and create enduring linked datasets that support research into core priorities. By 2023/24 there will be an improvement in the time taken to access data (from initial enquiry to delivery of linked data). By 2024/25, ADR Scotland will have a suite of new linked data assets available for research use.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Work in partnership to approach data owners who have not shared data for research before to promote the benefits of sharing data and inform future data acquisition and research plans.
- Provide a clear offering to data owners in terms of the benefit they derive from ADR Scotland, including supporting their own evaluation and assessment or audit requirements.
- Continue to provide access to resources and skills to facilitate the collecting, holding and curating of data.
- Build a clear and consistent approach to information governance across the public sector so that researchers are clear what constitutes acceptable or 'standard' use cases and can therefore secure more rapid access to data.
- Work with partners and the new service delivery organisation, Research Data Scotland (RDS), to provide clear signposting to researchers to access data.

4. **Build knowledge of appropriate legal frameworks for sharing, linking and accessing data:** ADR Scotland will work closely with RDS to enhance awareness and capacity in this area in Scotland. The ambition is to build shared understanding of the legal basis for sharing and linking data for research use and the interpretation of public benefit in this context.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Collectively engage with Data Protection Officers across a wide range of organisations to discuss their interpretation of both key legislation and of public benefit, drawing on evidence and best practice from across the UK.
- Provide data owners with clear guidance and legal documentation regarding sharing data for research purposes, organising seminars or face-to-face meetings where helpful.
- Work collaboratively with data controllers to improve the quality of their data and help them meet Government objectives and ambitions.
- Ensure there is clear guidance on the RDS website about the responsibilities of researchers and the approach to keeping data safe.
- Continue to offer regular Safe Researcher Training to researchers.

5. **Preserve, enhance and promote administrative datasets as broad and enduring research assets:**

ADR Scotland will work together with researchers and data owners to enrich our data catalogue and metadata to support future users.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Develop and enhance ADR Scotland's data catalogue and metadata (following the standards and principles developed by ADR UK) and ensure it is easy for researchers to find and understand. We will also explore how researchers can update metadata and improve its quality.
 - Refresh the data acquired for linkage at regular intervals to ensure it remains up to date and provide tables to clarify changes in reporting and variables over time.
 - Explore how we can create a rich ecosystem of information about data through the development of user guides and data descriptions, such as Data Explained, to support and facilitate further use of the data.
 - Promote newly available data through events and engagement with potential users.
 - Encourage and support repeatable research, through exploring ways to share code, documentation and feedback from the data to improve data quality.
- Work with the ONS and other ADR UK partners to optimise interoperability across platforms.

6. **Support open research and impact:**

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Promote a dual publication approach, supporting both academic and non-academic outputs such as Data Insights and policy briefings.
- Encourage and enable researchers to engage with policymakers and stakeholders, both in the design of their research and the dissemination of findings, to maximise impact.
- Work with the ONS to explore the feasibility of and encourage the use of digital object identifiers to ensure citations and impact can be tracked over time.
- Routinely track and report on the public benefit and scientific impact of research using the data, showcasing impact through case studies.

7. **Increase Scotland's analytical capacity needed to produce high impact research from Scottish data:** We will continue to develop our training and capacity building in administrative data research and linkage.

To do this, ADR Scotland will:

- Champion best practice and share expertise in creating and using administrative data for research, and continue to identify areas where better training or information is required.
- Develop and promote case studies on co-produced research projects that demonstrate the value of administrative data research to the public and to policymakers and describe effective collaboration between policymakers and researchers.
- Develop the capacity of researchers in Scotland through training, aligning with ADR UK's training strategy, including running the 'Introduction to Administrative Data' course, and signposting to and promoting other training opportunities.
- Continue to provide training on new datasets, following the same pattern as the event held on the longitudinal dataset for care-experienced children and exploring the further use of synthetic datasets for training.

8. **Generate new tools, methodologies and datasets for use by analysts and researchers:** To do this and promote across the public sector, ADR Scotland will:

- Develop innovative data methods, tools and cohorts to enable and benefit future research.
- Further enhance Scotland's data infrastructure, including the development of a geospatial platform during 2022/23.
- Create the Scottish Historic Population Platform (SHiPP), enabling the linking of digitised historic births, marriages and deaths in Scotland.
- Associated with SHiPP, and working with partners in National Records Scotland, undertake world-leading research into novel data linkage methods.
- Work with trusted research environments across the UK to share best practice and encourage innovation.

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ADR UK vision

ADR UK’s vision for 2026 is to be the default choice to host linked administrative data from across the entirety of UK and devolved government, making it accessible to a deep pool of trained researchers to generate insights routinely used to inform policy and practice.

ADR Scotland mission

ADR Scotland’s investment in data linkage infrastructure and capacity, enables vital research to better inform policy and public services utilising Scotland’s wealth of public sector data.

ADR UK aims	Trust & sustainability	Research for public good	Research access & support	Available data for research
ADR Scotland strategic goals	Widespread acceptance among public and data owners of the value of linking administrative data for research	Substantial increase in cross-cutting research that enhances bodies of knowledge for public good	More researchers with the skills to use linked administrative data for public benefit	Acquisition of linkable enduring research assets which enhance the quality and accessibility of administrative data
ADR Scotland objectives	Build public trust and address the needs of communities and wider society	Enable research that informs local and national public policy and practice	Create high-value research assets for reuse with streamlined, sustainable mechanisms for research access	Build knowledge of appropriate legal frameworks for sharing, linking and accessing data
	Preserve, enhance and promote administrative datasets as broad and enduring research assets	Support open research and impact	Increase Scotland’s analytical capacity to produce high impact research from Scottish data	Generate new tools, methodologies and datasets for use by analysts and researchers

<https://www.adruk.org/adr-scotland/>

Image shows a summary of ADR Scotland’s mission, strategic goals and objectives, as listed above.