

DARE UK Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) Meeting

Date: Thursday 27 January

Time: 3.00pm-4.30pm

Location: Remote

Attendees

STAG Members

- Professor David Ford (Chair) Professor of Health Informatics, Swansea University
- Dr Claire Bloomfield, Deputy Director Value of Data Centre for Improving Data Collaboration, NHSX
- Professor David De Roure, Professor of e-Research, University of Oxford
- Professor Ben Goldacre, Director of the DataLab, University of Oxford
- Professor Søren Holm, Professor of Bioethics, University of Manchester
- Alison Kennedy Director, STFC Hartree Centre
- Phil Kershaw, Technical Manager, Centre for Environmental Data Analysis, Harwell Camp
- Maisie McKenzie, Public contributor
- Chris Monk, Public contributor
- Professor Máire O'Neil, Director of Electronics, Communications & IT, Queen's University Belfast
- Professor Mark Parsons, Director of Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre and Associate Dean for e-Research, University of Edinburgh
- Professor Tom Rodden, Chief Scientific Adviser, UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS)
- Professor Elena Simperl, Professor of Computer Science, King's College London
- Peter Stokes, Director of the Integrated Data Programme, Office for National Statistics

UKRI and DARE UK representatives (observers)

- Hans-Erik G. Aronson, Director, DARE UK Phase 1
- Professor Andrew Morris, Director and CEO, HDR UK
- Professor Gerry Reilly, Design Authority, DARE UK Phase 1
- Dr Susheel Varma, Technical Lead, DARE UK Phase 1
- Fergus McDonald, Senior Programme Manager, DARE UK Phase 1
- Michelle Amugi, Programme Manager, DARE UK Phase 1 (Secretariat)
- Dr Ekaterini Blaveri, Interim Head of Digital Research Infrastructure, UKRI Medical Research Council (MRC) (Secretariat)

DARE UK Programme Board members

- Professor Felix Ritchie (DARE UK PB Deputy Chair), Professor of Applied Economics and Director of Bristol Centre for Economics and Finance, UWE Bristol
- John Marsh, Public contributor
- Dr Catherine Bromley, Deputy Director of Data Strategy and Infrastructure, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Dr Mike Ball, Head of Research Infrastructure, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
- Dr Justin O'Byrne, Co-Director of Digital Research Infrastructure, UKRI

DARE UK

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

David Ford, the chair, began by welcoming members to the inaugural meeting of the UKRI trusted and connected Data and Analytics Research Environments UK (DARE UK) Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) before inviting introductions from attendees. Following introductions, David Ford gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting: to provide an introduction, including relevant context, to the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Strategy and the DARE UK Programme; and to discuss the Group's ways of working and Terms of Reference.

2. UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy (DRI) and Delivery Plan

Justin O'Byrne presented UKRI's DRI Strategy, which focusses on five themes: Data infrastructure; Large scale computing; Secure services and tools for sensitive data; Skills and career pathways; and Foundational tools, techniques and practices. The objectives of each of these themes were highlighted before expanding on the phased approach which the DRI Programme will use to develop a national digital research infrastructure. The level of investment for the UKRI DRI Phase 1 was £17m (FY21/22), with a focus on the preliminary activities that will develop the longer-term plan and the early stages of high-priority activities (incl. ~£3m to DARE UK Phase1). The announcement for the next allocation to the UKRI DRI Programme was expected in Spring 2022.

Following his presentation, Justin O'Byrne opened the floor to questions. Discussions centred around how the DARE UK programme fits into UKRI 's Net Zero Initiative and DRI's overall strategic approach to industry with both identified as areas meriting follow-up discussion.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline/ status
Discuss the data services aspect of the DARE UK programme and how to engage effectively with the wider ecosystem of data services	All	Future STAG meeting
Explore the possible alignment of the DARE UK programme with Net Zero initiative and NHS England activities – for example, PPIE on NHS data use to get the most value out of respective consultations	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery team	Next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022

3. DARE UK Programme Vision and Overview

Director of DARE UK Phase 1, Hans-Erik Aronson, presented a summary of the DARE UK Programme, identifying the overall aim of the programme: to 'establish how a national data research infrastructure should be designed so that sensitive data can be connected and analysed in a secure, flexible, efficient and sustainable way'.

Hans-Erik Aronson shared an overview of the proposed multi-year, phased structure of the programme and identified some of the key assumptions on which the programme was based, e.g., that the programme is not starting from scratch, as each research council already has established data infrastructure and research use cases in place with opportunities for shared best practises, and that there is cross-council need for data to be connected and analysed in a secure, flexible, efficient and sustainable way, and that this need will only grow as time progresses.

Hans-Erik Aronson described the outputs of the Programme's Phase1 which included an initial landscape review of the UK data research infrastructure and the thematic areas which emerged. This Design &

DARE UK

Dialogue phase includes an extensive programme of community engagement with researchers, technologists, and the public, culminating in a co-designed blueprint for the next generation of Trusted Research Environments (TREs), with standards, access, accreditation, and ethics policies based on trustworthiness, security, and interoperability.

He went on to explain that this would entail a range of outreach methods, conversations with multiple stakeholders across research domains and a series of sprint exemplar projects to act as proof of concepts for specific hypotheses. The aim of Phase 1 is to deliver a “blueprint” of data standards, access and ethics policies, and technical services so that the new and existing TREs can readily work together on highly scaled research studies without significant impediment; and contribution to a business case for subsequent phases of this Programme.

The ultimate goal of the programme is to deliver solutions which work for researchers, data custodians and the data community, and is trusted by the public.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline/ status
Explore the main user groups for the proposed infrastructure and their user journeys	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery team	Next STAG meeting – 30 March 2022

Purpose of the Advisory Group: Terms of Reference (ToR) and Ways of working

David Ford drew members attention to the ToR, which had been shared prior to the meeting, and invited comments and observations.

- The group agreed that, whilst the ToR appear to be adequate for the moment, it would be useful to review them in a few months- once more meetings have been conducted.
- The role of the STAG as an advisory group, set up to provide advice to the DARE UK Programme Board was reinforced.
- The scope of DARE UK, in terms of the type of sensitive data on which it will be focussed, was highlighted as an area which needs to be clarified.

In addition, the membership of the STAG was discussed with the importance of diverse representation being emphasised by members. To add to this, a member raised that we should consider having diversity in terms of seniority on the STAG too, stating that, as part of the skills and pathways agenda, it would be useful to hear from those who are in their early career.

Industry representation in the STAG was also raised, recognising that this is a very broad area. Members agreed that it would be useful for the STAG to discuss this further at a future meeting.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline/ status
Indicate who the Senior Responsible Officer is in the Terms of Reference	Secretariat	Done
Discuss industry representation at the STAG and engagement with this sector through the DARE UK Phase 1 activities	DARE UK, Phase 1 delivery team	Next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022

Revisit the STAG Terms of Reference and discuss any gaps in expertise and backgrounds	STAG	Future STAG meeting
Develop an initial proposal/options on the scope of the sensitive data types on which the DARE UK Programme should focus and seek STAG's views	DARE UK, Phase 1 delivery team	Next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022

4. DARE UK Progress Update

Landscape review and early thinking

DARE UK's Phase 1 Design Authority, Gerry Reilly, provided an update on the progress of Phase 1 to date, beginning by giving an overview of the landscape review conducted by Carnall Farrar. 79 people were interviewed, the majority of whom were from research communities with a spread of representation across the UKRI Research Councils. Individuals naturally had different priorities and perspectives. However, most participants were aligned in the view that the Research Councils are already supporting the core digital infrastructure needed, the challenge is the ability to do this in an interoperable and reusable way across the data research network.

Early thinking around the six areas of unmet needs identified in the landscape review was shared with the Group and the following areas were discussed:

1. **Data and discovery** – the DARE UK team want to ensure that the blueprint outlines an approach which supports common data models (where appropriate) and technical standards to enable meta data and data discovery across domains. DARE UK Phase 1 will be developing a "blueprint" of data standards, access and ethics policies, and technical services so that the new and existing TREs can readily work together on highly scaled research studies without significant impediment
2. **Access and accreditation** - this has been identified as a key challenge and an area where a more joined up approach is needed with solutions like user accreditation processes and subsequent cross-domain access rights and shared adoption of processes and subsequent equivalent cross-domain access rights being considered.
3. **Digital research infrastructure** - foundational services are needed to support the deployment of analytics across federated networks e.g orchestration capabilities and repositories of analytics. The focus for the DARE UK Programme is not on building out large scale new storage and compute.
4. **Capability and capacity** - whilst DARE UK may not be the mechanism through which this is delivered, it is a core dependency for the DARE UK capability.
5. **Demonstrating trustworthiness** - is fundamental because the DARE UK Programme is focusing on sensitive data and therefore the process must be transparent and trust enhancing.
6. **Funding and incentives** - currently funding and incentives are based on capital grants and top slicing of research grants rather than on strategic and longer-term infrastructure investments. The DARE UK team are therefore considering how the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Programme can provide sustainable funding for provision of services, enhance incentives and responsibilities and improve the research culture

5.2 Sprint Exemplar projects

An update on the UKRI DARE UK sprint projects was given.

The sprint projects will span 8 months from January to August 2022 and focus on three key areas: best practice, technology demonstrators and use cases which test some of the key assumptions of the programme. In total, 22 eligible applications were received and assessed, these were then shortlisted to 12 which were reviewed by an independent panel, including two members of the public, with 9 projects receiving funding. Outputs and progress of these projects will be shared with the STAG on an ongoing basis.

5.3 Public Involvement and engagement (PIE)

Gerry Reilly, emphasised how central public involvement and engagement is to the DARE UK programme, reiterating that DARE UK is about trust. Therefore, DARE UK have ensured that there is public representation imbedded in the governance of the programme via the inclusion of two members of the public on both the STAG and Programme Board respectively. It was also made clear that a key requirement of all the sprint projects is that public involvement and engagement is imbedded in their governance structures and activities.

The recent DARE UK Public involvement and engagement activities were shared, including an overview of the public dialogue which took place on the 13 and 14 January with 46 participants from across the UK, part of the selection criteria for all participants was a lack of previous engagement around data research. Consultancy firm Kohlrabi have been commissioned to support with this activity and its findings, will be shared in early Spring 2022. This engagement was met with resounding approval from members of the STAG. It was added that, to maintain transparency and engagement with the public, DARE UK will hold public webinars on a bi-monthly basis with a 'Meet the Sprints' webinar scheduled for 8 February.

5.4 Next Steps

Upcoming events and milestones for the DARE UK programme were shared:

February 2022

01/02 Programme Board Meeting

08/02 'Meet the sprints' public event

25/02 1st draft strategic business case to frame subsequent discussions

25/02 1st draft recommendations / early thinking

March 2022

30/03 STAG Meeting

21/03 Public contributors meeting (date TBC)

28/03 PIE workshop report publishing

01-31/03 Stakeholder engagement workshops

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline/status
Ask the PB to identify if there are specific things on which they would like the STAG's advice/views	STAG Chair	Done
Develop a roadmap/representation explaining the interface and overlaps of the DARE UK Programme with the UKRI DRI Strategy (primarily), and the broader landscape, and indicates the gaps	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery Team	Next STAG meeting- 30 March 2022

Appendix – Summary of the actions from the 27 January 2022 UKRI DARE UK Scientific and Technical Advisory Group meeting

#	Actions	Owner	Deadline/status
1	Discuss the data services aspect of the DARE UK programme and how to engage effectively with the wider ecosystem of data services	All	This matter will be discussed in the May STAG meeting.
2	Explore the possible alignment of the DARE UK programme with Net Zero initiative and NHS England activities – for example, PPIE on NHS data use to get the most value out of respective consultations	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery team	Next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022
3	Explore the main user groups for the proposed infrastructure and their user journeys	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery team	This matter will be discussed in the next STAG meeting - 30 th March 2022
4	Indicate who the Senior Responsible Officer is in the Terms of Reference	Secretariat	Done
5	Discuss industry representation at the STAG and engagement with this sector through the DARE UK Phase 1 activities	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery Team	This matter will be discussed in the next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022
6	Revisit the STAG Terms of Reference and discuss any gaps in expertise and backgrounds	STAG	This matter will be discussed in the June STAG meeting.
7	Develop an initial proposal/options on the scope of the sensitive data types on which the DARE UK Programme should focus and seek STAG's views	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery Team	This matter will be discussed in the next STAG meeting – 30 th March 2022
8	Ask the PB to identify if there are specific things on which they would like the STAG's advice/views	STAG Chair	Done
9	Develop a roadmap/representation explaining the interface and overlaps of the DARE UK Programme with the UKRI DRI Strategy (primarily), and the broader landscape, and indicates the gaps	DARE UK, Phase 1 Delivery Team	This matter will be discussed in the next STAG meeting- 30 th March 2022