

DARE UK Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) Meeting

Date: Thursday 15 September

Time: 09.00am-10.30am

Location: Zoom

Attendees

STAG Members

- Professor David Ford (Chair) Professor of Health Informatics, Swansea University
- Professor David De Roure, Professor of e-Research, 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
- Professor Máire O'Neil, Director of Electronics, Communications & IT, Queen's University Belfast
- Professor Elena Simperl, Professor of Computer Science, King's College London

UKRI and DARE UK representatives (observers)

- Hans-Erik G. Aronson, Director, DARE UK Phase 1
- Professor Gerry Reilly, Design Authority, 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)
- Michael Ball, Head of theme for Data Science

DARE UK Programme Board members (observers)

- John Marsh, Public contributor
- Professor Felix Ritchie, UWE Bristol
- Emma Gordon

Apologies:

- Dr Claire Bloomfield, Deputy Director Value of Data Centre for Improving Data Collaboration, NHSX
- Professor Ben Goldacre, Director, Bennett Institute for Applied Data Science
- Maisie McKenzie, Public contributor
- Chris Monk, Public contributor
- 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)
- Peter Stokes, Director of the Integrated Data Programme, Office for National Statistics

1. Welcome and minutes of the previous meeting

David Ford, STAG chair, welcomed members and shared apologies from Claire Bloomfield, Peter Stokes and Ben Goldacre.

STAG members' attention was drawn to the minutes from the previous meeting on May 17th which had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Members were asked whether they felt that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the discussions which took place in the meeting. Members did not identify any issues.

In terms of actions from the May meeting, the following was shared:

- Action 1 is closed
- Action 2 is closed amended scoping paper shared with Programme Board (PB) in May
- Action 3 is closed
- Action 4 is closed –explored in PB meeting
- Action 5 is closed -shared with PB on May 27th
- Action 6 is closed sent to STAG members via email on May 24th
- Action 7 in progress- estimated completion end of Nov
- Action 8 is closed- shared within DARE UK recommendations
- Action 9 is ongoing

2. Brief update from the Programme Board meeting

David Ford gave an overview of some of the key points which emerged from the May Programme Board meeting:

- Justin O'Byrne updated the board on the UKRI DRI budget allocations for the next three years. The allocation for this financial year (FY22/23) was expected to be at the same level (£17 million) as the previous year with a significant increase of funding in the following two years. As a result of this lower funding amount for the first year of this three-year settlement, the UKRI DRI Committee (DRIC) was considering continuing with a 'Phase 1b' (instead of launching into Phase 2) for the DRI Programme to support a portfolio of both existing Phase 1 and new projects for up to 18 months (April 2022 to October 2023).
- The Delivery Team presented the PB with three options around how to approach the deeper landscape review – the PB opted for the 3rd option: extend the UKRI Infrastructure Portal to allow for additional self-reporting data capturing capability if possible- if not, at the very least utilize the contact database
- PB requested a plan/approach on how information on investments, which were not currently included in the UKRI Infrastructure Portal, would be captured in a meaningful way since this Portal was possibly deficient in scope/breadth in terms of the infrastructures which were included
- PB also asked that the delivery team discuss the potential alignment and avoid overlap between the DARE UK deeper landscape review work and the ESRC Future Data Services survey

No comments or questions were raised from STAG members regarding this item.

3. DRI Phase 1b allocation

The MRC team gave an overview of the Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Phase 1b allocation, giving context about the funding allocation process, decisions and portfolio.

The STAG were informed that the DRI Programme as a whole has been allocated £129 million with a rising profile of funds over the next 3 years:

- £17 million 22/23
- £42 million 23/24
- £70 million 24/25

DRI programmes aim to build a coherent national approach to investment in digital research infrastructure. As the funding amount for the first year of this three-year settlement is lower than expected, the DRI is continuing in a pilot phase of Phase 1b instead of launching into Phase 2. The DRI Programme will support a portfolio of both existing Phase 1 and new projects for up to 18 months (April 2022 to October 2023). The programmes within this portfolio were selected via a bid process.

The bid process was outlined:

Research councils were asked to develop proposals which were then submitted to the Digital Research Infrastructure Committee. Thanks were given to the STAG for their input into the DARE UK phase 1b proposal.

A total of 17 proposals were submitted to the DRIC and three guiding principles influenced the DRI's decisions on which programmes to fund in Phase 1b:

1. balance across UKRI councils and thematic areas
2. minimising delivery risks
3. setting a growth trajectory

DARE UK Phase 1b programme has been given a provisional allocation of £4.5million for a programme of work up until October 23rd with a spend profile of £3 million in the 22/23 financial year and £1.5 million in the 23/24 financial year. Discussions around reprofiling the current allocation are taking place.

Synergies between DRI projects have been identified and efforts will be made to ensure collaboration where applicable.

Mike Ball followed this by giving an overview of how UKRI spend is managed, highlighting the restrictions around how and when money is spent.

Recommendation	Owner(s)
Share an overview of the other DRI initiatives funded in the DRI Phase 1b portfolio and consider potential areas of collaboration	Delivery team

4. DARE UK Phase 1b update

The DARE UK delivery team gave a brief update on some of their key activities to date before introducing the planning and sign off process for Phase 1b.

STAG members were informed that the DARE UK recommendations on how to move towards a coordinated national infrastructure for sensitive data research were published on Aug 31st and have been positively received by the research community with engagement from over 550 individual users as of September 3rd.

The delivery team also confirmed that the definition of sensitive data in the scope of DARE UK has been finalised. This is the scope that DARE UK will be working with in Phase 1b. However, this may be refined further as they learn more.

It was shared that the Phase 1b delivery plan is in progress and will be presented to the Programme Board on the 20th September for sign off. However, there are some known Phase 1b activities which have already been discussed and confirmed:

- A summative write up of the DARE UK Phase 1 Sprint projects – highlighting the key findings as relevant to the aims of DARE UK and evaluating the effectiveness of using sprints to explore concepts
- A deeper review of the sensitive data landscape
- A sensitive data taxonomy
- Community working groups

No questions and comments were offered here from STAG members. Therefore, the delivery team handed back to the chair who introduced the key questions for discussion which would help the delivery team with their Phase 1b planning.

5. Deeper landscape review

The following questions were discussed with STAG members.

1. How can we encourage infrastructures to respond to the survey?
2. How can we identify and reach infrastructures which may not be known to us?
3. If the UKRI Infrastructure Portal is not an option for hosting the survey and sharing the findings, what would be the best platform on which to do this? What important considerations must we factor in when deciding this?
4. Currently, we have outlined 3 key activities to conduct as part of the deeper landscape review:
 - *Step 1: Establishing a broad baseline overview of sensitive data research digital infrastructures across research domains through the landscape review survey*
 - *Step 2: Engagement with UKRI research councils' heads of digital infrastructure to validate the output of step 1, give a sense of priority to the digital infrastructures in terms of their value proposition, and provide additional context from a funder's perspective*
 - *Step 3: Direct engagement with digital infrastructure teams to understand their capabilities and extracting lessons learnt from past approaches*

What other activities could be conducted to help broaden our understanding of the sensitive data landscape?

In response, STAG members made the following comments:

- Meet with the Infraportal team to establish exactly which aspects of their resources can be leveraged for the deeper landscape review survey. Dissemination of website/contact base/sharing of findings?
- Identify what the limitations of the UKRI infraportal are.
- Identify how we will encourage infrastructures to complete the survey both within and outside of UKRI
- Share a list of who has been invited to respond so that gaps can be identified, create an easy mechanism for others to refer/pass on to other infrastructures
- Liaise with other DRI infrastructures who have similar needs and identify how we can collaborate going forward. Need to establish a common place to store findings from such survey-one that can be easily updated as needed.
- Following this, go to the DRI with requirements and request their support in pushing this initiative through
- Ensure that the language used in the survey is accessible to commercial and industrial platforms so that they don't become disenfranchised –include individuals from these domains in the pilot round. Sensitive data taxonomy

Recommendation	Owner(s)
Liaise with the UKRI Infraportal team to establish exactly which aspects of their resources can be leveraged for the deeper landscape review survey.	Delivery team
Identify how to encourage infrastructures to complete the survey both within and outside of UKRI, with a particular focus on the COMMs strategy.	Delivery team

6. Developing a sensitive data taxonomy

The delivery team shared that it has become clear that they need to develop a sensitive data taxonomy. The current plan is for this to be in the form of a classification of the different types of sensitive data that exist and a risk hierarchy, and will help us to better understand and target the needs of the landscape.

The following questions were posed:

- Are members of the STAG aware of any existing classification that could provide a basis for this work?
- What will it be important to include within this classification of sensitive data?
- How should we approach developing this sensitive data taxonomy? What activities could be conducted? Who should be involved?

In response, the following comments were offered by STAG members:

- Identify why DARE UK want to build a sensitive data taxonomy: how will it be useful to the programme? Formulate the design of the taxonomy based on this.

- Leverage the expertise of STAG members who are experienced in this area: Elena Simperl, David De Roure and Soren Holm- each expressed willingness to support.
- Consider where/how perspective comes into establishing the hierarchy of sensitivity

Recommendation	Owner(s)
Clearly articulate the objectives of the sensitive data taxonomy in order to help inform the overall design.	Delivery team
Leverage the expertise of the DARE UK STAG members who are experienced in developing taxonomies.	Delivery team

7. Community working groups

The STAG were informed that in Phase 1b, the DARE UK programme's intention is to establish working groups with participants from across the landscape, focused on key priority areas (these may evolve as we move forward):

As such, the STAG were asked to respond to the following questions:

- In addition to the outlined priority areas, are there any other areas of work which you believe should be prioritised in Phase 1b?
- In your experience, what works well in working groups and what does not work so well?

In response, the following comments were shared:

Explore the UK and international landscape to establish where there are existing groups already working on the same or relevant areas, following this, identify how best to work with these existing groups

Consider convening a group to establish an overarching architecture which identifies the big picture/high level vision of what it is we want to achieve

Recommendation	Owner(s)
Conduct a review of the UK and international research landscape to identify any working groups which already convene around the areas DARE UK wish to explore and consider how best to draw on these resources.	Delivery team
Explore the benefit of convening a working group aimed at establishing an overarching architecture, identifying a high-level vision of what DARE UK is aiming to achieve.	Delivery team

DARE UK

8. AOB

MRC informed members that the DARE UK Programme Board will be reviewing the governance of the programme, including the STAG on September 20th. Following the outcome of this, the STAG will have the opportunity to review their Terms of Reference.

STAG members were informed that the DARE UK delivery team are seeking a Technical Lead and a link to the job description was shared. Members were encouraged to share the JD with their networks.

Appendix – Summary of the actions from the 15th Sept 2022 UKRI DARE UK Scientific and Technical Advisory Group meeting

#	Recommendations	Owner	Status
1	Share an overview of the other DRI initiatives funded in the DRI Phase 1b portfolio and consider potential areas of collaboration	Delivery team	Sent via email
2	Liaise with the UKRI Infraportal team to establish exactly which aspects of their resources can be leveraged for the deeper landscape review survey.	Delivery team	Ongoing
3	Identify how to encourage infrastructures to complete the survey both within and outside of UKRI, with a particular focus on the COMMs strategy.	Delivery team	Closed
4	Clearly articulate the objectives of the sensitive data taxonomy in order to help inform the overall design.	Delivery team	Open
5	Leverage the expertise of the DARE UK STAG members who are experienced in developing taxonomies	Delivery team	Open
6	Conduct a review of the UK international research landscape to identify any working groups which already convene around the areas the programme wishes to explore and consider how best to draw on these resources.	Delivery team	In progress
7	Explore the benefits of convening a working group aimed at establishing an overarching architecture, identifying a high-level vision of what DARE UK is aiming to achieve.	Delivery team	In progress