

# RSDA Annual Report – Progress Against Action Plan

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Research Support and Data Access (RSDA) continue to provide access to unit-record de-identified survey and administrative data for statistical research. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and RSDA are committed to ensuring research delivers a public benefit for the UK and access is granted to researchers in a safe and consistent way, in line with legislation and ONS policies.

As part of this ongoing aim, RSDA outlined eleven actions to help improve and progress its function. These eleven actions were outlined in the [2017-18 Annual Report](#).

This document outlines the progress made to deliver the actions stipulated in the action plan to date.

# Progress Summary – Highlights

In November, we hosted our Data Capability 2018 event at the Imperial War Museum London. This event celebrated the innovative and diverse use of secure data and provided the research community with opportunities to expand their professional networks.

The event also played host to the inaugural ONS Research Excellence Awards ceremony, further recognising outstanding and innovative use of secure research data to deliver a public benefit and to inform policy.



## DATA CAPABILITY 2018

### Shortlisted finalist from left to right

**Sarah Henry**, Director of Methods Data Research, ONS. **Emma Turner**, ONS Excellence Award winner, Bristol University. **Laura Gardiner**, Resolution Foundation. **Simon Conroy**, University of Leicester. **Bradley Speigner**, Bank of England. **Philip Wales**, ONS

# Progress Summary – Highlights

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- In July 2018, RSDA launched “SRS Roadshows”, reaching out and engaging with the research community in Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, London and South Wales. This provided a great opportunity to promote the services we offer and open valuable communication channels with Researchers.
- In May, launched the ONS Research Excellence Awards. The award attracted over 30 submissions, 10 of which made the shortlist:
  - The shortlisted applications were widely publicised as nominees for the “People’s Choice” award, which was voted on by over 500 people.
  - The shortlisted applications are currently being evaluated for use as case studies and will be published by the end of April 2019.

# Progress Summary - Headlines

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RSDA has:

- Continued to collect updated documentation or new waves of data.
- Collaborated with ONS teams to update the metadata RSDA make available in the Data Catalogue.
- Taken steps to improve the quality of metadata by updating the format and content of the information that are made available to researchers (data cheat sheets) including metadata about datasets.
- Started to develop a new metadata scheme, based on the SIMS standard.
- Continued to develop a new SRS platform with further development and testing taking place.

# Progress Summary

Action	Planned outcomes	Progress
Increase connectivity, capacity and availability of SRS.	A new SRS infrastructure will allow greater connectivity, increased remote access and increased processing abilities; establish more simultaneous sessions.	Continuing to develop a new SRS platform with further development and testing taking place.
Create an online portal for submitting and tracking applications and making requests (e.g output clearances, training etc).	An online portal will be created allowing users to submit both AR and project application forms which will also include tracking functionality. The online portal will allow users to book training and raise request directly to the service desk team.	The development of the online portal is progressing well and has reached its testing phase.
Review and streamline processes where there are multi-organisation engagement and contact for researchers.	Work directly with partner organisations to establish clear communication channels, enabling us to handle enquiries efficiently and address issues effectively.	Additional resource has been recruited to assist with partner organisation relationships.
Review plans for SRS remote access.	Currently collaborating with overseas organisations offering secure access to data (including Centre d'accès securise aux donnees (CASD) in France, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) in Holland, Institut für arbeitsmarkt (IAB) in Germany and the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) in New Zealand) to agree terms to specialised connections allowing researchers to access international data via a UK safe setting and vice versa.	Work is progressing with the IDANS collaboration. A meeting of the IDANS partners took place on 28 and 29 January 2019 to agree specifications for safe room connectivity to the SRS and equivalent European partner research data centres.

# Progress Summary

Action	Planned outcomes	Progress
Increase data availability in SRS.	Continue to engage with data owners both internally and externally to increase availability and range of data in the SRS, e.g National Pupil Database (NPD).	NPD data availability has increased. In process of acquiring all ONS data sets via 'information asset form'. 68% of all data sets not acquired have been requested.
Increase information about data available in the SRS.	Development of comprehensive catalogue of data available for research.	RSDA have updated metadata and made changes to the format and content of the information made available to researchers.
Create new data ingest procedure to improve data quality.	Engaging with ONS business to understand current resource dedicated to dataset and metadata preparation for the SRS. Offer RSDA resource to help deliver improved metadata for our researchers. Researchers will be better able to answer queries they have about the data.	A new data ingest procedure has been put in place (high level) including KPIs. Started reviewing the coding structures used to ingest data.

# Progress Summary

Action	Planned outcomes	Progress
Improve communications with customers.	<p>RSDA will deliver a programme of events to inform researchers about latest developments and listen and respond to their feedback.</p> <p>Customers to be kept up to date with all aspects of their application. Online application roll out will aid in providing clarity but a more direct approach to be considered if delays occur.</p>	RSDA have hosted roadshow events with researchers, updating them on changes to the new SRS and clearances. Introduced new methods of engagement such as Mailchimp. Expanded impact and engagement team.
Review current training locations and possibilities of adding additional locations in line with remote connectivity rollout.	We are running training courses in Bristol and one in Cardiff, but will look to offer Safe Researcher Training (SRT) courses in a wider variety of locations, particularly in the North once a quarter.	RSDA are hosting regular courses in Manchester and running courses in Cardiff. RSDA have supported other ONS teams to deliver training.
Raise Awareness of Research Data use.	Raise awareness and promote the use of Secure Research Data by inviting external speakers to talk to ONS staff about how they've used Secure Research Data to aid decision and deliver benefit to the UK. Continue to produce research case studies and host user events.	Published research case studies. Hosted five SRS roadshow events. Launched the ONS Research Excellence Awards and hosted the Data Capability Event.

# Progress Summary

Action	Planned outcomes	Progress
<p>Ensure consistent accreditation approach between data centres and processors in line with the DEA.</p>	<p>RSDA will collaborate with the administrative research centres and other schemes that accredit researchers, to ensure there is a consistent framework in place. Researchers accredited on one scheme will be able to transfer to the other schemes without the need to re-accredit.</p>	<p>ONS is formally part of the Administrative Data Research Partnership and, working closely with partner data centres, has agreed that accreditation is consistent and transferable between them. As the Digital Economy Act (DEA) provides a single Legal Gateway for use of any administrative data, the most efficient solution (for data centres AND the researchers) is for all to be accredited under this legislation. All researchers who hold current accreditation from one or more partner data centres, including all ONS Approved Researchers, will be automatically accredited as a DEA researcher without the need for retraining.</p>