Data First Academic Advisory Group
Terms of Reference

Purpose and scope

The Academic Advisory Group (AAG) is intended to support the Data First project. It will:

- provide detailed and expert knowledge and advice on a range of technical, methodological, research-related or wider issues
- facilitate links with academia by enabling access to a broad pool of academic and user experts
- represent the needs and interests of academic users by contributing to key decisions and proposals
- ensure research and academic requirements are captured and delivered
- raise awareness and generate interest in the project via academic networks
- collaborate with the Data First team to overcome any barriers that prevent effective joint-working between the project and academia

The AAG will provide an active advisory and supporting role to Data First to achieve its immediate objective of delivering the contractual milestones of the project. Management and delivery of the project milestones will be overseen by the MoJ and ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK) Project Board which is the primary governance and decision-making forum.

Membership

Collectively the AAG will need to reflect the breadth of knowledge and range of networks to secure credibility, buy-in and progress with the academic community.

The group will comprise up to 10 members, including:

- a Lead Academic appointed to lead a programme of academic outreach work
- up to 8 additional academics representing a mix of research expertise across the justice space, as well as specialist methodological skills and technical experience in large-scale administrative data linking, security and analysis
- an independent External Advisor appointed to promote the project to and provide expert and authoritative advice on key issues and challenges to ensure progress
- senior representation from MoJ Data and Analytical Services (DASD) directorate
- representation from ADR UK Data First project team

The names of all members will be published on the ADR UK website.

Expectations and ways of working

The Data First team will be expected to:

- provide a clear specification, information and agenda with sufficient notice of each AAG meeting so members can contribute meaningfully
- circulate minutes of meetings, including clear actions with responsible owners and records of decisions made
- maintain ongoing communication between AAG meetings, to keep members informed of progress and key decisions, and to invite comment on tangible outputs
- be explicitly clear about the information and materials members can share more widely and those that are provided in confidence
- inform members about the outcome of their advice and how it will be used
- provide opportunities for members to collaborate on and/or deliver analytical outputs, such as: quality assurance and peer review of Data First products; research based on the linked datasets; blogs and seminars to raise awareness of the project and its outputs.

AAG members will be expected to:

- attend quarterly AAG meetings in person wherever possible, and maintain ongoing communication via appropriate means for collaboration and discussions in between; including proactively contacting the Data First team when opportunities for making an impact are identified
- provide objective and expert advice as required, including on tangible outputs delivered by the project:
  - within subject, research or policy area of expertise
  - to overcome methodological or technical challenges in data linking, data engineering, data security or data science
  - to form a collective view on general issues or to overcome wider challenges
  - to identify academic colleagues to test, quality assure and carry out analysis of the linked data
- support the Data First team to help ensure the products and services delivered by the project meet academic and research needs, including:
  - identifying priority research questions that could be addressed from analysis of linked datasets
  - understanding the requirements and ways to facilitate efficient and transparent access to the data
  - identifying mechanisms to develop academic expertise in the analysis of linked administrative data for research purposes

- raise awareness and generate interest in the project and its products via academic networks, including identifying opportunities to promote the project at relevant events
- Support the Academic Lead in delivering a programme of academic outreach work, which may include facilitating and/or attending quarterly seminars
- work in partnership with the Data First team to identify and collaborate on analytical outputs as described in section above.

Term, key dates and remuneration

Membership will be for 12 months, from February 2021 to March 2022.

The AAG is intended to meet twice a year. Members are encouraged to take forward other activities, in line with the scope of the AAG, for up to ten days per year.

This project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Remuneration for AAG members will be provided by a standard daily rate set by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), plus any travel and subsistence costs occurred.

Conflict of Interest

AAG members will be asked to declare any financial or other interests that could be seen to create a conflict of interest as a member of the AAG, as soon as they arise. The immediate objective of Data First is delivering the contractual milestones of the project as set out by ADR UK.