# The Data Sharing Policies of the UK Research Councils:

# Principles and Practices

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# Overview

- The UK research councils.
- Generic drivers for data sharing.
- Data sharing policies and facilities.
- The future – from policy to practice.

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# Research Councils UK

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Arts & Humanities Research Council

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

bbsrc
biotechnology and biological sciences research council

MRC | Medical Research Council

EPSRC Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

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Science & Technology Facilities Council

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# What do we mean by data?

- Data as a by-product of research.
- Data as a part of the scientific record – must be maintained to allow reproduction and validation.
- Data as a 'published' output in its own right.

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# Drivers for data sharing

- Scientific need - especially for large-scale or long-term studies.
- Increased value – where part of a larger collection (eg. Oceans or atmosphere).
- To support & verify the scientific record.
- Value for money – data collection can be very expensive.
- Public funds – public access.

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# Data sharing policies

- Data policies and infrastructures have developed over time.

- Reflects different approaches to data sharing within different communities with differing scientific needs.

- Driven by the science – a *one size fits all* RCUK policy is not appropriate.

# Generic principles

- Research Councils recognise data as a valuable long-term, public-good resource.
- Data sharing improves opportunities for exploitation;
- Investigator teams have a right of first use and a right to be acknowledged;
- Effective exploitation requires effective data management.

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# Key differences

- Differences not in policy principles, but in how data sharing is supported.

- Twin track approach:
  - Provision of national facilities;
  - Support for delegated infrastructure.

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# National facilities

- 'Early' adopters of data policies have implemented long-term facilities:
  - ESRC: Joint JISC & ESRC supported UK Date Archive, including the Economic and Social Data Service;
  - NERC: Long-term commitment to managing and making available environmental data through 7 NERC Data Centres.

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- Formal data policy – currently being updated.
- Joint JISC & ESRC supported UK Date Archive, including the Economic and Social Data Service.
- Applicants must carry out a data review to ensure funds not requested for data that are already available. Data must be offered to the archive within 3 months of end of award.
- Developing 'new thinking' in data management and sharing. For example, QUADS – *Qualitative Archiving and Data Sharing Scheme.*

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- Data policy handbook and guidance. New version under development.

- All data must be offered to a NERC data centre to enable long-term management and re-use.

- Recognition of rights of investigator teams.

- NERC supports 7 data centres for long-term management of environmental data.

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# Delegated infrastructure

- 'Later' adopters of data policies provide funds through the grant process to support data management and dissemination:
  - BBSRC: April 2007;
  - MRC: January 2006;
  - AHRC: From April 2008, previously funded centralised service.
- Onus on the PI and the institution.

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- Data sharing policy and implementation guidelines. Endorsed by Council July 2006, apply from April 2007.

- Applicants must produce a data sharing plan. Data sharing encouraged in all research areas where there is a strong scientific need and it is cost effective to do so.

- Funds can be requested to support data management and sharing activities.

**MRC** | Medical Research Council

- Data sharing and preservation policy – applies to new grants awarded from January 2006.
- Applicants must produce a plan for data sharing and preservation and include costings in grant applications.
- Implementing data management facilities at MRC owned centres (as part of corporate responsibility for data).

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- *De facto* policy - detailed in funding guidance.
- Any significant electronic resources or datasets created as a result of research funded by the AHRC must be made available in an accessible depository for at least three years after the end of the grant.
- Can request resources to support management and sharing.
- Archaeology – special case.  Must use the AHRC supported Archaeology Data Service.

- No formal policy, does not overly intervene in the research dissemination process.

- Encourages PIs to manage primary data as the basis for publications securely and for an appropriate time in a durable form under the control of the institution of their origin.

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- Polices to develop following merger of PPARC and CCLRC.

- Facilities (ie CCLRC) – well developed policies and facilities on a per-project basis.

- Grant holders (ie PPARC) – Data curation policy agreed in principle.

# Which model is better?

- **National facilities:**
  - Longer-term, single points of contact, centres of excellence;
  - Perceived as expensive and less agile?

- **Delegated:**
  - More responsive, closer to the science, cheaper in the shorter term?;
  - Lack of long-term vision, access to key skills?

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# Beyond policy into practice

- The policy is the easy bit:
  - Resourcing, implementation and enforcement is more difficult.

- Long-term commitment:
  - Data management and sharing needs long-term vision and long-term support.
  - Are PIs the right people to do this?

- And don't forget the skills base.

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# Further information

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