Why the dialogues? Reflections from the ESRC

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Set the context: ESRC

- UK’s major public sector funder of social science research and post graduate training (>£200m budget)
- Supports independent, high quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector
- Key Principles:
  - Quality
  - Impact
  - Independence
How do we enable and support researchers to engage with the public?

- Pathways to Impact
- But did you know that we also:
  - Stage a Festival of Social Science
  - Support catalysts for public engagement
  - Website social science for schools
  - Require communications/impact plans
Why did ESRC embark on the dialogues on data?

- Rapidly evolving data landscape
- Administrative Data Taskforce
- Dialogue aims:
  - Better understand people’s views on the linking of admin data
  - Begin the process of creating a terminology describing the re-use of administrative data and data linking that is understandable to the general public
  - Help inform the development of the governance and operational procedures of the ADRCs and provide data on public attitudes to inform their future strategies and priorities
Capital Funding & Big Data

- Chancellor’s Autumn Statement included £600m for science, research and innovation, £484m for RCUK

- Funds to support the development of innovative technologies across eight areas, including ‘big data’

- Draws from RCUK Strategic Framework for Capital Investment (published Nov 2012)
ESRC Big Data Network

- Governance Structures
- UK Data Service and Administrative Data Service
- ADRC
- Data Research Centre
- Data Research Centre
- Third Sector Data Research Centre
- Social Media Data Research Centre
- International Centre for SM Research

Administrative Data
Phase 1

Business and Local Government Data
Phase 2

Third Sector and Social Media Data
Phase 3
ESRC investment ...

- **ADS** – Melanie Wright Essex (UKDS / ADLS)
- **ADRC-E** Peter Smith Southampton (Bloomsbury)
- **ADRC-NI** Dermot O’Reilly QuB (Ulster)
- **ADRC-S** Chris Dibben Edinburgh (Scottish consortium)
- **ADRC-W** David Ford Swansea (Cardiff)
So what will we be doing now?

- ESRC’s strategic consultation
- Innovating in the way we run funding calls
- Through RCUK and its website
- Social media and other publications
- Novel animations and video
- Lay membership of governance
- What is considered to be socially beneficial?
  - Impact and case studies
In summary

“*It’s taken the best part of 8 hours to get (data linking) across to us, who are actively interested. It’ll be more difficult for a member of the public*” (Cardiff)

“*as long as it’s used for good, like to develop things, improve services, improve knowledge*” (Belfast)

In general, participants supported administrative data linkage subject to safe guards.