

Why the dialogues? Reflections from the ESRC

Vanessa Cuthill 16 May 2014



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

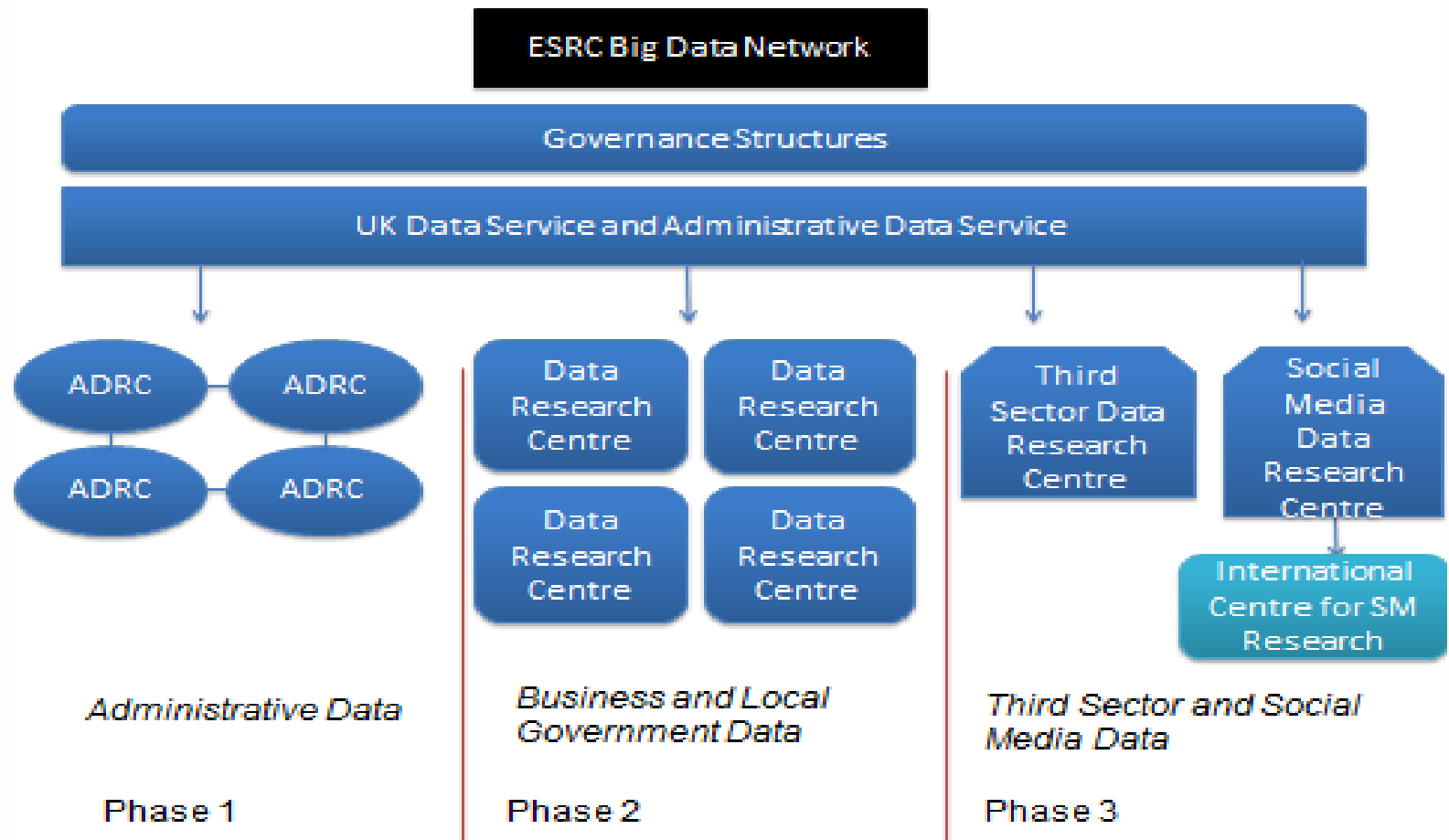
Why did ESRC embark on the dialogues on data?

- ▶ 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

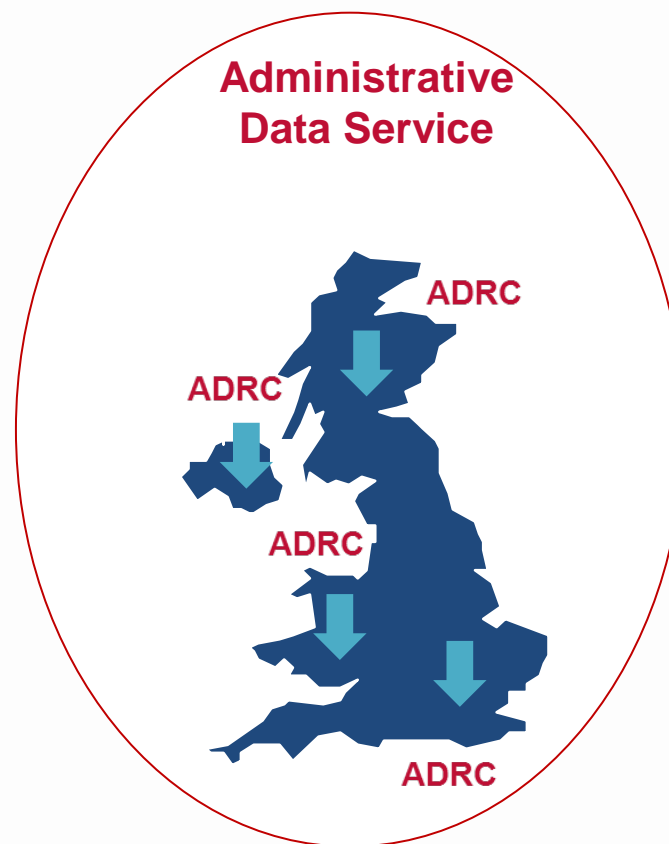
- ▶ Chancellor's Autumn Statement included £600m for science, research and innovation, £484m for RCUK
- ▶ Funds to support the development of innovative technologies across eight areas, including 'big data'
- ▶ Draws from RCUK Strategic Framework for Capital Investment (published Nov 2012)

ESRC Big Data Network



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.