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The Good, the Bad, the Clunky and . . . the Outcomes

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Background

There are there are considerable challenges to be addressed so the benefits of administrative data for research can be realised. Significant headway is being made, but there is great scope and appetite for further improvement.

Objectives

This study set out to explore good practice, barriers and bottlenecks in effective administrative data use, and to gain suggestions on how to share the good, solve the bad and improve the clunky issues.

Methods

Using the ESRC-funded UK Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) as the case study, a qualitative survey, focusing on the data use pathway, was carried out across the network. This encompassed a set of 18 questions spanning from acquisition to archiving. Survey responses were grouped into six themes: data acquisition; approval processes; controls on access and disclosure; data and metadata; researcher support; and data reuse and retention. The resulting information matrix was presented to participants at the All Hands meeting (April-May 2017) to facilitate discussion.

Findings

Survey responses were received from across the network (N=27) and 95 people took part in the workshop. The combined information from the survey and workshop was used to inform set of 18 recommendations across the 6 themes, and this has been used by the ADRN directors to develop an action plan for implementation.

Conclusions

The ADRN has broken new ground in overcoming many challenges in using administrative data for research in the UK. The recommendations and action plan show how further improvements will be made in the ADRCs, and the findings of this study are relevant more widely to other organisations working with administrative data.

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