



# Evaluation of public dialogue on open data

Report to Research Councils UK

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# 1. Introduction

Making data available for public use and scrutiny has been a key policy aim of the coalition government since 2010. The Cabinet Office has encouraged the open availability of a wide range of public datasets<sup>1</sup> and established a Public Sector Transparency Board and Transparency Principles<sup>2</sup>. The Open Access Implementation Group (OAIG), whose members include the Research Councils UK and JISC - both part-funders of the public dialogue on open data - has made a commitment to open access to the outputs from publicly funded research. Open Data is also one of the themes within the Government's Growth Review.

Advances in technology are increasing the opportunities to reuse and combine public data sets to create new and innovative information services and products – both commercial and non-commercial. This includes reuse of data generated from publicly funded research. Whilst there are clear moral, social and economic arguments for making research data open to others, there are also legal, ethical and commercial constraints on the release of research data. Though some progress has been made towards addressing the issues raised by open data and data reuse, many big questions remain to be answered.

## 1.1 The public dialogue on open data

To address some of the questions around open data and data reuse, Research Councils UK, working with the Royal Society, JISC and the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (Sciencewise-ERC)<sup>3</sup>, co-hosted a public dialogue project to provide public insight and feedback on future data openness, data reuse and data management technologies. The focus of the dialogue was on the *use of data in research* (to include physical, biological, engineering, mathematical, health and medical, natural and social disciplines, and research in the arts and humanities). 'Data' included raw observational data, cleaned or processed data, meta-data, models, clinical trial data and government records.

The specific objectives of the public dialogue were:

- To work with major UK research funders to provide public insight and feedback on future data openness, data reuse and data management policy option
- To engage key policy stakeholders to clarify the range of issues and options in policy going forward, related to the conclusions of the 'Science as a Public Enterprise' (SAPE) Royal Society working group
- To build on previous studies and work alongside relevant working groups/task forces recently established by government, to help shape future research data policy within the UK's main funding institutions
- To explore wider ethical and moral issues related to open data and data reuse

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/statements/transparency/pm-letter.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://data.gov.uk/blog/new-public-sector-transparency-board-and-public-data-transparency-principles>

<sup>3</sup> The Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC) is the UK's national centre for public dialogue in policy making involving science and technology issues. See <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk>

- To engage business on some of the issues relevant to privately and joint funded research.

The dialogue built on previous work on related issues such as the Sciencewise-ERC Science and Trust project<sup>4</sup> and it worked alongside working groups such as the Royal Society working group on ‘Science as a Public Enterprise’<sup>5</sup> (SAPE). Developments in thinking about open data issues affect a wide range of cross policy agendas in the Research Councils and other funders and policy makers, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Primarily, the public dialogue was intended to influence government policy. In addition, it had the potential to influence the Royal Society SAPE working group process and final conclusions.

## Format of the public dialogue

A steering group was established to agree the scope of the public dialogue. This group was formed of representatives from: BIS Government Office for Science, HEFCE Joint Information Systems Councils (Digital Infrastructure), Academy of Medical Sciences, GlaxoSmithKline, the Wellcome Trust, Royal Society, Natural Environmental Research Council (Research Outputs Network), Research Councils UK and Sciencewise-ERC. It was chaired by Research Councils UK’s Head of Strategy.

The public dialogue consisted of two public workshops, held in Oldham and Swindon, followed by two reconvened public workshops a month later, in the same locations. Between the two sets of public workshops, a scoping stakeholder workshop was held to help develop materials for the reconvened public workshop.

The design of these workshops was in line with the Sciencewise-ERC requirements<sup>6</sup> that the projects they support: involve the general public and scientists; provide participants with information and views from a range of perspective, and access information from other sources, thus making them informed; and that they are deliberative - allowing time for participants to become informed in the area before being given sufficient time to formulate and discuss their views.

The public dialogue was delivered by TNS BMRB<sup>7</sup> between February and March 2012. The final report on the findings of the open data public dialogue can be found here:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/Pages/OpenData.aspx>

### Public workshops

Thirty-nine members of the public took part in the public workshops. Each public workshop was attended by members of the steering group and experts (explained in more detail below). The table below details the format of each of the first and reconvened workshops and the numbers of participants and stakeholders attending, in each location.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/science-trust-and-public-engagement-2/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/science-public-enterprise/>

<sup>6</sup> The Government’s Approach to Public Dialogue” available at: [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/assets/Uploads/TrackedDocuments/Guiding-Principles/Sciencewise-ERC-Guiding-Principles.pdf](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/assets/Uploads/TrackedDocuments/Guiding-Principles/Sciencewise-ERC-Guiding-Principles.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/>

**Table 1. Format of the workshop in each location**

Date/ time/ location	Workshop Format
7 <sup>th</sup> February, 6.30 – 9.30pm, Swindon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial public workshop</li> <li>• 18 participants</li> <li>• 2 facilitators</li> <li>• 3 experts/ steering group members observing</li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> February, 6.30 – 9.30pm, Oldham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial public workshop</li> <li>• 21 participants</li> <li>• 2 facilitators</li> <li>• No experts/ steering group members observing</li> </ul>
6 <sup>th</sup> March, 6.30 – 9.30pm, Swindon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconvened public workshop</li> <li>• 17 participants</li> <li>• 3 facilitators</li> <li>• 2 experts delivering presentations</li> <li>• 1 steering group member observing</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> March, 6.30 – 9.30pm, Oldham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconvened public workshop</li> <li>• 21 participants</li> <li>• 2 facilitators</li> <li>• 2 experts delivering presentations</li> </ul>

During the first workshop, members of the public discussed their views of openness in general and were asked to think about an area of science where having more information would have been helpful, with reference to issues such as the recent breast implant scandal<sup>8</sup>, MMR or smoking. A video diary of researchers/ scientists explaining what happens to the data they collect over the course of a research project was shown to the participants. Facilitators talked the participants through the different stages of the research process and what happens to the information collected in studies and participants gave their initial thoughts around principles to govern data. The participants were introduced to principles around open data, which were based on the principles from the SAPE study and what the participants had said earlier in the workshop, and they were asked to reflect on whether these were the right principles and how important they were. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to speak to their friends and family about open data before attending the reconvened workshop and to consider further when data openness may or may not be helpful, in relation to news or other items they may see.

In the second workshop, facilitators reviewed the issues discussed in the first workshop, what is meant by 'data' and examples of data. Participants were asked to feedback on the task they had been set after the last session and what they had discussed with friends and family. Two experts who were involved in private and publically funded research delivered presentations about their views on current and future practices around open data in their work. Participants were then asked about their views of these current open data policies,

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/15/pip-breast-implant-scandal-7000-more>

whether they should be changed and what they thought were the advantages and disadvantages of open data. This was followed by two actors role-playing two case studies which illustrated the different moral, social and economic arguments for making different types of data open, using as examples NHS data or data about climate change. Following this, participants had the opportunity to discuss the case studies and how these related to the principles of open data which had been discussed. The final section of the workshop was a discussion about who should define whether opening up data is in the public interest.

### Participants in the workshops

Participants in each workshop were recruited to reflect the profile of the local area and as such were a mix of ages, ethnicities, socio-economic groups, and genders. The tables below detail the samples that were achieved in the Oldham and Swindon public workshops. Only one participant who attended the first workshop in Swindon did not attend the reconvened workshop.

**Table 2. Achieved sample in Swindon**

			<b>Total</b>
Gender	Male	8	18
	Female	10	
Socioeconomic grade	ABC1	10	18
	CBDE	8	
Children	Yes	9	18
	No	9	
Ages	18-34	4	18
	35-54	6	
	55+	8	
Ethnicity	White	6	18
	BME	12	

**Table 3. Achieved sample in Oldham**

			<b>Total</b>
Gender	Male	11	21
	Female	10	
Socioeconomic grade	ABC1	10	21
	CBDE	11	
Children	Yes	9	21
	No	12	
Ages	18-34	7	21
	35-54	8	
	55+	6	
Ethnicity	White	15	21
	BME	6	

## Stakeholder workshop

The purpose of the stakeholder workshop was to explore findings from the first workshop and to work with stakeholders to develop the case studies and scenarios for the reconvened workshops.

Stakeholders from thirty-three organisations attended the stakeholder workshop. These stakeholders represented a range of research funders, journalists/press and researchers. The organisations comprised a mixture of larger business, policymakers (from central government and science organisations), NGOs, charities and interest groups and universities.

## 1.2 Evaluation

Dialogue projects funded by the Sciencewise-ERC are required to have an independent evaluation. OPM was commissioned by Research Councils UK (with support from Sciencewise-ERC) to carry out this evaluation, providing an independent and unbiased assessment of the public engagement processes and impacts of the project and to ascertain whether the project met its stated objectives.

The main objectives of this evaluation were:

- To gather and collate feedback from those involved and the project commissioning body (Research Councils UK), and to undertake observation and interviews as necessary
- To summarise the findings from the research and data collection to produce a short evaluation report and case study covering the purpose of the project, summarising the key activities, and assessing how well the objectives and success criteria were met, good practice, key impacts and achievements and lessons for the future, in accordance with the requirements for evaluating Sciencewise-ERC projects<sup>9</sup>
- The lessons for the future will include information on developing best practice so that this can be taken account of by the project's commissioning bodies when considering future dialogues, and to contribute to wider learning about public dialogue.

The evaluation was guided by a number of project success criteria:

- Number of public involved in the public dialogue process
- Amount of time members of the public have to debate and discuss issues
- Number and range of case study issues/ scenarios considered by the public
- Diversity of public recruited to the workshop
- Satisfaction of stakeholders with the process for preparing and agreeing the information materials for the dialogue
- Credibility of the dialogue process with policy makers, affecting the extent to which they trust and use the dialogue results
- Policy makers able to describe results of the dialogue, and potential impacts on policy development, in future years
- Clear policy activities into which the dialogue results can be fed.

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<sup>9</sup> *SWP07. Requirements on Evaluating Sciencewise-ERC Projects* available at: [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/project-guidance](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/project-guidance)

## Evaluation research

The methods for the evaluation, as commissioned by Research Councils UK, were:

- Observations of the first and second wave public workshops in February and early March. During these workshops a pre-prepared observation framework was used to record observations.
- Observations of the stakeholder workshop in late February. During this workshop, a pre-prepared observation framework was used to record observations.
- Paper based self completion evaluation questionnaires completed by members of the public at the end of the second wave public workshops. We received completed forms from 21 respondents in Oldham and from 17 respondents in Swindon.
- Paper based self completion evaluation questionnaires completed by stakeholders at the end of the stakeholder workshop. We received completed forms from 16 stakeholders.
- Two qualitative thirty minute telephone interviews with stakeholders who attended the stakeholder workshop from the Department of Health and the Welsh Government.
- Three qualitative thirty minute telephone interviews conducted with 3 members of the steering group for the open data public dialogue. Steering group members were from the Royal Society and Research Councils UK.

## Approach to public engagement

The public dialogue on open data is part funded by Sciencewise–ERC. This brings it within the guiding principles for public dialogue on science and technology-related issues outlined in ‘The Government’s Approach to Public Dialogue on Science and Technology’. This document defines public dialogue as “a process during which members of the public interact with scientists, stakeholders (for example, businesses and pressure groups) and policy makers to deliberate on issues likely to be important in future policies”. Some of this deliberation must be face to face: it must give all sides a chance to speak, question and be questioned by others and, it must take place far ahead enough of policy decisions to be able to feed into the eventual policy decisions. A key requisite of Sciencewise-ERC’s public dialogue is that it must have a ‘policy hook’ with a clear understanding of who will be listening to the outcomes.

## 2. The public dialogue on open data

In this chapter we describe what worked well and less well about the public dialogue on open data. This chapter draws on interviews with stakeholders, observations of the workshops and feedback from evaluation questionnaires.

### 2.1 What worked well?

#### Opportunity to debate and discuss the issues

Participants in both the public and stakeholder workshops were very positive about the group discussions in which they took part. Evaluation data shows that the public and stakeholders enjoyed the workshops and rated the opportunity to discuss issues as one of the best aspects of the workshops they attended. For stakeholder participants, part of enjoying the group discussions was the “cauldron of ideas” in the discussions and the opportunity to discuss issues around open data with representatives from a variety of other organisations. As one stakeholder told us:

*“The discussions were going in interesting directions and the people there were from a variety of places and we all know our little world and it is rare we can get together and see the other’s worlds” (Interview with stakeholder from the stakeholder workshop)*

For public participants, part of enjoying the discussions was an opportunity to discuss issues which were new to them and to hear the other participants’ responses to these issues – particularly when these differed from their own. Others’ views helped to stimulate their thinking on the topic of data openness and to provide them with additional information which helped them to develop their own views on this subject.

#### Learning about a new issue

Observations of the public workshop suggest that the topics of data openness, data reuse and data management policies for data arising from research were new to many of the participants. All the participants felt they had been informed about data openness and 34 of the participants (out of 38) agreed that they had learnt something they did not know before. Eight of the participants rated learning about a new topic as the best part of the workshop they attended. The quotes below, taken from the public workshop evaluation questionnaires, illustrate this:

*“(The best part of the workshop was) opening my mind to a topic I had not considered previously.”*

*“(The best part of the workshop was) learning about data openness and who decides what to fund what.”*

#### Engaging with the issues through the case studies, actors and expert witnesses

Interviews with stakeholders and observations of the public workshop suggest that participants found the concept of open data quite abstract and, at times, a difficult issue with which to engage. However, participants found the case studies and presentations by expert witnesses an effective way of communicating issues relating to data openness and data

reuse. Across the two reconvened workshops, nearly all the participants rated the case studies and presentations as helpful in bringing to life the issues being discussed and a third of participants rated either the case studies or the presentations as the best part of the workshop they attended.

*“The role play and presentations helped understanding and stimulated debate.”  
(Comment from public workshop evaluation questionnaire)*

Some participants felt that more case studies and real life examples would have improved the workshops and one participant felt there should have been more real life examples in the first workshop, to illustrate the issues being discussed:

*“(What would improve workshops like this?) More activities / presentations by people for example the witness and actors, particularly on the first meeting.” (Comment from public workshop evaluation questionnaire)*

Steering group members were similarly impressed with the use of case studies in the reconvened workshops and felt the case studies used were very good at illustrating the issues in the debate around data openness:

*“I think the second set of workshops were good at finding the route through the technical issues and the issues people are concerned with, aided by the case studies” (Interview with steering group member)*

Whilst some participants' felt more real life examples would have been helpful, stakeholders were concerned that the presentations by scientists would skew or lead the views of participants, given that they were new to the topic and could be easily influenced to the views of others. Observations of the workshop suggest that rather than being led by these presentations, participants were very keen to interact with the experts and to find out more about how these issues worked in order to develop their views about the issues being discussed. Interacting with scientists or policy makers to deliberate issues is a key part of public dialogue, according to the guiding principles for public dialogue on science and technology-related issues<sup>10</sup>.

## Overall structure of the public dialogue

Given the complexity of the issues being discussed, the format of the public dialogue, whereby participants met in an initial workshop and were reconvened a month later, seemed to work well. Stakeholders felt that the reconvened approach to the public dialogue helped people unfamiliar with these debates to take on board new and complex information. It provided them with an opportunity to “mull this information over” and digest it, before they were reconvened and could develop their views on this information further:

*“Think the format worked well, the fact that the public got a chance to go away and think about it and then come back and discuss it further. It was a difficult topic and not something the public had thought about before and the format gave them the opportunity to mull it over” (Interview with steering group member)*

Stakeholders felt this reconvened approach, which allowed time for deliberation, was particularly important for the topic of open data. The immediate spontaneous response of the

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<sup>10</sup> outlined in Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (2008). *The Government's approach to public dialogue on science and technology*. <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/publications/>

public to their personal data being shared can be negative: providing sufficient time for dialogue and accessible information to support this is particularly important to ensure that the issues are understood and considered.

*“It is risky to engage in anything other than a deliberative sense because the topline results might be negative... There is a lot of emotive examples out there that people latch onto... Worrying that this deliberative kind of approach isn’t done more.” (Interview with stakeholder from the stakeholder workshop)*

## Stakeholder’s contributions to preparing materials for the dialogue

Stakeholders were positive about the process of preparing materials for the public dialogue. They felt that attending the workshop allowed them to contribute their views and ideas to the case study scenarios; they felt that their views were listened to and taken into account. Stakeholders felt well placed to comment on the materials due to their practical experience of when data might be made open:

*“The value of us commenting on them was that we know what is going on so we could suggest some actual examples for the case studies.” (Interview with stakeholder from the stakeholder workshop)*

Amongst the factors which stakeholders found helpful in being able to contribute to the materials were: the facilitation and chairing of the event, which was described as “excellent” by a couple of stakeholders; the other participants, and presentations of the findings from the initial public workshops.

*“Thought it was very good within time presentation, facilitation & moderation really excellent.” (Comment in evaluation questionnaire from stakeholder workshop)*

## Diversity of the public

Tables 2 and 3 in section 1 of this report display the achieved sample for the public workshops in Oldham and Swindon. These tables show that a diverse range of members of the public attended the public workshops, representing a range of ages, ethnicities, socio-economic grades, genders and adults with and without children. A couple of stakeholders were of the view that it was important for people from a range of backgrounds to be represented in the dialogue, as previous research projects had indicated that people from more deprived backgrounds would be less likely to want data to be open. The information in the tables above indicates that people from different socio-economic backgrounds were represented at the workshops.

## 2.2 What could have been improved?

### Timing

Participants felt that lack of time was an issue in both the public and stakeholder workshops.

### Stakeholder workshop

Amongst those who attended the stakeholder workshop, over half of the participants rated the worst aspect of the event as “feeling rushed” or “lack of time”. Five of the participants in the evaluation questionnaires and those interviewed wanted the event to be longer in order

to explore the case studies in more detail and also to hear more about the findings from the initial workshop. For a couple of stakeholders, the lack of time for discussions led to a feeling of a lack of clarity about what they were trying to achieve in the short time available:

*“It felt rushed and what exactly we were trying to agree versus what other stakeholder’s experiences of data and when it could be made open or re-used, could have been clearer.” (Comment from stakeholder workshop evaluation questionnaire)*

## Public workshops

Observations and evaluation questionnaires from the public workshops suggest that the pace was too fast for some of the participants. Nine out of thirty eight of the participants rated being asked to cover a lot in a short space of time as the worst thing about the workshop. This led a couple of the participants to feel as though they were being “pushed along” according to the facilitators’ agenda, without ample time to explore and learn about the issues at their own pace. From observations of the workshop, it seems that participants were very keen to probe the expert witnesses after they delivered their presentations but there was not enough time in the agenda to do this:

*“(The worst thing about the workshop?) The fact that the facilitators had a programme and they tended to not meet their objectives. A more paced less ‘pushy’ emphasis would have improved the event.” (Comment from public workshop evaluation questionnaire)*

For other participants, the length of the workshop and the time of day it was held was an issue – participants felt that a three hour workshop in the evening was too long, particularly for those who had come from a full day at work. Participants’ suggestions for improving issues around the timing of the workshops included: having a more focused discussion on fewer issues; finishing the event earlier or starting later, or having more time to discuss the issues.

## Participants understanding of the issues

For some of the public participants “often feeling confused” and “not understanding the topic” were the worst aspects of the workshops. Observations and interviews with stakeholders suggest that participants struggled to understand the issues and were not able to discuss them in detail. In addition, some stakeholders were of the view that overall, participants didn’t think these issues were relevant to them, apart from when the data being discussed had personal relevance to them, for example health data or personal data being shared online:

*“Most public participants didn’t really understand the issues, and even when they did understand the issues, they felt they weren’t relevant to them and the message was that they were happy to leave it up to us. For most people this is an esoteric issue...but when it concerns data from individuals people feel they have a stake in it.” (Interview with steering group member)*

There was a range of views amongst stakeholders as to what would have encouraged participants to have greater understanding of and engagement with the issues. As indicated in the quote above, whilst some felt that this was an inherently challenging and esoteric topic for people not involved in research, others, who had not attended the workshops, felt that these findings were surprising and could indicate that participants hadn’t been adequately briefed in order to respond to the issues around data openness.

## Representing the range of views on the topic of data openness

Some of the stakeholders we spoke to were unsure whether the participants who attended the public workshops represented a wide range of views about and level of interest in the topic of data openness. According to stakeholders, on the topic of data openness, there is a small minority of people with very strong views on the subject. The stakeholders we spoke to had different views about whether these people should be included in the public dialogue on data openness and a couple felt that those with strong views did need to be involved, in order to capture the range of views and levels of interest in the topic:

*“In these debates, there will be a majority of people are very happy with what is being proposed and a strong minority who don’t like this; we need to be careful as they are nosier than others. It is a bigger debate” (Interview with stakeholder who attended the stakeholder workshop)*

In addition, one of the stakeholders observed that some of the participants seemed to know each other, and this was concerning as they were more likely to express similar views.

### 3. Impacts of the public dialogue

The evaluation collected information on the impact of the public dialogue on policy and on stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Impact on policy and on stakeholders

The stakeholders we spoke to during the evaluation felt it was too early to assess the policy impacts of the public dialogue on open data, because they were waiting for the report on the open data public dialogue to be published. Stakeholders did identify a number of ways in which the public dialogue could impact policy.

- The report will be used by Research Councils UK to inform their data policies which are being revised later this year. In particular the work has had a direct influence on the work of the Research Councils' Research Outputs Network which co-ordinates cross council policy on access and use of research outputs and data (including across the HEFCs).
- The summary findings were also presented in March 2012 to the Administrative Data Taskforce, chaired by Sir Alan Langlands to feed into the Taskforce report to ministers in December 2012 on the wider use of administrative data for research and policy purposes<sup>11</sup>.
- The open data public dialogue report will not be published in time to influence the final conclusions of the 'Science as a Public Enterprise' Royal Society working group study. However, findings from the open data public dialogue are referenced in the final report of the SAPE study and will be used in the follow up which is planned after the publication of the Royal Society study. This follow up will involve a series of international meetings to discuss how open data can become a major international issue.
- Stakeholders felt that the report produced from the public dialogue could be used as part of an evidence base to be used when making decisions about data policies. One stakeholder from the Welsh Government was in the process of gathering evidence to speak to a special advisor and felt this report could be used to support this conversation:
 

*"The bottom line is ministers are real people and have the same concerns as a member of the public. When it comes to data, they don't know much about it and to be able to reassure them that real people are reassured is invaluable. Anything which contributes to ministers and confidence and their certainty about this is incredibly important"* (Interview with stakeholder who attended the stakeholder workshop)
- Stakeholders felt that the impact of the public dialogue would in part depend upon an organisation's view towards public dialogue and also how engaging and well written the report was:
 

*"If it is short and snappy and clear, the ministers will take it on board and it will become part of the batch of stuff I will draw on when I am having these kinds of conversations."* (Interview with stakeholder who attended the stakeholder workshop)

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/collaboration/collaborative-initiatives/Administrative-Data-Taskforce.aspx>

*“I think the results will be taken seriously but it depends on the organisation and how it feels about public dialogue, as to whether this will affect policy” (interview with steering group member)*

## 4. Conclusions and lessons for the future

This section sets out our conclusions and lessons for the future, based on findings from this evaluation. We consider the extent to which the public dialogue met its objectives by assessing evidence from the evaluation against the public dialogue objectives and success criteria.

### 4.1 What worked well and less well

This public dialogue was held to address some of the questions around data openness and data reuse. Research Councils UK, the Royal Society, JISC and Sciencewise-ERC co-hosted the dialogue to provide public insight and feedback on future data openness, data reuse and data management. Whilst participants found the issues of data openness abstract and at time difficult to engage with, they enjoyed learning about a new issue and their discussions with other participants and experts, suggesting an appetite to learn about these issues. Participants found the expert presentations and the case studies particularly helpful in bringing to life the issues being discussed in the workshop and stakeholders also agreed that these case studies were effective at communicating the range of issues in the debate about data openness. Amongst stakeholders there was a range of views about the extent to which it was possible for members of the public to understand these complex issues and feel they were of relevance to them. It is possible that giving participants more time to discuss issues with the experts and using more real life case studies could have aided the participants understanding of the issues being discussed. Overall, stakeholders felt the public dialogue process was effective at tackling a difficult and esoteric issue, they felt the results were credible and would be used to inform policy decisions around data openness.

### 4.2 Assessment of objectives and success criteria

Below we assess the extent to which the public dialogue met its objectives. This assessment suggests that these objectives have largely been met.

#### Did the dialogue meet its objectives?

1. To work with major UK research funders to provide public insight and feedback on future data openness, data reuse and data management policy option

In the public dialogue, the research funders Research Councils UK, the Royal Society, JISC and Sciencewise-ERC worked together in a steering group to oversee the public dialogue which aimed to provide public insight and gather the public's feedback on future data openness, data reuse and data management policy options. There is perhaps a question about the extent to which some of the public participants in this project could be described as having gained 'insight' from the dialogue, however. As we have noted earlier, some participants felt confused about the issues being discussed.

2. To engage key policy stakeholders to clarify the range of issues and options in policy going forward, related to the SAPE conclusions

Key stakeholders were engaged through the steering group (which was broad-based and highly engaged throughout the process) and through the stakeholder workshop, where

stakeholders discussed the case studies and materials for the reconvened public workshops. Those who attended the stakeholder workshop and steering group members felt that the stakeholder workshop represented a range of organisations and hence this element of objective two was met. However, timing of the SAPE study (the final report of which was published in June 2012) meant that the final conclusions of SAPE could not be assessed by the public, though the evolving findings of the SAPE group were fed into the design of the process. Overall, this objective has been partly met.

It is important to note, as mentioned in section 1 of the report, the public dialogue was primarily intended to influence government policy, not the SAPE conclusions, which are not directly related to policy.

3. To build on previous studies and work alongside relevant working groups/task forces recently established by government, to help shape future research data policy within the UK's main funding institutions

The steering group for the public dialogue was composed of representatives who provided links to a number of relevant working groups and talks forces. For example, the steering group included representatives from: the working group for the Royal Society SAPE study, from the RCUK Research Outputs Network and from BIS's Government Office for Science. The draft recommendations from the SAPE study were shared with TNS BMRB to refer to when developing materials for their public dialogue, the conclusions from the open data public dialogue were referred to in the SAPE report and will be used in the follow up to the publication of the report. The results of the public dialogue will feed into the RCUK Research Outputs Network which is revising the data policies of the Research Councils in summer 2012. The results of the dialogue have also influenced BIS's Government Office for Science, and were presented to the Langlands Administrative Data Taskforce to feed into its report to government in December 2012. This objective was met.

4. To explore wider ethical and moral issues related to open data and data reuse

Data from evaluation questionnaires indicates that the majority of public participants (24 out of 38) felt that they had been able to explore the wider ethical and moral issues related to open data and data reuse. A smaller number of participants expressed some uncertainty about this: ten participants 'neither agreed nor disagreed' that these issues had been explored and two disagreed. Whilst the majority of participants did feel they had explored the wider ethical and moral issues related to open data and data reuse, observations of the workshops and interviews with stakeholders, suggest that some of the participants' confusion over the issues being addressed impacted on their ability to explore these issues throughout the workshops.

5. To engage business on some of the issues relevant to privately and joint funded research

This objective was met through the representation of Glaxo SmithKline on the steering group for the project and also by the use of the pharmaceutical industry as a case study during the workshop, which meant that business was engaged on the issues related to privately and jointly funded research. Businesses were also engaged on some of these issues by attendance at the stakeholder workshop. The final objective, to engage business on some of the issues relevant to privately and joint funded research, has been met in the current dialogue.

## Did the project meet its success criteria?

The section below assesses the extent to which the project met its success criteria. The public dialogue largely met its success criteria.

### 1. Number of public involved in the public dialogue process

Thirty eight members of the public took part in the public dialogue process, which, as stakeholders observed, is a large number of people to be involved in qualitative research and was sufficient for this dialogue.

### 2. Amount of time members of the public have to debate and discuss issues

Participants each had two workshops of nearly three hours to debate and discuss the issues, and they also had a period of approximately a month to digest the information from the initial workshop. Given the complexity of the issues being discussed, as well as the fact that this was a new topic for many of the participants, some participants did feel they could have done with longer to discuss the issues. Extending the workshops would have helped participants to feel less rushed and hence more able to reflect and deliberate on the issues raised.

### 3. Number and range of case study issues/ scenarios considered by the public

Four case studies were used in the two reconvened workshops. Each covered a different topic, providing examples of open data use in different sectors and raising different ethical and social questions. The case studies covered:

- A case study about a university which has collected data on teenage smoking habits. In this case study the university is asked by a tobacco company to make this data open
- A case study about a university which has been researching tree ring data which can be used to examine changes in climate. The university is asked by a journalist, who is sceptical about climate change, to make this data open
- A case study where a university and aeroplane manufacturer have been working together on a research project, (which is majority funded by public money), to test the possible commercial uses for a new type of engineering material. Another university, not involved in the project, wants to see the data collected on the engineering material
- A case study about NHS data. A university professor wants patient data to be available for public and private health sector researchers and a member of a group campaigning for patient privacy has concerns about the sharing of medical records

The range of case studies used was diverse and represented the different ways in which data might be shared and why. Evaluation data suggests that participants found the range of case studies interesting. Their value in helping participants to understand the issues is perhaps underscored by participants' comments that more case studies would have been helpful in bringing the issues to life.

### 4. Diversity of public recruited to the workshop

Tables 2 and 3, showing the achieved samples in the Swindon and Oldham public workshops, indicate that this success criteria has been met. Members of the public who attended the workshops represented a range of ages, socio-economic grades, ethnicities, genders and adults with and without children. Whilst a small number of stakeholders felt that members of the public with very strong views could have been included in the public dialogue, there wasn't a consensus about this amongst the stakeholders we spoke to.

#### 5. Satisfaction of stakeholders with the process for preparing and agreeing the information materials for the dialogue

Overall, stakeholders who took part in the stakeholder workshop felt satisfied with the process of preparing and agreeing the information and materials for the dialogue and felt they were able to contribute their ideas. The main concern raised was the time available to discuss the case studies: these were seen as both enjoyable and useful and some stakeholders felt that more time for this would have been useful.

#### 6. Credibility of the dialogue process with policy makers, affecting the extent to which they trust and use the dialogue results

Whilst it is too early to assess the policy impacts of the project, stakeholders who were involved in policy felt that the process of the dialogue was credible. The reasons cited for this were:

- the overall format of the dialogue, which included a period for participants to reflect on the issues discussed in the workshop
- the dialogue was well run
- a large number of people were involved in the public dialogue workshops

A couple of stakeholders felt that the extent to which the process was seen as credible would depend less on the process itself and instead reflect an organisation's or policy maker's view about public dialogue overall as a valid and credible means of exploring these issues.

#### 7. Policy makers able to describe results of the dialogue, and potential impacts on policy development, in future years

It is too early to assess whether this success criteria will be met.

#### 8. Clear policy activities into which the dialogue results can be fed

The findings from the open data public dialogue will be used to inform by Research Councils UK data management policies which are due to be revised. The policy conclusions have been fed into the 'Science as a Public Enterprise' Royal Society working group study and will be used in follow up work to the publication of the Royal Society report.

## 4.3 Lessons for the future

Based on the evaluation findings presented above, we have identified a number of lessons for the future:

- Participants found presentations and case studies to be very helpful in aiding their understanding of the topic of data openness. Having more real life examples to ground the discussions in the public dialogue could have aided the participants understanding of and engagement with the issues.
- An important element of public dialogue is giving participants enough time and information to be able to develop their own views. Some participants in the open data public dialogue felt the process was rushed and they were pushed through the agenda in order to meet the objectives of the dialogue. Giving participants more time to explore complex issues at their own pace and more time to interact with the experts, could have aided participants understanding of the issues.
- Some stakeholders were surprised that the public felt the issue of data openness was not relevant to them unless it related to personal or health data. Greater framing of the issues so participants could make links as to how these issues related to their lives could have

enabled greater engagement with the issues, and for participants to feel these issues were of relevance to them.

- Some stakeholders felt there could have been greater links between this open data public dialogue and the 'Science as a Public Enterprise' Royal Society working group study. The timelines of the two projects meant that the conclusions of the open data public dialogue were not able to shape the conclusions of the Royal Society study.