

# Government publishes new strategy to kickstart data revolution across the UK

- Plans will see 500 data analysts across public sector trained in data science by 2021
- Downing Street to offer up to ten fellowships each year to attract world-class tech talent to the heart of government
- New £2.6m project to address barriers to data sharing and support innovation in the detection of online harms
- Digital Secretary launches consultation to help shape final strategy

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden today launched a National Data Strategy and set out the action the government will take to support the use of data in the UK.

The new strategy will put data at the heart of the country's recovery from the pandemic so companies and organisations can use it to drive digital transformation, innovate and boost growth across the economy.

The strategy, which lays out five priority 'missions' the government must take to capitalise on the opportunities data offers, is a central part of the government's wider ambition for a thriving, fast-growing digital sector in the UK.

It includes:

- Plans for 500 analysts to be trained up in data and data science across the public sector by 2021.
- Plans for a new Government Chief Data Officer to lead a whole-government approach to transforming government's use of data to drive efficiency and improve public services.
- Plans to introduce primary legislation to boost participation in Smart Data initiatives, which can give people the power to use their own data to find better tariffs in areas such as telecoms, energy and pensions.
- A new £2.6m project to address current barriers to data sharing and support innovation to detect online harms.

Today the Government is also announcing up to ten new Innovation Fellowships to support the digital transformation across government. Successful applicants will have the opportunity to work closely with the No. 10 Data Science team, Government Digital Service networks and a peer-group of

exceptional talent.

The UK is already a leading digital nation. Data-enabled UK service exports were estimated to be £243 billion in 2019, or 75 per cent of total service exports. And globally, the UK now sits behind only the US and China in terms of venture capital investment into the technology sector.

A 2019 McKinsey report also found that, internationally, a larger proportion of fast-growing companies use data-driven practices compared to slower-growing companies.

The strategy commits the government to develop a clear policy framework to determine what interventions are needed to unlock the value of data across the economy and help propel in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Ahead of his speech at London Tech Week's Global Leaders Innovation Summit, Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our response to coronavirus has shown just how much we can achieve when we can share high-quality data quickly, efficiently and ethically. I don't intend to let that lesson go to waste.

Our new National Data Strategy will maintain the high watermark of data use set during the pandemic – freeing up businesses, government and organisations to innovate, experiment and drive a new era of growth.

I am absolutely clear that data and data use are opportunities to be embraced, rather than a threat to be guarded against.

It aims to make sure British businesses are in a position to make the most of the digital revolution over the years and decades to come, help us use data to improve people's lives, and position the UK as a global champion of data use.

Health and local authorities are using data to monitor the spread of coronavirus and the NHS is now able to predict where the system is likely to face strain first, be that on ventilators, beds or staff sickness and make fast interventions to save lives.

During the lockdown data kept supermarket shelves stocked, and services such as Ocado could send groceries to the doorsteps of those most vulnerable to the pandemic – allowing them to shield in safety. It also powers robots, pickers and packers meaning shopping arrives in one piece.

The government and businesses have come together to capitalise on data before. Open Banking handed the control of personal data back to customers who were able to share their data with third parties like start-ups, and shop around for a better deal.

Now the new strategy will look at how the country can leverage existing UK strengths to boost use of data in business, government and civil society.

It proposes an overhaul in the use of data across the public sector and the government will launch a programme of work to transform the way data is managed, used and shared internally and with wider public sectors organisations, to create an ethical, joined up and interoperable data infrastructure.

Up to ten new Innovation Fellowships, inspired by the US Presidential Innovation Fellowships, which attracted the Lead Developer on Google Maps, former CEO of Symantec and Co-Founder of the Earth Genome Project, will be created to support the digital transformation across government.

Those fellows will sit within No 10, the Government Digital Service and a number of departments, and use their skills to contribute to the kind of fulfilling challenging projects that only the public sector can offer – ones that have a huge impact on society as a whole.

In addition, 500 analysts will be trained up in data and data science across the public sector by 2021 through the Data Science Campus at the ONS, the Government Analysis Function, and the Government Digital Service to meet the evolving needs of government.

A new Government Chief Data Officer will oversee the Government Digital Service and lead the Digital, Data and Technology function. They will be responsible for shaping and delivering the government's innovation and transformation strategies to improve capability and ensure the government can better leverage data and emerging technologies to design and deliver citizen-centric services that enhance our reputation as the world's most digitally-advanced government.

This comes after plans were announced last month for a new Chief Digital Officer.

To help arm the next generation with high quality data skills, the Government will explore new ways to teach undergraduate students data skills that complement the existing current maths and computing curriculums, as well as developing T-Levels which include qualifications on digital skills.

Smart Data initiatives allow consumers and small and medium sized businesses to simply and securely share data with third parties that help them use that data. Plans for primary legislation will be brought forward to give people the power to use their own data to find better tariffs in areas such as telecoms, energy and pensions, and open the doors to disruptors in every part of the marketplace.

Plans to test the possibilities of sharing data between the public and private spheres include a new £2.6m project to model how improved systems for classification and sharing of data could support a competitive commercial market in tools able to detect online harms such as cyberbullying, harassment or suicide ideation. Through this programme, the government will review and

upgrade the data standards and systems that underpin the monitoring and reporting of online harms such as child sexual abuse, hate speech and self harm and suicide ideation.

The strategy aims to take advantage of being an independent, sovereign nation to maximise those strengths domestically, and position ourselves internationally to influence the global approach to data sharing and use, including committing to the creation of an independent international data transfers capability.

Dr Jeni Tennison, Vice President at the Open Data Institute said:

People and organisations of all kinds are facing big challenges over the next few years. Data can help us all to navigate them, increasing our understanding of our changing world and informing the decisions we make. Data can also cause harm, for example through over-collection and inappropriate use. At the ODI, we want data to work for everyone, which means ensuring it both gets to the people who need it, and that it is collected, used and shared in trustworthy ways.

This National Data Strategy consultation is an important opportunity for us all to explore and influence how data should be used to support the UK's economy, environment and communities, and we look forward to the debate.

Sue Daley Associate Director, Technology and Innovation techUK said:

Unlocking the full power of data has never been more important to our economy and society. A national data vision and strategy for realising the full economic and social value of data is vital to driving social good, innovation, competition, economic growth, productivity and job creation.

The consultation on the National Data Strategy announced today is key to finding the right way forward for industry and citizens and techUK stands ready to help turn the strategy into a reality. Now is the time to get to work to build and realise the UK's data-driven future.

Dan Sutch, Director of the Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technologies (CAST) said:

Good quality data is critical to ensure we have the best information and insight to address significant social challenges in effective ways. We welcome this consultation and the focus on creating a national data strategy, and we will work with Government, funders and charities across the UK to explore how we

can make the most of data to strengthen civil society.

Diane Coyle, Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge said:

Data has become increasingly important to the economy and society more broadly. Our work [link] has shown the potential for the effective use of data to bring widespread benefits; but to achieve these, as well as minimise potential harms, the development of a national strategy providing the framework for its collection and use is vital.

Darren Hardman, General Manager Amazon Web Services (UK and Ireland) said:

Making more effective use of data and cloud computing is key to the UK's long-term economic growth and the continual improvement of our public services. We welcome the launch of this consultation on the new National Data Strategy, which will be instrumental in ensuring the UK remains one of the world's leading digital nations.

To help shape the final National Data Strategy document, the government has launched a consultation to help shape the core principles of the strategy, our ambitions for the use of data across the economy and policy proposals.

Published alongside the National Data Strategy, the [Government Office for Science's The Future of Citizen Data Systems report](#) examines different approaches to the governance, control and use of citizen data across the world. Considering the evidence that variations in regional data systems both reflect and determine developments in the economy, security and society, it explores factors that might drive future changes. The report provides an evidence base to support the National Data Strategy.

Sir Patrick Vallance, Government Chief Scientific Adviser said:

Our Foresight report on The Future of Citizen Data Systems highlights the importance of having a clear vision for what we want to achieve with citizen data, and building understanding and confidence among citizens in how we will achieve it. The National Data Strategy consultation is an important step in defining and realising this vision for the UK.

For media queries contact: 0207 211 2210.

## **National Data Strategy**

The National Data Strategy asks fundamental questions about what data should and should not be made available. It sets out how to maintain a regulatory

regime that is not too burdensome for smaller business and supports responsible innovation.

It will do so through five priority missions:

- Unlocking the value of data across the economy
- Securing a pro-growth and trusted data regime
- Transforming government's use of data to drive efficiency and improve public services
- Ensuring the security and resilience of the infrastructure on which data relies
- Championing the international flow of data

## **Online Harms Data Infrastructure project**

The Online Harms Data Infrastructure project is a new £2.6m pilot project, funded through the HM Treasury Shared Outcomes Fund, to explore how improved systems for data sharing and data interoperability could support innovation and competition in the detection of online harms. This project will analyse the current data landscape and the economic and social benefits of opening up online harms data, and then test a number of potential practical solutions. It forms part of the wider programme of work led by DCMS and Home Office to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online, and the best place to grow and start a digital business.

## **Innovation Fellowships**

The government will open applications to new No.10 and Government Digital Service Innovation Fellows in October. Prospective fellows will bring their unique skills to make a telling contribution to challenging projects that have significant impact for society. There will be ten fellowships available each year, with the first cohort starting in April '21. Fellowships will be awarded for 12 – 24months, with top talent being offered the opportunity to take on senior digital and technology roles in Government.

## **References**

DCMS analysis using the UNCTAD definition of digitally deliverable services. Services that are principally or largely enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT) are defined as digitally deliverable services, which are used within the data-enabled estimations.

UK Tech for a Changing World, TechNation (2020)

UK businesses that receive personal data, such as names, addresses or payroll details, from organisations in the EU are being encouraged to prepare for new rules around data protection. Check GOV.UK/Transition for further guidance.