

National Data Strategy Forum Launched to help UK become “the world’s number one data destination”

- New Forum launched to help deliver UK’s National Data Strategy and make sure country harnesses the huge power of data
- Data will play key role in levelling up opportunities and prosperity in UK regions by driving innovation and growth
- Firms backed to seize data opportunities, as new guidance on data sharing enacted

A National Data Strategy Forum to help the country seize the opportunities of data and cement the UK’s place as “the world’s number one data destination” has been announced by the government today.

Minister for Media and Data John Whittingdale and techUK director Sue Daley will chair the forum which will bring together key voices from industry, privacy groups and academia to help implement the UK’s National Data Strategy.

The National Data Strategy is an ambitious, pro-growth strategy that is driving the UK forward in building a world-leading data economy that works for everyone, while ensuring public trust in data use.

The move is announced as the government publishes its [response to a consultation on the strategy](#). The strategy lays out five priority ‘missions’ to be taken to capitalise on the opportunities data offers:

- 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

Speaking ahead of a techUK event to launch the new forum, Media and Data Minister John Whittingdale said:

Through the pandemic we have learned how to process data for the public good quicker, more efficiently and more responsibly. Now we need to capitalise on those valuable lessons.

Today we are launching a new forum to support delivery of our National Data Strategy and help us become the world’s number one data destination – boosting growth and creating jobs while maintaining high standards of data protection and governance.

The government has committed to overhauling the way data is used in public services to improve life for people across the UK and points to the nation's fight against COVID-19 as a prime example, when data was used quickly, efficiently and responsibly to model, predict and ultimately control the spread of the virus.

Climate data from the Met Office helped researchers around the world determine the link between seasonality and the transmission of the virus, while data sharing between healthcare trusts has helped develop faster treatment methods.

Now the government is taking the next steps to look at how the country can leverage existing UK strengths to boost use of data in business, government and civil society.

Work to deliver the strategy is already underway. A £2.6m data project to help in the detection of online harms has been launched and last month the Office for National Statistics' Data Science Campus said it had already trained almost [700 public sector analysts](#) to use cutting-edge data tools and techniques – smashing the target set in September.

Respondents to the National Data Strategy consultation confirmed the need for action to make sure the UK realises the benefits from better data use and overwhelmingly agreed the National Data Strategy provides an appropriate framework.

Many respondents recognised a need to embrace data as an opportunity to drive productivity and innovation across the economy rather than as a threat to be managed, given risks such as cyber attacks or data breaches.

A new Central Digital and Data Office has now been created to drive forward digital, data and technology transformation across government.

The government is also today laying in Parliament a new data sharing code to make it clearer and easier for firms to share data. The [code, developed by the Information Commissioner's Office's \(ICO\)](#), provides practical advice to organisations on how to carry out responsible data sharing.

The ICO has launched a [data sharing information hub](#) with guidance and practical tools to help businesses share data fairly, lawfully and transparently, while protecting people's personal information.

In February the government launched the recruitment for a new Information Commissioner who will be empowered to make sure people can use data to achieve economic and social goals, as well as maintaining their focus on privacy.

It is also leading change on the global stage. As part of the UK's G7 presidency, the government brought together the world's leading democracies last month to agree an ambitious vision to put technology at the heart of global efforts to build back better from the pandemic.

Building on the momentum from this, the UK will also host the Future Tech

Forum this September. The Forum will convene like-minded democratic partners to discuss the role of technology and data in supporting open societies and tackling global challenges.

Elizabeth Denham, UK Information Commissioner, said:

I welcome the publication of the Government's response to the National Data Strategy (NDS) consultation. It confirms the need for the UK to maintain high data protection standards, ensuring our regulatory regime remains able to respond to the rapidly evolving technological and societal landscape.

I also welcome the laying of the ICO's Data Sharing Code in Parliament today. Together with the NDS, the code gives individuals and organisations confidence in using data to fuel economic growth, drive innovation and deliver efficient public services, while ensuring people's information is protected.

Data is one of modern society's greatest assets, and creating a framework of public trust and transparency to citizens will be crucial to harnessing its power in the coming decade. Today's announcements are significant milestones on that journey.

Sue Daley, Director for Technology and Innovation at techUK, said:

Today's announcements show how determined the Government is to make the UK a global destination for data innovation".

techUK is excited to play our part in this as a co-chair of the National Data Strategy Forum. The Forum will be central to bringing together the industry, academia and civil society to deliver a data strategy that supports innovation and is built on trust, helping unleash the potential of data driven technologies across the UK.

Cabinet Office Minister Julia Lopez said:

The Central Digital and Data Office is supporting the ambitions of the National Data Strategy by transforming government's use of data to drive efficiency and improve public services. Our focus on improving data standards, ethics and quality across government will lead to more personalised public services that save taxpayer money.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Read the full [UK Government response to the National Data Strategy](#)

[consultation](#).

- The government's new £2.6m Online Safety Data project is modelling 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 new ICO code sets out best practice for firms when considering sharing data such as: Assessing the risks using a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA); Following good practice to have a data sharing agreement in place; Following the key principles in data protection legislation; Being aware that the accountability principle means that you are responsible for your compliance, and you must be able to demonstrate that compliance; Sharing personal data fairly and transparently; Identifying at least one lawful basis for sharing data before you start any sharing; Processing personal data securely, with appropriate organisational and technical measures in place.