HMRC performance update: April to June 2021

Summary

- As the impact of COVID-19 continues to be felt by our customers, we remain focused on keeping the tax system running, while supporting the economy and protecting livelihoods
- We have seen considerable improvements in our customer service levels in the first quarter of 2021 to 2022:
  - the percentage of calls answered has risen consistently and by the end of June was at the highest level for more than a year, with average call wait times reducing more than half by June when compared to April
  - overall customer satisfaction remains strong at 83%
- We know there is further to go, and we may see continued fluctuation in service levels during a period of continuing uncertainty
- The improvement has been driven by our ability to rebalance how we deploy our staff, as the economy gradually emerges from the pandemic, and following recent reforms to staff contracts, which help improve the efficiency and flexibility of our operations
- The amount of outstanding tax debt has continued to reduce as we have supported customers to pay where they can, including through affordable instalment plans

During 2020 to 2021, HMRC stepped up to respond to urgent government priorities during unprecedented circumstances. It meant prioritising our resources to ensure that our core services kept running during the pandemic, while at the same time delivering vital COVID-19 support to millions of customers – including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

In the first three months of the new financial year, our customer service performance has made good progress across most key measures. As the UK slowly emerges from the pandemic, we are also working towards a return over time to more normal levels of compliance activity, while recognising the very real needs and challenges that businesses and individuals still face.

We are contacting customers who have fallen behind with their tax during this difficult time. At all times, we will take an understanding and supportive approach to dealing with those who have tax debts or are concerned about their ability to pay their tax.

Customer experience

Throughout 2020 to 2021, we were proud to keep the tax system running while delivering new COVID-19 support schemes and supporting customers who were impacted by the pandemic. During this time, we saw record high average customer satisfaction with our digital services of 85.2%. We also introduced a range of new digital services, like digital stamps to avoid paper handling and a virtual assistant to handle routine Self Assessment and tax credits queries, and we increased our webchat capability, handling more than 3 million chats.

We took the conscious choice to divert 5,000 skilled customer service advisers to providing COVID-19 support because that is what individuals and small businesses needed from us most urgently. Our COVID-19 helpline handled 2.5 million calls during 2020 to 2021, with a wait time of just 1 minute and 16 seconds by the end of quarter 4.

At the same time, we expanded the capacity of our customs and international trade helpline as the UK left the EU, allowing us to answer calls with an average answering time of less than 5 seconds by the end of March 2021.

But these necessary measures had an impact on waiting times across some of our other helplines, and we’re sorry about the inconvenience this caused to people at busy times.

In the first quarter of the new financial year, we have seen progress and improvement across most of our key customer experience measures. We have also extended the range of measures we use in order to reflect a fuller picture of the experience of our customers across our contact channels.

Overall customer satisfaction — which has now been expanded to cover phones as well as webchat and digital services — remains strong at 83%, around the same level it was in March. Meanwhile, the percentage of calls answered has risen consistently and by the end of June was at the highest level for more than a year at 74% — with webchats at 92%. Across the whole quarter, average call waiting times were 13:38 — but our monthly figures show that wait times reduced by more than half from 19:25 minutes in April to 08:45 minutes by the end of June.

There is further to go — and we may see further fluctuation during a period of continuing uncertainty — but the progress we have seen is being driven by our increasing ability to rebalance our resources, as we gradually emerge from the pandemic. We are also introducing new reforms to our working contracts which were agreed with overwhelming backing from our trade union members in February this year and which are designed to improve the efficiency and flexibility of our operations over the long term.

Turnaround on customer correspondence remains lower than we would like, with 35.5% of customer correspondence turned around within 15 working days from April to June. This has been largely due to the complexity of dealing with extra post items related to repayments and other COVID-19 related issues (10% higher than anticipated during quarter 1 overall) and in particular a large increase in P87 claims for working from home expenses. We are focused on addressing this challenge by targeting resources where they are most needed and introducing more automated processing of certain types of correspondence.

Collecting revenue and managing tax compliance

Our approach to collecting revenue is to do all we can to enable our customers to meet their obligations from the outset, then support customers who need additional help and work with them promptly and professionally to put things right. We always step in on behalf of the majority of compliant taxpayers to tackle the minority who don’t play by the rules, and we don’t hesitate to use our criminal and civil powers where we believe someone is trying to cheat the system.

During the pandemic we have taken a common-sense approach to individual customer circumstances. Where people cannot pay their tax, we have enabled them to defer payment, and to pay off their debts over time in affordable instalments. Where people cannot deal with our compliance enquiries, we have deferred these if possible – with some direct face-to-face interventions moving into the next financial year.

These decisions to support customers – as well as the economic impact of the pandemic itself – have inevitably had an impact on compliance yield (the additional revenue we collect from our compliance activity). Between April and June 2021, with much of the economy still under COVID-19 restrictions, compliance yield remained lower than its usual pre-pandemic level for quarter one, at £7.4 billion. However, we expect yield to recover over the course of the financial year in line with Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts.

As the country slowly returns to a steady state, we are restarting our debt collection work – but we will continue to carry out this work in a way that is sensitive to customers’ altered needs and capabilities.

By the end of the first quarter in 2021 to 2022 our debt balance was £50 billion, down from £57.5 billion at the end of March. This is also a 31% reduction on the highest level we saw during the pandemic (£72 billion) in August 2020. Much of that high level was due to the choices we made to support customers by temporarily deferring payments – and the debt balance has dropped as deferred payments have started to become due. We are currently contacting all our customers with outstanding debt to offer support and are seeing strong levels of payment.

Looking ahead

Our immediate priority for customers is to continue helping them to comply with their tax obligations and supporting them with the economic impact of the pandemic, through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (both of which have been extended to September 2021) and other measures to support people while the economy recovers.

As the UK builds back better, we will continue to ensure the right tax revenue comes in and protect the tax system and individuals from fraudulent attack. Our approach to increasing compliance activity will be informed by customers' individual circumstances, particularly if they are still severely affected by the effects of the pandemic.

We will also carry on supporting businesses to adjust to the changes to trading rules following the UK's transition from the EU, so they can continue to compete successfully on the global stage.

We recognise the immense pressure that many people are still facing and we are doing everything we can to help. Our message to customers remains: if you can pay your taxes then you should do so – but if you're struggling, we want to work with you to agree a plan based on your financial position.

Note on changes to our quarterly performance data

For 2021 to 2022, we have updated our performance framework which includes several new or revised metrics that will allow us to better track our progress throughout the year. The 2021 to 2022 Quarter 1 performance data publication has been redesigned to include these changes. In particular, the 'Quarterly Performance' sheet has been re-named to 'Outcome Delivery Plan progress' and now tracks our performance against our quarterly expectations for those measures described in our Outcome Delivery Plan.

The measures added to the 'Outcome Delivery Plan progress' sheet are:

- Debt balance: moved from a separate sheet in the publication
- Tax Credit Error and Fraud: reported annually in a separate publication – the quarterly publication now contains a link to this
- Tax Gap: reported annually in a separate publication; the quarterly publication now contains a link to this
- Net Easy: moved from a separate sheet in the publication – now includes telephony responses as well as webchat and digital
- Telephony adviser attempts handled
- Webchat adviser attempts handled
- Customer correspondence cleared within 15 days (includes both post items and iForms)
- Customer Satisfaction: now includes telephony scores as well as webchat

> and digital

Definitions of all the measures can be found in the ‘Analytical Annex’ sheet. Previously published measures that were not covered in our Outcome Delivery Plan are still included in the publication on other sheets. The exceptions to this are measures where the scope has changed (Net Easy, Customer Correspondence and Customer Satisfaction). The back series of data for the old version of these measures is still included in the ‘Outcome Delivery Plan progress’ sheet, but only the new version of these measures will be updated going forward.

In July 2019, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury issued a ministerial statement in which HMRC committed to publish more information on our powers and safeguards. In line with this, we have published some additional measures this quarter. These cover the value and number of penalties, surcharges and assessments issued to customers that are still outstanding, as well as charges issued for businesses filing their PAYE RTI returns late and the number of these charges that are successfully appealed. This data is experimental and may be changed or removed in future publications.

Crimea: Media Freedom Coalition statement

Media Freedom Coalition statement:

> The undersigned members of the Media Freedom Coalition express their deep concern over the deteriorating media freedom situation in occupied Crimea, Ukraine, and the continued harassment, violence, and prosecution of journalists by the Russian Federation.
>
> Despite the risks, human rights defenders and independent journalists continue to call attention to the ongoing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and efforts to unduly restrict media freedom in the region. Such is the case with Vladyslav Yesypenko, a freelance journalist associated with the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty ‘Crimea.Reality’ project, who had been reporting on social and environmental issues and filming the views of Crimean residents prior to his arrest by the Russian Federation’s Federal Security Service (FSB) on March 10, 2021.
>
> We are concerned by reports of mistreatment and abuse while Mr Yesypenko has been detained.
>
> In addition, 9 Crimean Tatar citizen journalists, (Server

> Mustafayev, Tymur Ibrahimov, Marlen Asanov, Seyran Saliyev, Remzi Bekirov, Ruslan Suleymanov, Osman Aryfmemetov, Rustem Sheyhaliyev, Amet Suleymanov) are currently being held in pre-trial detention centers and prisons in Russia and occupied Crimea.
>
> We call on the Russian Federation to immediately release Vladyslav Yesypenko and all journalists who have been unjustly detained for their work and to allow journalists and media workers to practice their profession without fear of persecution, arbitrary imprisonment, violence, and forced disappearance.
>
> We are also concerned with Russia's efforts to stifle independent print and broadcast media on the peninsula through its continued harassment and intimidation which has effectively forced independent media underground or into exile.
>
> Together with the international community, we will continue to shine a light on the Russian Federation's efforts to curtail media freedom in Crimea. We also bring attention to the continued and systematic restrictions on the freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, faced by the residents of Crimea, one of the issues that the Crimea Platform initiative aims to address.

Signed by: Austria, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States

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Winners of National Highways competition to help wipe out graffiti are revealed

National Highways is on a mission to tackle the blight of graffiti by finding new products to remove graffiti but also potential solutions that will prevent the vandalism appearing in the first place.

A competition was launched to harvest innovative and modern solutions to the problem that continues to plague the road network.

Graffiti on bridges and next to roads can be distracting for drivers and the clean-up often requires lane or road closures, disrupting traffic. And it is costly – up to £10,000 to remove one instance of graffiti.

National Highways, formerly Highways England, has launched the competition with partners Kier and Connected Places Catapult to identify new solutions for dealing with graffiti.

More than a dozen companies submitted their concepts and products and the five most promising entries have now been announced. These winning ideas will each get up to £30,000 to spend taking their products forward.

The HausBots wall-climbing robot which can apply graffiti-preventative paints

National Highways Head of Innovation Annette Pass said:

> We are very excited about taking forward these fascinating, innovative solutions that could help us tackle the relentless problem of graffiti which takes up time and money that would be better spent elsewhere on our network.
>
> The standard of entries was very high and difficult decisions had to be made to whittle them down to a final five. But we are confident that as we develop these ideas further we will be able to identify modern solutions to this age-old problem.

The five winning ideas from the competition are:

Innovation Factory

Audio sensors will detect the application of graffiti in order to alert authorities and trigger audio and visual deterrents.

Sensing Feeling

AI software will analyse behaviour to detect vandals at graffiti hotspots and then deterrents such as alarms and lights can be activated.

HausBots

Wall-climbing robotics will be used to apply graffiti preventative paints, reducing the risk of such hazards as working at heights for the workforce.

Powerlase

This innovation will use lasers to remove graffiti from surfaces whilst preventing additional damage to the finish of surface coatings and films.

Nano Eco Group

A 3D chemical coating to prevent the adhesion of graffiti to a variety of surfaces and films.

Each of the winners will use the money to develop their idea and produce a feasibility study for National Highways which will then decide the most promising products to take forward for use on the road network.

Kier Head of Innovation Tom Tideswell said:

> Tackling graffiti is an everyday labour-intensive occurrence for our maintenance teams and we are always on the look-out for innovative solutions to speed up the identification and reduce time on site removing graffiti.

Connected Places Catapult Technical Director Paul Bate said:

> Connected Places Catapult are here to help UK companies with great new innovations and get them into the market. We've been really pleased at the quality of the applications and range of different technologies that these companies have brought to this competition. We're looking forward to seeing the outcome of all the feasibility studies and seeing which ones have the most promise for future use on National Highways' network.

The competition follows a recent trial of new solutions that took place over two days at an off-road site at Gravelly Hill Interchange – more commonly known as Spaghetti Junction – in Birmingham.

Three products or methods were tested to help identify those that most successfully remove graffiti quickly and safely whilst being eco-friendly. And there were another three trialled that go beyond coatings traditionally used to prevent graffiti appearing.

The aim of the trials was to evaluate the performance of newly identified products and increase the range of solutions available for use on the road network.

The cost of both initiatives has been met through the Innovation and Modernisation Designated Fund. This is a ringfenced National Highways fund dedicated to the exploration and adoption of modern and innovative working practices.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

The Government's new International Data Transfers Expert Council

The International Data Transfers Expert Council is a subgroup of the National Data Strategy Forum, which was launched in May and held its first meeting in June.

As part of our ambitious, pro-growth National Data Strategy, the UK will work globally to remove unnecessary barriers to cross-border data flows. Doing so brings countless benefits for the economy and society. The free flow of data enables scientific researchers to better understand and diagnose rare genetic diseases; it ensures our money is kept safe by allowing financial institutions to monitor and detect fraudulent activity in real time; and it boosts UK businesses and consumers by delivering cheaper digital services and opening up overseas markets and supply chains.

To achieve our ambitions, the government is seeking the brightest and best minds from across the globe, with unique experience and expertise in this area, to become members of the International Data Transfers Expert Council.

The International Data Transfers Expert Council will consist of 15 leading individuals, drawn from academia, industry and civil society. The members will provide independent and expert advice, of both a technical and tactical nature, which will enable the government to deliver on its mission to champion the international flow of data.

The International Data Transfers Expert Council will play a vital role in the government's work to forge strategic data partnerships with key economies worldwide.

Apply to become a member of the Expert Council

To apply to become a member of the Expert Council, please complete this application form. The deadline for applications is Sunday 12 September at 11.59pm BST.

Applicants will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Ability to provide independent, expert advice to the UK government on international data transfers policy
- Relevant experience working on one or more of the following areas or sectors: data transfers, data protection, international data policy, digital tech, trade, economic policy, law enforcement, national security, academia, science, health, finance or business
- Relevant experience working with, or expert knowledge of, specific countries (including the UK) and regions of strategic interest for the UK

- Global mindset, intercultural understanding, and experience working on international and diplomatic affairs

We will ensure that the membership is representative and diverse in terms of the sectors, geographies, perspectives, and sources of expertise which are represented. DCMS is committed to equality of opportunity and is committed to ensuring that we can better represent the views of the communities which we serve. We particularly encourage applicants from underrepresented groups, those based outside London and the South-East of England, and applicants who have achieved success through non-traditional educational routes.

Members will be expected to consistently attend and engage in meetings, which are expected to be held approximately every two months. Members will also be expected to sign non-disclosure agreements in the event that sensitive information is being discussed.

Please note that members will be selected from both this open recruitment call, as well as by direct invitation by the Secretary of State for Digital (also on the basis of the selection criteria listed above).

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Find our more about post-Brexit global data plans to boost growth, increase trade and improve healthcare

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UK unveils post-Brexit global data plans to boost growth, increase trade and improve healthcare

- UK announces intention for new multi-billion pound global data partnerships with the US, Australia and Republic of Korea
- International privacy expert John Edwards named as preferred new Information Commissioner to oversee shake-up
- Consultation to be launched shortly to look at ways to increase trade and innovation through data regime

Data underpins innovation and the global digital economy, everyday apps and cloud computing systems. It allows businesses to trade, drives international investment, supports law enforcement agencies tackling crime, the delivery of critical public services and health and scientific research.

The government is outlining the first territories with which it will prioritise striking ‘data adequacy’ partnerships now it has left the EU as the United States, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Dubai International Finance Centre and Colombia.

It is also confirming that future partnerships with India, Brazil, Kenya and Indonesia are being prioritised.

These new data adequacy partnerships, which will be subject to assessments that ensure high data protection standards, will build significantly on the £80 billion of data-enabled service exports to these 10 destinations from the UK every year.

Estimates suggest there is as much as £11 billion worth of trade that goes unrealised around the world due to barriers associated with data transfers*.

The aim is to move quickly and creatively to develop global partnerships which will make it easier for UK organisations to exchange data with important markets and fast-growing economies. These new partnerships will build on the existing 42 adequacy arrangements the UK has in place with countries around the world.

It is part of new plans to use the power of data to drive growth and create jobs while keeping high data protection standards. It will work hand in hand with the UK's trade agreements and support the country's ambitious trade agenda to unlock data flows and minimize unjustified barriers or conditions.

The government also today names New Zealand Privacy Commissioner John Edwards as its preferred candidate to be the UK's next Information Commissioner, following a global search.

As Information Commissioner and head of the UK regulator responsible for enforcing data protection law, he will be empowered to go beyond the regulator's traditional role of focusing only on protecting data rights, with a clear mandate to take a balanced approach that promotes further innovation and economic growth.

Plans to consult on the future of the country's data regime are also being confirmed. The aim is to make the country's data regime even more ambitious, pro-growth and innovation-friendly, while still being underpinned by secure and trustworthy privacy standards.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

> Now that we have left the EU I'm determined to seize the opportunity by developing a world-leading data policy that will deliver a Brexit dividend for individuals and businesses across the UK.
>
> That means seeking exciting new international data partnerships with some of the world's fastest growing economies, for the benefit of British firms and British customers alike.
>
> It means reforming our own data laws so that they're based on common sense, not box-ticking. And it means having the leadership in place at the Information Commissioner's Office to pursue a new era of data-driven growth and innovation. John Edwards's vast

> experience makes him the ideal candidate to ensure data is used responsibly to achieve those goals.

John Edwards said:

> It is a great honour and responsibility to be considered for appointment to this key role as a watchdog for the information rights of the people of the United Kingdom.
>
> There is a great opportunity to build on the wonderful work already done and I look forward to the challenge of steering the organisation and the British economy into a position of international leadership in the safe and trusted use of data for the benefit of all.

International data partnerships

Having left the EU, the Digital Secretary now holds powers to strike data adequacy partnerships with partners around the world.

The government believes it can unlock more trade and innovation by reducing unnecessary barriers and burdens on international data transfers, thereby opening up global markets to UK businesses. In turn this will help give UK customers faster, cheaper and more reliable products and services from around the world.

International data transfers are vital for everyday activities such as GPS navigation, video calls with family and friends, online banking, powering apps people use on a daily basis, retail, and businesses’ back office delivery.

Data adequacy partnerships, with countries or sectors which have high data protection standards, means organisations do not have to implement costly compliance measures to share personal data internationally.

Securing these arrangements will be a significant step in the UK’s ongoing plans to unlock the power of data to drive UK growth and innovation.

It will build on the adequacy arrangements the UK already has in place with international partners including New Zealand, Japan and Canada, as well the Crown Dependencies of Jersey, the Bailiwick of Guernsey and the Isle of Man.

The move will strengthen existing relationships and make data-enabled trade easier, quicker and safer.

A Mission Statement on the UK’s approach to international data transfers and the ‘UK Adequacy Manual’ are also being published today. These will be used to inform the assessment of a territory’s commitment to high data protection standards.

These are alongside a call for experts to form a new council to inform and consult on the UK's international data transfers policy. The council will consist of the brightest and best minds from across the globe and be drawn from industry, academia and civil society.

The government is also looking at potential future data sharing partnerships with other fast-growing economies such as Kenya, India, Brazil and Indonesia and will set out more details in the coming months.

New Information Commissioner

The country's experience of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the power of using personal data responsibly in the public interest and the benefits of collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Data empowered startups to build real-time dashboards with the NHS to pinpoint where ventilators, beds and medics were needed the most. It helped the National Shielding Service to prioritise grocery deliveries to the vulnerable during the height of the pandemic; and major drug treatment and vaccine breakthroughs were driven by big data analytics and artificial intelligence.

The government wants to empower the Information Commissioner to promote the responsible use of data to stimulate innovation and economic growth and for Mr Edwards to bring a new perspective to the role alongside his wealth of data regulatory experience and 20-year career practising and specialising in information law.

His experience overseeing an independent country's unique data regime also deemed 'adequate' to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will be vital.

He will be able to help the UK achieve its aims of maintaining equivalence with the EU's data standards, so personal data can continue to flow freely, while developing a new pro-growth approach to data law.

The UK's future data protection regime

The UK is already a highly connected hub for data flows and consulting on reforms to UK data law will help build on this strength to ensure the country is the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business.

The government wants to improve the UK's data protection regime to make it even more ambitious and innovation-friendly while still being underpinned by secure and trustworthy privacy standards. It believes improved data sharing can help deliver more agile, effective and efficient public services and help make the UK a science and technology superpower.

For example, NHSX's national database of chest X-Rays and images taken from hospital patients is being made available to researchers, clinicians and all those wanting to investigate COVID-19. This is helping professionals better understand the disease and develop technology enabling faster patient assessment and care in A&E, ultimately saving time and lives.

In the coming weeks the government will launch a consultation on changes to break down barriers to innovative and responsible uses of data so it can boost growth, especially for startups and small firms, speed up scientific discoveries and improve public services.

The consultation is expected to include the role of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) so it can be empowered to encourage the responsible use of data to achieve economic and social goals as well as preventing privacy breaches before they occur.

The proposal comes after the UK launched its Innovation Strategy and a plan to make the country a global leader in innovation-focused digital regulation to help cement the UK's position as a world-leader in science, research and innovation.

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Notes to editors:

*Based on the UNCTAD definition of data-enabled services sectors.

Unlocking the power of data is one of the government's 10 tech priorities.

Last year the government published its National Data Strategy to build a world-leading data economy that works for everyone.

In the strategy the government committed to championing the international flow of data, which fuels global business operations, supply chains and trade. It also plays a wider societal role, as the transfer of personal data ensures people's salaries are paid and helps them connect with loved ones from afar.

A consultation asked the nation to help shape the core principles of the strategy and the UK's ambitions for the use of data, including plans for new data adequacy arrangements. Respondents expressed broad support for UK adequacy assessment plans and the government's international vision to position the UK as a global champion of safe and secure data flows.

The US was identified as a priority country with which to secure an adequacy arrangement, particularly in light of the disruption caused by last year's ruling by the EU Court of Justice which invalidated the EU-US Privacy Shield adequacy arrangement.

The Republic of Korea and Australia were also cited as priorities and there were calls for the UK to explore potential arrangements with emerging markets in Africa, the Middle East, South America and the Indian Subcontinent.

Earlier this year, the government made clear its intention to expand the list of adequate destinations in line with its global ambitions and commitment to high standards of data protection.

This includes the United States, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Dubai International Finance Centre and Colombia. Future partnerships with India, Brazil, Kenya and Indonesia are also being prioritised.

Australia

The UK has significant total trade, services trade, and data dependent trade with Australia, which is in the top 10 of the UK’s largest trading partners without any form of adequacy arrangement in place.

Australia has a rapidly growing digital market and tech sector focused in the main cities and a growing number of successful global tech companies.

Australia has a strong data protection regime, which is designed to foster transparent and robust personal data handling practices and business accountability.

Colombia

Colombia is the third largest economy in South America and has seen strong economic growth and development over the past decade (among the strongest in Latin America and Caribbean). It was the UK’s third largest trading partner in South America in 2019.

Colombia’s green infrastructure push is attracting UK investment and involves outsourcing for engineering and marketing staff, key data driven industries.

UK and Colombian companies and universities collaborate in pharmaceuticals and intellectual property, for example for Covid-19 clinical trials. Such collaboration requires the cross-border transfer of personal data.

Colombia operates a comprehensive data protection framework that incorporates many principles and rights contained in UK legislation.

Dubai International Finance Centre

Dubai International Finance Centre has strong links with UK financial services, and is one of the most reputable and recognised centres for investment in the region.

The Dubai International Finance Centre has developed a strong data protection law that contains similar principles and protections to UK law.

The United Arab Emirates is the UK’s largest export market in the Middle East and the 18th biggest globally, and the UK’s sixth largest export market outside the EU.

There are 5,000 British companies operating in the UAE, many of which depend on data transfers, including BP, Shell, Rolls Royce, BAE Systems, SERCO, Standard Chartered, HSBC and John Lewis / Waitrose. 107 entities in the DIFC are branches of businesses based in the UK. 16% of DIFC’s financial service companies are originally based in the UK.

DIFC has several Memoranda of Understanding with a number of UK regulators and UK organisations such as the Financial Conduct Authority.

Republic of Korea

The Republic of Korea has a comprehensive data protection framework that has many parallels with the principles and rights contained in UK data protection law.

Both the UK and the Republic of Korea were founding members of the D9 (previously D5 and D7), the world's leading digital governments network and cooperate bilaterally on a number of digital and tech issues such as creative industries, AI, and 5G.

In the four quarters to Q2 2019, Republic of Korea was the UK's 24th largest trading partner, accounting for £13.7 billion or 1.0% of total UK trade in goods and services.

Singapore

Singapore is the UK's biggest trading partner in South East Asia and is a like-minded, innovative and forward-looking partner with nearly 5,000 UK companies open a base in Singapore or use Singapore as a headquarters for their Asia business.

Between 2016 and 2019, UK services exports increased by £1.3 billion with 70% of these exports delivered remotely.

Singapore has a strong private sector data protection regime which has evolved to suit the increasingly digital world on which the global economy relies.

United States of America

The US is the UK's most important national trading partner in data-enabled exports. 92% of the UK's service exports to the US are data-enabled, amounting to £67.03bn, and the government is working to remove barriers with the US to enable easier data-enabled flows and help support this strong trading relationship.

The UK government intervened in the Schrems II ruling last year. The Court of Justice of the European Union invalidated the Privacy Shield, which was a critically important framework for transatlantic data transfer. The UK government made clear it was disappointed in that ruling and it has heard from stakeholders how important it is that there is a solid and seamless mechanism for data transfers to the US.