

Follow up Written Evidence Submitted by
Lord Kamall, Minister for Technology, Innovation and Life Sciences, Department of
Health and Social Care
(DDA0073)

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to your committee on 'the right to privacy and digital data' on 8 June. My department and the wider health and care sector take the issues of data protection and patient trust extremely seriously.

We believe that strong public trust in the health and care system's use and protection of data is critical to delivering data-driven transformation. Without public trust, the use of data for the benefit of patients and the health and care system could not happen effectively. You can see this expanded on in our now published data strategy 'Data saves lives' which can be accessed following the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-saves-lives-reshaping-health-and-social-care-with-data/data-saves-lives-reshaping-health-and-social-care-with-data>

As I noted in my evidence, the government is committed to creating Secure Data Environments for access to NHS health data, supporting enhanced access, linkage, and oversight of uses of health data. I committed to provide further information to the committee on how Trusted Research Environments (TREs), a type of Secure Data Environment, will be procured by NHS England and how they will be resourced and sustained.

Resourcing

Over the next three years, NHS England, DHSC, and BEIS will [invest up to £200 million](#) in data infrastructure and services that improve linkage and accessibility of health data for research. This funding has been secured as part of the recent Spending Review.

A significant part of this investment will be used to develop an interoperable network of TREs. These TREs will enable secure, privacy-protecting access to NHS data for approved researchers to carry out vital research.

Procurement

Public sector procurement encourages free and open competition and value for money. Digital and Technology in the NHS is procured in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the current legislation that governs Public Sector procurement in the UK.

Details on the specific assurance by NHS England and NHS England and Improvement for Digital and Tech projects (Digital Spend Controls) are set out following this link:

<https://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/key-tools-and-info/digital-and-technology-assurance/>

Sustainability

The human Life Sciences sector is among the most valuable and strategically important in the UK economy, and critical to the country's health, wealth, and resilience. The investments in TREs will help to deliver the [Life Sciences Vision](#) needs on data, which are a key precondition of success.

By providing researchers and innovators with more streamlined and secure access to relevant and appropriate data, TREs will also support NHS organisations to deliver data partnerships.

All data partnerships must be compliant with the [DHSC five guiding principles](#), which help to ensure the NHS realises benefits for patients and the public when providing researchers with access to data. All data partnerships must:

- have an explicit aim to improve the health, welfare and/or care of patients in the NHS, or the operation of the NHS; and
- be on fair terms for the leading NHS organisation and for the NHS as a whole.

We are developing further guidance to support the NHS to ensure that data partnerships are delivered on fair terms and reassure patients about the use of their data. The returns to the NHS gained from data partnerships will enable us to further invest and sustain TREs over time.

(24 June 2022)