TRE’s sound great, but how do they REALLY work?

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Overview

• About UKDS SecureLab.
• What our User Support Team does.
• Common demands and how we've responded to them.
• Where we stop.
• We couldn't have done this without.
• Any questions at the end.
UK Data Service

• UKDS is the UK’s only nationally funded research infrastructure for curating and providing access to social science data.

• We’ve been enabling the use of social science data since 1967.

• We've run the UKDS SecureLab as our Trusted Research Environment solution since 2011, to enable safe access to our most sensitive data.
UKDS SecureLab

- Disseminating access, not data.
- Various access controls, based on the 5 Safes Framework.
- UKDS controls the space the researcher works within.
TREs in the OAIS model
Managing researchers through the project lifecycle

• Where do our UST staff get involved?

• Some pre-data access checks.

• Provide support once UKDS SecureLab access has been granted.
Pre-data access

User Support Team involvement prior to access being granted:

- Preliminary application ethics/validity checks.
- Safe Researcher Training (SRT)*.

*UKDS first to edit this and roll it out for online delivery at start of Covid-19.
Human Researchers

• Researchers are human(!) and may not recall everything they’ve been taught about UKDS SecureLab.

• Leads to greater resources needing to be allocated to outputs, imports etc. than is ideal!

• We provide users with a number of resources to help guide them through the different processes.
Researcher resources (1)

- UKDS SecureLab User Guide.
- SDC Handbook (SDAP).
- How to log in to UKDS SecureLab video.
- Output Request web form - minimum requirements.
- User Support Team available to answer queries.
Researcher resources (2)

• When researchers make frequent output errors or “don’t get it”.

• Moodle online Refresher course/quiz.

• Bitesize videos
  • 10 most common SecureLab output request issues.
  • How to use SecureLab efficiently.

• Webinars (recorded for re-watch)
  • All you need to know about UKDS SecureLab import requests.
Where do we stop?

• Critique methodology description (for applications) but don't provide methodological advice.
• As above for ethics...
• Software support ('support' not 'do'), we publish a list of available/help install but don’t train on use.
• We try to resolve data queries; but don't advise on data what to use / what analysis to carry out.
• We're not prescriptive re SDC-related changes to outputs.
• "Whatever you offer, researchers will need more from you...."
We couldn’t have done it without

Safe Data Access Professionals

- [https://securedatagroup.org/](https://securedatagroup.org/)

International Secure Data Facility Professionals Network

[https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/about/research-and-development/international-secure-data-facility-professionals-network-isdfpn/](https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/about/research-and-development/international-secure-data-facility-professionals-network-isdfpn/)
Final thought(s)

- Running a TRE is all about supporting people.
- They're human and will make mistakes.
- Think about what you provide proactively, resources you can point them to.
- Expect the unexpected (don't underestimate researchers capacity to surprise you, they'll come up with new queries).
- Don't think the technology will do all the work for you.
- Stand on the shoulders of giants (beg, borrow and steal from those who have gone before you).
Any questions?
Thank you.

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