Scottish National Safe Haven
(Trusted Research Environment)
Approved Organisations
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This paper lays out the criteria, developed under the Scottish Health Informatics Programme (SHIP). It reflects the fundamental principles of the good governance framework that promote safe data being accessed by safe people in safe environments. These criteria reflect the outcomes of the original SHIP public engagement work and subsequent public engagement work by other research initiatives that suggests that while there is strong support for data linkage in the public interest there are some concerns about commercial access. Accordingly, in order to give public and researchers the opportunity to develop trust around access using the Scottish National Safe Haven, these procedures reflect a public-private partnership model with respect to commercial access in the first instance. This position has been adopted in discussion with NHS Scotland Public Benefit and Privacy Panel and other public sector data controllers. It will be reviewed thereafter to ensure that it continues to deliver a trusted framework for facilitating scientifically sound, ethically robust health-related research.

1. All studies will have received data controller permissions prior to data being made available. Studies which require ethical approval will also have this in place before the research commences.

2. Anyone accessing data will have completed an approved course which covers the law relating to confidentiality, individual privacy, data protection and freedom of information. Courses will also ensure that researchers are familiar with issues around small numbers and disclosure control procedures.

3. Researchers will sign a user agreement prior to accessing data in the Scottish National Safe Haven.

4. Only researchers employed by an ‘approved institution’ will have direct access to data. Currently this is restricted to public sector organisations (e.g. Universities, NHS, Local Authorities and Scottish Government).
5. Direct access to data will not be granted to any commercial organisation, the media, lobby groups or third sector organisations. The needs of these organisations will be met through partnership with either an academic or NHS institution. Under these arrangements an approved organisation will undertake analyses of data on behalf of the partnership with ‘non-disclosive’ results released to all parties.

6. Remote access to data may be made available to approved organisations with permission from the Data Controller. If the data controller requires the researcher to access the data under stricter rules then physical settings are available at Bioquarter, No 9 Little France Road, Edinburgh or select academic institutions across Scotland. This may be extended to other academic institutions across the UK in due course.

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