

COVID-19 Research Database

Update – 07/05/21

Background

The Chief Medical Officer has established a Scientific Advisory Group, chaired by Prof Andrew Morris and a COVID Data Task Force under this group to oversee the need for rapid access to data to support this urgent research. The COVID Data Task Force has been established with representatives (PHS, SG, HDRUK, ADR and Academia) and its remit will be to work with data controllers to identify and agree the datasets that are key to supporting rapid research and analysis.

Most of the work done to date has been internal to Public Health Scotland with the focus on key national datasets required for enhanced surveillance and obtaining a feed of that data for the National Safe Haven. As well as working with the PHS teams to agree specifications and preparing information governance approvals whilst not interfering with their critical support to COVID-19. The work has been done at pace and is rapidly developing.

Data has started to move over to the National Safe Haven and eDRIS has developed associated documentation for researchers. See <https://www.isdscotland.org/Products-and-Services/eDRIS/COVID-19/> for more details.

How will the database work?

The database will work on the following broad mechanism:

1. eDRIS gather datasets from data controllers and transfer them securely to a SQL database in the national Safe Haven
2. Researchers review what data is available alongside supporting dataset definitions to assist in the formulation of their research questions
3. Researchers work with eDRIS to prepare PBPP applications. Further details on this process, including pricing, can be found at <https://www.isdscotland.org/Products-and-Services/eDRIS/Research-Proposal/> Additional information governance approvals may be needed depending on the dataset data controller
4. If approved, eDRIS will extract the approved data from the database to the researcher's folder in the Safe Haven as per existing processes. It might also be possible for researchers to receive data outwith the NSH if PBPP deem it necessary and sufficiently robust security and processes are in place.
5. However, the research database itself persists longer term.

This facilitates rapid access without the need for the data to be requisitioned for each new request as long as the request uses the datasets housed by the database. Requests using different datasets/items will require the data to be requisitioned as per the usual process.

Which datasets are included?

Currently, the COVID-19 Database holds a set of variables from the following datasets;

NRS Deaths
Infant deaths
NRS Stillbirths
NRS Births
SBR
Unscheduled Care Deaths
SMR (all excluding 11 and 12)
DCVP Dispensed
DCVP Prescribed
DCVP Paid
SICSAG Daily

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SICSAG Episodes

Diabetes Covariates

ECOSS (-/+VE tested patients only)

A&E

NHS24

GP OOH

SAS

RAPID (System Watch feed)

ISARIC

Scottish Stroke Care Audit (SSCA)

Census

GP cluster tables

Vaccination tables

COGUK

The availability of other datasets (below) is being explored:

- Other Maternity and Neonatal Data
- Care Home Census
- Social Care Data from SOURCE
- Zoe – Data from UK symptoms Tracker (Use is likely to be restricted)
- HEPMA (Hospital Electronic Prescribing which is been discussed across the UK)
- Education
- Other Scottish Government Datasets

The data items to be included are still being confirmed.

eDRIS would be interested to know what data requests might come up locally. We don't yet know what will be requested by researchers so there will no doubt be changes to the composition of the database.

How are Public Health Scotland processes being changed in response to COVID-19?

eDRIS has repurposed a proportion of staff to the development of the database and coordination of Rapid COVID-19 Research Projects. Support for COVID-19 research requests will receive the most immediate levels of support with their projects and eDRIS are assisting the NHS Scotland Public Benefit and Privacy Panel in their triaging of COVID-19 related requests. eDRIS worked with PBPP to develop and implement their rapid review process for COVID-19 related applications both research and non-research.

The Public Benefit and Privacy Panel for Health and Social Care have set levels of priority in response to COVID-19 (see <https://www.informationgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/pbpphsc/>).

The remainder of the eDRIS team are continuing with Business as Usual as the demand for this continues. However, eDRIS staff along with other staff in PHS may be re-allocated to support the general PHS response to COVID-19 at short notice.