

Press release

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Government must step up work to facilitate greater private and public sector data sharing, says new techUK whitepaper

- *New White Paper sets out seven policy recommendations the Government should consider to position the UK as a more attractive data economy*
- *The UK tech industry is calling on Government to make progress on work to facilitate the right data governance framework and culture of trust to enable data sharing across the entire economy*
- *Failure to address existing challenges to data sharing could mean that potential social and economic benefits of data are not being seen*

LONDON, 4 July 2022: Technology trade association techUK has today published a new White Paper, *Data Sharing: Getting the UK back on the right track* – calling on Government to address existing barriers to public and private sector data sharing, and to boost efforts towards delivering on the ambitions of the UK's National Data Strategy (NDS).

High growth firms, businesses, Government, and the public sector alike are reliant on personal and non-personal data to drive research, develop technologies including AI and digital identity products, and offer better services to citizens, such as more resilient healthcare services, smart city initiatives and solutions that can help make our environment greener. However, the economic and social potential offered by greater data sharing and data access is not being seen.

In this Whitepaper, techUK and its members have set out seven policy recommendations that will help to facilitate a more focused and coherent approach to data sharing that can ensure the value and benefits of increased data use are enjoyed across the entire UK economy and society:

- 1. Step up work to facilitate voluntary, trusted, and responsible avenues for private and third sector data sharing, including delivering on the BEIS Smart Data workstream and Mission 1 of the National Data Strategy:** Access to more, high-quality data is essential for powering the UK's world-class R&D ecosystem and enabling businesses to develop innovative digital products and services. While the UK has made a welcomed start in

setting out plans under the NDS Mission 1 Policy Framework and BEIS Smart Data Workstream, Government must implement these interventions swiftly and ensure that industry has continued visibility of its progress.

- 2. Ensure that ethical considerations underpin the sharing of data, particularly personal data:** Ethical considerations should underpin the use of all data, especially in circumstances where risks to privacy or other fundamental rights are identified. As data sharing increases, there is a key role for the Centre for Data, Ethics, and Innovation (CDEI) to play in ensuring that the right thinking is taking place on how data should be shared and used in ways that are responsible, ethical, and inclusive.
- 3. Deliver more joined-up delivery of the National Data Strategy, including greater visibility on the execution of Mission 3 and opportunities for industry engagement:** A lack of understanding on how Mission 3 of the NDS is being taken forward is leading to concerns that a data strategy is emerging which appears disjointed, with Mission 3 activities being inaccessible by industry. There could be a role to be played by the NDS Forum, such as outlining clear opportunities and pathways for industry collaboration.
- 4. Outline a clear plan for the continued opening up of Government and public sector data sets, with the aim to move toward near real-time reporting of data:** the opening up of key Government datasets will support the development of new products and services, particularly digital identity technology. Though the UK was once ranked a world leader in Open Data initiatives in 2017, it is disappointing to see the UK take a step backwards. Government must consult with industry and organisations to better understand which data sets could unlock the most value if opened up and outline a clear plan on how this will be put into action.
- 5. Collaborate with industry to understand challenges related to data quality and develop a set of industry-driven standards to address these barriers:** There is a key role for standards to play in addressing barriers to data sharing which are caused by poor data quality or lack of consistency in how data is collected and stored. Government should work with industry and standards bodies, such as the British Standards Authority (BSI), both in the UK and internationally to promote the development of standard formats and good practices so that quality and compatibility is installed as a basic principle of data collection.
- 6. Invest in sufficient resources to map regional data ecosystems, and set realistic benchmarks for the gathering of local government data:** Understanding the full digital landscape is a vital for making the case for investing in regional digital economies as part of the Levelling Up Agenda. techUK's Local Digital Capital Index is a tool that helps to build this picture, but we have identified that a lack of location-specific data on the strengths or otherwise of regional data ecosystems, hinders us from truly understanding the UK's digital maturity. Government must set a minimum benchmark for the gathering of local government data rather than a ceiling to ensure that no region is left behind.
- 7. Narrow the data skills gap and combat skills shortages by investing in training, upskilling, and reskilling of the UK's workforce:** The shortage of individuals able to work in data is impeding the quantity and quality of data driven activities and will remain a key barrier to the UK seizing the opportunity to lead the world in data driven economic growth. Recent

research has found the number of job roles that require hard data skills range from 215,000–234,000¹. One way the Government can address digital skill shortages to boost growth is by expanding the coverage of the Help to Grow: Digital Scheme, supporting SMEs to invest in digital reskilling through a Digital Skills Tax Credit and continuing to reform the Apprenticeship Levy.

Neil Ross, Associate Director of Policy, techUK said:

“The benefits and potential of responsible data sharing are clear. Already data sharing projects have helped support the UK’s response to the pandemic, drive greater financial inclusion and help us move toward achieving our net zero ambitions.

“However, there are more benefits to be gained if we can go further. To do this techUK has provided a number of suggestions for Government to encourage responsible data sharing. This can be done by delivering on commitments to legislate for Smart Data Schemes, as well as facilitate the right data governance framework, market environment and culture of trust to support both private and public sector data sharing.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

The possibilities and potential for data sharing are significant, and the success stories below only demonstrate a fraction of the benefits currently being unlocked across the economy and society. More work needs to be done to ensure that data is being used to its fullest extent to deliver even more benefits.

- techUK member, Inhealthcare, a leading provider of virtual healthcare services, is working with the NHS on a pioneering project in East Yorkshire to improve the flow of information between different parts of the healthcare system. The project aims to boost NHS productivity, increase the visibility and status of patients within the system and improve health outcomes. Inhealthcare is supplying Hull-based City Health Care Partnership, a provider of NHS services in community settings, with vital data about the admission, discharge and transfer (ADT) of patients within the region.
- By combining two of the UK’s largest Credit Reference Agencies (CRAs), short term loan applications and around 30 alternative public and private sources, techUK member, LexisNexis® Risk Solutions has carried out in-depth analysis to provide a detailed, regional overview of financial exclusion and its underlying causes across the UK adult population. Analysis of financially excluded individuals found that as many as 77% could be helped using alternative data solutions, meaning a further 5.5 million UK adults could gain access to fairer and more affordable financial services, for the first time ever.
- Developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Salford City Council, MappingGM is a mapping portal which visualizes spatial information to help both the public and public sector workers understand local areas. Working with public, private and third sector partners, MappingGM has developed several maps such as

¹ [Quantifying the UK Data Skill Gap \(Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport\).](#)



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“People and Communities”, which offers consistent socio-economic and demographic data about people and communities across Greater Manchester. It also provides information on the provisions of services in an area such as post offices and GP surgeries, and socio-economic information such as typology of residents. MappingGM’s maps and projects have supported local authorities in delivering better services and engaging with the public.

The full report can be downloaded [here](#).

About techUK

techUK is the technology trade association that brings together people, companies and organisations to realise the positive outcomes of what digital technology can achieve.

With over 850 members (the majority of which are SMEs) across the UK, techUK creates a network for innovation and collaboration across business, government and stakeholders to provide a better future for people, society, the economy and the planet.

By providing expertise and insight, we support members, partners and stakeholders as they prepare the UK for what comes next in a constantly changing world.