



Research Data Scotland

Board Trustee with Financial Expertise

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Overview

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board and becoming a Trustee of Research Data Scotland (RDS). We have known for some time that data organised well and used ethically can be a significant force for good that saves time, money and lives. The Covid pandemic has further shown the benefits of decisions steered with good data and research. Being able to bring data around people, places and businesses, around families and households is already proving essential in tackling our big challenges that aren't organised into discrete activities from single organisations. Yet, much public data is organised that way.

RDS is already starting to enable collaboration on data and research that is spilling out into wider collaborations that are changing lives. It is early and there is much to do to make this collaboration and data driven innovation systematic. We have established a high-quality Board and are seeking an additional Trustee with a finance background and skillset. I believe that someone with this experience can make the difference to RDS reaching its potential promoting and advancing health and social wellbeing, not just for Scotland but having a more global impact.

Professor Paul Boyle
Chair, Research Data Scotland

About Research Data Scotland

RDS's mission is to coordinate access to the excellent data already collected about people, places, and businesses in Scotland, helping researchers and analysts to access that data in a timely and cost-effective way, enable working across boundaries to collaborate on common datasets, and access to the analytical tools they need to bring cutting edge insights that inform great decisions. We will enable research on different scales: from large international studies, to simple and quick analyses of individual datasets, and support people to use the latest data science and geospatial approaches.

RDS will build a portfolio of research data assets that are held securely with public support and enable these datasets to be up to date and accessed at pace. RDS will introduce new services that help organisations to understand the impact of their decisions and so better improve wellbeing and equalities in Scotland.

RDS is an organisation that provides system leadership, commissioning partners based on their expertise, including: National Records of Scotland (NRS) who use their population records to help securely connect data around people, places and businesses; the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre (EPCC) at the University of Edinburgh who provide a secure computing infrastructure to hold data and to make it available to researchers; Public Health Scotland (PHS) who provide the service to researchers to understand their needs, navigate approvals processes and provide relevant data; and the Scottish Government who develop agreements about the terms of use of datasets with their owners.

At the heart of RDS is the handling of deidentified personal data. It is based upon seven principles, namely:

1. RDS will only enable access to data for research that is for the public good and considers equalities
2. RDS will ensure that researchers can only access data once it is deidentified
3. RDS will ensure that all data is always kept in a controlled and secured environment, using the FAIR principles of **F**indability, **A**ccessibility, **I**nteroperability, and **R**euse of digital assets, and building upon the [5 safes data privacy framework](#)
4. RDS will be user and problem led not data led
5. As a charity, all income that RDS generates will be re-invested into services to help researchers continue to access data, and firms that access public sector data for research in the public good through RDS will share any commercial benefits back into public services
6. RDS will be transparent about what data has been made available for research through its services and how it is being used for public benefit
7. Aligned with the Scottish data strategy, we will support people's appropriate choice over the use of their data in research.

In May 2020 RDS launched the Covid researcher data service. This now hosts around 70 datasets brought together for research to support Scotland's Covid response. There are already over 100 completed research projects using this data and around 650 active projects.

To achieve the organisation's mission, RDS needs to achieve a step change in the speed of access to data for research, whilst improving transparency and continuing to deliver proportionate information governance and ethical assessment. RDS will also broaden the range of data available to researchers. To achieve this, it has secured funding of around £5 million per year since 2021-22 from Scottish Government. This complements further investment from UK research councils (as part of the Administrative Data Research UK, and Health Data Research UK national core studies programmes).

RDS is now formally established as a registered charity (SC051305). As an organisation we continue to develop and our focus this year is to simplify and standardise approaches that drive down the time taken to access data without compromising scrutiny or security. This should mean more people innovating with data for the public good, saving time, money and lives.

Our Board

Working with the CEO, and the Chair, the Board steers the delivery of the RDS mission. It oversees key decisions that the organisation takes towards that mission, and provide support for the organisation through advice, and use of its networks to ensure RDS builds connections that helps it achieve its goals.

Currently there are five RDS Trustees and four further expert advisors to the Board. Find out more at this link: [Board of Trustees | Research Data Scotland](#).

The Board has two sub-committees:

- An Audit, Risk & Finance Committee who oversee the integrity of financial information, and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible;
- A Remuneration & Nomination Committee that determines the appropriate levels of remuneration of Executives and has a prime role in succession planning.

The Board Trustee role and terms

As a Trustee you will be expected to:

- Ensure that RDS pursues its stated purposes, by developing and agreeing a long-term strategy, constructively challenging and supporting the CEO;
- Advise the CEO on priorities and strategic direction based on the changing political or financial landscape
- Ensure that RDS complies with its articles of association, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- Ensure that RDS applies its resources exclusively to achieve its charitable objects and for the benefit of the public
- Scrutinise the performance of management in meeting agreed goals and objectives and monitor the reporting of performance
- Develop external relationships with stakeholders that help RDS deliver its mission and diversify sources of funding
- Safeguard the reputation and values of RDS
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of RDS
- Ensure the financial stability of RDS
- Follow proper arrangements for the appointment, supervision, support, appraisal, and remuneration of the chief executive
- Commit sufficient time to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

The commitment is to a quarterly Board meeting lasting two hours. Board meetings are usually online with an annual meeting based in Edinburgh.

The Board Trustee with finance expertise will chair the Audit, Risk & Finance Committee, and play an active role in all Board activities. As such, you would be expected to:

- Scrutinise budgets, spend forecasts, financial reports, and accounts to ensure the financial resources of the organisation meet its present and future needs
- Give advice on an appropriate set of financial management policies
- Assure the Board that the appropriate accounting procedures and controls are in place
- Advise on the risks as the organisation delivers on its strategic plans
- Keep the Board informed about its financial duties and responsibilities, leading on interpreting financial data as required
- Contribute to the fundraising strategy of the organisation.

As a Trustee and Board member there is an expected initial two-year term to serve.

There is no salary associated with RDS Board roles, though travel and accommodation expenses attributed to the work of the Board will be reimbursed. In addition, beyond the meetings, Board members may be occasionally asked to represent RDS at events or provide specific advice on pertinent issues; remuneration may be considered for this additional work.

Skills and experience

To ensure that RDS makes a tangible impact on the evidence we have to make decisions and improve lives, the Board has a wide range of expertise and perspectives on how to organise a data organisation.

The skills and personal attributes that required of all Board members are:

- Strategic thinking and the experience of turning strategy into programmes of delivery;
- Someone that can build and enhance the reputation of RDS through excellent communication and networking skills;
- Acting with integrity, and in ways that promote diversity in all forms;
- A passion for improving lives through the responsible use of data, research and innovation.

This post is specifically for someone with a background in financial management. In particular, the additional skills needed are:

Essential

- Qualified accountant with demonstrated commercial awareness and knowledge. Proven ability to communicate and explain financial information to members of the Board and other stakeholders.
- Analytical and evaluation skills, demonstrating good judgement.
- Knowledge and experience of charity finance practices.

Desirable

- Experience of charity fundraising.
- Skills and experience in one or more areas of non-executive governance and management e.g. strategic planning, business management, financial/accountancy, experience of Trusts or other grant giving bodies particularly fundraising and legal knowledge.

How to apply

Diversity and inclusion are core to RDS's mission, and it is vital that we have a Board and Trustees with different perspectives and backgrounds. We are keen to receive applications from all suitably qualified people and are particularly interested to hear from people that feel underrepresented in the data landscape.

Candidates are asked to provide a CV together with a 500-word statement of their suitability for the role, in one document. The deadline for the post is Friday 25th November. Applications should be uploaded by **CLICKING HERE**.

Please visit our Jobs page [Jobs | Research Data Scotland](#) to learn more about our [Privacy Notice](#) and [Equalities Monitoring](#).

Candidate's expressions of interest will be sifted by the Chair and the RDS Trustees the criteria being how well they can demonstrate the skills and aptitudes shown above, and the extent of the experience we are looking for.

For a confidential discussion about the post please contact Catriona Mackie or Kate Kennedy at our recruitment partners, Aspen People, on 0141 212 7555.