

# Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize 2026–2028

Applicant information pack



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# Background

Social Finance and Wellcome are delighted to launch the second Mental Health Data Prize, a UK-wide innovation programme funded by Wellcome to support teams developing new data tools for mental health science.

This document contains key information about the Data Prize and sets out how to apply. Please read both this information pack and the associated documents (including Eligible Expenditure Guidance, Template Grant Funding Agreement, and Terms of Submission) before applying.

"Building on the success of the inaugural Mental Health Data Prize, we are thrilled to extend our partnership with Social Finance to support teams to develop digital tools utilising existing data. The Data Prize will foster multidisciplinary collaborations and robust, responsible data use in mental health research. We are excited to pave the way for a better understanding of how mental health problems develop, persist and resolve."

**Dr Catherine Sebastian,  
Head of Evidence for Mental Health at Wellcome**



# Introducing the Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize

The Mental Health Data Prize is an open challenge that provides innovation funding, tailored support and a diverse learning community, supporting teams across the UK to develop scalable tools that use existing mental health data to drive new insights and approaches. The Data Prize's vision is that the tools created by funded teams utilise existing data to unlock sustainable innovation in mental health science and help transform early intervention for anxiety, depression and psychosis.

The first [Mental Health Data Prize](#) ran between 2022 and 2024 and supported more than 10 teams to develop novel insights and tools. The current round of the Data Prize is open for applications until the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

The Data Prize is being delivered by Social Finance in partnership with Wellcome, a global charitable foundation whose vision is a healthier future for everyone. The Data Prize contributes to Wellcome's mission to enable a step change in early intervention for anxiety, depression and psychosis.


## Overview of the Data Prize



## Introducing the Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize

DATE*	ACTIVITY
11 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Applications open
12pm 8 <sup>th</sup> May 2026	Application deadline
W/C 8 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2026	Online pitch sessions for shortlisted teams
By 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Selection of six successful teams for the Prototyping Phase, being awarded up to £100,000 each
3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2026	Kick-off of Prototyping Phase
August 2026 – April 2027	Prototyping Phase
May 2027	Selection for Sustainability Phase, narrowing from six teams to three. Three winning teams will be awarded up to £300,000 each in addition to the £100,000 received in Prototyping Phase
June 2027 – Feb 2028	Sustainability Phase
March 2028	Prize close and learnings

\* Dates subject to change



"Beyond simply providing funds for the tool, there was a huge focus on skill development throughout the programme. Through various workshops and other more tailored support provided by Social Finance, we've been able to more effectively develop the product (Harmony) and begin to build a solid user base."

**Dr Eoin McElroy, Senior Lecturer, Ulster University,  
Co-founder of Harmony, one of the winning teams from  
the first Data Prize**

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# Aims of the Data Prize

The intended outcomes of the Data Prize are:

- **To cultivate interdisciplinary collaborations:** The Data Prize seeks to attract diverse multi-disciplinary teams to work on mental health science, bringing together individuals across disciplines and career stages, and fostering adaptive ways of working that bridge traditional siloes. Expectations around team formation are outlined in the [Who can apply](#) section of this guidance.
- **To enable the development of innovative digital tools:** The Data Prize provides the funding and tailored support needed to develop innovative, scalable tools that use existing data to drive new insights and approaches, contributing to long-term impact. Expectations around in/out of scope tools are outlined in the [Scope and use cases for tools](#) sections of this guidance.
- **To inspire use of existing mental health datasets:** The Data Prize encourages innovation around the use of existing mental health datasets for development of digital tools, raising the visibility of these datasets, and unlocking new knowledge for the sector. Full guidance on dataset selection is included in [Annex 3](#).
- **To integrate lived experience:** The Data Prize prioritises meaningful inclusion of lived experience, creating opportunities for teams to explore a range of creative, participatory approaches and share learnings with the wider community, resulting in solutions that put lived experience front and centre, and inspiring teams to embed human-centred design practice into future work. Full guidance on integrating lived experience is included in [Annex 2](#).
- **To strengthen the skills of teams:** The Data Prize provides tailored support to multi-disciplinary teams, drawing on initial needs assessment to design a comprehensive support programme that equips participants with the knowledge and skills they need for successful delivery. Details of what support is available is outlined in the [About the Data Prize](#) section of this guidance.

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# About the Data Prize

The Mental Health Data Prize will provide teams with the opportunity to develop data tool concepts from initial ideas into working prototypes, running across two 9-month phases.

## What the Data Prize offers: Funding

### Prototyping Phase: August 2026 – April 2027

Six teams will be selected to create a prototype tool using existing mental health data to contribute towards improving early intervention in anxiety, depression, and/or psychosis. Each team will receive grant funding of up to £100,000.

### Sustainability Phase: Jun 2027 – Feb 2028

Three winning teams with the most promising prototype tools will be selected at the end of the prototyping phase to further develop and scale their data tool. Each team will receive funding of up to £300,000.

## What the Data Prize offers: Support

Alongside innovation funding, participants will have access to:

- Group workshops and expert surgeries.
- Team mentoring and tailored support provided by Social Finance and expert mentors.
- Workshops that guide meaningful integration of lived experience throughout the development process.
- Opportunities to showcase prototypes and gather peer and user feedback through 'Show and Tell' sessions.
- Opportunities for connection, collaboration and knowledge sharing with a diverse network of experts across mental health science and related fields.

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# Scope and use cases for tools

The Data Prize aims to support the development of scalable data tools that use existing mental health data to drive new insights and approaches, contributing to the overall vision of improving early intervention for anxiety, depression and psychosis.

Data tools can be designed for use by the research community, policymakers, mental health practitioners and others. Full guidance on dataset selection can be found in [Annex 3](#).

**Tools should address a well-defined opportunity area** that aligns with the overall vision for the Data Prize. A range of tools will be considered within the scope of the Data Prize, such as:

- Tools that facilitate data discovery or documentation.
- Tools that help users to perform data analysis.
- Tools that help to facilitate data analysis, for example by supporting data cleaning and manipulation.
- Tools that share insights from data analysis in a format accessible by different audiences, such as researchers, policymakers and/or practitioners.

**Tools considered out of scope would be:**

- Tools that facilitate individual clinical decision making, such as an AI chatbot screening tool that identifies need for/recommends early intervention measures for individuals.
- Tools that manage mental health conditions or symptoms, such as a mental wellbeing chatbot, mood tracking, sleep/exercise monitoring apps or a digital tool that supports people directly with navigating existing services for themselves.

Refer to Table A below to see examples of the types of tools that are in scope for the Data Prize. Please note – this list is not exhaustive and serves only as a guideline for what may be developed.

**Table A: Examples of tools within scope of the Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize**

USE CASE	EXPLANATION	INTENDED USER(S)	EXAMPLE
Tools that facilitate data discovery or documentation	Tools that make datasets public, legible, usable, and/or shareable	<p>Researchers</p> <p>Intelligence functions within strategic planning and delivery orgs e.g. NHS, ICBs, policymakers, mental health organisations</p>	<p><a href="#">Open Safely</a> or <a href="#">Radar Base</a></p> <p>Please note – these are indicative examples that have been developed outside the context of the Mental Health Data Prize – we recognise that teams may select a narrowed focus that matches the purpose and scope of the Data Prize</p>
Tools that help users to perform analysis	<p>Tools that enable use of methodologies</p> <p>Tools that facilitate use of linked datasets (e.g. linking mental health data and social care data)</p>	<p>Researchers</p> <p>Individuals / orgs involved in strategic planning e.g. NHS, ICBs, policymakers</p> <p>Delivery organisations e.g. mental health orgs conducting analysis to inform population-level planning &amp; resource allocation</p>	One of the winners of Data Prize 1, <a href="#">DigiCAT</a>
Tools that help to facilitate data analysis	<p>Tools that support data cleaning/ manipulation</p> <p>Tools that develop and disseminate a new statistical method</p>	<p>Researchers</p> <p>Intelligence functions within strategic planning and delivery orgs e.g. NHS, ICBs, policymakers, mental health organisations</p>	One of the winners of Data Prize 1, <a href="#">Harmony</a>
Tools that share insights from data analysis	Tools that enable users to interact with underused datasets to identify insights that inform prevention, policy, service planning	<p>Researchers</p> <p>Individuals / orgs involved in strategic planning e.g. NHS, ICBs, policymakers</p> <p>Delivery orgs e.g. mental health organisations</p> <p>Wider stakeholders / public who are able to take action based on data insights</p>	<p>One of the winners of Data Prize 1, <a href="#">School Health Research Network Data Dashboard</a></p> <p><a href="#">PsyMaptic</a></p>

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# Which datasets are eligible?

Teams will be expected to select and gain access to appropriate datasets to support and demonstrate the development of their tools. For more detail on this please refer to [Annex 2](#) where we have provided guidance for the selection of appropriate datasets.

As part of the evaluation process, the judging panel will be assessing the suitability of the datasets that applicants propose against these criteria. This applies to teams who intend to use exemplar datasets as well as to teams who intend to propose an alternative dataset. The judging panel will be looking for rigour and quality of datasets, with the expectation that teams will leverage robust datasets (e.g. longitudinal datasets with at least three waves of data capture, or large datasets with strong population representation) in their projects, demonstrating their utility and strengths.

Robust datasets can be held by academic, non-profit, public or private/commercial institutions. They can include, but are not limited to cohorts, biobanks, electronic health records and registries, community, village or household panels, data from experimental research collected over time, intervention trials with at least three time-points. Additionally, if one of the home organisations of applicants holds an appropriate dataset, teams are allowed to use it, provided it meets the criteria presented in the guidance in [Annex 2](#).

Applicants must be able to evidence access to relevant datasets as part of their application. Please see the application form for further guidance on what supporting documentation can be submitted as evidence. We recognise that dataset access can require multiple stages, for example where teams require access to Special License data. Where final steps towards dataset access are in progress at the time of application, but teams can evidence the roadmap to completing these, they should detail this as part of their application. If a shortlisted team cannot demonstrate access to their selected data by the 19<sup>th</sup> June, then they will be unable to take up a place on the Data Prize, and the place will be offered to another team.

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# Who can apply?

The Data Prize aims to contribute to building a thriving mental health science community, which brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. We actively welcome applications from teams which include early career researchers and practitioners, and/or individuals with relevant skills and experience who are interested in applying these to the field of mental health for the first time.

We encourage applicants to form multidisciplinary teams that bring together the range of skills and experience needed to deliver their proposal. This is likely to include a combination of expertise such as:

- Mental health research.
- Data science.
- Digital tool development.
- Lived experience.
- Mental health policy.
- Mental health practitioners.
- Specialists in areas such as data ethics, open science, and expertise relevant to sustaining and scaling data tools.

There are not strict limits on the number of individuals that can form a team. However, as a guide, we expect that Data Prize teams will typically include approximately 5–10 individuals to cover the relevant disciplines.

Each team will be asked to name a lead applicant organisation which is able to receive the grant funding on behalf of the team, and to detail all co-applicants involved in their team.

Full eligibility criteria are outlined below. Please make sure you have read these and understand them before submitting your application.

## Lead applicants

- Must be based at an organisation in the UK, which is either a higher education institution, a research institute, a healthcare organisation, a non-academic healthcare organisation, or a not-for-profit organisation.
- Must have a permanent, open-ended, fixed-term, or long-term rolling contract, or the guarantee of one for the full duration of the award.

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## Co-applicants

- Can be based anywhere in the world apart from mainland China.
- Should be based at either a higher education institution, a research institute, a non-academic healthcare organisation, a not-for-profit organisation, a commercial organisation, or self-employed.

## All team members

- Must play a meaningful role in delivering the proposal. Teams should involve multi-disciplinary collaboration, bringing together individuals across fields such as: psychiatry, psychology, neuroscience, disciplines within humanities or social sciences, computer sciences, mental health research, data science, data holders, digital tool development, lived experience, mental health policy, mental health practitioners, or specialisms in areas such as data ethics, open science, and expertise relevant to sustaining and scaling data tools, amongst others.
- Must be able to sign up to a set of standard grant terms and conditions, which are set out in the supporting documents. Please note that a single grant agreement will be signed with the lead applicant organisation. All co-applicants must also be able to sign up to the appropriate team member terms and conditions.

## Applications

- Must be completed in full, with no questions left blank or unfinished.
- Must evidence that the team has approval and has met all appropriate requirements and standards to access the data required for their proposal, and has adequate organisational data protocols to safeguard data consistent with applicable regulations. Please note proposals to carry out primary research to provide a core source of data are not in scope for the Data Prize.
- Must outline a tool proposal that is consistent with the guidelines on use cases and scope outlined in this Information Pack.
- Must contain a plan for engaging with people with lived experience, which meets the guidance included in [Annex 1](#).
- Must include a budget that meets the parameters set out in the Eligible Expenditure Guidance.

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# Team matching workshops

To help facilitate the formation of diverse teams with access to key areas of knowledge and expertise, we will be facilitating two Team Matching sessions scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> March and the 19<sup>th</sup> March.

These sessions will provide opportunities for participants to share their areas of expertise, ideas and interests for developing tools within the scope of the prize, with smaller facilitated conversations to allow for participants to get to know each other.

Further details on the agenda for these sessions will be shared ahead of time, but we encourage both individuals looking for teams to join, and teams looking for experts to fill gaps in their team's knowledge/skills base to register for these events. Details and registration for the events will be shared in a LinkedIn Group, to the Data Prize mailing list, and on the Data Prize website.

If you have a specific question about team formation outside of these sessions, please send us a message at [datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk](mailto:datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk).

"So often research can be quite slow – it can take years until you have a paper published. To develop a tool it's a nice experience because it has such an immediate effect. You get feedback from your users that they find it helpful... people reach out to you and they say, oh, I've used it. It opened up a world of opportunities, I would say."

**Dr Bettina Moltrecht Senior Lecturer, Principal Researcher University College London, Co-founder of Harmony, one of the winning teams of the first Mental Health Data Prize**



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# When to apply

The table below highlights the key dates for the Data Prize application process. Whilst these dates provide indicative timelines, Social Finance and Wellcome reserve the right to adjust these dates if necessary.

Recordings and supporting documents from online events will be published on the Data Prize section of the [Social Finance website](#).

Date	Activity
11 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Applications open
24 <sup>th</sup> February 2026	Launch event
5 <sup>th</sup> March 2026 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	Team matching workshops
19 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	FAQ published
19 <sup>th</sup> March 2026	Q&A and guest speaker event
10 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	Closure of clarification question submissions
17 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	FAQ updated
8 <sup>th</sup> May 2026, 12pm	Application deadline
W/C 8 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2026	Online pitch sessions for shortlisted teams
By 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Selection of successful teams
3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2026	Kick-off of Prototyping Phase

Following the receipt of a grant offer, successful teams must be able to kick-off work from the first week of August 2026.

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# How to submit questions

All teams who are considering applying for the Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize can submit questions to [dataprizet@socialfinance.org.uk](mailto:dataprizet@socialfinance.org.uk) before the deadline of 10<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

## Please note:

We will be collating questions submitted to provide consistent responses and therefore cannot answer questions submitted after this deadline, with the exception of specific support required in relation to submission of applications and use of the Submit portal. For any clarifications relating to the overall Data Prize, we will collate responses and publish these in the form of FAQ documents.

For any clarifications relating to specific teams or applicants, please note that we may be unable to provide a tailored response. In particular, please note that we are not able to provide responses on the following:

- Assessments of specific proposals, specific approaches to tool development or data analysis, or choice of specific datasets – guidance on the evaluation criteria that will be used by the independent selection panel is available in this document.
- Requests for expansion of the available budget per team beyond the published budget envelope.

Similar questions submitted may be collated to provide an overall response.

Please ensure that questions submitted are suitable for publication, and in particular, do not include any personal data or confidential information which cannot be shared publicly.

We aim to publish and update an FAQ document on the following dates.

- 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – First edition of the FAQ
- 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – Update of the FAQ

The FAQ documents will be published on the [Mental Health Data Prize webpage](#) and e-mailed to those who have started applications and signed up to receive communications.

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# How to apply

Make sure your team has downloaded and read all the application documents including:

- **Application Documents** – includes: PDF of the Application Form, and a Budget Template.
- **Supporting Documents** – includes: Template Grant Agreement for Teams (including Team Member T&Cs), Submission Terms, and Eligible Expenditure Guidance.

**Register:** We are using the application platform **Submit**. To register, please [follow this link](#) or go to the [Social Finance website](#). When registering you will need to accept the Privacy policy and Terms of Submission, which have been included in the supporting documents for your reference.

**Complete the application form:** Please make sure you have included and reviewed all the information and attachments required before submitting. Applicants can only submit one application per team.

**Submit your application!**

We have included in the Application Documents a PDF copy of the application form for your reference. Please feel free to use this to guide the drafting of your application. To submit your application however, the answers must be inputted into the **Submit** platform. Please do not try to submit your application using this PDF as it will not be considered.

Before submitting your application, please make sure you:

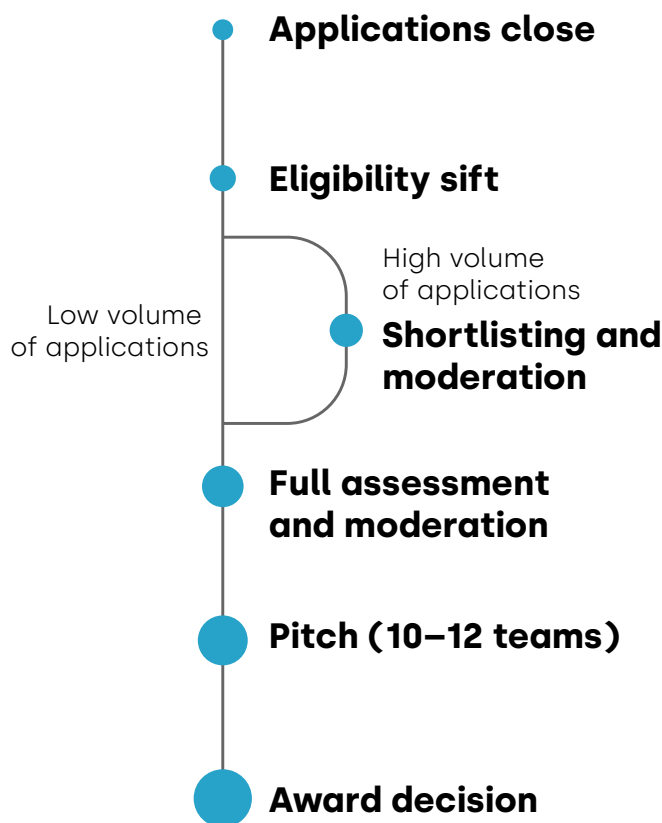
- Have read and accepted: the Eligibility Criteria (see Who can apply on [p. 11](#) of this document), Template Grant Agreement Terms, Terms of Submission, Privacy Policy.
- Have access, or have clear plans to have access by the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, to the datasets you will be using and have submitted evidence of access.
- Have fully answered every question in the application form without going over the word limits.
- Have approval from your lead applicant's home organisation to apply for the Data Prize.

# Evaluation process

Applications will be reviewed by a judging panel made up of experts in key fields relevant to the Data Prize including lived experience, data science, mental health research, and digital tool development. The panel will ensure decisions are fair, balanced, and consistent with the aims of the Data Prize. Its role is to review applications, moderate scoring, and agree final recommendations for funding. The final decision on funding will then be taken by Wellcome using the panel's recommendation.

The diversity of tools, teams, impact areas, and methods composing the cohort of 6 teams will be considered by the judging panel and Wellcome. These portfolio-level criteria will be considered during moderation of shortlisting and final award decisions to ensure a diverse portfolio of participating teams to maximise the impact across the Data Prize.

If a high volume of applications are received, an additional shortlisting phase will be added to the evaluation process. The diagram below shows the flow of the overall evaluation process:



# Evaluation criteria

Please find in the table below the Evaluation Criteria (scored between 0-5 for each of the individual criteria). Each application will therefore receive a total score out of 60, with 12 individual criteria each being scored out of 5:

<b>APPROACH TO TOOLING</b>	<p><b>A1: The proposed tool has the potential for <u>impact</u>, contributing to the mission of improving early intervention for anxiety, depression and/or psychosis.</b></p> <p>This could include use cases across research, policy or practice, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contributing to new research insights to improve existing early interventions, or develop new ones.</li> <li>● Facilitating a new approach or methodology that enables evidence-based decision-making about early intervention.</li> <li>● Furthering research, policy or practice insights around what works in improving early intervention for underserved communities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>A2: The proposed tool evidences an <u>innovative approach</u> to addressing data needs.</b></p> <p>The team can articulate how their proposed tool builds on existing research, policy and practice, and makes a novel contribution to the sector. This could include innovating in one or more of the following areas (or other applicable &amp; appropriate areas):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Solves a longstanding issue around data use for mental health research, policy or practice.</li> <li>● Adopts a tool not yet used in mental health research, policy or practice to be suitable for further use by the community.</li> <li>● Makes mental health data accessible to new groups including but not limited to: researchers, policy specialists, mental health practitioners.</li> <li>● Presents information contained within datasets in a new impactful, useful, and accessible format.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>A3: The team outlines a clear <u>vision for impact of the tool beyond the scope of this data prize</u>.</b></p> <p>This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The team’s articulation of their vision for longer-term sustainability, ensuring the tool can remain up-to-date and continue to drive impact.</li> <li>● The team’s dissemination plans to ensure the tool is widely adopted.</li> <li>● Potential to scale to wider applications within the mental health sector (across research, policy and/or practice).</li> <li>● Potential to scale to new user groups, organisations or locations.</li> <li>● Potential for use with other types of datasets.</li> </ul>

## APPROACH TO TOOLING

### **A4. The team outlines a clear and feasible plan for prototyping, evidencing their ability to reach tangible outputs by the end of the 9-month phase.**

This will include consideration of:

- Demonstration of clear objectives for prototyping.
- Articulation of suitable workstreams to deliver against prototyping objectives.
- Feasible time, resource and budgetary allocations to deliver these workstreams
- Consideration of associated risks and mitigations.

### **A5: The team articulates how they will make the tool available for wider use in line with open access principles.**

As per the [Wellcome open access policy](#), the proposal details approaches that the team will take to make tools available for wider use, including using publicly accessible code repositories, and providing sufficient data and testing to enable third parties to understand, test, run and re-use software.

## USE OF MENTAL HEALTH DATA

### **B1: The proposal clearly articulates the selection and use of appropriate mental health dataset(s) with potential to produce meaningful insights.**

This should include:

- Reasoning for the choice (note - the mental health dataset the team has proposed should be relevant to early intervention for anxiety, depression and / or psychosis).
- Evidence that the proposed dataset is robust and appropriate (e.g. longitudinal datasets with at least three waves of data capture, or large datasets with strong population representation).
- Proposed use of the selected dataset(s) is robust and appropriate for the team's tool use case, including reflections on potential risks, blockers, and mitigations for these.

### **B2. The proposal has potential to contribute to wider sector practice around use of existing mental health datasets.**

This could be demonstrated in a number of ways, for example:

- The proposal will provide greater visibility to an underutilised dataset, or a dataset that contains underexplored data points.
- The proposal will contribute to novel approaches for analysing specific types of data e.g. unstructured data.
- The proposal showcases a novel approach to analysis of datasets e.g. creative, participatory approaches that effectively blend insights from dataset analysis with insights and interpretation from lived experience experts.

### **B3. The proposal clearly articulates the use of data ethics principles and protocols to ensure ethical use of data.**

This should include:

- How teams have considered factors such as cohort profile, timeframe of data collection, and the provenance and legitimate basis for use of the proposed dataset.

**C1: The proposal outlines a multidisciplinary and diverse team with the range of skills and experience needed for successful delivery.**

This should include:

- Team members from an appropriate variety of disciplines to deliver on the tool proposal.
- Diversity across the team (including e.g. background, stage of career, education).

**C2: The proposal enables novel types of collaboration to advance mental health science.**

This could include for example:

- Organisations / departments which have not previously worked together.
- Organisations with relevant skills and experience, which have not previously had the opportunity to apply these to the field of mental health.
- Organisations experienced in the mental health field, which are developing a new collaboration with data or technical partners to extend their work on mental health data and tool development.
- Novel approaches to partnership between experts by profession and experts by experience.

**C3: The team outlines a plan for how they will work collaboratively and inclusively to bring together their complementary expertise.**

This should include:

- All team members having a clearly defined role which is crucial to the success and impact of the proposed project.
- Practical ways of working that are suitable to prototyping a data tool, ensuring workstreams are aligned, avoiding siloed working and enabling iteration in response to feedback loops (e.g. agile).
- Principles to ensure inclusive ways of working that provide each team member with a meaningful platform to bring their expertise to the collaboration.
- Team members having a consistent understanding of the project aims and ways of working (\*to be assessed during pitch stage).

**C4: Team shows a plan for lived experience engagement that is not extractive and positively impacts people with lived experience working on the project.**

This includes:

- How the proposal has been informed by lived experience expertise.
- How work during the Prototyping Phase will continue to be shaped by input from lived experience experts in an impactful way.
- How roles will align with lived experience experts' strengths and interests, and positively impact those taking part.
- How the team has taken steps to ensure their involvement plans can be representative of the population involved in their research / analysis.

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Recommendations made by the judging panel and funding decisions made by Social Finance and Wellcome will be final and will not be subject to challenge.

For more information about the Data Prize or if you have any questions, please email us at: [datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk](mailto:datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk)

"There isn't a lot of funding available that specifically supports digital tools for mental health science research and so it's been a really good opportunity to realise our vision ... And I can't wait to see what people come up with, what exciting ideas for digital tools there are out there."

**Prof Aja Murray, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh & Co-founder of DigiCAT, winner of Data Prize 2022-2024. Also on the Expert Advisory Group for the Mental Health Data Prize 2026 – 2028**



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# Annex 1: Glossary of terms

## Key Definitions

**Innovation** is about using new or existing knowledge to improve how things are done in a way that's new to a particular subject, approach or to mental health research/practice as a sector. Innovation happens in different ways, and on different scales. It can be about making existing systems or methods easier to work in/with, changing the way research is carried out or presented, creating new digital technologies, or introducing new ways to approach practice.

**Impact** is about the potential for meaningful difference brought about by the proposed tool, particularly in how it advances understanding, enables action, or improves outcomes in mental health research and practice. Impact can occur at different levels and over different timescales. It may involve generating new insights that shape future research questions, enabling other researchers to work more effectively through reusable tools or methods, influencing how evidence is interpreted or applied, or contributing to longer-term improvements for people affected by anxiety, depression and/or psychosis. Impact is not only about what is produced, but about who benefits from it, how it is used, and the change it helps to create.

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# Annex 2: Guidance on integrating lived experience

## Introduction

The goal of any innovation for mental health is ultimately to improve the lives of people who live with mental ill health.

Embedding lived experience as a central part of the development process helps ensure that:

- Innovations prioritise opportunity areas that can create the most impact for those with lived experience.
- Innovations support an empowering and representative narrative of mental health and do not inadvertently perpetuate stigma or harmful narratives about mental health.
- Innovations are well-received, trusted, and taken up by the population they seek to improve the lives of.

A key principle of the Wellcome Mental Health Data Prize is to ensure that lived experience is central to all aspects of the programme. This document provides guidance to applicants on integrating lived experience in their proposals and projects.

## What does lived experience expertise mean?

Wellcome defines lived experience as a unique form of knowledge, insight and expertise, that comes from having experience of mental health challenges in the past or currently. In the context of the Data Prize, this particularly includes the experience of anxiety, depression and/or psychosis. Lived experience experts can self-identify and do not need to have received a diagnosis.

Expertise of approaching lived experience involvement is another relevant and important form of knowledge and expertise, which might be relevant to include in shaping and delivering projects, but is separate to the lived experience expertise of mental health challenges.

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# Principles and practice of lived experience integration

## PRINCIPLES

### Centrality of Lived Experience Expertise

## PRACTICE

Lived experience expertise should be integrated across all stages of tool development, from proposal development, to prototyping, to dissemination and sustainability. Examples of opportunities for collaborating with lived experience experts include:

- **Problem identification:** Identifying the problem to be solved and what would make the most impact for people at risk of/ living with mental ill health.
- **Use of data:** Identifying current challenges and pain points around use and interpretation of existing mental health data and decisions made by researchers/ policymakers/ clinicians.
- **Language and narrative:** Advising on the narrative/ portrayal of mental (ill) health and choices around language and framing to be used within the proposed tool.
- **Ethics:** Advising on ethical considerations around use of mental health data and development of the proposed tool.
- **Outputs:** Co-developing outputs, for example the data tool itself, or associated publications, papers or blogs.
- **Dissemination:** Identifying dissemination routes and methods to communities that might benefit from the proposed tool.

**This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and other methods of collaborating are welcomed.**

**Team design:** We encourage teams to embed lived experience across project roles (for example as team members, advisors or workshop participants), including decision-making and leadership roles, and to identify a lived experience lead who will be accountable for this aspect of the work.

**Ways of working:** We encourage teams to establish strategy, reflective practices and metrics to regularly evaluate effectiveness and impact of integrating lived experience in project.

**Training and development:** We encourage teams to consider training and development needs across the whole team in relation to lived experience involvement, and to budget for this where appropriate.

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## Equity, Respect & Transparency

**Enable and empower lived experience experts to participate in all decision-making.** Consider key enablers to shared decision-making, for example taking time to establish shared language and avoid jargon, and agreeing ways of working and communication channels that best enable team members across all areas of expertise to actively participate.

**Document the contribution of lived experience experts and acknowledge them internally and externally.** We encourage teams to document how lived experience expertise has informed project progress and key decisions and acknowledging their contribution in outputs such as publications and presentations, particularly as this is a developing field and shared learning is valuable.

**Budget for fair compensation towards lived experience experts' time.**

**Uphold confidentiality and anonymity in line with preferences discussed with lived experience experts;** ensure open and transparent communication on how lived experience input will be used.

**Lived experience experts should be free to input and disclose personal experience as they wish.** At no point should they be forced or coerced to share what they do not wish to.

**Safety.** Teams should ensure an open and simple process to withdraw from participating in the project at any point. Teams should also have a safeguarding policy and a safeguarding focal contact. This should be applicable to all team members, not just lived experience experts.

**Observe and moderate group dynamics to ensure lived experience expertise is respected with equal importance to other areas of expertise.**

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## Intersectionality

Consider the interconnected ways in which different contexts and characteristics (for example and not limited to: race, experience of immigration/ displacement, gender, stage of career, (dis)ability, neurodivergence, socioeconomic background) might influence experience of mental (ill) health.

Consider who is missing from the table/ whose voices are not being captured when recruiting lived experience experts, and what might be enablers/ blockers to different people giving their input.

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This is not an exhaustive list of principles and practices. Lived experience engagement continues to evolve, and teams are encouraged to iterate over the course of the project and share their own learnings.

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## Recruiting lived experience experts

To recruit lived experience experts, teams are encouraged to consider:

- Whether organisations they are affiliated with have existing lived experience networks or collaborations that they could invite experts from.
- Partnership opportunities, such as bringing on a lived experience involvement lead from an organisation with existing experience and networks around lived experience involvement in a space relevant to their proposal.

## Case study

One of the winning teams from the first Mental Health Data Prize, DigiCAT, [published a case study](#) of their experience and reflections of integrating lived experience in their project.

## Further resources

[Wellcome's guidance on embedding lived experience expertise in mental health research](#)

[The Wellcome Trust. How lived experience expertise shapes research and development in digital mental health \[version 1; not peer reviewed\]. Wellcome Open Res 2024, 9:373 \(document\)](#)

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# Annex 3: Guidance on dataset selection

Participating teams can propose their own datasets as research data, with the potential gain of opening them for analysis from a range of expertise after the Data Prize, provided they meet the following criteria:

- The primary dataset used in the project should focus on UK cohorts. This does not preclude teams from incorporating additional dataset(s) beyond the UK where the proposed use case is supported by use of datasets from more than one geography.
- Datasets must include data from at least one age-appropriate measure of depression and/or anxiety and/or psychosis (or their symptoms). Proxy measures of these disorders or symptoms are permitted but should be well-justified.
- Datasets must facilitate insights related to early intervention and should include data about respondents under 30 years of age.
- The rigour and quality of datasets will be assessed as part of the evaluation of applications. We will be looking for teams to leverage robust datasets (e.g. longitudinal datasets with at least three waves of data capture, or large datasets with strong population representation) in their projects, demonstrating their utility and strengths.

We have provided some signposting to robust UK focused datasets as well as larger repositories at the end of this document.

Within their applications, teams must be able to demonstrate both:

- that their dataset is appropriate for their use case and proposed tool, and
- that they have gained appropriate access to use this data within the Data Prize.

If applicants have access to a dataset that does not meet all of the criteria above but provides other added value to address a use case within the scope of the Data Prize, please contact us at [datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk](mailto:datapriz@socialfinance.org.uk) so we can offer advice and guidance.

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## Expectations for data ethics

As part of the evaluation of Data Prize applications, we will be evaluating the safeguards that teams have in place to ensure the ethical use of data. Data Prize applicants must detail in their application the provisions they will have in place for ensuring:

- That their use case and any sharing of the data aligns with the provenance of the data and the legitimate basis for its collection.
- Clear protocols for the safeguarding of all data and in particular sensitive data.
- Compliance with local data privacy laws and, where relevant, compliance with any access protocols in relation to restricted access datasets or shared data platforms.
- Any potential biases in data collected are identified, with clear mitigations in place to address any biases.
- Mitigations against the risk that their research may generate outcomes that could be misused for harmful purposes.

## Expectations for open science

Wellcome are committed to conducting mental health research in an open way. Data Prize teams must be prepared to share the insights they have found along with relevant data in line with [Wellcome's open access policy](#). This includes:

- Where relevant, appropriate and privacy-preserving, analytical datasets, along with variables created and transformed during research, should be made publicly available.
- All source code must be licensed under an OSI-compliant licence and must be hosted on a freely-available and publicly accessible collaboration repository, such as GitHub, GitLab or BitBucket.
- If any software (including any software tool) depends on or processes data then sufficient data must be made freely available to enable third parties to understand, test, run, and re-use the relevant software. This could be a small sub-set of data embedded into the code repository, or a link to data on a publicly-accessible repository.
- Publications resulting from Data Prize projects should be published in open access journals, wherever possible.

Please make reference to the [Wellcome Open access policy](#) for further details.

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As part of the support programme provided during the Data Prize, participating teams will also be encouraged to engage with the community of fellow Data Prize teams. This includes sharing insights and outputs of research, and learnings relating to analysing existing mental health datasets and development of digital tools.

## Evaluating dataset choice

When submitting an application, all teams must ensure that they include within their response the following information relating to the data they will use:

- Provenance of the data and the fields that will be used in your project.
- Reasoning for your choice of dataset, noting how the dataset is appropriate to your proposed tool and can contribute meaningful insights around early intervention in anxiety, depression and/or psychosis.

How your selection and use of data embeds data ethics, including how you have considered factors such as cohort profile, timeframe of data collection, and the provenance and legitimate basis for use of the proposed dataset

How your use of data has potential to contribute to wider sector practice around use of existing mental health data (for example by increasing visibility and use of an underexplored dataset, or contributing novel approaches to analysing data)

## Identifying datasets

Please find below links to resources that your team might find useful when identifying an appropriate dataset(s) for you to use to develop your project. Teams are allowed to use more than one dataset in their project.

Do keep in mind that not every dataset included within these resources will align with the aforementioned criteria and guidance, so please do check before selecting a suitable dataset.

[Atlas of Longitudinal Datasets](#) – a signposting tool to thousands of longitudinal datasets.

[Catalogue of Mental Health Measures](#) – an interactive catalogue of mental health and wellbeing measures in British cohort and longitudinal studies.

[DATAMIND](#) – a UK hub for data-driven mental health research. DATAMIND provides access to mental health data through resources such as DATAMIND's [Trusted Research Environment \(TRE\)](#) and a wider set of [digital tools](#) for mental health data science.

[UK Data Service](#) – a UK data catalogue listing economic, population and social research data.

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Additionally, please see below a list of specific exemplar datasets to provide guidance on the type of data that we consider to be appropriate for the Data Prize. Please note these are examples only, and we welcome applications that include other datasets that meet the guidance above including smaller datasets and datasets held by non-profits.

- [Understanding Society](#)
- [Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children | University of Bristol](#)
- [Born in Bradford](#)
- [Millennium Cohort Study](#)
- [Next Steps](#)
- [National Clinical Audit of Psychosis](#)
- [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies \(IAPT\)](#)

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Publication date: February 2026

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