

# NHS South West Secure Data Environment Data Accelerator Fund for Novel and Emerging Assets (DAFNEA)

The NHS South West Secure Data Environment (SDE) is pleased to announce the launch of a new **data-readiness funding scheme**: the **Data Accelerator Fund for Novel and Emerging Assets (DAFNEA)**.

The **South West SDE** is a collaboration across six Integrated Care Systems:

- Bath, Swindon & Wiltshire
- Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire
- Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
- Devon
- Gloucestershire
- Somerset

It is part of NHS England's strategy to improve health outcomes by enabling secure access to multimodal health and social care data.

**DAFNEA** is a £1 million fund designed to help prepare and link new datasets for research via the South West SDE, in alignment with the national [Health Data Research Service \(HDRS\)](#) and local research priorities.

This scheme is designed to support organisations with health and care datasets that are not yet prepared or accessible for research. The funding will be used to help organise, categorise, store, link and govern the use of the data. A key part of the project is working with the South West SDE team to ensure appropriate **public, patient and professional engagement** has taken place and that the safeguards for appropriate use of the data are set-up.

## Purpose of the Fund

The fund aims to accelerate access to **novel, unique, multimodal data** for research. By this we mean data:

- Is **not currently or usually available** in regional or national research databases
- Is **bespoke, deep (complex data beyond single disease codes or activity counts), or multimodal (e.g. text, images, audio, video, and sensor data)**
- Align with **Health Data Research UK (HDR UK)** [strategic priorities](#) and improve researchers' abilities to tackle health inequalities

It will **not fund** the following activities:

- Assets or services outside the South West SDE footprint
- Collection of new data – datasets must already exist

All funding will be balanced across the South West SDE footprint, provided that applications meet the required quality standard. A proportion of the fund will be ring-fenced for VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) applications meeting the quality criteria.

### **Expected Outcomes by the End of the Funding Period**

Each awardee is expected to deliver:

1. A fully executed Data Sharing Agreement between the data controller organisation and BNSSG Integrated Care Board (host of the South West SDE). This should include:
  - a. An agreed ingress request process
  - b. A defined review cycle before organisational sign-off
  - c. Confirmation of legal signatory support during the application phase
2. Comprehensive and detailed (metadata) documentation for the data asset, including:
  - a. Column-level specifications
  - b. Detailed description of the data asset
  - c. Upload of this metadata to the central catalogue, HDR UK Innovation Gateway

### **Funding**

Funding can be used for:

- Secure, API-accessible storage (*data storage system that can be accessed, managed, and manipulated programmatically through an Application Programming Interface (API).*)
- Preparation of Data Sharing Agreements (to be completed by **March 2026**)
- Data preparation, including digitisation of paper-based data assets
- API and metadata catalogue development (to be completed by **December 2026**)
- OMOP ([Observational Medical Outcomes Partnership Common Data Model](#)) mapping (where applicable)

**Award amounts** will range from **£25,000 to £125,000**, depending on asset complexity. Successful applicants will be expected to provide regular progress updates.

The funding call will be coordinated by the two South West SDE research hubs at the University of Bristol (the contracting organisation) and the University of Exeter.

## Support

The South West SDE team will provide centralised support across technical, governance, programme and research domains. This includes:

- Governance and contracting support for DSA arrangements
- Technical development of an API to land data from the data controller into the SWSDE

## Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Be affiliated with, or be a partner of an **NHS integrated care board** or a **University** within the **South West region**.
- Propose data assets **not currently part of regional or national datasets**.
- Must offer **multimodal, deep, novel, or bespoke** data aligned with HDR UK strategic priorities.

## Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a panel including representatives from:

- South West SDE leadership and management teams
- South West SDE research working group, which has representation from members of the public
- South West academic institutes and NHS research departments

Applications will be assessed against:

### Feasibility and timeline criteria:

- Data Sharing Agreements in place by **March 2026**
- Metadata available by **December 2026**

### Strategic alignment criteria:

- Fills a gap in the healthcare data ecosystem
- Aligns with HDR UK strategy
- Detail public benefit and commercial potential

## Process and Timelines

Milestone	Date
Call opens	December 2025
Expression of interest deadline	Midday 7 January 2026
Invitations to the second round	14 January 2026
Full application deadline	28 January 2026
Funding decisions announced	Early February 2026
Project start	Mid-February 2026

## How to Apply

Please submit your expression of interest by **12:00 on Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026** to:  
[bnssg.swsde@nhs.net](mailto:bnssg.swsde@nhs.net)

Queries can also be sent to: [bnssg.swsde@nhs.net](mailto:bnssg.swsde@nhs.net)