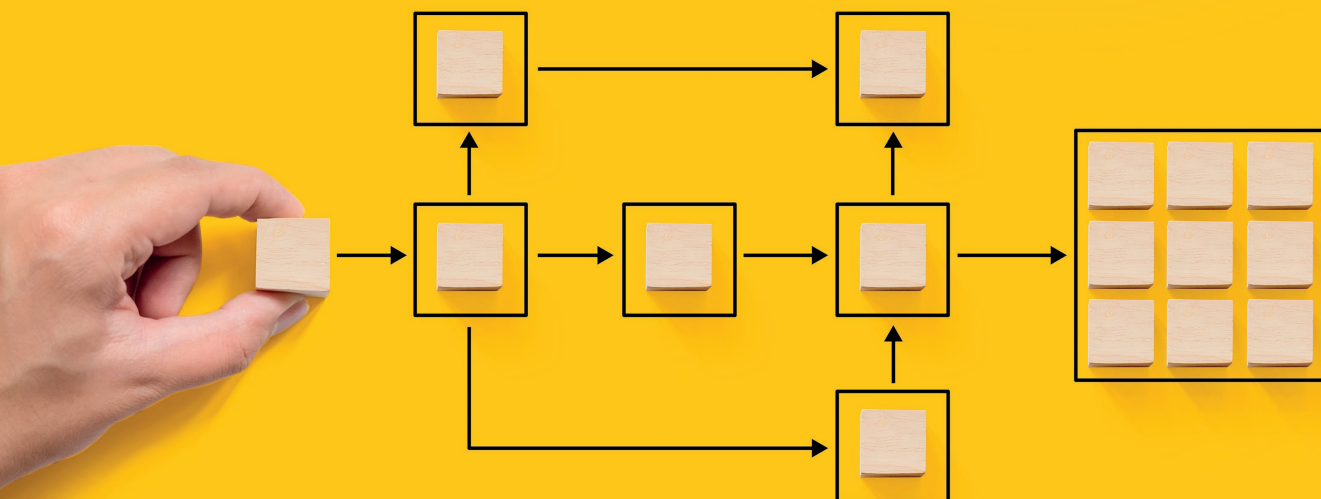
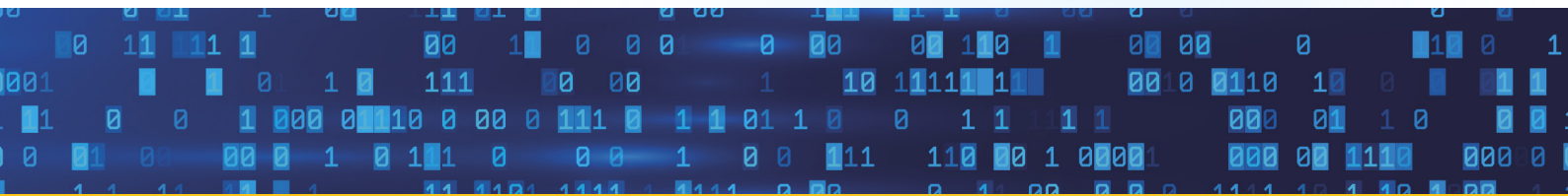




Improving Data Policies at the University of Sheffield and UK Reproducibility Network



Authors names, affiliations and ORCIDs:

□ Dr Adam Partridge (University of Sheffield, UK Reproducibility Network),
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0133-4155>

Summary:

In recent years policymakers at the national, funding body, publisher, and organisational levels have been working to ensure that their policies support the creation and reuse of data that are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR). Monitoring progress across the changing policy landscape is labour intensive and largely achieved through the completion of annual surveys and/or desk research. In addition, monitoring tends to focus on the existence of such policies rather than on their content and often looks only at what is happening at the national and funding body levels meaning that organisational level policies are often not taken into account.

The FAIRsFAIR project released their FAIR-enabling data policy checklist in 2022 to help policy makers self-assess whether elements of existing data policies are FAIR-enabling as well as providing recommendations on what should be addressed when developing new data policies. The checklist was also intended to help harmonise the description of policy content to improve its comparability and, to this end, a structured policy description template was created based on the content of the checklist. FAIRsharing - a curated, informative and educational resource on data and metadata standards, databases and policies - updated their own policy metadata in 2023 to reflect the fields covered by the FAIRsFAIR policy checklist and template. As a result, policies registered with FAIRsharing can now make the content of their policies more explicit and comparable by both humans and machines which could make monitoring the policy landscape more straightforward and efficient in the years to come.

This support action worked with up to individuals/small teams to support them to coordinate the registration of data policies from stakeholders in their country/region/domain with the FAIRsharing registry and consider how we can leverage this shared pool of information for ongoing policy monitoring activities.

This FAIR Implementation Story outlines the specific aims and actions of Dr Adam Partridge (The University of Sheffield and UK Reproducibility Network) in relation to their participation in the support action.



■ Introduction:

The support action was approached by focusing on the UK context - specifically the subset of institutions that are members of the UK Reproducibility Network (<https://www.ukrn.org/institutional-leads/>). The goal was to raise awareness of FAIR-enabling policies (e.g. viewing policies like another form of digital object), teach more people about FAIRsharing and the FAIRsFAIR policy checklist, and for institutions to create an entry for their research data policy on FAIRsharing.org.

■ Approach taken:

Dr Partridge developed and delivered a workshop for UKRN institutions to learn about FAIR-enabling policies, the FAIRsFAIR checklist, and FAIRsharing.org. He also organised for UKRN's STAR metascience project to present their early results at this workshop and used the FAIRsharing policy report (and checklist) to check how FAIR-enabling University of Sheffield's policy was. Dr Partridge addressed some of these issues (e.g. added a FAIRsharing entry for our research data repository and linked it to the policy entry) and shared this work locally with our (grassroots) Open Research Working Group. He presented this work to our Open Research Advisory Group with a recommendation that it be used to inform development of our **Good Research and Innovation Policy**, which is currently being reviewed. Dr Partridge also demonstrated the value of engaging with FAIR-IMPACT and FAIRsharing using the policy report output as an example of this.

■ Challenges encountered and addressed:

Dr Partridge encountered hesitation by attendees to dive in and add FAIRsharing records for their institution's policy. Many felt they either needed to discuss this further, didn't know who was responsible for this policy and/or that interpretation of the policy was difficult. For some institutions, this information is held across multiple policies. Timing over the summer was also a challenge as a lot of people were away. Dr Partridge addressed these challenges through offering follow-up support, scaffolding this process with attendees going forward into 2025, and ensuring policies could be directly added.

■ Impact:

Specifically at University of Sheffield, the support action led to the use of the policy report to inform direct improvement of our policy as part of the current review. Continued use of FAIRsharing, checklist, and policy report to guide future improvements is expected. At participating UKRN institutions (including the University of Sheffield), the support action led to increased knowledge and understanding of FAIRsharing, FAIR-enabling policies, and the FAIRsFAIR checklist within the UKRN member institutions. Future activities include continued follow-up with initial participating institutions, then the wider UKRN group of institutions.



■ ■ Key messages:

Use a wider initial net of institutions. Potentially split the workshop into an introductory session about the topic and then another session where attendees create entries for their policies - this would enable the info to be shared in between and the responsible people can then attend the second session. Consider the audience - FAIRsharing is useful to many different stakeholders, but the session can be tweaked to emphasise the most relevant aspects.





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