

# Eastern England Secure Data Environment (SDE) – Registration Guidance

## 1. What is Registration?

Registration is the process by which organisations and individual researchers are confirmed as meeting the governance, security, and training standards required to access the [Eastern England Secure Data Environment \(SDE\)](#). Registration safeguards patient data, maintains public trust, and restricts access to trained and authorised researchers.

Registration is a **mandatory prerequisite** for access to the SDE. Researchers cannot access a SDE workspace until both their organisation and they themselves have been successfully registered.

### The 5 Safes: How SDEs protect data

Registration is underpinned by the nationally adopted **5 Safes framework**, which provides a consistent approach to secure, privacy preserving research:

- **Safe People** – Only trained, authorised, and registered researchers may access the SDE
- **Safe Projects** – Research must have clear public benefit, appropriate approvals, and sound methodology
- **Safe Settings** – Data can only be accessed within a secure accredited SDE and cannot be downloaded, copied, or stored outside the secure environment
- **Safe Data** – Data are minimised, de-identified, linked, or pseudonymised according to project need
- **Safe Outputs** – All outputs are subject to Airlock checking before release.

## 2. National Registration Model

Registration for access to NHS Secure Data Environments is delivered through the SDE Network Registration Service. This provides a single, standardised process across England for registering organisations and individual researchers.

All organisations and researchers seeking access to the Eastern England SDE must complete registration through the SDE Network Registration Service. Registration status is recognised across participating NHS sub-national SDEs.

## 3. Organisational Registration

An organisation must be registered before any of its researchers can be registered.

Organisational registration confirms that the organisation meets national standards for information governance, data protection, and secure research practice. This includes assurance that appropriate policies, controls, and accountability structures are in place.

Organisational registration involves:

- Demonstrating compliance with national information governance and security expectations
- Evidence of appropriate **Safe People** and **Safe Settings** controls (see [here](#) for requirements)
- Successful completion of assessment through the SDE Network Registration Service
- Signing the **SDE Network Agreement**, which confirms the organisation's participation in the national SDE network.

Once registered, the organisation is recognised as an approved organisation, and its researchers may proceed with individual registration.

## 4. Individual Researcher Registration

Individual registration confirms that a researcher is eligible and authorised to work within an NHS SDE.

Researchers may apply for registration once their organisation holds registered status. Individual registration focuses on confirming identity, training, affiliation, and the appropriateness of access.

Individual researcher registration includes:

- **Identity verification** through the SDE Network Registration Service
- **Confirmation of organisational affiliation** to a registered organisation
- **Verification of mandatory information governance and security training**
- **Assessment of role and need for access**, ensuring the researcher's involvement is appropriate for the proposed project.

Successful registration enables the researcher to be considered for SDE workspace access as part of an approved project.

## 5. HDR UK Gateway Cohort Browser

Registered researchers gain access to the [HDR UK Gateway Cohort Browser](#).

This tool allows researchers to explore cohort level metadata and anonymised counts across participating SDEs. It does not provide access to raw data and is intended to support feasibility assessment and study planning.

Only registered researchers can access the Cohort Browser.

## 6. End-to-End Registration Journey

The registration process typically follows these stages:

1. **Organisational registration** is completed through the SDE Network Registration Service
2. The organisation signs the SDE Network Agreement and becomes fully registered
3. **Researchers apply for individual registration** through the SDE Network Registration Service
4. Identity, training, affiliation, and role checks are completed
5. Researchers are confirmed as registered by the national service
6. Once registered, researchers may initiate project applications via the Data Access Request (DAR) and Data Access Committee (DAC) processes. SDE workspaces are provided as part of an approved project. While registration may take place in parallel with project development, **SDE workspace access is granted only once registration is complete.**

## 7. Registration and the Data Access Process

Registration is closely linked to the DAR and DAC processes:

- A DAR may be prepared while organisational or individual registration is in progress
- Before a DAR can proceed to DAC review, the applicant organisation must hold **registered status**. All researchers who will access SDE data must be registered **prior to being granted access**
- Once DAC approval is granted, data access agreements and workspace access can proceed without delay, provided registration requirements have been met.

## 8. Key Points for Researchers

- Registration is mandatory for access to the Eastern England SDE
- Both your organisation and you as an individual must be registered
- Registration is completed through the SDE Network Registration Service
- Registration supports secure, trusted, and efficient access to NHS data for approved research.

## Appendix A

### A1. Organisational Registration

An organisation must be registered through the [NHS Research Secure Data Environment \(SDE\) Network Registration Service](#) before any of its researchers can be registered.

Organisational registration establishes that the organisation meets national standards for information governance, security, accountability, and assurance of researchers working on its behalf. Registration is completed once at network level and is recognised across participating NHS SDEs.

#### A1.1 Requesting organisational registration

Organisations request registration by completing the national [organisational registration form](#), providing core information about the organisation, key contacts, and the intended use of NHS SDEs for research.

#### A1.2 Providing organisational assurance

As part of the national registration process, organisations provide evidence demonstrating compliance with national information governance and security expectations. This includes assurance that appropriate controls are in place to support the Safe People and Safe Settings principles of the 5 Safes framework.

#### A1.3 National assessment

Information submitted through the SDE Network Registration Service is assessed against the SDE Network's published registration criteria to determine whether the organisation is suitable to request access to data held by NHS SDEs. Assessment is conducted centrally through the national service.

#### A1.4 Confirmation of organisational registration

Once assessment is successfully completed, the organisation is confirmed as registered at SDE Network level and is added to the national register of registered organisations. From this point, researchers affiliated to the organisation may proceed with individual registration.

Registration at network level confirms suitability to apply for data access but does not guarantee access to specific datasets, which remains subject to SDE specific DAR and DAC processes.

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## **A2. Individual Researcher Registration**

Individual registration confirms that a researcher meets national requirements to work within NHS Secure Data Environments. Individual registration may take place in parallel with project development but must be completed before SDE workspace access is granted.

### **A2.1 Requesting individual registration**

Researchers apply for registration by completing the national [individual registration form](#), confirming their identity, organisational affiliation, and role in research activities.

### **A2.2 Identity verification**

Researchers' complete identity verification by providing their organisational email address through the SDE Network Registration Service as part of the national registration checks. A named representative from the individual's organisation will be asked to vouch for them.

### **A2.3 Training verification**

Researchers must confirm completion of their employer's mandatory information governance and security training as required by national registration criteria.

### **A2.4 Organisational affiliation and role assurance**

Registration confirms that the researcher is affiliated to a registered organisation and that their stated role is appropriate for the research activities they intend to undertake within an SDE.

### **A2.5 Confirmation of individual registration**

Once all checks are completed, the researcher is confirmed as registered at SDE Network level. Registered researchers are eligible to request access to national tools and to be named on Data Access Requests submitted to participating SDEs.

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### **A3. Registration and the Data Access Request (DAR) and Data Access Committee (DAC) Process**

Registration operates alongside, but separately from, project specific data access approval.

1. A Data Access Request (DAR) may be developed while organisational or individual registration is in progress.
2. Before a DAR can proceed to Data Access Committee (DAC) review, the applicant organisation must hold registered status at SDE Network level. DAC review may proceed where the core research team is registered; any additional researchers pending registration will not be granted access to SDE data until registration is complete.
3. Following DAC approval, data access agreements and SDE workspace access can proceed without delay, provided registration requirements have been met. Registration alone does not confer access to data.