

Researcher Access Service

Enabling faster, simpler access to public sector data for research in the public benefit

What is the Researcher Access Service?

Research Data Scotland (RDS) has developed the Researcher Access Service - a digital service that makes it quicker and simpler for approved researchers to access Scotland's public sector data for research. Initially, the Researcher Access Service provides access to nine datasets around health, but we are working to expand to include other areas like education, social work, justice, and others through discussions with data controllers.

Launched by RDS in April 2024, the service enables faster access to public sector datasets held in Scotland's National Safe Haven – a Trusted Research Environment which securely houses some of Scotland's most useful datasets for research.

What data is available through the service?

Public Health Scotland have enabled streamlined access to some of their most frequently requested datasets via the Researcher Access Service. At launch, these nine datasets are the first to become available through the streamlined approvals process:

- Outpatient Appointments and Attendances (January 1997 onwards)
- General Acute Inpatient and Day Case (April 1997 onwards)
- Maternity Inpatient and Day Case (April 1997 onwards)
- Mental Health Inpatient and Day Case (April 1997 onwards)
- Scottish Cancer Registry (April 1997 onwards)
- Prescribing Information System (January 2015 onwards)
- Scotland Accident and Emergency (January 2011 onwards)
- Birth Registrations (1981 onwards)
- Death Registrations (2015 onwards)

The most recent data available may vary per dataset, and more detail will be provided as part of the application process. More detailed information about these nine datasets can be found on our website.

Working with users and the public

Since the outset, RDS has endeavoured to ensure that the public and the service's users (including researchers, partners, and other data professionals) are a key part of the design process.

The design and delivery of the Researcher Access Service has been through several stages of iterative development, with ongoing user consultation established as a fundamental part of the process.

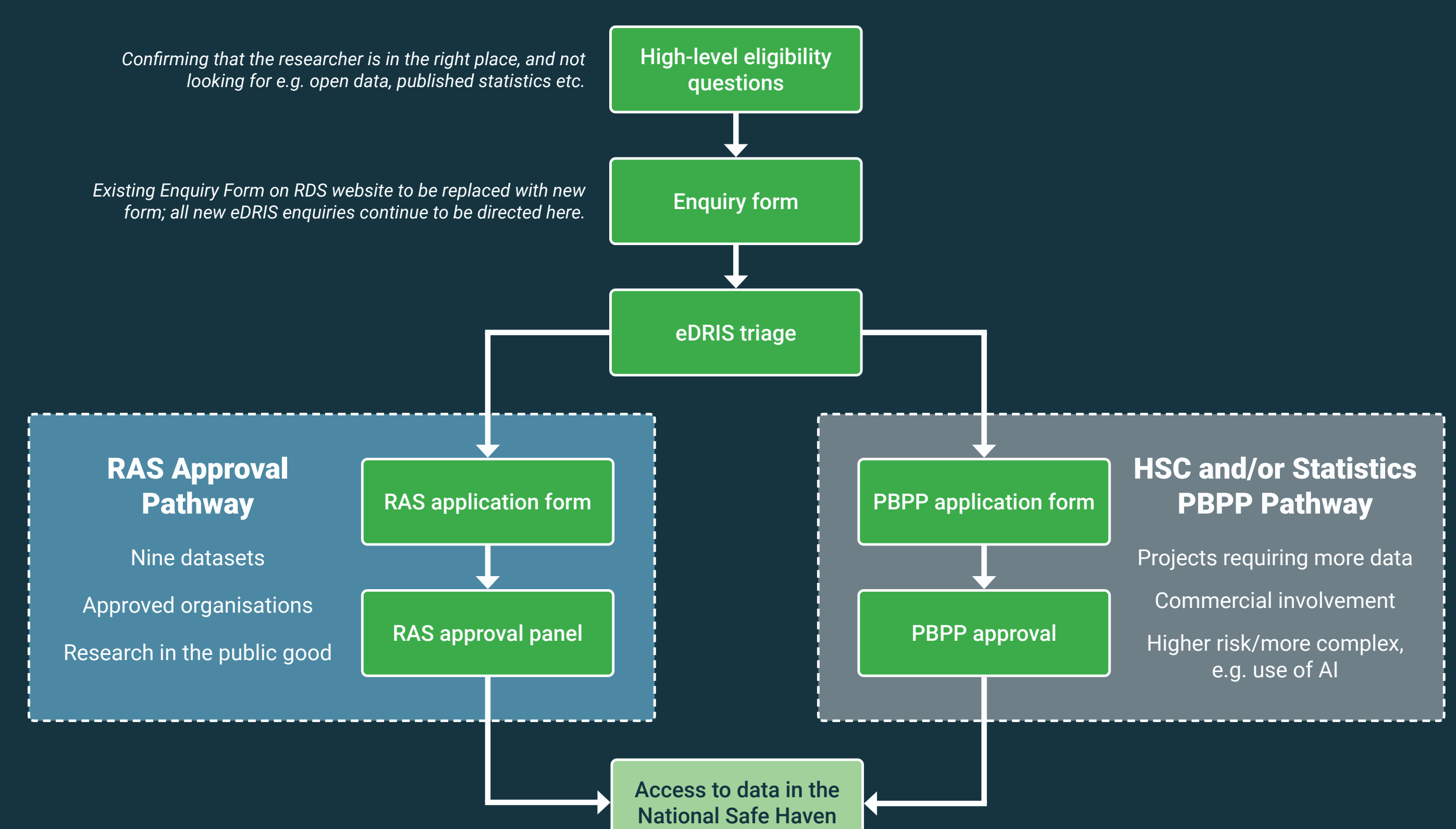
Alongside user feedback, we have been led by our public panel, Scotland Talks Data, on areas including oversight, ensuring the service doesn't impact data security, and clearly communicating processes and changes.

Throughout development and into the future evolution of the service, users and the public will continue to influence the priorities and direction of travel for our service development.

How does it work?

One way the Researcher Access Service makes it faster to access data is by streamlining the approvals process for certain datasets. When an application is submitted via the Researcher Access Service, eDRIS (electronic Data Research and Innovation Service, part of Public Health Scotland) will assess the enquiry and decide the appropriate pathway for approving the application.

By introducing a risk-based assessment at the first stage of the approvals process, the Researcher Access Service enables faster access to data for certain projects, without compromising on the security of the data.



Find out more

The Researcher Access Service is now live and open to applications for research in the public benefit. To find out more about using the service for your project, visit www.researchdata.scot

To stay up to date with future developments, subscribe to our monthly newsletter and follow us on X (Twitter) and LinkedIn.



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