

TVS SDE Glossary

Terms and plain English definitions

About the TVS SDE

Secure Data Environment (SDE)	A secure setting where approved users can access and analyse health and care data for approved purposes. Data remains protected within the environment and cannot be freely downloaded or copied.
TVS SDE	The Thames Valley and Surrey Secure Data Environment provides secure access to health and care data for approved research, planning and innovation projects.
Data Access Request Form (DARF)	The application form used to request access to data within the TVS SDE. Applicants provide details about their project, data requirements, approvals, and expected benefits.
Dataset Menu	A catalogue that helps applicants identify and specify the types of data they need for their proposed work.
Data Use Register	A publicly available record of projects approved to use data through the TVS SDE. It supports transparency about how health and care data is being used.
Analysis Environment	The secure workspace within the TVS SDE where approved users analyse data.
Processing Environment	The secure area where data can be prepared, linked or transformed before it is made available for analysis.

Data and Technical

Aggregated data	Data that has been grouped or summarised so that the information relates to groups of people rather than individual records.
Record-level data (or row-level data)	Information held as individual records rather than grouped summaries. Access is only provided where appropriate approvals and safeguards are in place.
Identifiable data	Data containing information that directly identifies a person, or could reasonably be used to identify them.
Deidentified data	Data from which information that directly identifies a person, such as their name or NHS number, has been removed or replaced.
Pseudonymised data	Data in which directly identifying information has been replaced with a code. The data is still treated as personal data because it may be possible to reconnect it to an individual using separately held information.
Free-text data	Information written in narrative form, such as clinical notes, letters and reports, rather than information held in structured fields or codes.

Coded and numeric data	Information recorded using standard codes, categories, dates or numbers, rather than narrative text.
Medical imaging data	Clinical images such as X-rays, CT scans, MRI scans and ultrasound images.
Metadata	Information that describes a dataset, rather than the data itself. For example, metadata may explain what the dataset contains, where it came from, when it was last updated, what fields are included, and any rules or restrictions for using it.
Data linkage	The secure process of combining information from different datasets that relates to the same person, service or event.
Data refresh	An update to a dataset so that it includes newer or additional information.
Reidentification	The process of connecting deidentified or pseudonymised data back to an identifiable person. TVS SDE controls are designed to manage and reduce this risk.
Data Minimisation	An important data protection principle that means only the data needed for an approved project should be made available in the TVS SDE. This helps reduce privacy risks by avoiding unnecessary use of personal information.
Data asset	A set of data that is managed as a resource and can be used for approved purposes, such as research, planning or service improvement.
Virtual machine (VM)	A secure, software-based computer provided within the SDE for approved users to carry out their work.
Natural Language Processing (NLP)	A type of computing that can analyse and interpret written language, such as information in clinical notes or reports.
Data ingress	The controlled transfer of data into the secure environment.
Data egress	The controlled release of approved data or results from the secure environment.
Data transformation	Changing data into a different structure, format or standard so that it can be used for an approved purpose.
Data specification	A detailed description of the data needed for a project, including the required fields, population, time period and any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

Research and approvals

Research database	A structured collection of data that has been reviewed and given ethical approval as a research database by a Research Ethics Committee (REC) or another independent ethics body. It may be used for future approved research, subject to the conditions of that approval and any relevant governance, legal and ethical requirements.
Public benefit	The positive impact a project is expected to have for patients, health and care services, researchers or wider society.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)	Activities that involve patients and members of the public in shaping, reviewing or informing projects that use health and care data.
Research Ethics Committee (REC)	An independent committee that reviews research proposals to consider whether they are ethically appropriate.
Health Research Authority (HRA)	The organisation that helps protect and promote the interests of patients and the public in health and social care research in England.
Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG)	An independent group that provides advice on the use of confidential patient information in specific circumstances.

Governance

Five Safes Framework	A framework used to assess whether data can be accessed and used safely. It considers Safe People, Safe Projects, Safe Data, Safe Settings and Safe Outputs.
Safe People	Approved users who have the appropriate identity checks, training, skills and authority to access data.
Safe Projects	Projects with a clear purpose, expected public benefit and appropriate legal and ethical approvals.
Safe Data	Data that has been prepared and protected to reduce privacy risks while remaining useful for the approved purpose.
Safe Settings	Secure technical and organisational arrangements that control how data can be accessed and used.
Safe Outputs	Results that are checked before leaving the secure environment to make sure they do not disclose information about individuals.
Information Governance (IG)	The rules, responsibilities and processes used to ensure that information is handled lawfully, securely and appropriately.
Legal basis	The lawful reason that allows personal data to be processed for a particular purpose.
Common law duty of confidentiality	The legal duty to protect information given in confidence and only use or disclose it where there is an appropriate justification.
Section 251	The TVS SDE has support under Section 251 of the NHS Act 2006, following review through the appropriate approvals process, to allow confidential patient information to be used for approved purposes without seeking individual consent, where this is not practical and where strict safeguards are in place
National Data Opt-Out	A choice that allows people in England to opt out of their confidential patient information being used for purposes beyond their individual care, such as research and planning. Where it applies, the TVS SDE must check and respect this choice before data is used.
TVS SDE Local Opt-Out	A choice that allows people in the Thames Valley and Surrey area to tell us if they do not want their confidential patient information to be used through the TVS SDE for purposes such as research, planning or service improvement. Where this applies, we will respect that choice before data is made available in the SDE.

Data controller	The organisation that decides why and how personal data is processed.
Data processor	An organisation that processes personal data on behalf of a data controller and under the controller's instructions.
Data Access Agreement (DAA)	A formal agreement setting out the responsibilities, conditions and controls that apply when data is accessed through the TVS SDE.
Data Framework Agreement	An overarching agreement between organisations that sets out the legal, governance and operational arrangements for making data available through the TVS SDE.

Quick acronym list

AE	Analysis Environment
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAG	Confidentiality Advisory Group
DAA	Data Access Agreement
DARF	Data Access Request Form
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
DSA	Data Sharing Agreement
EPR	Electronic Patient Record
FDP	Federated Data Platform
HRA	Health Research Authority
IG	Information Governance
ISMS	Information Security Management System
KYC	Know Your Customer
MFA	Multi-Factor Authentication
NDO(O)	National Data Opt-Out
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OMOP	Observational Medical Outcomes Partnership
PE	Processing Environment
PPIE	Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement
REC	Research Ethics Committee
SARC	Services and data Access Review Committee
SATRE	Standardised Architecture for Trusted Research
SDE	Secure Data Environment
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TRE	Trusted Research Environment
TVS	Thames Valley and Surrey
VM	Virtual Machine