Using Student Health and Wellbeing Survey Data for Data Linkage Research

This document explains how data collected from school students taking part in the Student Health and Wellbeing Survey will be used for data linkage research.

All students whose data is used in this way will have given their consent at the end of the survey.

If you have any questions about data linkage research or the Student Health and Wellbeing Survey you can contact a researcher in the School Health Research Network team at Cardiff University:

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What is data linkage research?

In 'data linkage research', records that are held about people are linked together to enable researchers to answer important questions for the benefit of society. This adds value to the data that is routinely collected every day across Wales for record-keeping and monitoring, as it means it can also be used for research.

The records that are linked together come from a variety of organisations, such as the NHS and Welsh Government. These are referred to as 'routine data' and examples include:

- ➢ National Community Child Health Database (NHS)
- ➢ Primary Care data from GP practices (NHS)
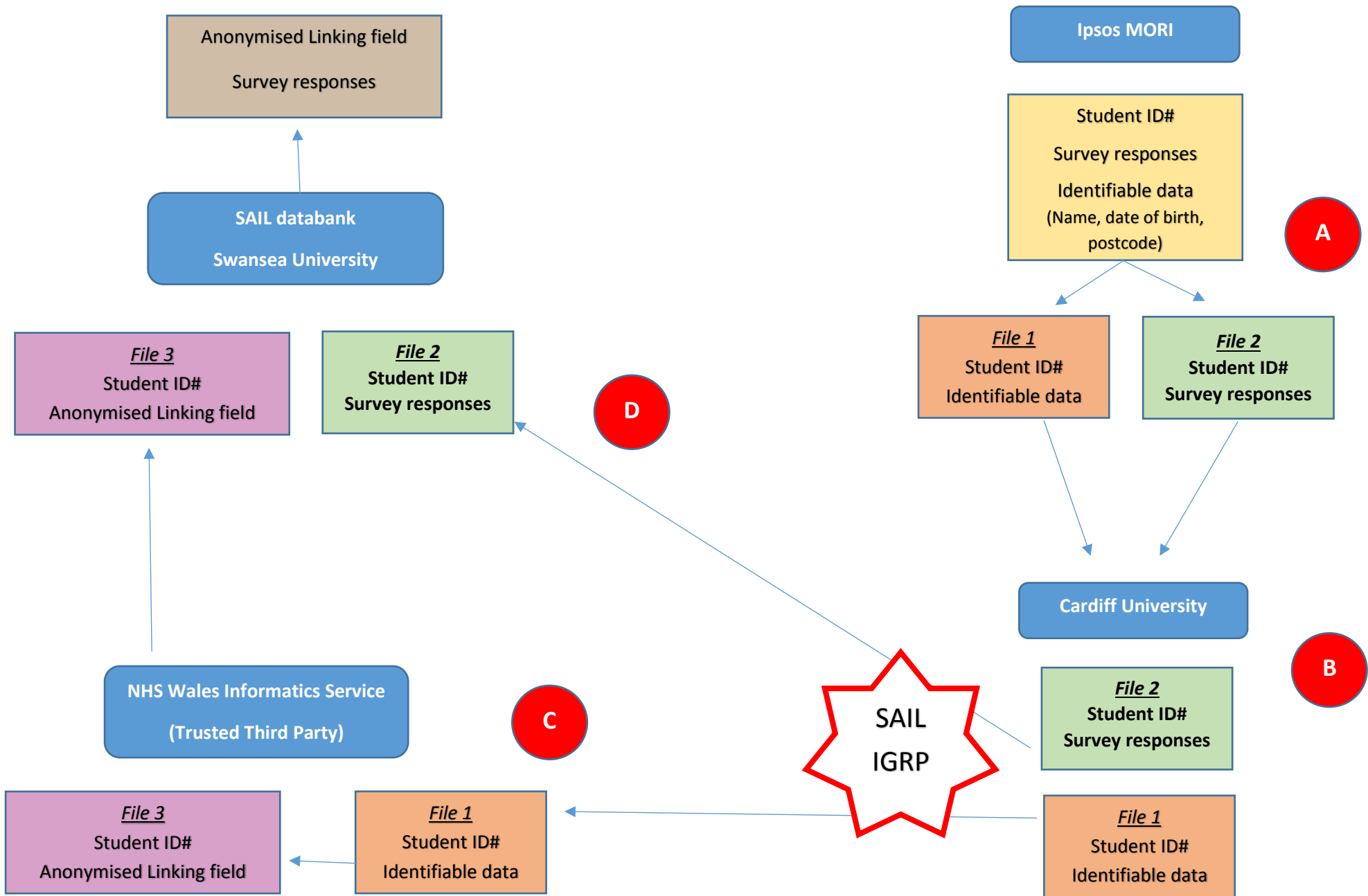- ➢ Educational attainment data, e.g. GCSE results (Welsh Government)

Data from surveys can also be used for data linkage research. These records come from organisations such as universities or from Welsh Government, for example:

- ➢ The National Survey for Wales (Welsh Government)
- ➢ The Student Health and Wellbeing Survey (Cardiff University)

Once records have been approved for use for data linkage research, they are held at the **SAIL databank at Swansea University.** Authorised databank staff are responsible for linking records together and ensuring they are stored securely and used appropriately. Before records are linked they are anonymised. ***This means that no individual person can ever be identified from the data that is held about them in the SAIL databank***.

How is data from the Student Health and Wellbeing Survey anonymised and transferred to the SAIL databank?

The diagram below shows what happens to data collected from students who take part in the Student Health and Wellbeing Survey and give their consent for their survey answers to be used for data linkage research.

Anonymised Linking field

Survey responses

SAIL databank

Swansea University

Ipsos MORI

Student ID#

Survey responses

Identifiable data
(Name, date of birth, postcode)

A

File 1
Student ID#
Identifiable data

File 2
Student ID#
Survey responses

File 3
Student ID#
Anonymised Linking field

File 2
Student ID#
Survey responses

D

Cardiff University

B

NHS Wales Informatics Service
(Trusted Third Party)

C

SAIL IGRP

File 2
Student ID#
Survey responses

File 3
Student ID#
Anonymised Linking field

File 1
Student ID#
Identifiable data

File 1
Student ID#
Identifiable data

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A The Student Health and Wellbeing Survey is carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Cardiff University. Ipsos MORI is a UK-based, social research company.

When a student starts the online survey they are randomly allocated a student ID number.

Ipsos MORI records each student's ID number, their survey responses and their identifiable data (their name, date of birth and postcode.)

Ipsos MORI then create two separate files. File 1, with student ID numbers and identifiable data, and File 2, with student ID numbers and survey responses. File 2 is therefore anonymised, as it contains no identfiable data.

These two files are password protected and then sent via secure electronic file transfer to Cardiff University.

B Cardiff University securely store the two files in a restricted access electronic folder. Access to this folder is reviewed monthly. The password on File 1, containing identifiable data, is changed and known by only three members of research staff.

Cardiff University researchers make an application to the SAIL Databank's Information Governance Review Panel (IGRP). This panel review how the survey data were collected and the information students were given before they gave their consent for data linkage research. Data cannot be entered into the Databank and used for data linkage research without IGRP approval.

C Once IGRP approval is granted, Cardiff University send the File 1, containing student ID number and identifiable data, to the NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS*****) using secure electronic file transfer.

Authorised staff at NWIS use an algorithm (a computer code) to convert each student's name, date of birth and postcode into an Anonymised Linking Field.

NWIS create a new file containing each student's Anonymised Linking Field and their student ID number (File 3) and send it to the SAIL Databank.

D Cardiff University send File 2, containing student ID numbers and anonymised survey responses, to the SAIL Databank using secure electronic file transfer.

Authorised staff at the SAIL Databank then use the student ID number to attach each student's Anonymised Linking Field to their survey responses. The student ID number is then discarded and the survey responses entered into the Databank with the Anonymised Linking Field.

All records in the Databank that are about a particular person have the same Anonymised Linking Field. This enables each student's survey answers to be linked to other data that is held about them in the Databank, e.g. GP records.

*NWIS are referred to as the 'Trusted Third Party' in the data linkage process. Their involvement means that researchers at the SAIL Databank only see anonymised data, i.e. they never see students' names. Likewise, staff at NWIS only see students' names, dates of birth and postcodes, but not their survey answers, so they never know what students said about themselves in the survey.

The SAIL Databank

SAIL stands for Secure Anonymised Information Linkage and you can read more about the SAIL databank on their website: https://saildatabank.com

The Databank is funded by Welsh Government.

Data Linkage Research using the Student Health and Wellbeing Survey

Data from the 2017 Student Health and Wellbeing Survey has been approved for entry into the Databank. This data will be linked to health and education records to explore the relationships between young people's mental health and wellbeing and their use of alcohol and drugs and their feelings about school life (e.g. relationships with teachers, truancy).

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