Open Data
Manchester

**Strategy 2022 - 25**

# Thanks

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*Julian Tait (CEO and co-founder) 2022*

# Introduction

Welcome to the Open Data Manchester three year strategy that will cover our development and operation from 2022-2025. It sets out who we are, what we are trying to achieve and how we are going to achieve it. It is the first proper strategy we have created and like all documents of its type will be out of date as soon as it is published.

Three years can seem a long time especially in a time when there is an ongoing invasion of Ukraine, the legacy of the pandemic, climate change as well as other global instabilities. Within the UK, we are starting to see changes in the legislative environment affecting data practice both directly and indirectly.

The last 12 years has seen our focus shift from one whose prime concern was for the liberation of public sector data for the common good, to one of developing a more critical approach to data practice exploring and developing programmes that ask why, for whom and how. Open data is still part of our DNA and our work is driven by the need for this openness to build trust, understanding and a fairer society.

Organisationally, we have become more mature. The last few years have been challenging for everyone, but the time of enforced home working and video communication allowed us to reflect on the value that we bring to our community and the partners, organisations and individuals we work with and support. This reflection has also coincided with a number of organisational development programmes that have strengthened internal processes and honed our purpose.

Our vision and mission is the connective tissue that holds what we do together and ensures that our work – which is informed by community in all its forms and place – is effective.

**Open Data Manchester's vision is for data and digital systems that enhance the lives of all.**

**Our mission is to promote responsible data practices that focus on the needs of all and ensure that data is used in ways that help people, our planet and prosperity.**

# Our data world

The ability to create, collect, share, analyse and store data about the world and our lives in it has created new possibilities for individuals, organisations and communities, opening up potential solutions to the many complex problems we face.

However, these opportunities come with challenges and risks that need to be understood if we want to realise the potential that data has to empower people, protect the planet and ensure future prosperity.

Since 2010, Open Data Manchester has championed the use of data for social good from the opening up of data for people to use, to the protection of our data rights.

We're community-led and, through our collective work, we have:

- advocated for public bodies to open up data so that people can understand more about how they work
- identified and challenged poor data practice
- developed new thinking around how we can all look after data better

We know that data used well can have huge benefits, during the COVID-19 pandemic it was 'R' numbers and graphs that helped many of us understand the challenge we faced and the action that was needed.

With the growing use of poorly realised data-based decision making processes affecting people's lives and the ability to connect disparate sources, the perils of bad data practice are starting to undermine those trying to do good with data. Whether it's opaque algorithms being used to shape the course of our lives, biases in data that exacerbate existing oppression, misrepresentation of minorities, or simply poor and often inaccessible applications of data.

We are vocal and active, taking a local approach to ethical data practice and co-designing the Declaration for Responsible and Intelligent Data Practice – a statement of intent that guides organisations to use data for the benefit of all – with organisations across Greater Manchester.

Locality and place are integral to our work, we all want our neighbourhoods, towns and cities to be happy, healthy and prosperous. Greater Manchester is our home and many of the methods we have developed have been informed by the communities we have had the privilege of working with. Likewise, working with other cities and communities both nationally and internationally enable us to learn and share back.

We are also tackling big global problems through work like the Plastics Packaging Portal where we are in the process of working with stakeholders from across the plastic packaging and waste industries to develop two open data standards – Open3R and Open3P. With the aim of creating transparency within the plastics packaging industry, helping people locate recycling facilities, enabling better tracking through the supply chain and developing a circular economy around plastic packaging.

Through training and events, often driven by community members, we support people, wherever they are, to define, understand and use data that is important to them.

Our work is expansive, impactful and eclectic, and we have often been leading the way. This strategy aims to bring together all that we are and do so that potential funders, partners and, most importantly, our community can work with us over the coming three years to help make data work for everyone.

# Our core values:

## Curiosity.
The challenges that we face are systemic and complex. Curiosity enables us to gain understanding through diverse experiences, acquiring knowledge whilst also sharing back.

## Inclusivity.
We are for everyone. Diverse perspectives enable us to see, understand and tackle the challenges of bad data practice, as well as shine a light on the good. We challenge ourselves and others to enhance diversity and inclusion through all of our work, and provide safe spaces for people to challenge thinking and test ideas.

## Community.
We started from a small community of open data activists and now embrace people from all around the globe. Drawing on knowledge, experience and foresight to help us tackle bad practice.

## Collaboration.
We seek like-minded individuals and organisations to broaden our impact, as well as adding value to their endeavours and building meaningful partnerships.

## Openness.
We are welcoming and friendly. We are part of a global community that works and shares openly. We seek to 'own nothing' with all of our work being published openly for others to adapt, adopt and reuse.

# The challenges we will address

Data affects all aspects of our modern lives, meaning the challenges we face can appear complex and unsolvable. Through the development of this strategy, conversations with both partners and the community, and reflection on the work that we have undertaken over the last 12 years, we have identified six challenges that we are tackling. These challenges are linked and systemic with data playing role in all of them.

Although these challenges have been identified, we do not seek to tackle these alone or at the same time. Many organisations are already addressing these challenges and through partnership working as well as using our platform to disseminate and support, we will together increase impact.

If we accept that data used well can have benefit for all and help us tackle some of the biggest challenges facing society today, we need to rebuild trust in data and the decisions that are based on it. We must make data systems that enhance the lives of all.

1. People don't trust facts and evidence - creating an environment where rational debate and consensus is more difficult to achieve.

2. Increasing reliance on technology is exacerbating existing inequalities - poorly designed data systems are amplifying existing biases and reducing agency.

3. Data is being used in ways that adversly affect people - There is little understanding of the value of data, allowing it to being exploited and misused by bad actors.

4. The way data is used isn't widely understood by people in local communities - Leading to distrust of evidence-based policy making and missed opportunities to enage with policy makers.

5. People have lost confidence in democratic systems - Populist narratives that discount facts are leading to growing disenfranchisement.

6. Decisions are made and systems developed without taking into account lived experience - Forcing people to conform to the system, being misrepreseented or excluded completely.
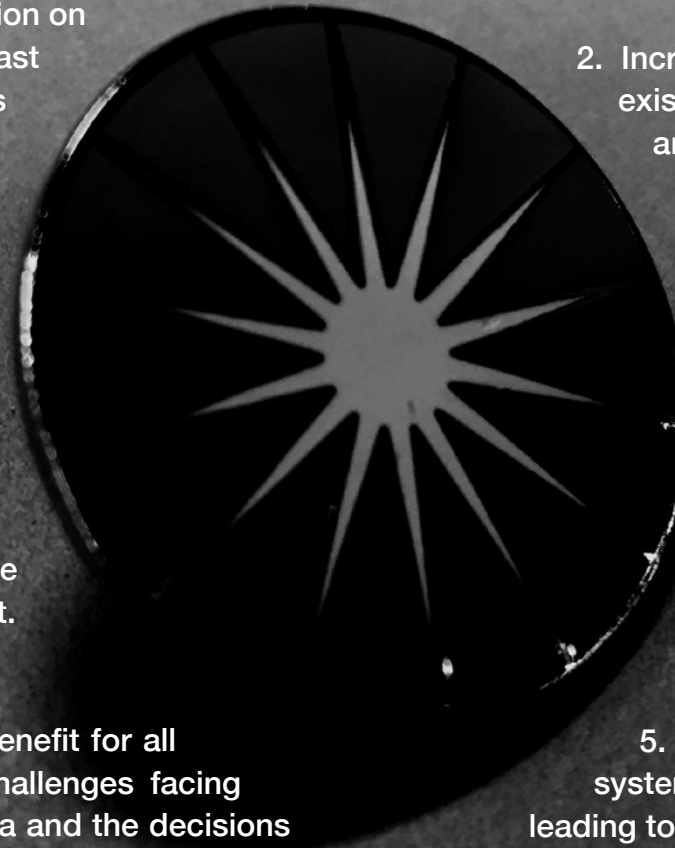
# How we effect change

## What we want

Data and digital systems that enhance the lives of all

## What we do

We promote responsible data practices that focus on the needs of all and ensure that data is used in ways that help people, our planet and prosperity

## By being

Curious
Inclusive
Community driven
Collaborative
Open

## Using

Events
Research
Design
Development
Delivery
Dissemination
Training

## How

We will inform, promote and celebrate data practice that is centred on people and their lived experience

We support under-represented communities so that they can take part and be visible within data practice

We raise awareness of data practices and systems that can adversely impact people, and challenge them

## So that

Organisations that collect and use data build trust with people

Data systems respect human rights

Ethical data systems deliver benefit to people and their local communities

## Where

We work with communities and organisations locally in Greater Manchester, nationally and internationally

# Our goals

We have three organisational goals that are key for ensuring data and digital systems that enhance the lives of all.

- Organisations that collect and use data build trust with people
- Data systems respect human rights
- Ethical data systems deliver benefit to people and thier local communities

Up until now, our organisational goals have not been explicit – being just a general sense of the trajectory we were following. The past two years of organisational development with employees, our board, community and external stakeholders have helped us to reflect on our work and identify what our goals should be.

Our previous work cuts across these goals, and with their identification we will be able to plan and develop our programmes strategically and apply more focus.

From our creation in 2010, our involvement with DataGM – The Greater Manchester Datastore and the development of the Greater Manchester Data Synchronisation Programme. Open Data Manchester has sought to work with public and private organisations so that they can understand the benefits of making data and information more openly available.

Our role as a trusted and critical friend that puts people front and centre finds us in a unique place, enabling us to bridge the gap between the public and grassroots organisations, public and private sectors, academia and the wider data community.
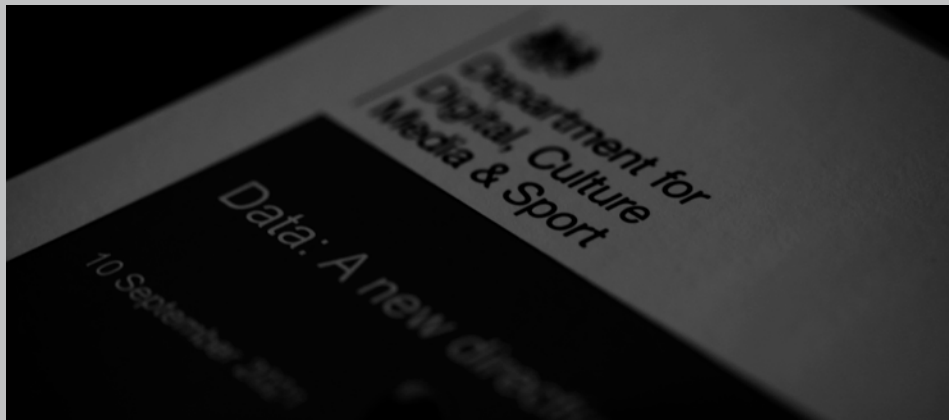
# Trust

Building trust by developing trustworthy data practice manifests itself throughout our work from the foundational development of data standards through to new forms of data custodianship.

Since 2012, we have been interested in data cooperative models for data custodianship. Initially promoting these to the UK's Cooperative Group. Our development project 'Data Cooperative Models for Small Energy Cooperatives' with Carbon Co-op mapped out how the use of cooperative data governance can empower people and create value for the members, the cooperative and wider society.

This has led to us advising a number of organisations both in the UK and USA, and the establishment of the Data Cooperative Working Group in partnership with the Aapti Institute in Bangalore. This brings together an international group of practitioners and academics to discuss and develop data cooperative models. The group meets bi-monthly.

We have a long association with data standards both from a transparency and accountability perspective, as well as concerning how data is structured and describes both the real world and lived experience. Our work with 360Giving and the Open Contracting Partnership has helped organisations understand and use open standards. Recently, through the InnovateUK funded Plastics Packaging Portal project, we have been developing two open data standards to enable a reduction of plastic packaging waste and its effect on the environment.

## Rights

The development of the Declaration for Responsible and Intelligent Data Practice frames ethical and trustworthy data practice in a place-based context and has engaged and been supported by public, private, academic, voluntary and civil society organisations. We are also working with a legal rights organisation and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to co-design consultation principles prior to the implementation of artificial intelligence and other automated decision making systems.

Open Data Manchester has always been a critical organisation trying to reflect on the how, why, who and what for, and imagining the potential futures a particular path could take. This has led us to develop an approach to our work that allows us to reflect on some of the systemic challenges that current data and digital practice is trying to deal with.

With all our work, we are informed by and led by our community with regular events highlighting current opportunities and challenges. From developing skills to creative applications of data, challenges and hacks to bespoke support, we own nothing and share everything.

## Ethics

The Greater Manchester Open Data Consultation for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, as part of its Local Data Review, and the commissioning of an Open Data Maturity Assessment, Strategy and Roadmap for the City of Izmir in Turkey for the International Finance Corporation, have shown the value of our approach both locally and internationally. Our stakeholder engagement and user focus, coupled with expert knowledge of data practice and its application has proven to be a unique and credible proposition here.

Working at a grassroots and local community level, we have sought to encourage more people to understand, use and challenge the data that is about them and their communities. During the pandemic, our in-person Data for Communities programme evolved and merged with our Lexicon of Experience work, unpicking how data represents people and places with a focus on marginalised and ignored communities. These programmes are informed by work being done internationally to decolonise data as well as that by the Design Justice Network, of which we have co-insitaged the Design Justice Network North of England node.

The evolution of these programmes has led us to the Our Streets Chorlton programme where we worked with residents to identify data, and co-design and develop methods of data collection to help them better represent their communities to policy makers.

# Our aims – achieving our goals

We will continue to develop and promote our people-centred approach to data practice, increasing our user research capacity and embedding human-centred design into the data projects we undertake.

Programmes that borrow from our experiential and psychogeographical mapping work, such as the ongoing Joy Diversion events and Mapping Mobility, will be folded into our Lexicon of Experience programme and will provide a basis for the further development of methods that foreground how we experience the world, and how data and digital systems represent that experience.

This work has already informed both our commissioned work where we aim to understand how people experience and use digital systems, and further development of our Data for Communities programmes.

Our events programme, which has enabled us to engage with experts, practitioners and the public through training and the showcasing of new and emergent practice, will continue to be a core component of what we do. Over the coming year, we will need to manage the desire for people to have in-person events with that of a larger geographically dispersed community that we have acquired as a result of the COVID pandemic.

We will inform, promote and celebrate data practice that is centred on people and their lived experience

# We will support under-represented communities so that they can take part and be visible within data practice

We will continue to support and develop greater awareness of how we design systems and how bad design can impact people – especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. Through membership of the Design Justice Network and the development of the North of England node, we will promote greater awareness of how design can impact people both positively and negatively.

There is a chronic lack of diversity and representation within data practice meaning that the outputs often don't reflect the reality of people who the data describes, exacerbating already existing biases and systemic oppressions. We are committed to challenging this under-representation through the continued development of our Data for Communities programme that helps organisations and communities to not only understand and use data that is relevant to them, but to also design methods and uses of data that are more representative. This enables better decision-making and outcomes for communities.

Our Lexicon of Experience work that investigates the human experience in data will be further bolstered through the development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Data role that will look at how data systems can be improved by making them more representative. This is especially important when much of the language around data systems, especially regarding socio-demographic data, is couched in the language of deficit, exclusion and deprivation, which in itself can be stigmatising and exclusionary.

Organisationally, we will continue to develop the work started in 2021 with Diverse and Equal, and Honey Badger Collective, looking at how we can become a more diverse and inclusive organisation through better recruitment practices such as CV-less and task-based selection.

To many people and organisations that we have the privilege of

working with both in Greater Manchester and further afield, data and the challenges faced with current practice are abstract and immaterial to the real world situations in which people find themselves. This immateriality creates a vacuum where bad practice can develop. We have actively been using our platform to identify, challenge and develop better data practice.

Working with public and private sector partners, we will continue to promote the Declaration for Responsible and Intelligent Data Practice to highlight how organisations can adopt a people-centred approach to data practice that puts trust, rights and ethics at its heart. We will offer tools and guidance that will signpost to use cases and, in partnership with other organisations, develop frameworks to enable better data practice for the people of Greater Manchester and beyond.

Our data cooperative work that saw us working with Carbon Coop in 2021 will continue to be developed. The Data Cooperative Working Group continues to meet, attracting academics and practitioners from around the world.

We believe that data cooperatives are a potential answer to the exploitation of people's data by bad actors through communities coming together and forming data custodianship organisations around issues that are important to them. Bringing value to themselves, their communities and wider society. However, this practice is still emerging across the globe. To help people, organisations and communities to understand the concept of data custodianship and cooperatives, and decide if creating a cooperative to look after data is a viable and relevant approach, we will design and develop guidance.

We will raise awareness of data practices and systems that can adversely impact people, and challenge them
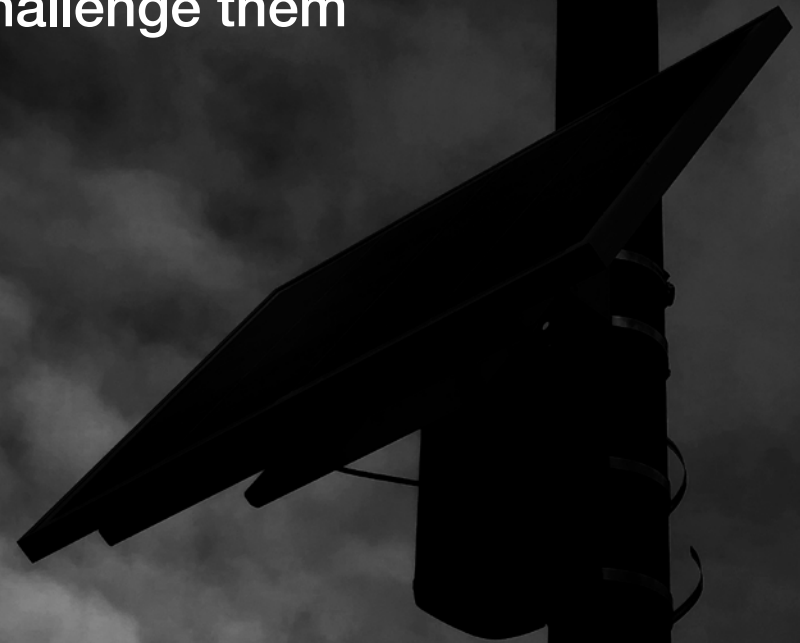
# Our proposition

The work we deliver gives us a unique proposition that sits in the middle of placed-based working, data systems and the needs of people and their communities. Working with organisations and communities within Greater Manchester gives us the opportunity to devise, test and prove new approaches to data and data practice, as well as its intersection with communities and place.

This helps inform and grow our commercial offering whether it be working with cities to understand the opportunities of data and open data, the development of data standards or engagement of external stakeholders by researching demand-side needs of the data reuse community.

This commercial work that takes place on the local, national and international level reciprocally supports further development of our community work, helping us to support people in Greater Manchester whilst also sharing back to the wider global community.
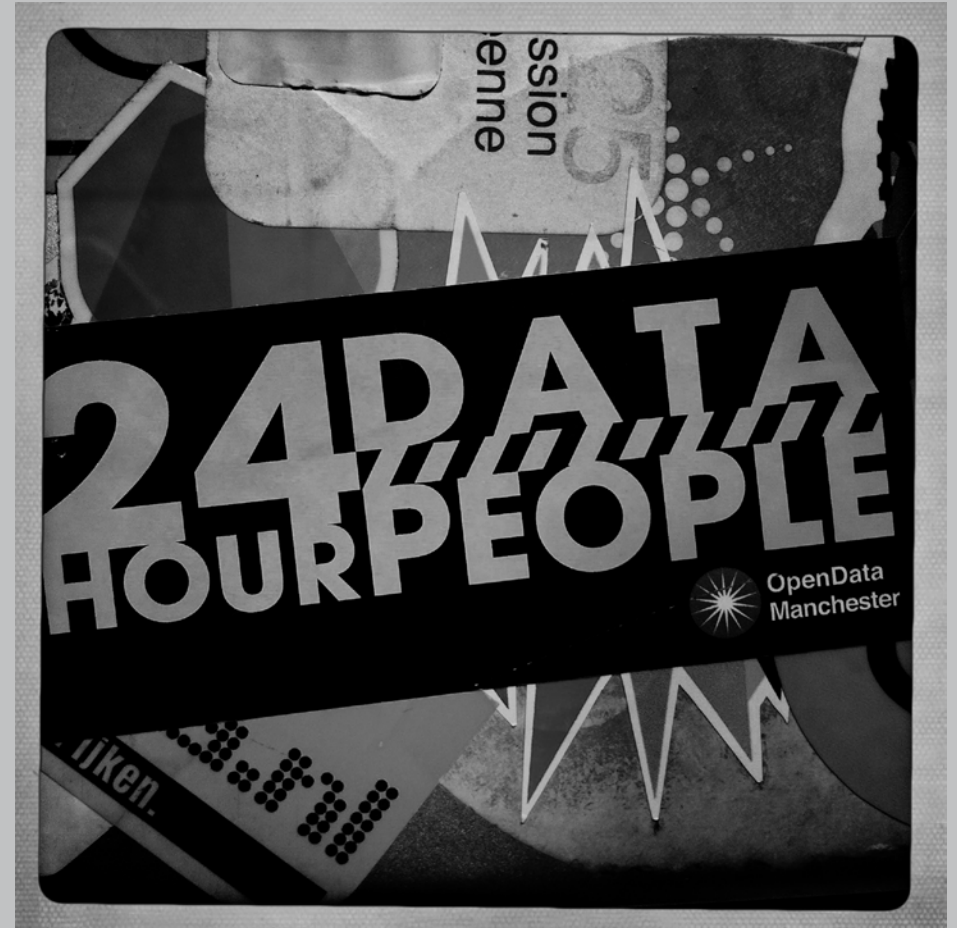
## Our governance

In 2017, with support from Luminate, we started on our path to become a Community Interest Company (CIC). Initially we were a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with two directors, transitioning into a CIC with nine directors and a CEO in 2018.

The CIC model has helped the organisation to develop a split income model with a proportion of our income coming from grants and the rest from consultancy and commissioned work. An asset lock and the initial company limited by guarantee status ensures that any surplus from commercial work is reinvested into our social purpose and mission.

The board of directors oversees the governance of the organisation and advises on strategy. The board is 2/3 female and meets quarterly with sub-committees created to manage specific tasks.

The board brings a huge array of knowledge and skills drawing from the public, business, academia and civil society sectors to Open Data Manchester.

Open Data Manchester is run by a Chief Executive who currently reports to the board. More details of the directors and the proceedings of the organisation can be found on the Open Data Manchester website: https://opendatamanchester.org.uk

As well as board obligations and traditional roles, nominated board members have specific functions such as a Community Custodian with a behaviour and safeguarding remit and an employee liaison member who represents the concerns of staff members to the board.

All employees are encouraged to attend and input into board meetings when non-sensitive matters are discussed.
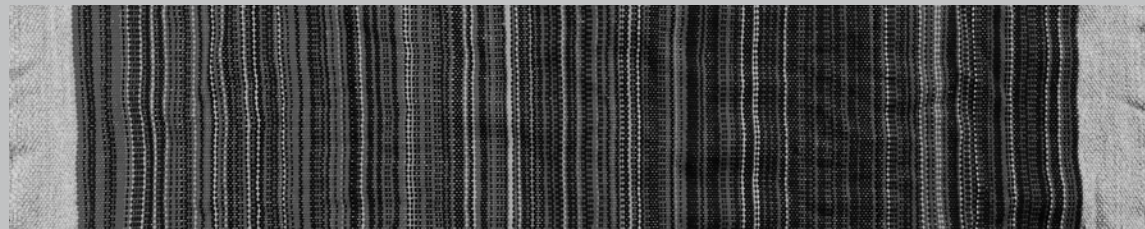


## Funding

At present we have a roughly 70:30 funding mix between grant funding and commercial income, with surpluses from our commercial work being reinvested.

We have received grant funding from: Luminate, The Cooperative Foundation, InnovateUK and The National Lottery Climate Action Fund.

Commercial clients include: Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Manchester City Council, International Finance Corporation, Catalyst, Coop Group, University of Manchester and Technopolis.

This mixed funding model allows us to develop state of the art data practice, especially around the development of our data standards and experience mapping work, deeper community engagement, and building bridges between different sectors and communities. It allows us to be flexible and responsive in our approach and is particularly useful for developing new strands of activity and broader community engagement that may be difficult to achieve otherwise.