Interview & Focus Groups Questions on Theme 1: Data Matching

In this focus group, we will be looking at examples of **'data matching'.** This is where organisations match data from different datasets or databases, or compare data from one dataset with data from another. To aid our discussion we will be referring to the illustrations I sent to you via email/post.

Previous participants have said they have found these complicated (and a bit overwhelming to start with) so don't worry if you feel the same. Read through them stage by stage and we will discuss all together as a group.

NHS antibiotic prescribing project: The first example is an NHS research project about antibiotic prescribing. Prescribing too many antibiotics is a problem, because it means that people are becoming resistant to them. Because of this, antibiotic resistance is a public health crisis. The research aims to understand antibiotic prescribing in order to reduce it and so address the antibiotic resistance crisis.

What do you see happening in this illustration? What does it tell you about what happens to NHS data in the research?

Fill in the gaps – add to the description collectively produced by participants, as needed, for example:
The NHS Antibiotic Prescribing Research Project gathers data from a range of sources (eg visits to GPs and hospitals, data about deaths, or about the deprivation of local areas).
1. University researchers request access to the datasets they need to do their project.
2. This data is linked together by NHS Digital and CPRD (Clinical Practice Research Datalink, a service supporting public health and clinical studies). In this process, the only organisation that receives identifiable patient data is NHS Digital, the statutory body in England with legal authorisation to receive this type of data.
3. The linked data is shared with University of Manchester researchers who analyse the data to understand the factors that affect antibiotic prescribing and to try to improve how this is done. Individuals can't be identified by the people with whom the data is shared.
4. The researchers produce dashboards for GPs and health policy makers to improve / reduce antibiotic prescription.
What do you think about this data process? (*Prompts: What stands out to you here? Does anything surprise you, and if so, what? How do you feel about what you see?*)

Confirm Your Identity: Here is an illustration of a process at the DWP, the government department responsible for welfare, pensions, child maintenance and related policy. The process is called Confirm Your Identity.

If someone needs to claim Universal Credit (a payment to help with living costs for people on low incomes) from the DWP, the DWP needs to confirm that the claimant is who they claim to be – this is known as verifying identity. This year, DWP introduced a new way to make it possible to verify identity online. This means that individuals no longer need to go to a Job Centre to verify identity in person or with documents which can be difficult to do, due to working hours, illness or mobility. This illustration shows how the DWP is using data to verify people's identity when they use online services.

What do you see here? What does the illustration tell you about what happens to data about you in order to verify your identity at the DWP?

Fill in the gaps – add to the description collectively produced by participants, as needed, for example:
1. An individual logs in to create a universal credit account.
2. If their DWP ID is not yet verified …
3. … The DWP then gives claimants the option to use an automated, secure system to get confirmation from HMRC that they have already had their identity verified by HMRC. To do this, they login into their account on the system HMRC uses.
If claimants don't already have an online HMRC identity, or if they need to revalidate an old one, they can do so by providing additional data from documents that they might have at home, such as a passport and P60 (a record of a person's income and tax for the previous year). This is illustrated in stage 3a on p2. To use this option, they need to input their passport number and the amount of money they were paid in the previous tax year into a secure online system.
HMRC will then do an automated check with the Passport Office and its own systems (seen in stage 3b on p2).
If claimants don't have a passport or P60, they can choose to input information from other financial documents (such as bank statements) into HMRC's secure system in order to create an online identity. HMRC will do a one-off, secure identity check with a financial agency such as TransUnion (seen in stage 3b), as these hold records for most people.
HMRC then let DWP know if they are able to verify the claimant's identity (stage 4). Claimants won't need to prove their identity again with the DWP.
How would you feel about using this system? (*Prompts: Does anything surprise you, and if so, what?*)

[where there are stages that don't get discussed, let participants know that we'll come back to them later]

Comparison: We are now going to ask you to compare these examples. C & D on pages 3 & 4 show you more details.

Do you feel the same about both examples of data matching? Are you equally comfortable / uncomfortable with both?
Or do you feel differently about:
data matching in healthcare/ NHS compared to data matching in welfare/DWP?
data matching to understand antibiotic prescribing compared to data matching to enable identity verification when claiming benefits?
Why/why not?

I'm now going to share a link with you in the chat, and share my screen with you in case any of you have difficulties with this. It links to a whiteboard which shows some of the benefits of and concerns about these data uses:

Benefits of antibiotic research = address public health crisis of antibiotic resistance
Concerns about antibiotic research = it requires the use of patient data.
Benefits of Confirm Your Identity = don't need to confirm identity in person/with paper docs
Concerns about Confirm Your Identity = requires people to have HMRC account, passport, bank account, financial record, so excludes people with complex lives + negative consequences for people whose identities can't be verified.

I would like you to move the post its with your name on to the position on the board that best reflects how you feel. Simply click and drag your post it. If you have a problem, I can do this for you, just let me know. Once all of the post its are in position, I will take a screenshot.
Can you tell me why you placed your post its where you did?
[discussion of benefits and concerns]
Having heard the views of others, do you want to keep your post it in the same position or move? If you would like to move it, please do this now. Once all of the post its are in position, I will take a screenshot.