GROUNDWORK

# Community charter

An independent, open-source community for the people who build public sector data and AI

**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION** · 26 November 2026

A draft for discussion. Founding members discussed it at the founding session on 25 November 2026, and comments are still welcome at info@groundworkuk.tech. It draws on established practice from the open-source community.

## 1. Name and purpose

Groundwork is an independent, open-source community for people building and buying data and AI infrastructure in the UK public sector. Its purpose is to help the public sector share data safely, avoid lock-in, and get better value for public money, by building skills, open standards and practical tools in the open. Over time, it aims to grow a community of contributors and builders who develop open-source solutions for real public sector use cases.

## 2. Principles

1. **Public interest first.** Activity is judged by its benefit to public services and taxpayers.
2. **Open by default.** Code, standards, guidance and session outputs are published openly unless there is a clear security or privacy reason not to.
3. **Vendor neutral.** The community promotes open standards and portability. It does not promote, endorse or sell any product.
4. **Practical.** Work is grounded in real use cases, built and tested by practitioners.
5. **Inclusive.** Membership and leadership should reflect the public sector workforce across roles, regions, backgrounds and seniority.
6. **Transparent.** Funding, governance and conflicts of interest are published.
7. **Usable by all.** Code, data and guidance are documented in plain English, accessible, free to use and provided in open, machine-readable formats.
8. **Quality and maintenance.** Contributions are tested and documented, and every project has a named maintainer and a plan for its life after release.
9. **Secure by design.** Work follows government security standards so it can be safely deployed in the public sector.
10. **Reuse before build.** The community uses and contributes to existing open components and standards before starting new ones.
11. **Impactful.** The community measures and publishes what it achieves, focusing on solutions in use and value to the public (see section 9).

## 3. Membership

- Open to anyone working in or for the UK public sector, including central and local government, the NHS, arm's-length bodies, police and devolved administrations, and charities and other third sector organisations working on public services
- Industry, academia, civil society and open-source contributors are welcome as contributors, on the same terms as everyone else

- Members take part as individuals, not as representatives of their employer. Organisations are named for transparency, not to imply endorsement
- Members agree to the code of conduct and to these principles
- Membership is free

## 4. Governance

- **Independent chair:** Dr Laura Gilbert CBE, responsible for the agenda, convening and upholding this charter
- **Steering group:** senior people who guide Groundwork and keep it independent. Members include Polly Jones (Emrys Health), Mallory Durran (CTO, Nesta), Theo Blackwell (Greater London Authority), Catherine Hutchinson (DWP), James Benford (ONS), Kalbir Sohi (Chief AI Officer, UK Government), Alex Jones (Public Digital), Alexander De Ville (Recursive), Martin Wrigley MP, Sir Julian Smith MP and Terence Eden, with further places to fill. Over time the group aims for about 10 to 12 members, with a majority from the public sector. Sponsors may hold observer seats, without a vote
- **Decisions:** by consensus where possible; otherwise by steering group majority, with the chair holding a casting vote
- **Working groups:** formed by the steering group for specific outputs (for example the portability test), each with a named lead and a published scope
- **Secretariat:** convening and administrative support provided by Emrys Health

## 5. Sponsorship

- Sponsors fund the community; they do not set its agenda or approve its outputs
- No sales activity at community events or through community channels, and no use of member contact details for marketing
- Sponsors receive acknowledgement as supporters, not endorsement of their products
- Community outputs, including the portability test, apply equally to sponsors
- Sponsors and the nature of their support are published

## 6. Conflicts of interest

- The chair, steering group members and working group leads keep a published register of relevant interests
- Anyone with a conflict on a specific decision declares it and steps back from that decision

## 7. Open licensing and outputs

- Code is released under the Apache License 2.0
- Written outputs are published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence (CC BY 4.0)
- Contributors own the intellectual property in their contributions and license them openly on these terms, confirming they have the right to do so

## 8. Building: a longer-term ambition

As a stretch target, the community aims to move from convening and learning to building: growing a community of contributors and builders who develop and maintain open-source solutions for real public sector use cases.

- Use cases come from public sector organisations, each with a named owner who will use the result
- Contributors build together in public repositories, starting with shared components
- A solution counts as delivered when it is in use in at least one public sector organisation, with documentation, an open licence and a named maintainer

- Hackathons and labs feed this work, so promising prototypes have a route into use
- Sponsors may contribute engineering time, mentoring and compute as well as funding

## 9. Impact

- The community measures and publishes what it achieves, so members, sponsors and the public can judge whether it is working
- Measures: solutions in use in public sector organisations; organisations adopting them and reuse across organisations; cost avoided compared with typical procurement; recommendations taken up in procurement guidance, legislation or departmental strategies; and participation (members, organisations represented, sessions held)
- A short public impact summary is published each quarter, starting in May 2027
- Impact is reviewed with this charter (section 12), and the community changes course where the measures show it is not delivering

## 10. Data and security

- Labs, hackathons and demos use synthetic, open or properly anonymised data only
- No personal data, and nothing above OFFICIAL, is shared in community sessions or channels
- Members remain bound by their own organisations' security and information rules

## 11. Code of conduct

The community adopts the Contributor Covenant as its code of conduct, with a named contact for reports and a clear process for handling them.

## 12. Review

This charter is reviewed in March 2027, and annually after that. Later reviews draw on the quarterly impact summaries (section 9).