Twitter Thread by Anna Powell-Smith

Anna Powell-Smith
@darkgreener

Thread.

The UK's street address data is one of our most important, and problematic, public datasets.

Now, an opportunity has arisen to do something about it. Read on.

(1/10)

Here's why it matters.

Let’s say you’re creating a service that uses addresses.

Perhaps you’re building the next Deliveroo. Or organising emergency food parcels.

You need a way for users to enter addresses; to locate them; and probably to match them with other data.

(2/10)

It's as fundamental to public and private sector services as the periodic table is central to science.

For these reasons, other countries have official, freely available address and location data.

But the UK doesn’t.

(3/10)

This causes us innumerable problems.

Whether you’re building a business, and spending endless time wrangling with what should be simple data issues...

https://t.co/swmaVj4qnS

(4/10)

...or you’re a civil servant trying to deliver emergency support services at the height of a pandemic…

https://t.co/FahZThzYaQ

(5/10)

> Another day unpicking the consequences of different datasets using multiple, different methodologies for matching an address to the local authority. People are falling between these gaps.
>
> — Paul Downey (@psd) April 2, 2020

...or you’re a democracy charity making it easier for people to vote…

https://t.co/vUyelwVxNC

….you waste time obtaining and cleaning basic data.

Ultimately, it's pure drag on the economy and a brake on public service improvements. It causes real harms.

(6/10)

Addresses are a key part of our national data infrastructure, and they aren’t working.

Let's skip how we got here. Here’s the opportunity now.

Address data is managed by Royal Mail. Royal Mail is regulated by Ofcom.

(7/10)

Ofcom has the power to review the governance of UK address data.

It last did this in 2013.

Right now, Ofcom is consulting on what it should do for the next 2 years: https://t.co/sWQY2pldlP

We should all ask Ofcom to review address data again in 2021.

(8/10)

Here's how to ask them to, in 5 mins:

1. Download the form: https://t.co/xhGYDI4hwh (.odt)

2. Suggest Ofcom review the cost and governance of PAF in 2021/22, as part of its broader review of postal regulation

3. Mail it to planofwork@ofcom.org.uk by 5 Feb

■

(9/10)

Finally, please share this with your address-data-using friends, and let's make 2021 the year we start to make addresses work for everyone.

https://t.co/5jU4jVzMEj

Thanks to @peterkwells for spotting this opportunity, and much expert advice!

(10/10)