Data, Tech, & Black Communities: Members & Code of Collaboration

Contents

What is Data, Tech, & Black Communities (DTBC)? 1
What are our principles? 2
What are the benefits of being a DTBC member? 3
What does membership entail? 4
1. Stewards 4
How are decisions made at DTBC? 5
Who can be a steward? 6
2. General membership 6
How are decisions requiring general membership input made at DTBC? 7
Who can be a general member? 7
How do we work with each other? Our Code of Collaboration 8
Introduction 8
How we treat each other 8
How we won't treat each other 9
How we respond to violations of our code of conduct 9
How to raise a complaint 10

What is Data, Tech, & Black Communities (DTBC)?

Data, Tech, & Black Communities (DTBC) is a group of diverse Black/Black heritage people e.g. parents/guardians, practitioners, activists, technologists– all with a shared interest to work together to ensure data and data-driven technologies (e.g. AI) enhance Black lives, rather than curtail or surveil them. Our interest in technology is broad, but we focus primarily on the applications of data and data-centric technologies in the following areas: **health, education, crime** and **justice, and employment** and **enterprise**, within the UK.

Our community stewards are currently four Black women: Tracey Gyateng, Ade Adewunmi, Dr Mwenza Blell and Anita Shervington. Edafe Onerhime, a founding

steward of DTBC was instrumental in developing this work. We started this work in December 2020 and have published most of our findings and reflections on our Medium blog (https://medium.com/@data-tech-black-communities).

We hope the resources we create and share as part of our work can be valuable to other marginalised communities in the UK because **we believe there is strength in solidarity**. That's why we actively encourage these groups to reuse our methods, tools, and resources.

What are our principles?

We work with openness, humility, respect, accessibility, inclusivity, and a focus on relevance—so our work stays grounded in real lives and led by those most impacted.



- **Openness:** We share our work, methods, and ideas transparently, and invite others to reuse and build on them.
- **Humility:** We don't claim to have all the answers—we learn continually and value insight from others.
- **Respect:** We honour people's time, labour, and expertise, striving to engage thoughtfully and fairly.
- **Accessibility:** We work to make our events and outputs welcoming and usable for everyone, especially those most often excluded.
- **Inclusivity:** We recognise the diversity of Black experiences and aim to create safe, inclusive spaces where Black people from a wide range of backgrounds and socioeconomic status can contribute.
- **Relevance:** We focus on how data and technology affect real lives, avoiding abstract or academic framing that doesn't connect to lived experience.

What are the benefits of being a DTBC member?

Join a knowledgeable community

Data and data-centric technologies like AI can be confusing. As a DTBC member, you won't have to try and make sense of it all by yourself. You'll be part of a friendly and diverse network of people. We bring different lived experiences and varying levels of tech-related expertise but also, a common interest in understanding how these technologies impact Black communities. Together, we can raise questions, explore ideas, and propose solutions for our (and society's) collective benefit.

Career development and project opportunities

You will be the first to hear about and join community-led projects that research the real-life impact of data use and data-centric technologies and propose ways to reduce harm to Black communities.

Getting involved in a funded project means you'll:

- have access to free data skills training,
- help vet and decide on project ideas,
- receive some compensation for your time and labour. This aligns with our community values of respecting people's time by providing recompense where we can and working in non-extractive ways.

Early access to research

Members get early (i.e. before they are published) access to research findings and project team presentations about findings and recommendations .

A safe, inclusive space

We acknowledge the reality of systemic racism and its impact on our lived experience. Instead of abstract debate, we focus on action to improve our material

conditions. Our spaces are built on respect and community care, enshrined in a code of conduct to ensure all members feel safe and heard.

What does membership entail?

There are two levels of membership: 1) stewards 2) general members. All members are volunteers, however our principle is to ensure projects are funded and that we provide fair compensation for work as much as possible. We also understand not everyone can volunteer their time, and do not want to prohibit anyone from working for DTBC where they want to. In cases such as this, we will do our best to raise/seek funding to enable participation in our work

1. Stewards

Stewards have a leadership role within DTBC and help set the direction for DTBC's work. Stewards are involved in the following activities:

- **Grow and guide the community—** Devise and support efforts to recruit new members, as well as help shape how we run the community
- **Represent DTBC** – Stewards advocate for DTBC's mission and initiatives. This involves explaining our position, values, and seeking out opportunities to engage with others
- **Refine and deliver meaningful projects—**Stewards work with other members to refine the design of impactful community-led projects that are relevant to Black communities and aligned with our mission. They are also required to support efforts to seek out and apply for funding for the project and support its delivery.
- **Keep members and partners informed—**Vibrant communities have moderators who help facilitate discussions among members. In our case, that means sharing details of our projects, values and updates via blog posts, newsletters, and more.
- **Contribute to discussions about government policy and broader data and data-centric discourse—**Stewards facilitate working group discussions comprising community members and relevant allied experts to develop a DTBC position. They will also be responsible for engaging with relevant government consultations and public discourse that affects our communities.
- **Support our team and projects—**Help to recruit and coordinate freelance experts and community members (with fair pay!).

- **Keep things running—** Manage DTBC's communication tools, apply for funding, and make sure resources are well used.

Stewards meet weekly on Fridays, with meetings scheduled either at 10am or in the evening, depending on collective availability.

As DTBC's membership expands, some of these activities (1-6) will be handled by general membership working groups. The process for doing this will be discussed and decided at DTBC annual general meetings. Even with an expanded membership, we anticipate Stewards will have responsibility for driving the development of, and adherence to, DTBC's governance structures.

Stewards' hour-long weekly meetings are the primary forum for fulfilling their responsibilities. They are encouraged to attend all meetings (however we fully understand that life happens and will be flexible when necessary).

How are decisions made at DTBC?

Decisions related to stewards' areas of responsibility are made by consensus. This does not mean that all stewards agree with a particular course of action or direction of travel; it simply means that some do and none have objections.

There may be times when one or more stewards have a personal interest in a project or engagement, and as such, would like to participate even if consensus regarding DTBC involvement has not been achieved. In such cases, those stewards could choose to participate in the said events or projects in a personal capacity (not on behalf of DTBC). This, of course, assumes that such projects do not actively undermine the purpose and interests of DTBC.

How are DTBC funds managed?

Two stewards (Ade Adewunmi & Tracey Gyateng) are the directors of DTBC CIC and manage the bank account. This means they have statutory reporting and accounting responsibilities to fulfil. Decisions made by stewards should not conflict with statutory reporting and accounting duties.

Who can be a steward?

The requirements for becoming a steward are:

- Satisfactory completion of general membership application form
- ability to fulfil the responsibilities of the role; and
- the bandwidth to participate in weekly meetings, quarterly horizon-scanning meetings and at least one in-person strategy meeting, annually.

The selection process is simple; existing stewards will meet interested individuals to understand their motivations for being a steward and suitability, given the stated criteria.

You might be required to step down from a Steward role if:

- you are unable to regularly attend meetings (at least 75% of meetings) without providing a reason to other stewards; or
- you engage in activities which violate DTBC stated principles or code of conduct or undermine DTBC's interests. In such circumstances, your membership of DTBC will also be reviewed by a working group comprising DTBC members.

2. General membership

As a general member, the benefits outlined above will be provided. In return, we hope that members will get involved in the following ways:

- **Support the community** – Welcome new members by helping them find their feet within the community, get involved in projects etc. You can also contribute to how our community space(s) works.
- **Run DTBC events or represent DTBC at third party events** – Help organise and deliver DTBC events. You could also canvas other members' opinions on a topic and represent the community's views at external events that we are invited to.
- **Propose and shape meaningful projects** – Propose data and tech-focused projects to the wider DTBC community, that would add value to Black communities in the UK. Such projects might explore a specific technology, or its use, and its impact on people's lived experience. Members can also contribute to the designs and implementation of DTBC projects.

- **Create and communicate** – Help achieve our community's broader concerns by being storytellers and amplifiers about the role and impact of data and data-centric technologies in and on Black communities. This might be through blogs, videos, art, and more.
- **Curate the conversation** – Find and share relevant news, articles, or resources for our members and newsletter.
- **Take action** – Ultimately, the point of all our learning, researching, storytelling and discussing is to be in a position to take action that makes a positive difference. This action could involve supporting community organisers, responding to government consultations, or other initiatives that align with DTBC's mission.

General members primarily engage online through Signal and are invited to online member events on an ad hoc basis.

How are decisions requiring general membership input made at DTBC?

Decisions are made by majority vote, and members will be asked to vote on areas to take forward. Two stewards (Ade Adewunmi and Tracey Gyateng) are the directors of DTBC CIC and manage the bank account. This means they have statutory reporting duties to adhere to, and decisions that conflict with statutory reporting may need to be overridden by the directors.

Who can be a general member?

If you are in alignment with our mission and goals; our principles, and code of collaboration and are willing to answer a few questions to verify your membership, you can become a member. Please complete this [Request for membership form]. We will record your name, any organisational affiliation(s) and contact details and sign you up to our Signal group and newsletter. Your personal details will only be used in relation to DTBC work and will not be shared with external organisations without your explicit consent.

A Steward will review your request for membership and you will be sent an e-mail confirming your membership.

How do we work with each other? Our Code of Collaboration

Introduction

DTBC is a community-driven organisation focused on improving the way data and technologies affect Black lives. While we share a common purpose, each member is unique. By recognising and respecting our differences, we will generate a diverse range of ideas and solutions for making technologies work for our benefit.

This means we embrace diversity. We know there will be differing points of view and that as a community, we will need to work through them. In doing so, we must be considerate of each other and treat each other with dignity. Everyone, regardless of gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic, must feel safe to contribute within the DTBC community. Physical, mental, emotional abuse and/or bullying of members based on any particular characteristic will not be tolerated.

Below is some guidance for how we interact with one another. Overall this can be summarised as: **BE A KIND HUMAN.**

How we treat each other

How we treat each other are captured within the principles of DTBC. As a summary, these are:

Open with each other– our ideas aren't undercover;
Humility is at our core– leave the egos at the door;
Respect for time & labour– we appreciate your favour;
Accessible to everyone– no barriers to participation;
Inclusivity is key – diverse is who we be;
Relevancy is what's needed – abstraction won't be heeded!

When interacting with each other, please exercise consideration and respect in your speech and actions. In discussions, please avoid stereotypes (even those commonly heard in our communities) and speak of your direct experience or cite well-evidenced research.

As a member of DTBC we expect you to treat fellow members with dignity and respect regardless of your personal convictions.

How we won't treat each other

At DTBC, we are working together to ensure that data and data-driven technologies (e.g., AI) **enhance Black lives,** and in doing so, **we will enhance the lives of everyone.** Behaviours and actions that seek to diminish the lives of people within our diverse community are not welcome here.

Harassment– any form of action and/or behaviour that causes, or intends to cause physical, mental, emotional harm– towards other DTBC community members or communities they belong to will be treated seriously and dealt with swiftly to prevent and/or reduce actions/behaviours that are likely to cause harm.

How we respond to violations of our code of conduct

Following a complaint about a breach of our code of conduct, we will immediately take action to ensure the safety of the person(s) harmed. This could involve stewards removing the person/s who have caused harm from meetings or DTBC work until an investigation takes place.

A working group of stewards will be formed to investigate the incident. Stewards will speak to all parties to understand the incident and the nature of the alleged harm. If, following the investigation, the complaint is found to have merit, we will provide support to those who have been harmed, taking our lead from them. We will also review our operating practices to identify ways we can prevent a similar thing happening again.

We will also try to work with those who have caused harm to ensure they understand the harm they have caused and, if they are willing, help them identify and implement necessary behaviour change. In the sad circumstance in which the person/s who has caused harm is unwilling to change their behaviour or fails to stick to the behaviour change they committed to, they may be asked to leave the DTBC community.

How to raise a complaint

Stewards will make themselves known within meetings/ events. If you are being harassed, notice that someone is being harassed, or have concerns about others' conduct, please contact a steward as soon as possible. If your complaint is about a steward, then please direct it to one or more of the other stewards.

You can contact stewards by email: stewards@dtbc.org.uk

There is no singular solution for how we bend and shape the data and technologies that are largely developed by powerful actors, to instruments that can aid the flourishing of Black lives. We truly believe that our differences in beliefs, behaviours, cultures and ways of viewing the world will help us to develop the multitude of actions that will be required to shape data and technologies. We won't always agree, but we can choose to always uphold the humanity of every single person we interact with, to treat each other with respect; and keep our eyes focused on the impact we want to make.

