

Sir,

A rape victim's decision whether to give up their phone data to the police (Give us your phone or we'll drop case, rape victims told, 29 April) is hard because the interests of the police clash with those of the victim. Victims want data which is sensitive and irrelevant to remain private, while the police need all data to be potentially available for criminal investigation and a future trial.

Much of this conflict could be solved by setting up a data trust. Data trusts hold data as stewards, deciding who can have access and on what terms. A data trust for these purposes would preserve data for use as future evidence, and control access to data which was irrelevant for a police investigation. A research project by the Open Data Institute published its findings two weeks ago, and these findings explain the issues and how they can be resolved.

Independent stewardship of data will become increasingly important for data sharing, particularly where delicate interest balancing needs to be carried out. The legal and other structures needed for data trusts already exist, and do not require new laws to be put in place.