

Becoming a research data manager

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Health warning

This talk is largely reflection and conjecture

I hope you enjoy it anyway!

These are my own opinions...

...formed from my experience and talking to people in
the sector...

...and don't necessarily represent any one institution

A little bit about me

Blog: erambler.co.uk

Twitter: [@jezcope](https://twitter.com/jezcope)

Github: [jezcope](https://github.com/jezcope)

A photograph of a stack of books, a smartphone, and a pair of glasses resting on an open book. The books have various colored covers (blue, yellow, green).

Education

MSci in Mathematics & Computing

3 years research experience

Computational systems biology, if you're interested

Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education



What did I learn?

How researchers think and speak

How people learn



ICT Project Manager in Doctoral Training Centre

Centre for Sustainable Chemical Technologies

Research360 project
Jisc MRD programme

 **CANSI**
www.cansci.com

What did I learn?

Be able to work both independently and collaboratively

Be agile and work with what you've got



Research Data Manager

Imperial College London

University of Sheffield

Libraries at research-intensive universities

Key learning point

Work flexibly and don't make assumptions

Ignore Cross traditional silo boundaries

Build consensus and bring people with you on the
journey

Where next?

My job is fulfilling: interesting, varied and rewarding
i.e. I'm not going anywhere soon

but I do have a stated aim to make myself redundant, so...

- Research?
- Data science?
- Consultancy?
- Software development?
- *Any suggestions?*



The wider profession

i.e. enough about me!

What does a research data manager do?

Reviewing DMPs

Writing documentation

Teaching (and developing
teaching materials)

Planning

Project management

Community building

Infrastructure building

Policy development

Service evaluation

...

Where do we get those skills?

Librarians

Archivists

Researchers

Technicians

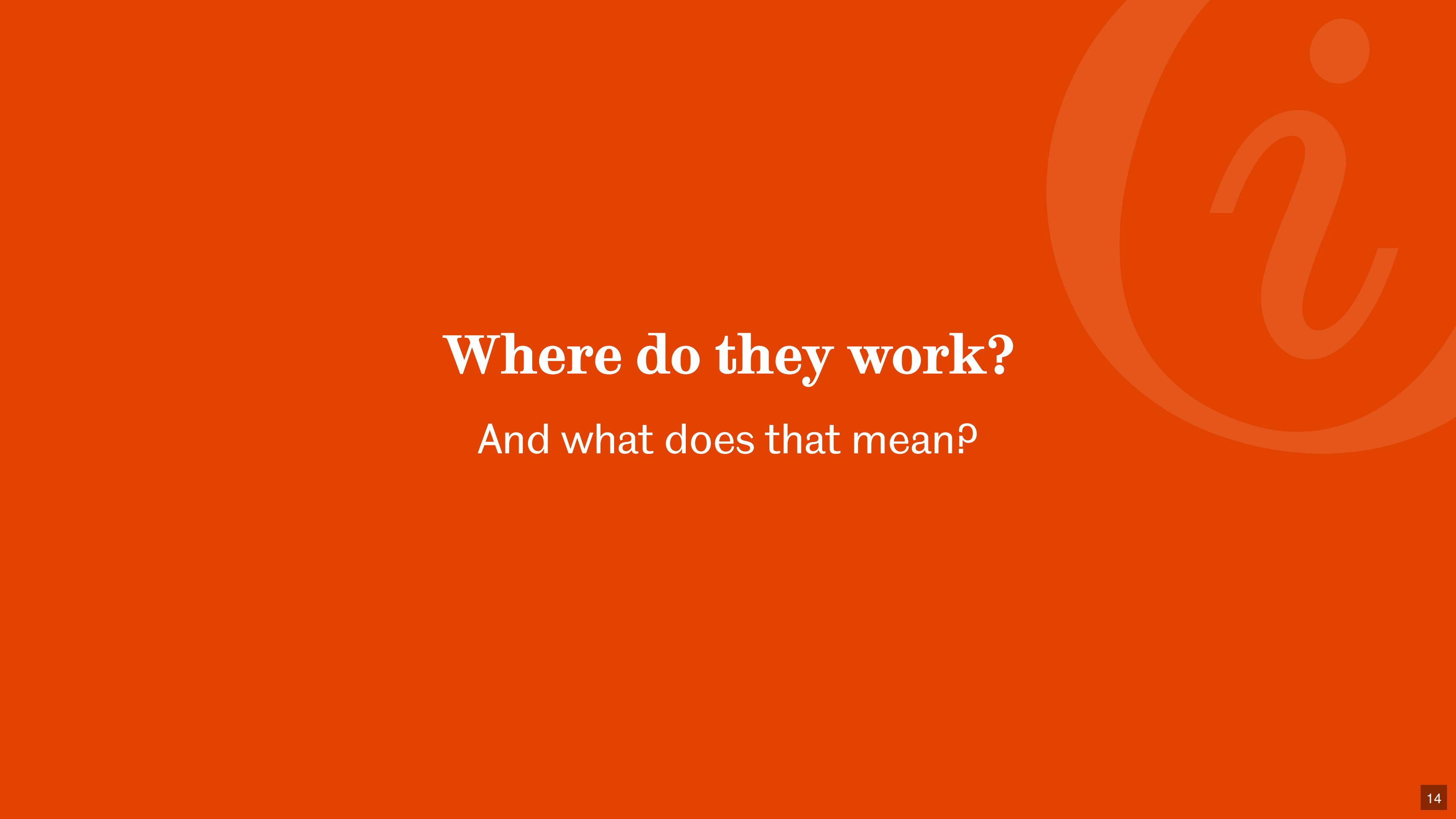
Data scientists

IT professionals

Research support
professionals

Project managers

QA professionals



Where do they work?

And what does that mean?

Library

Metadata; Access; Information Management

Research Office

Policy compliance; Risk management

IT Services

Technology; Infrastructure

Academic departments

Local, subject-specific needs; tactical rather than
strategic



Challenges

Challenge 1: funding is difficult right now

RDM skillset is valuable, and valued outside HE

Hard to recruit and retain talented people

Hard to justify expanding teams to meet demand

Challenge 2: no obvious career path

People come from diverse backgrounds...

...which is *why* we recruit them

But traditional promotion structures don't value that diversity

Challenge 3: it's a new and fragmented profession

It's hard to find a local community



Solutions

Continue making business case for institutional RDM support

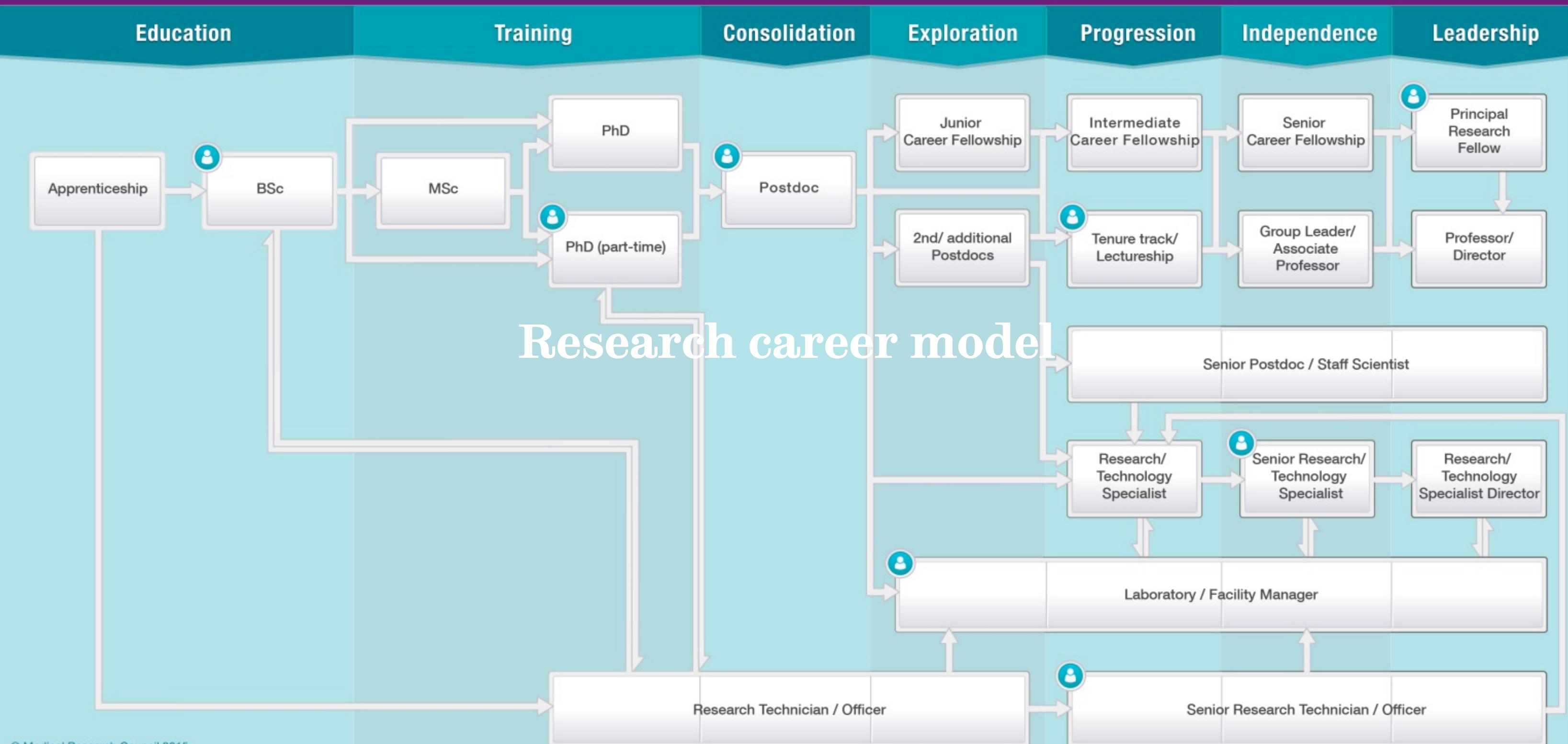
Sadly, money is important

Develop a career model for research data managers

If we want to recruit, develop and retain talent...

...we need to give people scope for development

Interactive career framework: Career view



Professional services career model

Move around to get experience *within your service*

Move up to positions of wider, more strategic
responsibility

Research software engineering

Lobby universities & funders to:

- acknowledge contributions
- fund specific posts for RSEs

Research data managers

Some ideas:

Encourage freedom of movement across department boundaries

Aim to build capacity within departments and faculties

Work with other communities (e.g. RSE)

Continue community building

Seek out and welcome new constituencies

e.g. technicians, postdocs, RSEs

Sector bodies cooperate to build a home and a voice for
our profession

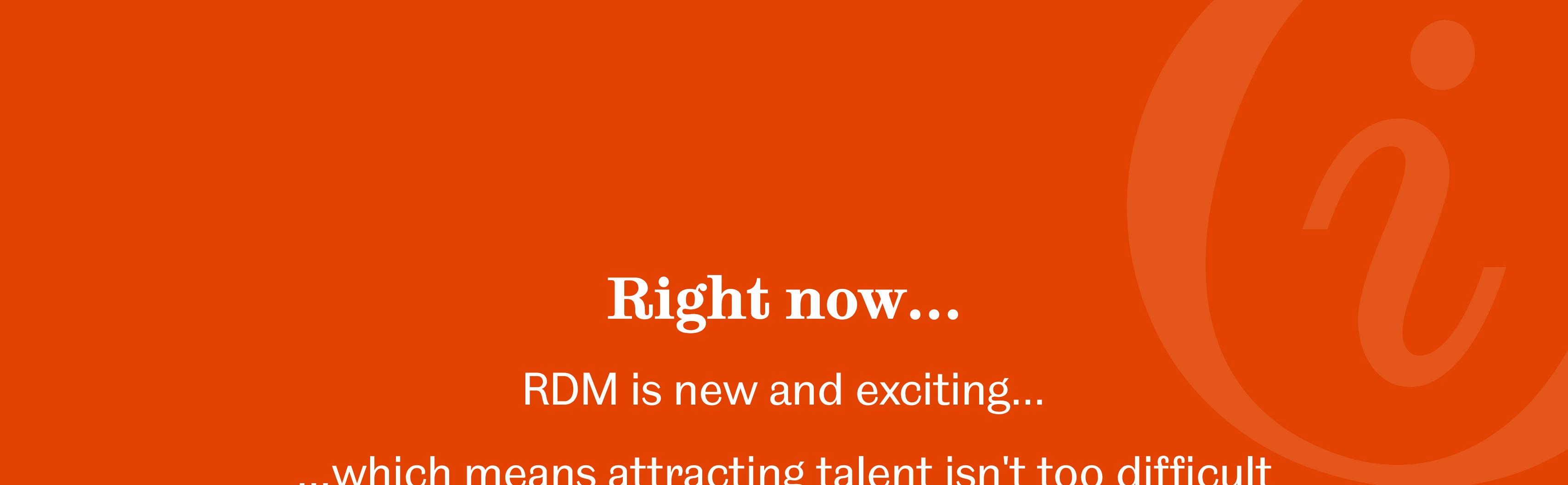
DCC, Jisc, DPC, CODATA, ...

Provide a range of opportunities

Build skills: e.g. Library Carpentry

Build experience: e.g. secondments, job shadowing, new posts

Conclusions



Right now...

RDM is new and exciting...

...which means attracting talent isn't too difficult

But this will change!

For the future...

We need to make sure we can recruit *and retain* talented people

We're well on the way, but we're not there yet!

Acknowledgements

Literally hundreds of people who have supported me in my career and given me the opportunities that have put me here today

Academic career model © 2017 Medical Research Council

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