



Principles of Good Research & Research Proposal Guide

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Principles of Good Research

All research is different but the following factors are common to all good pieces of research involving social care service users, their families and carers and staff working in this area.

- There is a clear statement of research aims, which defines the research question.
- There is an information sheet for participants, which sets out clearly what the research is about, what it will involve and consent is obtained in writing on a consent form prior to research beginning.
- The methodology is appropriate to the research question. So, if the research is into people's perceptions, a more qualitative, unstructured interview may be appropriate. If the research aims to identify the scale of a problem or need, a more quantitative, randomised, statistical sample survey may be more appropriate. Good research can often use a combination of methodologies, which complement one another.
- The research should be carried out in an unbiased fashion. As far as possible the researcher should not influence the results of the research in any way. If this is likely, it needs to be addressed explicitly and systematically.
- From the beginning, the research should have appropriate and sufficient resources in terms of people, time, transport, money etc. allocated to it.
- The people conducting the research should be trained in research and research methods and this training should provide:
 - Knowledge around appropriate information gathering techniques,
 - An understanding of research issues,
 - An understanding of the research area,
 - An understanding of the issues around dealing with vulnerable social care clients and housing clients, especially regarding risk, privacy and sensitivity and the possible need for support.
- Those involved in designing, conducting, analysing and supervising the research should have a full understanding of the subject area.
- In some instances, it helps if the researcher has experience of working in the area. However, this can also be a negative factor, as sometimes research benefits from the fresh eyes and ears of an outsider, which may lead to less bias.
- If applicable, the information generated from the research will inform the policy-making process.
- All research should be ethical and not harmful in any way to the participants.

Research Proposal Guide

The following topic areas and questions need to be covered in any application to do research which involves direct or indirect access to social care service users, vulnerable adults in the housing service, their families and carers and/or members of council staff.

How you write your proposal is up to you but if you can address the criteria in this guide it will help the South West London Research Governance Consortium to make a judgement about your research proposal, so answering as many of the questions as possible will simplify the approval process.

Questions to address in preparing your research proposal

- 1. Background**
- Why is this research important?
 - What other studies have there been in this area?
 - How will this research add to knowledge in this area?
 - What do you want to find out?
 - What is the main question you wish to answer?
 - What are the specific questions you will ask to address the main question?
- 2. How you will do your research**
- Will you be doing this research on your own or with others?
 - Have you provided full details of anyone else you intend to carry out this research with, including fieldworkers?
 - Who are you targeting in this research?
 - How many people or case files do you intend to interview or read through?
 - Where will the research take place?
 - Will participants be clearly and fully informed of the purpose of the research study?
 - How will you do this?
 - How will participants be clear about the expectations of the researcher?
 - Do you have an information sheet and a consent form for participants?
 - Supervisory arrangements - how do you intend your research to be supervised and monitored and by whom?
 - Who will be funding your research?

3. Timetable

When will your research start and finish?

Are there particular stages to the research - e.g. piloting, then main research?

If so, what are they?

Is the timetable realistic?

Is it influenced by external constraints or deadlines?

How will you provide regular updates and progress reports and to whom will you provide them?

4. Methodology

What sort of data will you be collecting - e.g. are you intending to count numbers, talk to people directly or a mixture of the two?

What is the main method you will use to carry out the research - e.g. questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, paper reviews etc.?

How will you select your sample?

How will you recruit your sample?

How will you collect your data?

Will you be paying participants?

5. Ethical Issues

Is there any potential risk or harm to participants or yourself?

If so, what are the potential risks and what do you intend to do to reduce them?

How will you obtain informed consent?

Where informed consent is unable to be provided, what will you do?

How will your research comply with equal opportunities?

How will participants be given the opportunity to complain?

Will you be insured against professional negligence claims?

How will you deal with complaints made against you by participants?

How will you deal with any sensitive or criminal matters that may be raised in the course of your research?

What follow-up support will be available to participants should they require it?

What will you do if the focus of your research project shifts or changes substantially from the proposal?

If it goes outside the original remit, how will you notify the council? You may need new approval.

6. Data Protection

Will you be using recording or video equipment?

How will you make sense of or analyse the data?

How will the data be stored?

For how long will the data be stored?

How will it be disposed of?

How will you ensure confidentiality and anonymity of data?

Who will have ultimate ownership of the data?

Are you or do you need to be registered under the *Data Protection Act 1998*?

Audit.

If you are likely to need to contact a participant later, you need to declare this now.

7. Dissemination

In what form will your findings be presented - e.g. report, presentation, journal etc?

How will you be disseminating your findings?

To whom will you be disseminating your findings?

How will you ensure anonymity in any publications?

To whom does the research belong and have you thought about intellectual property rights?

It is a condition of approval that the research will be logged on the council's database. The council would also like a summary to be made available for the council's website – would you be willing to provide this?