UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research 2017 – An Overview

The new UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research has been developed by the Health Research Authority and the Health Departments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; and replaces the separate Research Governance Frameworks of each UK country.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy framework is:

- To protect and promote the interests of patients, service users and the public in health and social care research, by describing ethical conduct and proportionate, assurance-based management of health and social care research, so as to support and facilitate high-quality research in the UK that has the confidence of patients, service users and the public.
- To ensure a consistent approach to co-ordinating and standardising regulatory practice, and achieve compatibility across the UK for the management and conduct of health and social care research.

Scope

The policy framework applies to health and social care research that is within the responsibility of the HRA or the Devolved Administrations’ Health Departments; involving patients, service users or their relatives or carers.

Audience

The policy framework is aimed at organisations and individuals who manage and conduct health and social research in the UK, including funders, sponsors, researchers and their employers, research sites and care providers.

Principles

The policy framework sets out 19 principles of good practice in the management and conduct of health and social care research that take account of legal requirements and other standards. The principles are summarised below:

1. **Safety** - of the individual prevail over the interests of science and society.
2. **Competence** - of all the people involved in managing and conducting a research study.
3. **Scientific and Ethical Conduct** - prevails in all aspects of research studies.
4. **Patient, Service User and Public Involvement** - in the design, management, conduct and dissemination of research, unless otherwise justified.
5. **Integrity, Quality and Transparency** - when designing, reviewing, managing and conducting research.
6. **Protocol** - clearly describes and justifies the design and procedure of the research.
7. **Legality** - researchers and sponsors should be familiar with relevant legislation and guidance.
8. **Benefits and Risks** - for the individual participant and other present and future recipients should be assessed before the research study is started.

9. **Approval** - should be gained from a research ethics committee and any other relevant approval body where it is expected or required.

10. **Information about the Research** - is made publicly available before the research study starts.

11. **Accessible Findings** - whether positive or negative, are made accessible, in a timely manner and, where appropriate, in a suitable format for those who took part.

12. **Choice** - research participants are afforded respect and autonomy, taking account of their capacity to understand, and consent is voluntary and informed.

13. **Insurance and Indemnity** - to cover liabilities which may arise in relation to the design, management and conduct of the research study.

14. **Respect for Privacy** - information collected for or as part of the research study is recorded, handled and stored appropriately, while the confidentiality of individual research participants remains protected.

15. **Compliance** - sanctions for non-compliance with these principles will be imposed.

16. **Justified Intervention** - the intended deviation from normal treatment, care or other services is adequately supported by the available information.

17. **Ongoing Provision of Treatment** - the research proposal or protocol and the participant information sheet explains what happens after the research intervention period has ended.

18. **Integrity of the Care Record** - information about treatment, care or other services provided as part of the research study is recorded, handled and stored appropriately and can be understood by others involved in the participant’s care.

19. **Duty of Care** - continues to apply when patients and service users take part in research. If an unmanageable conflict arises between research and patient interests, the duty to the participant as a patient prevails.

**Responsibilities**

The policy framework defines and sets out the responsibilities of individuals and organisations involved in research. These include:

- Chief investigators
- Research teams
- Funders
- Sponsors
- Contract research organisations (CRO)
- Research sites
- Regulators of professions
- Other regulators
- Employers
- Health and social care providers

Find out more and download a copy of UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research [here](#).