

Promoting ethical research in Cornwall

Research Governance Framework

Managers' briefing note

The Research Governance Framework (RGF) for health and social care considers and approves research and consultation in the sector. It is a statutory duty for Education, Health and Social Care to have such a process in place.

How do we do this in Cornwall?

An RGF panel meets monthly to consider applications from across the directorate, from both staff and external applicants. These might be for individual social work student projects, large-scale academic studies or departmental research and consultation. In fact, anyone who wants to approach people who use our services, carers, relatives or employees needs to have their research approved.

Why is this important?

The framework was set up by the Department of Health, as part of the response to the scandal first uncovered at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, in which hospitals were retaining body parts for research without permission. The Council's RGF panel has been in place since November 2002 and has an independent chair.

A high priority for the panel is to check that the research is ethical, and that proposals have taken into consideration factors such as data protection and an appropriate research methodology. The purpose is to encourage compliance, without discouraging research.

What's the benefit for the Council?

Properly-conducted social research work can be invaluable in shaping services. Often though, the topics chosen are led by students, required to conduct a piece of research as part of their course, or national research projects across a number of local authorities. Managers have an opportunity to commission research into specific areas by specifying their requirements or posting potential research topics on the RGF website. Please contact the administrators below for more information.

How does this link with other consultation and engagement work?

The Council's RGF considers applications from the social care sector. A similar arrangement is in place for studies in Health. The RGF panel also works closely with the corporate Community Intelligence Team, which oversees all consultation and engagement for the Council. RGF also supersedes the ethics panels of universities and colleges.

Further information

Forms, guidance and the Department of Health policy are available on the website at: www.cornwall.gov.uk/rgf. You can also contact the RGF administrators, as follows:

rgf@cornwall.gov.uk