

# Research Governance Annual Report

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016

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## **1. Executive summary**

During the year we:

- reviewed 14 research projects;
- acted as lead reviewer for 1 multi-site research application to the Midlands Region Research Governance Group;
- advised on 24 questionnaires and interview schedules being developed in-house by Directorate for People staff to support evaluation, consultation or engagement activity;
- organised presentations for our Research Governance Advisors on 'Use of questionnaires in research' and 'Evaluation studies';
- recruited a new Research Governance Advisor from within Children's Services;
- raised awareness of our research governance process externally by uploading a copy of last year's research governance annual report to the Internet; and
- responded to a public consultation on the proposed UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

## **2. Introduction**

Welcome to the tenth Research Governance Annual Report which summarises the work of Research Governance Advisors and operation of the Research Governance Advisory Committee (RGAC) for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. It also compares our performance with what we said we would do in 2015-16, which was to:

- continue to monitor and respond to changes to the national framework for health and social care research;

- recruit additional research governance advisors from amongst staff in children's services; and
- identify additional ways of raising awareness, both internally and externally, of our research governance processes.

### **3. What is research governance?**

Research governance is a framework for ensuring research is ethical, safe, of good quality and useful as set out in the Department of Health's 'Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care' (Department of Health: 2005). Proper governance of research is essential to ensure the public can have confidence in, and benefit from, quality research in health and social care.

In Birmingham City Council research governance approval is required for social care or public health research projects that will involve service users, their carers or staff working in adults' or children's social care services, or public health. These projects may involve collecting information directly from participants through, for example, a questionnaire, interview or focus group, or require access to anonymised or identifiable personal information about them.

### **4. Management of research governance**

The research governance function is based within the Directorate for People and manages reviews of social care and public health research projects that are commissioned, hosted or conducted by the directorate.

Following a restructure in 2015, the research governance function moved from within Adults' Social Care to the Commissioning Centre of Excellence, and Michael Walsh, Head of Service – Intelligence, Strategy and Prioritisation, replaced Charles Ashton-Gray as the Research Governance Lead.

The Directorate has a RGAC whose membership is voluntary and includes citizens who use services, carers, Council staff and university staff. (Please see Appendix 1 for list of members). The

members are known as 'Research Governance Advisors' (RGAs) and much of their work of reviewing and advising on research proposals is carried out electronically.

RGAs bring with them a breadth of experience that means research proposals are viewed from a number of different perspectives to identify their potential benefits and limitations.

During the year we recruited a new Research Governance Advisor from within Children's Services and four Research Governance Advisors stepped down from the RGAC.

RGAs meet as the RGAC twice a year to develop their knowledge of research governance, review work undertaken, and identify ways of improving the research governance process in the Directorate.

During 2015 we held RGAC meetings in May and November. We continued to use the meetings to provide an overview of our work and as a learning opportunity for RGAs.

We supported RGAs by arranging presentations on:

- Use of questionnaires in research; and
- Evaluation studies.

## **5. Overview of research governance activity 2015-16**

### **5.1 Research projects reviewed by Research Governance Advisors**

During the year RGAs reviewed 14 research projects, compared with 22 in 2014-15. A list of these can be found in Appendix 2.

As with the previous year, the majority of the projects we reviewed involved children's social care services (7 projects) and most of the research governance applications were from universities (9 projects). Please see Appendix 3 for further details.

We agreed to support 11 research projects. Of the remaining three research governance applications: one was withdrawn; we referred one researcher to a service that the Directorate commissions; and the Directorate lacked capacity to support one project.

From our reviews of research projects we identified that some researchers are still failing to use version control for their documentation and not sufficiently proof reading documentation and research tools before submitting them to us.

## **5.2 Our performance in reviewing research proposals**

We aim to respond to researchers with the outcome of our review within 20 working days of receiving all requested documentation plus satisfactory answers to any initial concerns we had about the project. In 2015-16 we met this target for 89% of the applications (range 0-21 working days with an average of 7 working days). Where we did not reach the target it was because of deliberation over whether or not the Directorate had capacity to support the project.

When we notify researchers of our decision regarding their application, we send them a short questionnaire to collect feedback about their experience of going through the research governance process. During the year we continued to receive positive feedback about the process, including:

*“This has been the most timely response I have received thus far.”*

*“This has been the most straightforward and speedy research governance approval process that I've gone through. I don't have any suggestions for improvements.”*

*“The research governance staff were extremely helpful and responsive, this made the whole process much simpler and easier to navigate.”*

We did not receive any suggestions for how the research governance process could be improved.

## **5.3 Completed research reports**

We ask for a copy of research findings once projects have been completed. During the year we received results from 10 projects. These are listed in Appendix 4.

## **5.4. Supporting research-type activity**

During 2015-16 we advised on 24 questionnaires and interview schedules developed within the Directorate for People for the purpose of service evaluation, consultation or engagement activities. This compared with 21 in the previous year.

## **6. Developments 2015-16**

### **6.1 Raising awareness of research governance**

We emailed a copy of last year's research governance annual report to staff within the Directorate for People and uploaded a copy to the Council's website:

[https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/891/research\\_governance\\_annual\\_report](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/891/research_governance_annual_report)

We also uploaded a copy of the 2014-15 annual report to the 'Research Community' section of the Council's research blog:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/1323/>

We updated information about research governance on the internal Children's Procedures Database and also saved copies of results from research projects to an internal database where they could be accessed by staff.

### **6.2 Improving research governance processes**

During 2015-16 the Health Research Authority (HRA), which is responsible for publishing policy and guidance on how to manage and carry out health and social care research in England, published a draft UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research. The policy framework is intended to replace the existing national research governance frameworks for health and social care. In 2015 we responded to a call for comments from the HRA on its draft UK Policy Framework and in 2016 we responded to HRA's consultation on the revised Policy Framework. More information on the framework is available at:

<http://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-the-hra/our-plans-and-projects/replacing-research-governance-framework/>

A final version of the policy framework is expected to be published in late 2016.

### **6.3 Providing support for research and research-type activity**

We encouraged the sharing of research by supporting a 'Celebrating Research' mini conference held in October 2015. More information about the mini conference is available at: <https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2015/10/26/birmingham-city-council-celebrating-research-partnership-working-seminar-15102015/>

In October 2015, we supported a group of researchers from Linneaus University, Sweden to meet with staff from Adults Social Care to discuss the provision of community care to older adults.

In 2016 we developed guidance for Directorate staff on retention of research data and published this on an internal database to assist them when conducting research.

## **7. Midlands Region Research Governance Group**

Birmingham is a member of the Midlands Region Research Governance Group whose members support each other to have in place high quality research governance systems.

We hosted two meetings, in April 2015 and in March 2016, for members of the Midlands Region Research Governance Group to discuss the HRA's proposals for replacing the Research Governance Framework. These discussions were used by members to inform their response to the HRA's initial call for comments and the subsequent public consultation on its proposed Policy Framework.

The Group has a reciprocal arrangement between its members for when a researcher wishes to carry out a project in more than one council within the Midlands (called a 'multi-site research governance application'). Under this arrangement one council becomes the 'lead' for that project, reviews the research and then shares this review with the Midlands Group. It means that researchers do not have to make separate applications to different local authorities for research governance clearance. This saves

the researcher's time and also the time of research governance leads in the Midlands. During 2015-16 Birmingham reviewed, within timescale, 1 multi-site research governance application and shared information about the project with other members of the Group.

## **8. Conclusions**

During the year we continued to raise awareness of our research governance process; improve the quality of research and research-type activity; and develop our research governance advisors by:

- reviewed 14 research projects;
- acted as lead reviewer for 1 multi-site research application to the Midlands Region Research Governance Group;
- advised on 24 questionnaires and interview schedules being developed in-house by Directorate for People staff to support evaluation, consultation or engagement activity;
- organised presentations for our Research Governance Advisors on 'Use of questionnaires in research' and 'Evaluation studies';
- recruited a new Research Governance Advisor from within Children's Services;
- raised awareness of our research governance process externally by uploading a copy of last year's research governance annual report to the Internet; and
- responded to a public consultation on the proposed UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

## **9. Looking forward**

We will continue to raise awareness of our research governance process both inside and outside the Council, and continue to

support quality improvements in social care and public health research activity.

In addition in 2016-2017 we will:

- continue to develop links with local universities;
- celebrate local research activity by contributing to an annual research seminar; and
- revise, as needed, our research governance documentation and process to meet requirements of the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care.

If you would like to be involved in reviewing research proposals or would like more information about research governance, please contact:

Deborah Towle

Email: [SCHResearchGovernance@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:SCHResearchGovernance@birmingham.gov.uk)

## **Appendix1. List of Research Governance Advisors**

Barbara Ann Marshall  
Bernie Redmond  
Charles Ashton-Gray (Research Governance Lead, 2015)  
Christine Ransome-Wallis  
Deborah Towle  
Heather Thompson  
Ian Jenkins  
Jackie Robinson  
Janet Parkes  
Meanaz Akhtar  
Margaret Stratton  
Maureen Oakley  
Melanie Gray  
Mike Walsh (Research Governance Lead, 2016)  
Parvez Muzaffar  
Rosemary Littlechild  
Steve Mennear  
Wayne Harrison

They include:

- staff from adults' social care services (4);
- staff from Children's Services (1);
- staff from Commissioning Centre of Excellence (4);
- staff from Public Health Team (1);
- university staff (2);
- citizens with experience of services (3); and
- citizens with experience as carers (3).

## Appendix2. Progress of applications

Service area	Project title	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
Adults' Social Care	Understanding the new commissioning system in England: contexts, mechanisms and outcomes – Jonathan Hammond	Funded research, University of Manchester	Approved	Ongoing	Yes - interim report
Adults' Social care	A critical analysis of the test for mental capacity: autonomy, sexual activity and supported decision making – Jaime Lindsey	PhD Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Completed	
Adults' Social Care	Carers Survey – Mike Ewins	Directorate for People (on behalf of the Department of Health)	Approved	Completed	Yes
Adults' Social Care	Cognitive testing of questions for the carers survey	TNS-BMRB (on behalf of Department of Health)	Approved	Completed	

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Approved/ Not approved</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Research summary received</b>
Children's Social Care	The experiences of children and young people in care – Rosie Smithson	Corporate Strategic Research Team, Birmingham City Council	Approved	Completed	Yes
Children's Social Care	Foster care and attachment – John Hoffman	Funded research, Leicester University	Approved	Ongoing	
Children's Social Care	The educational experiences of children in care – Elaine Matchett	PhD Student, Birmingham City University	Approved	Completed	
Children's Social Care	Safeguarding and radicalisation	TNS-BMRB (on behalf of the Department for Education)	Approved	Completed	
Children's Social Care	Frontline outcome evaluation	Dartington Social Research Unit	Approved	Ongoing	

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Approved/ Not approved</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Research summary received</b>
Children's Social Care	Resilience, attachment style and personality disorders – Cristina de Llano Arias	PhD Student, Coventry University	No capacity to support		
Children's Social Care	Experiences of birth parents – Shirley Lewis	PhD Student, Coventry University	Referred to commissioned service provider		
Adults' and Children's Social Care	Social work in higher education curriculum supervision - Barbara Ailli Haanwinckel	Visiting PhD Student, University of Birmingham	Withdrawn		
Adults' and Children's Social Care	The science of cities: the impact of demands for services to vulnerable citizens in the context of the future development of cities - Malkiat Thiarai	PhD Student, Warwick University	Approved	Ongoing	

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Approved/ Not approved</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Research summary received</b>
Public Health	Factors affecting childhood obesity rates across Birmingham: prospective analysis 2006/7 and 2014/15 – Susan Lowe	MPH Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Completed	Yes

### Appendix3. Overview of research governance applications

#### Number of projects reviewed:

Children's Social Care	Adults' Social Care	Adults' and Children's Social Care	Public Health
7	4	2	1

#### Outcome of reviews:

Approved	No capacity to support/Withdrawn/Referred
11	3

#### Lead organisation:

University Student Projects	Projects from Research Organisations	University Research Projects	Directorate for People Projects	Projects from Other Directorates
7	3	2	1	1

#### Progress of approved research projects:

Completed	Ongoing
7	4

## Appendix4. List of research reports received

Copies of research reports are stored on an internal database in the Directorate for People

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>
Adults' Social Care	Strategies used in England, Scotland and Sweden to minimise risk of harm to people with disability using direct payments – Alix Goodwin	Funded research, The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia
Adults' Social Care	Indirect payments for people who lack capacity: how do they work?	Funded research, National Institute for Health Research School of Social Care Research
Adults' Social Care	Domestic violence and women with learning disabilities	Funded research, Tizard Centre, University of Kent
Adults' Social Care	Carers Survey 2015	Directorate for People, Birmingham City Council
Adults' Social Care	Understanding the new commissioning system in England: contexts, mechanisms and outcomes	Funded research, University of Manchester

<b>Service area</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>
Children's Social Care	Is the Strengthening Families Framework Model suitable for use within child protection practice in England?	MA Student, University of Wolverhampton
Children's Social Care	The experiences of children and young people in care	Corporate Strategic Research Team, Birmingham City Council
Children's Social Care	Safeguarding in faith-based educational settings	Practitioner Research, University of Birmingham
Health	What are women's views on home birth?	MRes Student, University of Birmingham
Public Health	Factors affecting childhood obesity rates across Birmingham: prospective analysis 2006/7 and 2014/15	MPH Student, University of Birmingham