

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 then a more qualitative, unstructured interview may be appropriate. If the research aims to identify the scale of a problem or need, then a more quantitative, randomised, statistical sample survey may be more appropriate. NB 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, then 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, especially regarding risk, privacy and sensitivity and the possible need for support.
- Those involved in designing, conducting, analysing and supervising the research 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 as sometimes research benefits from the fresh pairs of eyes and ears of an outsider, which may lead to less bias.
- If applicable, that the information generated from the research will inform the policy process.
- All research should be ethical and not harmful in any way to the participants.