

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00433 (Version 1)

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Social Work Adult Services	Lead Officer Name:	Jennifer Faichney
	None	Team:	Planning, Performance and Policy
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Proposal:	<p>Research Governance Framework</p> <p>The proposed HSCP Research Governance Framework aims to support researchers to conduct research in adult social care services to promote the benefits of research and evidence-based practice as well as remaining mindful of system pressures and staff capacity to approve research projects. This framework serves as an interim framework to allow time to build capacity and expertise in processing research requests. We aim to review this framework and publish an integrated procedure that aligns with the introduction of the National Care Service in 2026.</p> <p>Why we need a Research Governance Framework</p> <p>The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 sets the framework for the integration of adult health and social care within Scotland. With regards to research governance, there is no integrated process for the HSCP as we have two separate policies for adult social work and health services. This is typical across all HSCP's.</p> <p>Currently, the Performance Review Officer assesses research requests for both adult and children's social work services with final approval from the Chief Social Work Officer. The NHS has an existing structure in place for research governance that also includes an ethics committee. For</p>	Reference No:	

requests to health services, researchers must apply to the NHS Forth Valley's Research and Development Office for processing. This information is publicly available on the [NHS Forth Valley website](#).

Researchers wishing to conduct research need a framework to direct and support them through the process and staff assessing research proposals need a solid framework to support decision-making. Currently, researchers do not know where to go as no information is available publicly for the Partnership and there is no HSCP Research Governance Framework to support staff in understanding what research is, what our responsibilities are, and how to assess proposals.

Research is referred to in Chapter five, Section 23 of the proposed National Care Service (Scotland) Bill. It outlines that Care Boards may conduct research, assist others in conducting research, and give financial assistance for research projects. While this framework primarily focuses on requests for adult social care, it also supports partnership working with NHS FV Research and Development Office. It is intended that this framework serves as an interim procedure to support learning from NHS FV and refine our process with a view to review the framework for an integrated procedure for both health care and adult social care research requests upon arrival of the National Care Service in 2026.

It is anticipated with the introduction of the National Care Service and the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic that there may be an increased interest in conducting social care research. A research governance framework would support the Partnership to manage any increase in research requests.

A person-centred approach should also apply in research as it does to how we deliver our services. Evidence is required

to understand how much social care research is being conducted and where it is taking place. This evidence would measure and explore the impacts of how we deliver our services and support the development of evidence enriched practice to ensure our services are person-centred and lead to positive outcomes for service users. Lastly, a research governance framework would support career progression for our social care workforce.

Research Governance Process

The Partnership will only assess external applications to conduct adult social care research. If the research request involves both social work and health care, then a separate application will also need to be made to the NHS FV Research and Development Office for research related to health care services. This includes health care services within the scope of integration that the Partnership is responsible for.

NHS FV already have an established rigorous process in place for assessing health care research requests, including having a Research Ethics Committee. These are resources and expertise that the Partnership does not have. By having health care research requests follow the NHS FV governance procedure, we can ensure that those requests have been duly and effectively processed before a decision has been made.

However, these two processes should not co-exist in isolation from one another as the existing processes currently do. There are opportunities for improved partnership working between the HSCP and NHS FV Research and Development Office to learn and coordinate research requests. The NHS FV Research Officer will be invited to join our assessment panel so we can mirror good practice and share learning.

Research access requests for social care research must be completed using the application form. All requests must be submitted for review via email before the deadline, which will be published on the website. To remain mindful of system pressures and limited staff capacity, we aim to host research projects between March and October and will have two deadlines for research in December and May. We may consider research proposals outside of that timescale under exceptional circumstances.

Applications will be assessed by a panel and recommendations made to the Senior Leadership Team. The researcher will then be informed once a final decision has been made, usually up to three months after each deadline. This timescale should allow sufficient time to assess the application and gather information for feasibility of study. There will be no process for appealing rejected applications. A service or team manager will then be appointed to oversee the research project and will be the researcher's primary contact for support. Information will be made available to staff so they can support the researcher during the study.

We will maintain a register of what research is being conducted in the Partnership to support learning and to avoid duplication. The Clinical Care and Governance Committee will receive updates on research proposals and approved projects every six months.

Research Ethical Considerations

Social Care research should be subjected to the same rigorous ethical considerations as health-based projects currently are. This would include a more thorough and robust ethical framework and committees (e.g., NHS Research Ethics Committees) that are made up of experts in the social care field. Unfortunately, this level of support does not currently exist for adult social care.

According to the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research, the Partnership is not responsible for making a decision regarding the ethics of a research project. We can only accept reliable assurances that the research project has been approved by an ethical committee. For example, the NHS Forth Valley Research Ethics Committee or a university ethical committee. To provide these assurances, researchers must submit a copy of ethical approval in their application.

However, within the assessment criteria, there are key areas of deliberation that fall within the category of ethics that the panel will consider ensuring the safeguarding of staff and service users. This also includes ensuring that researchers have a PVG membership, if applicable. The framework also includes further information regarding research ethical principles to support decision-making. We would also seek the guidance from NHS FV and the Project Leader from NHS Research Scotland Management Team regarding complex ethical issues.

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	No	Yes	No	No
Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Other, please specify:	Researchers			

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):	
09/06/2023	There is no HSCP Research Governance Framework to assess proposals to conduct research within adult social care. The aim of this new policy is to establish a framework to support staff in understanding what research is, what our responsibilities are, and how to assess proposals as well as provide information for researchers to support their applications to conduct adult social care research projects.

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

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SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:		Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average	
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:		
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:		
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:		
	Expected Annual Income Total:		
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:		
	End Date (if any):		

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)

A - Quantitative Evidence This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

B - Qualitative Evidence This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other

The [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#) outlines key principles and responsibilities for the management and conduct of health and social care research. The Falkirk HSCP Research Governance follows the UK Policy Framework.

To develop this framework, consultation has taken place with the Project Leader from NHS Research Scotland Management Team, NHS Forth Valley Research and Development Office, and Glasgow HSCP to learn from their experiences of assessing research requests and identify and share best practice.

Best Judgement:

Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	Yes
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	Policy and Research Officer based on discussions with colleagues in NHS and Glasgow HSCP to identify best practice.
What gaps in data / information were identified?	Unlike NHS, there is no formal governance procedure across Scotland for assessing social care research requests. NHS have their own ethics committee and universities have ethics committee. But, there are no ethics committee in place for social care research.
Is further research necessary?	No

If NO, please state why.

There is no HSCP Research Governance Framework that assesses both social work and health research requests across Scotland. This framework has been developed using the minimal resources available. As proposals are submitted for assessment and we learn best practice, we will review the framework process and amend where necessary.

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place

Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	No	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.		
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.	To develop this framework, consultation has taken place with the Project Leader from NHS Research Scotland Management Team, NHS Forth Valley Research and Development Office, and Glasgow HSCP to learn from their experiences of assessing research requests and identify best practice.	
How was the engagement carried out?	What were the results from the engagement? Please list...	
Focus Group	No	
Survey	No	
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	No	
Other: please specify		
Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?	No	
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes	
Is further engagement recommended?	No	

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age	✓			<p>Researchers may be interested in conducting research that targets older people. However, there have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed.</p> <p>The benefits of social care research are that it would provide an evidence base to measure and explore the impacts of how we deliver our services and support the development of evidence enriched practice to ensure our services are person-centred and lead to positive outcomes for service users. Depending upon the nature of the research project, it could have a positive impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>The research governance framework does have measures in place to mitigate negative impacts on service users. This includes scrutinising the selection of research participants to determine whether participants are being systematically selected simply because of their easy availability, their compromised position, or their manipulability, rather than for reasons directly related to the problem being studied.</p>

Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:

				<p>conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed.</p> <p>The benefits of social care research are that it would provide an evidence base to measure and explore the impacts of how we deliver our services and support the development of evidence enriched practice to ensure our services are person-centred and lead to positive outcomes for service users. Depending upon the nature of the research project, it could have a positive impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>The research governance framework does have measures in place to mitigate negative impacts on service users. This includes scrutinising the selection of research participants to determine whether participants are being systematically selected simply because of their easy availability, their compromised position, or their manipulability, rather than for reasons directly related to the problem being studied.</p>
Sex	✓			<p>There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.</p>
Ethnicity	✓			<p>There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.</p>

Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Sexual Orientation	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Transgender	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.

Poverty		✓		It is anticipated that with the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of the cost-of-living-crisis on health inequalities that there may be an increased interest in conducting social care research. A research governance framework would support the Partnership to manage those research requests. Any research project in this area could potentially lead to research findings that would provide an evidence-base for practitioners and policy makers to support individuals living in poverty and minimise the impact of health inequalities.
Care Experienced	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Other, health, community justice, carers etc.	✓			There have been a limited number of requests made to conduct research so it is unknown who projects will target or the nature of the research proposed. Researchers may select participants based on protected characteristics. However, proposals are assessed by a panel who take into consideration the ethics of the proposal and the selection of participants. Any potential negative or positive impact on research participants would be considered prior to approval of research proposal.
Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)	Ethical misconduct poses a considerable risk and may cause significant harm to research subjects and the public. For example, there is a potential safeguarding risk if a researcher is left unsupervised with a participant and makes them feel uncomfortable whilst conducting an interview. To mitigate this, it is required for researchers, where applicable, to be PVG certified. In addition, a team manager will be provided with all the information necessary to support the research project and will be advised of researchers PVG status so they are not left unsupervised with service users. In the event that a safeguarding issue presents, the research project will be stopped and the research supervisor notified.			
		Evidence of Due Regard		
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):				

Advance Equality of Opportunity:	
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	

SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	No	
Councils	Yes	<p>Falkirk Council has a procedure in place for research requests to Children's Services that also included Adult Social Work Services. Final decisions were made by the Chief Social Work Officer. With this new research framework, this would change the existing procedure as all Adult Social Work Services requests would now be submitted via the new framework.</p> <p>Research requests may involve Falkirk Council employees as research participants. Employees must voluntarily consent to their participation and not be coerced or forced to participate. Also, the researcher will require supervision, especially if service users are participating in the research. An assigned member of staff, e.g., team manager, would be responsible for supervising the research study.</p>
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	Yes	<p>NHS Forth Valley already have an established rigorous process in place for assessing health care research requests. If a research request involves health care then an application will also be made to the NHS FV Research and Development Office. This includes health care services within the scope of integration that the Partnership is responsible for.</p> <p>The two governance processes will not co-exist in isolation. There are opportunities for partnership working between the HSCP and NHS FV Research and Development Office. The NHS FV Research Officer will be invited to join our assessment panel so we can mirror good practice and share learning, as well as coordinate research requests across health and adult social care.</p>

Integration Joint Board	Yes	<p>It is anticipated with the introduction of the National Care Service, the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on health inequalities that there may be an increased interest in conducting social care research. A research governance framework would support the Partnership to manage any increase in research requests.</p> <p>A person-centred approach should also apply in research as it does to how we deliver our services. Evidence is required to understand how much social care research is being conducted and where it is taking place. This evidence would measure and explore the impacts of how we deliver our services and support the development of evidence enriched practice to ensure our services are person-centred and lead to positive outcomes for service users. Lastly, a research governance framework would support career progression for our social care workforce.</p>
Police	No	
Third Sector	No	
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.		

SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

Mitigating Actions: If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

Research ethics is a set of guidelines that promotes the responsible conduct of research to avoid ethical misconduct. The HSCP Research Governance Framework sets out the core principles of research ethics to support the consideration and resolution of ethical issues when they occur during a research study. Falkirk HSCP does not have the expertise or resources to make a decision regarding the ethics of a research project. We can only accept reliable assurances that the research project has been approved by an ethical committee. For example, a university ethical committee. To provide these assurances, researchers must submit a copy of ethical approval in their application. However, within the assessment criteria, there are key areas of deliberation that fall within the category of ethics that the panel will consider ensuring the safeguarding of staff and service users. The appendix provides further information about research ethical principles.

For example, the research ethical principle 'respect for persons' requires that individuals are treated as autonomous agents and individuals without capacity to consent are entitled to protection and may be excluded from participating in research activities. The extent of protection will be dependent on the risk of harm and the likelihood of benefit from participation. Persons who are considered to have diminished autonomy for research and consent purposes include incapacitated adults and vulnerable populations. Adults who are incapacitated because of chronic illness or injuries cannot make decisions about their participation in research. They can, however, be enrolled in a study if the outcome benefits the participant directly. This must be decided by a person who is not part of the research team.

During the assessment process, the panel will consider these issues as well as conduct a risk/benefit assessment to determine whether or not the research project can be conducted. Assessing the benefits of the research may require exposing participants to some risk, especially where the participant may benefit directly through the research. Where the research project does not benefit the participants directly, there may be wider benefits to others that may justify the risk.

The framework has been designed to support decision-making so that research projects do not have negative impacts on vulnerable groups. For complex issues, we would seek guidance from the NHS Forth Valley Research and Development Office as well as the Project Leader from NHS Research Scotland Management Team.

Are actions being reported to Members?	No
If yes when and how ?	

SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.

No major change required	Yes	The framework has been designed to support decision-making so that research projects do not have negative impacts on vulnerable groups. For complex issues, we would seek guidance from the NHS Forth Valley Research and Development Office as well as the Project Leader from NHS Research Scotland Management Team.
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	No	
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:	<i>Jennifer Faichney</i>	Date:	25/04/2023
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SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA: Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?	Yes / No
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ASSESSMENT FINDINGS If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA	
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Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?	Yes / No	If YES, please describe:
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LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA

LEVEL	Yes / No	COMMENTS
HIGH	Yes / No	
MEDIUM	Yes / No	
LOW	Yes / No	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:	<i>Suzanne Thomson</i>	Date:	16/11/2023