



GUIDELINES

for people who
want approval for
a multi site social
services research
project

directors of
adass
adult social services

The ADASS Research Group

The Research Group is part of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Standards and Performance Committee. It advises the Association and individual adult social services departments on research issues and priorities.

The Group aims to encourage adult social services departments to use empirical evidence when they are developing policy and practice. Research projects are an essential part of achieving this, but they must be relevant and carried out to an acceptable standard if they are to be of real use to departments.

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EVALUATING RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Adult social services departments are very frequently asked to take part in research exercises and surveys, and the Research Group wants to ensure that the projects carried out are worthwhile and that the topics best reflect the main concerns of departments.

If you want to involve four or more adult social services departments in your project you should submit your proposal to the Group for a critical appraisal.

This means that a panel considers your research proposal and says either yes or no to recommending to directors that their departments should co-operate with the project.

Even if a project is approved, the panel sometimes asks that changes are made to proposals before the research starts, and you should note that you should NOT contact departments asking for their help with your project before you get approval for it from the Research Group.

If your project is not recommended by the panel, members can give you suggestions as to how you can improve it (and if appropriate you can re-submit it when changes have been made).

- The process takes around four weeks from the Group receiving an application (and fee) to the applicant getting a decision.
- There is a sliding scale of fees to cover the costs of the evaluation.

Projects involving three or fewer departments

As a general guideline, you need not submit your project to the Research Group if you plan only to involve three or fewer departments. You should approach the departments concerned directly.

However you can if you wish ask the Research Group for advice – as can the directors you approach.

How do directors know which projects have been approved?

Directors of adult social services get a regular monthly circular listing all recent applications and giving the panel's decision about each one. This list is also published on the ADASS website (www.adass.org.uk/research.shtml). Researchers are notified at the same time.

The importance of the appraisal

This approach gives...

- the Research Group a useful overview of relevant research that is being undertaken
- adult social services departments the assurance that the research is seen as worthwhile.

It should be borne in mind, however, that a recommendation does not guarantee that any individual department will agree to take part in the project.

Help at the planning stage

The next section gives guidelines for researchers who are planning research involving adult social services departments. However, if you want to discuss your proposed project at an early stage, you can contact the Research Group for advice (see page 7 for contact details).

BEFORE YOU START

You need to bear in mind that adult social services departments are often large and diverse organisations, operating many services from many locations with staff drawn from many occupational groups. Generally they are under extreme pressure to achieve all that is expected of them.

When you are planning your research project you should take into account

- the time involved for adult social services staff
- the relevance to their concerns
- plans for publication and dissemination of your results
- any ethical issues associated with the proposed project
- how competent you are to carry out the intended programme of work

How much time are you asking staff for?

Research projects have a claim on departments' time, but only a tenuous one. They should take up as little of the departments' time as possible, while still producing useful results.

Positives

- Short, well-constructed questionnaires that need answers from only a few people.
- Questions that are easy to answer because they show an understanding of the way departments work.
- Questions that will elicit straightforward answers (for example, yes/no).

Negatives

- Projects which propose interviewing large numbers of staff at great length and/or involve them in finding large numbers of service users to be interviewed.
- Questions which involve the time-consuming extraction of large amounts of data from paper or computer files.
- Questions which are over-generalised, leaving staff not knowing how to answer.
- Questions that need lengthy narrative answers.

How relevant is your project?

Projects should be connected with the real concerns of adult social services departments. While it is impossible to be specific, departments have many concerns about developing services and planning for the future, about making ends meet and improving service quality and responsiveness. Implementing new legislation, the impact of other changes in style and organisation of services and evaluating innovation are general areas of concern.

You can get information about what research is already underway or proposed from these websites

ADASS Research Group www.adass.org.uk/research.shtml

Joseph Rowntree Foundation www.jrf.org.uk

Research In Practice for Adults www.ripfa.org.uk

Making Research Count www.makingresearchcount.org.uk

Social Care Online www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk

CareKnowledge www.careknowledge.com/ck/application_store/portal/index.cfm#

You can also discuss this with a member of the Research Group (see page 7 for contact details).

Who's going to hear about the results of your research?

Even the most thorough research with far-reaching implications is useless if no one in adult social services departments ever hears about it. You should decide early on how you are going to make your findings known.

- If possible you should send a **report to all departments**, not only those which participated in the project.
- You should write a **short summary of your main findings**, indicating where there may be implications for the development of policy and practice, and send copies with your report. This summary is vital as it will be read by more people than the full report (which will, of necessity, contain methodological details and very fine-grained findings).
- **An article in the popular trade press** – for example, *Community Care* magazine – is likely to reach an even wider audience within departments.
- Consider following up your report with **workshops or seminars** where the relevance of research findings to key policy areas can be discussed.
- **Send the Research Group a copy of the full report and the summary.** A list of reports received from projects approved by the Association is published on the ADASS website.

Have you looked carefully at the ethical issues of your project?

Adult social services departments have a clear responsibility towards the users of their services and their carers. This responsibility has many facets, including the protection of vulnerable people from unwanted attention and the preservation of the confidentiality of information about them. Most departments have set up ethics committees to ensure that research with which they are involved is of a high ethical standard.

The Department of Health's Research Governance Framework (www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/24/27/04122427.pdf) describes what is expected of people carrying out research projects in order that the projects are ethically sound and of good quality. The Social Services Research Group, in conjunction with the ADASS, has published a Resource Pack (www.ssr.org.uk/governance/index.asp) to help researchers – and people in adult social services departments with responsibilities for research governance – meet these expectations.

Will you be operating legally?

There are legal limits to what information departments can disclose, both in specific areas and under data protection legislation. You should explore fully the implications of this in your proposed field of research.

Are you planning to involve service users?

You should be aware that there are potential difficulties in the area of interviewing service users and/or their carers. Interviews should not, for example, cause people distress, and people interviewed should be fully aware beforehand of what the interview would involve and should give their informed consent. There are some areas where disclosure of information could cause potential damage to third parties. In addition, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides a statutory framework for research involving people who lack capacity to consent to their participation. The Act requires a researcher to obtain formal approval before involving such people.

This does not mean, however, that any research project or survey which involves direct access to service users or their records is automatically disqualified. What it does mean is that very careful attention must be paid by departments to the safeguards built into such projects. The sorts of questions which are intended to be asked of users, the ways in which confidential information will be handled, your intentions about publication of results are all issues on which departments will need reassurance.

Have you an ulterior motive?

- Any project that may result in the denigration, or exploitation, commercially or otherwise, of service users cannot be supported by the Group.
- 'Research' projects that are in reality aimed at marketing a product will not be supported by the Group.

Are you competent to carry out the project?

The competence of the researcher is a key consideration. The Group will not recommend that directors participate in projects where there is reason to believe that the researcher is not capable of carrying out and completing a well-constructed and potentially helpful piece of work.

Your application should include details of the qualifications and experience of the main researcher(s).

The Group accepts that there are many people who want to carry out a research project as a component of a course of study. The Group believes that these should be local rather than national studies. If you are carrying out research in this capacity and you apply for national co-operation your project will be scrutinized very critically and will be less likely to be supported.


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FEES

The Group charges a fee to researchers seeking its support. The amount charged depends on the size and cost of the project.

Project cost	Fee	VAT	Total Amount
under £5,000	£27	£4.73	£31.73
£5,000 - £20,000	£180	£31.50	£211.50
£20,000 - £100,000	£360	£63.00	£423.00
£100,000 - £500,000	£600	£105.00	£705.00
£500,000+	£1,000	£175.00	£1,175.00

Applicants are charged a fee irrespective of the outcome of their application. The Group reserves the right to waive the fee in the appropriate cases (for example, bona fide research students who are not getting a grant to carry out the research). If you ask for the fee to be waived you should give reasons.

The processing of your application will not begin until your fee is received. If you email or fax your form, or do not attach a cheque to a posted form, the Research Group will send you an invoice.

Cheques should be made payable to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services.



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SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

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COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form is given in two formats: as an MS Word document, and as a PDF. Click to get to the version you want.

- **MS WORD**

The application form is available as a downloadable MS Word document, which will allow you to include information from other documents. Your completed form can be emailed as an attachment, sent by post or faxed. If you email the form, your email address will be taken as your signature, but if you mail or fax the form, you must remember to sign it.

If you send the form, you should enclose a cheque for your fee. If you do not enclose a cheque, or you fax the form, you will be invoiced for the appropriate amount, and you should note that your application will not be processed until your fee is received.

- **PDF**

The application form can be printed from the PDF, completed, and sent or faxed. If you do this, don't forget to sign it. If you need extra space in any section, please add information on a separate sheet.

If you send the form, you should enclose a cheque for your fee. If you do not enclose a cheque, or you fax the form, you will be invoiced for the appropriate amount, and you should note that your application will not be processed until your fee is received.

Forms should be returned to

**ADASS Administrator
ADASS Business Unit
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ**

**Tel: 020 7072 7433
Fax: 020 7863 9133
email: team@adass.org.uk**

APPLICATION FOR SUPPORT FROM
THE ADASS RESEARCH GROUP (continued)

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Overall cost of project (please include funding sources and commissioners)

Connections with other pieces of research already completed or underway

Adult social services departments to be approached
(details of how many and which)

Potential value to adult social services departments

Likely areas and scale of costs to adult social services departments in supplying data or otherwise enabling the project to proceed (for example, time needed for staff to complete questionnaire)

Plans for the dissemination of findings

Address to which invoice for fee should be sent, if different from above.

Signed (see notes on page 7)

Name in block capitals

Date