

What is research governance and why is it important?

Research governance is a process by which the quality of research can be assured and the rights, dignity, safety and wellbeing of those involved can be protected. It also helps to protect the reputation of the council, by ensuring that any research carried out with citizens is ethically sound. If this process is not followed, this poses a reputational risk to the council and leaves us open to challenge.

Research governance is relevant to any piece of work that could be considered 'research', which generally refers to any 'research-like' activity (including 'consultation', 'engagement', 'audit', 'review', and others) which involves primary data collection where you may be seeking the views of the general public and/or service users.

When collecting data and information, there are always ethical considerations that need to be taken into account. Ethical issues need to be managed in order to minimise the risk to yourself, your participants and the organisation. The Market Research Society's Code of Conduct lists 10 [ethical principles for researchers](#) when undertaking research or engagement.

The national [Research Governance Framework](#) for Health and Social Care (RGFHSC) sets out the broad principles of good research governance.

The research governance process at ECC sets the standard for all research carried out by or for ECC, and the **research planning template** will assist you in making sure you have given due consideration to all ethical issues relevant to your research, and that they are managed adequately.

This process needs to be completed before any data collection begins.

Research proposals are reviewed by ECC's Research & Citizen Insight (R&CI) team. For queries around research governance you can email us at research@essex.gov.uk.

Do I need to complete the research planning template?

Is the research activity being carried out internally? (I.e. by your team or with the support of the R&CI Team)?

If so and your research involves engaging with service users or members of the public, **you are likely to need to complete the research planning template (see appendix A).**

Please email us with a brief description of your planned activity and any relevant background information, and we will advise on next steps.

Please note we can provide advice and guidance at any stage of the process and generally assist you to carry out your research effectively and ethically. However, the earlier you involve us in the design of your research project, the more effective our contribution can be.

Is the research activity being carried out on behalf of ECC by an external third-party provider?

If so, you will be responsible for ensuring that any providers invited to bid for contracts abide by the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, applicable guidelines and/or appropriate comparable Code of Practice. When evaluating proposals from providers, we recommend including a question on ethical standards within the evaluation criteria.

Please ensure you follow the [guidance on buying research or engagement services](#).

Are you a student carrying out research as part of your degree?

If you are carrying out research as part of your academic studies, you will be required to **obtain ethical approval from your respective university.**

You therefore do not need to complete ECC's research planning template, however we ask that you please **send your research application and a copy of the approval letter** from your university to research@essex.gov.uk.

Appendix A

Research planning template

This document has been designed to help you plan your research and covers the key points needed for a research study to progress successfully. You may find the document useful even if research governance approval is not required.