

What is Research?

Healthcare is evolving all the time and one of the main reasons for change and improvement is the information we obtain from research. There are many questions about health, illness and the effects of treatments which have not yet been answered.

Research seeks to answer these questions but also helps improve practice, building on foundations of previous research.

The process of taking part in research helps to develop evidence to inform and underpin health and social care policy, with the aim of continuously improving services and treatments for patients.

This improvement may take the form of something new and innovative, but it may also be as simple as putting a stop to outdated practices proven to no longer be beneficial. There are many types and methods of research.

Any research activity within the NHS is subject to the UK Framework Policy for Health and Social Care Research which sets standards for the research process and formalises the responsibilities of all those involved.

The policy has only recently substitute the 4 Research Governance Frameworks, but as the RGF it states that research can be defined as “the attempt to derive generalizable new knowledge by addressing clearly defined questions with systematic and rigorous methods”.

Also any research undertaken is also subject to the standards laid out in Good Clinical Practice (GCP) which is defined as “an international, ethical, scientific quality standard for the design, conduct and recording of research involving humans”

The UK & Europe have now a legal obligation for any participants in medicinal trials to be treated in accordance with GCP.

GCP has 13 core principles and arose from the Declaration of Helsinki in 1962.