

A brief guide to research ethics

1. Basic principles

Ethics are an essential part of conducting research, regardless of how big or small the project is. Key research ethics principles are the respect for human rights, informed consent to participate, protection of personal data and the right to privacy.

2. Ethical approval

Some research projects require ethical approval before they can be conducted. Typically, studies involving human participants and their data require ethical approval, while studies using freely available data in the public domain might not. Ethical approval is harder to obtain if you are not associated with an academic institution. However, it is still possible for you to seek ethical approval, either through collaborating with an academic institution or applying independently.

Research ethics committees

- For NHS research, [this Health Research Authority \(HRA\) directory of research ethics committees](#) provides the latest guidance about applying for approval
- [Integrated Research Application System \(IRAS\)](#) is a single system for applying for the permissions and approvals for health and social/community care research in the UK

Information and guidance on research ethics

UKCP's [Code of Ethics and Professional Practice](#) includes ethics specifically about research, and all UKCP members must should adhere to this code including but not limited to codes 18 to 22.

For additional resources on how to conduct research ethically, you can try the following resources:

- [European Commission: Ethics for researchers](#)
- [Government Social Research Profession: GSR Ethical Assurance for Social and Behavioural Research](#)
- [Information Commissioner's Office: Guide to the UK General Data Protection Regulation](#)
- [Intersoft Consulting: the European data protection regulation](#)
- Smajdor, A, Sydes, MR et al., [Applying for ethical approval in the UK](#)
- [UK Research and Innovation: research ethics guidance](#)
- [University College London: recommendations on when to apply for ethical approval](#)
- [World Medical Association: WMA Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects](#)

UKCP is not responsible for the content of external websites. The inclusion of a link to a third-party website or resource from UKCP should not be understood as an endorsement.