



# Research, Clinical Audit or Service Evaluation

Information leaflet 1

For more information including copies of this leaflet please contact the Research & Development Department or visit the website

<http://www.leedsandYorkpft.nhs.uk/professionals/RD>

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Clinical audit, service evaluation and research activities frequently involve collecting data from patients or staff. Whilst the ability to distinguish between these activities may be straightforward in some cases, in practice there are frequently grey areas where it may be more problematic.

It is important that projects are correctly classified from the outset as governance and approval requirements are different.

This leaflet gives a brief overview to help you decide how to categorise your project and provides sources of further information.

### **What is the difference between Clinical Audit, Evaluation and Research?**

#### **Clinical Audit**

*"Clinical Audit is a quality improvement process that seeks to improve patient care and outcomes through systematic review of care against explicit criteria and the implementation of change"* (NICE, 2002, Principles for Best Practice in Clinical Audit, p1)

The aim of all clinical audit activity is to improve patient care and outcomes. It measures existing practice against evidence based clinical standards. Aspects of the structure, process and outcome of care can be selected and evaluated against explicit

criteria. Where needed, changes are made at an individual, team or service level and then further monitoring (re-audit) is used to confirm that this has led to an improvement in healthcare delivery.

The Clinical Audit Support Team is the central resource for all clinical audit related activity and the first point of contact for any clinical audit enquiries (Elizabeth Day [e.day1@nhs.net](mailto:e.day1@nhs.net)).

#### **Service Evaluation**

Service evaluation aims to evaluate the effectiveness or efficiency of a service, with the aim of generating information to inform local decision making. It is usually only relevant to the population or setting in which it takes place and results are not generalisable.

If you want to evaluate the effectiveness of your current practice or compare efficiency across areas of practice then it is service evaluation.

#### **Research**

*"Research can be defined as the attempt to derive generalisable, new knowledge by addressing clearly defined questions with systematic and rigorous methods"* (Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care, 2005)

Research is another word for 'enquiry'. It

is a systematic and rigorous process of investigation that is undertaken to discover facts or relationships and reach conclusions using scientifically sound methods. If you want to investigate the effect of something new on patients/carers or test the effect of something new in an area where current evidence and knowledge is lacking then it is research. Findings should be generalisable beyond the project setting.

### **Sources of further information**

The following resources provide further guidance

#### **Health Research Authority online decision tool**

<http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html>

#### **Health Research Authority Defining Research leaflet**

<http://www.hra.nhs.uk/documents/2013/09/defining-research.pdf>

#### **Health Quality Improvement Partnership – A guide for clinical audit, research and service review**

<http://www.hqip.org.uk/assets/LQIT-uploads/Guidance-0212/HQIP-CA-PD-009-220212-A-Guide-for-Clinical-Audit-Research-and-Service-Review.pdf>