

Local Research Ethics Committees

Executive summary

Every health district should have a local research ethics committee (LREC) to advise NHS bodies on the ethical acceptability of research proposals involving human subjects. District Health Authorities are responsible for establishing and maintaining LRECs, in consultation with NHS bodies in their districts. The booklet "Local Research Ethics Committees" gives detailed guidance on:

- the establishment and function of LRECs, and the administrative framework within which they work (Chapter 2);
- the ethical principles to which LRECs should have regard (Chapter 3);
- particular groups as research subjects (Chapter 4).

Responsibility for deciding whether a research proposal should proceed, within the NHS, lies with the NHS body under whose auspices the research would take place.

Action

NHS bodies should take into account the following specific requirements:

- As soon as possible and no later than 1 February 1992, each District Health Authority should establish an LREC (or, exceptionally, more than one) and provide it (or them) with adequate administrative support.
- Any NHS body asked to agree a research proposal falling within its sphere of responsibility should ensure that it has been submitted to the appropriate LREC for research ethics approval:
 - district health authorities, about research within their hospitals or community health services, or in private sector providers under contract to the DHA;
 - special health authorities, about research within their units;
 - family health services authorities, about research involving general medical, general dental, or other family health services;
 - NHS trusts, about research within the units they control;

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This replaces HM(68)33 and HSC(IS)153, which are now cancelled

Addressees

For action:
Regional Health Authorities
District Health Authorities
Special Health Authorities
Family Health Service
Authorities
NHS Trusts
Directly Managed Units

For information:
Community Health Councils

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and should take the LREC's advice into account before deciding whether the research project should go ahead. Projects which do not have LREC approval must not be agreed.

NHS bodies are advised to draw these guidelines and the booklet to the attention of all their health professionals.