

## **The University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 7**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE RESEARCH WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY**

In 2009, the University's Senate approved a proposal by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) that all empirical investigations, other than audits and evaluations, carried out by, or on behalf of, Professional Services departments of the University (i.e. 'administrative research') should be subject, as research, to research ethics review. This also applies to administrative research undertaken within academic departments, faculties or research centres, and aims to guarantee consistency across the full spectrum of the University's activities. It should also be a useful contribution to ensuring that whatever inquiries the University makes are of the highest possible quality.

Procedure aside, administrative research undertaken within, or on behalf of, the University is subject to the same research ethical requirements as academic research undertaken within, or on behalf of, the University. This principle applies whether the work is undertaken in-house, by University staff or students, or contracted out to an external research organisation (such as a market research company, for example).

### **2 ETHICS REVIEW PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESEARCH**

The following ethics review procedure applies to research which involves human participants, personal data or human tissue, undertaken within all Professional Services departments. It also applies to administrative research that is undertaken within academic departments/faculties/research centres.

#### **2.1 Is it research?**

Since, for administrative work, it is not always clear whether a particular inquiry constitutes research, the first stage is to determine whether or not ethical review will be required. Should the member of staff who is taking the lead on the work require advice on this, they may contact the Ethics Administrator or the Principal Ethics Contact for Professional Services/administrative research, who may consult with the Chair of UREC in order to decide whether ethics review is necessary.

#### **2.2 Ethics review**

The second stage, should it be decided that ethics review is necessary, will involve the member of staff who is taking the lead on the project submitting an ethics application using the online Ethics Application System (refer to the Research Ethics Approval Procedure section of this Policy for full details). NB. For administrative research taking place within an academic department/faculty/research centre, the applicant must specify in the application form that the review should be undertaken by the 'Professional Services' rather than their home department/faculty/research centre.

Three ethics reviewers will be appointed by the Ethics Administrators for Professional Services/administrative research. A pool of ethics reviewers has been identified from across the Professional Services and includes staff in administrative roles within academic departments/faculties/research centres. Should the reviewers be unable to reach a consensus on the decision, the UREC will undertake an ethics review of the application. The UREC's decision is final.

