UREC

Ethics 'self-declaration' process: information for Ethics Administrators and Principal Ethics Contacts

A 'self-declaration' process is available as part of the Ethics Application System, for research that uses only existing, anonymised data that contains no personal identifiable information.

The process is **not compulsory**, but aims to provide two key benefits:

1. Helps the researcher to be confident about whether they need full ethics approval or not;

2. If full ethics approval is not required, provides an official letter confirming that the project has been through an appropriate ethical assessment - for providing to external bodies e.g. journals, funders etc.

The self-declaration process is accessed by researchers through the usual ethics system, by clicking on the 'New Application' option. The information screen that appears includes the following question: **'Does your research involve only existing (secondary) data?'**. Clicking 'proceed to questionnaire' will take the researcher to a series of 5 questions to establish whether full ethics approval is required or not.

Any answer indicating that full ethics approval is required will direct the researcher to the standard ethics application form - otherwise, they can proceed to a short application form and submit this.

For student applications, supervisors will be asked to check the application and sign it off first. It will then appear in the relevant Ethics Administrator's dashboard, from where you will be able to select 'approve' as per a standard application form. This will take you to a screen with the full form details, and you can just select 'send decision to applicant' so that the system will generate an 'approval' letter for the researcher.

No reviewers will need to be appointed as the purpose of the form is just to record the researcher's answers to the questions which establish that ethical review is NOT required, along with very brief details of the research.

As an Ethics Administrator, you are not actually granting 'approval' - the process of clicking the 'approve' button in the dashboard is just to prompt the system to generate the letter. This also provides Ethics Administrators/Principal Ethics Contacts with an opportunity to maintain an overview of 'self-declaration' requests that are being made across your department, and to retain an element of 'control' over these applications. For example, departments may wish to undertake some spot checks of self-declaration applications to ensure that information provided in the short form does not indicate that any new data will be collected from human participants).

For further information please contact Lindsay Unwin in Research Services (l.v.unwin@sheffield.ac.uk).