

NEGOTIATING RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

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RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

- An umbrella concept which encompasses a set of principles and an administrative process
- A system of quality assurance
- A new type of networking and stakeholder involvement
- A mechanism of control – a ‘soft’ form of government
- (Daly, M. *Governance and Social Policy*, JSP January 2003)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH IN THE UNIVERSITY

- HSPRC – The Health and Social Policy Research Centre
- One of five health related research centres in the University of Brighton
- Working across academic boundaries
- Post graduate Medical School and new Brighton and Sussex University Medical School

TYPES OF RESEARCH

- Health and social care
- Community development
- Crime and youth justice
- Higher education
- Environmental policy
- Scholarship
- Funded research – ESRC, JRF etc.
- Contract research (including evaluation)
- Participatory research within the Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP)

THE RESEARCHERS

- Post graduate students: Taught Masters courses, conventional MPhil/PhD courses, new Professional Doctorate courses
- Many research students are part time and researching within their area of professional work
- Academic staff
- Contract researchers

HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

- Decline of scholarship with heavier teaching loads and increased student numbers
- Intensifying competition for research funding
- Increase of contract research
- Push to increase percentage of research funding in total university budget

UNIVERSITY POLITICS

- The White Paper on Higher Education
- The Roberts Report
- The Research Assessment Exercise 2007?
- Research funding will be concentrated in fewer universities
- Involvement of universities in their local communities will be encouraged

RELEVANCE TO RESEARCH GOVERNANCE?

- Research has become more competitive
- University research strategies are under review
- Higher standards are expected
- Universities such as Brighton have set up their own 'Virtual Research Unit' to monitor contracts, the quality and costing of bids and the personnel involved
- Internal ethics committees are more rigorous
- Researchers are under greater UNIVERSITY research governance

SHARED PRINCIPLES OF GOOD RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

Ethics: dignity, rights, safety and well-being of research participants

Science: design and methods of research subject to independent review

Information: full and free public access to information on research and its findings

Health and safety: safety of research participants, researcher and others ensured

Finance: financial probity and compliance with the law guaranteed

The University's View

- We endorse and are already committed to all these principles
- We have moved further down the road of 'user involvement' than many health and social care agencies
- Our research is often much broader than the 'outcome research' assumed in health and social care research governance

Some Problems

- We have problems with a medicalised approach – much of the language used is not relevant to social care nor to qualitative research
- We want to use a variety of approaches, especially qualitative and participatory approaches that may not be as appreciated as traditional methods – RCTs for example

BUREAUCRACY

- We are concerned that we have to comply with so many systems
 - Our own university processes
 - Multiple health agency processes
 - Social care processes
- There has to be some congruence and agreement between agencies, especially when research straddles different authorities

MAKING RESEARCH COUNT

- As a new member of MRC we support its response to the DoH Consultation Process
- MRC argues ‘there is a risk of over-caution... and a danger that new procedures may lead to the omission of user views which become too difficult to elicit and get ethics approval to discover’.

AND FINALLY?

- Will the new frameworks really guarantee higher quality research or will they frustrate and over control researchers who value their independence?
- Will the new frameworks restrict the critical capacity of researchers and ensure that only 'safe' subjects are researched and only 'acceptable' findings are disseminated?