

## Research Governance Framework



working with others  
to protect the public

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Research Governance Framework is to ensure that research or studies involving Parole Board members or data is conducted ethically and is of benefit to the Parole Board, the victims and prisoners with whom we work, and the wider parole system. We define 'research involving the Parole Board' as including any work that involves collecting information for research and/or evaluation purposes (as opposed to the routine collection of information for management, monitoring, or audit purposes) from or about individuals who may be prisoners that have been considered by the Board, victims of crime, or those who deliver the work of the Parole Board. This may, in some cases, also involve staff from within His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and/or Prison Law Practitioners. This Framework applies to all such research.
- 1.2 The Parole Board Research Governance Group (the RGG) considers applications to undertake research involving the Parole Board. The RGG is made up of Parole Board members with academic backgrounds, representatives from the Senior Leadership Team and the Management Committee, an independent expert academic adviser, and is supported by the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub. As well as assessing research applications, the RGG provides an important role in reviewing outcomes of approved research and how it can be used to shape future policy and practice and identify priority areas for future research.
- 1.3 The formal basis on which The Parole Board is able to lawfully carry out its own research, allow interviews with its members, and share information relating to prisoners and victims, is under-pinned by this Framework and a Privacy Notice which is publicly available, which alerts relevant individuals on how we may use their data.
- 1.4 The Parole Board is not required to secure consent from individuals to process their data as the lawful basis is "legitimate Interest". The Information Commissioner's Office ([Legitimate interests | ICO](#)) Article 6(1)(f) gives the Board a lawful basis for processing where:
 

*"processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child."*
- 1.5 Where the access to, or provision of, data is required for the purposes of research, a Data Sharing Agreement will need to be drawn up and agreed by both parties.



## 2 The application process

- 2.1 Any Parole Board member or Secretariat staff thinking of undertaking research from within the Parole Board (considered an internal applicant), should contact the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub. They will be offered an opportunity to informally discuss their proposed research with a member of the RGG. If they wish to proceed with an application they should discuss the proposal with the Chief Operating Officer, in terms of identifying requirements for formal support, and taking into account any ethical or resource implications.
- 2.2 External applicants are encouraged to contact the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub to discuss any proposed research they may be considering. The Policy and Practice Hub can offer advice on the relevance and feasibility of proposed studies, the type of data and access that may be available, and what the limitations may be.
- 2.3 Before making an application to the Parole Board's RGG, prospective applicants (internal and external) should first ensure that their proposal is supported by the institution or organisation at which they are based, where relevant, unless they are seeking an "in principle" approval (see paragraph 2.5 below). Applicants will also need to provide proposals on securing required ethical scrutiny (if not already in place), as appropriate, should the application be approved.
- 2.4 Once these actions have been undertaken, prospective applicants should complete the RGG research application form, available on the Parole Board website or, for internal applicants, on the internal SharePoint.
- 2.5 There may be instances where an applicant wishes to seek an agreement "in principle", subject to the approvals set out in paragraph 2.3 above, or where the support of the Parole Board is being requested when submitting an application to a third party (for example a funding institution or data provider). The RGG will consider these on their individual merits, but this must be clearly indicated in the application.
- 2.6 The application should explicitly set out what is being considered and how it will be of benefit to the Parole Board. Applicants should explain how the research will contribute to one or more of the research priority areas published on the Parole Board website [HERE](#).
- 2.7 However, studies in other areas will be considered where they would contribute to improving and/or better understanding of the parole process.
- 2.8 The application must clearly set out the practice implications of the research, whether this be advancing knowledge, recommending policy changes, making practice recommendations, or influencing future research.



- 2.9 The application must also indicate the resource requirement for the Parole Board as capacity to support the study will need to be carefully considered.
- 2.10 The application form, research proposal (where appropriate) and any other supporting documents (for example, interview schedules, university ethics approval) should be submitted to the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub who may, if necessary, seek clarification from the applicant on any points.
- 2.11 The Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub will submit the application, with any views, to the RGG.
- 2.12 The RGG will decide, within a maximum of six weeks of receiving the request, to:
  - a) Approve the application, which may be "in principle"
  - b) Refuse the application
  - c) Ask for revisions
  - d) Request further information
- 2.13 RGG may offer comments or suggestions to improve the research design.
- 2.14 The Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub will inform the applicant in writing of the decision and any comments made by RGG.

### 3 **Approval criteria**

- 3.1 Internal applications (from members and staff) for interviews with Parole Board members will usually be supported where there is a clear benefit of the research to the Parole Board and/or wider parole system. However, internal applications for contact with prisoners, victims, or access to case related data will require the applicant to contact the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub in the first instance for an informal discussion. A parallel application to the Ministry of Justice National Research Committee will most likely be required.
- 3.2 External applicants will usually need the support of the organisation or institution they works for or are connected to in some way as this will provide assurances in terms of ethics and intended use of the research.
- 3.3 Students at either PhD or Master's level should contact the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub for advice if they are undertaking post-graduate education which involve studies relevant to parole and wish to access members or data.
- 3.4 Applications from students at undergraduate level will not normally be supported. This is because such research is unlikely to be published externally and, consequently, unlikely to be of sufficient benefit to the Parole Board, or the prisoners and victims with whom we work, to justify our participation.



3.5 However, undergraduate students may be considered appropriate to undertake small-scale studies or literature reviews that fit with Parole Board priorities, and students are welcome to seek clarification from the Parole Board if they have a specific study in mind.

3.6 To be approved by the RGG, research proposals must meet the following criteria:

- a) The proposed research is judged by the RGG to be robust and methodologically sound
- b) The nature of the proposal makes Parole Board involvement necessary, within its resource capacity
- c) The proposed research is relevant to the Parole Board's statutory functions and the findings are likely to be of benefit to the Parole Board and the wider parole system
- d) Research may not be supported where the Parole Board considers it would duplicate existing or ongoing similar research
- e) Parole Board participation in the research must be proportionate to the likely benefit derived from, and expected significance of, the research; applications may be declined because of the opportunity costs or other cost implications for the Parole Board that would arise from supporting them. Any external projects should identify costs to the Parole Board of supporting the work, and these should be built into the funding bid
- f) Ethical issues involved must be satisfied, and confidentiality and anonymity must be guaranteed; researchers must ensure that no Parole Board staff, prison and probation staff, prisoners, victims, or cases are identifiable in any research report. Where applicable, approval from the relevant university or other institution's ethics panel should be sought before an application is made to the Parole Board
- g) Appropriate data security measures, which may require encrypted data storage, must be put in place by the applicant during the process and following completion of the research, which must be legally compliant (taking account of General Data Protection Regulations), comply with the Confidentiality and Information Assurance declaration and any Data Sharing Agreement in place

3.7 Where research involves contact with parole eligible prisoners, victims involved in parole, or access to HMPPS personnel or data, the research should have national significance contributing to the evidence base of best practice. Such research will need to be approved by the Ministry of Justice National Research Committee before being considered by the RGG. In some circumstances, RGG support may be sought ahead of approaching the National Research Committee.

3.8 Where research involves the analysis of data owned by the Parole Board, a Data Sharing Agreement agreed by both parties will need to be put in place.



3.9 Where applicants are unsure whether their proposal meets the criteria set out at paragraph 3.5, they may wish to contact the Policy and Practice Hub for an informal discussion before submitting their application.

3.10 All researchers proposing to work with research participants who lack, or may lack, mental capacity need to be aware of the need to comply with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and its underlying principles, and the provisions relating to research. Any research with individuals (adults) who lack the mental capacity to consent must have the ethics of the research scrutinised and approved by an 'appropriate body'. An 'appropriate body' is defined in law. In England, the 'appropriate body' must be a research ethics committee recognised by the Secretary of State. In Wales, the 'appropriate body' must be a research ethics committee recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government. University ethics committees are *not* recognised as appropriate bodies under the terms of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

#### 4 Approved Research Applications

4.1 If the application is approved, the applicant will be required to agree to certain conditions before commencing the research, which will include the following:

- a) The researcher must sign a Confidentiality and Information Assurance declaration
- b) The researcher (or their organisation) must sign a Data Sharing Agreement, where required
- c) Timescales for the study must be agreed with the Parole Board in advance of commencing the research or study
- d) The researcher must keep the Parole Board up to date on progress and emerging findings of the research
- e) The researcher must advise the Parole Board of any major changes to the research design or plan (including timeframes), for consideration as to whether re-approval from the RGG is required, which may also require further ethical scrutiny
- f) The researcher must provide a full copy of any draft report or paper to the Parole Board ahead of any publication or distribution
- g) The Parole Board should be acknowledged in the final research report or paper and any publications arising from it, unless otherwise instructed
- h) The researcher will notify the Parole Board ahead of any formal publication or distribution, and any subsequent follow up publications and provide copies of papers amended following any review process
- i) The researcher should inform the Parole Board of any planned media activity and of any responsive media attention as soon as possible
- j) The researcher will permit the Parole Board to share final reports and published papers (that may not be subject to open access) with its membership and upload to its website, subject to any restrictions or prior agreements to the contrary



- k) The researcher should provide a Plain English summary of the research for distribution to Parole Board members
- l) The researcher may be invited to present findings at an event or conference

4.2 No fieldwork, such as interviews with members or access to Parole Board data, may take place until approval has been received from the RGG.

4.3 If the application is unsuccessful or further information is required, the Parole Board Policy and Practice Hub will contact the applicant to discuss how to take this forward.

**Policy Owner**

Faith Geary, Chief Operating Officer

**Approved by**

Parole Board Management Committee

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