

Guidance for conducting research in Aberdeenshire schools

OVERVIEW

Aberdeenshire council welcomes and supports research in our schools. We particularly support research that:

- Encourages learning
- Has the potential to contribute to new knowledge and practice in education
- Investigates what appears to be working well so that practitioners and policy makers can learn from the most successful experiences or examples
- Helps to improve practice in educational settings

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure such research offers educational and/or other benefits, minimises disruptions to pupils and schools and is likely to produce relevant, usable and high quality findings.

The application form and guidance apply to research to be carried out by external agencies in Aberdeenshire Schools including:

- Nurseries
- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Schools with Enhanced Provision

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

When assessing the research applications, the council considers:

- The **benefit** – the potential benefit of the research to the Council and wider community
- The **feasibility** – the likelihood that the benefits will be realised
- The **cost** – the impact the research will have on participants and the schools involved, for example in terms of time and effort required by participants and the resources used
- The **other research or pressures** the participating schools are currently undergoing
- **Ethics** – whether the participants are given the respect and protection they deserve
- **Possible risks** linked to the research
- Whether the proposal is of **educational merit**

The Council's purpose is not to critique the research design but to allow access to pupils and/or staff for beneficial research whilst making sure disruptions and risks are kept to a minimal level.

CONSENT

Active informed consent on an **opt-in** basis is required in all but exceptional circumstances for all participants. It is expected that there will be written consent from parents/carers and pupils if applicable.

Permission must be granted from the relevant head teacher of the school(s) you are recruiting from before the research can begin. Please note that schools and pupils have the right to decline participation in your research even if your proposal is approved by the Council.

The researchers must respect the right of participants' to withdraw from the project at any point and provide them with the means to do so.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Strict observation of confidentiality must be respected and in particular the researcher must comply with the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). Participants' data must be kept anonymous and secured safely. An enhanced privacy notice is required.

DIRECT WORK WITH CHILDREN

Any direct work with children **must** be conducted in the presence of a member of school staff. If applicants wish to discuss this further, then please contact **Carron Douglas** (Principal Educational Psychologist) using the contact details provided at the end of this document.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Before any research can begin please complete the Aberdeenshire Council's external research application form with details of researchers and their intended research project (this can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website under the [Research in Schools page](#))

Please ensure all relevant documents are attached to the submitted application, including:

- Copy of research proposal
- Evidence of ethical approval
- Copies of data collection instruments (e.g. questionnaires, interview schedules)
- Information sheets and consent forms for participants
- Participant debrief sheet

APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Steps to follow when requesting permission to conduct research:

- Complete research application form providing full information about the research proposal
- Attach copies of all relevant documents
- Check and sign application form
- Submit the completed application, preferably by e-mail, to:

<p>Carron Douglas Principal Educational Psychologist Education & Children's Services Aberdeenshire Council Woodhill House Westburn Road Aberdeen AB16 5GB</p> <p>01224 472840 ecs.asnadmin@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>

Please note: Your application will be delayed if your submission is missing any of the required documentation.

If there are any extensions or variations to the research project after approval has been given then Aberdeenshire Council must be consulted before any further progress in the research is made.

The following suggestions are provided to help researchers increase the likelihood that their proposals will be accepted, in order that projects can begin with as little delay as possible:

1. Read the instructions on the forms carefully and make sure full information is included in the relevant sections. You may wish to highlight how your research links to the current improvement priorities within Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children's Services (please visit the [Educational Psychology Service](#) page on the Aberdeenshire Council website to obtain more information about these priorities)

2. Make sure the forms are correctly signed and dated
3. Attach copies of all relevant materials to the application
4. Make sure you have carefully evaluated the amount of time you will need for the project and the number of pupils/education staff required

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Researcher to submit application.
2. Principle Education Psychologist to review submitted application and make recommendation to Head of Service.
3. Head of Service to consider submitted application and recommendation of the Principle Education Psychologist.

Steps if approval is granted from Head of Service

1. Researcher to contact Head Teachers to seek consent of participating schools.
2. Researcher to gain consent of participants.
3. Researcher can begin research.
4. Researcher completes research and provides a feedback report to Aberdeenshire Council and participating schools.

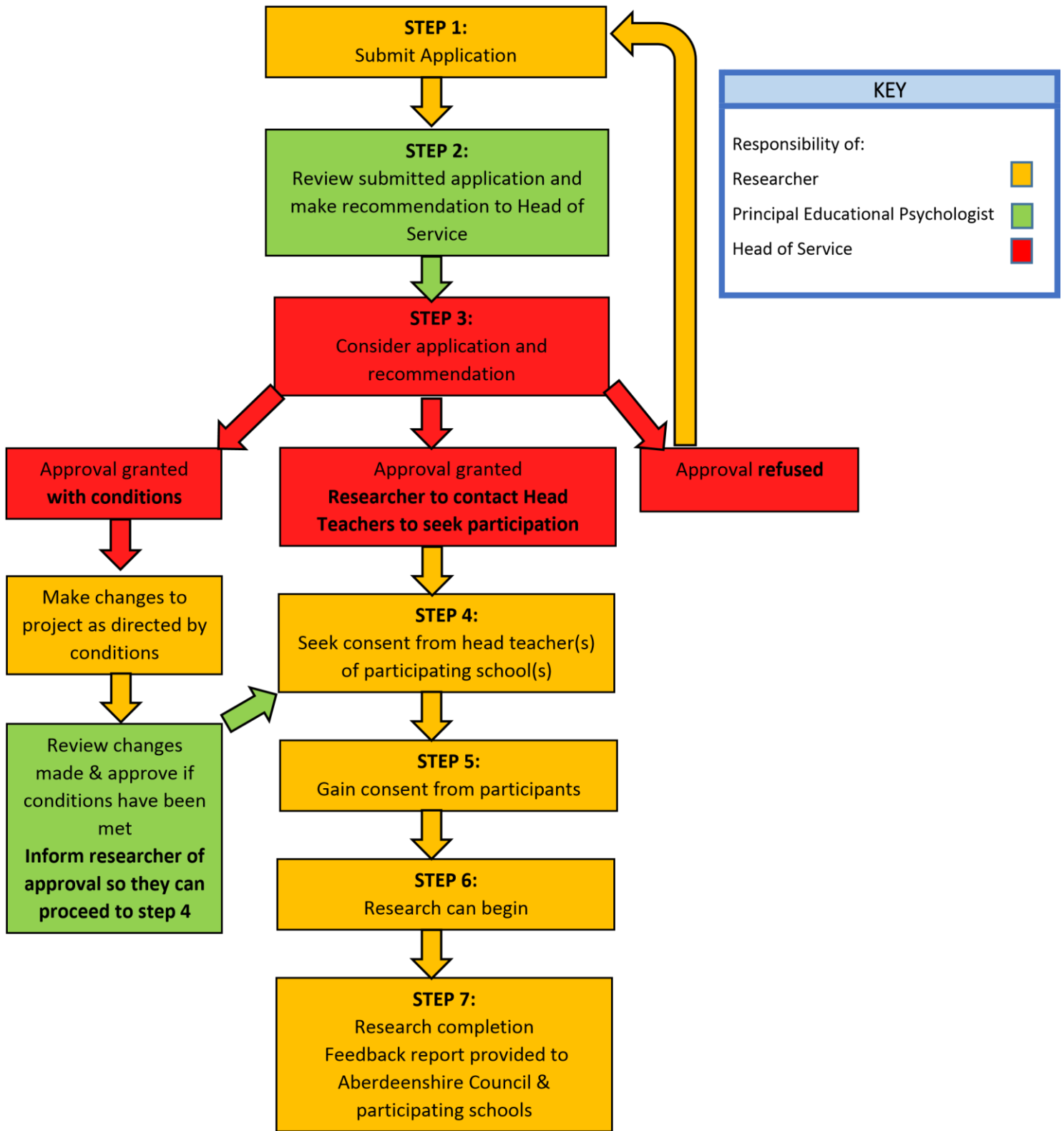
Steps if approval is granted with conditions from Head of Service

1. Researcher to make changes to project as directed by conditions.
2. Principle Education Psychologist to review changes made and approve if conditions have been met. Principle Education Psychologist to inform researcher of approval.
3. Follow steps from if approval is granted from head of service.

Steps if approval is refused from Head of Service

1. Researcher to be begin application process from the start again.

Please be reminded that if there are any extensions or variations made to the research project after approval has been given then Aberdeenshire Council must be consulted before any further progress in the research is made.



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POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF APPLICATION

There are 3 main outcomes of applications:

- Approved **without conditions** – the researcher may contact head teachers to seek school participation
- Approved **with conditions** - amendments are requested before full approval granted
- Refused

Every effort will be made to provide a timely decision to researchers in relation to their application. You will normally be given notification of your approval/refusal by email within 3 weeks. If you have not received a response within this timescale, please contact Carron Douglas, Principal Educational Psychologist (contact details are provided below).

Following approval by the Head of Service, the researcher must seek the approval of the head teacher(s) before research can begin.

QUESTIONS?

We hope this guidance helps in the successful completion of research proposals. However, if you have any further questions or concerns or would like to informally discuss your proposal before submission please contact:

Contact Details:
<p style="text-align: center;">Carron Douglas Principal Educational Psychologist Education & Children's Services Aberdeenshire Council Woodhill House Westburn Road Aberdeen AB16 5GB 01224 472840 ecs.asnadmin@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>