Points to Consider When Planning Research

The following points from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) www.esrc.ac.uk highlight potential issues to researchers which should be considered in planning research. These are examples of areas you will need to have explored prior to submitting your application for ethical approval.

Have you considered risks to:
- The research team?
- The participants? E.g. harm, deception, impact of outcomes
- The data collected? E.g. storage, considerations of privacy, quality
- The research organisations, project partners and funders involved?
- Might anyone else be put at risk as a consequence of this research?
- What might these risks be?
- How will you protect your data at the research site and away from the research site?
- How can these risks be addressed?

Details and recruitment of participants:
- What types of people will be recruited? Eg students, children, people with learning disabilities, elderly?
- How will the competence of participants to give informed consent be determined?
- How, where, and by whom participants will be identified, approached, and recruited?
- Will any unequal relationships exist between anyone involved in the recruitment and the potential participants?
- Are there any benefits to participants?
- Is there a need for participants to be de-briefed? By whom?
- What information will participants be given about the research?
- Who will benefit from this research?
- Have you considered anonymity and confidentiality?
- How will you store your collected data?
- How will data be disposed of and after how long?
- Are there any conflicts of interest in undertaking this research? E.g. financial reward for outcomes etc.
- Will you be collecting information through a third party?
- Have you considered consent?
- If using secondary data, does the consent from the primary data cover further analysis?
- Can participants opt out?
- Does your information sheet (or equivalent) contain all the information participants need?
- If your research changes, how will consent be renegotiated?

- Have you considered ethics within your plans for dissemination/impact?
- Are you conducting research outside the UK? Are there any additional issues that need to be considered as a result? E.g. local customs, local 'gatekeepers', political sensitivities
- Which Ethics Committee is most appropriate for your research?
- Have you considered the time you need to gain ethics approval?
- Have you considered what legislation your project will need to abide by? E.g. Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Human Rights Act
- How will the ethics aspects of the project be monitored throughout its course? Is there an approved research ethics protocol that would be appropriate to use?
- How will unforeseen or adverse events in the course of research be managed? E.g. do you have procedures to deal with any disclosures from vulnerable participants?

A recommended checklist for researchers can also be found on the UKRIO (UK Research Integrity Office) website;

http://www.ukrio.org/wp-content/uploads/UKRIO-Recommended-Checklist-for-Researchers.pdf