

## **Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committees – Full quality Accreditation 2020**

I am proud to say that both Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committees A and B (HSC REC A and B) have achieved full Quality Accreditation in June and July of 2020. Only a minority of UK NHS RECs achieve full quality accreditation. On this occasion HSC REC B also achieved this without any conditions, a rare achievement.

To recap, the RECs provide research ethics review of research studies directly or indirectly involving HSC/NHS patients and service users before that study starts. This is a UK legal or policy requirement. This crucial work is achieved by the entirely voluntary contribution of the research ethics committee members and upholds the ethical integrity of research.

The Health Research Authority run a 3 year rolling accreditation programme for all UK NHS and HSC Research Ethics Committees which audits performance against agreed standards.

(<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/quality-assurance/hra-and-devolved-administrations-accreditation-scheme-report/>).

There are currently 86 NHS and HSC RECs across the UK which all work to common standards such as National Standard Operating Standards, the National Policy Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees, various laws such as the UK Clinical Trials Regulation 2004, the Human Tissue Act 2004 and the Mental Capacity Acts.

Areas reviewed at quality accreditation include committee constitution, the transparency of member appointments, committee member attendance, the management of all committee meetings and committee decision making, the timeliness of committee decisions, the clarity of decision letters, the quality of minutes, as well as the training provided to the committee members.

As Head of the Office for Research Ethics Committees Northern Ireland (ORECNI) at BSO which manages the RECs, I am very proud of this

achievement which is down to the strong teamwork of staff within the ORECNI and the volunteer members of its RECs. I would recommend that the Board write a letter of thanks in particular to the Chairs and members of both RECs.

The list of HSC REC committee members is available at <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1986.htm>:

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