

MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit



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Updating guidance for natural experimental evaluations of population health interventions

Participant Information

We would like to invite you to take part in an online workshop where we will gather opinions on the content of proposed guidance for natural experimental evaluations of population health interventions.

The updated guidance

Updated guidance is being developed on using natural experiments to evaluate population health interventions, which will provide a single, integrated, up-to-date guide to the use of natural experimental methods to evaluate population health interventions.

Since original MRC guidance on natural experiments was published in 2012, new methods have been developed, there has been an increase in the use of natural experimental evaluations, the availability of very large routinely collected data resources, and the application of systems thinking to complex health interventions. This has implications for how natural experimental evaluations are designed and conducted. There is no up-to-date comprehensive overview of all the significant developments in methods, infrastructure or governance, and some key concepts and definitions are still debated. The rise in use of natural experimental approaches means it is important that publishers, funders, and users of intervention research are aware of all the recent developments and of the strengths, weaknesses, applicability and limitations of the full range of methods now available.

The project is a collaboration between the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit of the University of Glasgow, the University of Bristol, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Exeter. The study is led by Professor Peter Craig at the University of Glasgow and funded by an MRC/NIHR Research Grant from 2021 to 2023.

Your involvement

Your knowledge of natural experimental evaluations will be a valuable contribution towards developing the updated guidance. If you agree to participate, we will ask you in an online workshop:

- To indicate your agreement or disagreement with information that may be included in guidance for the use of natural experimental evaluations
- To discuss information that may be included in guidance for the use of natural experimental evaluations
- To provide details of any additional information that should be included in the guidance.

The workshop should last approximately three hours.

The online workshop

The workshop will be conducted from the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow. Results and discussion responses will be collated anonymously. Direct quotes may be used as part of the project report, but these will not be traceable to you. The results will be held on an encrypted computer at the Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow for analysis by the research team. The analysis will comprise de-identified data. The findings of the project will be disseminated via conference presentations and a peer-reviewed, open-access journal article, in which, with your permission, we will acknowledge you in a list of contributors to the project. The workshop data will be stored according to MRC guidelines for 10 years following completion of the study, and then destroyed. We will use the information you provide for research purposes only, in accordance with GDPR policy.

Confidentiality

We will not disclose your identity or information that would identify you to anyone outside of the project without your permission. We will protect the confidentiality of all your responses and discussion comments. Confidentiality will be respected subject to legal constraints and professional guidelines. Your responses and discussion comments will be de-identified. We will destroy all information that identifies you at the end of the study. The de-identified information we collect as part of this consultation may be shared with others for research purposes only. We shall make every effort to prevent breaches of confidence, such as interception of data sent via the internet or identification of respondents from occupational details. We shall use secure electronic systems to store data in accordance with data and collect occupational information in broad categories.

Your rights as a research participant

Participation in the workshop is voluntary, and we do not believe there are any risks associated with it. We will not provide payment for your involvement. You may decline to participate, decline to answer particular questions, and/or withdraw from the workshop at any time without reason. The University of Glasgow will use the information you give us for research purposes only. The workshop has ethical approval from the University of Glasgow.

Next steps

Thank you for considering taking part in the workshop. If you have any questions or have a concern about any aspect of this project please do not hesitate to contact me, Ms Mhairi Campbell, (email: Mhairi.Campbell@glasgow.ac.uk), or the Lead for Ethical Review, College of Social Sciences, Dr Susan Batchelor (socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk).