



Unit 3 Enquiries into Current Research in Health and Social Care

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

Research in health and social care is vital to support the development and progression of treatments, policies, care of service users and society. When undertaking research in this sector, it allows us to make advancements in how we care for our community, reducing the prevalence of ill health and improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all.

Research is undertaken by all health and social care professionals, at different levels and stages of their career – from a carer trying to understand the best way to support a service user receiving domiciliary care, to a doctor discovering faulty genes that can lead to cancer. It is the responsibility of all of us to be able to assess our area of expertise and make a difference in the lives of others.

Throughout the unit, learners will develop transferable skills and competencies that will allow them to consider the importance of research across the sector, develop an understanding of the research currently being undertaken and understand the methods that are used by researchers to investigate these issues. Learners will also develop understanding of the importance in research of ethics which is applied to our everyday work in health and social care, along with an awareness of the future implications of the important work being undertaken across the sector.

Delivering the learning aims

Learning aim A helps learners to understand why we research in health and social care. This section of the unit allows learners to develop an understanding of a range of issues that occur in health and social care, from health conditions to lifestyle factors that can impact health and wellbeing. Due to the vast amounts of research in this sector, it is possible to focus on local issues that learners are familiar with, which will allow them to develop their knowledge and understanding of issues faced by their own community in a more contextualised way.

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Learning aim B focuses on research methods that are used within health and social care and will support understanding of different research articles that learners will come across during and after their studies. Through developing an understanding of methods such as questionnaires and scientific experiments, learners will be able to engage closely in research, understanding how to carry out each of the methods considered. It will also allow them to explore a range of ethical considerations, applying these to different service user groups to support future career progression.

Learning aim C should be weaved throughout the unit to support development of study skills for learners. This learning aim focuses on research skills that are needed not only in research but across studies at this level and beyond. For example, when considering different sources of information from secondary research, learners should apply their search for this information to the purpose of research. While learners are developing an understanding of different organisations involved in research, it is a good idea to allow them to consider the suitability of these organisations and understand the conventional rules of referencing and creating bibliographies – skills that will be vital for further study.

Learning aim D considers the impact of research for professionals, service users and the sector. For example, when research is carried out, the findings can be applied in many ways, from providing a new drug to treat cancer to offering different ways to implement person-centred care. This learning aim also allows learners to see how policy is developed and implemented in practice due to research that has been carried out. This may well support their understanding of the development of legislation, policy and practice across other units in the specification.



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
<p>A Understand the purpose of research in health and social care</p>	<p>A1 The purpose of research in the health and social care sector</p> <p>A2 Issues in health and social care</p> <p>A3 Research organisations</p>	<p>This unit is assessed through a Pearson Set Assignment.</p>
<p>B Understand research methods used in health and social care</p>	<p>B1 Research methodologies</p> <p>B2 Ethical principles in research</p>	
<p>C Understand research skills used in health and social care</p>	<p>C1 Selecting appropriate secondary sources</p> <p>C2 Planning and carrying out research</p> <p>C3 Research skills</p>	
<p>D Explore the impact of research in health and social care</p>	<p>D1 Effect of research on individuals</p> <p>D2 Effect of research on provision and practice</p>	



Assessment guidance

The unit is assessed by a Pearson Set Assignment (PSA). The assessment is set by Pearson and must be taken under controlled conditions before it is marked by tutors.

There are 120 guided learning hours assigned to the unit, of which 20 hours will be required for assessment.

Set assignments are available from September each year and are valid for one year only.

Learners will receive a set assignment containing information that will contextualise the assessment activities to be undertaken using scenarios that are relevant and supportive of their studies in health and social care.

Delivery must cover all the unit content and prepare learners to produce evidence to meet the assessment criteria and assessment guidance in preparation for taking the PSA. Sample Assessment Materials are available on the Pearson website. These can be used or adapted to help learners prepare for assessment.



Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction

This unit gives learners the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of research in the health and social care sector. As a starting point, learners should understand why it is important to undertake research in the sector. Using current issues occurring in the community will engage learners with already familiar issues. For example, if there are rising cases of a particular health condition in the local community, this would be a good focus to begin the unit to find out what learners already understand in relation to unit content.

Learning aim A: Understand the purpose of research in health and social care

- Learning aim A focuses on the purpose of research in health and social care. Learners should understand a range of current issues across the sector, the role that research plays and the organisations involved in research. As a starting point, you could provide learners with some key pieces of recent research to discuss and share ideas – they could think about aspects such as why the research is needed, how it will help the community, how it will improve practice and provision in the sector.
- For A1, the primary focus is for learners to understand the purpose of research. This includes improving outcomes for people using services, informing policy and practice, extending knowledge and understanding, identifying gaps in provision, improvement in practice and policy, e.g. changes in treatment of health conditions, and changes in practice in providing care and support. You could watch video clips that demonstrate why we undertake research in the sector (e.g. changes in treatment of health conditions, and changes in practice in providing care and support) and create a discussion and class mind-mapping activity around this. Learners could then focus this understanding in small groups through preparing a resource for one purpose of research to share with the class.
- For A2 and A3, learners should focus on current issues across the sector to include health conditions, lifestyle factors and social care and welfare needs. You could give learners an issue in the local community to consider, such as trends in a particular illness, demands of services, economic issues,

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wellbeing, or major life events. They could undertake a paired task to research this issue, sharing findings in small groups with other pairs. It is a good idea to link this learning outcome to learning aim C at this point, giving learners the opportunity to use different source types (journals, textbooks, websites, etc). They should also consider finding research from different organisations relevant to health and social care (e.g. the local health authority or charities).

- For A1, A2 and A3 it is a good idea to introduce parts of learning aim C, in particular C1 – this section of the unit focuses on secondary sources of information, literature searches, different search engines, etc. This should be weaved throughout the unit to allow for a more holistic approach to assessment. It is also recommended that learners have the chance to visit a library and have access to support from a librarian to develop their skills in searching for information, referencing and creating bibliographies.

Learning aim B: Understand research methods used in health and social care

- Learning aim B focuses on different research methods used in health and social care, along with ethical considerations. It is important that learners understand the idea of a range of methods being used in research projects, with a consideration of validity and reliability of these methods being consistently reinforced.
- For B1, learners should understand different methods and sampling methods used in research. It is a good idea to introduce sampling methods at the start of this learning aim to give learners an understanding of why certain participants are included in particular research projects. The research found in learning aim A could be used to start consideration of what participants were used and why, introducing the key sampling methods that would have been used. Learners could then work in small groups to investigate the sampling methods, providing their own definitions and examples of each to share with the class. It is also a good idea to source images of each of these sampling methods to reinforce and test understanding. When approaching this section of the unit, learners should engage in the process of designing and implementing the research methods. For example, you could ask learners to work in small groups to produce a questionnaire on a topic of interest to the class (this does not need to be subject specific – it could be something as simple as favourite food). The rest of the class could then complete this questionnaire and critique it to suggest improvements/changes. This could be done in a round

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robin activity where each group prepares a different research method to be completed and assessed. Scientific experiments and case studies should be delivered by the tutor due to the nature of these methods.

- For B2, ethical principles should be tutor-led to ensure that learners fully engage with the need to protect participants in research. A tutor-led presentation is one way to approach delivery. There is a vast array of video clips and documentaries that can be used to consider this topic which will demonstrate the importance of following ethical guidelines, and the impact that these have on participants, researchers and the wider community. Once tutor delivery is completed, learners could independently collate all the information that has been delivered into a detailed mind map to include how ethical principles have been applied in the research, why these principles are important to protect the participants, the legislation, guidance, etc that has been followed in the research, the importance of following these in research, and conflicts of interest in research.

Learning aim C: Understand research skills used in health and social care

- Learning aim C focuses on the development of skills that learners will need not only for research but for wider study. This learning aim should be integrated into other learning aims using a holistic approach to teaching, learning and assessment where possible.
- For C1, learners should become competent in selecting and using appropriate secondary sources of evidence. This is best incorporated into learning aim A through sources of research evidence when considering the purpose of research (as shown in the previous section).
- For C2, the focus is on how to plan and carry out research. There is no requirement for learners to carry out primary research, but this could be incorporated into learning aim B with the suggested activities to plan and prepare their own research methods. To support this, tutors should source relevant past research that learners can use to consider the rationale for the research, timescales etc. There is a wealth of excellent video clips of different research studies that can be used in class to analyse the planning of research. Learners could follow up these activities with a small-scale plan for a research project of their own – they could plan a piece of research based on previous lessons/topics covered to consider rationale for the research, aims and objectives of research, selecting appropriate research methods, selecting target group and sample, deciding realistic timescales, deciding how research will be monitored and modified, deciding measures

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for success, and considering ethical issues while carrying out research. They could present this as a research proposal in class.

- For C3 it is suggested that learners follow on from the research proposal to critique this. Learners could critique their own or another group's proposal to consider time management, organisational skills and non-judgemental practice, offering improvements to the proposal that are justified and articulate their knowledge and understanding of the topic. This critique should then be supported in development by the tutor to incorporate other aspects of the specification. For example, the tutor could give learners a piece of research undertaken in the sector and complete a whole-class critique on methods of analysis and drawing conclusions, selecting relevant numerical data to include graphs, tables and statistics, and interpreting these, analysing results including the compilation of data, results and findings, methods of analysis valid for data collected including triangulation using percentages and statistical averages, recognising bias in graphs, tables and statistics, validity and reliability of results, including possible bias error, use and misuse of statistics, ethical principles and generalisability. To allow for assessment of understanding, learners could produce a piece of writing to consider each aspect of C3 and draw together their knowledge and understanding.

Learning aim D: Explore the impact of research in health and social care

- Learning aim D focuses on how research can affect provision, practice, the wider society, professionals and service users and so it is important that this is done as the final section of the unit to allow learners to draw on their knowledge and understanding of the unit content already covered.
- For D1 and D2, learners should consider the effect of research on individuals, provision and practice in health and social care. This could be done through a range of guest speakers working in health and social care. Learners could prepare for the visits by considering questions to ask in relation to implications of research on service users, recommendations to support service user groups as a result of research, changes to provision and practice as a result of research, implication of research for provision and practice in the sector, the potential for development of working practice and provision of services, and potential areas for further development of the research. The guest speakers should be advised of the topics that learners need to be aware of in order to prepare a lecture that is relevant and appropriate for the learners and the content of the unit.



Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to:

- Unit 2: Anatomy and Physiology for Health and Social Care
- Unit 4: Principles of Effective Care
- Unit 5: Principles of Safe Practice in Health and Social Care
- Unit 6: Promoting Public Health

Resources

Textbooks

Priest, H and Roberts, P – *Healthcare Research. A textbook for students and practitioners.* (Wiley, 2010) ISBN 9780470689585

Taylor, R – *The Essentials of Nursing and Healthcare Research* (Sage, 2013)
ISBN 9781446276433

Tilly, L – *Health and Social Care Research Methods in Context. Applying research to practice* (Routledge, 2021) ISBN 9781000511826

Journals

British Journal of Nursing

British Journal of Sociology

Health and Social Care in the Community

Journal of Integrated Care

Journal of Social Policy

Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law

Videos

A wide variety of videos can be found to support delivery of this unit. Useful documentaries on research, clips to explain the purpose of research, research methods and ethical considerations can be found in abundance. These should be relevant and appropriate for the level of learning and learners undertaking the course.



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Websites

A wide variety of websites can be used to support learning in this unit. It is good to use:

- government-led sites
- healthcare organisations
- social care organisations
- reputable charities.

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for tutors to preview each website before using it in class to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that tutors bookmark useful websites and consider enabling students to access them through the school/college intranet.