This summary is based on a project to identify the characteristics of good quality organisational case study research and devise reporting standards with particular application to the UK NHS.

The reporting standards were developed in three stages:

- a rapid review of the existing literature to identify reporting items
- a modified Delphi consensus process with a panel of experts to develop and refine the structure and content
- application of the list of high-consensus Delphi items to samples of organisational case studies to assess their feasibility as reporting standards

The standards aim to improve the consistency, rigour and reporting of organisational case study research.

The standards are intended primarily as a tool for authors of organisational case studies.

The standards outline broad requirements for rigorous and consistent reporting, without constraining methodological freedom.
What is an organisational case study?
Case study is a method of research that engages in close, detailed examination of a single example or phenomenon, and is often used to understand activity and behaviour within a real-life context. Organisational case studies are concerned with an organised body of people with a particular purpose, such as a business, government department, or charity group.

Why are reporting standards needed?
The broad diversity of approaches used within organisational case studies mean that any attempt to develop ‘definitive’ methodological guidance in this area is likely to be highly contentious and resource-intensive. However, clearly reported methods will help research funders, peer-reviewers, and other research users assess methodological quality. A search of the EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research) clearinghouse (http://www.equator-network.org/) for reporting guidelines found that there were no reporting standards for organisational case studies.

Scope of the reporting standards
The aim of the reporting standards is to improve the consistency, rigour and reporting of organisational case study research to make it useful to different audiences.

Consensus standards for the reporting of organisational case studies

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The reporting standards will be helpful for authors of organisational case study research; research sponsors making funding decisions for proposed case studies; ethics and research advisory groups requiring clarity about planned methods; peer-reviewers evaluating the robustness of a completed case study; and readers and policy makers interpreting and implementing the findings of organisational case studies.

How to use the reporting standards
The standards require the author to refer to the location in their published case study where each reporting item was met, or alternatively where a justification for the absence of the item can be found. The standards are not intended to be a guide on how to undertake an organisational case study.

Future research
While the proposed reporting standards are based on a high level of consensus among a group of experts, their true value cannot be fully established until they have been applied in practice. Further consultation with relevant experts will be necessary to build engagement with the reporting standards for organisational case studies among various audiences, and to collect evidence that could be used to evaluate and refine the standards.

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