

# **Social Sciences Research Ethics Framework: towards a national Guideline**

**Regional Consultation Meetings, 2004**

**Presentation 2: Introduction to the Guidelines**



# The Context: October 2002 – A Review of Ethics and Social Science Research

Identified key changes in research ethics environment – changes in research governance, in institutional engagement with ethics, in training needs, in character and complexity of research, information and data.

As noted in the report – *‘there is a wide diversity in how developed such (ethics review) systems are, in the specific details of research governance mechanisms, and whether the onus for ensuring good ethical practice should be with individual researchers, host institution, or research funder.’*



## **Follow up activity: Sept 2003 – April 2004**

To work towards development of new, robust national guidelines for social science research practice, ethics review & governance

To do so through extensive consultation with wide range of agencies and associations, and through regional Meetings across UK

To build a framework that can secure broad support from across the social science research community and funding agencies



**Research Ethics  
Framework**



## Developing A Framework for Social Science Research Ethics

An ESRC project at University of York & Oxford Brookes University

### **REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETINGS**

- Newcastle            5 February 2004
- Edinburgh           13 February 2004
- Manchester         19 February 2004
- London                23 February 2004

To book a place, visit the project website  
at [www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/](http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/)

**Research Ethics Framework project**  
**SATSU, Department of Sociology**  
**University of York YO10 5DD**  
**Email: [ref@york.ac.uk](mailto:ref@york.ac.uk)**

**For information on the Framework & Regional Meetings visit**

[www.york.ac.uk/res/ref](http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref)



## **Types of research activity the Framework will cover:**

- Research conducted within each of the principal fields/disciplines of the social sciences
- Interdisciplinary social science research
- Interdisciplinary social/other science research
- International social science research
- Complementary to guidance provided for social research ( e.g. by SRA)

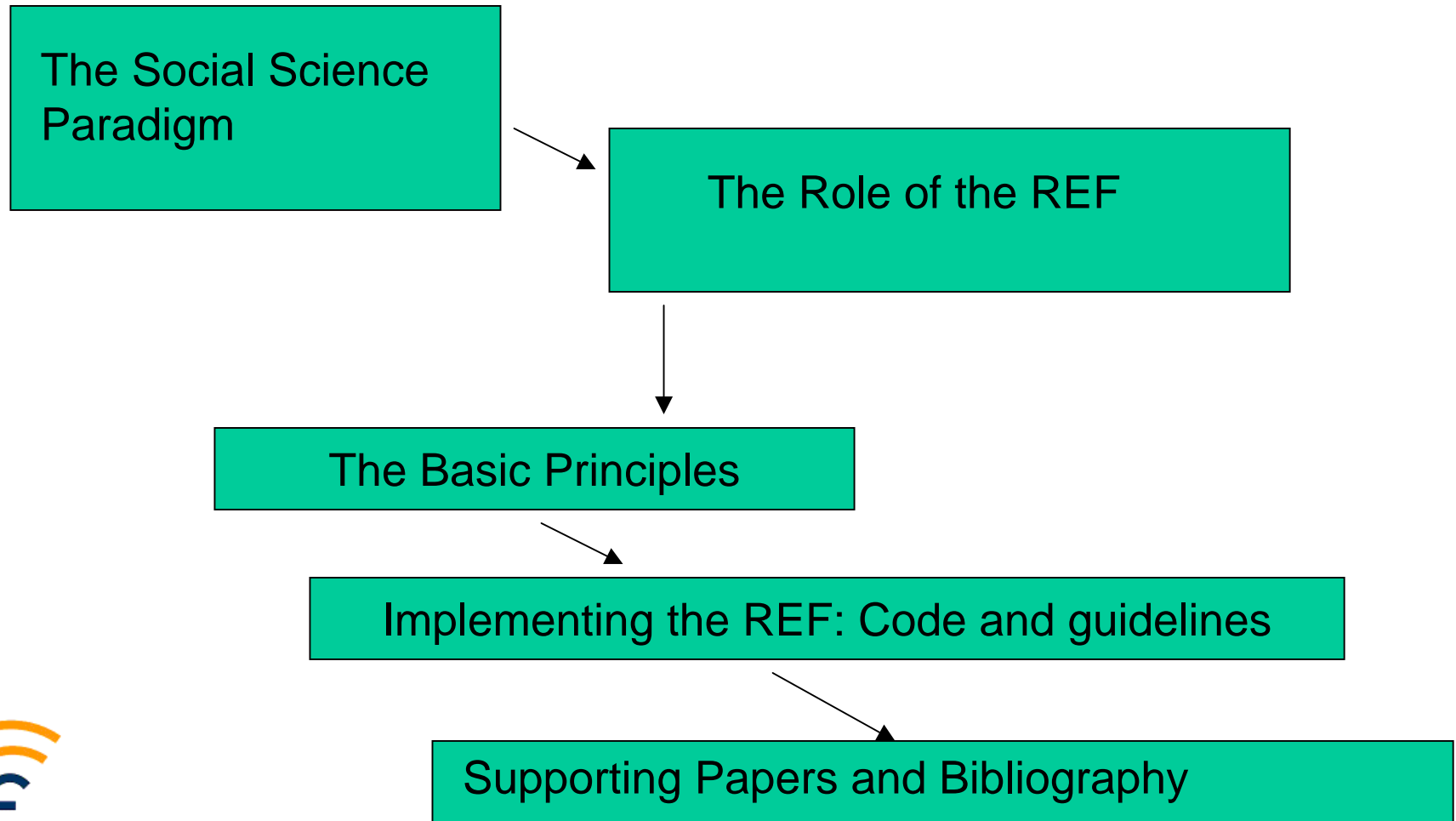
## What the Guidelines are *not* about:

- Providing a *definition* of social science research:

Will not attempt to provide a precise *formula* or rules that seek to *define* the meaning of social science research:.

- Producing new ethical *codes* of practice – primary focus will be on ethical scrutiny and research governance
- *Duplicating* existing good practice – but will seek to *articulate* with other ethics–related guidance

# Structure of the Framework Document



# 1. The Social Science Paradigm



Critical inquiry

Methodological diversity

Range of contexts

Multiple methods

Broad conception of risk

A socially-grounded and iterative ethics



## 2. The Role of the Research Ethics Framework

- Statement of basic principles
- Guidance about the process of ethics scrutiny
- Research governance in social science contexts
- Provides national code and guidelines for ESRC-funded research
- Model that is endorsed by other national SS funding agencies
- Complementary to existing professional bodies' own codes.

### 3. The Basic Principles

- *honesty* to research staff and subjects about the purpose, methods and intended and possible uses of the research (especially data-sharing/archiving), and any risks involved;
- *consent* to use of research results should normally be secured (normally post-hoc in covert research)
- *confidentiality* of information supplied by research subjects and anonymity and privacy of respondents;
- *independence* and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research

## 4. Implementing the REF

- Statement that locus of responsibility lies with research provider
- Existing ethics codes of professional associations seen as guiding principles at level of individual researcher but not regarded as ethical review *per se*
- Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure the integrity of science, the subject and the researcher
- Ethics scrutiny should focus on *implications of the research* for three groups: the research participants, researchers, and their employing organisations
- ESRC proposals for monitoring of ethics review

## Review needs to be grounded in a broader conception of 'risk'

- Risks in social research inadequately covered by conception of risk as defined by LREC
- Where social science research relates to health and well-being of individuals or relies on access to individuals via formal health agencies may need LREC approval
- Risk calculations in social science research should refer to potential disruptive impact of research
- Research may be 'deliberately and legitimately opposed to the interests of the research subjects' (TriCouncil of Canada)

## 4. Supporting Papers and Bibliography

- Illustrative scenarios (case studies) and the issues a research ethics committee might need to consider in reviewing a proposal

- 4 papers:

Cross-boundary research; international regulation; working in/with developing countries; university ethics review procedures

- Extended bibliography

- Web-based resource supported by ESRC

[www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/](http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/)

