WHAT DOES A RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE REVIEW?

Research with people must be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee before its start to ensure it is conducted ethically.

A committee does not review a protocol as if going through a checklist. It **deliberates on the basis of seven main points,** asking questions like these:

1 SOCIAL VALUE

- Does the study have the potential to generate knowledge to improve people's health and wellbeing?

2 SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY

- Is the research methodology sound?
- Will it produce valid knowledge that can be generalized?
- Is the research feasible to conduct?

3 FAIR PARTICIPANT SELECTION

- Is the inclusion and exclusion of participants based on scientific criteria, and to minimize risks and maximize benefits?
- Is the distribution of burdens and benefits fair?
- Are there special protections for participants who are vulnerable?

4 RISK/BENEFIT BALANCE

- What are the risks to which participants are exposed and how will they be minimized?
- Do potential benefits of the research outweigh the risks?

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- How will communities' priorities and concerns be considered?
- What are the plans to engage communities in research?

6 INFORMED CONSENT

- Are people given clear and complete information about the research so that they can freely decide whether to participate?

7 RESPECT FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Does the research guarantee participants' safety and well-being?
- Is participants' data confidentiality maintained?
- Can they withdraw whenever they want?
- Will participants be given new relevant information during the course of the study?