

Developing a methodological framework for organisational case studies: a rapid review and consensus development process

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Plain English summary

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Organisational case studies typically involve the close, detailed examination of an organised body of people with a particular purpose, such as a business, government department or charity group. This research method can be used to understand activity and behaviour within a real-life context. However, the actual methods proposed for organisational case studies are often not clearly described.

We aimed to develop a set of 'reporting standards' for organisational case study research relevant to the UK NHS. Reporting standards are a list of criteria that can be used to improve the consistency, rigour and reporting of research, making it more accessible and useful to different audiences.

We developed the standards by first collecting together practical information about reporting from published research methods texts and relevant organisational case studies. We presented this information to an online panel of experts as a list of 'items'. We reduced and refined these items over two rounds, until only those agreed to be essential for the reporting of organisational case studies remained.

Ultimately, there was agreement among experts on 13 items, which together formed the basis of the reporting standards. Application of these standards to existing organisational case studies suggested that they can be used to improve the consistency, rigour and reporting of future research. We suggest that the reporting standards be further tested (and possibly refined) for use by researchers seeking public funding.

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