Guidelines for the preparation of Executive Summaries

The aim of Focus on Research summaries of final reports is to improve access to your research and to stimulate interest in the final report. These summaries can also be used by CSO to disseminate information concerning the projects we fund throughout NHSScotland. Preparation of the summary (and indeed the whole report) should also encourage you to consider how the findings may contribute to the development of health service policy and practice and to formulate your thoughts about the direction the research should take in the future.

The text of the summary should be easily understandable and describe the main results and potential practical implications. The executive summary is intended to be read without reference to the report as a whole and therefore some constraints apply:

* the summary should not contain references
* any abbreviations or specific terms should be explained
* a contact for obtaining copies of the full report must be given
* the text should be readily understandable (written to be understood by the layperson with no jargon)
* it should focus thoughts on how the study findings fit into the bigger picture
* it must be presented in the required format
* it must be returned to CSO in electronic format (along with the final report)

Format

A standard format is required as on the template which can be downloaded from the website. Please note:

* The section headings are given and all should be included, although the relative sizes of the sections is flexible (the template is in 2 columns, and the text will automatically wrap to the next column)
* Click on the line below a section heading to insert the text
* Please leave one free line between sections
* Please use the fonts as set (Verdana, 11 point for headings and 10 point for text) and do not use smaller font sizes in an attempt to include more information
* The summary as a whole must not exceed the one page given in the template

Sections

**Aim:** a short description of what the study set out to achieve including background if required for the following text to be understood

**Project outline/methodology:** how the study was carried out, including criteria for participants, tests carried out etc

**Key Results:** highlight the significant findings of the study

**Conclusions**: short statement of the outcome of the study - did it achieve its aims?

**What does this study add to the field?**: this should summarise what was previously known and how these data add to the body of knowledge

**Implications for practice or policy**: this should describe whether this study could potentially lead to changes in practice or policy

**Where to next**: this should state what further research naturally follows on from the completed study

If the Focus on Research page of your report is not in the required format, is not easily understandable, does not stand alone from the report or is not received in electronic format, it will be returned to you for editing. A member of CSO’s Public Involvement group will also comment. Failure to revise the summary may result in delays in the final payment of the grant being issued.

Executive summaries will be posted on our website after consideration at the relevant advisory committee meeting. CSO conducted a review of journal policies towards publication of summaries on the web and this suggested that most leading journals would not reject papers for this reason (this is not unlike having an abstract published at a Conference). Any concerns that posting of the Summary on the website may lead to rejection of a paper by a journal should be directed to the relevant Research Manager.