

## NCB Research and Impact Team

### Ethical guidelines for research

#### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the policy and principles of ethical approval of research of NCB's Research and Impact Team. This document should be read in conjunction with NCB's Safeguarding, Data Protection and Risk Assessment Processes and Procedures (copies of which are available on request).

The Research and Impact Team at NCB are members of the Social Research Association (SRA). At a *minimum*, our research practice adheres to the research ethics guidance<sup>1</sup> provided by the SRA which seeks to:

- Protect research participants
- Ensure research is high quality
- Comply with legislation
- Reassure funders
- Maintain the good reputation of the sector

This is done using guidance on the following:

- Informed consent
- Confidentiality and anonymity, including the use of personal data as defined by the Data Protection Act, 2018
- Avoiding harm
- Questionable research practices, and
- Ethical foundations

NCB recognises the vulnerability of children and young people including, but not limited to, vulnerabilities due to their age/stage of development, and childhood experiences/circumstances, and also of some adults (including parents/carers, e.g. due to cognitive ability/disability, other disabilities, health issues such as mental health, addictions or other needs), which is why we enhance the SRA's guidance. This document sets out examples of these enhancements.

Issue/principle	NCB Enhancements
<b>Informed consent</b>	<p>Plain language documents are used to explain both the aims of the project and what participants are being asked to do.</p> <p>The voluntary nature of being involved is verbally emphasised and reiterated to participants who are also told they can withdraw from the project at any time, without explanation. When applicable, this is also added in writing in cases of written consent forms.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/SRA/Ethics/Research-Ethics-Guidance.aspx>

	<p>Consent forms are tailored for children and young people depending on age and mental capacity, and the nature of their research involvement (i.e. whether they are participants or advisors).</p> <p>Consent forms for adults will also differ depending on whether they are research participants or advisors.</p>
<b>Confidentiality, anonymity and the right to privacy</b>	<p>Plain language documents are used to explain what confidentiality, anonymity and the right to privacy mean. The limitations of confidentiality (e.g. in cases where criminal activity or safeguarding issues are raised) are also explained verbally as well as in written format. Consent forms also highlight how long we retain personal info and what we are doing with that info.</p> <p>It is made clear to participants that they are free to choose the information they share and that they can withhold information which is personal or sensitive to them.</p>
<b>Avoiding harm</b>	<p>All staff work to NCB's Safeguarding Policy and conduct Risk Assessments. Where NCB staff meet children and young people who are research participants in a setting that is not NCB's (or organised by NCB), risk assessments will be completed in conjunction with the host organisation. Where possible staff teams from NCB will be mixed in terms of gender.</p> <p>Identified risks are mitigated against and the risk assessments are signed off by a Senior Manager. Where sensitive topics are discussed, subject and engagement experts work together to ensure lines of enquiry and discussions are appropriately framed, always with an emphasis on the safeguarding and wellbeing of participants. For example, to encourage discussion we might draw on experiences gathered from fictitious or real, but anonymised, case studies/vignettes to elicit opinions and perspectives from participants rather than ask for real life examples from individuals. Links to support organisations which specialise in such topics will be provided to participants at the end of the session/interview. A 'safe space' will be provided (whether online or in person) should participants want to withdraw from a group session if they become upset, where a member of NCB staff can support the person.</p> <p>Should an NCB staff member become upset at the content of some data, they are supported by their line manager to debrief and have access to the Employee Assistance Programme, where independent, professional counselling and other support can be accessed.</p>
<b>Flexibility &amp; accessibility</b>	<p>While NCB has schedules for all work programmes, including research, it is important that these are flexible enough for participants to be involved in the project but do not feel burdened by it. Consequently, adjustments to timescales,</p>

	<p>length of sessions etc. may be necessary. These will be discussed with funders as appropriate.</p> <p>In addition, NCB is aware of the wide range of support needs which participants may have and will always seek to make reasonable adjustments to ensure the project is fully accessible. This may entail the provision of sign or other language interpreters, the accommodation of alternative means of communication, support dogs, support adults/Personal Assistants, payment towards childcare etc.</p>
<b>Incentives</b>	<p>NCB's research team supports incentives for child and parent/carer research participants, usually in the format of gift cards/vouchers, prize draws or sometimes in the format of an enjoyable group activity. Young people who are part of ongoing research advisory groups (as opposed to research participants) will, as far is possible receive incentives. We will explore with funders any limitations on incentives. When reporting the rewarding of research participants will be made explicit in order to be fully transparent. The use of incentives would be acknowledged in any research reports to ensure transparency</p>
<b>Ethical review</b>	<p>When researching particularly sensitive or complex issues, an additional layer of ethical review may be used via the SRA's Ethics Forum, to obtain feedback from independent experts in particular topics.</p>