The Edge Foundation - Research Ethics Policy

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# Introduction

## Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Edge researchers, managing and conducting research and evaluation projects, are working in a way that meets the highest ethical standards possible. This document aims to provide a practical guide to the issues and behaviours that Edge research staff should consider and demonstrate in their work – showing their commitment to an Edge core value of ‘interacting with integrity.’ It describes the ethical principles to be considered, processes that Edge researchers should follow, and links to supporting resources and templates.

## How to use this document

Employees should familiarise themselves with the research ethics policy in its entirety.

All proposals should be subject to an ethics review by application of the research ethics checklist provided at Annex 1. This review should happen at an early stage of proposal development and always before submission of the offer to the funding body and/or before fieldwork commences if it is Edge own research project.

Where the answer to questions 3, 4 or 5 of the research ethics checklist is ‘yes’ then the project should be considered higher risk from a research ethics perspective.

This checklist has been developed based on the Government Social Research Ethics Checklist. Upon completion, you will be signposted to specific points that should be considered as well as relevant sections of the research ethics policy; wider Edge policies and available templates and resources as appropriate to support you. These outputs should be referred back to once the project starts and throughout the project lifespan.

Considering the ethical implications of our work is required for each and every research or evaluation project. However, where a project relates to the checklist questions in red, Project Leads should take extra care and caution to ensure that we are meeting the highest ethical standards possible. This may involve, for instance, including research ethics as an agenda item at each project meeting with team members or the funding body, or putting together a dedicated ethics steering group.

## Related policies and guidance documents

There are a range of other Edge policies and guidance documents that link with this policy. Key documents can be found in Chapter 6: Resources. In particular, note that Edge has developed specific guidance around conducting surveys and interviews. These more in-depth guidance documents should be read alongside this more general policy.

## Key ethical principles for Edge work

Research ethics are important for ensuring that researchers are held accountable for their work. Researchers have an influence on how or which experiences are known, and these decisions often shape the decisions of policy makers. Research may revolve around sensitive topics or may include vulnerable populations. Therefore, clear principles are needed to make sure participants are fairly treated and protected from harm.

Research ethics moves beyond the professional ethics that all Edge researchers are required to abide by and the GDPR requirements for the safe and secure processing and storage of data. The key tenets of research ethics include both of these elements, but also:

The ways in which participants in research are engaged

Duties of care to research participants and the law for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

The ways in which data is analysed and reported to reflect participant data

Duty of care to researcher safety and wellbeing

Balancing the obligations to funders with obligations to society, to work with integrity and transparency that advances knowledge and does not mislead.

There are some fundamental principles that all Edge researchers working on social research and/or evaluation projects should adhere to:

Conduct projects in ways that prioritise the avoidance of harm

Use data only for the purpose it is originally designed to be used for

Ensure ethical participation for research participants and safety for researchers

Building on these three key principles, there are more detailed duties or obligations that can be understood as obligations to participants, obligations to colleagues, obligations to funders and obligations to society in general.

# Obligations to participants

## Data protection and GDPR

In the first instance, all Edge employees should be familiar with working in compliance with the Edge data protection policy.

All projects must be reviewed to ensure the Edge GDPR policy is adhered to. Please see appendix 1

## Inclusion of participants

Being inclusive is vital when conducting social research. This means that steps should be taken to ensure unrepresented groups are included as research participants, to allow all people to have the opportunity for their experiences to be heard. Inclusion is also important methodologically, as a failure to consider the barriers to participation can result in a biased sample.

Where applicable, potential barriers to participation should be identified during the proposal development stage (depending on the types of participants involved). Solutions should be identified and incorporated into the methodology to ensure that it does not unnecessarily exclude participants of interest. Issues to consider include location, format of data collection, language and level of comprehension.

### Location

If face-to-face data collection is required/preferred, consider whether the location chosen is easily accessible for all participants in terms of transport, proximity to home or their individual organisational office, and convenience of logistics. Solutions may include:

Covering travel expenses

Identifying locations and dates already known to participants and where they have existing appointments

Choosing a host location that is accessible for all participants

Enabling participants to join group meetings or interviews by phone/video where it is not possible for them to attend in person

Locations chosen should be accessible for people with disabilities. Conducting interviews with individuals in their own homes is another potential option, but will involve a risk assessment by the project lead and additional safety measures (see section 3.1 Researcher safety and wellbeing).

### Format of data collection

Potential participants may lack easy access to the internet or a (mobile) phone, making certain methods inappropriate, such as online surveys or telephone interviews. Consider whether paper-based methods (for surveys) or face-to-face interviews are more accessible and appropriate, and whether they can be incorporated alongside other methods. Gatekeeper organisations may be able to provide telephone equipment for participants, but this cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, some participants may have access needs related to disability (e.g. visual impairment or hearing loss), therefore, researchers should consider how to adapt the format of data collection to allow all potential participants to take part.

### Language

Participants may be excluded by the lack of provision of research materials and data collection methods in languages they understand. This may apply to participants in countries where English is not the first language, migrants living in English-speaking countries, and participants in countries where it is legally required to offer materials in (an) additional language(s) to English. Where appropriate, the translation of materials and the use of researchers with additional language skills should be included in budgets at the proposal stage. Where this is not possible, a rationale for working with a more limited group of participants should be developed.

### Level of comprehension

Where written in English, research materials should be written in [Plain English](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf), to allow for audiences with differing levels of knowledge and comprehension levels. Where necessary and applicable, interviews should be conducted in a similar manner. For participants with a range of learning disabilities, a budget for developing research materials in [Easy Read format](https://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/learning-disabilities/a-to-z/e/easy-read) and involving researchers able to communicate with this group of people should be included.

## Participant safety and wellbeing

We have duty of care towards participants engaging in our research and should consider the potential adverse effects of participation on a project-by-project basis, during the proposal development stage as well as throughout the project timeline. Potential negative impacts could include stress, emotional or psychological harm, discomfort, embarrassment, or feelings of intrusion. Participants should be made aware of known potential risks as part of informed consent. The research design should seek to avoid or minimise any such risks.

Some general considerations are as follows:

Avoid contacting participants at unreasonable times, particularly when calling personal phone numbers. What is "unreasonable" may vary by project, population, and local customs but typically we should avoid calling participants in the weekends, early mornings, and evenings during the weekdays, unless this has been agreed in advance at the participant's request.

Consider how many times we attempt to invite a participant to take part in the research for example, where it may be reasonable to call a business number five times, this may be perceived as harassment/intrusion for a personal number.

Ensure that informed consent is obtained (see section 2.4)

Ensure that participants can withdraw at any point

Ensure participation is voluntary. Participants should not feel any pressure to take part in the research including from sub-contractors or the funding body/

Ensuring that the data collection is not excessively burdensome on the participant. For example, researchers should consider whether multiple stages of research with the same participants are necessary, as well as considering the travel costs and time required for participants.

Depending on factors such as the vulnerability of the population (see section 2.4.3) and sensitivity of the research topic, the following may also need to be considered:

* Providing contact details of a relevant support organisation to participants and where appropriate, to those who are invited to participate but decline.
* A safe guarding procedure should be developed in advance for dealing with concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a participant or others. This could be as a result of a disclosure made by the participant or another to the researcher, or based on the researcher's own judgement and observations. This could include Lines of accountability and communication with the project management team should be agreed. This should include setting out who within Edge (e.g. Project Lead) researchers can raise concerns with, as well as clarifying with the funding body where such concerns should be escalated. Any person involved with a project has a duty to raise any concerns that they have about the safety or wellbeing of a participant. Concerns can be raised with the project lead, as well as the researcher’s line manager.

For vulnerable individuals, researchers should consider whether external contacts (such as support workers) should be liaised with to ensure the research is appropriate and to discuss any concerns during the research. This decision would require a thorough evaluation of participants’ anonymity and safeguarding procedures.

Informing the participant prior to data collection that the data collected will be kept confidential however in cases where there is a concern about the safety or wellbeing of the participant or others, confidentiality must be broken.

Ensuring participants are aware that potentially upsetting issues may arise, and reminding participants that they do not have to complete the study if they become upset. Researchers should remind participants of their rights where appropriate e.g. if the participant is particularly upset or embarrassed by a certain line of questioning, they should be reminded that they have a right to decline to answer certain questions, or stop the research process.

Researchers have the necessary training related to the subject area and the population group as well as checks (e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service) to conduct the data collection. All project staff conducting research should be subject to a basic DBS check, and this should be renewed every two years. Enhanced DBS checks should be requested when appropriate.

Using other means such as secondary data where direct data collection may be distressing or otherwise have harmful effects for the participant

## Informed Consent

### Gaining informed consent (all participants)

When intending to collect data from a participant, researchers must first ensure that informed consent has been provided. Informed consent is the voluntary agreement to participate in research, based upon a full understanding of the nature and purpose of the research and of the ways in which the findings of the research overall and from individuals’ contributions will be used. Remember:

Informed consent must be obtained from all participants irrespective of participant "type" (e.g. vulnerable individual, member of the public, professional).

Employees should be particularly mindful of this where Edge have not directly recruited the participant:

* + For example, when taking a snowball sampling approach, or where the funding body is supporting with recruitment.
  + In such circumstance, we must not assume that the individual has been given sufficient information by the "referrer".
  + It is our responsibility to make sure that they are given sufficient information to provide informed consent.

For vulnerable individuals, researchers should consider whether external contacts (such as support workers) should be liaised with to ensure the research is appropriate and to discuss any concerns during the research. This decision would require a thorough evaluation of participants’ anonymity and safeguarding procedures.

#### Informed consent should be a dynamic process

Informed consent is not a standard tick box exercise: it is a dynamic process that should be considered on an ongoing basis and should be tailored to the project.

If data collection takes place with the same participants at multiple points, or if the project evolves, then informed consent may need to be renewed.

Information provided should be proportionate and appropriate to the project. We should not deliberately withhold information that may likely affect a participant's willingness to take part, nor should we overwhelm them with information that may be unwanted or unnecessary, for the sake of covering all bases. We should ensure that information provided is at an appropriate level for the participant.

Researchers should use their judgment and remind the participants of aspects of informed consent where appropriate e.g. if during an interview the participant is particularly upset or embarrassed by a certain line of questioning, they should be reminded that they have a right to decline to answer. Researchers should also give advance warnings or reminders before sensitive sections of questions, and they should consider whether all questions are appropriate to ask.

### Informed consent checklist (all participants)

As a minimum, researchers should ensure that potential participants are informed of the following before seeking to obtain consent:

Subject and purpose of the research.

Who is carrying out the research (e.g. "Edge is an independent foundation conducting research on behalf of <funding body name>).

What participation will entail.

An accurate estimate of the length of time data collection will likely take (e.g. "the interview is expected to take approximately 30-45 minutes depending on your responses".

That participation is voluntary, and that they can choose to decline either to participate altogether, or in specific aspects of the data collection for example specific questions without providing a reason..

That they can withdraw from the research at any time and without giving a reason (although it may help the research if they do provide a reason).

That there is a clear procedure for withdrawing consent, which is made clear to all participants before agreeing to take part.

If the data collection is being audio/video recorded or if they are being observed.

How the data will be stored and who will have access to it providing assurance that it will be kept secure (and when it will be deleted).

How the data will used e.g. will feed into a report for X funding body who will use it to inform Y policy.

Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity as appropriate and relevant to the project. We cannot always assure anonymity and if this is the case we should make the participant aware of this.

An Edge contact point, usually the Project Lead.

### Gaining informed consent (vulnerable populations)

In addition to the information set out in 2.4.1, below are some factors that one should consider when seeking to gain informed consent from participants who may be considered vulnerable. This includes children (aged 18 or younger) and vulnerable adults. Vulnerability in adults is a dynamic state, containing a number of needs and personal circumstances. Vulnerable adults may not be able to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation. This may include individuals with mental health issues, disability or physical illness.

Researchers should consider whether participants are too vulnerable to be interviewed, e.g. for some victims of exploitation, it may not be appropriate for them to participate in research. In some circumstances, taking part in a research project may increase a participant’s vulnerability.

It is also important to consider whether participants’ vulnerabilities affect their ability to give informed consent.

However, vulnerability does not automatically exclude someone from taking part in research – it is important for vulnerable populations to be considered in research. Therefore, researchers should consider how research can be conducted in ways that protect vulnerable participants.

Information should be provided in a form that is accessible and relevant to the participants’ age and ability. This is often best done verbally, but a written information sheet should also be provided for the participant to keep either as a physical or electronic copy.

Give participants sufficient time to decide if they wish to take part for example sending out an information sheet in advance of invitation to participate.

For children aged under 16 years, written consent of parents or carers must also be obtained. The consent form must state that the research has been explained and that an information sheet has been provided.

Parental consent should not be equated with the consent of the child or young person, who must still be invited to give consent themselves.

Gatekeepers/responsible adults may be able to help with the process of obtaining parental consent. Responsible adults could include school headteachers, youth workers, sport/activity providers, case workers and other adults with responsibility for protecting children in their care. Responsible adults may for example, they initially introduce the project to the participant; contact parents or carers; allow consent forms (opt-out were appropriate) to be issued to parents through school IT systems or support translation or other issues relating to access and inclusion.

Keeping either an audio/paper/electronic record of consent.

Where interviews are recorded, consider mentioning that they can request that the device be turned off at any time.

Where interviews are recorded as written notes, consider mentioning that they can request that notes are not taken at any time.

Provide assurance that anything discussed will be kept confidential unless there is a concern that there was a risk of harm either to the participant or someone else, in which case this must be disclosed to the relevant authority.

Have preliminary discussions with relevant people or organisations to find out how children or a vulnerable group who might participate in research are best communicated with and whether there are any needs (such as impairments) or considerations (such as cultural background) that need to be addressed.

### Gaining informed consent (sensitive topics)

In addition to the information set out in 2.4.1, below are some factors that one should consider when seeking to gain informed consent for projects where the topic may be considered sensitive:

Where it is anticipated that some questions may be upsetting, inform the participant of any such risk and that they are free to skip any questions or stop at any time.

Give participants sufficient time to decide for example sending out an information sheet in advance of inviting them to take part.

Where interviews are recorded, consider mentioning that they can request that the device be turned off at any time.

Where interviews are recorded as written notes, consider mentioning that they can request that notes are not taken at any time. Provide assurance that anything discussed will be kept confidential unless there is a concern that there was a risk of harm either to the participant or someone else, in which case this must be disclosed to the relevant authority.

Have preliminary discussions with experts in the topic area including those with lived experience and/or conduct background reading as appropriate to find out how participants in the research are best communicated with and whether there are any needs (such as impairments) or considerations (such as cultural background) that need to be addressed.

* Provide information of relevant support organisation(s) that the participant may wish to reach out to .

## Incentives

Views vary on whether incentives support people to participate who might not otherwise and is the "right" thing to do as participants are offering their time, or whether they can be a form of coercion and negatively impact the power dynamic between researcher/funding body and participant. Whilst it is common to compensate participants who are not engaging in the research as part of their professional role e.g., patients, members of the public, the pros and cons of offering such incentives should be considered on a project-by-project basis and discussed and agreed.

Where an incentive is offered to participants:

This should be provided in addition to other expenses which if not provided could prevent someone participating in the study.

Incentives will be in the form of vouchers, there will be no cash offered.

As a guide, consider offering vouchers that can be used in multiple stores. Vouchers should be appropriate and useful for participants. It may also be advisable to offer a charitable donation made on behalf of the participant.

Make clear to the participant that acceptance of the incentive does not negate their right to decline to answer questions or withdraw from participation in the study.

# Obligations to colleagues

## Researcher safety and wellbeing

Project Leads should consider the safety and wellbeing of each other and those within the project team as part of the project planning. Potential negative impacts of fieldwork could include stress; emotional, psychological, or physical harm; discomfort; or loss of property. These risks could arise because of factors such as the physical environment of the data collection site; travelling to and from the data collection site; the participant; other people and/or research topic. Processes to protect researchers will vary on a project-by-project basis and will need to be proportionate to the level of risk. Considerations include:

Conducting two-person visits.

Confirming data collection sites have been set up safely. For example, researcher sitting closest to the door, easy access to staff if assistance is required and what the researcher should do if they find this has not been implemented on arrival.

Safety procedures around collecting data from participants who may likely to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. These may include, for example, two-person interviews and/or choosing public venues for interviewing.

Pre- and post- telephone calls to make sure the researcher has arrived and left the visit safely.

Conducting data collection in the presence of project workers.

Considering the skills and experience of the researcher when selecting the project team.

Ensuring that researchers have appropriate clearance (DBS or BPSS) before conducting research with children or young people or make research visits to educational or childcare setting.

Ensuring that researchers are prepared and appropriately trained ahead of any research with children and young people including that:

* + They should never be alone with a child or young adult (even if they have a DBS check).
  + They should be aware of the school’s or setting’s safeguarding procedure in advance of the visit and know what to do if any safeguarding issues are raised.
  + Stop the research if they have any doubts over the child/young person’s comfort or their own comfort.

Specific training for the researcher relating to the population or the research topic, in addition to standard safety and security training for all lone workers (see lone working policy referenced in Edge Health & Safety Policy item 3; please request a copy from the Ethics Administrator).

Debriefing sessions with researchers so that they can raise any concerns.

Offering counselling and/or other appropriate support for researchers beyond the standard employee assistance service. For example, reflective practice sessions may be useful for some research staff members. This gives individuals the opportunity to reflect on their work and identify ways to improve.

Seeking permission from the researcher before putting them on the project team for particularly sensitive topics, making clear that they have the right to decline working on the project without having to give a reason and without consequence.

Providing a work mobile and/or personal protection alarm.

Costing for taxis where walking or public transport may not be safe.

Where appropriate, the Project Lead should discuss with the funding body the potential risks to researchers and negotiate the implementation of any processes that minimise these. Conversations should also take place with researchers involved to ensure that they are satisfied with any processes that are put in place and have the opportunity to raise any concerns. Where projects are considered to have a high risk of adverse effects on researchers, there should be onus on the Project Lead to actively consult and seek feedback from researchers.

## Skills and development

Edge will ensure that all researchers receive appropriate training to enable them to understand their ethical responsibilities, be able to follow the appropriate processes and make judgements about any arising situations which ensure that ethical obligations are met.

# Obligations to funding bodies

Different funding bodies will, as part of tendering opportunities, lay out the ethical guidelines with which they expect prospective suppliers to be able to demonstrate they comply with. Edge research staff will ensure that they provide an accurate summary of their ethical policies and show how these policies meet or potentially surpass their requirements. Where funding bodies do not explicitly request this information, the ethical implications of a study should be considered as part of the bidding preparation and information included where most appropriate (depending on tender specifications).

As part of this, Edge should ensure that the proposals they submit (and work subsequently carried out) for funding bodies are based on the best methodological design possible; involving the best use of funds and providing funding bodies with the strongest possible data and analysis. Considerations for this include:

All potential risks and mitigation identified for a prospective study include issues relating to ethical obligations to participants, Edge researchers and funding bodies.

Experience levels of Edge researchers included in the team are appropriate to the ability to deliver tasks.

Consistent and transparent communication is maintained with funding bodies throughout and any changes to proposed research design, research team or timelines are discussed and agreed in advance.

Quality assurance processes are adopted throughout the length of a study, including plagiarism checks of reports and any written material submitted to funding bodies.

Reporting of work is transparent and robust and meets the needs of the audience(s) in terms of accessibility and legibility.

# Collaborative and commissioned research projects

Edge often conduct research in collaboration with different research institutions. There are different types of collaborative projects: some projects are led by the research team of Edge, others are led by collaborative partners. If collaborative research is conducted, each institution should get ethical approval from their own ethics committee before data collection starts. Ethical considerations should be discussed jointly and all above points followed.

When a research project is commissioned by the Edge Foundation, the commissioned research institute is responsible for the ethical review and that the research is conducted in an ethically acceptable manner. The commissioned research team should inform Edge once the ethical review has been completed.

# Obligations to society

Edge researchers should ensure that they consider the wider ethical implications for their work in terms of society. This ensures that all work is fulfilling the Edge commitment to Integrity, one of its core values. As part of this Edge will ensure that our work:

Meets scientific standards for high quality research. Edge work can inform policy decisions and is therefore obligated to provide evidence, data and analysis which provides robust foundations for these decisions

Has practical value – with a clear and meaningful purpose. Where possible Edge should support funding bodies to commission work which is necessary and makes the best use of funds in order to avoid a misuse of resources. This should be considered during the planning and proposal stage and form part of a bidding decision.

Complies with the relevant legislation:

[Human Rights Act (Article 8)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/schedule/1/part/I/chapter/7) (1998).

[Freedom of Information Act](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents) (2000).

[Mental Capacity Act](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents) (2005).

[Statistics and Registration Services Act](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/contents) (2007).

[Data Protection and GDPR](https://www.gov.uk/data-protection)(2018).

Clearly establishes attribution and intellectual property at the outset. Copyright and licensing regulations must be adhered to.

# Resources

## Internal resources

Internal policies can be requested through e-mailing: [ethics@edge.co.uk](mailto:ethics@edge.co.uk)

Edge Data Protection Policy

Edge Health and Safety Policy

Conflict of Interest Policy

Lone working Policy (I need to locate)

Complaints Procedure (I need to locate)

Template consent form and information sheet

## External resources

[British Educational Research Association, Ethical Guidelines](https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024-online) (2024)

[British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Human%20Research%20Ethics.pdf)

[Economic and Social Research Council Research ethics resources](https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/)

[Government Social Research Ethical Assurance for Social and Behavioural Research](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ethical-assurance-guidance-for-social-research-in-government)

[Market Research Society's Code of Conduct](https://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/code-of-conduct)

[Research Ethics in the Real World](https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/research-ethics-in-the-real-world)

[Sage Research Methods, *Ethics of Social Research*](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/34088_Chapter4.pdf)

[Social Research Association ethics resources](https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/Ethics/Research-ethics-guidance/SRA/Ethics/Research-Ethics-Guidance.aspx?hkey=5e809828-fb49-42be-a17e-c95d6cc72da1)

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/safeguarding/safeguarding-adults>

1. ANNEXES
2. Research Ethics Checklist

Edge researchers should familiarise themselves with the research ethics policy in its entirety. In addition, the below research ethics checklist must be completed during the proposal development stage. This checklist has been developed based on the [Government Social Research Ethics Checklist](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988369/GSR_Ethics_Checklist_2021.docx). Upon completion, you will be signposted to specific points that should be considered as well as relevant sections of the research ethics policy; wider Edge policies and available templates and resources as appropriate to support you. These outputs should be referred back to once the project starts, and throughout the project lifespan.

Considering the ethical implications of our work is required for each and every research or evaluation project. However, where a project relates to the questions in red, Project Leads should take extra care and caution to ensure that we are meeting the highest ethical standards possible. This may involve for instance including research ethics as an agenda item at each project meeting with team members or the funding body, putting together a dedicated ethics steering group.

1. **Does the project involve collecting data from participants?**
2. **Is there a risk that certain groups will be excluded from the research?**
3. **Are potential participants aged 16 or under?**
4. **Could the potential participants be considered vulnerable adults?**
5. **Might some of the research questions cover stressful or culturally sensitive subjects?**
6. **Will incentives be offered to participants?**
7. **Will the project involve offsite data collection?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q1) Does the project involve collecting data from participants? If yes consider the following…** | |
| *Proposed methodology:*   * Is the research design appropriate to the groups being interviewed? * Is the level of respondent burden appropriate for the groups of people involved in the research? * How will the research consider the diverse perspectives of people according to their gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and age? |  |
| *Informed consent:*   * What processes are in place to ensure that participants are informed and understand the project, the purpose, the funding body, topics and that their participation is voluntary? * What can you do to ensure that participant agreement is made before the interview is conducted? |  |
| *Data protection:*   * What procedures are in place to ensure adherence to the Data Protection Act and other government data security requirements? * Reporting should not allow the identification of any individual. What checks are in place to ensure that no one can be identified? (for both quantitative and qualitative work) |  |
| *Safety and wellbeing*   * What considerations have been taken to ensure participants' safety and wellbeing? |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q2) Is there a risk that certain groups will be excluded from the research?** | |
| * Might the research, sampling design or data collection method exclude some groups of people? * What steps can be taken to encourage and widen participation? (e.g. travel costs, childcare, varying times and locations of interviews, accessibility of venues, advance letters in different languages etc) * Do you need interviewer assistance such as offering help with the completion or a translator? * Do you need to consult with others so that barriers to participation for certain groups are reduced? * Have the interviewer/researchers demonstrated awareness of equality issues and an ability to work inclusively? * What is our role/responsibility to different stakeholders and research participants around dissemination? * Are there any accessibility or equality issues about how findings are made available or presented? |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q3) Are potential participants aged 16 or under? If yes consider the following…** | |
| *Informed consent:*   * Consent from a parent or legal guardian is required for children aged under 16 to participate in research, what processes are in place to ensure this is done? * How can you ensure that the children are also adequately informed about the work? |  |
| *Chaperones:*   * It is sometimes recommended that an adult accompanies children and young people during an interview. What processes are in place to ensure this is in place when required? * Who is best to accompany the child(ren)? |  |
| *Safety and wellbeing*   * What procedures are in place to ensure interviewers are properly trained and vetted (e.g. DBS check)? * What procedures are in place for disclosure of abuse? * What processes are in place if there is a concern for the safety and wellbeing of the participant or that of others? |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Q4) Could the potential participants be considered to be vulnerable adults? If yes consider the following…**  *A* vulnerable *adult is someone aged 18 or above who may need community care services for reasons like mental health issues, disability, age or illness. They may not be able to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation* | |
| *.Informed consent*   * Are there any groups that might have difficulty giving informed consent themselves? * How can you ensure that participants are adequately informed about the work? * Is consent via gatekeepers required? If so, what processes need to be in place? * What steps can be taken to ensure representativeness, i.e. to ensure that participants are not “hand-picked” by gatekeepers or that there is a minority view promoted? |  |
| *Safety and wellbeing*   * What procedures are in place to ensure interviewers are properly trained and vetted (e.g. DBS check)? * Have the interviewer/researchers demonstrated awareness of equality issues and an ability to work inclusively? * What procedures are in place for disclosure of abuse? * What processes are in place if there is a concern for the safety and wellbeing of the participant or that of others? |  |

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| **Q5) Might some of the research questions cover stressful or culturally sensitive subjects?** | |
| *Participant safety and wellbeing:*   * How will stress and sensitivities be minimised? * How can interview length be kept to the minimum? * Do you need to ensure that there is post-interview support? * What procedures are in place for disclosure of abuse? |  |
| *Researcher wellbeing:*   * What procedures are in place to ensure the wellbeing of the researcher? |  |

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| **Q6) Will incentives be offered to participants?** | |
| * Are incentives appropriate for the research topic and population of interest? * Could this be viewed as a form of coercion or negatively impact the power dynamic between the researcher/funding body and participant? * Are participants engaging in the research as part of their professional or personal time? |  |

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| **Q7) Will the project involve offsite data collection?** | |
| * What procedures are in place to ensure the safety of the researcher? |  |