

Code of practice for conducting research with children and young people

The following guidelines have been put together to ensure that every possible step is taken to protect both the researchers and children and young people from coming to any harm as a result of the Sport Unlimited research that is being conducted. Carrying out research with children and young people as part of the Sport Unlimited project should not be arduous or problematic and should be enjoyable and interesting for all those involved, but by following these simple and straightforward guidelines we can do our best to ensure that everyone will benefit.

For more detailed information and guidance on safer working practice for adults who work with children and young people, visit <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk>

The Research ...

Before conducting your research there are a number of steps that should be taken which will help to shape an ethical research project. The key principles guiding the NSPCC approach to ethics are as follows:

1. **Justifiability** - Firstly, the research that you are conducting should be worthwhile and necessary. Those who propose the research should be able to show that the study will add new knowledge and not simply replicate research that already exists. The value of the new knowledge gained should outweigh the potential disruption and inconvenience caused to those involved in the research.
2. **Informed consent** - those involved in research directly as participants or researchers or indirectly (e.g. as in research on case notes) should understand what the research involves, how it might affect them and be able to give or to withdraw at any time their consent. Consent should be negotiated appropriately with regard to the age and understanding of those involved.
3. **Confidentiality** - the privacy of participants should be respected in all cases except when there are child protection concerns. Further guidance on confidentiality when working with children and young people can be found in Helen Evans (2006) A Review of the Literature on Confidentiality in the Context of Child Protection and the Impact of Confidentiality on Children and Young People Accessing and Receiving Help London : NSPCC
4. **Voluntary participation** - participants in research and children and young people recruited as researchers should be able to take part voluntarily and should not be pressurised, obliged or subject to any coercion.
5. **Avoidance of harm** - research activity should avoid any harm arising from the research towards participants, researchers and those less directly affected. The possibility of harm should be monitored before, during and after the research. Researchers have a responsibility to assist participants who may have been distressed. Researchers should not be exploited nor harmed by research activity.
6. **Mindful of the specific needs and rights of children and young people.** Research should avoid prejudice, stereotyping, excluding and discriminating against children and young people. Age-appropriate research methods should be used that allow children and young people to participate and to express their views.

7. **Integrity** - research should maintain appropriate standards of rigour, quality and integrity of design, implementation and dissemination and should not be biased. Conflicts of interest should be declared. Researchers should have the relevant expertise and training needed to conduct the research.

8. **Governance** - research activity should be well managed. There should be clear procedures for review and monitoring to ensure the quality, validity and ethical compliance of research activity.

1. Protect Yourself ...

- Don't get into a situation where abuse of trust may occur – don't work with family or close friends.
- Declare any conflicts of interest.
- Avoid conduct which would lead others to question your motivation/intentions.
- Do not give personal contact details (e.g. phone numbers, email addresses) to young people.
- Don't put yourself in a vulnerable situation.
- Those managing the research sessions should have CRB checks and appropriate training in working with children and young people.
- Researchers should have had some training /expertise in doing research – if not, contact SIRC for guidance.

2. Protect Children and Young People (participants) ...

- Privacy of participants should be respected in all cases except where there are child protection concerns. Confidential information should not be used to humiliate, embarrass or intimidate CYP. However, don't promise to keep secrets.
- If you become aware of a situation where the quality of the sessions being provided is not sufficient, report it to the relevant authority, e.g. PDM, CSP project lead.
- Report any behaviour by colleagues which raises concern.
- Clothing should be appropriate and not provocative, revealing or offensive.
- Only give gifts as part of an agreed reward system and ensure participant selection is fair.
- If worried that a child is being abused, you have a duty to report it to local social care office and responsible person within organisation, e.g. school, club.
- Participants need to understand what the research involves and the impact it may have on them and be able to withdraw at any time. Participation is voluntary and there should be no coercion.
- Research should avoid prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.
- Make the questions and research methods appropriate to the age groups.
- Try to ensure there is a mix of group and individual activities to allow all voices to be heard - remember that not all children are confident at speaking in front of a large group of people and be sensitive to their needs whilst also trying to capture their experiences.
- If you are video/tape recording for research purposes, take steps to protect the identities of children - if names are recorded, ask for first names only. Also ensure that parental consent has been

obtained before taking photographs/videos (for further information, see guidance for photographers document).

- If conducting one-to-one research, make sure this takes place in a public place and inform parents/guardians of this contact before it takes place.