

# The MRS Code of Conduct Consultation Meeting

19 March 2009

# Introduction

## **Geoff Gosling**

Chair, MRS Market Research Standards Board  
& MRS Council Member

# Incentives

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MRS Deputy Director General

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Deputy Chair, MRS Market Research Standards Board  
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- **B27** Client goods or services, or vouchers to purchase client goods or services, must not be used as incentives.

# Some history...



The FEDMA definition of direct marketing:

*“Direct marketing is a series of marketing strategies, using various delivery techniques designed to provide a received (consumers and companies) with information at a distance. Direct Marketing is not a homogeneous marketing discipline but rather a series of different strategies using different means of approach (e.g. broadcasting, printed press, mail, telephone, on-line services). It is used to **sell products, to deliver information, public announcements, and for sales after service, customer care services** , charity and political appeals.”*

# What does this mean for research?



The ICO clarifies this further in its guidance:

*“...direct marketing, as defined in these Regulations, will apply not just to the offer for sale of goods or services, but also the **promotion of an organisations’ aims and ideals**. This would include a charity or political party making an appeal for funds or support, and, for example, an organisation whose campaign is designed to encourage individuals to write to their MP on a particular matter or to attend a public meeting or rally.”*

- Definition of market research as distinct from marketing
- Agreed with Information Commissioner following introduction of Data Protection Act 1998
- Research does not contain a commercial message nor does it promote the aims and ideals of the client

- Client incentives can encourage participation and can be cost effective but...
- ... do they constitute a commercial message or a promotion?
- What is the ***research purpose*** of providing a client product to a respondent?

# Research with Children

**Barry Ryan**

MRS Standards & Policy Manager

- **B28** Consent of a parent or responsible adult (acting in loco parentis) must be obtained before interviewing a child under 16.
- *Comment: Under special circumstances, permission to waive parental consent may be obtained, but only with the prior approval of the MRS Market Research Standards Board.*

- This rule would require consent from a parent or responsible adult in all locations and using all methodologies.
- Removes limited exemption for 14 and 15 year olds in public places.

- Why should there be a lower standard of consent in a location where children are exposed to greater risks from the hazards of everyday life?
- What is the ***ethical*** underpinning of the current rule?

- **B32** For research **administered using an electronic communications network or service**, Members must ensure that Respondents are asked to give their age before any other personal information is requested. Further, if the age given is under 16, the child must be excluded from giving further personal information until the appropriate consent from a parent or responsible adult has been obtained and verified.

- How do we know who we are interacting with?
- Increasing levels of unrestricted internet access to younger and younger users.
- Rewording to exclude targeted, e.g. B2B, samples?

# Principles and remaining changes

**Barry Ryan**

MRS Standards & Policy Manager

- Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.
- Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.
- Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.
- Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their professional activities.

- Researchers shall respect the rights and well being of all individuals.
- Researchers shall ensure that respondents are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.
- Researchers shall balance the needs of clients, individuals and their professional activities.
- Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgement in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.

- Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.
- Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession .

- **A10** Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that Respondents are not harmed or adversely affected as a result of participating in a research project.
- *Comment: Member should have due regard to sensitive subjects that may be covered in a research project. For example, Members should ensure that Respondents are informed of questions that relate to sensitive subjects and offered the option not to answer.*

- **B15** If there is to be any recording, monitoring or observation during an interview, Respondents must be informed about this both at recruitment and at the beginning of the interview.
- *Comment: This does not include monitoring (listening) to telephone interviews for the purpose of quality control where interviewers have been informed that such monitoring takes place.*

- **B19** A Respondent's right to decline to answer any question must be respected.

- **B21** For telephone and face to face interviews, calls must not be made to a household (local time) before 9am weekdays and Saturdays, 10am Sundays or after 9pm any day, unless by appointment.
- *Comment: The only exception to this is where local rules and customs differ from UK practice.*

- **B36** Members must ensure that completed recruitment questionnaires, incentive and attendance lists, **transmissions or recordings** or any other research information or outputs which identify Respondents are not passed to **or accessed by Clients or other third parties** without the explicit permission of the Respondents; and Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that the **information or outputs are** used only for the purpose agreed at the time of data collection.

Questions?

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