



**MRS Guidelines for Research with Children
and Young People**

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MRS is the world's largest association for people and organisations that provide or use market, social and opinion research, business intelligence and customer insight.



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Introduction

These Guidelines interpret the MRS Code of Conduct (revised 2010) and provide additional best practice advice. Unless otherwise stated, Guidelines are not binding. Rules 20 to 25 of the MRS Code of Conduct contain specific mandatory provisions relating to research with children.

Research is founded upon the willing co-operation of the public and business organisations. It relies on the confidence of those involved that it is conducted honestly, objectively, without unwelcome intrusion and without harm to participants. Its purpose is to collect and analyse information and not to create sales or to influence the opinions of anyone participating.

Under the Code, children are defined as those aged under 16 years. These Guidelines also provide additional best practice for research with young people aged 16 and 17 years. There is no recommended minimum age for research among children but it is expected that researchers will involve very young children directly in research only when this is necessary and appropriate to the particular project.

The intention of the provisions regarding age is to protect potentially vulnerable members of society, whatever the source of their vulnerability, and to strengthen the principle of public trust. These guidelines cover any research directly involving people under the age of 18 whether carried out independently or in conjunction with a parent, guardian, carer or other responsible adult.

Their main aims are:

- To protect the rights of children and young people physically, mentally, ethically and emotionally and to ensure they are not exploited;
- To reassure parents and others concerned with their welfare and safety that research conducted under these guidelines is designed to protect the interests of children and young people;
- To ensure good quality research;
- To promote the professionalism and value of research - among children, young people and the wider public; and
- To protect the researcher and client from accusations of improper behaviour by publishing the necessary good practice required to meet their legal and ethical responsibilities.

Rules from the Code of Conduct applicable in each section of this document are stated in bold. These rules are binding on MRS members and breaches may result in disciplinary action. The guidance that follows the rules provides interpretation and additional best practice. Members are reminded that this document is designed to compliment the MRS Code of Conduct and should not be consulted in isolation.

As specified in the Code, it is the responsibility of the researcher to keep abreast of any legislation which could affect research among children and young people and to ensure that all those involved in a project are aware of and agree to abide by the MRS Code of Conduct.

This material is provided for information only. It is not legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Specific legal advice should be taken in relation to specific issues.

The Principles of the MRS Code of Conduct

1. Researchers shall ensure that participation in their activities is based on voluntary informed consent.
2. Researchers shall be straightforward and honest in all their professional and business relationships.
3. Researchers shall be transparent as to the subject and purpose of data collection.
4. Researchers shall respect the confidentiality of information collected in their professional activities.
5. Researchers shall respect the rights and well being of all individuals.
6. Researchers shall ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities.
7. Researchers shall balance the needs of individuals, clients, and their professional activities.
8. Researchers shall exercise independent professional judgement in the design, conduct and reporting of their professional activities.
9. Researchers shall ensure that their professional activities are conducted by persons with appropriate training, qualifications and experience.
10. Researchers shall protect the reputation and integrity of the profession.

Definitions

Children and young people:

The MRS Code of Conduct defines a child as a person under the age of 16. Where the term young people is used in these guidelines it refers to those aged 16 and 17 years. Where the term adult is used, it refers to someone aged 18 or over.

Informed consent:

Informed consent is a process by which a participant voluntarily confirms his or her willingness to take part in a particular project, after having been informed of all aspects of the project that are relevant to their decision to participate.

Permission:

This is the permission given by the responsible adult to the interviewer which allows the interviewer to invite the child/young person to participate in a project. It is not permission to interview the child/young person, as the child/young person must have their own opportunity to choose to take part in the research.

Clearly there may be circumstances in which it's necessary for an interviewer to approach a child or young person in order to establish age before going through the appropriate consent procedure. These approaches should only be made where an interviewer has good reason to believe that the child or young person is old enough to be interviewed without consent, ie aged 16 or over. In all cases, the appropriate consent procedure must be followed before the child or young person can be taken through the interview itself.

Online Research:

Online Research is defined as research in which a participant, either on a single occasion or as part of a panel, is involved in any of the following:

- Completing research documentation (e.g. survey, diary, questionnaires etc) online via any internet connected device;
- Downloading research documentation from a server on the internet and returning it by email;
- Receiving research documentation incorporated into an email and returning it in the same way;
- Participating in an online qualitative interview or discussion;

- A measurement system which tracks web usage;
- Participating in an online message board;

Online research also includes:

- Collecting information from a social networking service;
- Any other collection of personal data in the online environment for the purpose of research.

Responsible adult:

This is an adult who has personal accountability for the well-being of a child at the time of the research. In a protected environment, like a school, the responsible adult will be the person in authority or overseeing the location who has responsibility for the protection of the child/young person. In any other environment - like the street or in home - a responsible adult will be a parent, guardian or other person on whom a parent or guardian has conferred responsibility for the child/young person (e.g. a relative, child-minder, au pair or neighbour). It is not an individual who has a limited or specific responsibility such as a lifeguard, instructor or employer.

Definitions from the MRS Code of Conduct

Client:

Client includes any individual, organisation, department or division, including any belonging to the same organisation as the member, which is responsible for commissioning or applying the results from a research project.

Data Collection Process:

A data collection process is any process used to obtain information from or about participants. It includes, but is not limited to, interviews, questionnaires, discussion guides, and stimulus materials, as well as passive data collection.

Identity:

The identity of a participant includes, as well as their name and/or address, any other information which offers a reasonable likelihood that they can be identified by any person or organisation who has access to the information.

[Comment: this also includes images of images of the participant]

Incentive:

Any benefit offered to participants to encourage participation in a project.

Research:

Research is the collection and analysis of data from a sample or census of individuals or organisations relating to their characteristics, behaviour, attitudes, opinions or possessions. It includes all forms of market, opinion and social research such as consumer and industrial surveys, psychological investigations, qualitative interviews and group discussions, observational, ethnographic, and panel studies.

Participant:

A participant is any individual or organisation from or about whom data are collected or who is approached for interview.

Guidelines

1: Permission

A: Where permission is required

The Rules

20. Members must ensure that permission of a responsible adult is obtained and verified before a child participates in a research project.

Comment: A responsible adult is an individual who has personal accountability for the well-being of a child, for example, a parent, guardian, teacher, nanny or grandparent. It is not an individual who has a limited or specific responsibility such as a lifeguard, instructor or employer.

Under special circumstances, permission to waive the requirement for permission of a responsible adult may be obtained, but only with the prior approval of the MRS Market Research Standards Board.

Guidance

1. Where research is being conducted in schools with the permission of teachers, headteachers or governors (as responsible adults acting in loco parentis), researchers should suggest to the school that consent is also sought from parents or guardians for in-school interviews. Where permission is sought for some interviews in a school, it should normally be sought for all interviews, including those with young people.
2. Further to the comment on rule 20, there may be occasions when obtaining permission for research into sensitive subjects would, for example, cause potential harm to the child or young person (e.g. researching the use of confidential helplines). In these cases – and in social research where there may be valid reasons to conduct interviews without permission – the requirement for permission may be waived but only with the explicit prior approval of the MRS Market Research Standards Board.
3. Researchers seeking to waive the requirements for permission of a responsible adult must make a written application to the MRS Market Research Standards Board containing:

- a. A written statement outlining the ethical reasons why a waiver is required (e.g. why this research need to be done, what harm or adverse consequences could be caused by asking for permission, etc.)
 - b. A copy of the questionnaire, discussion guide or other data collection instrument to be used.
 - c. Any stimulus material, show cards, etc that form part of the data collection process.
4. The MRS Market Research Standards Board may:
 - a. refuse to grant a waiver
 - b. grant an unconditional waiver
 - c. grant a waiver subject to amendment of the methodology of materials.
5. Repeat or tracker projects must obtain a new waiver on each occasion they are run.

B: Obtaining permission and providing the necessary information

The Rules

- 21. Where the permission of a responsible adult is required, members must ensure that the responsible adult is given sufficient information about the project to enable them to make an informed decision.**
- 22. Members must ensure that the identity of the responsible adult giving permission is recorded by name, and relationship or role.**
- 23. Where it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that participants may include children, members must ensure participants are asked to confirm 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 permission from a responsible adult has been obtained and verified.**
- 24. In all cases, members must ensure that a child has an opportunity to decline to take part, even though a responsible adult has given permission for their participation. This remains the case if a project takes place in school.**

Guidance

1. Permission of a parent or responsible adult must be obtained in a form that is verifiable. Traditionally, researchers have accepted verbal permission in telephone and face-to-face contexts and the signature of parents for postal and self-completion questionnaires. Email communications on their own are considered insecure and must not be accepted as a verifiable form of permission in isolation and so must be supplemented by a second form of permission, for example, a telephone call or a letter.
2. In accordance with rule 21, parents or responsible adults must also be fully informed about any products or stimulus material which the child may be asked to try or use.
3. If there is a research reason for the subject matter to be disguised, where possible a list of subjects, including that for the research, should be shown to the responsible adult in advance so that they receive a further opportunity to opt out.

4. In accordance with rule 24, the opportunity to opt out of the research must be made clear to the child and to the responsible adult. It is important that both fully understand that they are not obliged to take part and this includes their right to withhold answering a specific question or element.
5. In addition, when research takes place in schools or in other contexts where participation in activities is mandatory (e.g. scout or guide groups) the right of individual children/young people to opt out must be emphasised by the interviewer.
6. The possibility of back-checking with the child for quality validation and whether a re-contact question will be asked of the child must be confirmed with the parent or responsible adult at the time consent is sought.

2: Subject Matter

Care must be taken if the subject is contentious, disturbing or in any way in advance of what the child/young person may be expected to know or understand. It is imperative to avoid certain subjects when interviewing younger children (e.g. a topic that might frighten or distress the child), though the same subject might quite safely be covered with an older child/young person. This is a question of good research practice as much as ethics.

The Rules

- 5. Members must not act in a way which might bring discredit on the profession, MRS or its members.**
- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**
- 26. Members must ensure that the anonymity of participants is preserved unless participants have given their informed consent for their details to be revealed or for attributable comments to be passed on.**

Guidance

1. Special care is needed when interviewing children and young people about:
 - issues which could upset or worry the child (e.g. his or her relationships with other children, his or her experiences at school (if unfavourable))
 - issues which risk creating tension between the child and their parents and /or carers
 - issues relating to potentially sensitive family situations (e.g. parental relationships, income, use of alcohol or drugs within the household, family illness)
 - issues relating to racial, religious and similar socially or politically sensitive matters
 - issues concerned with sexual activities
 - issues relating to their own experiences or worries about alcohol or drugs
 - issues relating to illegal or otherwise socially unacceptable activities

2. If there is a valid or important reason for covering any of these sensitive subjects in a research project, it is essential both that a full explanation is given to the responsible adult and their permission obtained; and also that steps are taken to ensure that the child/young person is not worried, confused or misled by the questioning. (See Consent A2 for exceptions).
3. Social, economic or demographic information based on Chief Income Earner or Head of Household should be obtained from the responsible adult at the time consent is obtained.
4. In accordance with Rules 5, 6 and 26, sensitive subject matter is unsuitable for the conduct of research in public places where confidentiality cannot be assured. This means that research and stimulus material, and a participant's responses must not be overheard or seen by third parties.

5. Examples of research prohibited by Rule 6 are:

- Research carried out on behalf of manufacturers or providers of products or services, or for promoters or lobbyists for products or services, which are illegal for the age group involved in the research (e.g. buying alcohol for under 18s or gambling for under 16s).

The only exception to this is when research needs to be conducted to ensure products or services are not manufactured or marketed in such a way that encourages under age use or consumption. In each case research may only be conducted with children with the explicit and prior approval of the MRS Market Research Standards Board.

- Research which encourages, or appears to encourage, illegal behaviour such as under age drinking or gambling.

6. Where the research involves the testing of any products, special care should be taken to check that:

- These are safe to consume (e.g. foods, confectionery) or to handle (e.g. toys). The researcher must confirm this with the supplier even though the latter may be legally liable for any adverse effects caused by the product
- The child or young person does not suffer from any relevant allergy (e.g. to products containing nuts or certain e numbers) and that parents are

advised of allergens contained in the product. 14 allergens are required by law to be specified on food packaging, if present.

- There are no ethnic, religious or cultural barriers to the child or young person consuming or handling the product
- The child or young person is not asked to test a product which is illegal for the age group

3: Interviewing

A: The data collection process

The Rules

25. Members must ensure that information about other individuals is not collected from a child unless for the purposes of gaining permission from a responsible adult.

33. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure all of the following:

- a. that data collection processes are fit for purpose and clients have been advised accordingly;**
- b. that the design and content of data collection processes are appropriate for the audience being researched;**
- c. that participants are able to provide information in a way that reflects the view they want to express, including don't know/ prefer not to say where appropriate;**
- d. that participants are not led towards a particular point of view;**
- e. that responses are capable of being interpreted in an unambiguous way; and**
- f. that personal data collected are relevant and not excessive.**

Guidance

1. In accordance with rule 25, the data collection must avoid classification questions that are unnecessarily intrusive or are difficult for the child or young person to answer. Where consent is being sought, it may be preferable for some classification questions to be asked of the parent or responsible adult, rather than the child or young person.
2. The content and language of the project should be sensitive to the language, needs and feelings of the age group to be interviewed and their capabilities. The language of the project should be kept as simple as possible and not be patronising.
3. The research should avoid questions which might result in a child or young person making unreasonable demands on a parent or guardian

B. The interview

6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.

36. Members must ensure that a participant's right to withdraw from a project at any stage is respected.

Guidance

1. It is not normally necessary for the responsible adult to be present during the interview. Where their presence would be undesirable for technical reasons - e.g. if it could introduce bias - this should be explained and consent sought to interview the child alone.
2. Further to rule 36, the child/young person must be reminded of their right to withhold answers to particular questions.
3. In accordance with 6, any disclosure of a confidential nature which may be potentially harmful to the child or young person must be dealt with in a sensitive and responsible manner.
4. Where a child discloses that they have been harmed or that they are at risk of abuse, or the interviewer suspects this is the case, the interviewer in the first instance should report this to their supervisor or a member or members of the research team designated for this purpose. If they are satisfied that there is genuine harm or risk of harm, researchers may:
 - a. offer the child information on where to obtain assistance or help
 - b. contact police or social services in cases where the child is unable, through lack of capacity or other circumstances, to seek help,
5. Further to rule 6, care must be taken to avoid any physical contact with the child/young person.
6. It is recommended that an explanatory leaflet be provided to all participants under the age of 18, providing information about the following:
 - a. The subject and purpose the project,

- b. The identity of the interviewer
- c. the research organisation responsible
- d. who to contact for further information, and
- e. an assurance that the interview was conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct

C: Research venues

The Rules

- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**

Guidance

1. Research must only be conducted in safe and appropriate environments.
2. If the research is conducted in the client's domain, the client must take responsibility for providing a safe and appropriate venue.
3. It is advisable for research carried out in the home of the child/young person, either in person or by telephone, or online, that an adult remains on the premises - though not necessarily in the same room - throughout the interview. Interviewers should advise parents or responsible adults of this at the time they seek consent for the interview to take place.

D. Incentives and rewards

The Rules

- 5. Members must not act in a way which might bring discredit on the profession, MRS or its members.**
- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**
- 21. Where the permission of a responsible adult is required, members must ensure that the responsible adult is given sufficient information about the project to enable them to make an informed decision.**
- 12. Members must ensure that research purposes are clearly distinguished from direct marketing.**

Comment: Client materials, advertisements, products and services may legitimately be the subject matter of a research project. The following practices however fall within the scope of direct marketing:

- a. The offering of client goods or services, or vouchers to purchase client goods or services as an incentive, reward or expression of thanks;***
- b. The use of promotional language in describing clients in invitations or introductions to projects;***
- c. The offering of materials to participants which promote clients or their products and services at the conclusion of a project.***

Members may provide information about a client's products or services where it is necessary to avoid adversely affecting a participant. For example, where a sensitive subject has been discussed, members may provide information on relevant help lines operated by a client.

- 13. Members must ensure that client goods or services, or vouchers to purchase client goods or services, are not used as incentives in a research project.**

Guidance

1. In accordance with 21, parents or responsible adults must be informed of the nature and value of incentives at the time consent is being sought.
2. Any incentives provided by the client or researcher should follow the same rules as those for products to be tested (see Subject Matter 4 above) - i.e. they should be safe, legal and acceptable to responsible adults.
3. Any refreshments provided should be suitable and legal for the age group and care should be taken to avoid any products that are known to cause allergic problems.
4. Where incentives are used they should be suitable and acceptable for the age of the child/young person and fitting for the task required. Sweets or other high fat, salt and sugar content food stuffs should be avoided.
5. Researchers should take reasonable precautions to ensure that vouchers are not used to buy age inappropriate products, although final responsibility rests with the vendor. This can be done by restricting the voucher to a particular store.

4: Qualitative research

The Rules

- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**
- 7. Members must ensure that participants are provided with sufficient information to allow informed consent to be given. This includes:**
 - a. the name of the organisation or individual responsible for data collection;**
 - b. the general subject of the data collection;**
 - c. the purpose of the data collection;**
 - d. whether the data collection is to be recorded and/or observed;**
 - e. who is likely to have access to live or recorded information;**
 - f. the likely length in minutes of the data collection, if asked;**
 - g. any costs likely to be incurred by the participant; and**
 - h. an assurance that the activity is being conducted in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct.**

Guidance

1. Parents or responsible adults providing permission must be informed of any recording, monitoring or observation of the interview.
2. Once permission has been given, the child or young person can be asked the recruitment screening questions. With young children or where recruitment questions may be difficult for the child or young person to answer, it is recommended that the recruitment screening process is conducted with the responsible adult, rather than the child.
3. The researcher should take responsibility for ensuring that a child has arrangements to get home or be collected by a responsible adult. Researchers or

other appropriate persons should remain at a venue until all children have been collected/have left.

4. The researcher should ensure that the responsible adult has full details of the research venue, name of moderator, finishing time, etc.
5. Any observation should be kept to a minimum and handled appropriately.
6. In accordance with rule 6, stimulus material must be safe and appropriate for the age of children/young people involved.

5: Online research

The Rules

- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**

- 21. Where the permission of a responsible adult is required, members must ensure that the responsible adult is given sufficient information about the project to enable them to make an informed decision.**

- 23. Where it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that participants may include children, members must ensure participants are asked to confirm 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 permission from a responsible adult has been obtained and verified.**

- 25. Members must ensure that information about other individuals is not collected from a child unless for the purposes of gaining permission from a responsible adult.**

Guidance

1. Recognising the particular difficulties of ensuring consent in online research, further to 23 consent must be obtained in a form that is verifiable. Email communications on their own are considered insecure and must not be accepted as a verifiable form of consent in isolation and so must be supplemented by a second form of consent, for example a telephone call or a letter. Where researchers have a pre-existing relationship with parents (e.g. they are current panel members) it may be possible to verify consent electronically through the use of passwords, exchange of tokens, etc.

2. Further to rule 6, researchers must provide advice of any costs likely to be incurred by participation. This may be a particular problem in the case of research using mobile phones where children may not have unlimited data plans or where significant charges may be incurred if data roaming is used overseas.

3. Further to rule 21, a notice to a parent or responsible adult, seeking their consent for their child to be asked to participate in the research, must be posted on the website or emailed to a parent. This notice should include:
 - a. A heading explaining that this is a notice for parents/responsible adults
 - b. Name and contact details of the researcher/organisation conducting the research.
 - c. The nature of the data to be collected from the child.
 - d. An explanation of how the data will be used.
 - e. An explanation of the reasons the child has been asked to participate and the likely benefits.
 - f. A description of the procedure for giving and verifying consent.
 - g. A request for a parent's or responsible adult's contact address or phone number for verification of consent.
4. Prior parental consent will not be required to:
 1. Collect a child or parent/responsible adult's address or email address solely to provide notice of data collection and request consent.
 2. Collect a child's age for screening and exclusion purposes.
5. In accordance with the principle of voluntary informed participation, information identifying children must not be collected from forums, social networking sites, blogs, etc. without their consent and without obtaining the consent of a parent or responsible adult.
6. Where a researcher joins a social network or forum, they must declare their presence, their role as a researcher, the identity of the organization they work for, what information they intend to collect, what it will be used for and who will have access to it. It is not acceptable for a researcher to pose as a child, to lurk on networks or forums, or to passively collect data without prior consent.
7. Where researchers are responsible for the design and administration of sites or forums used by child participants, they should incorporate the "Click CEOP" Internet Advice button to allow children to obtain advice from, and report bullying or inappropriate behaviour to, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre.

8. Researchers should exercise particular care when they use apparently anonymous verbatim quotes obtained online in reported results or in presentations to clients or third parties. Verbatim quotes may be attributed to identifiable participants through the use of search engines to reveal their original source. Researchers should take steps to check that quotes used in reports, etc., cannot be identified in this way.

6. Self-completion postal/paper research

The Rules

23. Where it is known (or ought reasonably to be known) that participants may include children, members must ensure participants are asked to confirm 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 permission from a responsible adult has been obtained and verified.

Guidance

1. Where the age of the participant is not known but it is known that some are likely to be under 16, all questionnaires should carry a notice explaining that permission is required for completion by children and include an explanation of the subject matter and nature of the research and details of the researcher undertaking it, with contact information.
2. There should be space on the questionnaire for the responsible adult to sign that they have given their permission for the child to complete the questionnaire. Where self-completion questionnaires are administered to a large number of children at the same time, for example in a classroom environment, the responsible adult may sign a permission form rather than each individual questionnaire.
3. Postal packages should not contain sharp or potentially harmful objects.

7. Criminal Record Checks

The Rules

- 5. Members must not act in a way which might bring discredit on the profession, MRS or its members.**
- 6. Members must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by the member's professional activities.**

Guidance

1. Interviewers who will have contact with children in certain circumstances may be required to register with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme in Scotland or submit to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check. It is not necessary for all researchers to apply for a DBS check and this will only be necessary in certain circumstances where there is prolonged or regular contact with children and young people.
2. Anyone may obtain a copy of their own Basic D, which lists unspent criminal convictions, at any time via Disclosure Scotland.
3. Until 2009 Standard and Enhanced DBS checks were frequently asked and granted where researchers worked with children. A change in the law at the end of 2009 restricted the availability of Standards and Enhanced Checks to very limited set of circumstances. A list of disclosure categories is available from the DBS website.
4. Registration with the Scottish PVG Scheme is required (and Standard and Enhanced DBS checks are available) in the following circumstances:
 - a. The job is of a specified nature such as teaching, instructing, supervising, caring for or providing children/vulnerable adults with guidance or treatment , moderating an online service for children or (in Scotland only) involves unsupervised contact with children.

OR

 - b. The job takes place in a specified location such as:

- schools (educational institutions exclusively or mainly for the provision of full-time education to under-18s)
- children's homes
- childcare premises (including nurseries)
- pupil referral units
- children's hospitals (hospitals exclusively or mainly for the reception and treatment of children)
- institutions exclusively or mainly for the detention of children
- children's centres in England, and
- adult care homes in England and Wales and residential care or nursing homes in Northern Ireland

AND

- c. it occurs frequently (once a week or more) intensively (four times a month or more) or overnight (2am to 6am) with the same children or in the same location.

5. Full details of the PVG and the DBS disclosure categories are available from:

http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/pvg/pvg_index.html

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

8: Non-research projects

The Rules:

15. Members must ensure that non-research or mixed-purpose projects are conducted in accordance with the separate MRS Regulations *Using Research Techniques for Non-Research Purposes*.

Guidance

1. Members and MRS Company Partner employees must be honest with and not mislead participants when they are being asked to participate in a non-research project. The technique used to collect the data and purpose for which the data will be used must be clearly differentiated in any description of a non-research project (“e.g. This questionnaire will gather information to be used to tell you about our products and services”).
2. Members/Company Partners should pay particular attention to the following:
 - a. The wording of fair processing notices used to collect information for client databases to be used as sample
 - b. Preambles describing the exercise (e.g. questionnaire introductions) clearly state all purposes for which the data are to be used.
 - c. When familiar research brands are being used that the material reinforces that the exercise is not a research exercise.
 - d. The content of materials used during data collection e.g. stimulus materials
 - e. Any resulting outputs from the exercise (e.g. press releases) must clearly define the purpose(s) for which data were collected
 - f. Opt outs from contact that have previously been offered to prospective participants or applicable exclusion lists such as the Telephone Preference Service.
 - g. The consequences of the exercise e.g. if agreeing to receive promotional materials that their details will be passed to the client, etc.
3. Examples of non-research exercises include:

a. **Using co-creation to generate video footage for an advertising campaign**

A charity asks as a researcher to help it develop a new ad campaign targeting potential donors aged 16-24. The researcher engages with a group of video bloggers to generate insights and **to produce videos to be used in a marketing campaign**. The participants/participants would have to be clearly informed of this use at the time of the project. Additional releases for reasons of copyright would also be required.

4. Children (i.e. those under the age of 16) should not be employed and directly or indirectly paid or paid-in-kind to actively promote brands, products, goods, services, causes or ideas to their peers, associates or friends.

Notes



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