

MRS MARKET RESEARCH STANDARDS BOARD STATEMENT

In July 2017 MRS received a complaint about an Employee Engagement Survey run by Capita Surveys and Research (CSR), a MRS Company Partner.

The staff being surveyed were assured that all responses were confidential and not identifiable. However, a new member of their client's staff added a reply paid envelope to a number of the questionnaires for the employees to return direct to their employer, possibly allowing the employee's employer to identify individual responses.

MRSB agreed that data protection law demands that personal data should be fairly and lawfully processed, which includes obtaining individuals consent for data to be passed on in a form which allows them to be personally identified.

Accordingly, MRSB found that the policies and processes of CSR in the management of research material containing personal data did not conform to national legislation (the Data Protection Act 1998) in breach of rule 1 of the MRS Code of Conduct. Further, MRSB found that CSR did not take reasonable steps to ensure that others do not breach or cause of a breach of the Code, in breach of rule 4 of the MRS Code of Conduct. MRSB also found that CSR did not take reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not harmed or adversely affected by their professional activities, in breach of rule 6 of the MRS Code of Conduct. Finally, MRSB found that CSR did not ensure that the anonymity of participants is preserved in breach of rule 26 of the MRS Code of Conduct.

MRSB concluded that it was appropriate that CSR were formally advised of the breach in accordance with paragraph 32 (c) (i) of the MRS Company Partner Complaints Procedure with a requirement to take corrective action with regard to the processes that resulted in the breach in this case.