Checklist for Ethics Reviewers

This checklist is designed to help you to consider all aspects of the research ethics application that you are reviewing, and should address most of the concerns that might come up. However, please remember this is not exhaustive, and each application will raise its own questions.

Summary of the Research

? Is there likely to be a worthwhile outcome? (the purpose is not to conduct a methodological review, but research should be of sufficient merit to justify the time and effort contributed by participants, as well as the researcher(s))

? Do the potential benefits of the research balance against the potential risks to participants?

About the Participants

? How will permission or access to participants be obtained? Are the gatekeepers involved identified / on board?

? What are the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participants? Are these appropriate?

? How will informed consent be obtained? Is the method appropriate? Can the researcher be sure that participants can give informed consent that is free from coercion? (Informed consent is not necessarily required in all cases, but if it is not to be gained there must be a very good reason)

? What is the potential for harm to participants – pain, discomfort, stress? (almost all research involving participants will have some potential for physical or psychological harm, and the risks should be acknowledged) How will this be minimised/addressed/managed? Are these measures adequate?

? Have any potential risks to individuals or groups who may be affected by or come into contact with the research been considered (eg. family members of participants, or the wider community)? How will these risks be managed?

? Are there at least two routes for anyone involved in or coming into contact with the research activities to report safeguarding concerns or incidents? (with at least one route that is independent of the research team)

? Is the researcher likely to uncover any issues unrelated to the research? (e.g. illegal activity, illness or disease, abuse, etc.) How will the researcher handle such an eventuality?

? Are participants able to withdraw from the research, and how will this be done?

? Are participants potentially vulnerable or vulnerable? Are the implications of this addressed appropriately?

About the Data

? What measures have been taken to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and security of personal information concerning research participants? Are these appropriate to the research? Are these realistic?

? Who will have access to the data and how will they be stored?

? How long will data/recordings/samples be held? Does this take account of any intended future use? Will personal data be permanently deleted / destroyed when they are no longer required?

? Are there any implications for the General Data Protection Regulations?

Supporting Documentation

? Are all of the relevant supporting documents included? (e.g. information sheets, consent forms, interview schedules, questionnaires, data management plan) - there may need to be different versions for different groups / interview methods, etc.

? Are materials for participants clear and free from technical terms, jargon and abbreviations as far as possible?

? Are the materials appropriate for the intended audience (e.g. children)?

? Is it clear to participants who will have access to their data and in what form (anonymous/confidential/ aggregated)?

? Are participants able to withdraw their data from the research? How do they do this? At what stage would it no longer be possible for the participants to withdraw?

? Will participants understand what is being asked of them and what they are contributing to?

? Is it clear to participants what the data will be used for, and the legal basis that is being relied upon for this (under GDPR)?

? Is it clear to participants how long the data will be kept, and/or any potential future uses (in what form e.g. anonymous)?
Is it clear to the participants how the data will be managed and which organisation will be the Data Controller?

Is it clear to the participants how to complain (about the research in general, or about how their personal data has been handled) if they wish to do so?

Is it clear to the participants how they can report any safeguarding concerns or incidents (that includes at least two routes, one being independent of the research team) and how those concerns or incidents will be dealt with, that takes into account the local context?

Is it clear to the participants who is leading the research and how to get in contact with them?

Are supporting document(s) provided that will help to ensure that non-participants coming into contact with the research activities know how to report a safeguarding concern or incident?

General considerations:

Is there enough detail in the application?

Are the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants considered?

Is there an appropriate Designated Safeguarding Contact(s) named? (This would usually be someone from within the research team, but a Contact may also be based within another organisation if it is a partnership project, particularly if overseas)

Is there an appropriate process for the handling and escalation of safeguarding concerns or incidents, (if the research is collaborative, is there an agreement between parties regarding how this will be managed)?

Will the researcher be safe? Is there a procedure in place for risks to the researcher?

Does the research have any implications for the reputation of the University?

Is the researcher suitable? Do they have the necessary skills? Are there any conflicts of interest?

Are there any obvious gaps, ambiguities or uncertainties in how the research will be carried out?