



Child protection policy and a code of Ethics for people working with children and young people



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INTRODUCTION

Introducing the Code

A Code of Ethics describes the standards of practice expected of the group of people to whom it refers. It is to provide participants with advice and guidelines on dealing with the ethical aspects of this project. The project must comply with ethical principles and conditions aiming to the participants' privacy and personal identity protection and ensuring data quality and confidentiality. Participants are expected to commit themselves to meeting the needs required, and not to exploit their positions of power.

Ethics in European Commission's granted projects are considered to be an integral component. Specifically in this project it must be ensured that all the documents delivered and all the activities implemented with children and young people are in line with the standards set out in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and comply with applicable international, EU and national law. The relevant references will be the UNCRC, the UNICEF Guide on Children's Rights and Journalism, and the Horizon2020 guidelines on how to complete your ethics self-assessment and the Directive 95/46 /EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data.

The aim of the project is the creation of an online educational toolkit for awareness raising on gender stereotypes and prevention against sexual violence and harassment. Among the actions used for implementing this aim is the involvement of youngsters as peer consultants to provide input and feedback. Through these actions it is considered that it will occur a deeper respect on women's rights and a behavioural change of young people in the field of sexual violence, harassment and gender stereotyping. Taking in mind that children are the primary target group on FIRST project, we have to protect their values, rights and interests.



Ethical Principles for People Working with Children and Young People

- Value and respect each child or young person as an individual in his/her own right, in his/her role as a member of his/her family, and in his/her role as a member of the community s/he lives in;
- Respect the relationship of the child or young person to his/her parents, his/her siblings, other members of his/her family and other significant persons, taking account of his/her natural ties and interdependent rights and responsibilities;
- Help each child or young person for whom he or she bears responsibility by preventing problems where possible, by offering protection where necessary, and by providing care and rehabilitation to counteract or resolve the problems faced;
- Use information appropriately, respecting the privacy of children and young people, maintaining confidentiality where necessary, respecting the right of children and young people to be informed of matters concerning themselves, and avoiding the misuse of personal information;
- Oppose at all times any form of discrimination, oppression or exploitation of children and young people, and preserve their rights;
- Maintain personal and professional integrity, develop skills and knowledge in order to work with competence, work co-operatively with colleagues, monitor the quality of services, and contribute to the development of the service and of policy and thinking in the field of childcare.

Responsibility for Self:

1. To maintain and improve professional competence

- to develop and utilise their skills, knowledge and experience as fully as possible.
- to undertake training and educational programmes in order to remain up to date on professional issues and relevant legislation, to re-examine attitudes and to renew motivation.



- to accept supervision, counselling and career appraisals, in order to ensure ongoing competent service.

2. To maintain standards

- to maintain high personal standards of professional conduct, avoiding any acts which may bring the profession or organization into disrepute or which may diminish the trust or confidence of the public.
- to pursue a commitment to quality in services offered and in interpersonal relationships on an ongoing basis.
- to recognise how personal values, opinions, experiences and biases can affect personal judgement.
- to present attitudes and a personal manner which will not give unnecessary offence to service users or colleagues, and to maintain an appropriate personal appearance.
- to behave reliably, for example by being punctual, fulfilling obligations and maintaining expectations of communication.
- to maintain appropriate boundaries between personal and professional relationships.
- to avoid placing oneself in positions where one is open to face allegations about misconduct.
- to acknowledge limitations in knowledge and competence, and to decline any duties or responsibilities if unable to perform them in a safe and skilled manner.
- to seek advice as necessary.
- to follow conscience where it is felt that to do otherwise would be wrong and to report to a responsible person any conscientious objection which may affect professional practice.
- to ensure that professional practice is not influenced by commercial considerations.

3. To maintain physical and emotional well-being

- to be self-aware in relation to values and their implications for practice.
- to maintain an approach to work which is balanced, optimistic, patient, mature, self-controlled and constant in coping with failure.
- to avoid using drugs or alcohol prior to or during work.
- to maintain standards of safety through the use of appropriate equipment, clothing and procedures.

Responsibility to Children, Young People and their Families:

1. To promote the rights of children and young people

- to recognise, respect and advocate for the rights of children, young people and their families in relation to them both as individuals and as groups of service users.



- to involve children and young people and their families in decision-making affecting their lives.
- to enable children and young people to learn to play a role as adult citizens.
- to give priority to meeting the needs and well-being of children, young people and their families in devising and monitoring programmes.
- to act as advocate in their best interests.
- to respect privacy .
- to maintain confidentiality concerning information obtained in the course of professional services, and make disclosures only with their consent.

2. To promote the welfare of children and young people as individual persons

- to develop positive and empowering relationships with children and young people within appropriate professional boundaries.
- to foster the development of children and young people in order to achieve their full individual potential.
- to take account of the individual circumstances and needs of children and young people to meet their psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs.
- to take account of the developmental stage, understanding, capacity and age of children and young people when designing or providing programmes.
- to assess and meet the needs of each child and young person on an individual basis.
- to create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children’s physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development.

3. To ensure clear boundaries between professional and personal relationships

- to ensure that service users explicitly understand the boundaries between professional and personal relationships.
- to maintain an appropriate professional distance, avoiding dependency relationships.
- to avoid sexual intimacy.
- to avoid non-work friendships with children and young people with whom one is working which are not known to colleagues.
- to avoid language which is inappropriate or which might be misconstrued.
- to respect the physical and emotional privacy of children and young people.

4. To cooperate with others in meeting the needs of children and young people

- to facilitate the participation of significant others in services to meet the needs of children and young people.
- to encourage collaborative participation in sharing responsibility between professionals, children and young people, their families and the wider community.
- to support the families of children and young people in care and to enable them to maintain their family ties.



Ethical Principles for People Working with Children and Young People while conducting Research

Ethical considerations in research with children and young people occur at all stages of the research process. Collected data need to be really focused and relevant to the purposes of the project and must not identify individuals or information. Data privacy and protection issues should comply with relevant EU rules which will be guaranteed by the application of the Directive 95/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. The Directive is available online on:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31995L0046&from=en>

All the Organizations should follow rules on confidentiality and anonymous treatment of all data collected. Furthermore, obtained data must not use in a different context than the one they are collected for.

Personal Data Protection

Personal data means any information, private or professional, which relates to an identified or identifiable natural person. Therefore, personal data, including the views of the participants on the topics discussed must be protected. You may collect and process data only if and insofar as it is really necessary for the project. Collecting personal data that is not essential to your research may moreover expose you to allegations of using data for another reason without additional permission.

Access

In some cases it is not just parents and local authorities who must be approached for clearance. In some cases parents and children will hesitate to participate in the research therefore, it may be necessary to talk more broadly than ‘parental’ consent’ and researchers will need to think about how to work with other authorities.



Access to children and young people has also often to be negotiated with parents and families. Researchers need to consider the ethical issues that arise in relation to access both being granted and denied. If parents give their approval for research to be carried out with their children, researchers need to ascertain whether the children themselves have been consulted about their involvement. Similarly, if a few parents do not give permission for their children to participate in research being carried out in a classroom context, when the majority of children are participating, researchers need to consider how they will manage this sensitive situation: such children may have wished to participate and may, consequently, feel excluded.

While researchers will need to be guided by the requirements placed upon them by the local context with regard to accessing children (e.g. any conditions set out by the head teacher of a school), it is of primary importance that, where possible, children themselves have the right to decide about their participation in research. It may be therefore that the best strategy for accessing children is to send an opt-out letter home to parents/guardians (i.e. parents/ guardians only reply if they wish their child not to participate) rather than an opt-in letter, with care taken to ensure that such letters are translated, where appropriate. This approach means that the decision about whether to participate is more likely to be made by children themselves.

Privacy

Privacy issues also arise when data is collected and stored, namely on how long the collected data will be kept and where they will be stored. Generally, data stored for as long as the project lasts. It has to be specified if the data will be kept stored beyond the duration of the project.

Another important issue for preventing unacceptable risks or invasion of privacy is the secured access policy for the collected personal data. It needs to be ensured that appropriate methods will be used (e.g. password protection, encryption). Also it must be ensured that data will be securely stored, and not in an easily lost media such as memory sticks.

Regarding the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector, as well as the retention of data generated or processed in connection with the provision of publicly available electronic



communications services or of public communications networks (e.g. cloud, big data, open data, cookies etc.) the project must comply with the relevant legislation and in particular with the EU Directive 2002/58/EC on the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector. The Directive is available online on:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0058:en:HTML>

Data usage information sheet explaining to the European Commission how the obtained data is planned to be stored should be submitted to the European Commission. It should also be submitted a document showing that the appropriate local/national authorities for data protection and privacy has been contacted.

Issues of Consent

Carrying out any research with children and young people necessitates obtaining children's and young people's informed consent. However the nature and meaning of informed consent in respect of children, and the ways in which this can be achieved, needs to be considered carefully. For example, if children are asked whether they wish to participate in research taking place at school, researchers need to consider the extent to which children may feel obliged to give consent, in a context structured by relations of authority between the children and adults in which they may often feel disenfranchised. In addition, in any context, researchers need to consider how the traditional authority relations between adults and children might be mitigated, so that children's consent can be given freely.

Given such difficulties, consent should be seen as an ongoing process and as something that is renegotiated verbally at each stage of the research. This enables children to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so. Since children are often less familiar with what research entails they may initially wish to participate but later feel less keen as they get to know what is involved. Consideration needs to be given, therefore, to ways in which children can be made to feel comfortable with ending their involvement in the research should they choose to do so.



By signing informed consent documents, participants agree to a controlled breach of their privacy for a specific purpose and a specific period of time. Children don't have legal competence to consent for themselves, thus it must be obtained informed consent from the legally authorized representative (parent or legal representative).

According to HORIZON 2020 Guide undertaking a project involving work with human participants and specifically with persons unable to give informed consent, like children, specific information have to be provided. These include details on the procedures to obtain approval from parent/legal representative and also details on the measures for ensuring that there is no coercion on participants for participating. Parents and participants need to have a fully informed understanding of the project before they give their consent. They must be provided with an “*Informed Consent Form*” and “*Information Sheets*”.

The form must explicitly state that participation is voluntary and that anyone has the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw their participation, and that data will be protected throughout the project. *Consent must normally be given in written form.* Dissent should be respected. The information sheet should include in simple terms an explanation for the background and purposes of the project and also how issues of privacy will be protected.

Sample information sheets, sample consent form and finally the signed informed consent forms must be provided to the European Commission. In order the consent forms be anonymous it could be used a codification system in a way which identities will be replaced with numbers.

While obtaining verbal consent is often sufficient, and perhaps preferable in qualitative research, researchers need to consider when it might be appropriate or necessary to also obtain children's written consent. At other times – when photographs of children are to be taken as part of the research process for example – obtaining written consent from both children and their parents may be advisable in the light of concerns about child protection and privacy issues. If the research is to use and publish children's artwork, researchers should consider whether verbal and/or written consent for this is also necessary. Many children may wish to see their published artwork attributed to them, raising further issues in relation to questions of anonymity. Of course, decisions about informed consent and the process for



obtaining it will vary according to the age of the children or young people involved in the research, and the nature of the research.

Data Storage and Data Security

However simple or complex your data set, think about what you might need to do to ensure that your management of the data respects the terms of your consent, and in particular, the confidentiality and anonymity that participants were promised. Take advice from relevant staff in your institution; the data protection manager can advise you on protocols for handling personal data; the computing or information services department should be able to advise you on setting up secure databases for the different forms of data that will be generated by your research. The earlier you can start to think about these issues, the better.

When you are preparing your research you need to plan for data management. If your work will generate complex or sensitive datasets, you may need to plan some time for a database manager or information specialist to develop and manage the systems that you need to keep your data secure. Before you access or collect your data, you should check what requirements you have in place for data storage, and what facilities are available (e.g. for data archiving).

Whether collecting new data or accessing existing data, researchers need to take into consideration how data will be stored, who will have access to the data and how they will be able to access data. Also, researchers need to plan for unexpected and undesirable events (for example losing a USB stick). Researchers must have systems in place to protect the participants, themselves and the Institution. For example, losing a USB stick that contains anonymized data is problematic, but it is less problematic if the stick is securely password protected. But what if the USB stick contained participant contact details or other personal or identifiable information? How secure would it need to be? Researchers should take account of what it needs to be done with hard copies (such as paper notes of interviews), computer files with anonymized data that are not identifiable, and computer files with personal or identifiable data.

Hard copies such as interview notes, prints of photographs, or video or audio tapes need to be kept securely locked away - for example in a locked filing cabinet that can



only be accessed by agreed members of the research team. Researchers should have the following questions in mind:

- Who needs to have access to hard data?
- Will these data be anonymized before they are stored? If not, why not?
- Will these data be stored separately from personally identifying data?
- Where will the key be stored?
- Could anyone find it and access the data who should not?
- How will you deal with hard copies in the period between data collection and data storage?

Files - including computer files - that contain personal or identifiable data (such as names) need to be encrypted or password protected, and only accessed by agreed members of the team. Particular care needs to be taken if you are sharing files within the research team - e.g. on shared computer drives, or by email - or if you are transferring personal data beyond the research team (e.g. if a gatekeeper is giving you a list of contacts). Computer files including anonymized still need to be held securely, and can only be shared according to the terms of your consent from participants. Thus - for example - you need to get prior consent from participants if you plan to archive data for use by other researchers. Anonymizing data is more complicated than simply assigning an ID number or pseudonym - see our section on [anonymizing data](#). To ensure that anonymized or personal data are only accessible to those that have been agreed (such as your immediate team) you may need help to set up additional security systems.

On the whole, the way data protection and privacy issues are taken into account and formally treated fundamentally depends on the legal environment of each country where the research will take place. However, despite the various differences across the EU, the application of Directive 95/46/EC (Data Protection Directive) guarantees a uniform approach towards these issues. For a detailed picture of the relevant legal framework, see: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/law/index_en.htm.

Researchers are reminded that compliance with EU rules on data protection and privacy issues is compulsory when applying for EU research funding. In case of non-compliance, applicants' incur significant risk (e.g. legal sanction and ethical ramifications such as peer review difficulties).



Children's Rights & the Media

According to the Oslo Challenge “the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights – to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection – and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of the child, the relationship between children and the media plays a role.”

There are a number of ways in which the rights of children may be violated by inappropriate exposure and media stereotyping. It is a responsibility to portray children fairly, without doing any harm to them and all the information concerning them should respect the standards and principles of the UNCRC. The significance of the relationship between children and the media it is stated and recognized in various articles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The media have the power to remind the public that children are also individual human beings with rights that need to be protected accordingly.

Media Representations

Media hold a powerful position in society, and it is an effective tool in influencing and mobilizing society for the rights of children. However, they are not always in line with respecting and ensuring children rights. In studies undertaken globally it is shown that the media are often stereotyping children and as a subsequent children images. At the same time young people are not happy with the way they are portrayed in the media.

Nowadays, online media is the most powerful and influential agent. The emergence of the internet it is able to create harmful or negative perceptions and knowledge among younger users which might create wrong behaviours and attitudes.

Children Voices

Children are not always aware of their right to free expression. They are not used to it so they face difficulties expressing themselves. Article 12 of the UNCRC sets out the role of state parties in ensuring children’s right to express their views freely in all



matters relating to them and for those views to be listened to; Article 13 sets out the right of the child to freedom of expression through the media of their choice; Article 17 declares that it is the responsibility of state parties to make sure that children have access to information from a diversity of national and international sources. Yet, studies shows that children opinions are under-represented in the media.

Understanding how young people see the world around them and transmitting that vision to the public is one of the most challenging tasks facing the media. If children given the chance to express themselves on issues affecting them directly, it will benefit both the society and the children. Slowly, adults are starting to change their attitudes about children’s participation in media and to value children as agents of change in communities.

The International Federation of Journalists has integrated child rights in the professional code of ethics and runs programs in awareness-raising. It supports an international exchange of best practices for enabling children to be seen and heard and for responsible coverage of children.

Child Protection Policies

Child protection means protecting children from harm, both intentional and unintentional. The fundamental objective of child protection is to ensure that all those with a duty to safeguard children recognize that duty, and are able to fulfil it. Whoever is working with children and young people today has to ensure that the interests and safety of children and young people are protected. Article 3 of UNCRC, provides that, when organizations make decisions which affect children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. The media can also play an important role in the protection of children. Article 17 of the UNCRC states that the media are responsible for promoting the welfare of the child.

More specifically, media organizations can implement child protection policies to safeguard any behavior of its staff that may threaten the rights of the child. The media can help mobilize public opinion to participate in the protection of children and expose those who threaten children in any way, whether through abuse or simply lack of appropriate systems.



Protection of children from the media also needs to be ensured. For example, media exposure of children who have suffered abuse often constitutes secondary abuse, due to the potential for victimization if a child's identity is revealed. Commercialization, violence, sexual pressure, gender stereotypes and other harmful influences can narrow children's opportunities to participate in the media.

Problems that may arise while implementing a Code of Ethics

However good a Code of Ethics is, when it is implemented in practice, it can only act as a guide to help participants of this project to find solutions to the problems they face. Every problem one faces is slightly different from others one has dealt with before, and they cannot be solved by treating the Code as a rule book.

Sometimes there may be a conflict between two principles which are both important. The needs of children and young people may need to be balanced against the needs of other children in their families, for instance. Again, it may not be possible to resolve some problems without sharing confidences and thus breaching confidentiality. Or again, judgements may sometimes have to be made about the comparative needs of colleagues and those for whom they care; a complaint by a child, for example, can have a big effect at the career of a participant/researcher and etc.

It is often when there are serious conflicts between principles that Codes of Ethics address the key questions facing society, and resolving such dilemmas can be very difficult, demanding clear thinking and honesty in facing the issues. This may be seen when people working with children and young people feel that they have to challenge the law.

On this point there are differences between countries, depending upon their cultures, legal and political circumstances and the stage of development of the profession. In some countries, it is felt that a Code of Ethics should be consistent with or based upon the law. In other countries, a Code of Ethics may be seen as a way of asserting the responsibilities taken on by an independent profession for its own standards, separate from the law and the views of the government. In some countries, people



may feel that they have to oppose bad law-making or the injurious application of the law, in order to retain their professional integrity and to meet the needs of children and young people.

The issues a Code of Ethics contains are of real importance in setting high standards, and its content should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that it continues to reflect good practice.

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SIGNED:

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