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UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice

2012

Introduction

The University of Wales: Trinity Saint David is committed to the maintenance of high ethical standards in the research undertaken by its staff and students, whether supported directly by the University or funded by external sources. The University recognises its obligation to ensure that research undertaken under its auspices is conducted to appropriate standards, and conforms to generally accepted ethical principles and practices.

The University believes that research ethics review and approval are important for the following reasons:

- to enhance the quality and integrity of research;
- to protect the rights and welfare of participants and minimise the risk of physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger from research procedures;
- to protect the welfare of researchers and their right to carry out legitimate investigations;
- to minimise the potential for claims of negligence made against the University, its researchers and any collaborating individual or organisation; and
- to ensure the reputation of the University for the research it conducts and sponsors.

This procedures and guidelines outlined in this code of practice applies to all academic and administrative staff, and all students conducting research projects and related activities as part of undergraduate, postgraduate or short course taught or research programmes. This includes every research project involving members of academic and administrative, full-, part-time and honorary staff at Trinity Saint David, and every research project conducted by postgraduate research students enrolled/registered at, and/or supervised by staff at the University with the exception of cases where the Principal Investigator is registered elsewhere providing that the research project has been approved by an equivalent ethics committee following a comparable level of ethics review.

This code of practice does not refer directly to broader questions of ethical behaviour within the University in areas other than research.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found in Section 2.6.1 of the AQH.

1. Ethics Committee Membership

Membership of the University's Ethics Committee shall be reviewed on an annual basis. In each instance members will act as their respective School's Research Ethics Officer and should seek to ensure that colleagues are aware of the roles and duties of the Ethics Committee and should seek to promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity across the research activities of the University as set out in this Code of Practice.

Chair	Dr Jeremy Smith
One representative from each School: Dr Rob Shail Dr Jill Venus : Dr Elsie Reynolds Mr Dave Gardner Dr Jonathan Pugh Dr Siân Wyn Siencyn Dr Jane Booth Dr Geraint Davies Dr Hywel Lewis Dr Sam Hurn Dr Aldo Tagliabue Dr David Morgans Dr Maya Warriar	The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences School of Creative Arts School of Business: Work-based Learning School of Sport, Health and Outdoor Education School of Performing Arts The Faculty of Education and Training School of Early Childhood School of Social Justice and Inclusion School of Initial Teacher Education and Training: School of Welsh and Bilingual Studies: The Faculty of Humanities School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology School of Classics School of Cultural Studies School of Theology, Religious and Islamic Studies
Dr Mirjam Plantinga Dr Matt Briggs Mrs Alison Sables Dr Angharad Elias / Dr David Parsons	Co-opted members: Dean of Humanities Research and Development Postgraduate Research Office UW CAWCS
Mrs Julia Davies	Secretary to the Committee

2. Basic Ethical Principles

Research conducted in and by the University should be undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice. These fundamental and widely accepted principles may be broadly summarised as:

- Beneficence - 'do positive good'
- Non-maleficence - 'do no harm'
- Protect participants' interests and /or rights
- Ensure participant and researcher safety and risk – i.e. the need to avoid harm or potential harm.
- Consider and protect against where necessary the impact of work on others
- Ensure informed consent – i.e. the need to inform participants of the aims and procedures of the research and obtain their agreement to take part on the basis of this information
- Avoid deception – i.e. the need to avoid deception in informing participants about the research, or to justify the need for deception if necessary

- Provide debriefing – i.e. the need to provide participants with additional information to support them after taking part in the research, and/or to provide true information if deception was necessary originally
- Allow withdrawal from Investigation – i.e. the need to inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, including during or at the end of their involvement
- Ensure confidentiality – i.e. the need to reassure participants that information they provide will not be disclosed without prior consent to others other than within the context of the research, or at a minimum will be made anonymous
- Data security and archiving – i.e. to ensure that research data is held in a secure manner consonant with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and that it is archived in such a way that it will be accessible for future audit purposes. Special attention should be made with regards to a funding bodies requirements to submit research data to open repositories.

3. Research involving human subjects and animals

General guidance is available in these pages, but in principle careful ethical consideration should be given to any piece of work at any level conducted within the University, or in partnership with it, that implicates the involvement of others (human or animal) or has the capacity to interfere with or make a difference to their lives. 'Others' commonly refers to participants in the research, but could also refer to others affected by it e.g. at risk of physical or mental harm. This is without reference to the length of the piece of work, or the level at which it is undertaken.

4. What happens if I have not applied for or obtained ethical approval?

Failure to follow the University's guidance on ethical review of research may result in disciplinary action. Where the Ethics Committee become aware that research is being conducted in breach of these policies and procedures or of researchers who are not complying with them, the matter may, in relevant cases be resolved by informal discussion with the researchers and remedial action being taken by them. However, where necessary either committee may refer the matter to the Chair of the Ethics Committee or other relevant persons for further investigation.

Procedures for the Ethical Approval of Research Projects:

5. Taught Undergraduate, Postgraduate Courses and Undergraduate Dissertations

The Ethics Committee does not, under normal circumstances, review and approve research projects and related research activities conducted as part of taught undergraduate, taught postgraduate, taught short course programmes, or undergraduate dissertations. It does however provide advice, guidance and support to academic staff supervising such teaching, assessment, projects and activities.

In these cases the school, module leader and supervisor have the responsibility for deciding what authorisation, if any, should be sought. If module leaders are in doubt as to what is appropriate they should seek advice from the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

It is acknowledged that there are sometimes difficulties in drawing a clear line between research requiring/not requiring ethical consideration, but if in doubt students and their researcher supervisors are advised to err on the side of caution and go through the ethical approval route by referring the matter to the Ethics Committee.

If ethical issues are identified by the module leader, supervisor or school, the student should complete a Student Ethical Approval Form. This must be signed by the student, their supervisor, and the School's Research Ethics Officer. The form should then be stored in the appropriate School Office in such a way that records can be easily subject to audit if required. A copy should also be appended to the work in question. If ethical issues are identified in this process which cannot be resolved, individual cases should be referred to the Chair of the Ethics Committee.

6. Taught Postgraduate Dissertation

In the case of dissertations carried out on taught postgraduate courses the responsibility for ethical considerations should be with the research supervisor who should advise the student in line with standard ethical practices and the guidance contained on these pages. However the standard Research Ethics Approval Form should also be completed and referred to the ethics committee for 'light touch' approval in such instances that the proposed research implicates the involvement of others (human or animal) or has the capacity to interfere with or make a difference to their lives. The form should then be stored in the appropriate School Office in such a way that records can be easily subject to audit if required. A copy shall be appended to the work in question.

7. Research Degrees

All prospective research projects, whether at MPhil or Doctoral levels, should be referred to the Ethics Committee by the student and supervisor for approval prior to the completion of the registration process. The standard Research Ethics Approval Form should be completed in these cases and submitted to the Ethics Committee. A copy of the form shall be retained in the Postgraduate Research Office.

7.1 Risk Assessment

In addition to requiring the completion of the Research Ethics Approval Form, some researchers may also be required to submit a Risk Assessment Form in research projects which involve fieldwork or laboratory work. Where this is the case the Postgraduate Research Office is required to retain a copy of the Risk Assessment. For guidance applicants should assume that a Risk Assessment Form may be requested by the Ethics Committee if the research process involves any of the following:

- Environmental Risks
- Lone working
- Risk of ill health or injury
- Use of hazardous equipment
- Dealing with the public
- Manual handling
- Chemical / Biological risks
- Working on or near water
- Armed conflict
- Civil unrest
- Other hazards

Ethics approval will be expedited if the form is completed with the initial submission and applicants are encouraged to do so.

7.2 Safety and risk in the field

There are a variety of dangers which can face people engaged in research. Researchers have an obligation to themselves, to co-workers and to researchers under their direction to maintain awareness of potential dangers and to take steps to diminish these. The main dimensions of risk to social researchers are:

Danger of physical intimidation, or actual bodily harm; and also the psychological trauma which could result from these;
Emotional distress in response to participants' disclosures;
Being put in compromising situations, such that they risk being accused of misconduct;
Arousal of suspicion and antagonism from authorities.

Clearly there are arenas in which such dangers are unlikely to arise. Equally there are arenas in which awareness of danger is crucial. For instance, physical danger could be a factor in researching criminal fraternities, addicts or emotionally disturbed people; and emotional distress may be a factor when working with terminally ill people or victims of abuse.

In general, matters of culture, class, race, religion, ethnicity, belief and gender and varied contexts, should be seen as potentially relevant to the safety of researchers. Explicit discussion of risks and identification of appropriate countermeasures is likely to be beneficial in minimising anxiety and thereby freeing the researcher to concentrate on the work. Exercising basic common sense is paramount and each situation should be evaluated separately. Situations can change rapidly in the field; therefore it can be important to keep safety under review, especially where situations have already been identified as dangerous. It should be recognized that in some research scenarios physical dangers may come from people connected with those being researched (e.g. husbands of abuse wives, or associates of criminals), rather than from the research participants themselves.

General health and safety issues associated with field research activities should also be considered. Issues could include such things as road accidents, vulnerability to criminal activity (not directly associated with the research) and exposure to infectious diseases. In evaluating the potential dangers of a project, it may be necessary to consider likely impacts on non-field workers, such as transcribers or others engaging with the data.

8. Staff Research – Externally Funded

Ethics Committee approval must be sought for all research undertaken by members of academic staff within the University, for which external funding is sought. In such instances where application deadlines necessitate submission of research proposals to funding bodies prior to ethical approval being granted, such approval must be sought before the research commences, and in each instance at the next available meeting of the committee. The standard Research Ethics Approval Form should be completed in both cases and submitted to the Ethics Committee.

8.1 Risk Assessment

Refer to section 7.1

9. Staff Research – Internally Funded

Where external grant awarding bodies are not funding the research, either in part or wholly, the University operates a system of self-regulation in which the researcher has the responsibility to consider ethical issues and take note of the guidance on these pages and any other relevant codes of practice. In general any programme of research which involves human or animal participants, their 'products' (e.g. body samples, written records, etc), that has a direct impact on individuals, or uses contemporary material that may implicate living subjects or organisations, will need careful ethical consideration and in all such cases a standard Research Ethics Approval Form shall be submitted to the Committee. If any uncertainty exists regarding the need for ethical approval the School's Research Ethics Officer should be consulted in the first instance.

In all cases

10.1 Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Staff undertaking research work which involves one-to-one or other unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults will usually be required to obtain a current enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check issued for work conducted through the University. Please see the guidance below.

10.2 Approval

Applications should be submitted for approval as early as possible. All projects must be signed off from an ethics perspective before that part of the work for which approval is being sought begins.

If projects are approved research may proceed. The applicant and supervisor[s] will receive a letter to this effect from the Ethics Committee. Projects will be approved for the duration of the research process subject to resubmission should the nature of the research change or on the identification of unforeseen ethical implications that arise during the research process.

If projects are approved subject to amendments the applicant and supervisor[s] will receive a letter to this effect that indicates the minor points that require clarification. The project should be amended and re-submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

If projects are not approved because they contain major flaws the applicant and supervisor[s] will receive a letter from the Ethics Committee, detailing the issues to be addressed. The project must be substantially revised and re-submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

11. Continued review of all research projects:

All postgraduate research conducted for research degrees shall be reviewed for on-going and unforeseen ethical issues during the various points of a research degree candidature:

- Progress reviews with the supervisory team
- Submission of full proposal
- Upgrade from MPhil / PhD
- Annual review

Staff research will be continually monitored on a self-regulatory basis.

If projects which have initially been judged not to have ethical implications change and do subsequently have ethical dimensions it is the responsibility of project supervisors for all

supervised research, or in other cases the staff responsible for the research, to ensure that ethical scrutiny procedures are invoked and followed through. Such instances must be raised immediately with the Ethics Committee

12. Unforeseen ethical implications

In all cases any adverse events occurring during the conduct of research projects must be reported to the Ethics Committee. In such cases the researcher, whether staff or student, shall withdraw from the research process with immediate effect until notified by the ethics committee that the University is satisfied that the research design has been modified in such a way as to mitigate further harm.

13. Collaborative Research

Research is increasingly conducted on a collaborative basis with a range of public, private and third sector organisations, at national, European and International levels. In such instances the Ethics Committee shall consider the proposed programme of research in its entirety, rather than just those work packages pertaining to UW: TSD staff. Consistent with the guidelines in this Code, each organisation shall submit the research proposal to its own governance systems and research shall not commence until each body is satisfied that all ethical issues have been addressed.

14. Safeguarding - Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)

The Criminal Records Bureau's aim is to help organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children or other vulnerable members of society or to hold particular positions.

Staff and students at whatever level undertaking research work which involves one-to-one or other unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults will be checked. The need for a check should be identified by the researcher and supervisor on the basis of the nature of the activity involved. The Ethics Committees may also make recommendations regarding CRB checks for projects they review.

The Ethics Committee will require confirmation that a CRB check has been obtained where researchers are working individually or unsupervised with participants who are under 16/18 or fall into the category of vulnerable adults. Evidence of the check should be presented alongside all other documentation provided when making an application to the Ethics Committee.

When it is identified that an individual post will require a CRB check then notification is made on the RS1 form submitted to the Staffing Committee or which is presented to the Human Resources department from one of the Senior Financial Officers. The latter might occur for a short time post which does not have to be processed by the Staffing Committee.

Processing the CRB forms

All Human Resources staff are trained to process the CRB forms. They are all aware of the confidential nature of the duty.

Should the University receive notification of a criminal record in respect of a member of staff then the matter will be considered by the Vice Chancellor, the Director of HR and the Chair of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Committee. Matters will proceed in accordance with the relevant Human Resources policy.

Updating the CRB check

It is part of the normal data checking process at TSD for staff to be asked to check on an annual basis that the information held about them on personnel files is accurate. As part of this process each member of staff is asked to sign a self declaration testifying to the fact that there is no change to their personal status and Criminal Convictions are clearly cited in the documentation. The University will take disciplinary action in a case where a member of staff or a student has deliberately withheld information from the institution.

CRB checks are generally repeated every 3 years.

Levels of CRB Check

Two levels of CRB check are currently available; Standard and Enhanced Disclosures.

Standard CRB checks are for people entering certain professions, such as members of the legal and accountancy professions. Standard checks no longer include a check of the old or new barred list, therefore if researchers are working or volunteering with children or vulnerable adults, they may now be entitled to an Enhanced CRB check.

Enhanced CRB checks are for posts involving work in a regulated activity for a regulated activity provider with children or vulnerable adults. In general, the type of work will involve regularly caring for, supervising, training or being in sole charge of such people. Enhanced checks are also issued for certain statutory purposes such as gaming and lottery licences.

Enhanced checks show: convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held in England and Wales on the Police National Computer, the most relevant convictions in Scotland and Northern Ireland may also be included; and, a check of the new barred lists if requested and any locally held police force information considered relevant to the job role, by Chief Police Officer(s).

Regulated Activity

Regulated activity is defined as

- Activity involving contact with children or vulnerable adults and is of a specified nature (eg teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, medical treatment or in certain circumstances transport) on a frequent, intensive, and/or overnight basis;
- Activity involving contact with children or vulnerable adults in a specified place (eg schools, care homes etc) frequently or intensively;
- Fostering and childcare;
- Certain specified positions of responsibility (eg school governor, director of children's services, director of adult social services, trustees of certain charities)

These positions are set out in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

CRB Code of Practice

The CRB recognises that the Standard and Enhanced Disclosure information is extremely sensitive and personal, therefore it has published a Code of Practice and employers' guidance for recipients of Disclosures to ensure they are handled fairly and used properly. Organisations that wish to use CRB checks must comply with the CRB's Code of Practice.

The CRB Code of Practice states that Disclosure information should only be used in the context of a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, designed to protect applicants from

unfair discrimination on the basis of non-relevant past convictions. The University's policy is available from Human Resources.

Storage of Disclosure information is also important. The Code of Practice requires that the information revealed is considered only for the purpose for which it was obtained and shared only with those involved in the decision. It should be destroyed after a suitable period has passed - usually not more than six months. In line with the Code of Practice the University has a policy for the handling and storage of disclosures which is available from Human Resources

Organisations must therefore use Disclosure information fairly, and ensure that it is handled and stored appropriately. They must also satisfy the CRB that they are complying with the Code of Practice, which means co-operating with requests from the CRB to undertake assurance checks, as well as reporting any suspected malpractice in relation to the Code or misuse of Disclosures.

Vulnerable Adults

The definition of vulnerable adults used by the CRB and is set out in legislation and is as follows;

A vulnerable adult is a person who is aged 18 years or over and:

- is living in residential accommodation, such as a care home or a residential special school;
- is living in sheltered housing;
- is receiving domiciliary care in his or her own home;
- is receiving any form of health care;
- is detained in a prison, remand centre, young offenders institution, secure training centre or attendance centre or under the powers of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- is in contact with probation services;
- is receiving a welfare service of a description to be prescribed in regulations;
- is receiving a service or participating in an activity which is specifically targeted at people with age-related needs, disabilities or prescribed physical or mental health conditions or expectant or nursing mothers living in residential care (age-related needs include needs associated with frailty, illness, disability or mental capacity);
- is receiving direct payments from local authority/HSS body in lieu of social care services;
- requires assistance in the conduct of his or her own affairs

For further information please visit the [CRB website](#) or contact Human Resources.

15. A Brief Summary of Guiding Principles

The following is a summary of the guiding principles which individual Schools and the College's Ethics Committee will refer to in making their decisions. It is not intended to be exhaustive, and of necessity, individual School's will need to reference the norms and conventions of their own disciplines in reaching any decision.

Above all it should be remembered that the integrity of any research depends not only on its scientific rigour, but also on its ethical adequacy. Ethical issues are many and varied, and may be quite complex. Research involving human participants is undertaken by many different disciplines and conducted in a broad range of settings and institutions. While some

issues are specific to professional groups, all research should be guided by a set of fundamental ethical principles to ensure the protection of human participants. Underpinning the standards are the ethical imperatives of DO NO HARM (nonmaleficence) and DO GOOD (beneficence). Consideration of risks versus benefits need to be weighed up by researchers. In medical research, physically invasive procedures are easily defined, but what constitutes risk in social research is sometimes less clear cut. Questionnaires, observation and interviews can all be potentially intrusive and provoke anxiety in participants, or worse, involve psychological risk. It is important to think through carefully the likely impact on participants of any data collection methods. Certain groups are particularly vulnerable and may succumb to pressure, for example students, children or people with learning disabilities. Some participants are unable to give informed consent and are therefore less able to protect themselves, for example people with dementia. Research activities may be so unintrusive that individual consent is not warranted, such as in the case of some community-based studies.

The following standards have been developed to guide staff and students undertaking research involving human participants. They are intended to cover general principles, but they may not address all situations and the researcher should seek further advice from their School's Research Ethics Officer, the University's Research Ethics Committee and their profession's code of practice for research ethics as appropriate.

15.1 Responsibilities to research participants

Researchers enter into a personal and moral relationship with those they study and should strive to protect their rights. Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research the participant is not adversely affected by the research. So, while researchers are committed to the advancement of knowledge, the goal of the research does not provide a right to override the rights of others. Wherever possible, researchers should seek to:

- Minimise disturbance to both those participating in the research and to their relationships with their environment and those gatekeepers who may control access to participants - since these relationships will continue long after the researcher has left;
- Anticipate and guard against consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful and try to anticipate the long-term effects on individuals or groups as a result of the research;
- Take special care where research participants are particularly vulnerable by virtue of age, social status and powerlessness;
- Resort to covert research only where it is impossible to use other methods to obtain essential data (in such studies it is important to safeguard the anonymity of research participants);
- Take care to avoid falsification or misrepresentation of evidence, data, findings or conclusions;
- Clarify with participants the extent to which they are allowed to see transcripts of any interviews and field notes and to alter the content or interpretation of the data.

15.2 Beneficence and Non-Maleficence

Terms such as risk, harm and hazards include emotional and mental distress, and possible damage to financial and social standing, as well as to physical harm. In principle:

- The research should be methodologically sound and the purpose should be to contribute to knowledge;
- The research should be undertaken and supervised by those who are appropriately qualified and experienced;
- The importance of the objective should be in proportion to the inherent risk to the subject. Concern for the interests of the subject must always prevail over the interests of science and society;
- The research should be preceded by careful assessment of predictable risks in comparison with foreseeable benefits to the subject or to others;
- Research should not be undertaken where the hazards involved are not believed to be predictable;
- Adequate facilities and procedures should be in place to deal with any potential hazards.

15.3 Informed Consent

It is generally held that sane competent adults should be free to make their own decisions. Consequently, respect for the individual right to choose is at the core of ethical research. Gaining informed consent is an essential element of ethically valid social research. Thus three basic principles apply. Consent needs to be:

- Informed - given in possession and understanding of the principal, relevant information;
- Voluntary - given freely and not as a result of coercive pressure (real or perceived);
- Competent - given by somebody able, in virtue of their age, maturity and mental stability, of making a free, considered choice.

More specifically, it is necessary to ensure that the potential research participant is fully aware of, and fully understands,

- What the research is about;
- Why it is being conducted;
- Who it is being conducted for and who is funding it;
- What the purpose of the study is and what will happen to the results;
- Where the results will appear and who is likely to have access to them;
- What will be expected of them if they agree to participate and how long their participation will take;
- What anonymity and confidentiality mean in practice and an understanding that the participant does not *have* to participate; and having agreed to participate can withdraw any time without detriment.

In practice researchers should therefore ensure that:

- Each potential subject is adequately informed of the aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential hazards of the research and any discomfort it may entail
- Any documentation given to potential participants must be comprehensible and there should be an opportunity for them to raise any issues of concern;
- Consent should be acquired in writing and records of consent should be maintained;
- Potential participants must be informed that they are free to withdraw consent to participation at any time;
- There should be a procedure for making complaints and participants should be made aware of this;
- All participants should be volunteers. Considerable care should be taken where consent is sought from those in a dependent position and it should be made clear that refusal to

participate will not lead to any adverse consequences. For example, students must be assured that any decision not to participate will not prejudice in any way their academic progress;

- Any inducement offered to participants should be declared and should be in accordance with appropriate guidelines;
- Consent must be obtained from a legal guardian in the case of minors or any others who do not have the legal competence to give informed consent.
- Asking participants to sign a written consent form is a widely accepted method of obtaining informed consent. In addition to ensuring that participants agree to participate of their own free will and understand what they are getting involved in, the existence of signed documentation protects the researcher from subsequent accusations by participants.

15.4 Exceptions

There are occasions when informed consent may be impracticable or meaningless in social research, for example:

- Research on 'public behaviour', e.g. street or crowd settings
- Where it would compromise the subjects of research (e.g. when studying those engaged in illicit or illegal behaviour, such as drug-taking), or
- Where written consent could put them at unnecessary risk.

Retrospective consent

In some contexts consent can be gained retrospectively (and in this case informed consent refers more to consent to use the data gained and an understanding of how the data is to be used) e.g. as in the example of observational psychological experimentation, or where covert research is necessary and warranted – such as work in the field of deviance where it involves immoral or illegal behaviour.

When consent forms are not appropriate

It should be recognised that seeking written consent is not under all circumstances appropriate. For instance, illiteracy may be an issue, such that imposing written consent forms would not be a meaningful or legitimate means of establishing consent. In overseas research there may be circumstances where translation is not feasible; or it may be that asking for written agreement is culturally inappropriate. In such cases the researchers should seek informed verbal consent.

Covert Research

Covert research cannot, by definition, involve informed consent, because informing the subject would render the research overt. If informed consent is ethically required for research, then covert research is impermissible.

If any member of staff or student is seeking to use research methods and designs covered in these exceptions they should in the first instance seek the advice of their School's Research Ethics officer.

15.5 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The right of the individual to privacy is a pre-eminent ethical driver in western societies. In the social researcher's relationship to participants this translates into two imperatives: anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity and confidentiality may be defined as follows:

Anonymity refers to concealing the identities of participants in all documents resulting from the research;

Confidentiality is concerned with who has the right of access to the data provided by the participants.

In practice the obligation of the researcher to the researched may be summarised thus:

Anonymity and privacy should be respected. This means that care should be taken in deciding whether or not sensitive information should be recorded;
Identities and research records should be kept confidential whether or not an explicit pledge has been given;

The right to remain anonymous should be respected unless a clear understanding to the contrary has been reached. Researchers have the responsibility to ensure appropriate precautions to protect the confidentiality of participants' data. For instance, names and any information from which identities could be inferred (e.g. locations) should be removed.

Anonymity, confidentiality and the greater good

Whilst respecting anonymity and confidentiality are core principles of social research they are not absolutes. There may be situations when the researcher has a duty of care to reveal information that has been provided in confidence, or which the researcher has discovered through interactions with the participant. For example, if a researcher were to become aware of abuse in a care home, it would be necessary to act on this knowledge and inform the relevant authority. Who constitutes the relevant authority in any given case would depend on a variety of factors, including whether the abuse is isolated or systemic within the organisation. In any case, researchers would be well advised to consult confidentially with their own colleagues and inform their own institution.

16. Professional Bodies – Ethical Codes of Practice

Various professional groups have their own ethical guidelines and many of these are easily available on the internet and can be consulted by following the links below. In all cases the onus is placed on the researcher to meet the highest ethical thresholds set by the relevant professional body.

Economic and Social Research Council

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/research-ethics.aspx>

British Educational Research Association

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines>

Association of Social Anthropologists

<http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>

Social Research Association

<http://www.the-sra.org.uk/guidelines.htm>

British Sociological Association

<http://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm>

Royal Anthropological Institute

<http://www.therai.org.uk/about-the-rai/governance/ethical-policy/>

The British Psychological Society

http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/ethics-rules-charter-code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct_home.cfm

RCUK Policy and Code of Conduct on the Governance of Good Research Conduct

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/goodresearchconductcode.pdf>