Ethical impacts statement:

Data for Children Collaborative WITH UNICEF

The Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF is dedicated to ensuring that our projects undertake an ethical review that is tailored to the unique challenges that may arise when working on data science projects for children. Our ethical assessment has been developed to put children and their rights at the forefront of project development.

What it is:

The ethical assessment is made up of four key components:

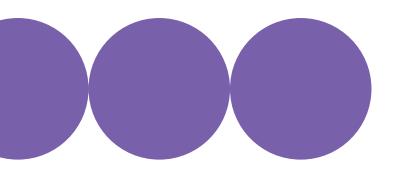**Compass:** our guiding principles

Road Map: tailored questions for each project stage

Highway Code: additional resources and example answers to guide the user

Safeguarding Training: tiered training developed with UNICEF to ensure teams are aware of safeguarding roles and reporting procedures

How it works:

Our ethical assessment is a living document, designed to encourage project teams to reflect on ethical issues at three critical project stages: Start, On the Road and Destination. We want to facilitate an opportunity for discussion and collaboration to ensure that the project remains aligned to our values and consistently holds children as the priority stakeholder. Our ethical assessment forms part of our safe data ecosystem alongside data security and data management.

What we've learned:

There is no one right way of working:

- Each project team has a different dynamic
- Project teams should seek the solution that best suits them (team effort, principal investigator takes the lead…)
- We can help to facilitate meetings, reviews and discussions where necessary

Ethics can be seen as a barrier to progress:

- Putting together a project is already a lot of work and ethics can be seen as another form to complete
- Breaking down the ethical assessment into phases has made it easier for teams to engage with and complete the necessary steps
- Highlighting how the ethical assessment is a tool to help shape the project, and not stall it, has proved successful in gaining valuable input from the teams

Ethics isn't easy!

- There are no right answers!
- Helping to build on organic ethical decision making and discussion can help teams to be engaged and enthusiastic about the process
- Ethics isn't static and it is important to revisit and review answers at key points throughout the project

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Impacts:

**Our ethical assessment has helped to shape project outputs and goals.
We have seen results such as:**

HIV:

- Highlighted the importance of limiting access to the final output given the sensitive nature of the data
- Raised questions about onward public sharing and whether this is appropriate
- Discussions about the final product design to ensure it is helpful, but not harmful

Child Poverty Access to Services:

- Consideration about the language used in final publications to avoid negative assumptions regarding access issues
- Communication of only disaggregated information and no maps or images that could identify a single household or location

Obesity Growing Up in Scotland:

- Key issues noted will surround the onward policy making and programme planning which will make predictions about specific risk factors for obesity – important to have foresight about how this could lead to stigma and discrimination

Moving forward:

Discussions around implementing ethics, particularly with regard to data and technology, have been front and centre in the news and media recently. However, finding examples of how to practically do this are somewhat limited. We want to support external organisations who want to use our tools for their own projects, and are planning to deliver a training session in an upcoming webinar.

We also want to carry out On the Road and Destination assessments for our live projects as they progress. In addition, we are hoping to set up a more formal review process for future projects, to ensure clarity and consistency across the project portfolio.

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