Key Ethical Considerations for Research with Young People
Research should bring about good and do no harm
Ethical research requires reflecting on risk and making decisions about minimising risks and maximising benefits for participants and others – this is not straightforward
Harm can occur whether the research is qualitative or quantitative
Contextual and personal factors influence how harms and benefits are felt
Researchers need to be prepared to respond to any risks

- Does the research with children and young people actually need to be done? Why?
- Do the researchers have the capacity, skills, knowledge and cultural awareness?
- What are the potential risks of harm? (E.g. physical, psychological, burdens, disappointment)
- What harms may occur after participation?
- What plans can be put in place to reduce risk? Are some participants at higher risk?
- What are the potential benefits? (E.g. learning the findings of the study, having their views heard, improving services they access)
Accessibility and Inclusion

- Research should be equitable and non-discriminatory (rights-informed)
- Research should be inclusive of all young people, without discriminating on the basis of gender, ethnicity, disability, age, language, geographic location, etc.
- Specific measures, e.g. choosing methods that enable inclusiveness and ease of access, need to be put in place to ensure meaningful participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups

- What might exclude certain participants from the research? (Methods, locations, topics, recruitment criteria, accessibility)
- What methods and approaches can ensure that all young people can participate?
Informed Consent

- Obtaining consent demonstrates respect for the participant’s dignity – their capability and right to make decision about matters that affect them.
- Gaining informed consent shows honesty – that the researcher has not deceived the participant about the study.
- Consent involved an explicit act (e.g. a written or verbal agreement), can only be given if participants understand the research, must be voluntary without coercion, and must be re-negotiable so that they can withdraw.
- Parental consent is also required for under 18s.

- Whose consent is needed?
- How does the local context, age of participants, capacity and understandings determine how consent should be obtained?
- How will information about the research be explained at the participants level of comprehension?
- How does power impact consent?
- What can be put in place to prevent coercion?
- How will the competence of participants to consent be assessed?
• Researchers must respect participant’s privacy and ensure their information remains confidential
• Data must be securely stored, protected, and disposed of
• The location and methods used in data collection impact on privacy and confidentiality
• Personal information is that which could lead to the identification of a participant (name, age, address, gender, qualifications, ethnicity)
• Privacy includes ensuring participants are anonymous
• There are circumstances when confidentiality needs to be breached (e.g. child abuse concerns)

➢ How can participant’s privacy and confidentiality be respected?
➢ How can privacy be maintained in the research setting?
➢ How will participants be kept anonymous?
➢ What plans are in place for the safe keeping of data?
Payment and Compensation

- Participants should be appropriately reimbursed for any expenses, compensated for efforts, time or lost income, and acknowledged for their contribution.
- Payment should be avoided if it pressures, coerces, bribes or causes disadvantage.
- Financial dealings can change relationships and impact power dynamics.
- Careful consideration of the local social and cultural context in determining payment/compensation is crucial.
- In some contexts, forms of compensation other than monetary may be more appropriate.

- How will participants be recognised?
- How will they be supported, financially or otherwise?
- What ethical issues may arise because of this?