

CODE OF ETHICS - GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCHERS

Research undertaken by the European Policies Research Centre must comply with the University of Strathclyde's *Code of Practice on Investigations on Human Beings*. This Code is designed to ensure that all research undertaken by University staff and students is carried out in an ethical manner. The Code of Practice is intended to ensure that:

- research is designed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality;
- research subjects (e.g. interviewees) are informed fully about the purpose, methods and possible uses of the research and what their participation involves;
- the confidentiality of information and participant anonymity is respected;
- involvement of research participants is voluntary; and
- research is independent, free of conflicts of interest or partiality.

In practice, research experts (i.e. EPRC researchers and any experts sub-contracted to EPRC) must ensure that the following general requirements (and any project-specific requirements specified by the Department/University Ethics Committee) are met.

- (a) When interviewees are approached to take part in the research, they must be informed about the **nature and objectives of the research**. Where available, a copy of the research commissioning letter - explaining the purpose and organisation of the evaluation - should be given/sent to interviewees. Where a project website has been established, the interviewees should be given the web address. They should be advised that they are welcome to contact EPRC if they would like further information.
- (b) It is important that interviewees agree to participate in the interview on a **voluntary and informed basis**. This consent should be recorded - whether given by email, letter, phone or in person. If the interviewee wishes to withdraw from the interview at any point, this wish must be respected. The EPRC project manager must be notified if this occurs.
- (c) In advance of an interview, interviewees should be given **appropriate information on the nature of the interview** as follows (see also below):

- (i) the name(s) of the person(s) conducting the interview;
 - (ii) the key questions/issues to be covered in the interview;
 - (iii) that confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewee will be maintained (they will not be quoted or otherwise identified in reports);
 - (iv) how information will be used for the study;
 - (v) that records may be kept for further or follow-up research, but that they can decide not to allow this; and
 - (vi) that they will be informed of the outcomes of the research by being notified when the Interim, Draft Final and/or Final Reports are published.
- (d) While it is important for the evaluation to obtain accurate and detailed information, individual participants must not be pressured to answer any question. They have a **right not to answer any question(s)** during the interview, and - where relevant - be advised that by not answering a particular question the interview/questionnaire will not be considered in the study.
- (e) Experts should **maintain a secure record** of all aspects of the fieldwork process, from the first approach made to an interviewee to the writing up the results. In practice, this means keeping copies of relevant correspondence, notes of phone calls, records of interviews etc. securely so that if the interviewee raises any questions at a later date, experts can demonstrate (for example) that they obtained informed consent or that they have a record of the interview.
- (f) Experts should **maintain confidentiality and anonymity** by ensuring that the record of the interview is not given to anyone outside the EPRC research team. The record of the interview should also make a clear distinction between the factual information/opinions expressed by the interviewee and any interpretation of the interviewer. The record should also highlight any information provided by the interviewee as background or personal information which is not to be used in writing reports.
- (g) Experts should **ensure data security**. In practice, this means: retaining records only for the period for which they are required for research purposes; utilising Strathclyde University (or other organisational) email accounts which have adequate virus protection (and avoiding use of home PCs / email accounts); ensuring storage in a safe place (password-protected in the case of electronic storage), with appropriate back-ups; taking care with the transport of data (especially on laptops and memory sticks, where data should be anonymised wherever possible); ensuring that data is not shared with another organisation unless approved by the EPRC project manager (and in accordance with the terms of

Ethics Committee approval of the study); and disposing of data and equipment in ways that the data cannot be recovered.

Research experts must comply with the study according to these conditions. Failure to comply with the protocol will mean that data can not be used in the study.

EPRC has prepared a separate information sheet for interviewees, summarising the above principles, which can be sent/given to interviewees in advance of the interview. This is available on the EPRC website at: www.eprc.strath.ac.uk. In case of any questions on the above, please feel free to contact the EPRC project leader or Lynn Ogilvie at EPRC (email: lynn.ogilvie@strath.ac.uk; tel: +44 141 548 3672) at any time.

Further information on the University of Strathclyde policy on ethics, including the Code of Practice, is available here: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/secretariat/ethics/>.

EPRC, Glasgow, January 2009