



research
in practice



Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme Evaluation

Ethical statement

The TCE evaluation is led by the University of Bedfordshire but is owned by the TCE partnership, comprising Research in Practice and The Children's Society in addition to the University of Bedfordshire.

This ethical statement is built on information from all three organisations. Key ethical issues relating to the evaluation approach and methods are:

1. What are the ethical principles underpinning the evaluation?
2. What are the specific issues associated with internal evaluation, and how can these be managed?
3. How will data be safely and ethically collected, stored, and destroyed?

1. What are the ethical principles underpinning the evaluation?

There are different ways in which ethical principles can be described. The TCE evaluation notes the wider context of ethical guidelines (for example, the Social Research Association <http://www.sra.org.uk> and others). The Children's Society describes its ethical principles for social research as comprising protection; provision; participation and professionalism. An ethical approach to internal evaluation will take account of all of these concepts. For the purposes of TCE evaluation, it is proposed to build these in relation to the restorative principles that underpin the programme overall, and the proposed 'evidence principles' ([also available on the microsite](#)) which outline a TCE approach to the use and application of different evidence sources throughout the evaluation.

2. What are the specific issues associated with internal evaluation, and how can these be managed?

Internal evaluation raises particular issues relating to consent, anonymity, and accountability.

Consent The freedom to consent to participate in research and evaluation is a core ethical principle. Internal research and evaluation can carry with it an implicit or explicit assumption that individuals will participate. In the case of the TCE programme, BSPs are required to take part in evaluation as a condition of participation in the programme. At the same time, the possibility that individuals within the BSP programme may request not to participate in the evaluation, or may have concerns about doing so, should be acknowledged and the principle of voluntary participation maintained. These concerns can be mitigated by:

- Ensuring that information about evaluation is systematically provided to participants. This will include information about the rationale for the evaluation; how individual identity will be protected; contact details in the event of any questions.
- Where possible, separation of evaluation requests from BSP delivery.

- Assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.
- In the event that there is a general concern about participating within a TCE BSP, this would be explored by the project lead and, where necessary, escalated to the local authority.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The fact that an evaluation is being carried out internally shifts the power relationship between evaluator and those being evaluated. The evaluator has access to a wider range of information about the organisation, and pre-existing relationships with those being evaluated. Reporting may also become more complex in light of the relatively small nature of the BSP cohorts and the programme team, with the consequence that it may be more difficult to provide assurances of anonymity.

TCE will mitigate these concerns as follows:

- Clarity in BSP and evaluation processes regarding the naming of local areas. - As far as possible, evaluation communication to come from the UoB evaluation team.
- Identifying information (job role and local area) will be removed from survey data at point of analysis.
- Thoughtful and sensitive communication to evaluation participants regarding the use of quotes and qualitative information.
- Clear information to be provided to TCE programme staff and BSP participants regarding how analysis of information will take place.
- Ongoing discussion and joint decision making regarding the nature of case studies and how issues of confidentiality and anonymity will be managed in respect to these. Accountability and reporting Responsibility for the evaluation sits with the University of Bedfordshire, reporting to OMT and PMG and to the Department for Education. An evaluation steering group has been established. Please see the evaluation QA processes for further details.

3. How will data be managed and protected?

The evaluation will involve handling different forms of data. The following aims to explain how this can be safely and transparently received, stored, processed and destroyed. It should be read in the context of definitions of data in the GDPR and associated guidance:

<https://ico.org.uk/fororganisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/keydefinitions/what-is-personal-data/>

Data for the evaluation will be collected from primary research via online surveys, interviews (in the event these are requested or are necessary if individuals cannot attend focus groups) and focus groups. This may exist in hard copy form (audio recordings, written notes) or in soft form (on survey or other analytic software). Additional data will be available from microsite analytics and other TCE processes (e.g. application data).

All data will receive additional password protection in addition to the protection provided through being stored on the internal shared drive TCE Evaluation Folder. Access to this is restricted to the research team, and ownership is held by Dr Helen Beckett (meaning that only she can authorise access to the folder).

Hard copies of data (notes from focus groups; any meeting observations) will be scanned, uploaded and the hard copies destroyed via the UoB confidential waste system.

In the event that any data collection/recording takes place using recorders, these must be encrypted. If transcription is required this will be undertaken using UoB's transcription service (Transcribelt) which has a robust system for data protection.

Data will be held for the life of the TCE project only.

Online survey data is being collected via SmartSurvey. This has been assessed as complying with GDPR and suitable for protecting data (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/gdpr>). All surveys will be systematically removed from their secure online location, and archived on the internal secure drive (S: Drive) as soon as feasible once data collection is no longer active.

Data downloaded from Smart Survey will be anonymised wherever possible, specifically in relation to job role and local area.

All analysis of data should comply with consent agreements and should aim to provide an objective and fair representation of the facts. Analysis of data should not draw conclusions which cannot be validated by data collected within the project. No names will be used in the reporting of data. The use of quotes will be subject to consideration of whether the quote is necessary and whether identification is possible.

References

Draper, L. (2001) 'Being evaluated: a practitioner's view', *Children & Society*, 15, 1, pp.46-52.

Preston-Shoot, M. (2009) Guidance on Insider Research. IASREC 2009. Luton: University of Bedfordshire. Available at:

https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/249457/insider_research_guidance_iasrec_oct_09.pdf

The Children's Society Ethical Principles for Conducting Ethical Research

Research in Practice (2020) *Evaluation Data Protection Guidance*.

University of Bedfordshire Ethics Guidance. <http://www.beds.ac.uk/iasrec>