



Research ethics statement

1. Principles of research ethics

1.1. The Bridge Group is committed to conducting high quality, independent research. We adopt innovative approaches to investigate and understand social equality. We ensure that all research is conducted in accordance with ethical principles.

1.2. All research will be conducted with an ethic of respect for cultures, communities, the individual/person, and independent knowledge. This ethic of respect informs our approach to research design and the development of our projects at every stage.

2. Objectives of ethics statement

2.1. Protect the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of all participants (including researchers).

2.2. Codify the principles governing the Bridge Group's research involving participants and personal data.

2.3. Establish the highest standards of research practice across the organisation to achieve high quality research.

2.4. Provide information for sponsors, clients and collaborators.

2.5. Provide information for research participants.

3. Responsibilities to participants

3.1. All Bridge Group researchers, and Fellows and collaborators contributing to projects, should work within an ethic of respect for all individuals involved in the research they are

undertaking. This means that individuals must be treated fairly, sensitively, and without prejudice.

3.2. The Bridge Group is committed to making reasonable adjustments for all researchers and participants to meet individual needs and ensure inclusion and involvement.

3.3. Research projects will take place in an inclusive environment, ensuring that the experiences of differences arising from age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant characteristic are respected and valued.

3.4. The Lead Researcher will ensure that physical, social, and financial barriers to participation are overcome wherever possible. This will include consideration of the cost of travel to interview, and transparent communication about the option to claim for expenses, as well as access requirements, such as research location and the timing of interviews.

3.5. The Bridge Group requires all researchers to be cognisant of the ways in which structural inequalities inform all social relationships, including those developed in the course of research. In view of the strategic priorities of the charity, it expects particular sensitivity to issues relating to socio-economic background, and its intersection with other diversity and equality characteristics, at every stage of the project.

3.6. Researchers are required to consider the ethical implications of their research on participants at every stage of the project: prior to it, during it, and afterwards.

3.7. Researchers must be transparent about how the research is funded and declare any sponsor at the outset in the Participant Information Document.

3.8. Researchers have a duty to share the outcomes of the research with participants if they choose to be kept informed. This will involve the Research Lead reflecting with the research team on the most suitable way of engaging participants and sharing information. For instance, by emailing a copy of the final report, inviting participants to the report launch, or emailing a brief summary.

4. Scope

4.1. Research Leads are responsible for operationalising our ethical principles in each project. But all Bridge Group researchers are expected to follow them as a matter of routine practice to foster an ethic of respect for individuals, achieve high quality outputs and maintain our reputation for research excellence.

4.2. This ethical policy relates to all Bridge Group staff, Fellows and collaborators who contribute to projects involving participants and personal data.

5. Consent

5.1. Researchers are responsible for obtaining participants' voluntary, informed consent to be involved in projects. Throughout the research process, researchers will remain sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish to withdraw their consent at any time, for any or no reason. It should be made clear to participants that they can withdraw at any point without needing to provide an explanation and that there will be no repercussions. (See requirements for [Participant Information Document](#)).

5.2. Lead researchers must ensure that all potential participants understand the purpose of the research and why their participation is necessary. They must complete a [Participant Information Document](#) and share it with potential participants so they know how their data will be used and shared and who to contact if they have further questions or wish to withdraw from the process.

5.3. In the context of engaging vulnerable participants, such as young people under 18, in research, researchers should consider approaching gatekeepers before directly approaching participants.

5.4. The principles of consent also apply to any possible reuse of data, for instance, if the same data was used by the Bridge Group to address new research questions. If data are to be reused, this should be made clear when gaining initial consent.

5.5. It is recommended that only anonymised and disaggregated data should be archived for sharing with other researchers beyond the original research project team, and that researchers minimise the possibility that traces of identity retained within anonymised digital data can lead to the identification of participants. All Bridge Group researchers must be familiar with the charity's Data Security and Confidentiality Policy.

6. Minimising harm arising from participation in research

6.1. Operationalising this ethical policy should help to make participants feel both valued and safe. In advance of data collection, researchers must reflect on their duty of care in order to identify any potential risks and to seek to mitigate them to minimise any challenges for both researchers and participants.

6.2. Researchers should be transparent about any harm to participants that might arise from the process of the research or its publication. Any unexpected harm to participants that arises during the course of the research, or following its publication, should be brought to their attention immediately or to the attention of their guardians/gatekeepers by the Research Lead. For instance, negative publicity following publication may impact research participants who have given time and shared intimate experiences with researchers.

6.3. Researchers should ensure that research designs do not advantage one group of participants over others. For instance, consistency of approach can minimise uneven treatment across research communities. But, flexibility and situated judgement is required of researchers as there may be circumstances that mean a consistent approach could result in the uneven treatment of participants.

6.4. In the event of research participants being under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults, the Research Lead should involve the institution or organisation in which the research is set and ensure they are involved in the process of gaining consent. For instance, gatekeepers, such as teachers, should be contacted and invited to mediate the process of engaging young or vulnerable participants. Additionally, researchers should adopt the institution's safeguarding policy and contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer in the event of any concerns.

7. Privacy and data storage

7.1. All researchers should recognise the entitlement of both organisations and individuals to privacy and anonymity. Throughout the research process, participant data will be treated as both confidential and anonymous.

7.2. In some research contexts, anonymity may not be possible. For example, if conducting fieldwork in a small organisation or community. In these cases, sensitivity will be required to negotiate the handling of data and representation of participating individuals and/or organisations.

7.3. Researchers must refer to the Bridge Group's Data Security and Confidentiality Policy for more details.

8. Responsibilities for researchers' wellbeing and development

8.1. The Bridge Group is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of researchers and is sensitive to the potential risks associated with fieldwork. It is the responsibility of the Lead Researcher to undertake a risk assessment in advance of any fieldwork and to offer ongoing monitoring of researcher safety.