

Play Scotland

Ethics of working with children and young people: Policy Statement

In both research and practice with children, there are particularly high ethical standards. Fundamental to this is upholding children's rights across the process which will be facilitated by our robust rights-based methodology. Power differentials are also important to be mindful of, and this requires a reflective approach from the team in order to be aware of how the children see us, as well as how we see them. Informed consent/ dissent is also an important point of discussion as some question whether it is realistic to expect children to fully understand the implications of taking part. However, this does not mean you should not try to explain. Ethical literature tends to settle on a need to allow children informed dissent, and not be compelled to participate in activities when they do not want to.

At all stages of working with children and young people, we will ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR) by following the latest guidance issued by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). GDPR does not fundamentally change children's data protection rights from the Data Protection Act. However, it emphasises that children have the same data protection rights as adults, as 'data subjects' under this legislation. Questions of children's competence also remain the same under GDPR. This means that only if there is evidence to suggest a child is *not* competent to exercise their own data protection rights or consent to processing themselves should a parent/carer act on their behalf. If a child is competent then in most cases it should be appropriate to let the child act for themselves. However, the overriding consideration should still be what is in their best interests.

All children engaging with Play Scotland will be informed of any project aims and implications in an age and stage appropriate format. In Scotland, a person aged 12 or over is presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to be able to exercise their data protection rights. This aligns with Play Scotland's approach of seeking to find ways that work with children's existing abilities, understanding and competencies, but always having children's best interests at heart. Thus, we will inform parents of children we work with of the project, but consent or non-consent will be determined by the participant themselves, unless we find evidence that the child is not competent to do so.

We will revisit ethics throughout projects, including attention to the impact of protected characteristics of both the children and research team. A child-rights approach necessitates attention to non-discrimination as a central tenet of the UNCRC and all those working directly with children will be members of the PVG scheme. The Child Protection Officer of Play Scotland (currently the CEO) will take ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

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Marguerite Hunter Blair Chief Executive Officer

Contact details 07795954856 marguerite@playscotland.org