

Research Ethics

• PRIFYSGOL CYMRU •
UNIVERSITY OF WALES



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Policy

- **SRA = informative, educative, advisory, discursive; interdisciplinary; non-sanctionable.**
- **European Commission = standard setting; quality management – pan-European; anticipating ERA.**

Some issues and dilemmas

- Individual responsibility of researcher at “coalface”
- How to balance harm and benefit
- Need for dynamic ethical decision-taking
- Divided loyalties – professional/“client” accountability
- Ethical pluralism – feature of “normative” ethics and inevitable consequence of devising a pragmatic code.

5. RESEARCH GOVERNANCE

- Establish systematic procedures for ethical review.

(has utilitarian and teleological gains)

- Adopt standardised protocols for checklisting ethical decisions (Section 6 in SRA Guidelines)

(utilitarian and deontological)

Seeking quality assurance

- Expert mentorship
- Ethical review procedures for all social research (in-house or independent?)
- Training courses centrally validated by a national professional body
- Professional doctorates for advanced practitioners
- Kitemarking procedures for organisations and practitioners
- Professional registration and licensing (sanctions against unethical behaviour)

Example: vulnerable subjects

- Defining “vulnerability”.

Vulnerabilities of...

- Age (extremes)
- Disability (varying in degrees)
- Physical/mental ill health/incapacity
- “Location”:
 - customer/client
 - employment
 - geography
 - ethnicity
 - community (linguistic/social) ...etc.

...lead to deprivations of...

- time
- money
- energy (physical and mental)
- psychological stability

... therefore enhancing exclusion potential.

Example: vulnerable subjects

- Defining “vulnerability”.
- Protecting vulnerability while ensuring inclusion (“reachability”).
- Balancing stakeholder gains/losses.
- Estimating distress.
- Preserving anonymity.
- Unwarranted material gain/loss.

