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Introduction

This practitioners' Guide to Research Ethics grew out of our own experience of engaging with Research Ethics Committees (RECs) for modest practitioner-research projects. Months later, with our timelines in disarray, we emerged with reconfigured projects, shocked at how little we had known at the beginning of this process.

We know that almost everyone who embarks on such a journey will inevitably spend a huge amount of time, energy and effort learning the research ethics procedures ropes, getting to grips with terms, navigating through formidable forms, collecting letters of support and permission, drafting information sheets and consent forms, and, if they haven't lost the will to continue, eventually pressing SEND while heaving a huge sigh of relief. But, is all this necessary, we asked ourselves... had we known what we were in for from the very beginning, would we have saved time and aggravation? The answer, we now know, is an emphatic yes.

Since we documented our long and arduous journey, we decided to put this to the advantage of our practitioner colleagues. The result? This Guide.

Practitioners are inevitably involved in research or research-related procedures (such as monitoring and evaluation) at some or other time. You yourself may be embarking on a project as a result of work-place initiatives; deciding to do a research degree; teaching a research degree; or a colleague is interested in *your* work for *their* research, and you find yourself wondering about research ethics. As practitioners often working with vulnerable people, our very practices are embedded in ethics and safeguarding, but research ethics is slightly different.

As part of seeking a broader understanding of research ethics, and preparing for this Guide, we looked at the global understanding of human rights as well as UK human rights legislation; we explored various universities' and organisations' RECs and their procedures; we drew on our own experience of applying to statutory RECs and we read various research guides. While many of these were not directly relevant to us, we did gain the understanding that research ethics is as much about doing good research as it is about averting risk, and safeguarding *all* research participants!

What you will NOT find in this Guide is the nuts and bolts of research design: we avoid too much talk of methodology and methods, and we barely touch on data collecting instruments or data analysis. As researchers, these are very much *your* business and there are plenty of guides that deal explicitly with research methods. The emphasis here is on how research ethics impacts your research preparation: from our experience it is the research area in conjunction with ethical considerations that shape a research methodology and method.

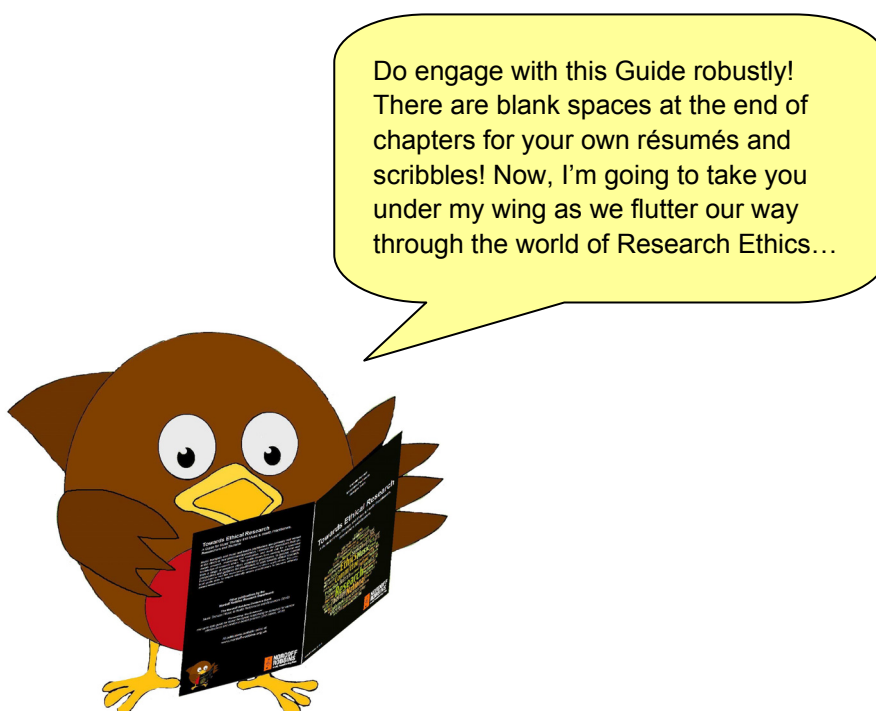
Our message is simple: make research ethics part of your thinking from the very beginning, rather than face it once your design is in place and it's time to submit your application to a REC. To save you dismantling and reconfiguring your project for the sake of application protocols, find out which REC you need to engage with and contact them from the very start. We've planned this Guide in a way that we hope engages with you and with your practices, and invites you into a journey that will lead to exciting and ethically robust research!

This Guide is in three parts, with Part A providing the foundations for thinking about research ethics. Here we talk you through research ethics terms (some of which differ slightly between committees and organisations) to help you remain alert to how these terms impact on your own planning and submissions. Part B is a resource for what we feel are particularly useful books, websites, policy documents and chapters to assist you on your research ethics journey. Part C takes you on what can feel like a circular journey – through visiting and re-visiting the various milestones of committee applications. Here the snakes and ladders analogy signals what can feel like bumpy ascents and sudden descents, and at times being at the mercy of a dice... but keep your research dreams well within your sights. At the end of the day, we had a strong desire to research our practices, and this fuelled our determination to succeed. Succeed we did, and this opened doors to the rich delights and surprises that continue to emerge from researching our practices.

Good Luck and Bon Courage!

The Nordoff Robbins Research Team.
(Prof. Mercédès Pavlicevic, Giorgos Tsiris and Camilla Farrant)

P.S. We would like to introduce you to our Research Department robin whose insistent trilling came to represent a mixture of voices (not always cheerful, and at times rather too know it all). We had to restrict his over insistent appearances (he has a tendency to show off) so we hope that he'll remain restrained throughout your reading.



CHAPTER 4

Considering Places, People and Procedures

So far we have considered broad research ethics concepts. In this chapter we focus particularly on places, people and procedures. We came across the particular terms considered here through completing research ethics applications and we hope you'll avoid the confusions we experienced, since many such terms have meanings that do not necessarily correspond to common sense or everyday language use. Bear in mind that this chapter may still apply to you even if you are doing monitoring, evaluation or audit.

What is a Host Organisation?

The answer to this question is less obvious than it seems. *Where* research is situated can mean several things! Host Organisation may be the place that employs you (e.g. Primary Care Trust, school); the place where research participants are located (e.g. hospital, care-home); the place where data is collected; the research institution doing the data collection and more. Since Host Organisations generally need to write letters of support for REC submissions, ascertaining who is and is not a Host Organisation can become complicated; you could have multiple Host Organisations. However, not all RECs take the same stance on what counts or does not count as a Host Organisation. Check the guidelines of your REC. In the following table are scenarios we have encountered at the Research Department of Nordoff Robbins:

Examples of what constitutes a Host Organisation	Host Organisation?
<p>Example 1</p> <p><i>As part of a research study, we observed a music therapist working in a care-home. Because we observed her in her capacity as an employee of this care-home, the care-home was considered a Host Organisation.</i></p>	Care-home ✓
<p>Example 2</p> <p><i>A music therapist (who works in a hospice) participated in our research study by filling in a questionnaire. Since the study didn't involve the participant in her capacity as a hospice employee, the hospice was not considered a Host Organisation.</i></p>	Hospice X
<p>Example 3</p> <p><i>As part of our research project, we studied videos of music therapy sessions that a music therapy Charity had released in DVD format for publicity purposes. Because this material was already in the public domain¹, the Charity wasn't considered a Host Organisation.</i></p>	Music Therapy Charity X

¹ For an explanation of material in the 'public domain', see p. 55.

<p>Example 4</p> <p><i>In our research project, we studied audio recordings of music therapists' work in three care-homes: A, B, and C. Because the recordings were originally generated for organisational purposes, each care-home was considered a Host Organisation¹.</i></p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Care-home</th> <th>Care-home</th> <th>Care-home</th> </tr> <tr> <th>A</th> <th>B</th> <th>C</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Care-home	Care-home	Care-home	A	B	C	✓	✓	✓
Care-home	Care-home	Care-home								
A	B	C								
✓	✓	✓								
<p>Example 5</p> <p><i>For our research study we held an interview in a local café with a practitioner who works in a special needs school. We didn't have to name the café as a host organisation! But because we interviewed him as a representative employee of the special school, the special school was named as a Host Organisation.</i></p>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Special school</td> <td>Café</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓</td> <td>X</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Special school	Café	✓	X					
Special school	Café									
✓	X									
<p>Example 6</p> <p><i>A music therapist participated in our research study by giving an interview at a quiet room in the premises of the care-home where she works. This study didn't relate to the care-home as an organisation, and the participant was interviewed out of his working hours at the care-home. Therefore, the care-home was not considered as a Host Organisation.</i></p>	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Care-home</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Care-home	X							
Care-home										
X										

Figure 8: Examples of what constitutes a Host Organisation

Who is a Research Participant?

Any person who takes part in a research study counts as a Research Participant. Research participants are involved in the data collection (and sometimes data analysis) phase of the research and their involvement can take a range of forms:

- being interviewed by a researcher
- participating in a focus group discussion with other participants
- filling in a questionnaire
- being observed by a researcher
- being part of an audio or video material that is not in the public domain and is to be used for research purposes
- cross-checking data analysis for accuracy

All research participants need to know what the research is about, what you've asked or invited them to do and for how long. They also need to know their rights and responsibilities. This information generally forms part of a Participant Information Sheet (which RECs study closely), accompanied by a Consent Form that asks whether or not they agree to participate on the basis of the information you have provided (for examples of these sheets and forms see p.36-38).

When involving participants in a study, you *always* need to get consent for their participation. Consenting procedures look straight forward at first glance, but can include 'tricky' paths. In this next section, we consider the distinction between consent and assent. Be sure to use the 'proper' terminology when preparing your research ethics application.

Towards Ethical Research

A Guide for Music Therapy and Music & Health Practitioners,
Researchers and Students

Music therapists and music and health practitioners are generally well versed in the ethics of their professional practices. However the procedures that underpin research, monitoring and evaluation and audit call for a specialist knowledge of research ethics. This guide draws from existing legislation and from a range of research ethics committee procedures, to provide current perspectives and guidance for practitioners to work towards ethical research. Embedded in 'real life' experiences of research ethics applications, this practical guide aims to inspire ethically-aware practitioners to become ethically-aware researchers.

**Other publications by the
Nordoff Robbins Research Department:**

The Nordoff Robbins Evidence Bank:
Music Therapy / Music & Health References and Resources (2010)

Presenting the Evidence:
The up to date guide for music therapists responding to demands for clinical effectiveness and evidence-based practice (2nd edition, 2009)

All publications available online at:
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