Insight Consultancy and Research (ICR) Limited

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Safeguarding Policy

How ICR protects children, young people and adults at risk in its research and engagement work

Version 1.0 | Effective: 22 November 2026 | Owner: Designated Safeguarding Lead

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how ICR protects children, young people and adults at risk who take part in, or are affected by, our research, consultation and engagement work. It applies to all directors, employees, freelancers, subcontractors, fieldwork partners and volunteers working on ICR projects, whether face to face, by telephone or online.

For this policy, a child is anyone under 18. An adult at risk is anyone aged 18 or over who has care and support needs and, because of those needs, may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

2. Principles

- The welfare of participants always comes before the needs of a project, a client or a deadline.
- Everyone has an equal right to protection, regardless of age, disability, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, language or background.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Concerns must be acted on, not ignored or left for someone else.
- We work in partnership with clients, local authorities and statutory agencies, and we share information where needed to keep someone safe.

3. Legal and Professional Framework

This policy reflects the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Care Act 2014, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and its guidance on research with children, young people and vulnerable people. Where a client has its own safeguarding procedures, ICR follows those as well.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Contact
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Managing Director)	info@icr-me.com (subject line: "Safeguarding")
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	info@icr-me.com (subject line: "Safeguarding")

The DSL is responsible for:

- receiving and assessing all safeguarding concerns and deciding on referrals;
- keeping secure, confidential records of concerns and actions;
- making sure staff and partners are trained and briefed before fieldwork;
- approving safeguarding risk assessments for projects involving children or adults at risk;
- liaising with clients, local authority safeguarding teams and the police;

- reviewing this policy every year and after any serious incident.

If the DSL is unavailable, the Deputy DSL takes on these responsibilities. Every project manager must know how to reach one of them at all times during fieldwork.

5. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

- Anyone who will have direct contact with children or adults at risk must have an appropriate DBS check before starting work. Enhanced checks are used where the role meets the legal threshold.
- We take up references and check identity and right to work for all fieldworkers.
- Subcontractors and fieldwork partners must confirm in writing that their staff are vetted to the same standard, and ICR may ask for evidence.

6. Training

- All staff and freelancers complete safeguarding awareness training at induction and refresh it every two years.
- The DSL and Deputy DSL complete designated lead training and refresh it every two years.
- Every project involving children or adults at risk includes a safeguarding briefing covering this policy, the project risk assessment, who to contact and how to record a concern.

7. Project Planning and Risk Assessment

Before any project involving children, young people, adults at risk or potentially sensitive subjects, the project manager completes a safeguarding risk assessment, approved by the DSL. It covers:

- who the participants are and any particular vulnerabilities;
- the topic and whether it may cause distress or prompt disclosures;
- venues, timing, travel and lone-working arrangements;
- consent arrangements and any need for parental or carer involvement;
- signposting information for support services relevant to the topic;
- how concerns will be escalated during fieldwork.

8. Consent and Participation

- For children under 16, we obtain the informed consent of a parent or responsible adult, and the child's own agreement to take part.
- Young people aged 16 and 17 may consent for themselves where they understand what is involved, but we consider involving a parent or carer depending on the topic and setting.
- For adults who may lack capacity to consent, we follow the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the client's procedures, and involve a carer or advocate where appropriate.
- Information about the research is provided in plain English and accessible formats, and in other languages where needed.
- Participants are told they can stop or withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and how their information will be used and protected.
- Participants are told, before they start, that confidentiality may have to be broken if they tell us something that suggests they or someone else is at risk of serious harm.

9. Code of Conduct During Fieldwork

Staff and partners must:

- carry ICR identification and explain who they are and why they are there;
- interview children in the presence or within sight and hearing of a parent, carer or responsible adult, unless a different arrangement has been agreed in the risk assessment;
- avoid being alone with a child or adult at risk wherever possible;
- never give personal contact details or connect with participants on social media;
- never offer lifts, gifts beyond agreed incentives, or make promises they cannot keep;
- follow the lone-working rules in the ICR Health and Safety Policy, including working in pairs for outdoor fieldwork and regular check-ins.

For online and telephone research, staff use ICR-approved accounts only, do not record sessions without consent, and follow the same rules on contact and conduct.

10. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

A concern may arise from something a participant says, something a fieldworker sees, or information from a third party. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, financial, neglect, exploitation, discrimination or self-neglect.

If a participant tells you something worrying:

- stay calm, listen and let them speak in their own words;
- do not ask leading questions or investigate;
- do not promise to keep it secret; explain that you may need to tell someone who can help;
- reassure them they were right to tell you;
- write down what was said, in their words, as soon as possible, with the date, time and place, and sign it.

11. Reporting Procedure

1. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999 first.
2. Report the concern to the DSL, or the Deputy DSL if the DSL is not available, the same day and within 24 hours at the latest.
3. The DSL decides whether to refer to the relevant local authority children's or adult social care team, the police, or both, and records the decision and reasons.
4. Where the work is for a client, the DSL informs the client's named safeguarding contact, in line with the contract.
5. Staff must not discuss the concern with anyone other than the DSL, Deputy DSL or the agencies involved.

If staff are unhappy with how a concern has been handled, they may refer it directly to the local authority or the police.

12. Allegations Against Staff Or Partners

Any allegation that an ICR employee, freelancer or partner has harmed, or may pose a risk to, a child or adult at risk is reported straight to the DSL, or to the Managing Director if the allegation concerns the DSL. ICR will refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for allegations involving children, inform the client, remove

the person from fieldwork while the matter is looked into, and make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service where the law requires it.

13. Subcontractors and Partners

All subcontractors and fieldwork partners must follow this policy or an equivalent one approved by ICR, confirm that staff are vetted and trained, and report any concern to ICR's DSL immediately. Safeguarding requirements are written into every subcontract.

14. Records and Confidentiality

Safeguarding records are kept securely, separately from research data, with access limited to the DSL and Deputy DSL. Information is shared only where needed to protect someone, in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Records are kept for as long as needed for safeguarding and legal purposes and then securely destroyed.

15. Monitoring and Review

The DSL reviews this policy every year, after any serious incident, and when legislation or guidance changes. Lessons learned from any concern are shared with staff and partners.

Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Managing Director and the Designated Safeguarding Lead on 22 November 2026.