

ESRO Values and Ethical Policy

2016

ESRO: CORE VALUES

At ESRO our core principles focus on giving our clients new kinds of insight and new ways of understanding problems, whilst remaining true to robust and detailed research evidence. We are guided by the truism that ‘what people say they do, what they think they do and what they really do, are rarely the same thing’. To this end, our research methods are committed to revealing lived realities, and we are always looking for new ways to immerse ourselves in different research contexts. We believe that by looking deeper and thinking differently, research can be used to inspire and energise. Good research should never remain on the shelf.

ESRO: ETHICAL POLICY

In all our dealings – both internally and with our clients and respondents – ESRO is committed to working professionally, respectfully and courteously at all times. Many of the associated values of this are set out independently in our Safeguarding, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Environmental (Sustainable Development), Quality Assurance and Data Protection, Information and Security Policies. In addition, we abide strictly by the codes of conduct of the SRA (Social Research Association), the ASA (Association of Social Anthropologists), the MRS (Market Research Society) and the AQR (Association for Qualitative Research).

ESRO'S COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

ESRO has developed a reputation for being able to research groups that are often described as ‘hard to reach’ or ‘vulnerable’ by policy makers and other researchers. While of course we take seriously our duty of care to all who participate in our research, we are especially vigilant regarding the welfare of these groups. We aim to ensure that their participation in the research process is not only helpful to us, but provides them with a positive experience. We achieve this in a number of ways, including the following:

- As well as abiding by the different codes of conduct named above, we have our own code which informs how we recruit participants, conduct fieldwork, store and analyse data. All our staff are regularly DBS checked and, in addition, we conduct regular internal feedback and training sessions in which researchers share their experience of working with vulnerable people or in especially challenging environments – e.g. prisons, Young Offenders Institutions, hospitals, dementia care facilities.
- Given the paramount importance of ‘informed consent’ to social research – ensuring that participants have understood the implications of their participation – we ensure all our fieldworkers are assiduously trained in the importance of being transparent about the nature and purpose of the research. In those cases where it is not possible to be entirely open with

participants (e.g. sensitivity/confidentiality, order effects or bias), we always agree in advance with our clients the exact procedure for gaining consent and briefing respondents.

- Even given an individual's informed consent, we follow strict protocols protecting the personal data of all those we study. This includes ensuring that respondents are aware what the data will be used for and how it will be stored. In most cases we anonymise the identity of our respondents by changing personal information and any personal identifiers. If for any reason we need to use personal identifiers (e.g. if making a film or taking photos) then we ensure that the individual has given full consent.

Further information regarding our treatment of participants is contained in ESRO's Safeguarding and Data Protection, Information and Security Policies.

NB. This overarching Ethical Policy is subject to constant review, and is checked and updated at least once a year in relation to client and staff feedback. All new staff are required to sign up to our internal policies, and are given a thorough introduction to our ethical standards and expectations when joining the company.