Barnardo’s Research Ethics Committee

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Description automatically generatedChanges to Barnardo’s Research Ethics

Committee (BREC)

## Updated 26/06/2024

## Changes to Remit and Scope

## 1. BREC no longer will review research (including evaluation) conducted with Barnardo’s staff

Before the review, research “Involving staff, that might lead to publication”[[1]](#endnote-1) needed a BREC review. BREC will no longer review research where the participants are Barnardo’s staff.

**Why?**

* This distinction unnecessarily complicates BREC’s remit.
* BREC could involuntarily prevent Barnardo’s staff taking part in external research projects. We don’t believe it should be up to BREC to say if staff members are allowed to participate in research.
* BREC is reviewing research with staff members that is being published externally as a risk mitigating measure to help protect Barnardo's reputation against findings that might reflect poorly on its staff and services. This is not research ethics and BREC does not have final sign-off of research outputs, and therefore it shouldn’t be in BREC’s remit.

## 2. Research (including evaluation) published both internally and externally needs to be submitted to BREC for review

Before the review “Gathering insight that you do not intend to share with people outside of Barnardo’s (other than ‘business as usual’ reporting to commissioners, which itself does not need to be submitted to BREC)”[[2]](#endnote-2) did not need to be reviewed by BREC. The publication status of a project no longer determines if it needs a review or not. If the project is research, it needs to be reviewed irrespective of who the research is published for.

**Why?**

Research which involves service users, former service users, or children and young people accessed via Barnardo’s services as participants needs a BREC review to protect their rights, safety, dignity and wellbeing, irrespective of whether the research is published externally or internally. Research could be damaging to participants throughout the research process irrespective of whether the research is published internally or externally.

## 3. BREC will allow undergraduate or masters’ students access to Barnardo’s service users if the students are current Barnardo’s staff

It has been BREC’s advice that undergraduate or Masters’ students (including Barnardo’s staff) should not normally be given access to service users for research purposes. BREC will no longer advise against research just because a member of staff is doing the research as part of an undergraduate or Master’s study.

**Why?**

When a current member of Barnardo’s staff is undertaking undergraduate or Master’s research, it is inconsistent and unfair to advise against them doing research just because it forms part of their undergraduate or Master’s course. Barnardo’s staff who are students should be able to demonstrate that they meet the necessary level of experience/knowledge required by BREC to do research with Barnardo’s service users. The BREC group agreed that this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## 4. BREC no longer will ask for researchers’ CVs as part of the BREC application

BREC used to ask researchers to submit their CVs as part of the BREC application process. Researcher CVs were used to help reviewers assess the competency of researchers.

**Why?**

In BREC’s experience researcher CVs have not been helpful in judging researcher competence. BREC make decisions on the strength of the application based on the content in the Application form and CVs could confuse or influence decision making. BREC still require researchers to provide information about relevant training, experience, qualifications and the policies they plan to follow when conducting their research.

## Changes to BREC’s Processes and Procedures

## 5. The BREC Application form, Guidance for Applicants, Reviewers Feedback form and Guidance for Reviewers form have been combined into one form/document

The B\_BREC Application from, C\_BREC Guidance for Applicants form, C\_BREC Guidance for Reviewers form and D\_BREC Reviewer Feedback form use to be 4 forms that had to be stored, opened, and downloaded separately. All these forms have now been combined into one form, BREC Application form.

**Why?**

To improve the user experience for researchers and reviewers, expediate the process of applying to BREC, and to make the review processes quicker and easier for reviewers. In addition, having one form instead of multiple forms for both applicants and reviewers should create a better continuity and flow within BREC process and cut down on human error.

## 6. BREC applications will be reviewed by one Supporting Reviewer and one Lead Reviewer

In the past all research applications submitted to BREC were independently reviewed by one Lead Reviewer and two Supporting reviewers. This has changed and the number of Supporting Reviewers per application decreased from two to one.

**Why?**

The recruitment of two Supporting Reviewers per application has always been one of the most cumbersome and time-consuming processes for the BREC Coordinator. When the BREC Team lost the BREC Coordinator role, the recruitment of two Supporting Reviewers per application became unsustainable and it was reduced to one Supporting reviewer per application. The new way of working was piloted within the BREC Team for three months before it was accepted. The only potential risk identified with one less Supporting reviewer is that less reviewers will be scrutinising future applications, which could mean an increased risk of something being missed. It was thought this is a small risk and will be mitigated by reviewers having the option to call on Subject Matter Experts (SME) if they feel they need additional support with an application. Every application is still reviewed by two experienced and trained researchers, one Lead Reviewer and one Supporting reviewer.

## 7. Supporting Reviewers are all members of the Barnardo’s Research and Evaluation team

In the past members of staff from across the charity contributed as Supporting Reviewers. This has been changed so that only staff members from the Barnardo’s Research and Evaluation Team (R&E Team) are Supporting Reviewers. Supporting reviewers are still supported by Subject Matter Experts (SME) - based in children's services - when needed. SME offer unique and crucial knowledge based on experience of day-to-day work with children, young people, and families.

**Why?**

When the BREC Coordinator role was lost, the recruitment of Supporting reviewers from across the charity became unsustainable and was taken into the R&E Team. The new way of working was piloted for 3 months and reviewed, and was accepted. No problems were discovered within the pilot period.

## 7. Complaints Procedure

BREC is committed to providing an excellent service in a professional, fair and supportive manner. Unfortunately, there may be times when things go wrong, and therefore BREC created a complaints procedure to deal with concerns when they happen.

**Why?**

A Complaints procedure should provide colleagues with a mechanism to let BREC know when the Committee’s service does not meet their expectations and will provide the BREC Team with clear processes to follow on how to investigate, escalate and remedy a complaint in a consistent and timely manner.

## Further Changes

BREC’s remit, scope, processes and procedures will monitored by the BREC Team on an on-going basis and more formally reviewed bi-annually to make sure it stays current and fit for purpose.

1. BREC Terms of Reference [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. BREC Service User Insight Checklist [↑](#endnote-ref-2)