

Best Practice Guidelines for Conducting Research with Adults experiencing Food Insecurity - an empirical based approach to food security provision in vulnerable populations.

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Title	Best Practice Guidelines for Conducting Research with Adults experiencing Food Insecurity -an empirical based approach to food security provision in vulnerable populations.
Lead Organisation	The Rowett Institute.
All Organisations	The Rowett Institute at the University of Aberdeen.
Category	Emerging Practice
Poverty Impact	Awareness raising.
Introduction to the Project	
Best Practice Guidelines for Conducting Research with Adults experiencing Food Insecurity are recommendations aimed at further supporting researchers working with this vulnerable population beyond the standard ethical guidance. The guidelines provide practical advice on risk assessment, safeguarding and addressing ethical dilemmas that may arise when engaging/researching with this group. The ultimate goal of the project is to identify strategies to improve research practice and integrity and to help to protect research participants from potential harms.	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?	David Watts, Principal Investigator on the research team.
How did the idea for the project come about?	
The idea for the project emerged whilst requesting help from staff of food support organisations to recruit participants into our study of adults experiencing food insecurity in Scotland when a practitioner asked whether guidelines existed for conducting research with this vulnerable. This highlighted a need to go beyond existing guidelines and develop them further for this particular group.	
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?	Yes
The guidelines were informed by existing ethical guidelines such as those published by the British Sociological Association and relevant literature. A bibliography is also attached to the guidelines advising of other relevant publications	
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes
The development of the idea involved several others. For instance, a steering group that was established including staff and volunteers from food support organisations, individuals with lived experience of food insecurity and academics from other institutions. A student on a work placement also contributed significantly by supporting administration and drafting. Dr John Mackenzie coordinated the process, managed the placement and worked with the steering group to refine the guidelines based on previous guidelines, existing literature and collective feedback.	
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	Yes
One individual with lived experience of food insecurity actively participated in the steering group. Having previously experienced food insecurity and later becoming involved in self-advocacy and political initiatives addressing inequality in Scotland, she brought extensive personal experience and familiarity with research participation. She contributed strong, well-articulated views on what should and should not be included in the guidelines, which helped the direction of discussions	

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Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?		No
Which organisation provided funding?		
How much was required?		
What was the specific source of funding?		
Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes
Staff/Volunteer Time	A postgraduate student on a work placement.	
Facilities / Workspace	Zoom/Internet.	
Equipment	Computers	
Local Knowledge	Knowledge and experience from the steering group, student on work placement and John's previous experience of carrying out research with adults who had experienced food insecurity.	
Food and Drink	N/A	
Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?		Yes
There were only a couple minor barriers when developing the initial idea. At one point, the student on work placement misunderstood the task, which caused a small delay. John also noted it could have been helpful to receive more feedback from a wider range of members of the steering group. However, he stated that engagement was effective.		
Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?		Yes
• Recognition of the need for clear guidance when conducting research with food-insecure groups. • Formation of a steering group to support the project's development. • Strong engagement from stakeholders and lived experience contributors.		

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How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?	Approximately one month.
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	It was John's decision

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Early Development

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?	No
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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Are potential users referred to your Project?	No
Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your Project?	No
What is the most common way through which users typically access your Project?	
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?	No

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	Yes
A woman with lived experience of food insecurity contributed to the development of the guidelines, contributing her insights based on personal experience of food insecurity and poverty.	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u> ?	No
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?	Yes
Provided feedback and guidance during steering group meetings to help refine the guidelines. Shared practical insights about food insecurity that informed the content of the guidelines.	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
Dr John Mckenzie.	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	No
This was something John developed in addition to existing workload. He was not given any specific time allocation or guidelines to follow.	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it	
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	Yes
Who is involved?	Staff and volunteers from food-support organisations, people with lived experiences of food insecurity taking part in research and other academics.
How does it work?	As previously discussed, the steering group included academics, food-support workers and people with lived experience of food insecurity. They co-produced a set of flexible guidelines intended to support research practice and improve participant experience.
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	No

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	No
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	No
Is the project part of any other strategy?	No
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	No
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	No
In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	No impact (too early to ascertain)

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Funding

Is funding used to support the work?	No
Has external funding been secured to support the work?	No
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?	No
Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?	No
Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?	No
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?	
N/A	

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?		Yes
Role: A masters student did much of the administrative work of setting up the steering group and coordinating meetings and feedback. They also produced an initial draft of the guidelines.		
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?		No
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?		No
Is the post permanent or fixed term?		No
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??		No
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?		Yes
Facilities / Workspace	A meeting space for the steering group was required.	
Equipment	Internet access, emails and computers.	
Local Knowledge	The Steering Group were invited to contribute on the basis of their expertise	
Food and Drink	N/A	
Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?		Yes
Who provides: Support primarily comes from existing outlets and organisations willing to share resources or expertise (e.g., research organisations providing access to materials or guidance).		

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Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	No
Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	No

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?	No
Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	No
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	No
Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	No
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	No
Has the data that has been collected from this evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?	No
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	Yes
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	Yes

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?		Making progress toward meeting aims
What difference has the project made?		
None yet, as the guidelines have not been made available to researchers nor applied in practice.		
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?		No
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?		No
Has the project changed through time?		No
What changed		
Why has it changed		
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		No
In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		No

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
• The steering-group process worked well. • Stakeholder engagement was strong. • Participation from lived-experience members was particularly valuable. • Co-construction of the guidelines was effective.	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
• Overall, everything worked well. However, a few aspects of the project worked less well • Some steering-group members did not engage or respond consistently. • One lived experience participant volunteered to join but then did not participate. • There was a variation in levels of stakeholder engagement.	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
• Researchers should review the guidelines before designing their research as they influence information sheets, consent forms and recruitment approaches. • The guidelines should be viewed as flexible rather than a fixed set of rules. Any researchers should provide feedback to John who will update and redistribute them periodically. • Early involvement of lived experience contributors is highly beneficial. • Having a steering-group helps improve both ethical and practical aspects of research with vulnerable groups.	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	Yes
The guidelines will be open for researchers to use and subject to continual revision based on John's experience of applying them and feedback from other researchers who are invited to evaluate their effectiveness.	

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How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?

Very easily. The method for creating the guidelines is clear and replicable.

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