Researcher Ethics in the CIAG sector

Career Development Institute/AGCAS/University of Derby
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The importance of ethical research in the CIAG sector

Aims of this session

If you were at this conference last year, you may have already seen me present on CIAG practitioner-research.

If not/for a quick recap:
- The practice of a career development practitioner must be in line with the values of the sector
- By extension, any research undertaken by the practitioner-researcher must uphold ethical values

However:
- Research also has its own ethical parameters and expectations

This presentation will provide a structure to use to demonstrate your engagement with ethics as a practitioner-researcher.

Professional status and researcher ethics

Creating links

- If you are promoting yourself "as a member of" then you must embody the values of that organisation in your research work

- One way to do that is to embed reference to your sector's code of practice / code of ethics in your research methodology

- This enables you to both demonstrate a separation of research from guidance practice and an engagement with expectations within the discipline

- Remember! The ethical values demonstrated by a researcher impact upon their own professional reputation and that of any institution or professional body to which they are affiliated

- Ethical codes take practice beyond legal compliance and bring with them a requirement for ethical and moral sensitivity.

Career Matters Article

You may have seen my earlier article in Career Matters, which is an introduction to how I have mapped research against the 11 points of the Career Development Institute's Code of Ethics, available at: https://www.thecdi.net/write/Documents/Code_of_Ethics_update_2018-web.pdf

In this presentation I explore this approach in further detail

For those of you who are members of AGCAS, consider how these same principles might be applied to 6 points of the AGCAS Code of Ethic, available at: https://www.agcas.org.uk/AGCAS-Member-Code-of-Ethics

(I will also refer to the ACGAS points in this session)

The article image on the left contains:

"This article demonstrates how the points of the CDI's ethical code can be mapped onto practitioner-research."

APPLYING THE CDI CODE OF ETHICS TO PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

EMMA BOLGER

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM THE AUTHOR'S PHD THESIS-IN-PROGRESS.

The research competence of a career development professional is closely related to their promotion of the career development sector. While lax values in a researcher risk bringing the sector into ill-repute, the converse, a rigorous dedication to ethical practice, can promote the sector, highlighting how the career development researcher-practitioner has unique strengths which can be harnessed for wider benefit. Not least, membership of the CDI brings with it the expectation that all members will adhere to the professional body's *Code of Ethics*, an updated version of which was issued in January 2019.

As is the case for all ethical codes, the CDI *Code of Ethics* "is not a rulebook, it does not list procedures to follow for every circumstance but is intended as a guide to professionals in all aspects of their professional lives" (CDI, 2019). This article demonstrates how the points of the CDI's ethical code can be mapped onto practitioner-research.

Point of the CDI Code of Ethics	Application to practitioner research
Accessibility	Accessible research requires a commitment to inclusion at every stage. This includes, for example, the use of inclusive language and adaptable/flexible formats for theory, fieldwork and dissemination of findings.
	There must be the ability for practitioners without academic expertise or academic networks to access the findings of research. Research findings should be openly accessible where possible and promoted to fellow professionals. Dissemination opportunities should be taken up which include in-person sector-specific professional development conferences or online professional training, such as webinars.
Accountability	The *Code of Ethics* can be used within fieldwork, to demonstrate the commitment to ethical practice and enhancing visibility of accountability, for example by signposting it within research interviews and participant information sheets.
	By explicitly presenting oneself as a member of the CDI and upholding the *Code of Ethics*, the practitioner-researcher furthers the standing and good name of their professional body.
Autonomy	Fieldwork undertaken should align with core principles of careers practice and at no time should the researcher intervene with unsolicited advice or give biased direction.
Competence	Professional development activity relating to research skills may be necessary prior to undertaking research to ensure fitness to practice as a practitioner-researcher.
Confidentiality	All research participants can expect to have their data and personal information treated with the same confidentiality as would be afforded to them as career guidance and development clients and in line with the *General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act* (2018).
	Researchers must undertake appropriate disclosure, in line with the client group/research participants as appropriate and to meet the requirements of the *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act* (2006).
Continuous Professional Development	Researcher reflexivity, a specific form of critical self-awareness, should be paramount, perhaps through a research diary to enable identification of competency issues and professional development needs.
	The performance criteria and knowledge and understanding expectations of each of the *National Occupational Standards for the Career Development Sector* (CDI, 2014) can be used to identify professional development needs.
	Engagement with sector-led researcher training, alongside a willingness to share and train other professionals in researcher tools and techniques.

Assumptions

Johnson and Neary (2016) highlight key ethical considerations for those working with human participants in research: informed consent, coercion, incentives, withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality, risk assessment, debriefing, and confirmation.

The exploration of the Code of Ethics we are about to undertake assumes that these aspects of ethical research are already integral to any project you are planning or currently working on.

Reference:
Johnson, C. and Neary, S. (2016) *CPD for the Career Development Professional*, Bath: Trotman.

The 11 points of the Career Development Institute's Code of Ethics

The Career Development Institute believes the Code of Ethics should "be used and referred to as a tool to increase and maintain a common trust and understanding of values and beliefs necessary to do our work" (Career Development Institute, online).

Accessibility

Accountability

Autonomy

Competence

Confidentiality

Continuous Professional Development

Duty of Care—to Clients, Colleagues, Organisations and Self

Equality

Impartiality

Transparency

Trustworthiness

Accessibility

Accessible research requires a commitment to inclusion at every stage!

Inclusive language and adaptable/flexible formats for theory, fieldwork (data collection) and dissemination of findings

Academic researchers: practitioners without academic expertise or academic networks should be able to access the findings of research

- This is far more than a format/academic style/language issue; research findings should be openly accessible where possible and not held behind subscription-only firewalls
- Summary overviews of research with the author's contact details included should be made available in the public domain and promoted to fellow professionals.
- Dissemination opportunities should be taken up which include in-person sector-specific professional development conferences or online professional training, such as webinars.

Accountability

Show willingness to submit to scrutiny

Promote career development professional values in research

The Code of Ethics can be used within fieldwork, to demonstrate the commitment to ethical practice and enhancing visibility of accountability, for example by signposting it within research interviews and participant information sheets

By explicitly presenting oneself as a member of a professional body and upholding the Code of Ethics, the practitioner-researcher furthers the standing and good name of their professional body.

Autonomy

Research should align with core principles of careers practice

At no time should the researcher intervene with unsolicited advice or give biased direction.

Competence

Professional development activity may be necessary prior to undertaking research to ensure that fitness to practice as a practitioner-researcher is achieved

Research should not commence until the practitioner-researcher is sufficiently competent in the research skills required for each individual project.

Confidentiality

Data Protection Act (2018): all research participants can expect to have their data and personal information treated with the same confidentiality as would be afforded to them as CIAG clients

Confidential information can only be disclosed when the safety of the participant or the researcher is at risk or when required by law to disclose information conveyed.

Continuous Professional Development

Researcher reflexivity and critical self-awareness during research should be evident
- a research diary
- Self-identify competency issues and professional development needs.

Accessing training
- Engagement with sector-led researcher training (e.g. today!, CPD modules, ad-hoc training)
- Show willingness to share and train other professionals in researcher tools and techniques.

Duty of Care – to Clients, Colleagues, Organisations and Self

Engagement with practitioner-researcher communities of practice

Role expectations are highly important and must be clarified

At contracting stage, explicitly reiterate the difference between research interviews and change/action orientated career guidance interventions.

Look to all of your affiliations that might have relevance.

Equality

The Equality Act (2010) compliance

Equality impact assessment

Consider an intersectional approach where possible

Research should be designed to recruit from as diverse a group as possible

Researchers should seek to make visible the experiences of underrepresented groups
- researchers should be suitably equipped to identify and work with underrepresented individuals and a commitment shown to ongoing professional development in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Impartiality

Research should be undertaken independently

Be clear about who you are linked to: professional memberships, affiliated institution(s) and employment(s)

If your research is funded, ensure your sponsor is know

Output should not be swayed in the direction of the funders' needs or objectives!

How can research findings focus on client-centred outcomes?

Transparency

Synonymous with accuracy?

Data collected on a participant as part of the research is open to their review if requested, in line with the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Trustworthiness

Deliver on all of your promised outputs!

Ensure that research participants receive the same treatment as would be offered to clients in a professional capacity.

Summary

Finding practical, well thought through ways to apply each point of a Code of Ethics to your research project exemplifies the high standards held up by our profession/sector and helps you to create evidence of your commitment to ethical research

Remember: a rigorous dedication to ethical practice can promote the sector, highlighting how the career development researcher-practitioner has unique strengths which can be harnessed for wider benefit.

Contact details

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