## Template Participant Information Sheet

The [Privacy Notice for Research](https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2019/02/Research-Privacy-Notice.pdf) should be provided alongside the Participant Information Sheet.

Below are examples of the main points an information sheet should include:

**The title of the research project**

If the title could be difficult to understand then it should be explained in lay terms.

**Invitation paragraph**

Explain that the prospective participant is being asked to take part in a research project. For example you could say:

*‘You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.’*

**What is the purpose of the project?**

The background, aim and duration of the project should be given here. Remember to be brief and don’t use overly complicated language that a lay person wouldn’t understand.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You should explain how the participant was chosen and say how many other participants will be recruited.

**Do I have to take part?**

You should explain that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary and that refusal to agree to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled and the participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. For example:

*‘It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.”*

**What do I have to do?/ What will happen to me if I take part?**

You should state how long the participant will be involved in the research, how long the research will last (if this is different), how often they will need to participate and for how long each time. You should explain if travel expenses are available.

You should explain what exactly will happen (e.g. blood tests, interviews?)

Where a participant is to be interviewed, it might be helpful to explain the questioning style (e.g. clarify if questions will enable open as well as closed answers to be given in relation to a particular topic; e.g. clarify which aspects of the topic participants should be able to discuss in-depth and which not in-depth).

You should explain the participant’s responsibilities, setting down clearly what you expect of them.

You should set out simply the research methods you intend to use.

State if there are any lifestyle restrictions as a result of participating.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Any reasonably foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages and risks need to be stated.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Any benefits to the participants that can reasonably be expected should be stated. However, where there is no intended benefit to the participant from taking part in the project this should be stated clearly. It is important not to exaggerate the possible benefits to the particular participant during the course of the project, this could be seen as coercive.

For example you could say:

‘Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will …’

**Use, dissemination and storage of research data**

This should be explained. Also explain your plans for future publishing, archiving and re-use of the data where known, or be explicit about the potential for this to happen.

**What will happen to my personal information?**

Clarify any limits to confidentiality and anonymisation. Explain how identifiable participants will be. Explain what will, and what could happen to the data.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

You should state that all information collected about them will be kept secure and explain how information will be kept confidential. Example paragraph:

‘All the contact information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will stored separately from the research data. We will take steps wherever possible to anonymise the research data so that you will not be identified in any reports or publications’.

Sometimes it is not possible to keep everything confidential, for example if the participant discloses an intention to harm themselves or others. If you feel that your research data collection methods may well solicit information about potential harm or abuse or other situations that require reporting, then potential participants should be informed about this possibility/obligation in the consent process. Where, due to the nature of the research, it may not be possible to guarantee the anonymity of the data then the reasons for this should be stated here and any limits to anonymisation made clear to participants before they consent to take part. Furthermore, the consequences to the participant from data not remaining confidential should be provided here.

If a focus group is being used as a method of data collection, full anonymity cannot be guaranteed on behalf of the other focus group participants. The consent form should clearly note this limitation.

You should be able to tell the participants what will happen to the results of the research (i.e. when the results are likely to be published, whether they can obtain a copy of the published results) and add that they will not be identified in any report or publication.

Given the importance of research data for the future you need to include a statement indicating that the data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research (this should be explicit on the participant consent form).

**What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project’s objectives?**

Please explain here.

**Who is organising/ funding the research?**

You should state the organisation or company that is sponsoring or funding the research.

**Contact for further information**

You should give the participant a contact point for further information.

This can be your name, address and telephone number or that of another researcher in the project. If this is a supervised-student project, the address and telephone number of the student’s supervisor should be included as well. The use of personal phone numbers and email addressed should be avoided.

**Finally …**

The information sheet should state that the participant will be given a copy of the information sheet and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.

Remember to thank the participants for taking the time to read through the information.

Version control is important. For example use a table like the one below to keep track of the various versions of your documents:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Project title* | *Document type* | *Version #* | *Date* |
|  | Eg consent form for... |  |  |

**Additional question to include in an information sheet if the research involves producing recorded media:**

**Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

You need to obtain the participants’ permission to record their activities on audio or video media. You must ensure that there is a clear understanding as to how these recorded media will be used. For instance, if you record a music or theatre performance, you must not publish or broadcast the recording, show it in public, or deposit it in an archive without the performers’ permission. Storage (and eventual disposal) of interview recordings which contain sensitive material can also be an issue to address. For example:

*‘The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.’*

If you plan to use the recording in a publication or broadcast or deposit it in an archive, it is often better to prepare and sign a separate release form for each item used. You must ensure that all appropriate boxes have been agreed to, to avoid any future complications. For example, if an individual is not happy for data to be used in the future (even in an anonymised form) you should not consent them to the project.