**Background**

A participant information sheet needs to cover the aim of the study, what you need the participant to do, how you will use and protect their data etc.

Structure the document, to be appropriate for the target audience. You may wish to use sub-headings for easier navigation. Larger font may be suitable for visually impaired participants.

If you have a detailed privacy notice in place, you may wish to use a ‘layered’ approach, i.e. summary of key points in the participant information sheet, with links to your privacy notice for more detail.

You will need signed consent if recording via audio, video or taking pictures (See ‘Example consent form’).

If you have any questions, please contact research@essex.gov.uk

 **EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**When would I use a participant information sheet?**

A participant information sheet is particularly relevant when doing face to face research, using methods such as focus groups, interviews, and ethnography. The introduction of a survey should contain similar information.

**Why is it important?**

It increases our transparency around why and how we will use individuals’ data. It provides a participant with information about your study, informs them of their rights and helps them to make an informed decision on whether they wish to take part or not.

Send a copy ahead of the research so participants have time to read it and can refer to it.

Briefly go through it with participants before the focus group /interview, check their understanding and make sure they are happy to proceed (informed consent).

**Legal basis for research**

Much of research is conducted under the legal basis of ‘Public Task’, but each research project can be different and should consider the legal basis. If you are unclear what your legal basis for conducting the research is check with Information Governance. This will determine whether you require a signed / written consent for research.

**Participant information sheet structure**



Participant information sheets are usually structured by:

* The purpose, who you want to talk to, what the participant is being asked to do
* Informing people of their rights and how their information is stored
* Linking to your business areas privacy statement

**Section 1 – Example of an information sheet**

**Research project title:**

You are being invited to take part in research but before you do it’s important you understand why the research is being done and what it might mean for you. Please take time to read this and ask us if you are not clear on what it means or have questions.

**What is the purpose of the research?**

Essex County Council would like to find out about your experiences of XX. [e.g. We want to find out what worked well for you when, what could be improved and what is important when XX.]

Your views would help us improve our xx [e.g. services, strategy, future service plans etc for service].

**Why do you want to talk to me?**

We would like to talk to people who XX. What you tell us is important and will help us to XX [e.g. improve experiences for others].

**What am I being asked to do?**

We would invite you to take part in XX [e.g. a 20 minute telephone call with a member of the project team from Essex County Council].

It will be an informal discussion and the project team will have questions to guide you, but you will be in control of the discussion.

[Optional: Add information here about any incentives and link to information about impact on benefits – See Incentives My Learning module]

With your consent, we will audio-record the discussion. This is so we can focus on what you tell us without having to take too many notes. If you don’t want to, we will not audio record the discussion and will take notes only.

 **EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

 **EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Participants rights**



It’s important to inform participants of their rights so they can make an informed decision whether they wish to take part in your research.

This includes:

* That it’s voluntary for them to take part,
* What they tell you will be handled confidentially (except for safeguarding issues) and
* Findings will be anonymised in any reports.
* How you store information and for how long.

**Section 2 – Example of an information sheet**

**Do I have to take part?**

It’s up to you whether to take part or not. This decision will not affect your individual services.

You can change your mind at any time before or during the interview and skip questions if you wish.

You can change your mind later, too. However, if you want to remove anything you have said, please contact [Team name/ email] by [date]. After this date, we will not be able to remove your views as they will have been combined with those of others.

**Confidentiality and anonymity**

We will anonymise findings and will not use your name or anything that can identify you [or the person you care for] in anything we report on.

**Risk of harm**

If you disclose anything that indicates a risk of harm to yourself or someone else, we have a duty of care to report this to a relevant health or social care professional that will contact you to discuss what further action should be taken. This is the only case where we would break our promise of confidentiality.

**How long will we keep your information?**

We will collect this information under our Public Task in the public interest (our legal basis) and we will keep your information for up to [add number] years securely and in line with our procedures. The data controller is Essex County Council. The results report will be kept indefinitely for permanent preservation (where all data will be anonymised).

For more information on how long we keep your data, please refer to our privacy notice on [add link for your business areas privacy statement].

**Section 3- Wrapping up**

**Who can I contact for further information about the research?**

[Contact team an email address]

**Who can I contact if I have a complaint about the research?**

You can contact [member of the team conducting the research or Research lead] in the first instance. If you do not feel your complaint has been handled properly you can then contact [email of a Manager/Head of Service].

Thank you for your help, your participation is greatly appreciated.

Essex County Council fully complies with information legislation. If you would like the full details of how we use personal data, and the rights you have about its use, please go to [www.essex.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.essex.gov.uk/privacy) or call 03457 430430.

[If you have a specific privacy notice, provide a direct link to it]

**Useful phone numbers**

Please find a list below of contact numbers for [relevant to research e.g. support services, voluntary organisations, financial services etc ]

**Complaint handling and useful numbers**



Provide contact details for further questions or complaints with respect to the research.

Provide some relevant contact numbers to signpost people to support.

 **EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**