

Childlight Researcher Conflict of Interest Guidance: Metadata

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If you require this document in an alternative format, please email Childlight@ed.ac.uk or write to Childlight Global Child Safety Institute, University of Edinburgh, Third Floor, St John's Land, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh, UK, EH8 8AQ.

Childlight Global Child Safety Institute

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1 Introduction

Childlight is committed to the highest standards of research integrity and transparency. Conflicts of interest are a normal part of working in complex academic, policy, and practitioner environments, and are not inherently wrong. However, they must be recognised, declared, and managed to protect the independence, integrity, and reputation of Childlight's work.

Childlight staff have multiple roles both inside and outside of the organisation and have external relationships that are many and varied. This can include links with academic, private, public and/or voluntary sectors in addition to local, national or even global communities and groups. As a result, current or potential conflicts of interest could arise. This is often through circumstances entirely beyond the control of an individual or which could not be foreseen.

It is expected that staff, fellows and partners will have real or potential conflicts and this is acceptable as long as they are transparent and declare them where necessary and take steps to actively manage and reduce the conflict of interest to ensure that it is not detrimental to the reputation or research which Childlight is undertaking.

Given the sensitive and cross-disciplinary nature of Childlight's work, particular attention should be paid to external relationships or funding links with the technology sector, pornography industry, perpetrator-aligned groups, TOR and related platforms, or any other entities that may raise reputational concerns.

2 Purpose and Scope

This guidance provides practical advice on how to identify, declare and manage conflicts of interest in line with the University of Edinburgh Conflict of Interest Policy for:

- Childlight staff
- Global Data Fellows
- Partners and collaborators from other organisations
- Affiliated researchers working on behalf of Childlight
- Those who serve in advisory or governance capacity to Childlight including but not limited to:
 1. Steering Board members

2. Technical Sub-Committee members
 3. Index Impact & Comms Working Group members
 4. Subject matter experts to index areas
 5. Individual study advisory group members
- Note:* Individuals may serve on more than one of the above groups.

This Childlight guidance complements, but does not replace, the [University of Edinburgh Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

3 Relationship to the University of Edinburgh Conflict of Interest Policy

All staff employed by the University of Edinburgh (UoE) are bound by the UoE Conflict of Interest Policy: the governing standard that sets out the definitions, principles and procedures for disclosure and management of conflicts of interest.

This Childlight guidance complements the University policy by:

- Extending the same principles to individuals affiliated with Childlight who are not university employees.
- Providing examples and considerations specific to Childlight's research and collaborative work.

4 What is a Conflict of Interest?

A conflict of interest arises where personal, financial or professional considerations have the potential to compromise or bias professional judgement, decisions, or actions, or where others may reasonably perceive this risk.

Types include:

- Actual conflict of interest – the conflict exists now.
- Potential conflict of interest – the conflict could arise in the future.
- Perceived conflict of interest – others may reasonably believe a conflict exists, even if it does not.

Conflicts may be individual (e.g., a researcher's external role) or institutional (e.g., a Childlight partnership with an organisation that could compromise independence).

5 Examples of Conflicts of Interest Relevant to Childlight

Conflicts of interest often arise naturally from the breadth of our work. Examples could include:

Funding and Partnerships

- Receiving funding from a technology company whose data is being included in a Childlight research project.
- Collaborating with an NGO that has strong advocacy positions which may bias or appear to bias research outcomes.

Professional Roles and Affiliations

- A Global Data Fellow who also works with a government department on related policy issues.
- A staff member serving on the advisory board of an organisation that could benefit from Childlight's research.

Personal Connections

- Supervising a student or hiring a consultant with whom you have a close personal relationship.
- Working on a project that involves data provided by a relative's organisation.

Research Integrity Risks

- Co-authoring research with individuals whose previous work is under public or academic dispute.

6 Declaration and Management Process

Declarations should be made on joining Childlight, reviewed annually, and updated whenever circumstances change.

UoE Staff University of Edinburgh staff must follow the University's Conflict of Interest Policy and submit [Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms](#) through the University process.

Non-university Affiliates Non-University affiliates (Global Data Fellows, partners, collaborators) must complete the Childlight Partner Conflict of Interest Declaration Form (Appendix 1), submitted to the Childlight Administrative Assistant.

7 Managing Conflicts of Interest

Not all conflicts require action beyond declaration. Depending on the nature and severity of the conflict, management may include:

- Transparent declaration only.
- Exclusion from a specific project, decision, or piece of research.
- Withdrawing from certain roles or responsibilities.
- Severing a relationship or divesting financial interests.

Decisions on management will be made by the Childlight Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the University of Edinburgh where relevant.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Childlight Partner Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

Completion Guidance

All individuals external to Childlight (e.g., Impact and Comms Working Group, Advisory Committee members, Global Data Fellows, partners, and collaborators) who are involved in Childlight research projects must complete this form before the project is submitted for ethical approval.

The Project Lead Researcher will request completion of this form and you should return the signed copy to the Childlight Administrative Assistant at childlight@ed.ac.uk.

Childlight is required to hold a completed Conflict of Interest Declaration for every member of the research team prior to the commencement of any research activity. Please note that failure to complete and return this form may cause delays to project approval or initiation.

Project Details

Project Title: Long Form	Click or tap here to enter text.
Project Title: Short Form	Click or tap here to enter text.
Childlight Project ID	Click or tap here to enter text.
Lead Researcher	Click or tap here to enter text.

Declarant Information

Full Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Organisation	Click or tap here to enter text.
Job Title / Position	Click or tap here to enter text.
Email Address	Click or tap here to enter text.

Role in the Project	Click or tap here to enter text.

Declaration of Interests

Please tick any of the following that apply to you in relation to this project:

- ☐ Financial interests in organisations connected to this research
- ☐ Current or recent consultancy or advisory roles
- ☐ Membership on boards, committees, or professional bodies relevant to the subject area
- ☐ Personal relationships with other researchers, funders, or stakeholders
- ☐ Institutional or organisational obligations that may impact objectivity
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

If you ticked any of the above, please provide details below:

Conflict Assessment

Does this constitute a conflict of interest?

- ☐ No conflict of interest
- ☐ Potential conflict of interest (mitigation required)
- ☐ Actual conflict of interest (requires management plan)

Please outline on what basis you have selected this response:

Where there is a negative compromising conflict – a mitigation plan should be made.

Mitigation Plan (if applicable)

☐ Please check this box if you **do not** require a Mitigation Plan

Otherwise, please describe the steps taken to manage or eliminate conflict [e.g., exclusion from parts of the project, disclosure statements, independent oversight]

Declaration and Signature

- ☐ I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ I understand that declaring an interest does not imply any wrongdoing and that transparency is required to protect the integrity of Childlight's research.
- ☐ I understand that I must update this form if circumstances change during the lifecycle of this project.

Signature

Date

Review (Internal Use Only)

Reviewed by	Click or tap here to enter text.
Position	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap here to enter text.
Outcome	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Mitigation Required <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to Research Ethics Committee
Comments	Click or tap here to enter text.

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Signature

Date