

## **Protocol in relation to dealing with distress in research**

### **Preparation**

Participant Information Sheet must clearly state the expected topics of the study to ensure participants are fully informed of what they are likely to discuss in addition to the usual information regarding the study and data protection. This must also advise the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and how their data will be managed in this event.

The researcher must:

- familiarise themselves with appropriate support organisations, either local mental health support services, third sector groups or national emergency lines.
- consider the venue in terms of offering a private environment but one where people are nearby if help is needed. Where possible and practical, provide participants with their choice of venue to enable them to feel at ease.
- Particularly when sensitive subjects will be discussed it is generally advisable for two researchers to be present during data collection. It should be suggested to participants that they may wish to have a friend, family member or someone else close by if they feel this would be beneficial. If a researcher is on their own a colleague should be on call to support (see also KCL 'Lone Worker Policy').

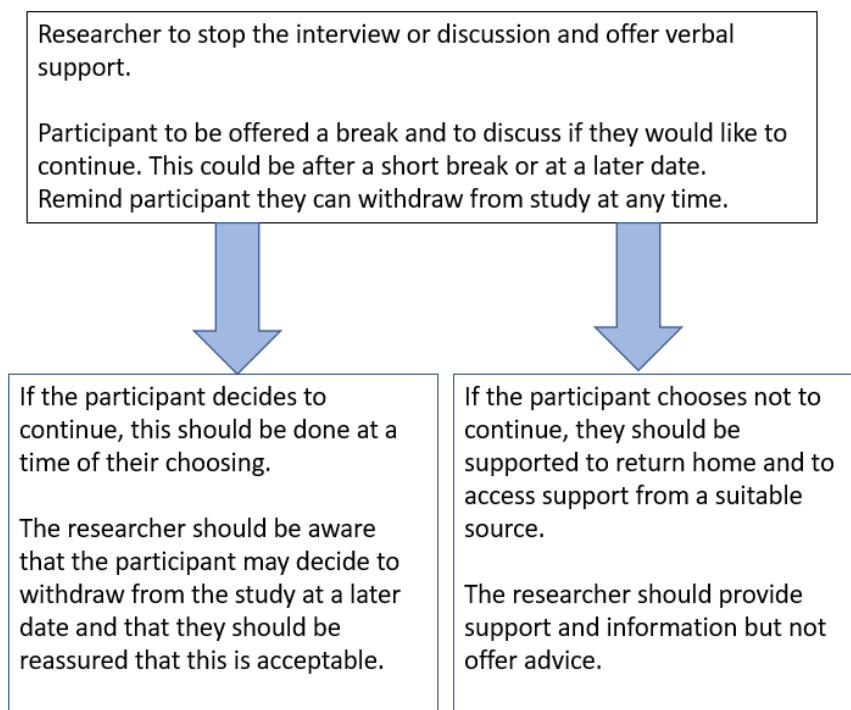
### **During data collection**

When the consent process is taking place, remind research participants that they can stop at any time without any negative consequences and that they do not have to explain their decision.

When conducting data collection via the telephone or online (e.g. using video communication software) researchers should be aware that monitoring participant distress may be more difficult. Alternative support

routes should be put in place. Ensure that you have alternative ways to contact the participant at the time of the interview, such as a telephone number or address.

### Process in the event of distress:



### Follow-up

If the researcher does not feel that the participant is safe to be left alone then contact should be made with an appropriate service/person, either family, friends, or a local support service. In the very unlikely event that the participant is deemed to be at immediate risk then the emergency services should be contacted.

If appropriate, and agreed with participant, the researcher should seek to carry out a follow-up contact to check they are safe and doing well.

Where there has been such a situation a debrief session between the researcher and a senior colleague is recommended to reflect on the experience, understand if anything could have been done differently and to ensure the wellbeing of the researcher.

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