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# **Applying Ethical Guidelines from Psychology to Widening Participation in Higher Education: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

Widening participation is usually taken to refer to activities and interventions aimed at creating a higher education system that includes all who can benefit from it – people who might not otherwise view learning as an option, or who may be discouraged by social, cultural, economic or institutional barriers (Campbell, 2020). Widening participation is linked with a global effort towards the 2030 United Nations' agenda for sustainable development; and in particular the goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). It is important in terms of social justice and for local economy (Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, 2012). Drawing on findings from a case study spanning a two-year cycle; this paper focuses on the application of the British Psychological Society (BPS; 2021) guidance on conducting research with vulnerable groups as outlined within the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) as applied to the development of a widening participation programme evaluation for care experienced young people within a higher education institution in the UK. The research evaluation aimed to increase client-centered engagement with the programme and increase its relevance to their goals; whilst upholding the wellbeing of the participating care-experienced young people. Key considerations and theory to practice implications are outlined with reference to the case study. The utility of these ethical guidelines is highlighted for those implementing WP programmes internationally, in addition to those who work with vulnerable young people, as defined by the BPS (2021).

**Keywords:** ethics; case study; higher education; well-being, widening participation.