

Reset Ethics Research Project : Stakeholder Newsletter #3 July 2021

Welcome to our penultimate newsletter! – Dr Lucy Frith PI



Public focus groups – Dr Carol Gray



The Reset Ethics team has been busy over the last few months. Interviews have been ongoing, we have held five public focus groups (see Carol's report, facing) and one focus group with healthcare professionals. Another HCP focus group is planned for later this month. We have also been publishing and disseminating our initial findings.

Readers will recall that we are researching the distinctive ethical issues raised by what we have called 'the reset period', when non-Covid services resumed alongside the continuing pandemic. The American Journal of Bioethics has [recently published a paper](#) noting the lack of an ethical framework to guide the planning and implementation of the "contingency" phase of a public health emergency. The contingency phase has similarities with our 'reset' phase: it operates between 'usual' practice and the 'crisis' phases of a pandemic. Our commentary on this paper, *'Neither 'crisis light' nor 'business as usual': considering the distinctive ethical issues raised by contingency and reset phases of a pandemic'* has been accepted for publication and is currently in press. In our commentary, we suggest that it is in situations where 'usual' patient-centred care cannot be achieved, or where what is achievable is equivalent to 'usual' care in some respects but not in others, that the interesting, and arguably distinctive, ethical issues and dilemmas arise. Patients receive 'good enough' care, which ensures that the health system as a whole can continue to function. The caring aspects of treatment - an essential component of patient-centred care - have, for example, been an immediate casualty of the 'reset' period, due primarily to infection prevention and control measures. Care from behind a mask or a ventilated hood is experienced differently by both healthcare professionals and their patients, even where treatment meets the patient's clinical needs.

Look out for our Commentary in the American Journal of Bioethics. When published, we will feature it on the 'News' page of [our website](#).

Catch up on our other work in progress below.

We held our fifth public focus group on 23rd June. We have spoken to service users about their experiences of using maternity or paediatric services during the 'reset' phase of NHS provision during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preliminary messages emanating from the groups include that

1. Clarity of communication from local Trusts to service users is important, and they'd like it to be consistent across the various methods used (e.g., social media sites need to convey the same information as websites)
2. Disparity between Trusts is confusing, while disparity between healthcare and other areas of everyday life is irritating
3. Participants recognize the tension between keeping NHS staff safe, and allowing support from family members, but wonder if the balance is right.
4. Some of the changes that have been instigated during the pandemic would be useful to continue post-pandemic (e.g., video or phone consultations in certain circumstances, less crowding in waiting rooms)
5. Service users do not feel involved in NHS Trust decision-making. If they are involved, it is through targeted patient involvement groups, such as Maternity Voice Partnerships, which seem to work well. If they are not involved, they don't really know how to get involved.

A copy of the report on the focus group findings will be sent to those participants who requested one; it will also be available on the Reset Ethics website.



Calls for evidence: what we have been reporting in June and July.



Our preliminary research findings have underpinned our responses to four calls for evidence, most recently:

- The [call by the All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) for evidence to inform its recommendations to the UK Government
- The [Women's Health Strategy Call](#)
- [The Public Accounts Committee call](#) for evidence about the lessons to be learned from the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our responses can be read in full on [our website](#).

Conference presentations

Our Reset Ethics research is one of the AHRC funded COVID-19 projects to be involved in the '[Pandemic and Beyond](#)' programme. The Pandemic and Beyond programme is exploring the wide-ranging impact of Arts and Humanities research projects in mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Lucy Frith, our Principal Investigator, presented a paper at the [University of Liverpool Postgraduate Bioethics](#) Conference, held online on 24th-25th June, 2021. The Conference Theme was '*Voices and Values in Bioethics*'.

You can view our Conference slides and Lucy's abstract on the News page of [our website](#).

Work in progress

We are presenting our preliminary results to an ethics committee at one of our participating NHS Trusts later this month. The headline for our discussion will be 'Masking emotions and sterilising care: what are the unintended consequences of COVID-19?'

