**Research Ethics Information Sheet (February 2019)**

**Public Title: The Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project**

*We are Dr Vic Baines, Professor Pete Fussey and Dr Daragh Murray working on behalf of the University of Essex, UK. We, on behalf of the Project, would like to invite you to take part in a research study that we are undertaking in collaboration with Liberty. This document sets out key information about the focus, approach and ethical guidelines governing the study. Also listed are contact details for named individuals holding overall responsibility for this study and its ethical standards of research.*

1. **What is the Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project?**

The Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project (‘the Project’) is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (‘ESRC’) and the University of Essex. It is housed at the Human Rights Centre of the University of Essex in the UK. The project is scheduled to span five years (late 2015-2020) and constitutes one of the largest projects of its type in Europe. The project researches on a range of issues connected with the impact of new and emerging technology on human rights. The research covers numerous areas including the impact of security practices, digital technology in humanitarian work, and issues concerning AI and health. The project is led by the University of Essex and involves a number of other academic partners including the universities of Cambridge and Harvard.

1. **What is this specific research study hoping to achieve?**

The main aim is to gather evidence to understand the relationships between technology companies and law enforcement agencies. The research is interested in how different organisational processes and practices address security challenges. This work will connect with other aspects of the project that analyse the increasing data richness of policing environments.

1. **Why should you consider taking part?**

You will have the opportunity to participate in a research study on an important issue that remains underexplored by academic study. The information that you provide will be used to inform the project’s research on law enforcement uses of digital technology and help develop a deeper understanding of complex relationships between state and commercial actors. Our work is heavily focused towards supporting the organizations we research with. A number of opportunities will also exist for participants to be involved in stakeholder-focused events including conferences, engagement and networking sessions and other research dissemination workshops.

1. **What will be involved in participating?**

Interviews will be semi-structured and will take place in a location of your choosing, subject to invitation and after you have offered full consent to be interviewed. Interviews typically last around 45 - 60 minutes and relate to the main research aims of the Project outlined above.

1. **Research ethics and data use**

The work is publicly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and is beholden to the strictest standards of research ethics in the social sciences. The research has also been scrutinized as a precondition to attaining additional ethical approval at the University of Essex. This research is also guided by the British Sociological Association standards of ethical research and prioritizes the well-being and wishes of the research participant above all other concerns. All data collection is subject to a number of standards and procedures. This covers issues such as ensuring anonymity, consent, diligent data handling, a clear complaints procedure with lines of accountability and a defined structure of responsibilities and research governance. In more detail, these include:

* Consent: interviews can only take place once explicitly and informed consent has been offered. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. The project team will ensure any consent is as informed as possible. We will provide information about the research, as well as relevant data handling issues, and give you an opportunity to ask questions at the beginning of the interview or focus group. We will then check that you agree to continue. You can exit from the interview or focus group at any time, or you can ask us to temporarily stop the process if you wish to stop participating. You do not need to provide an explanation for this.
* Withdrawal: If you retrospectively want to withdraw from the research after the interview/focus group, please contact Dr Vic Baines (interviewer), Professor Pete Fussey ([pfussey@essex.ac.uk](mailto:pfussey@essex.ac.uk)) or Dr Daragh Murray ([d.murray@essex.ac.uk](mailto:d.murray@essex.ac.uk)). Please note that there are certain points beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research – for instance, once we have published the results of the research. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to contact us **within a month of participation** if you wish to withdraw your data.
* Anonymity: The default position is for all participants full anonymisation. This includes the removal of any direct identifiers (such as name) and indirect identifiers (such as organization, location, role).
* Right to review: The transcript and/or any interview/focus group notes can be shared with you upon request. To ensure that you receive this before any analysis takes place we strongly encourage you to contact Professor Pete Fussey ([pfussey@essex.ac.uk](mailto:pfussey@essex.ac.uk)), the named individual with overall responsibility for this part of the project, within one month of participation. As a participant you have a right to request to see any data or personal information held about you. Please contact both Professor Pete Fussey in this regard.
* Data handling: Data will be digitally encrypted and securely stored. Personal details will be replaced with an anonymized ID number. Any personally identifiable details will be destroyed.
* If consented to by the interviewee(s), we would like to audio record interviews in order to ensure complete fidelity to what has being said and allow us to undertake the most accurate analysis possible. The audio recording will only be used to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and will be destroyed once the transcription process is complete. No audio recording will take place without clear prior consent of the interviewee(s).
* The audio recording and/or any interview or focus group notes will be transcribed and anonymized (e.g. anything that could identify you removed including your name and position within the organization), unless you opt-in to having your data attributed to you. Group interviews and focus groups involve an added issue regarding anonymization given the possibility of being identified by peers during group discussion. In these circumstances a pseudonym will be applied to any written record of the conversation and the recording destroyed following transcription.
* Anonymized extracts or observations from the interviews and focus groups may be written up and analysed in publications that arise from the research.
* Clear complaints procedure: If you have any concern about any aspect of this project, you should first raise with Professor Pete Fussey. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the overall project coordinator, Professor Lorna McGregor ([lmcgreg@essex.ac.uk](mailto:lmcgreg@essex.ac.uk)).

The ESRC, our funder, requests all research data arising from ESRC-funded research to be made available to the scientific community in a timely and responsible manner after the project concludes (2020), unless there are exceptional reasons why this cannot happen. We will only pass on anonymised transcripts with your full consent. If given, anonymized data created or repurposed during the lifetime of the Project (and, in this specific case, the interview or focus group transcripts) will be offered to the UK Data Service within three months of the end of the Project for cataloguing and archiving. This will be done following the above principles of data anonymization unless you consent to having your data attributed to you by name or organization.

1. **Do you have any questions?**

You can contact Professor Pete Fussey at:

Department of Sociology,

University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park,

Colchester,

CO4 3SQ

UK

[pfussey@essex.ac.uk](mailto:pfussey@essex.ac.uk)