



centre for applied
developmental
psychology



SCOTTISH SPCA
Scotland's Animal Welfare Charity

“Achieving consensus on the best ways to educate children about animal welfare & prevent cruelty”

Delphi Study

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are contacting you to ask if you would be willing to take part in our important research project that aims to identify how best to educate children about animal welfare and prevent cruelty. There is currently no guidance available, so we are seeking your expert opinion as a professional working in this field. The study will lead directly to the production of a framework and guide that will be available online. This will support those wishing to develop, improve and evaluate their own animal welfare education/cruelty prevention interventions. It will also guide policy and future research agendas.

I am the researcher on the project, and I support Professor Jo Williams, who leads the CAAR group (Children, Adolescents, and Animals Research) at the University of Edinburgh. We work closely with the Scottish SPCA and other animal welfare organisations, and our wider team comprises academics and student researchers.

We would like to invite you to be part of our expert panel in a Delphi study. The aim is to achieve consensus across those working with common aims, and will involve completing 2 online questionnaires.

About the study

The project will identify the range of existing animal welfare education/cruelty prevention interventions and the components that lead most effectively to positive outcomes.

Online survey

The Delphi technique is a multi-staged approach to achieving consensus among experts on an important issue. To achieve consensus on what constitutes a successful intervention, we will include all organisations that deliver animal welfare/cruelty prevention interventions to children and young people. The present Delphi comprises two online questionnaires - known as *Rounds*:

Round 1: The first round will consist of both multiple choice (selecting options) and open-ended questions that we will ask you to reflect on your own experience/observations. After receiving all responses, the information will be collated and key themes identified. These data will then be used to construct the Round 2 questionnaire.

Round 2: This questionnaire will ask questions based on the information provided in Round 1 and seek consensus by presenting statements that you rank in order of importance or rate your degree of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale.

If consensus is not reached in the initial two rounds, we will bring together a smaller sample of participants to discuss where views diverge. We will provide more information on this at a later date should this be the case.

Feedback: When both rounds of the Delphi study have been completed, a report will be provided to each participant. You will have the opportunity to provide feedback on this final document, before we draw up our framework/guidelines.

What will I have to do?

If you decide to take part, we ask that you take part in Round 1 (a link to the survey is provided below). We will ensure the process is as straightforward as possible. It is envisaged that the first questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes to complete, and the second 15 minutes. Simple and specific instructions will be provided for each question. There are no right or wrong answers.

Ethics, privacy and your rights

All aspects of this research have been approved by the Clinical and Health Psychology Research Ethics Committee. Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means you have the right to:

- (a) withdraw at any time without explanation,
- (b) ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn and destroyed without penalty,
- (c) refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you, and
- (d) have your questions about the procedures answered.

At the outset of the online survey, we will ask you to state the organisation you work for and your role within the organisation for the purpose of establishing the reliability and limitations of our study. We will not use this information in any other way and will not collect any other personal information. Your responses will remain anonymous and we will not reveal any personal or identifiable information. We will only collect your email address to send you the next online questionnaire.

How do I take part?

If you are willing to participate in the study, please click on the link below. This will take you to our online Round 1 survey. On the first page, there is a consent form that you will need to read and accept in order to participate. If you would like to contact a member of the team prior to participating, our contact details can be found at the end of this letter. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require further information.

Round 1 online survey: <https://edinburgh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/educating-children-about-animal-welfare-and-preventing-cruelty>

To ensure our study is inclusive, we would sincerely appreciate it if you could encourage other practitioners in the area to take part. Please feel free to forward this invitation email to them.

Thank you for your time. Your help will be invaluable to the development of policy and practice in this field.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Janine Muldoon

Contact details

University of Edinburgh

Dr Janine Muldoon (Research Fellow): Janine.muldoon@ed.ac.uk

Prof. Jo Williams (Clinical and Health Psychology): jo.williams@ed.ac.uk

If you wish to discuss the project with someone outside the team, please feel free to contact Matthias Schwannauer (Head, School of Health in Social Science): m.schwannauer@ed.ac.uk