



**School of Geography, Planning
and Environmental Policy**

University College Dublin,
Richview, Clonskeagh Drive,
Dublin 14, Ireland

T +353 1 716 2711
F +353 1 716 2788

**Scoil na Tíreolaíochta, na
Pleanála agus Polasáí
Comhshaoil UCD**

An Coláiste Ollscoile Baile Átha Cliath,
Richview, Treallús Clonskeagh,
Baile Átha Cliath 14, Éire

gpep.admin@ucd.ie
www.ucd.ie/gpep

Dear Householder,

February 2015

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP ON WATER QUALITY AND SEPTIC TANK MAINTENANCE

BROCKAGH RESOURCE CENTRE, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 12TH, 7.30 -9.00PM

Are you a owner of a septic tank? If so, I am inviting you to take part in a community focus group on septic tanks and water quality issues in the Brockagh Resource Centre, Thursday February 12th, from 7.30-9.00pm. This focus group is part of a larger project titled *Relay Risk: Examining the Communication of Environmental Risk through a Case Study of Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems in the Republic of Ireland*.

What is the research about and why is it being conducted?

My name is Catherine Devitt, and I am a researcher with the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy at University College Dublin. The focus of our research relates to the potential environmental and public health risks that may be caused by some poorly performing septic tank systems, and to understand the householder views and feelings regarding the new National Inspection Plan for septic tank systems introduced by the Government in 2013. We are conducting focus groups with septic tank owners in two other locations. We are also carrying out interviews with experts, practitioners, and representatives from sector based groups and organisations.

What will happen if you decide to take part in this research study?

You will be participating in a community focus group that will follow an informal format with roundtable discussion on a number of topics. The focus group will include questions on your perceptions of the risks associated with septic tanks, the costs involved and your feeling towards the current nationwide Inspection Plan; the sources of information you trust, your opinion on public engagement, and the roles that information, enforcement and incentives can play to ensure satisfactory water quality standards. The focus group will last about 1 hour and 30 minutes.

How will the data be used?

This is an entirely independent, academic piece of research, funded under the national Strive Environmental Research Programme. All the information collected will be anonymised and treated in the strictest confidence, will be securely archived for the duration of the research project, and used in UCD for research purposes only. The results of will help inform future strategies around environmental risk communication, and also scientific reports and academic



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publication.

How will we protect your privacy?

Before the commencement of focus groups, your consent will be sought to audiotape the discussions. **All** information arising from the focus groups will be treated confidentially, and stored securely by the researcher. The information gathered will not be shared with any third party. No individual will be identifiable in the results. All data will be anonymised, so that individual participants will not be identifiable. Once anonymised following data collection, all identifiable data will be destroyed. Anonymised, de-identifiable data will be archived for a period of ten years should further analysis be required by the research team.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

Participating will improve our understanding of the roles that households may play to protect local water quality and help us to better advice policy makers on these issues. There are no risks to taking part in this research study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

There are no obvious risks to your involvement (if you agree to take part). Though the focus group may take some of your time (approx. 1.5 hours); this will be conducted in a way that is most convenient to you.

Can I change my mind at any stage and withdraw from the study?

If you choose to take part, you can withdraw at any time prior to or during the focus group. .

How will I find out what happens with this project?

If you have any questions or comments about the study prior to or after the focus group, I would be happy to talk with you. I can be reached by telephone at 01 716 2756 or by email at catherine.devitt@ucd.ie. Results will be presented to at a final project seminar. Participants interested in attending this seminar will be invited to contact the researcher.

Thank you very much for helping with this important research project

Sincerely,

Catherine Devitt

(Researcher)