NSE Research Ethics Approval Form

This form must be completed, signed (preferably on your computer) and sent to the Nottingham School of Economics Research Ethics Committee email address: NSE-REC@nottingham.ac.uk

This application must be approved by the Nottingham School of Economics Research Ethics Committee (NSE-REC) before potential participants are approached to take part in any research. Any significant change in the design or conduct of the research over the course of the project should be notified to the NSE-REC and may require a new application for ethics approval**. If the applicant is a student, the supervisor (or module convenor if there is no supervisor) must approve the project and also sign this form.**

Section I: Project Details

Project title: Direct and spillover effects of a paperless billing randomized communication experiment

Name of applicant: Dario Tortarolo; Guillermo Cruces

Role:

☑ Staff ☐ Graduate student ☐ Undergraduate student

Email address: dario.tortarolo@nottingham.ac.uk
guillermo.cruces@nottingham.ac.uk

When will the data collection take place? (Start date/End date) Nov 2020 -
(data are automatically collected every month by the municipality)

Reason for seeking ethical approval (e.g. laboratory experiment, survey, use of personal data, …):

Our communication experiment consists of delivering letters in a municipality that seeks to induce neighbors to sign up for paperless billing to pay for a monthly municipal tax. This is good for the environment, saves costs, and would minimize people exposure to the pandemia. The municipality will be in charge of the implementation and we will use administrative records based on personal anonymized data to compute the effect of the intervention on take-up and monthly tax payments.

Section II: For Students Only

Course: _____

Module code and name (e.g. L14100 Economics Dissertation): _____

Supervisor's (or, if there is no supervisor, module convenor's) name: _____

Section III: Questions about the appropriate REC to review the application

Does the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data or premises and/or equipment? Yes ☐ / No ☑

Does the study involve vulnerable adults who are unable to make an informed and free decision on their involvement in the research (e.g., those with a mental incapacity or prisoners)? Yes ☐ / No ☑

Note: If you answer 'Yes' to either of the questions above the NSE_REC cannot approve your project. You will need to send this completed form to the NSE-REC for reference and submit your research for ethics approval from an NHS Research Ethics Committee. Once ethics approval is granted, a copy should be sent to the NSE-REC for their records.

Section IV: Project details

Please answer **ALL** of the following questions. Some questions require you to enter information into a text box. If you need additional space you can write "see attachment" in the box and include an attachment.

1. In the box below, please describe how do you plan to gain access to prospective research participants?

The local authorities from the municipality where our experiment takes place, will be in charge of distributing the letters to the neighbors in the treated blocks. This is a task that employees carry out on a regular basis to inform neighbors of different activities. The difference is that in this round they will only deliver the notifications to a group of randomly selected households. After the experiment is implemented, we will access administrative data to analyze behavioral responses. These data will be previously deidentified by local authorities to preserve confidentiality.

Questions about consent	Yes	No
2.Does the research involve vulnerable groups (e.g., children or those with cognitive impairment)?	☐	☒
3.Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g., pupils at school, , residents of Nursing home)?	☐	☒
4.Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and informed consent at the time (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)?	☐	☒

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the questions about consent, please explain why, and describe any steps you will take to deal with the ethical issues raised in the box below:

Questions about the potential for harm	Yes	No
6.Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, commercially or legally sensitive topics)?	☐	☒
7.Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	☐	☒
8.Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants, or will the study use invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	☐	☒
9.Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	☐	☒
10.Is there a possibility the safety of the researcher/research assistants may be in question beyond everyday risks (e.g. international research in trouble-spots)?	☐	☒

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the questions about the potential for harm, please explain why, and describe any steps you will take to deal with the ethical issues raised in the box below:

Questions about confidentiality	Yes	No
11.Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?	☒	☐
12.Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?	☐	☒
13.Will the research use an internet platform where respondents' data may be monitored by a third party (e.g., Surveymonkey, Facebook)?	☐	☒
14.Will the personal data of research participants (e.g. name, nhs number) be revealed in research outputs or stored data?	☐	☒

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the questions about confidentiality, please explain why, and describe any steps you will take to deal with the ethical issues raised in the box below:

We will use administrative tax records to compute the effect of the intervention on the take-up of electronic billing and monthly tax payments. To preserve confidentiality, these data will be previously deidentified by employees from the municipality. We will access the databases through a secured network.

15.In the box below please explain briefly how the data will be gathered and stored:

The data to be used in the project are collected on a monthly basis by the municipality. These data are automatically gathered when neighbors make their monthly payments. The municipality will stripe out the identifiers and share the data with us. The fields to be included will be: outstanding debt, tax payments, the household address, type of payment -electronic vs cash-, gender, age, assessed value. These data will be stored in anonimised format in encrypted drives and password protected computers.

Signature of applicant: **Signature of the supervisor:** **Date:** 16/09/2020

G.C.