Guidance on Research involving Young People and Children

The following provides additional guidance for research involving vulnerable people and/or children:

**Research involving vulnerable adults**

- Consent procedures should be explored with vulnerable people (for example those with mental incapacity, in care, at risk or involved in illegal activities). Informed consent should be actively and directly sought from (not depending on relatives or carers) using alternative forms of communication with those with learning difficulties or sensory disabilities to maximise access such as signing, symbols or Braille.
- Consent should be monitored, for example, through non-verbal cues that might indicate that it was misunderstood.
- Anonymity and confidentiality are likely to be particularly important and sensitive. Researchers need to make clear that disclosures suggesting serious danger to the respondent or others cannot be treated confidentially.
- Where information given in a research context suggests that there is a threat of serious harm to the participant or others, researchers should disclose this to the relevant authorities (see Research Ethics Checklist) but inform the participants and their guardians/responsible others of their intentions and reasons for doing so. Notes should be kept in case a complaint arises.
- Researchers should make themselves aware of relevant services (e.g. counselling), in case support needs emerge during the research.

**Research involving children**

- All principles outlined above apply in the case of children and young people too
- Children (defined as those aged under 18) will need particularly careful consideration with respect to establishing and monitoring consent, the role of gatekeepers, the use and communication of findings and the potential disruption (emotionally or practically) caused by the research itself.
- Informed consent from children and young people should be actively and directly sought using communication methods that maximise their understanding of the research.
- Informed consent for research with children must also be obtained from those with parental responsibility for them in law, adhering to the same principles outlined above.
- Disclosure of information suggesting serious harm to the child or others should be addressed as indicated in the guidelines above on vulnerable people.
- Participation in the research should be made as rewarding and enjoyable as possible.
- Interviewing children should either be undertaken by two researchers or in areas where the researcher and child are not entirely alone to protect the researcher as well as the child.
- Consider the gender of interviewers where appropriate, for example in research involving children who have been sexually abused.
- Feedback on the findings should be given in ways that are meaningful to the participants.