5. Involving Children and Vulnerable Adults in Research

Clinical research involving children (i.e. under 18s) is vital to increase our knowledge of childhood conditions and improve healthcare for children. Similarly, the involvement of vulnerable adults in research can provide a wide range of beneficial insight and evidence.

There are important considerations prior to involving children and/or vulnerable adults e.g. DBS checks, consent and payment issues. Furthermore, researchers, professionals and parents/carers/guardians often feel anxious about asking children and/or vulnerable adults to take part in research, for example, because of potential risks or perceived burdens.

The University’s Policy on Research involving Children and/or Vulnerable Adults (link here) gives an overview of these considerations and guidance on how certain practicalities should be handled.

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has also published a report and a number of resources for researchers to consider how children and young people can ethically be involved in research. You can access these resources here.