

Guidance on cases of ethics approval involving participants under 18

Low Risk Cases

Low risk cases are defined as those where the research is taking place in an institutional setting (e.g. school, young offender institution, hospital, 'looked after' children in local authority care).

Under 16s

You must ensure that -

- When conducting interviews, a professional is present at all times.
- Parental/gatekeeper consent is obtained.
- Appropriate measures are in place for informed consent/involvement of participants where competent.
- Survey design is appropriate to the age group, and use of non-adult participants is warranted.
- You have considered the potential for distress/adverse effects among non-adult participants, e.g. embarrassment, non-understanding, fear of authority etc.

16-18 year olds

You must ensure that -

- When conducting interviews, a professional is present at all times.
- Written informed consent is obtained.
- Parental/gatekeeper knowledge has been obtained. Formal consent may be required in some settings.
- Participant information and participant consent documentation is appropriately drafted.
- Survey design is appropriate to the age group, and use of non-adult participants is warranted.
- You have considered the potential for distress/adverse effects among non-adult participants, e.g. embarrassment, non-understanding, fear of authority etc.

High Risk Cases

High risk cases are defined as those where the research is taking place in a non-institutional setting – for example, in the child's home.

You must ensure that –

- When conducting interviews, a professional is present at all times.
- Parental/gatekeeper consent is obtained.
- The interviews are conducted in an externally observable space (for example, a room with a glass window open to view from the outside) or with an appropriate adult in an adjacent room.
- Written informed consent is obtained.
- Participant information and participant consent documentation is appropriately drafted.
- Survey design is appropriate to the age group, and use of non-adult participants is warranted.
- You have considered the potential for distress/adverse effects among non-adult participants, e.g. embarrassment, non-understanding, fear of authority etc.