

## Focus group for health research in pregnancy and childhood (FRIEND)



*A discussion group to help design and shape future research*

## What is the purpose of FRIEND?

FRIEND aims to increase the inclusion of patients, service users and the public in research. This is not the same as participating in research, but rather means actively helping us with the process of research. This may include helping to set research priorities, reviewing research proposals and having input into how studies are run.

## What is research and why is it important?

Research takes many forms, but essentially it is about trying to answer specific questions to increase our knowledge. In healthcare this knowledge is used to help us understand health and disease and to develop ways of improving treatments or healthcare policy. Research is a central part of the NHS and it is vital that this is accessible to as many people as possible.

## What type of research would this group be discussing?

We have active research groups at St. George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and St. George's, University of London, investigating a variety of issues relating to pregnancy and child health. Some of this research is specifically focused on issues relating to infection and vaccines, whereas other studies are investigating other aspects of pregnancy and child health for example diabetes and respiratory illnesses.

## What would my involvement be?

We plan to meet as a group four times a year to discuss potential new studies, research which is at the proposal stage and ongoing work. These meetings will last for approximately 1 hour 30 minutes. They may be online via Zoom or in person in the Tooting area. You will receive a £25 voucher for participation in the group. You would not need to attend every meeting and we will inform you in advance of the type of studies which are being discussed so that you can decide if this is of interest to you. You may be sent some information about the studies before the meeting if you wish to read it, but this will not be essential.

## Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part. Participation in the group is entirely voluntary and not taking part would not affect your healthcare or participation in future research studies. If you choose to join FRIEND you would be free to leave at any time.

**We hope that FRIEND will allow us to form collaborations with the public to strengthen our research and help improve the healthcare we provide to pregnant people and children.**

**For more information please contact the team on:**

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