

## **Exploring the experiences of children aged 8 and 12 years about being involved with decision making about their health and related treatments**

There has been a great interest in children's rights to be involved in decisions about their care since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) where it states that every child has the right to make informed decisions. This has been further emphasised by the Department of Health (2003) and the Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008). But two issues exist; the child's perspective of their competence in being involved in the decision making process, and measuring competence.

There are few studies that have explored children's view of their competence. Most has been mainly focused on parents' views, or focusing on the child as a "body" that adults care for, or persons for who care must be taken (Mayall, 1998; Tates and Meeuwesen, 2001).

Measuring competence is laden with conceptual problems. There are a variety of tools that exist and all differ in their focus and this then can imply that problems of inconsistency may exist. In all 22 scales were found, but none were found that measured competence in children in the decision making process.

The aim of the study is therefore twofold.

1. To develop a tool to measure children's decision making competence
2. To explore the experiences of children with long term conditions in their involvement in decision making, how it works for them and how confident they feel about this involvement.

The research project is a mixed method convergent parallel approach. The qualitative phase used a grounded theory study to explore the experiences children aged 8 and 12 years have about being involved with decision making about their health and related treatments. The quantitative phase used a pilot study that aimed to develop the decision making competence scale and inform a full trial.