WTDTP Projects for September 2022

Project Reference: T4/31

Project Title: **Non-invasive prenatal testing in fetal anomaly screening: issues of informed choice and**

**reproductive autonomy.**

Theme(s): Theme 4: Ethical, legal and social implications of genomics and genomic epidemiology

Primary Supervisor: Prof Natalie Armstrong (University of Leicester)

Secondary Supervisor(s): Prof Alison Pilnick (University of Nottingham)

Department: Health Sciences

Project Summary: This project explores the implementation of non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) within the Fetal Anomaly Screening Programme (FASP). Introduced from June 2021, NIPT offers a second screen for pregnancies identified as at higher risk of Down’s, Edwards’ or Patau’s syndrome. In contrast to diagnostic tests (such as amniocentesis) that pose a risk of miscarriage, NIPT is not invasive to the fetus as it involves taking blood from the person who is pregnant. Those with higher risk results from initial screening can now opt to have either: i) no further testing, ii) NIPT as a second screen before choosing whether to have a diagnostic test, or iii) a diagnostic test straightaway. Those whose pregnancies are affected can then choose to continue the pregnancy or have a termination.

The use of NIPT has prompted considerable debate, both in terms of where and how it is best positioned within the screening process and ethical concerns about informed choice and reproductive autonomy.

The student will complete a critical literature review of the roll-out of NIPT within the FASP, prior to undertaking empirical qualitative work with healthcare professionals and parents. With the right student, it is also possible that analysis of audio-recorded consultations could be included.