

4<sup>th</sup> July 2025

## Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to invite your child/young person to take part in a **research study on digital device use, online engagement and its impact on cyberbullying**. Cyberbullying happens when someone uses technology like the internet, social media, messaging apps or gaming platforms to intentionally hurt, embarrass or upset someone. It can happen anytime and anywhere. I understand this can be difficult topic for discussion; however, I have outlined below the purpose of the research and what it will involve.

## Purpose of the Research Study

I manage a child's voice initiative called the SHAPE Programme, at Sandwell Council. I am currently undertaking a Masters in Public Health (MPH) at the University of Birmingham. For my dissertation, I am researching the topic of cyberbullying, which, through my role at the local authority, has been highlighted by children and young people as an ongoing issue.

The aim of the study is to explore whether the use of digital devices and engagement on online platforms such as social media site like Snapchat and Instagram, links to adolescents (in years 7 to 12) becoming at risk of cyberbullying. The study will enable Public Health professionals and those in the field of Education understand the relationship between devices and cyberbullying and therefore prepare interventions to ensure the linkages between the two areas are not increased.

## What does taking part in the research involve?

As part of the research, I will be collecting data through the following methods:

- Individual interviews of 8 to 12 young people in years 7 to 12, which will consist of in-depth questions to understand the personal experiences of children and young people regarding cyberbullying.  
*Please note any children who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will be offered a parent /carer/chaperone/professional present at the interview, if they wish*
- Short questionnaire to complete when they attend the interviews. 5 questions will be asked on what devices they own/access/do not own or access, the total time they spend online on their devices, what online platforms they use and their online interactions.

As an incentive the child will receive a £10 Amazon voucher if they take part in the interview. Please note the interviews will be audio recorded through a digital recording device, in order for the data to be analysed effectively.

Interviews will take place on school premises unless the school cannot accommodate or the child/young person would prefer an alternative venue, which can be mutually agreed on. In this case please note parent carers/ guardians must ensure their child/young person is dropped off and picked up from the location. Where the participants are unable to have support from parent carers or guardians for travel and must take public transport, travel expenses will be reimbursed.

### **Benefits and risks of your child taking part**

The benefits of this study outweigh the risks as demonstrated below.

The benefits include:

- Platform for children and young people to have a voice and share lived experiences
- Personal and social development through communication
- Ability to share any concerns, issues they have to improve the lives of children and young people in the future through impacting policies and improving services

The risks include:

- Emotional distress to the child and young person through sharing their experiences

The risks outlined will be mitigated through the actions taken to ensure sensitivity and confidentiality as explained in the next section.

### **Sensitivity and Confidentiality**

I understand you may be concerned about your child disclosing information about their personal experiences, however sensitive issues and confidentiality has been considered.

Please note the following:

- Any information shared by your child/young person will be treated in the strictest confidence. The only exception to this is if any experiences shared, could have a serious detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing. In this situation, a safeguarding officer at the child's school will be made aware, in order to ensure the child's welfare is maintained.
- For any young person with neurodiverse and special educational needs and disabilities who registers, a discussion will take place with parent carers to ensure that the researcher is aware of the young person's needs so appropriate accommodations can be made to ensure they are comfortable, and all accessibility needs have been met, when undertaking the interview.
- No child/young person will be identifiable from any reports or publications arising from my research
- Full transcripts from interviews will only be shared if requested as part of my submitted research
- Data will only be shared as part of my submitted research
- All data will be kept securely, paper copies will be securely locked away and electronic copies of information will be held in a secure online folder within University of Birmingham data systems.
- Any personal data obtained will be deleted or disposed of securely once my dissertation is graded
- All participants have the right to withdraw up to two weeks after taking part in the interviews. An attempt will be made to withdraw any data collected where possible, and any data that cannot be withdrawn for the purposes of the analysis, will remain anonymous.

Following taking part in the research, if your child requires further support in any of the issues discussed, you can refer to the Just Youth website for advice and guidance at [www.justyouth.org.uk](http://www.justyouth.org.uk). If you do have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [nxp329@student.bham.ac.uk](mailto:nxp329@student.bham.ac.uk)

### **What are the criteria required for the child/young person to take part?**

The only criteria for the child to be involved is the following:

- Must be in years 7 to 12 in secondary school
- Has access to or owns at least one electronic device (This includes a mobile phone, games console, ipad/tablet, smart TV, laptop or computer)

Although the research topic is on cyberbullying, is it **not essential** for the child/young person to have experienced or being aware of cyberbullying taking place in their social environment.

### **What are the next steps for my child/young person to take part in the research?**

If you are happy and would consent to your child/young person taking part in the research, please complete the registration and consent form at [www.justyouth.org.uk/research](http://www.justyouth.org.uk/research). Once the form is complete, I shall be in touch with further details.

If you have any queries or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [nxp329@student.bham.ac.uk](mailto:nxp329@student.bham.ac.uk) or my Supervisor at the University of Birmingham Dr Antje Lindenmeyer at [a.lindenmeyer@bham.ac.uk](mailto:a.lindenmeyer@bham.ac.uk).

Many Thanks

Neesha Patel