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**Information Letter for Parents: COVID-19 REACH Diary Study**

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are a group of researchers from the Centre for Society and Mental Health at King’s College London. For the last 3-4 years, with the permission of the head teacher, we have been undertaking a research study, REACH, at your child’s school. Thanks very much to you and your child for your invaluable contributions to our research so far. We are very grateful.

We are writing to let you know about the next phase of the REACH study. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please read it carefully. It will tell you why the research is being done and what your child will be asked to do if he/she takes part.

**What is the aim of the research?**

The overall aim of REACH is to understand what things lead to better mental health and what things lead to worse mental health in young people from all backgrounds. The next phase of REACH will be using a diary method to help us understand in more detail the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – including schools reopening and social distancing measures, during the start of the new academic year – on young people’s mental health and wellbeing.

**Why are we doing this?**

The COVID-19 pandemic, resultant school closures and reopening, and other social distancing and self-isolation measures, are having significant and widespread impact, and generating worry and uncertainty. This is likely to be especially so among young people. This phase of REACH will focus on the personal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the day to day lives and the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Specifically, we will try to understand what things help young people to maintain good mental health during these difficult times.

**How can your child help us?**

We need your child’s help so that we can understand the impact of the pandemic on young people’s mental health and, importantly, how best to help young people who are struggling. If your child chooses to take part, we will ask them to participate in a **short interview** (30 minutes at most) with one of our researchers (over Skype or Zoom) about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their day-to-day lives and well-being over the last few months. Your child will then be asked to complete a **video and/or audio and/or written diary** where they will talk about the impact of changes to their life relating to COVID-19 and school routines during the start of the new academic year. We expect your child to spend around 5 minutes, no more than 10 minutes to record their entries, which they can do as and when they feel like it, with a minimum of once every week for two months. Diary entries will be recorded on a free to download mobile app (Metricwire) which instantly sends the entries to us via a secure online platform that only research staff on the REACH project will have access to. If your child does not have a personal android phone to use for this part of the study, we will provide them with a phone during this period. The types of questions that we would like your child to answer each time they record an entry are:

* How have you been today? We’re keen to hear about what you’ve been doing and how you’ve been feeling.
* How about over the past week?
* Have there been other changes at school since you returned in September?
* How do you feel about being back to school, your travel to and from school, seeing your friends again, risks to your physical health (or physical health of members of your family)?
* How do you feel about your academic progress since you returned to school?
* What has made things challenging (if anything)? What has helped you cope with challenges?
* How have these experiences have had an impact on your mental health and wellbeing?

At the end of the two months, we will ask your child to participate in another **short interview** (30 minutes at most) with one of our researchers (over Skype or Zoom) to find out about their experience of completing the diaries. At the end of the study, your child will receive a £40 voucher for taking part.

**How private is the diary?**

Once a diary entry has been recorded, it will be sent to us via the mobile app. Members of the research team will review diary entries within a week of receiving the recordings. All information collected will be **completely confidential (private)** to the research team, and to staff at a third party company which will be used to transcribe the video/audio recordings (please see the GDPR statement for more information), and will not be seen anyone else.

If, however, while taking part, your child tells us something that makes us concerned for their welfare we may inform their school’s safeguarding lead. If your child is over 16 and has left school, and they tell us something that makes us concerned for their welfare, one of our trained researchers will call your child to discuss options for getting the help that they need. We may also contact the safeguarding lead at their college/sixth form or contact the relevant child protection service. As the diary entries will be reviewed within a week of receiving the recordings, it may not be possible to respond immediately if your child does discuss something which makes us concerned about their welfare.

**What do I do if I have any questions?**

If there is anything you don’t understand, or if you have any questions you would like to ask, then please do. You can ask us any questions today or you can ask us later by contacting Gemma Knowles (email: [reach@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:reach@kcl.ac.uk); tel: 07391 482947; website: [www.thereachstudy.com](http://www.thereachstudy.com).

This research study has been approved by an independent group of people called the Psychiatry, Nursing and Midwifery (PNM) Research Ethics Subcommittee (RESC) (reference: HR15/162320). If this study harms you or your child in any way, please contact the Chair of the PNM RESC at [rec@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:rec@kcl.ac.uk).

**What do I need to do now?**

Whether or not you take part in this part of the study is entirely up to you and your child. It’s ok if you don’t want your child to take part and you will not have to explain your reasons.

**You are also able to change your mind and stop taking part at any time and pull out of the study**. If you change your mind before 31 August 2023, which is the end of the study, we will destroy all information we have from you.