

**Information Letter for Parents and Carers**

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 that REACH will be moving online for the next phase, which is starting this week. 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/they 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 focus on understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – including school closures and other social distancing and isolation measures – on young people’s mental health and wellbeing.

**What are we doing?**

For the last 4 years, we have been doing a study in schools in south London to see what things influence young people’s mental health. The study is focussing on what leads to better mental health. The study is called REACH, which stands for **R**esilience, **E**thnicity, and **A**doles**C**ent Mental **H**ealth, and is funded by the European Union and the Economic and Social Research Council. Over 4,000 young people are taking part. Last year, we invited everyone in your child’s year at school to take part.

For this next phase of REACH, we will be inviting young people who have been taking part in REACH to provide information about their mental health and their experiences during the pandemic via our online questionnaire.

**Why are we doing this?**

The COVID-19 pandemic and resultant school closures and other social distancing and self-isolation measures are having significant and widespread impact and, for many, generating worry and concern. This is likely to be especially so among young people.

The next phase of REACH will focus on understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic – including school closures and social restrictions – on young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Specifically, we will try to understand what things help young people to maintain good mental health during these difficult times. Doing this study could help many young people now and in the future.

**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 over time and, importantly, how best to help young people now and in the future.

There are two parts to this:

1. If your child chooses to take part, they will be asked to complete a short (30 minute) online questionnaire about their experiences and how they feel during the pandemic. The questionnaire will include some questions on difficult experiences such as self-harm. The questionnaire will be completed on our secure online platform. Your child will also be asked if they are interested in completing the questionnaire again, around 6 months from now (and, after that, 1 year and 2 years later). This is so we can understand the effects on young people over time. If your child is interested in completing additional questionnaires, we will ask your child to provide an email address or mobile number that we can use to send them the link to future questionnaires. Taking part is entirely voluntary and your child is free to stop taking part at any time. All questionnaire responses will be **completely confidential (private)** to the research team. The responses will not be seen by parents, other pupils, teachers, or any employee of the school. Your child’s name will not be on the questionnaire and information will be anonymised, so that your child cannot be identified.
2. At the end of the first questionnaire, your child will have the chance to register their interest to participate in an additional part of the study. For this part of the study, young people will be asked to record, using a video diary app, their real-time experiences during the pandemic. They will be asked to do this once every two weeks for two months. This is so that we can understand, in more detail, the day-to-day experiences of young people during the pandemic. We will include around 40 young people, from those who express interest, in this part of the study. If your child is chosen and is under the age of 16, we will give you more information and ask for your consent before we ask your child to do anything further.

If your child decides to complete the questionnaire, within 2-3 working days of finishing, they will receive a **£15 Love2Shop e-voucher** for their time. If they are selected and decide to take part in the video diary study, they will receive a **£40 voucher** for their time.

If, while taking part, your child tells us something that makes us concerned for his/her/their welfare, we may inform the school’s safeguarding lead.

We may also contact you in the future about any follow-up REACH activities that your child has the opportunity to be involved in.

We may share anonymised research data with other researchers, for research purposes only.

**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 by contacting Gemma Knowles (email: [reach@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:reach@kcl.ac.uk); tel: 07391482947). You can also visit our website for further information ([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) Committee (reference: HR15/162320). If this study harms you or your child in any way, please contact the Chair of the PNM RESC (email: [rec@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:rec@kcl.ac.uk)).

**What do you need to do now**

If you have understood what we are asking and you do not have any more questions, please now decide if you want your child to take part in our study. This is entirely up to you. It’s ok if you don’t want your child to take part and you do not have to explain your reasons. **You are also able to change your mind and stop your child taking part at any time and withdraw them from the study.** If you change your mind before 31st August 2023, which is the end of the study, we will destroy all information we have on your child.

If you **do not** want your child to take part, please let us know by either contacting the school or the research team **by the date provided in the email.** You can contact the research team by email ([reach@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:reach@kcl.ac.uk)), text or phone (07391482947).

If you told us last time that you **did not** want your child to take part, we will assume he/she/they should **not** take part this time. If you have changed your mind, and would now like your child to take part, please let us know.

If you **do** want your child to take part, please ask him/her/them to read the Information Sheet for Young People (<https://www.thereachstudy.com/information-for-young-people1.html>), so they can decide whether they would like to complete the questionnaire. On or after the date provided in the email, school will send this information and the link to the questionnaire to your child to invite them to take part, unless you have told us that they should not receive an invite.

Thank you very much for reading this letter.

Yours,



Professor Craig Morgan, on behalf of the REACH Research Team