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School of Education and Sociology

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**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (version 1, 26/10/18)**



Title of Project: Sobriety Stories: Past Selves, Present Practices and Imagined Futures Amongst Women who No Longer Drink.

Name and Contact Details of Researcher: Emily Nicholls, [emily.nicholls@port.ac.uk](mailto:emily.nicholls@port.ac.uk)

Ethics Committee Reference Number: FHSS 2018-081

**1. Invitation**

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study looking at the experiences of women who stop drinking. Joining the study is entirely up to you, and before you decide I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please read this information and email me if you have any questions. Please feel free to talk to others about the study if you wish. If you would like to take part, we will go through this form again in person before we start the research so you can again ask me any questions.

My name is Emily Nicholls and I will be carrying out the research. I am a researcher and senior lecturer in Sociology at the University of Portsmouth. I have been doing research around women’s drinking and identity for several years, and I stopped drinking in February 2018.

**2. Study Summary**

This study is concerned with exploring the experiences of women who used to drink moderate to heavy amounts but have stopped drinking in the last 6 months to 1 year and are feeling at least some benefits or positive changes as a result. I am really interested in exploring your ‘journey’ to sobriety i.e. how you have made the move to ‘going sober’ and your own reflections on your past drinking, your present experiences of early sobriety and what you imagine for the future. I am also interested in whether (and how) you think your practices, relationships and identity have changed since you stopped drinking. To take part you need to:

1. identify as female and be between 18 and 70 years old and UK-based
2. identify as a former moderate to heavy drinker (by your own definition!)
3. have been sober for 6-12 continuous months when you contact me
4. believe that you have experienced some positive changes in any area of your life as a result of stopping drinking (although of course there may be challenges as well!)
5. have stopped drinking primarily for personal reasons rather than –for example – for religious or urgent medical reasons
6. not be accessing or have accessed in the past formal treatment programmes such as rehab
7. be feeling confident enough in your sobriety to not be worried that you will drink to harmful levels in the immediate future

Participation in the research would require you to attend 1 informal interview with me to share your ‘sobriety story’ and will take approximately 1-2 hours of your time.

**3. What is the purpose of the study?**

This study is designed to explore the experiences of women in early sobriety, specifically how they frame their journey to sobriety and have negotiated any changes to their practices, relationships and identities as a result. I believe this work is important because there is limited research on women who stop drinking, and the research that does exist tends to focus only on the experiences of university students (and predominantly young people). This study may also provide some really useful lessons about how women take the first steps in early sobriety and then maintain it, and also help to normalise and demystify sobriety and tell different ‘stories’ that do not simply support the dominant drinking culture in the UK. This research is timely, as more people in the UK are abstaining or stopping drinking, and there is now more recognition of sobriety as a positive lifestyle choice. Through a focus on some of the ‘positives’ of stopping drinking as well as the challenges, this study will also go beyond previous studies with a more medical focus on ‘problem drinkers’ and ‘alcoholics’ (you do not need to identify with these terms to take part in this research).

**4. Why have I been invited?**

You have been invited to take part as you have responded to a flyer or advert that you saw because you are a member of a relevant Facebook group or are attending a coaching day or retreat with IChange21. I am looking to speak to at least 10 women in total, of a range of ages and backgrounds but all with similar sobriety dates.

**5. Do I have to take part?**

No, taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide if you want to volunteer for the study. Please take at least 24 hours to think about it, and feel free to discuss it with others. If you agree to take part, we will go over this sheet before the interview then ask you to sign a consent form.

**6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you would like to take part, please check that you meet the 7 eligibility criteria in section 2. If you are eligible to take part, we will agree a time and place for an interview to discuss your experiences of stopping drinking. The interview will last about an hour and will be an informal and open discussion with me asking some general questions about your experience of stopping drinking. We will talk a bit about your drinking history (but you do not have to talk about anything you don’t feel comfortable discussing), how things are now (the benefits and challenges of stopping drinking, changes in your practices, relationships and sense of self) and what you hope for in the future.

The interview will take place in a space where you feel comfortable. I am based at the University of Portsmouth, so we can conduct the interview here if you prefer, in a booked, private meeting room. Alternatively, we can book a room closer to your home (in a local library for example), or meet in a quiet coffee shop. If you are attending a coaching day or retreat, we can do the interview in a private room on-site. I am able to travel to you, but if this is not feasible or practical, we can also conduct an interview online over Skype.

The interviews will be audio-recorded and I will ask a trusted company to type up the interviews (they won’t know who you are or have any information about you). I will then analyse the interviews, looking for the main themes and similarities. This will allow me to produce the main findings of the project, which I may publish in academic and non-academic forums and may present at conferences or public talks. Findings may also be shared with organisations. I may use some direct quotes from the interviews, but no identifying features will be used, and I will ask you to choose a pseudonym (fake name) to be used instead of your real name.

**7. Expenses and payments**

If you are required to travel solely for the purposes of this interview, then I can reimburse your travel costs up to £10. I will also offer you a £10 voucher as a token of my thanks for your involvement.

**8. What are the possible disadvantages and advantages of taking part?**

I recognise that this could be a sensitive topic, and it is possible that you might become distressed or upset talking about it. I will try to minimise the chances of this through giving you flexibility and freedom over how you answer questions. For example, I would like to ask a little about your drinking history and reasons for stopping drinking, but you do not need to talk about these topics in great depth if you do not feel comfortable doing so. You can also decline to answer certain questions if you wish to, or take a break or call off the interview at any time.

If the interview does throw up any difficult issues for you, the following might be of help:

Stephanie Chivers, IChange21: Stephanie Chivers is a research partner and a habit and addiction specialist with 12 years personal and professional experience.  For more information, useful blogs, ebook, free videos and support click the link <https://www.ichange21.com/>

Club Soda: <https://joinclubsoda.co.uk/> Mindful drinking movement and support

Drinkaware: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-support-services/> Comprehensive list of alcohol support services

If you take part, you will be helping to add to a limited body of research on early sobriety, and in sharing your own story you will contribute to better understandings of why and how women stop drinking and how they manage the early stages of sobriety. The more research we do on non-drinking, the more we also help to challenge dominant drinking cultures that position drinking as the ‘norm’, and we might also be able to make recommendations that can help other women who are trying to quit drinking. You will also receive a small token in the form of a £10 voucher to thank you for taking part.

**9. Will my data be kept confidential?**

Your data will be kept confidential. The only personal data I will keep is your signed consent form (which may also include your email address). I will number this document then scan this electronically and immediately destroy the hard copy. The electronic copy of your consent form will be stored securely on Google Drive (see below).

I will record the interview and it will be typed up by a trusted Transcription company (who will not have your personal details). Once I have the transcript of the interview, I will delete the recording, and store the transcript electronically in a Google Drive to which only I (and an official university account) have access. These are accessed by a password protected account used only on my password-protected work PC and personal laptop. Your transcript will be numbered with a number matching the one on your consent form, and the filename will be this number and your chosen pseudonym. All the interview transcripts will then by analysed to help me produce my main findings. If you would like to receive a copy of your interview transcript to approve before I analyse it, you can indicate this on the consent form, and I will email it to you as a password-protected document (with password sent separately). You can change or delete any parts you are not comfortable with. You can also indicate on the consent form whether you would like to be emailed a summary of the findings. If you do provide your email address here, it will be kept with the consent form only. If you do not feel comfortable using your personal email account but would still like a copy of the transcript or findings summary, you can set up a free, throwaway email account in advance to write here.

The findings and the data, when made anonymous, may be presented to others at academic conferences, or published as a project report, or in academic journals or books. It could also be made available to any commissioner or funder of the research, or shared with organisations such as local support organisations. Your pseudonym will always be used and whilst I may include your age and length of sobriety, no personal data will be included and it will not be possible to identify you.

Anonymous data, **which does not identify you**, will be publicly shared in an online repository at the end of the project and made open access. A CC-BY licence will be applied to this publicly shared data. This will allow anyone else (including researchers, businesses, governments, charities, and the general public) to use the anonymised data for any purpose that they wish, providing they credit the University and research team as the original creators. No restrictions will be placed on this shared anonymised data limiting its reuse to only non-commercial ventures.

All data will be retained for 10 years. When it is no longer required, the data will be disposed of securely (hard consent forms disposed of through confidential waste bin and electronic data deleted).

There are some limits to confidentiality. If you tell me during the interview process that you are in immediate danger of harming yourself or someone else, I will pause the interview and we will explore how you would prefer to deal with this situation. I will encourage you to get support from your GP or another support organisation, and ask if you feel OK to continue with the interview. In the very exceptional circumstance that I feel you or someone else is at extreme risk of serious harm, and you choose not to seek help/advice, I may have a duty to disclose this to the relevant agencies.

GDPR compliance

The School of Education and Sociology of the University of Portsmouth wishes to process your personal data (that is, collect, use, store and destroy data that identifies you) as part of the following project: Sobriety Stories: Past Selves, Present Practices and Imagined Futures Amongst Women who No Longer Drink. The data we collect will be your name (and optional email address) when we gain consent. If you have any queries about this, please contact Emily Nicholls or if you have any general queries about how your data will be processed, please contact the University’s Data Protection Officer at information-matters@port.ac.uk .

We ask for your consent to process this data because it is important that we have a consent form that has been signed by you which shows us that you agree to take part in the research. You might also provide your email address on this consent form if you would like to be sent (a) your typed up interview and / or (b) a summary of the findings. We will not share your personal data. *The exception to this will be any regulatory authority which has the legal right to access the data for the purposes of conducting an audit or enquiry, in exceptional cases. These agencies treat your personal data* in confidence.

Your personal data (hard copy consent form) will be scanned electronically and the hard copy destroyed via confidential waste disposal as soon as possible. The electronic copy of the consent form will be stored securely on a Google Drive for 10 years, and securely destroyed after that date.

You have the right to request a copy of the personal data we hold about you, to restrict the use of your personal data, the right to be forgotten, the right to data portability and the right to withdraw your consent to the use of your data. For more information on these rights, please see the information at the following links: <http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/corporategovernance/gdpr/>. You also have the right to lodge a complaint about the use of your personal data to initially the University (email [information-matters@port.ac.uk](mailto:information-matters@port.ac.uk)) then to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – for more information please see <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/raising-concerns/>.

**10. What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?**

As a volunteer you can stop the interview at any time, or withdraw from the study at any time before 31 May 2019 without giving a reason if you do not wish to. If you do withdraw from a study after some data have been collected you will be asked if you are content for the data collected thus far to be retained and included in the study. If you prefer, the data collected can be destroyed and not included in the study. Once the research has been completed, and the data analysed, it will not be possible for you to withdraw your data from the study.

**11. What if there is a problem?**

If you have a query, concern or complaint about any aspect of this study, in the first instance you should contact me.

If your concern or complaint is not resolved by the researcher, you should contact the Head of Department:

Dr Catherine Carroll-Meehan

Head of School of Education and Sociology

+44 (0)23 9284 5204

[catherine.carroll-meehan@port.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.carroll-meehan@port.ac.uk)

If the complaint remains unresolved, please contact:

The University Complaints Officer

023 9284 3642 [complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsadvice@port.ac.uk)

**12. Who has funded and reviewed the research?**

This research is being funded by the University of Portsmouth. I will not receive any financial reward by conducting this study, other than my normal salary as an employee of the University. This study has been reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Ethics Committee ([ethics-fhss@port.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-fhss@port.ac.uk)) and been given favourable ethical opinion.

**Thank you**

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering volunteering for this research. If you do agree to participate your consent will be sought. You will then be given a copy of this information sheet and your signed consent form, to keep.