

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Study title:** Stress online: Developing an online method for measuring stressful life events and difficulties

**Invitation:** You are invited to take part in a research study. We are contacting you because you previously took part in a research study on depression at the Institute of Psychiatry, London. However, before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the CLEAR research study?** This research aims to develop a sophisticated online measure of life change which can involve stress.

**Do I have to take part?** Taking part is entirely voluntary; it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Also, if you decide to take part you will be asked to complete a consent form for your participation.

**What do I have to do?** This online procedure will ask you to complete a series of questions including background details (e.g. your date of birth, gender, ethnicity), about people close to you (your partner, parents, children, close friends) as well as details of any life changes that have occurred in the last 12 months on a range of different topics. It will ask both about brief events and longer lasting difficulties. There will also be questions about symptoms of depression and any ill-health you may have experienced. The information you give us will allow us to explore how life events and difficulties are related to health and other life outcomes. If you agree to take part then we will email and post to you details of the website address and instructions of how to log into the website to complete the assessments. You can do this at home or somewhere else where you can complete the questions in private. If you do not have access to the internet but would like to take part please get in touch with us and we will make alternative arrangements.

**How long will it take?** The online questions are on different topics and you can respond in your own time and at your own convenience, save your information and can come back to it after a break. You will then have up to 72 hours (3 days) after you start entering information to finally complete and submit your response. The time taken to complete the online assessments depends a lot on what has happened to you in recent months, but is likely to take around 45 minutes. You can log in as many times as you like within the 3 days but after this time the system will reset and you will have to start again.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?** There are no significant risks. However, it is possible that some people may get upset when thinking about stressful events that have happened to them recently. If you feel upset or uncomfortable about answering a particular question then please leave it and move on to the next one. Also, a list of organisations and their contact details are provided on the CLEAR system if you wish to talk to someone about any of the issues that have been raised during the assessments. If you would be prefer, a paper copy of these can also be sent to you.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?** The information you provide will help generate a greater understanding of how life events and difficulties can influence how people function and this will potentially be of great value to health and social care professionals and educators. We think it may be interesting for you to work out your recent experiences in a structured way which may help you think about them. You will be able to print off a personalised calendar of your events and difficulties over the last 12 months. The process may offer you greater insight into what you have experienced over the last year in relation to your well-being. We will also give you £15 for your time.

**Is the information confidential?** Yes. We have taken a lot of trouble to make sure the online site is highly secure. You will not be named in the study, we will give you a randomly generated identification instead. The code to this login will be held securely with the university team but no one else will know it. Names and personal details are logged in a master file, which is kept separately from your online details. All the data will be kept on secure servers or in secure research offices at Middlesex University.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?** The results of the study will be written up in a research report with the aim of being published in academic journals, books, and/or presented at conferences. All reports and publications arising from the study will be in such a format that no one will be able to identify you. You can request to receive a summary of the research findings after they become available.

**Who is organising and funding the research?** This research is being organised by the Centre for Trauma and Abuse Studies at Middlesex University, London, and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It is headed by Professor Antonia Bifulco, a psychologist who is expert in this area of research.

**Who has reviewed the study procedures?** This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by London-Chelsea Research Ethics Committee.

**Contact for Further Information:** Thank you for reading this information, participating in this study contributes to a better understanding of life events and their effects on health and other outcomes.

If you have any questions please contact Ruth Spence at [R.Spence@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:R.Spence@mdx.ac.uk), telephone: 0208 8411 4116 or through the following address at Middlesex University:

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Alternatively, you can contact Professor Antonia Bifulco at [A.Bifulco@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:A.Bifulco@mdx.ac.uk) or through the same address.