INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS (TYPICAL GROUP)

Study title: Making it fair for child witnesses

*Research team: Professor Lucy Henry, Dr Rachel Wilcock, Dr Laura Crane, Dr Gilly Nash, Dr Mimi Kirke-Smith and Dr Zoe Hobson*

We are a team of researchers based at City University London and would like to invite you and your child to take part in our project ‘Making it fair for child witnesses’. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish. Feel free to contact our team if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

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

When children are victims or witnesses to crimes, they may have to be interviewed by police officers, attend court, and be challenged about their evidence by barristers. However, little is known about how to support children through this process. The purpose of this study is to find out more about the strengths and weaknesses of children as witnesses, as well as to identify the best ways to support this group during a criminal investigation.

**What does the study involve for me and my child?**

Taking part in the study will involve you completing two short questionnaires about your child that ask about any strengths or difficulties that they may have. We are happy to help you with any items that you find difficult or for which you need clarification. After you have signed the attached consent form, we will give you the questionnaires and your child will be asked to complete a number of fun activities. More details about these activities are outlined below.



# What school was like over 100 years ago…

Our research team will visit your child’s class and give a short talk about what school was like in Victorian times. During this presentation, one of the members of our team will ‘steal’ an item from another team member, although we later find out that this was only a misunderstanding!

# What can you remember?

Your child will be asked to tell us about what they can remember at three different times: (1) immediately after the talk, (2) one week later, and possibly (3) one year later. At time 1 and time 2, your child will be asked to tell one of our researchers what they remember. At time 3, we may ask if your child would be prepared to use Skype to speak to one of our trained barristers, who will ask them about what they saw. **We would appreciate it if you would not tell your child that they would be asked to recall the event, as this would not happen in a real-life investigation.**

# Fun games!

Your child will also be invited to take part in several games that assess their language, attention, memory and general ability level. In our experience, children really enjoy taking part in these games. They will also be asked to fill out some questionnaires about how they are feeling at the time. All games and questionnaires are suitable for children aged 6 and over. All of these individual tasks are very short, and they will be split up so that your child will not spend too long on these tasks at any one time.

**Does my child have to take part?**

It is up to you whether you would like your child to take part in this research. If you decide that your child can take part, you will be asked to sign and return a consent form. However, participation is voluntary and you may choose to end your involvement at any time and without giving a reason. We will also ask your child if they are happy to take part at each stage of the research. If they would prefer not to take part, that is fine.

Importantly, we are seeking your permission to audio or video tape your child while they are being interviewed about what they can remember. The reason that we are requesting this is (a) so that we can accurately note down *exactly* what your child was able to remember, and (b) so that we can select a random sample of the videos and ask a panel of ‘mock jurors’ to evaluate how well each child was able to describe what they could remember. Although this latter part of the project is crucial to our research, you can choose for your child’s video not to be used for this purpose and for no one except members of the research team to view the video (or you can opt for your child to be audio, rather than video taped). We should add that there will be no way of identifying your child from the videos (e.g., their full name will not be mentioned, their school badge will not be visible).

**What will happen to the information that you collect from me or my child?**

We will keep information collected in confidence. This means that we will only tell those who have a need or right to know. Participation in this project will have no implications for your child’s school assessment or educational provision. Published reports based on these studies will not mention individual children or their parents. Your child’s file will be given a code number, rather than a name, for us to identify it. An anonymous computer file of the whole data set will be placed in a secure repository run by a government sponsored research funding council, only accessible to bona fide researchers with our approval. Individual score sheets/recordings will be kept under lock and key accessible only to the research team for a period of 5 -7 years. If you have any questions about the research at any time, please feel free to ask us during the session, or contact Dr Laura Crane (Laura.Crane.2@city.ac.uk or 020 7040 8207), Professor Lucy Henry (Lucy.Henry.1@city.ac.uk) or Dr Rachel Wilcock (Rachel.wilcock@winchester.ac.uk).

**If you are willing for your child to participate in the study, please fill in the attached consent form and return it to a member of our team. Please keep this information sheet for your records.**

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS (ASD GROUP)

Study title: Making it fair for child witnesses

*Research team: Professor Lucy Henry, Dr Rachel Wilcock, Dr Laura Crane, Dr Gilly Nash, Dr Mimi Kirke-Smith, Dr Zoe Hobson & Ms Debbie Collins*

We are a team of researchers based at City University London and would like to invite you and your child to take part in our project ‘Making it fair for child witnesses’. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish. Feel free to contact our team if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

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

When children are victims or witnesses to crimes, they may have to be interviewed by police officers, attend court, and be challenged about their evidence by barristers. However, little is known about how to support children through this process, especially children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The purpose of this study is to find out more about the strengths and weaknesses of children with ASD as witnesses, as well as to identify the best ways to support this group during a criminal investigation.

**What does the study involve for me and my child?**

Taking part in the study will involve you completing two short questionnaires about your child that ask about any strengths or difficulties that they may have. We are happy to help you with any items that you find difficult or for which you need clarification. After you have signed the attached consent form, we will give you the questionnaires and your child will be asked to complete a number of fun activities. More details about these activities are outlined below.



# What school was like over 100 years ago…

Our research team will visit you and your child and show them a video about what school was like in Victorian times. In this video, one of the people ‘steals’ an item from another person, although we later find out that this was only a misunderstanding!

# What can you remember?

Your child will be asked to tell us about what they can remember at three different times: (1) immediately after the talk, (2) one week later, and possibly (3) one year later. At time 1 and time 2, your child will be asked to tell one of our researchers what they remember. At time 3, we may ask if your child would be prepared to use Skype to speak to one of our trained barristers, who will ask them about what they saw. This will give us an idea of whether there are any differences in the way that children with and without ASD remember events that they have seen. **We would appreciate it if you would not tell your child that they would be asked to recall the event, as this would not happen in a real-life investigation.**

# Fun games!

Your child will also be invited to take part in several games that assess their language, attention, memory and general ability level. In our experience, children really enjoy taking part in these games. They will also be asked to fill out some questionnaires about how they are feeling at the time. All games and questionnaires are suitable for children aged 6 and over. All of these individual tasks are very short, and they will be split up so that your child will not spend too long on these tasks at any one time.

**Does my child have to take part?**

It is up to you whether you would like your child to take part in this research. If you decide that your child can take part, you will be asked to sign and return a consent form. However, participation is voluntary and you may choose to end your involvement at any time and without giving a reason. We will also ask your child if they are happy to take part at each stage of the research. If they would prefer not to take part, that is fine.

Importantly, we are seeking your permission to audio or video tape your child while they are being interviewed about what they can remember. The reason that we are requesting this is (a) so that we can accurately note down *exactly* what your child was able to remember, and (b) so that we can select a random sample of the videos and ask a panel of ‘mock jurors’ to evaluate how well each child was able to describe what they could remember. Although this latter part of the project is crucial to our research, you can choose for your child’s video not to be used for this purpose and for no one except members of the research team to view the video (or you can opt for your child to be audio, rather than video taped). We should add that there will be no way of identifying your child from the videos (e.g., their full name will not be mentioned, their school badge will not be visible).

**What will happen to the information that you collect from me or my child?**

We will keep information collected in confidence. This means that we will only tell those who have a need or right to know. Participation in this project will have no implications for your child’s school assessment or educational provision. Published reports based on these studies will not mention individual children or their parents. Your child’s file will be given a code number, rather than a name, for us to identify it. An anonymous computer file of the whole data set will be placed in a secure repository run by a government sponsored research funding council, only accessible to bona fide researchers with our approval. Individual score sheets/recordings will be kept under lock and key accessible only to the research team for a period of 5 -7 years. If you have any questions about the research at any time, please feel free to ask us during the session, or contact Dr Laura Crane (laura.crane.2@city.ac.uk or 020 7040 8207), Professor Lucy Henry (lucy.henry.1@city.ac.uk) or Dr Rachel Wilcock (Rachel.wilcock@winchester.ac.uk ).

**If you are willing for your child to participate in the study, please fill in the attached consent form and return it to a member of our team. Please keep this information sheet for your records.**

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet.