**How do autistic adults conceptualise and recover from intimate violence and abuse?**

**Content Warning**: Before reading this information sheet, you should be aware that this study contains information relating to potentially upsetting events.

**Who is conducting this research?**

This study is a collaborative project. Our team includes both autistic and non-autistic people, and/or people with lived experience of intimate partner violence.

Our team is:

Dr Amy Pearson, University of Sunderland

Mr Kieran Rose, The Autistic Advocate, University of Sunderland

Dr Monique Botha, University of Stirling

Mrs Sarah Douglas, University of Bristol

Dr Felicity Sedgewick, University of Bristol

**Research Assistants**

Miss Alex Mitchell, University of Sunderland

Mrs Wendy Joseph, University of Sunderland

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**What is the purpose of this study**

Research suggests that autistic people are at a higher likelihood of experiencing forms of interpersonal violence, such as domestic violence and abuse. The aim of our project is to examine how autistic people recognise and understand this violence and abuse, the barriers they might face seeking and accessing support, and things that help in accessing support and recovery. Our research would provide a much needed evidence base to improve access to support for autistic people who have experienced these forms of violence, and ensure that support offered is both appropriate, and of adequate quality.

**Who can take part?**

We are interested in speaking to **autistic adults** (people over the age of 18) of any gender who have experienced domestic violence, or intimate violence/abuse, and who **live in the UK**. Both **clinically diagnosed, and self-identified** autistic people are welcome. We will not exclude anyone from taking part on the basis of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, communication needs, additional disabilities, etc.

Due to the nature of the study however, there **are** some limitations on who can take part. You **cannot** take part in this research if:

1. You are currently experiencing ongoing proceedings related to your experiences of violence and abuse in the criminal justice system.
2. You are currently experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, violence and abuse.
3. You do not currently live in the UK. We will not be including people from outside of the UK in this study as services in different countries may vary greatly. Our results may be of interest to a variety of services, but we will be focussing on the UK criminal justice system and support services.

**What will happen if I decide to take part?**

If you decide to take part in this research, you will be invited to take part in an interview. This interview can be on a day/time that suits you. You can take part in the interview using different methods, for example:

* Video interview
* Interview by live chat

We welcome participants to share their communication needs with us.

If you would like to see the questions before the interview to give you time to think about your answers (or decide that it might be too upsetting to take part for example), we can send you the questions in advance.

Prior to taking part we will contact you to set up a safety plan, so that we know what to do if you become distressed, and how best to support you. We will also arrange a time to complete the interview.

During the interview we will ask you questions about your experiences. However, we will focus on your experience of seeking help, and you do not have to share any details about the violence you experienced with us.

The interview will be recorded by the researcher. They will then transcribe (type up what you said) your interview and send this back to you so that you can decide whether you are happy to include the things you said in the interview. You will be compensated for your time a) taking part in the interview, and b) reading and providing feedback on your transcript and results.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You can withdraw at any point during the interview by telling the researcher that you don’t want to take part anymore. They will stop the interview, and delete all of the data that they have collected so far.

If you decide you do not want to take part **after** your interview, you can contact the researcher to withdraw your data. You are able to withdraw up until you have confirmed that you are happy with your final transcript and your final transcript has been uploaded into our storage system. If you decide that you want to withdraw we will delete all data that you have submitted.

**What will happen to my data?**

Amy Pearson will be the primary data controller for this project. All of your data will be stored in compliance with General Data Protection Act (2018) regulations. Your data will be stored on a private folder on the Open Science Framework, that only the research team has access to. All identifying information will be removed, so that no-one outside of the team would be able to connect your identity to your data.

At the end of the project, all data will be uploaded to the UK data sharing service (as per the specifications of the funding body). All identifying information (e.g. names, places, specifics) will be removed, and your data will not be stored with any personal information.

The [UK Data Service](https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/about/) is the UK’s only nationally funded research infrastructure for curating and providing access to social science data for research and teaching purposes. Each UK Data Service collection has an access level designated by the data provider depending on the detail, confidentiality and sensitivity of the data for further information please see the access levels and conditions webpage here: <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/find-data/access-conditions/>

For the purpose of this study, we will be using safeguarded access. This means that any researcher who wants to access this data who is not part of this project will have to apply to access the data, and meet specific criteria in order to do so. Here we recognise a) the sensitivity of the research topic, and b) concerns from the autistic community about how their data may be used by third parties.

The results of this study will be analysed by the team. Before we submit these findings for publication we will contact you with a copy of the results for you to share your view on whether they are accurate, and represent your experiences. We will publish these results in academic journals and may present them at conferences. We will also provide an open access version of the paper so that anyone can read it. We will also produce a report aimed at professionals working in fields where they may encounter survivors where we will share our findings, and best practice. We will also produce a video about our findings for the public.

We are aware that this is a particularly sensitive topic and that some of the questions might cause you to think about, or remember, some upsetting memories. If the study causes any discomfort, or you feel that you would like to speak to someone about your experiences, we have included some services you can contact below:

**Support**

For LGBTQ+ support:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse-resources-lgbt-people>

For anyone:

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/en/How-can-we-support-you>

<https://www.sarsas.org.uk>

For men:

<https://mensadviceline.org.uk>

For women:

<https://www.refuge.org.uk>

**Contact for further information**

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Dr John Fulton (Chairperson of the University of Sunderland Research Ethics Committee) **Email:** john.fulton@sunderland.ac.uk **Phone:** 0191 515 2529