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MH-CAT: A SURVEY OF CHILDREN IN CARE IN ENGLAND

Dear carer/parent,

We are a team of researchers from the University of Bristol, researching mental health of children in care in England. Your local authority is participating in this research and as part of it, children and young people in care aged between 11 and 18 years are being asked to complete an online survey. This is not a mandatory survey and it is completely optional for the children and young person to take part. If they do complete survey, as a thank you for taking part, they will receive a £15 gift voucher.

This survey is about the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in care and looks at different factors which may influence these. For example, school or college, being in care and people and support. This research has ethical approval from the University of Bristol and has approval from the Association of Directors of Children's Services Research Committee (Reference: RGE200212). We have also discussed this research with Department for Education, who have confirmed its usefulness.

We are asking the children and young people to complete the survey by themselves, but it is also fine for them to ask an adult for help or support. We do not ask for any personal information on the survey, but we do ask for an email address at the end of the survey, so that we can send them the gift voucher.

Some more information about the survey and how we will use the information that is being collected from the surveys is provided overleaf. We have also included a list of support services where children and young people can access mental health support should they need to.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us. The best way to do this is by email (mh-cat@bristol.ac.uk) as we are currently working away from the office.

Thank you very much,

Dinithi Wijedasa, Sarah Harding and Rachel Hahn

FURTHER INFORMATION

WHO IS BEING ASKED TO PARTICPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?

All children and young people aged between 11-18 years old who have been in care for at least one year in your local authority are invited to take part in this research.

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS ABOUT?

There are questions about:

- Being in care and the place where you currently live
- School or college
- People and support
- Contact with birth family
- Thoughts and feelings
- Health
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

DOES THE YOUNG PERSON HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

No. It's completely up to them whether they take part. They don't have to, if they don't wish to. They can also stop completing the survey at any point if they choose.

WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION THE CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE PROVIDE?

The information from the surveys will only be accessed by the research team, who have been approved to work on this research at the University of Bristol. The research team will not know the identity of the children/young people participating in the survey. The survey will just have an identity number from the local authority to link to the child, and we also do not ask for any information that will identify the child/young person or anyone they are living with. Your local authority will also not know the individual children who participated in the survey.

Responses are confidential which means that we will not tell anyone what the young people have said. There is one special instance where we might let your local authority know the ID number of some children and young people. This is only when the survey response might indicate that there is a potential risk of significant harm for the child/young person or someone else. If this happens, we will give the local authority the study identity number, so that their social worker can identify and contact the child or the young person.

WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE INFORMATION?

We will combine all the answers given by young people in your local authority to give information to the managers about how the children and young people they look after are doing. It will not be possible for anyone to personally identify you from the results or reports as we will only be showing combined results. In future, using the local authority ID number, we may link the information you provide in the survey to other data held about you by the Department for Education.

We will also be writing reports and present the findings at meetings and training events so that that we can help those who are in charge make better decisions about children in care. We will tell people about our findings by writing reports and presenting at conferences, but no-one will be able to recognise who specifically did the survey.

The research will comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

There are no known risks linked to taking part in this research. As the survey asks about many areas of life, there may be questions that the child or the young person may find upsetting. A list of support services that they can contact is overleaf.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any questions about the project, please contact: The research team: Email: mh-cat@bristol.ac.uk

If you have any complaints about the project, please contact: Dinithi Wijedasa
Email: Dinithi.Wijedasa@bristol.ac.uk

PROJECT TEAM AT UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL: Dinithi Wijedasa, Sarah Harding, Rachel Hahn.

The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) UK.

Here is a list of support places for children and young people if they need support with their mental health and wellbeing

The Mix

The Mix offer a helpline, email, live chat, telephone counselling service and crisis text line for anyone under 25 years old wanting support.

Call 0800 808 4994 (hours may vary)

[Visit The Mix website](#)

Childline

Childline run a free 24-hour helpline, email service and online and phone counselling service for children and young people in the UK. They can also provide Welsh speaking counsellors.

Call 0800 11 11

[Visit Childline website](#)

CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason.

Call 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Free, anonymous [webchat with trained staff](#)

Infoline

Infoline provides an information and signposting service. Ask them about:

- mental health problems
- where to get help near you
- treatment options
- advocacy services.

Call 0300 123 3393 (Open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays)

Text 86463

[Visit the Mind website](#)

Supportline

The Support line offers confidential emotional support to children, young adults particularly aimed at those who are isolated, at risk, vulnerable and victims of any form of abuse.

Call 01708 765200 (hours may vary)

[Visit support line website](#)

HopelineUK (Crisis support for young people)

If you are under 35 and feel that life is not worth living any more, call Papyrus's HopelineUK from.

Call HopelineUK on 0800 068 41 41 (9am to 10pm weekdays and 2pm to 10pm on weekends)

Text 07786 209697 (9am to 10pm weekdays and 2pm to 10pm on weekends)

[Visit Papyrus website](#)

Shout (Free 24-hour support)

Offers confidential 24/7 crisis text support for times when you need immediate assistance.

Text "SHOUT" to 85258

[Visit Shout Crisis Text Line](#)

Samaritans (Free 24-hour listening support)

When life is tough, Samaritans are here to listen at any time of the day or night. You can talk to them about anything that is troubling you, no matter how difficult.

Call free on 116 123

[Visit the Samaritans website](#)

Your doctor

Doctors can give you a safe space to talk and answer any questions you have. They can also:

- give you information
- offer you support and treatments (such as counselling and medication)
- refer you to a specialist mental health service, such as the adult mental health services (CAMHS).

For more advice on where to find other support and for some tips on self-help visit:

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/>

Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Rise above: www.riseabove.org.uk