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SURVEY OF MENTAL HEALTH 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. As part of this research, 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 people to take part. If they do complete the survey, as a thank you for taking part, **they will receive a £15 gift voucher.**

It is possible that you are receiving this request for the second time as this survey was carried out for the first time in autumn 2020. If the child or young person that you are the carer/parent for completed it last year, we would greatly appreciate it if you can encourage them to fill in the survey again as this information will enable us to explore changes over time.

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 identifiable information on the survey, except for an email address (either yours or the young person's), so that we can send them an online gift voucher. We will not use this email address for any other purpose.

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, Florie Schmits and Yeosun Yoon
(The research team)
Email: mh-cat@bristol.ac.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION

WHO IS BEING ASKED TO PARTICPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?

All children and young people aged between 11-18 years 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 current placement
- School or college
- People and support
- 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.

Responses are confidential which means that we will not share the information that the children and young people give us in the survey with anyone. There is one special instance where we might let your local authority know the identity number (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 the children and young people from the results or reports as we will only be showing combined results. As part of this research study, we also plan to link the information children and young people provide in the survey to other data held about them by the Department for Education. The research team will only have access to anonymised data and will not know any personal details about any child in care.

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). More information about how we collect and analyse information for research at the University of Bristol can be found here <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/data-protection/policy/research-participant-fair-processing-notice/>.

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. You might want to contact the child or young person's social worker to have a discussion. We have also attached a list of support services that the children and young people can contact.

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, Florie Schmits, Yeosun Yoon

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Services that can help if children and young people feel the need for support with mental health and wellbeing

The Mix

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

Call 0800 808 4994 (3pm – 12am every day)

Text “THEMIX” to 85258 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

[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 (hours vary but usually morning until 3.30am)

[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](#)

[Visit the CALM website](#)

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))

[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.

Call HopelineUK on 0800 068 41 41 (9am to midnight every day of the year)

Text 07860 039967 (9am to midnight every day of the year)

[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 (24 hours a day, every day of the year)

[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 (24 hours a day, every day of the year)

[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: <http://www.riseabove.org.uk>