**Participant Information Sheet**

**Study Title**: Exploring Strategies Older Workers Use to Sustain Careers in Digital and Creative Work

**Researcher**: Benjamin Thomas

**ERGO number:** 55614

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

**What is the research about?**

I am a sociologist of work at the University of Southampton with an interest in how different older workers (over 35 years old) sustain careers in digital and creative work.

I am investigating the choices people make over their careers in order to continue to work in digital and/or creative work, comparing how this differs for different people in different circumstances. I am considering the type of industry people work in, how they are employed (directly or freelance for example), how their background and education shapes their experience of work, and their personal circumstances at particular points in their lives.

This research is being carried out as part of a PhD qualification which is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

**Why have I been asked to participate?**

As someone who is over 35 years old and works in a digital and/or creative industry, you are being asked to participate in this study so that your views about this kind of work can be understood.

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

If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed using an online communication tool about your background, your career-to-date, and possible future plans. You will be asked about why you have made previous career decisions and your reasoning behind any future planning. You will also be asked about working conditions and work cultures that you have experienced.

This single interview is expected to be between 1 and 3 hours dependent on what you would like and are able to do. I will have a topic guide to make sure I cover certain things, but the interview will be able to cover anything you like regarding your career and related topics.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions, the interview will have to take place over video call. An audio-only recording will necessarily be taken so that a transcription of the interview can be written up for later analysis.

**Are there any benefits in my taking part?**

This interview can be beneficial to you in the sense that it is a chance to reflect on you career, and to communicate your experiences of the industry you work in. Your participation along with others will add to academic understanding of older workers’ experiences in digital and creative work.

**Are there any risks involved?**

At this time, due to COVID-19 restrictions, I am not conducting research into companies directly. However, if restrictions are lifted in the timeframe I have to conduct my research, I may request organisational access to some digital and creative companies. If in this case, the company is one you work for, there is a chance you could be identified. Although all interview data you provide will be anonymised, by participating in this research, your employer or contractor (which might represents a future ‘case study’ being researched) may be able to identify you in the report I deliver on completion of the work. This is more likely if you are one of only a few older workers (over 35 years old) in your organisation. This is something you need to consider carefully before agreeing to proceed.

It is possible that the interview will bring up negative emotions regarding your career or wider situation. If this is the case, we can pause or stop the interview if you wish. In addition, there are a number of support services which might be beneficial to use, listed below.

Samaritans:

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

Remploy mental health support service (government mental health service)

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/about-us/current-programmes/access-work-mental-health-support-service>

Mind.org.uk (help with managing stress at work

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/workplace-mental-health/getting-support/#.Xc1Pkb_gphE>

You can also contact your GP.

**What data will be collected?**

Data from you is in the form of your interview. In the interview I will ask you about your background to ensure that the full range of interviews I conduct is representative of different ages, gender identities, and class and ethnic backgrounds which make up your industry. This is done to ensure representation of views from different groups. This data will be held securely on a password protected university server. I will store your contact details for the duration of the study.

**Will my participation be confidential?**

Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

Contact information will be held on a secure server. Consent forms will be completed online, and stored securely. The audio recording and subsequent transcript from your interview will be held securely on a password protected server for the duration of the project. When the transcript is made, your name and other identifying details will be anonymised. Once the project is complete, your contact details and the audio recording will be deleted.

**Do I have to take part?**

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

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

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw up to one calendar month after the interview has taken place without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. The time limit is in place so that work done subsequent to your participation is not adversely affected at a later date by withdrawal of your data. If you wish to withdraw your data from the research, you can contact me on [b.p.thomas@soton.ac.uk](mailto:b.p.thomas@soton.ac.uk).

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

The results of the research will form part of my PhD thesis, and potentially be published in the form of articles in academic journals. In addition, generalised research findings will be made available to any case study organisations used in the research in the form of oral presentations or written reports. No identifying information will be present in these reports, although as stated above, there may be a risk of being identified if you are one of only a few older workers in the case study organisation. This is something you need to consider before participating. You are welcome have access to any of these publications once complete, which you can request via email – [b.p.thomas@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:b.p.thomas@soton.ac.uk).

After the research has been completed, the anonymised data will be stored for 10 years at the university, following the University of Southampton data management policies. As a requirement of the project funding, the anonymised data will potentially be uploaded to the UK Data Service. This acts as a library for research data that is collected and means that other researchers could potentially use the data for other research in the future. This would include the anonymised transcript of your interview. I would include a general summary of the characteristics of people who took part, but no personal information or contact details would be included. Because there is a small risk that someone who knows you might identify you, I would request the UK Data Service to store this data under ‘controlled access’, which means that future users would have to ask my permission to use the data, as well as signing an End User Agreement. You could ask to have your data removed from the archive at any time in the future by contacting me. It is entirely up to you whether you are happy for the data you provide to be stored and reused in this way – if you are not comfortable with this you are still able to take part in the study.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact me on:

[b.p.thomas@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:b.p.thomas@southampton.ac.uk)

07811 217024.

**What happens if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to me as the researcher and I will do my best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)).

**Data Protection Privacy Notice**

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, ‘Personal data’ means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University’s data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf>

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University’s policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason (‘lawful basis’) to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the ‘Data Controller’ for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University’s data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University’s Data Protection Officer ([data.protection@soton.ac.uk](mailto:data.protection@soton.ac.uk)).

Data arising from your interview will be anonymised and any personal identifiers removed from the data. This makes it difficult for others to identify you, although the researcher and the University of Southampton will still hold personal information about you. Only the researcher and responsible members of the University of Southampton or individuals from regulatory authorities would have access to the codes that link the anonymised data to your personal information. These codes would be password protected to add additional security to your personal data.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering taking part in the research.**