**INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS**     
**This project has been reviewed and approved by the Psychiatry, Nursing & Midwifery Research Ethics Sub-Committee (REF HR-20/21-21292).**   
    
**Title: Understanding the impact of cognitive biases in maintaining loneliness in young people.**   
    
You are being invited to participate in this research study as part of my doctorate degree at King's College London. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the associated restrictions and changes in social activities and relationships has had an emotional impact on young people with many young people reporting loneliness. It is vital to help young people who experience high levels of loneliness to manage these feelings. As part of the research team, we are interested in developing a new intervention to manage loneliness. If you choose to take part, we hope that the information you provide will help others manage similarly challenging situations.    
    
**Why have I been invited to take part?**   
We are interested in working with University students, aged 18-24 years. Because the intervention is delivered in written English, you need to be fluent in English to take part. You will also need to give us informed consent. If you have a learning disability, experienced trauma to the brain or have been diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder, you may not be eligible. If you have participated in earlier phases of our research, you may also not be eligible. The researchers will discuss these eligibility criteria with you before we ask you to complete the consent form.    
    
**What will happen if I take part?**   
There are two phases to the research study. In the first part, you will first be asked to complete a short online questionnaire on feelings of social isolation and loneliness. This phase should only take 10 minutes. We will then select participants with a range in scores to move on to the next phase of the research.

The second phase should take approximately 1 hour and will be completed online. You will first be randomly allocated to one of two groups. However, both conditions will involve completing more questions about your feelings and social relationships. After this, you will read and complete the endings of some social stories; the nature of these differ across the two groups. At the end of this, you will be asked to complete some questions about the social stories.

If you agree to take part, you will need access to any devices where you have access to the internet. If you are experiencing any difficulties or are unable to complete the questions online, these can be completed via telephone with a researcher instead.    
    
**Do I have to take part?**   
Participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Once you have read this information sheet, please contact us if you have any questions. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form before you are able to complete the study. You can choose to withdraw from the study at any point or to withdraw the data you have already given us without giving any reason.

Withdrawing from the project will not affect you in any way, simply email the researchers to let us know. Please note that you will have to provide the researcher with the unique identification code which will be provided to you. If you choose to withdraw your data, you must let us know before 30th March 2022, as we will write up the final report after this point.    
    
**Are there any benefits of taking part?**   
By taking part in the study, this will help us inform the development of new psychological interventions for young people struggling with loneliness. To say thank you for your time, you will be offered a £10 voucher, but only if you complete both phases.    
    
**Are there any risks of taking part?** We do not expect that there will be any risks to you when completing the study, but sometimes when we ask people about their feelings and relationships with others, this can be upsetting. We will provide you with a list of advice and support resources that you may find helpful.    
    
**Will my information be kept private?**   
YES. Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, you will be randomly given a unique identification code. There will be no information that would identify you. Only the research team will have access to your data, which will be saved on a secure server maintained by King’s College London. We will keep your data for up to 7 years after completion of the study.

Your anonymised data may be shared with other research scientists for the purposes of research and knowledge. This data will not be able to be traced back to you. Any data sharing and transfer arrangements are compliant with GDPR and KCL policies and if shared with any other third parties will only be done with your consent.    
    
**Data Protection Statement:**   
The data controller for this project will be KCL. If you would like more information about how your data will be processed in accordance with GDPR please visit the link below:   
 https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statement-on-use-of-personal-data-in-research    
    
**What will happen to the results of the study?**   
The results of the study will be written up for dissertation purposes and for publication in scientific journals. However, no information that would identify you would be included in this. If you wish to receive a copy of the scientific article, please let the researcher know.

**What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?**   
If this study has harmed you in any way you can contact my academic supervisor at King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:    
    
Email: **J.lau@qmul.ac.uk**   
Jennifer Lau

Or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study you can also contact The Chair, Psychiatry, Nursing & Midwifery Research Ethics Sub-Committee.   
    
Email: **rec@kcl.ac.uk**   
    
**If I have recently experienced negative feelings, is there any support I can access?**   
    
Here is a list of resources that you can access if you have experienced negative feelings recently.    
Mind https://www.mind.org.uk/    
Samaritans https://www.samaritans.org/ contact number 116 123    
Young Minds https://youngminds.org.uk/    
CALM https://www.thecalmzone.net/    
NHS Every Mind Matters https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/    
    
**Who should I contact for further information?**   
    
 If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:   
 Email: **Elizabeth.bangura@kcl.ac.uk**   
    
Departmental postal address –    
National Addiction Centre Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) Addiction Sciences Building 4 Windsor Walk Denmark Hill London SE5 8BB    
    
Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.