**Parent/Guardian Information Sheet and Consent**

**form of typically developing adolescents aged 14-16yrs**

**The Effect of Early Experiences on Development**

We would like to invite your child to take part in our research study. Before you and your child decide whether you would like to take part, it is important for you to know why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact xx or xx

**The aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to explore the effect of early experiences on children’s development. In particular we are interested in understanding how early negative experiences can affect the way children interpret social and emotional information in their environment. We have contacted your child’s school because we are keen to recruit comparison children who have grown up in a typical environment, so that we can see how children who have not suffered from early difficult experiences deal with social and emotional information.

Because social and emotional processes develop across time, we plan to study everyone again in one year’s time. For this reason we would like to collect your contact details so we get in touch with you. Separate information sheets and consent forms will be provided in one year’s time to remind you what the study is about. If you, at that point, decide you will not want to continue to take part, you are free to withdraw from the study and we will not contact your further.

**Why is the study being done?**

Experiencing early adversity has been shown affect in a negative way the emotional and psychological development of children. In addition, children who have suffered from many difficult experiences are more likely to develop mental problems later in life than those who have not. It is our hope that this kind of research will eventually help us prevent more children from developing illness and mental health problems later in life, and will help us to treat those who do suffer from these problems more effectively.

**What will happen if we take part?**

If you agree to take part in this research, your child will be seen by x at school for a little over one hour. During that time, your child will do some computer games and puzzles that look at how children process cognitive, social and emotional information. Your child will also be asked to fill in some questionnaires and do some simple pen and paper tasks.

Sometimes differences in genes make some children more reactive to negative experiences than others. We also know that negative experiences can switch genes ‘on’ or ‘off’. We are keen to collect DNA to study the influence of genes and this would help us to better understand how negative experiences have their effect. DNA would be collected from your child for research purpose only and no one apart from our team would have access to this information. DNA can be collected by rubbing cotton wool buds on the inside of the cheek. This method is painless and quick, not that different from brushing one’s teeth. If you want your child to take part in the study, but decide not to provide DNA, that is fine.

An information sheet for your child has been provided. Please talk about the study with your child. X will also make sure that your child understands what he/she will be doing and give him/her an opportunity to ask any questions that he or she may have.

**What will your child be asked to do?**

Your child will be asked to do some games on a laptop computer while at school. The games have been designed to be fun and appropriate for your child’s age and they will inform us about how your child reacts to social and affective information. For example your child will be asked to play a game while seeing different facial expressions on screen. In addition, your child will be asked to fill in some questionnaires that ask questions about his/her emotions and thoughts about a variety of social situations. All of this information is gathered in the strictest confidence. Some of the questions we ask are about events that may have been unpleasant, such as witnessing aggressive behaviour in the neighborhood or conflicts at home. It is important for us to gather this information to be able to provide a point of comparison between children who have experienced early adversity and children who have not. If you give permission we would also like your child’s teacher to fill in a few questionnaires about your child’s behaviour in the classroom. If you want to see copies of the questionnaires, we can forward these to you before you make a decision about your child taking part.

**Are there any risks of discomforts?**

We do not anticipate any risks to the individuals taking part in this study. We will liaise with your child’s class teacher to ensure that they do not miss any lessons that the teacher believes important for the child to attend. This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics committee.

**What are the potential benefits?**

We hope that our findings will help to develop ways of treating children who have suffered from early adverse experiences, for example by improving their ability to understand and respond to information in their environment. However, any research has to be thorough before practical recommendations are made. This is likely to mean that there is no immediate benefit for the children taking part in the study, but we hope that their help will be beneficial to other children in the future.

**Does my child have to take part in this study?**

It is up to you and your child whether or not you take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide now, or at a later date, that you do not wish to participate in this research you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Even if you are happy for your child to take part, he or she will still decide for himself. It will be explained to your child that he/she can choose to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. We want to make sure that everyone is happy when taking part in our project.

**Will information about my child’s performance be available to anyone?**

All information collected from you and your child during the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential, unless required by law. Information of your child’s DNA will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. For example the school will not have access to our research records. It is important for parents to know that we are interested in the average performance of children, not in any individual child. All research reports we will produce, including those looking at genetic factors, contain information about average performance of several children in any of our tasks. No individual child will be named or singled out.

**Who will have access to the research records?**

Only members of our research team will be able to look at the information we collect. The use of some types of personal information is safeguarded by the Data Protection Act of 1998 (DPA). The DPA places an obligation on those who record or use personal information, but also gives rights to people about whom information is held.

**How to contact the researchers**

xx.

If you prefer to email, my address is [x](mailto:charlotte.cecil@ucl.ac.uk), alternatively you can contact x or send her an email at x

We are happy to talk through any questions with you. We would be extremely grateful if you could return the enclosed form to your child’s teacher. Thank you for taking time to read this information.

***Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.***

***Your help makes our research possible!***

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**Please tick (√) appropriate box:**

**Yes**, I would like my child to participate in this study

If **Yes**:

**Yes**, I agree for my child to have a DNA cheek swab taken

**No**, I do not agree for my child to have a DNA cheek swab taken

**No**, I do not want my child to participate in this study.

**If Yes, please complete the following:**

I have read the Information Sheet.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my child from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that my child is free withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I give consent for the teacher to fill in a questionnaire regarding my child.

I give consent to be contacted directly by the research team in the future at the details given by me on this form.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I wish to ask.

I have the names and telephone numbers of the research team in case I have any queries in the

future.

Child’s Name: Parent’s Name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_

**PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING DETAILS SO THAT WE CAN CONTACT YOU IN ONE YEAR’S TIME TO TAKE PART IN THE SECOND PART OF STUDY**

Address:

Telephone number:

Email: