In My Shoes - A School Participation and Connectedness Intervention for Neurodivergent Children in Mainstream UK Primary Schools: A Feasibility Study.

Parent/Carer Information Sheet

Your child is being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to read the information below so you understand why the study is being carried out and what it will involve.

Please read this Information Sheet, discuss it with others, or ask any questions you have to help you decide if you would like your child to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

There are increasing numbers of neurodivergent pupils in mainstream primary schools. Research shows that neurodivergent pupils can sometimes face barriers to school participation and connectedness. School connectedness and feeling included are important for all pupils' wellbeing. *In My Shoes* is a whole-class programme, originally from Australia and now adapted for the UK, that teaches all pupils perspective-taking and social problem-solving. Using engaging characters and activities, it helps pupils understand that everyone experiences school differently and learn practical ways to support each other and create inclusive classroom communities. This feasibility study gathers feedback from pupils, teachers and parents/carers, about the programme through questionnaires and focus group discussions, informing PhD research on inclusive education in UK primary schools.

Why has my child been invited?

We are looking for Year 4 and 5 classes in mainstream primary schools across the North East and the Scottish Borders to take part in a feasibility study for the whole-class intervention, *In My Shoes*. Your child's class has been invited to take part. Participation will involve your child being taught all the modules of *In My Shoes* by their class teacher, completing questionnaires and then having an opportunity to take part in a group discussion. This is to ensure the materials are understandable, appropriate, and linked to the statutory PSHE curriculum.

Does my child have to take part?

Your child will take part in the twelve modules in the classroom as part of their statutory PSHE curriculum in school. However, it is up to you whether you would like your child to take part in the research study by giving their feedback on the modules. The purpose of this information sheet is to help you make that decision. If you agree to your child taking part in the questionnaires, discussions and feedback afterwards, you can withdraw them from being involved in the study at any point up to the focus group participation date without explaining why. You are completely free to decide whether your child takes part or not, or to allow them to take part and then withdraw their data from the study before completion.

What will happen if my child takes part?

Research participation involves two optional components: (1) your child's completed questionnaires being used for research analysis, and/or (2) your child attending a focus group discussion in school with a researcher at the end of the 12-week intervention. You may consent to one, both, or neither.

All pupils will complete questionnaires as part of their normal lessons. Giving consent determines whether their questionnaire responses are used for research. After you sign a consent form, we will also explain the study to your child and give them an opportunity to assent/dissent to take part. All pupils will complete written feedback questionnaires in class, but we need your consent to use your child's responses for research purposes.

During the focus group session, your child will be invited to discuss the understandability and appropriateness of the *In My Shoes* modules. This information will help us refine the intervention prior to trialling it in UK primary schools more widely. The focus group session should last approximately one hour. Please note that the session will be audio-recorded, but all information will be de-identified for analysis and only group information will be reported. After your child has completed the focus group session, they will be given a debrief sheet for you explaining the nature of the research, how to find out about the results, and how to withdraw your child's data if you wish.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks from taking part in this research project. We have been careful to make sure the discussion prompts are as minimally intrusive as possible. As focus groups involve group discussion, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as other participants will hear the contributions. All participants will be asked to respect confidentiality by not sharing others' comments outside the session. If your child's involvement in the research causes them any distress or you have any concerns, we can refer them to a suitable professional. Again, you may withdraw your child's personal data at any point if you wish.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There may be no direct benefit to your child from participating in this research. Sometimes, people like to be involved in research that may have a positive impact on others, and by giving us their views of the modules in *In My Shoes,* your child will be helping to develop an appropriate and understandable intervention. We hope the results of this research will help us to refine the intervention prior to trialling it in more UK primary schools.

This intervention has been developed to support all pupils' participation and connectedness at school, informed by neurodivergent pupils' experiences and what helps them to feel included. The whole-class approach means that all pupils benefit. Anticipated outcomes include:

- Increased understanding that everyone experiences school differently
- Greater awareness of personal and peers' strengths and differences
- Improved skills in noticing when others need support, helping them and asking for help
- A stronger sense of acceptance, respect, inclusion and support and feeling connected at school
- Enhanced empathy and helpful behaviours that include everyone in the classroom and playground/yard.

How will the data be stored?

All information we collect will be treated as confidential and used only in this project unless otherwise specified. Your child's name will not be written on the focus group recording nor on the transcript of their discussion, and their name will not appear in any reports or documents resulting from this study. The consent form you sign will be stored separately from your child's data. The data collected from you and your child will be confidential. The only exception to this confidentiality is if the researcher feels that your child or others may be harmed if information is not shared, in line with standard safeguarding procedures.

How long will the data be stored for?

All electronic data, including the recordings from your child's focus group discussion, will be stored on the Northumbria University cloud-based storage, which is password protected. All data will be stored in accordance with the University's guidelines and the Data Protection Act (2018). All information will be treated as confidential and used only in this project unless otherwise specified. Only the research team will have access to the information. The information collected in this research will be de-identified which means we will remove identifying information on any data and replace it with a code. The code will be stored separately from the participant data. Data will be kept for a period of three years after the research has ended and then it will be destroyed. You have the right to access, and request correction of, your child's information in accordance with relevant privacy laws. The results of this research may be presented at conferences or published in professional journals. Your child will not be identified in any results that are published or presented.

What will happen to the results of the study, and could personal data collected be used in future research?

The general (anonymised) findings will be used to adapt and revise *In My Shoes* for further development and testing. Furthermore, these findings may be reported in a scientific journal or presented at a research conference. However, the data will be anonymised and neither you nor your child (including the data you have both provided) will be personally identifiable.

Who has reviewed this study?

This research project was submitted for review through the Northumbria University's Ethics Online system and has been approved (submission reference: 6905) by the review panel.

What are my rights as the parent/carer of a participant in this study?

Research data is collected for the purposes of creating new knowledge which is shared with others and is therefore considered to be 'a task in the public interest' (Art.6 GDPR). Therefore, your rights include the following: a right of access to a copy of your personal data and supplementary data relating to the processing of your personal data (to do so, individuals should submit a Subject Access Request); a right in certain circumstances to have inaccurate personal data rectified; and a right to object to decisions being taken by automated means. If you are dissatisfied with the University's processing of your child's personal data, you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For more information see the ICO website (http://www.ico.org.uk/).

What happens next and who can I contact about the research?

If you decide to allow your child to take part in this research, you are asked to sign the consent form. Your signature indicates that you understand what you have read and what has been discussed. Please take your time and ask any questions that you have before you decide what to do. You may request a copy of this information and the consent form to keep. As stated above, your child will be provided with a debrief sheet for you following the group focus session. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the research further, you can contact the principal investigator, **Fiona Nicholls** at **fiona.m.nicholls@northumbria.ac.uk**

Contact for further information

Northumbria University's Data Protection Officer (DPO) is the point of contact for any data protection matters, including breach reporting, subject access requests or even just general queries you may have: dp.officer@northumbria.ac.uk

You can find out more about how we use your information at:

www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/leadership-governance/vice-chancellors-office/legal-services-team/gdpr/gdpr---privacy-notices/