



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET **(Focus Groups) [Professionals working with missing children and young people]**

Research Ethics Committee Reference Number: 25/LCP/001

Title of Project: *Understanding other people's behaviour, attitudes, and feelings towards a young person who has gone missing.*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. Please do not take part if you think this topic will be distressing for you.

1. What is the purpose of the project?

This project aims to explore young people's perspectives on how professionals, and friends or family may behave or feel towards a young person who has been reported missing and has now returned. The project also aims to explore ways of addressing any negative behaviours and feelings towards young people who have gone missing in the past, as well as highlighting positive ways to communicate with these young people. We also want to explore creative ways of researching these issues for future projects.

2. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified as a potential participant as you are involved in supporting and/or safeguarding young people with a lived experience of going missing within your organisation. We would like to run around 10 focus groups, with around 4-6 individuals from your organisation in each group. Therefore, we expect there to be around 40-60 participants involved in the focus groups.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. You can ask questions about the project before deciding whether to take part. If you do not want to take part that is OK. We will ask you to sign a consent form and will give you a copy. Please consider retaining a copy of the record of consent for your future reference.

You can stop being part of the project at any time, before publication of outputs (August 2025) without giving a reason. You may withdraw from the project by contacting Dr Freya O'Brien (f.obrien@ljmu.ac.uk).

Data can be withdrawn until 1 August 2025 (when reports will be published) without giving a reason and without prejudice. *If possible*, all identifiable data collected would be withdrawn from the project. No further data would be collected, or any other procedures would be carried out on or in relation to you.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be invited to a focus group ran by one of the Liverpool John Moores University research team for approximately 60 minutes. You will be offered regular breaks as necessary. Focus groups will be conducted on MS Teams. You will be sent a set of questions you will be asked in the focus group beforehand and questions will cover the following topics:

- Your role and responsibilities in terms of involvement in supporting missing children
- Your reflections on young people's experiences (positive and negative) with the police, other professionals (e.g., social workers, teachers, employers, other support or key workers, health workers), as well as friends and family. For example, we will explore how these people have behaved, and what kinds of emotions and attitudes have been displayed towards the young person.
- Your reflections on the impact such experiences have had on young people. For example, how the young person would behave after/during these experiences, what the young person would feel after/during these experiences, and what the young person would believe after/during these experiences.
- Your reflections on whether young people have discussed concerns about facing stigma from others around their missing episodes in the future.
- Your ideas about how to address any negative behaviours/feelings/attitudes exhibited by other people towards young people within this context, and how to highlight and share positive experiences and good practice.
- Your ideas about how to creatively and innovatively involve young people in research so that their voices are heard.

The topic might be considered sensitive because we will explore the topic of young people who have gone missing.

Please remember, you have the right to decline any questions you do not want to and you can also ask to pause or stop the focus group at any time, and we can reschedule if needed. With this in mind, please consider your privacy when taking part so that nobody can overhear your answers. Before the focus group, we will discuss what to do if privacy is compromised and how to answer questions or respond to other people if they interrupt the focus group in any way (e.g. someone else appears in the video feed). During the focus group, we will ensure privacy is maintained by our researchers conducting the focus groups in a private room at LJMU.

5. Will I be photographed or video/audio recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio recording is essential to your participation, but you should be comfortable with the process. You are free to stop the recording at any time and therefore withdraw your participation.

You are free to decline to be video recorded as part of the focus group. You should be comfortable with the video recording process, and you are free to turn off your camera at any time whilst continuing to participate in the project.

The audio recordings of your activities made during this study will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission.

Focus groups will be recorded using MS Teams and, as soon as possible, the recording will be transferred to secure storage and deleted from the MS Teams (maximum seven days after the focus group).

The audio recording of your activities made during this project will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them. As soon as the video/audio recording is transcribed (maximum seven days after the focus groups), we will delete the video/audio recording.

6. Are there any possible disadvantages or risks in taking part?

You will be asked to express your views on the topic of missing young people and children. The sensitive nature of the topic discussed (missing persons) is a potential psychological risk. This risk is categorised as minimal as all participants are presumably accustomed to dealing with such information due to the nature of their day-to-day work and research. No sensitive information will be asked for and therefore risks will be minimised.

Participants who have worked with missing children and young people may divulge information about situations where negative behaviour, attitudes, emotions have been exhibited towards young people. This information could potentially impact others' employment. This risk is categorised as minimal because it is assumed that such potentially adverse decisions would have been dealt with at the time they occurred. The focus groups are virtual, and therefore only the interviewer will have privy to this information. Therefore, we ask participants not to name any individuals or teams. If anyone is named, we will stop the focus group, remind participants that they must not name anyone, and then delete that part of the conversation after the focus group has occurred. All transcriptions will be anonymous and confidential, and the researcher will examine each transcription before analysis, and redact any covert or overt identifiable information (which we would hope, would not be included by this stage). All data will be protected and secured as outlined in other sections, and the participant can withdraw their data before analysis starts.

If you experience an adverse event from taking part in this research, please contact the investigator, Dr Freya O'Brien (f.obrien@ljmu.ac.uk).

7. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There will be no direct or personal benefit for those people participating in the project. It is hoped that this project will lead to better practices and research with missing children and young people.

8. What information will be collected and what will happen to information/data provided?

The information you provide as part of the project is the **project data**. Any project data from which you can be identified (e.g. from identifiers such as your name, date of birth, audio recording etc.), is known as **personal data**. Your participation in this project will involve the collection/use of personal data.

We will keep all information about you safe and secure. People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. The personal data collected will include:

- Contact details.
- A record of consent (which will include your name)
- Project data will include audio/video recording[s] (which include your voice/image). Focus groups recordings will be deleted once the focus group transcript has been verified as accurate and an evaluation has determined that it has no further value.

Identifiable project data will be stored securely at LJMU for the duration of the project – unless there is no need for the data to be identifiable, at which point it will be made anonymous. Other

project data (including consent forms) or project data that needs to be identifiable, will be stored securely at LJMU for *five years* after publication or public release of the work.

We will not tell anyone that you have taken part in the focus group, although there is of course a possibility that another member of the group might recognise you. All members of the focus group will be asked to respect the confidentiality of their fellow participants.

We will not attempt to capture the IP address or any other information that is not voluntarily provided. Data may be stored on backups or server logs beyond the timeframe of this project.

We need to manage your records in specific ways for the project to be reliable. This means that we won't be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you.

9. Will the project be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other outputs?

The findings from the project *will* be written up in academic publications, conference presentations, and a report co-authored with Missing People.

We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the and we would like your permission to use direct quotations but without identifying you in any outputs.

10. Who is organising and who is funding/commissioning the project?

This project is organised and funded by Liverpool John Moores University in partnership with the charity Missing People.

11. Whom do I contact if I have a concern about the project or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please contact Dr Freya O'Brien (f.obrien@ljmu.ac.uk) and she will do our best to answer your query. You should expect a reply within 10 working days. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at Liverpool John Moores University who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee; Email: FullReviewUREC@ljmu.ac.uk; Tel: 0151 231 2121; Research Innovation Services, Liverpool John Moores University, Exchange Station, Liverpool L2 2QP

12. Data Protection

Liverpool John Moores University is the data controller with respect to your personal data and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the project. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the project outlined above. Research/evaluation is a task that is performed in the public interest. You can find out more about how we use your information:

- the LJMU [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/legal/privacy-notice-and-cookies/external-stakeholders-privacy-policy/research-participants-privacy-notice) (<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/legal/privacy-notice-and-cookies/external-stakeholders-privacy-policy/research-participants-privacy-notice>)

The online platform may collect personal data (e.g. via the IP address, backups of project data). This makes them a data controller with respect to personal data and, as such, will determine how

personal data is used. Please see their privacy notice here: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/privacy/privacystatement>

The LJMU Data Protection Officer is Tina Forrester (DPO@ljmu.ac.uk)

13. Contact details

Principal Investigator: *Dr Freya O'Brien*

Member of LJMU staff

LJMU Email address: *f.obrien@ljmu.ac.uk*

LJMU School/faculty: *School of Justice*

LJMU Central telephone number: 0151 231 2121

Please consider retaining a copy of this information sheet for your future reference.