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Bridging Divides Part 1

Information Sheet for Parents and Carers

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: HR-24/25-49835

We would like to invite your child to take part in Bridging Divides, a research project about youth mental health that's taking place at your child's school. Before you decide whether they can take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If anything is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact us. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

What is Bridging Divides?

Bridging Divides is a research study being conducted by King's College London to understand gender inequalities in young people's mental health. Your child's school is taking part. The aim of the study is to understand how young people's experiences shape mental health and contribute to gender differences in mental health at this age. We're also trying to understand why, in general, young people in London seem to have worse mental health than young people in other places.

Bridging Divides is a 5-year project funded by the Wellcome Trust and it's taking place in London and Tokyo. More information about Bridging Divides can be found on our website (bridging-divides.org) and social media (Instagram: [@bridgingdividesproject](https://www.instagram.com/bridgingdividesproject)).

Why are we doing this project?

Many young people start to feel more stressed, anxious, or low – or experience other types of mental health problems – during adolescence. The types of problems and how common they are can vary for different groups of young people, including by gender. In London, for example, around 21% of Year 9 girls and 7% of Year 9 boys report feeling very anxious, and around 18% and 9% report feeling very low. These gender differences tend to widen with age.

We want to understand why this happens and what can be done to help. Listening to your child's experiences is a key part of this, including whether young people of different genders experience things differently.

Young people have been involved in designing this study and its focus. They came up with the idea (and the name!) and are helping to deliver it.

Why has my child been invited to take part?

We are inviting everyone from Year 7 to 13 at your child's school to take part. Participation is completely voluntary. Choosing not to let your child take part will not disadvantage them in any way.

How can my child take part?



There are three parts to this study, and all are voluntary:

In Part 1, we are inviting all young people at participating schools to complete a questionnaire (survey) about their mental health and life experiences. Thousands of young people in London are being invited to take part.

In Part 2, we will interview and run workshops with around 120 Year 9-13 students who took part in the survey, to understand their experiences in more detail and to ask for their help to create a new measure that better captures these experiences.

In Part 3, we will invite hundreds of young people in Years 7-9 to provide *daily* information, via app-based questions and other methods, to understand how young people's experiences impact their mental health *in real time*.

This information sheet is about **Part 1**. We will share information about the other parts of the study in a few weeks.

The survey will take place at your child's school, during a school lesson or form time, and lasts around 40 minutes. Broadly, the survey questions will cover the following topics:

1. Who they are, e.g., sex, gender, age, ethnic group
2. Their mental health and wellbeing, e.g., worry, low mood, self-harm, happiness, behaviour
3. Things that might contribute to gender differences in mental health, e.g., sexism, sexual harassment, social media, social and academic pressures, body image, friendships, peer pressure, puberty, periods, dating, and sports
4. Things that might explain why teenagers in London seem to have worse mental health than teenagers in other countries, e.g., safety, violence, financial difficulties, racism, exam stress, diet, and physical activity

If your child chooses to take part, they will be invited to complete the survey. They can skip any questions they don't want to answer, and they can stop or withdraw at any time. If they withdraw by 31/03/2030 (the study end date), their data will be deleted

All questionnaire responses will be **completely confidential (private)** to the research team. Their responses will not be seen by parents, other pupils, teachers, or any employee of the school. **Your child's name will not be on the questionnaire.**

If they withdraw by 31/03/2030 (the study end date), their data will be deleted at the end of the session, we'll ask your child if they'd like to join other parts of the study. Those who complete the survey will receive an info pack about Part 2 or 3 to bring home. They won't take part in these additional activities without your consent.

If your child is in Year 7, 8, or 9, they will be invited to complete the questionnaire again one and two years from now. We will contact you again before we do this.

If your child is in Year 10 or Year 11, we will also ask if they would like to share contact details with us so we can share study updates and invite them to take part in other



research opportunities in future. **This is completely optional**, and whether they choose to give contact details or not, this does not affect their participation in the survey in any way. If your child is in Years 7, 8 or 9, we will not ask for any contact information until the final time they are invited to part in the survey (two years from now).

We may also contact you in the future about other research activities that your child has an opportunity to be involved in.

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee [HR-24/25-49835]. All members of the research team have had Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks at the Enhanced Disclosure level and are trained in safeguarding, data protection, and doing research with young people.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

It will take a bit of your child's time and it's possible that some young people may find some questions uncomfortable or upsetting. Researchers will be there to answer any questions and to reiterate that taking part is optional. They can skip any questions they do not want to answer, and they can stop taking part at any time. There will be opportunity for your child to speak with a member of school staff about how they are feeling if they want to. We will also hand out leaflets containing information on sources of support. If, while taking part, your child tells us something that makes us concerned for their immediate safety (or someone else's), we may inform the school safeguarding lead and point them to help. However, none of their other survey answers will be disclosed; these will remain confidential and private.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By taking part in this study and sharing their experience with us, your child will contribute to a better understanding of young people's mental health and what could be done to help. The questionnaire may also prompt them to reflect on their own experiences and wellbeing. After the survey, they will have the chance to participate in other parts of Bridging Divides. If they participate in Part 2 or Part 3, they will receive a gift voucher for their time. We will share more information about these parts of the study in a few weeks. We will also share the key study findings with your child's school, but your child will remain **anonymous** in all reports.

How will my child's data be protected?

King's College London is the Sponsor of this research and is responsible for looking after your child's information. The research team and authorised administrative staff will use this information to do the research or to check the records to make sure that the research is being done properly. Your child's data will be processed in compliance with UK data protection laws, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Part 1 questionnaire will be administered via Qualtrics, a KCL-approved, GDPR compliant, widely used tool for collecting research data. Qualtrics uses encrypted off-site backups to automatically back up respondent



data. At the end of the study, all responses will be exported to King's platforms and deleted from Qualtrics. Any backups held by Qualtrics will be fully removed within 90 days, in line with Qualtrics' privacy policy.

We will collect personal information such as date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and health. Your child's information will be stored securely on King's servers. Any information that could identify your child (e.g., name, date of birth) will only be accessible to the immediate Bridging Divides research team. Your child's questionnaire data will be *pseudonymised*. This means it will be stored and analysed separately from any information that could identify your child (e.g., name, date of birth). The questionnaire data will be linked to ID numbers rather than names.

Pseudonymised and anonymised research data which do not contain any identifying information may be shared with other researchers, including outside of King's, for research purposes. This includes international collaborators involved in Bridging Divides. Only the immediate Bridging Divides research team at King's will have access to information that identifies your child (e.g., name, date of birth).

Your **child will not be identifiable** in any reports or other outputs containing study findings. We will share these outputs on the study website in due course: <https://www.bridging-divides.org/>

We are collecting your name on the parental consent and opt-out forms because we need to confirm and keep an accurate record of parental consent. We may store your information, your child's name and any contact information for up to 10 years after the study is scheduled to end (i.e. up to until 31/03/2040). This will be stored securely on King's servers and/or in secure office cabinets and only accessible to the immediate Bridging Divides research team.

At the end of the study, pseudonymised research data (i.e., questionnaire data linked to your child's unique ID number) may be stored securely at King's for up to 10 years before they are safely destroyed. Questionnaire data and consent/assent form data will be stored separately.

Further information on how King's processes research data can be found at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statement-on-use-of-personal-data-in-research>

Please contact the research team if you require further information on data processing or a printed version of the webpage link above.

Does my child have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. Your child should only take part if they want to, and choosing not to take part will not disadvantage them in any way. Once you have read the information sheet, please contact us if you or your child have any questions that will help you/them decide.

What if I change my mind later?



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You can change your mind and withdraw your child without explanation. If you change your mind before 31/03/2030, the end of the study, we will destroy all information we have on your child.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have questions, please do get in touch. You can contact us directly (email: bridgingdivides@kcl.ac.uk; tel: 07933944804) or via the school. You can also visit our website for further information (bridging-divides.org).

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If this project has harmed your child in any way, or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the project, you can contact King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

The Chair of Health Faculties Research Ethics Subcommittee, rec@kcl.ac.uk

What do I need to do now?

If you are happy for your child to complete the questionnaire, you do not need to do anything.

If you **do NOT** want your child to take part, please complete the attached form and return it to your child's school within one week. Alternatively, you can contact the school or research team directly via the contact details above.

Thanks for reading this information and for considering your child's participation in this study.