



Participant Information Sheet

Title of project: Care-experienced academics working in higher education

Lead researcher name: Dr Neil Harrison

Invitation and brief summary:

You are being invited to take part in a research study to explore the educational pathways of care-experienced people now pursuing an academic career. We are looking for participants who meet both the following criteria:

- A. Are currently (or were recently) employed in an academic role in a UK university or other higher education provider. This includes teaching staff, researchers, academic managers and similar roles, whether full-time or part-time, but excludes administrative or support staff. It also excludes doctoral and other postgraduate students who are not also academic staff.

AND

- B. Were 'in care' at some point in childhood. This would include people who were placed with foster carers, those in residential care or children's homes and those in kinship care within their extended family. This may have been within the UK or elsewhere, for any length of time.

Please take time to consider the information carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

Purpose of the research:

We believe that care-experienced academics will have important insights into the risk and protective factors that shape educational success, with stories that will illuminate the challenges of entry into a competitive career, including negotiations of professional and personal identity. The overarching aim of the study is to provide an evidence base to make these careers more accessible for care-experienced people in the future.

Why have I been approached?

We are recruiting participants through social media and by 'snowballing' – asking participants to pass on information to other care-experienced academics that they may know. We would like to recruit as many participants as possible into the questionnaire element of the study and to interview up to 20 participants. These elements are explained in more detail below.

What would taking part involve?

We are taking a two-stage approach to collecting data. In the first stage, we will ask you to complete a **short online questionnaire** about you, your career and some broad information about your experience of care. This will be hosted on the Qualtrics system and will take about 5 minutes. There will also be an opportunity to volunteer for the second stage, but this is optional. The information you provide will be anonymous.

In the second stage, we will ask you to participate in a **confidential online interview** using Microsoft Teams. This will last about 60 minutes and will explore your educational and career pathways in more detail. We will provide you with the interview questions in advance to help you decide whether you are happy to be interviewed. Once we have completed all our interviews, we will share an interim report with you and ask if you would be willing to participate in a shorter, follow-up interview lasting about 15 minutes. We will record the interview(s) and then prepare an anonymised transcript for use in our research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits of taking part, but the study will help to inform policy and practice in the future with the aim of improving access to academic and other prestigious careers for care-experienced people. There is no payment for participation.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We are very aware that discussions of people's personal histories can be very sensitive and may surface difficult memories and emotions. The lead researcher has experience of researching with care-experienced people and we will endeavour to ensure that the risks are minimised. None of the interview questions will relate directly to your experience of care and you will have the chance to see them in advance. You can choose not to answer any of the questions or pause/abandon the interview at any time without giving a reason.

We will be very careful with the confidential information that we collect from you, either through the questionnaire or the interview(s) – this is explained in more detail below. We will also take all reasonable steps to ensure that you are not identifiable through any interview quotes or other information that we publish. For example, we will not refer to your place of work and we may change or omit minor details to protect your anonymity.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can pause your involvement or withdraw from the study at any time, including during an interview if you feel uncomfortable. You do not have to give a reason and we will respect your decision without question. If you do wish to withdraw from the study, please contact the lead researcher or another member of the team. Data from your interview can be withdrawn at any point prior to publication. As it is provided anonymously, it may not be possible to withdraw data provided through the questionnaire, but we will endeavour to do so at any point up to publication.

How will my information be kept confidential?

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection.

The questionnaire will be hosted on the Qualtrics system which is one of the University's approved suppliers and meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. Only the research team will have access to your data while it is stored on Qualtrics. The Qualtrics privacy notice can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement>. Once the data collection period has ended (after roughly one month), we will remove all the data from Qualtrics and delete it from their system. It will then be stored on the University's system, which is access controlled; only the research team and other relevant University staff will have access to your data. If you have provided us with a contact e-mail to arrange an interview, we will store this separately from the rest of your data.

The video recording of the interview(s) will initially be stored within the Microsoft Teams environment, which is secure to the research team. As soon as possible after the end of the interview, we will move the recording and the automated transcript to secure servers at the University, where they can only be accessed by the research team and other relevant University staff. At this point, we will discard the visual element of the recording and remove any names or other identifying information from the transcript. The audio recording will be used to prepare an anonymised transcript and then destroyed. The transcript will be retained for analysis.

Once it is on the University's system, access to your research data will be restricted to the research team through password-protected secure servers with two-step authentication. Other responsible members of the University staff may also be given access to research data to monitor or support the study. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes described and nothing will be shared with anyone outside the University, unless we think that you or someone else might be at risk of harm. All data collected will be securely destroyed from the University system three years after the end of the project.

As part of the requirements of our funding, we are required to deposit the anonymised interview transcripts within the 'ReShare' system operated by the UK Data Service. This allows other researchers to access them for research purposes. Under the UK Data Service definitions, the deposited data will be '*safeguarded*' with additional protections to ensure that it is only accessed by legitimate researchers and that the highest levels of depersonalisation apply.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of the study will be published in an academic journal and form the basis of presentations to one or more academic and stakeholder conferences. We will also produce a blog post for a general audience explaining our findings. Details of all the publications will be posted on the project website once available.

Who is organising and funding this study?

This study is being funded by the **British Academy and Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grants Programme** as grant number SRG2021/210232. The lead researcher for this study is **Dr Neil Harrison** who can be contacted at n.harrison2@exeter.ac.uk. Other researchers from the University of Exeter may be involved in the administration, data collection and analysis.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences and International Studies Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter. The British Educational Research Association's 2018 guidelines for ethical research practice will be used to inform the study.

Further information and contact details

General questions or concerns about the study can be directed to the lead researcher in the first instance – see above. If you would like to make a complaint about the study, please contact the College of Social Sciences and International Studies Research Ethics Committee who can be contacted at ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk.

Thank you for your interest in this project.