



Research Study:

Now Recruiting Girls Aged 13 To 15 Years **With And Without** Autism Attending Mainstream School In Northern Ireland

Having received ethical approval from the University of Strathclyde's Ethical Committee, **Mrs Sheila Cross, Research Projects Manager at Middletown Centre for Autism**, is currently recruiting girls with and without autism aged 13 to 15 years who attend a mainstream school in Northern Ireland to complete a study on peer experiences to assist her in the fulfilment of her MEd in Autism from University of Strathclyde.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The focus of the study is to explore the peer experiences of girls with autism aged 13 to 15 years old in comparison to girls of the same age who do not have autism and who also attend both single and mixed gender schools in Northern Ireland.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To increase our knowledge of peer relationship experiences of early teenage girls with autism and how this impacts girls within the school setting.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Girls with a formal diagnosis of autism (by an Educational or Health Professional) with no known learning difficulty
- Girls without autism
- Girls aged between 13 and 15 years old
- Girls who attend a mainstream school in Northern Ireland
- Girls with access to the Internet
- Girls who have English as their first language

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

- ✓ The data analysed from this study will be used to gain a richer understanding of the experience of girls with and without autism within the mainstream school setting.
- ✓ It will also be used to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences experienced by girls within single and mixed gender schools.
- ✓ Findings from the study will be used to help us understand how to best support girls with autism within the educational setting.

WHAT DOES THE STUDY INVOLVE?

Participants will be asked to...

- ✓ Complete an adopted version of the Index of Peer Relationships questionnaire - designed to measure people's feelings towards their peer group.
- ✓ Take part in an online discussion group (through a **Closed** Facebook account) over a 4-week period.
- ✓ On Monday of each week the Researcher will post a series of questions based on a theme for the week. **Participants will be able to answer/discuss these with others in the discussion group in her own time (at home) up until Friday of each week.**
- ✓ Each Friday participants will be asked to complete a short survey based on 3- 4 questions based on the theme for that week.

SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS

- ✓ The **closed Facebook group** set up by the Researcher ensures that non-members of the group **cannot find or post to the group in Facebook or in any other way.**
- ✓ The Researcher has undertaken up to date Child Protection training.
- ✓ The Researcher will email parents/participants with a pseudonym name (a name given for the purpose of anonymity) so together they can set up a Facebook account purely for the purposes of this study.
- ✓ A list of rules will be provided for participating in the online discussion groups.
- ✓ All data reported on will be anonymised.
- ✓ Participation is voluntary.
- ✓ Participants can withdraw at any time up to the stage of data analysis.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION should you wish to...

- Distribute information sheets/consent forms about this study to Caregivers/pupils at your school or**
- If you and your daughter would like more information about the study/register your interest or**
- If you know caregivers/girls with or without autism aged 13 to 15 years who may be interested in taking part in this study**

Please contact Sheila Cross by:



– sheila.cross@middletownautism.com or alternatively to sheila.cross.2014@uni.strath.ac.uk



Tel: 028 37515750 (from 9.30am-2pm Monday – Thursday)