Moral development and social information processing: relationships with empathy, working memory and perspective taking.

Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians
(Please keep this copy)

My name is Beverley Garrigan. I am a Clinical Psychology PhD student at the University of East Anglia. As part of my PhD, I am conducting a research study and I would like to invite your child to take part.

Before you decide whether or not you would like your child to take part in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve, so please take time to read this information sheet.

What is the study about?

We know that as children get older, their social, cognitive and moral reasoning skills develop and become more complex. However, we still do not know much about the relationships between these skills as they develop, and how they affect reasoning abilities and behaviour. Understanding more about these developmental relationships in typically developing young people allows us to better understand problems that may be encountered by children and young people, such as young people with brain injuries. Knowing more about the relationships between these skills and how they relate to behaviour may allow us to develop better rehabilitation programmes.

Why has your child been chosen?

We are recruiting young people aged between 11 and 18 years old. Your child has been invited to participate in this study because they are in the age range required for the study.

As this study is looking at relationships between different skills in typically developing children, we are unable to include any children who may have atypical development. You will be asked whether your child has been diagnosed with a developmental disorder, or if they have a history or neurological damage or disease. If your child fits any of these criteria they will unfortunately be unable to take part in the study.

Does your child have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you and your child whether you would like your child to take part or not. This information sheet is to give you more information about the research, to help you decide whether you would like your child to take part.
If you would like your child to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Your child will also be asked whether they agree to take part in the study. Your child can decide they do not want to take part, and do not have to give a reason.

What does the study involve if my child takes part?

If you decide you would like your child to take part and fill in a consent form, a date and time for a study session with your child will be arranged by the research team. This session will be arranged for a time and place that is convenient for you and your child. At this session, the researcher will meet your child. Your child will be given a participant information sheet to read, similar to this, which explains what they will be asked to do. They will have an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Your child will then be asked to sign an assent form if they would like to take part.

During the study session, your child will complete a variety of tasks. One task will be to fill in a paper questionnaire which asks some questions about your child’s behaviour and how they think. They will also be asked to watch some short animated clips on a laptop and say what they think is happening in the clips. The researcher will also ask some questions to which your child will respond verbally. Your child’s answers will be audio recorded so that the researcher can code the answers at a later date. Only the researchers will listen to these recordings, and they will be deleted at the end of the study.

The study session with your child will last an hour and a half to two hours, and may be split into 2 sessions if this is more convenient.

One of your child’s teachers will also be asked to fill in a brief questionnaire about your child’s behaviour. We would also like to ask you to fill in a short questionnaire about your child’s behaviour. If you would like your child to take part, please fill in the enclosed consent form and parent questionnaire and return it to the researcher, Beverley. If you would prefer, you can complete the online consent form http://psychology.exeter.ac.uk/research/centres/ccnr/consent/ and the online questionnaire http://survey.ex.ac.uk/index.php/878332/lang-en.

Your child will also be asked whether the researcher can talk to them about another study which is part of Beverley’s PhD. If your child agrees, they may be invited to take part in this study but they are not agreeing to take part in this study.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Yes. All the information I receive from your child is treated as strictly confidential. Your child’s responses to the assessments (including those audio recorded) will only be seen by the research team.

Your child’s responses will be kept under an ID number rather than their name, so their data will not be identifiable. Only the researcher, Beverley Garrigan will have a list that matches the ID numbers to names.
Your child’s responses to one part of the assessment which will be anonymised and will not contain any personally identifying information will be sent to researchers at the University of Bristol who developed one of the tasks being used, as they will score this part. As noted these researchers will only see your child’s ID number and will not know any other information about your child.

All the information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of East Anglia. The consent forms containing names will be kept in a separate filing cabinet to the responses to the assessments. In accordance with guidelines, the data will be kept securely at the University of East Anglia for 10 years.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By participating, your child is helping us to understand the relationships between social, cognitive and moral development in typically developing young people. This knowledge can help us to better understand the areas where young people with less typical development (such as young people with brain injuries) may need extra help. A greater understanding of how the development of these different skills relate to behaviour can also help us in developing useful rehabilitation programmes. Your child will also gain some experience of how psychological research studies are carried out.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

The research team does not envisage any disadvantages or risks of taking part. Some children may find the assessment procedure quite long and will be able to take a break or complete some tests in another session if they want. It is highly unlikely that any child would find the procedure distressing. However, in the unlikely event that your child experiences any distress in the assessment session, the session would be terminated, the reasons for distress would be explored, and they would have the option to continue the session at a later date or withdraw from the study.

What will happen if I don’t want my child to carry on in the study?

You or your child are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You just have to let one of the research team know, but you do not have to give a reason. If you withdraw your child from the study, any data we have collected about your child will then be destroyed.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research you can contact Beverley Garrigan or one of her supervisors via the details below. If you would prefer to speak to someone not directly involved in the study, you can contact Professor Kenneth Laidlaw via the contact details at the end of this information sheet.
What will happen to the study results?

The research is part of a PhD. The results will be written up for submission to the University of East Anglia and may be published in a research journal.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is organised and funded by the University of East Anglia, in collaboration with the University of Exeter. Your child’s school is assisting with recruitment for this study.

Who has reviewed and approved this study?

This research has been considered by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee. This study was reviewed by the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences Ethics Committee, at the University of East Anglia, and was given a favourable opinion.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

This is your copy to keep.
I would be extremely grateful for your assistance.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact the researcher, Beverley Garrigan by emailing: B.Garrigan@uea.ac.uk

Or you can contact one of Beverley’s PhD supervisors:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Peter Langdon</td>
<td><a href="mailto:P.E.Langdon@kent.ac.uk">P.E.Langdon@kent.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>01603 711178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Sian Coker</td>
<td><a href="mailto:s.coker@uea.ac.uk">s.coker@uea.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>01603 593544</td>
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If you would prefer to speak to someone not involved in the study you can contact the Head of the Clinical Psychology Department at the University of East Anglia, Professor Kenneth Laidlaw:

Email: K.Laidlaw@uea.ac.uk
Phone: 01603 593600