

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Interview/Focus Group)

Research Ethics Committee Reference Number: 24/PSY/037

Title of Project: The Big Question: Understanding why suicide is prevalent in Cumberland

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 project 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.

1. What is the purpose of the project?

In Cumbria between January 2020 and December 2023, 303 people have died by suspected suicide and, of those deaths, 56% were in Cumberland. Every one of those deaths is a tragedy. They are also a shocking reminder that we must continue to improve suicide prevention action, not only to improve the support for those who have lost a loved one to suicide, but also make support more available and accessible to those who have suicidal thoughts. This project hopes to understand why suicide rates in Cumberland are significantly higher than the national average, and to identify strategies that the Local Authority could put in place to help to reduce the suicide rate.

2. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been identified as a potential participant because you responded to a recruitment email/poster/advert, or you were approached by an organisation who is supporting us with this research. Please only take part if you have experience of: 1) personal suicidal thoughts or behaviours, 2) bereavement by suicide, or 3) supporting someone who has experienced suicidal thoughts or behaviours (personally or professionally). We also ask that you are over 18 years of age, and currently live in Cumberland.

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 for you to keep. You can stop being part of the project at any time, without giving a reason. You may withdraw from the project by contacting the Principal Investigator (details below) within one month of the interview/focus group, after which point the data will be anonymised and we will not be able to identify your data.

Anonymous data already collected will be retained and used because we cannot trace this information. Data can be withdrawn without giving a reason and without prejudice. No further data would be collected.

You must not take part if you have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 –

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

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

You will be asked to take part in either a one-to-one interview or a focus group (an interview with other participants). The researcher will advise you if you have been selected to take part in a focus group, but if you would prefer a one-to-one interview then this can be arranged. The interviews

can take place in-person or online via Microsoft Teams, at a time and place to suit you. Focus groups will take place in-person, via an organisation that you are already in touch with. The interviews/focus groups will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be offered regular breaks as necessary. They will ask about your experiences with suicide (e.g., what would have helped you at the time, why you feel you or your friend/family member had suicidal thoughts), and your opinions on what needs to be done to improve the suicide rate in Cumberland. You can share as much or as little personal information as you are comfortable with. Please remember, you have the right to decline to answer any questions you do not want to answer and you can also ask to pause or stop the interview/focus group at any time, and we can reschedule if needed. We will offer regular breaks during the focus groups, and the interviewer will check in with you individually to make sure that you are happy to continue. If your interview is online, please consider your privacy when being interviewed so that nobody can overhear your answers.

The topic of the interviews/focus groups may be considered sensitive, as it asks about personal experiences of suicidal thoughts or behaviours, or bereavement by suicide. However, we feel it is important to understand people's lived experiences, in order to gain a true understanding of why people in Cumberland are dying by suicide, and how to prevent it. If you feel you will find this topic upsetting or distressing, we advise that you do not take part. If after the interview/focus group, you think you need further support, the researcher will put you in touch with Every Life Matters, a local suicide prevention charity, who will offer you one-to-one support (<https://www.every-life-matters.org.uk/>; 07908 537541).

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. The recording will be used solely for transcription purposes, and will then be destroyed.

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

Participating in the project is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. The potential distress will be the same as any experienced in everyday life. However, the topic of the interviews/focus groups does focus on suicide, which may be upsetting for some. If participation in this project has negative effects on you; please seek help and advice from support services outlined in the debriefing sheet provided to you by the researcher.

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 suicide prevention initiatives in the region.

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 safe and secure. People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your personal data. The personal data collected will include:

- Contact details. With your agreement, and if you would like support from Every Life Matters, we would store your contact details so that we could put you in touch with the organisation. Once the initial introductions are complete, the data will be deleted.
- A record of consent (which will include your name).
- Project data. We will use a code/pseudonym so that you cannot be directly identified from the data. Interview/focus group recordings will be deleted once the

interview/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 three years after publication or public release of the work.

For focus groups - 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.

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 e.g., a report, journal articles, and for conference presentations. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the project 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 by Liverpool John Moores University, who have been commissioned to undertake the work by Cumberland Council, in order to understand what more can be done in the region to reduce the suicide rate.

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 Emma Ashworth, and we 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 LJMU Data Protection Officer is Tina Forrester (DPO@ljmu.ac.uk)

13. Payments, reimbursements of expenses or any other benefit or incentive for taking part

There will be no payment or any benefit or incentive for taking part in this project.

14. Contact details

Principal Investigator: Dr Emma Ashworth

Member of LJMU staff

LJMU Email address: E.L.Ashworth@ljmu.ac.uk

LJMU School/faculty: School of Psychology, Faculty of Health