

INFORMATION SHEET

What is 'PaLS'?

Today's life is full of stresses and strains of one kind or another. For young people, one source of stress may be the school itself or the peer group you are in. Sometimes it may be difficult to make friends or get in with particular groups or crowds, and sometimes you can feel quite left out. Where you are in the school peer group can be a very important matter. So important in fact, it can cause stress and affect your health

The 'PaLS' study will examine young people's experience of school peer groups and how this may affect levels of stress and health and well-being. It is funded by the British Medical Research Council and has been approved by your local education authority and your Head-Teacher. Over 4,000 S4 pupils, in 22 secondary schools, are being asked to take part.

'PaLS' is the first study of its kind in the world and will contribute important knowledge about stress in teenagers and its consequences for health.

What does it involve?

We are asking you to do three things:

- To complete a questionnaire about your health and well-being, your lifestyles, life at home and in school, and your friendships and membership of groups.
- To provide two saliva samples, one at the beginning of the session and one at the end. In your pack, you will find two tubes containing a cotton roll (like a dental swab) which you need to chew for about 2 minutes and then place back in the tube. The saliva will be analysed for cortisol, which is a hormone released when the body responds to everyday stressors.
- To have your height and weight measured and answer a few standard health questions.

How do I take part?

To take part in the study, you need to sign the **consent** form which is the first page on the questionnaire. You can choose not to take part or to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. This will not affect your future care or schooling in any way.

Will my information be confidential and what will happen to it?

Everything you tell us is confidential. That means no one apart from us will see your answers or your physical measurements. However, there is one exception to this. Although we don't ask about it, if you choose to tell us about physical or sexual abuse, we have an obligation to inform a teacher who would then inform your parents.

When you have signed the consent form, we replace your name with an ID and remove the page from the questionnaire so that you cannot be identified. An ID is necessary so we can link it to measurements of height, weight and cortisol. Similarly, your friends' names will also be replaced with an ID.

The saliva samples will be sent to a laboratory for anonymous cortisol (stress hormone) testing and then destroyed. There is no other measure taken.

And finally

We are very grateful to you for taking part. The questionnaire is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your views and experiences so that we can build up a picture of school peer groups. 'PaLS' is a very important study. Please take it very seriously, but we also hope you enjoy doing it.

If you feel you need to talk to someone about any of the subjects in today's questionnaire ...

Remember...

Your guidance teacher is there to help you, he or she is always available.

If you don't want to talk to a teacher...

What about a friend, a parent, a brother or sister, an aunt or uncle, a grandparent, a friend's parent, the school nurse or counsellor, a youth worker, a social worker, or your doctor?

If you don't want to talk to any of those...

It may help to ring some of these people. It is easy to feel unsure about ringing these numbers, but the people who answer have been trained to take all sorts of calls and will be kind and helpful.

Some lines can be very busy so it may be hard to get through, but keep trying.

- **Childline 0800 1111**
A free national 24 hour counselling service for all children and young people who need help or who are in trouble or danger. Or you can write to Childline, Freepost 1111, Glasgow G1 1BR.
- **Childline for Children in Care 0800 88 44 44**
A service for children and young people who are looked after by a local authority.
- **The Samaritans 0845 7 909090 0141 248 4488**
24 hours 7 days a week. Offers free emotional support to anyone going through a crisis.
- **National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC) 0800 800 500**
FREEPHONE 24 HOURS. Offers counselling, information and advice for anyone concerned about a child or young person at risk of abuse including young people themselves.

Who else?

- **MINDinfoLine 0845 766 0163**
Mon-Fri 9.15am-4.45pm. Provides information on all aspects of mental distress.
- **Carers Line 0808 808 777**
Wed and Thurs, 10.00am-12.00am and 2.00pm-4.00pm. Offers help to every carer, including young people.
- **Saneline 0845 767 8000**
All week, 12 noon-2.00am. Provides support to anyone suffering from mental illness, their friends and family.
- **Family Mediation 0141 332 2731**
Mon-Fri 9.00am-5.00pm. Information, support and coping with parental separation or divorce, or stepfamilies, for 11-25 year olds.
- **Strathclyde Gay and Lesbian Switchboard 0141 847 0447**
Open 7.00pm-10.00pm. Counselling, sexual health advice and general information on the gay scene. Or you could write to PO Box 38, Glasgow G2 2QF.
- **Macmillan Helpline 0808 808 000**
Mon-Fri 9.30am-1.00pm and 2.00pm-5.00pm. For any child or young person who has cancer or is dealing with cancer in their family.
- **Childline Scotland Bullying Line 0800 44 11 11**
A service for children and young people concerned about bullying.
- **Eating Disorders Association (Youth Helpline) 0845 634 7650**
Mon-Fri, 4.00pm-6.30pm and Saturday, 1pm-4.30pm.
- **Scottish Child Law Centre 0800 328 8970**
Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm. Free confidential legal advice for the under 18's.
- **Youth Access 020 8772 9900**
Mon-Fri, 9.00am-5.30pm. Will put you in touch with local contacts for counselling, advice and information.
- **Notre Dame Centre Adolescent Unit 0141 334 6131**
Mon and Wed, 9.00am-5.00pm, Tues and Thurs, 9.00am-7.00pm, Fri, 9.00am-4.00pm. Offers help to young people who have suffered the loss of a friend or relative.