**Information letter:** **How do autistic and neurotypical children learn words?**

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Sophie Lund, and I am a PhD student in Psychology at Lancaster University. I would like to invite your child to participate in a research project investigating how neurotypical children and autistic children learn new words. This research will investigate how children’s word learning is affected by features of their environment. Studying why so many autistic children struggle to learn words is necessary to inform the design of effective educational interventions.

Children’s participation in the project will involve playing simple and fun games. Using a touch screen computer, children will be taught the names of unfamiliar objects, and after a 5-minute break, we will assess whether they can remember the names correctly. Children will be video recorded while they play these games (please refer to item 7 on the attached consent form for further details). We will also measure some additional skills that relate to word learning (e.g. language comprehension) and ask your child’s teacher to complete some short questionnaires about their behaviour, which will be used to aid in our interpretation of children’s responses. Children’s involvement in the project will take place in their nursery/school and will be divided into several short sessions, each approximately 10-15 minutes in length. Children will be given stickers in each session and a book in the final session to thank them for their participation.

For your child to take part, I (the primary investigator) require your written consent. Participation in this study is voluntary, and there are no adverse consequences for you or your child if you do not provide consent. Children will be reminded that they can withdraw at any time throughout their involvement in the research. If your child expresses any signs of distress, I will end the session immediately. I am fully DBS cleared and have experience working with autistic and neurotypical children.

All data will be treated with strictest confidence and will be coded by number to ensure anonymity. Anonymised numerical data will be made publicly available to the academic community, but individual children will not be identifiable. Anonymised data will only be used for scientific purposes, including but not limited to: presentations at academic conferences, and publication in scientific journals and my PhD thesis. You also have the right to withdraw your child’s data with no explanation up to 2 weeks after they have completed the study, in which case the data will be destroyed. After this point the anonymised data will remain in the study.

All paper documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Lancaster University and digital data (including video recordings) will be stored on password-protected and encrypted computers/laptops/external hard drives, and secure Lancaster University OneDrive accounts. Personal data (paper documents and videos) will not be shared beyond the research team under any circumstances. After a period of at least 10 years post-publication, personal data will be destroyed, in line with GDPR regulations permitting the longer storage of data for scientific research.

To mitigate for any risk associated with COVID-19, all testing materials will be thoroughly cleaned with disinfectant before and after working with each child, hand sanitiser will be used, and I will follow any further covid-19 guidance that is in place.

If you are willing to provide consent for your child to take part, please sign the next page.

If you would like to ask any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me or the project supervisor. For general concerns or enquiries, please contact the Head of Department who is not directly involved with the study.

If you have concerns or complaints regarding data management, you can contact Lancaster University’s data controller ([compliance@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:compliance@lancaster.ac.uk)).

Sophie Lund Dr Calum Hartley Prof Kate Cain

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Many thanks for your time!

Sophie Lund.

**Consent Form**

**Study title: How do autistic and neurotypical children learn words?**

**Investigators**: Sophie Lund, Dr Calum Hartley & Professor Padraic Monaghan

Please initial in each box to indicate consent to each point.

As the parent/guardian

1. I agree that my child can be involved in the present study.
2. I have been provided with full information about the present study.
3. I have been given contact information for the researchers involved in the study.
4. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
5. I am aware that my child’s participation is voluntary and I, or my child, can withdraw at any time during participation without giving a reason and without consequences.

1. I am aware that I, and my child, have the right to withdraw my child’s data up to 2 weeks after they have participated, without giving reason and with no adverse consequences. After this time period, my child’s anonymised data will remain in the study.
2. I agree that my child can be video recorded while playing the word learning games in this study. I understand that the videos will be stored on encrypted and password protected devices, and secure OneDrive accounts. \*
3. In understand that only anonymised data will be shared publicly for scientific purposes. \*
4. I understand that the research will be conducted in line with current covid-19 guidance.

\* The video data will enable the research team to code your child’s behaviour retrospectively. This will reduce the likelihood of us missing important information or making errors. Video data also allows us to spot important patterns of behaviour and capture responses that are surprising or difficult to interpret “in the moment”. For the duration of the study, video data will be stored on the researchers’ encrypted and password-protected laptops/computers and secure OneDrive accounts. Once the study is completed, members of the research team will use these videos to code your child’s behaviour into an anonymised datasheet. Due to the vulnerable nature of the participants, video data will not be shared beyond the research team under any circumstances. Anonymised numerical data sets will be made available publicly, children will not be identifiable by these data.

Does your child have normal or corrected to normal hearing and colour vision? Yes No

What is your child’s handedness? Left handed Right handed Ambidextrous (both)

Is your child regularly exposed to a language other than English? Yes No

If so, please detail language, number of hours per week etc. …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

I have read and understood the declarations above, and agree to my child’s participation in the present study:

Child’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Child’s date of birth:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Caregiver Contact Details

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian’s Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to ask any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me or the project supervisor. For general concerns or enquiries, please contact the Head of Department who is not directly involved with the study:

Sophie Lund Dr Calum Hartley Prof Kate Cain

PhD Student Project supervisor Head of Department

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