

**Plain Language Statement for Parents/ Guardians**

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am conducting a research project as part of my MA in Autism Studies course in Mary Immaculate college and I would like to request your consent to invite your child to participate. All of the relevant information about the project is in this statement.

**Title of the research:** Benefits and Barriers to Exercise Participation for Autistic Post-primary Students in Ireland

**Researcher:** Aoife Rosney

**Email:** 24601361@micstudent.mic.ul.ie

**Supervisors:** Jill Mc Canney & Kayren Hayes (Middletown Centre for Autism)

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**Programme:** Master of Arts (Autism Studies), Mary Immaculate College (MIC)

**Data Privacy Notice:** Where relevant, any personal data provided in the course of this research will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Privacy Policy. The data will be collected on the basis of the consent of the participants and any queries participants may have in relation to how data will be used and managed can in the first instance be directed to the researcher. Mary Immaculate College is the Data Controller of the research and the MI Data Protection Officer is Ms. Elaine Mulqueen ([Elaine.Mulqueen@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Elaine.Mulqueen@mic.ul.ie)/ +353 61 204511)

**Purpose of the research:** The purpose of this research is to investigate autistic teenagers' perceptions on exercise – benefits of and barriers to exercise participation. Through this

research, there is an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding on teenager's experiences about exercise, both inside and outside school. Findings can be shared with schools and the wider community to share identified resources and accommodations that make exercise more inclusive for all. This will be of massive benefit to the autistic community.

**Requirements for involvement in the research:** Students who are interested, are invited to participate in interviews with me to discuss their experience of exercise participation to date. Interview questions will focus on experience of exercise, feelings around exercise and current barriers to exercise participation. I will make a video to introduce myself to participants and explain the purpose of my research. Questions to be asked on the day will be given in advance to the participants. The SENCO can email me at my Mary Immaculate email address if they identify students who are willing to participate. The interviews will be conducted on Microsoft Teams, audio recorded and will take a maximum of 30 minutes.

**Potential Risks and Benefits:** There are no significant risks to your child when engaging in this research. I will share interview questions a week in advance of the interview. Your child does not have to answer any interview question that they do not want to answer. Confidential information about your child, you, your family or the school, will not be reported. The data will be anonymised before analysis, thus removing any identifiable information. The research focus will be, in line with the research questions, exploring opinions, views and experiences of exercise participation. There will not be any focus on specific young people or exploration of views regarding specific young people, thus avoiding any profiling of young people. Your child may benefit from reflecting on their own experiences and by identifying supports or resources that could be used to remove barriers to exercise participation.

**Data storage and security:**

Data will be stored on the MIC server. Audio recorded interviews will be removed from my password protected laptop and stored on MI drive within two hours of the interview.

Interviews will be permanently deleted once they have been transcribed two weeks after the interviews. All data - informed consent forms, transcripts, and identifiers (the principal,

teacher, SENCO, student's names) will be stored on the MIC server. All identifiable data will be disposed of by the researcher after graduation on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025. Participants can access their data or withdraw from the research up until that point. I am the only person who will have access to the data.

**Data Confidentiality:** No identifying information will be presented in the thesis and pseudonyms will be used in place of your child's name. Parents' / guardians' identifiers (names to pseudonyms) will be stored separately to the data on the MIC server. Please note that the confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations. Voluntary nature of the research Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Participants are free to withdraw from the research or to withdraw their data from the research by contacting the researcher.

**Sharing research findings:**

Any participant who wishes to find out the results of the study can contact the researcher after the study to receive a brief summary of results.

**Voluntary nature of the research:** Participants are free to withdraw from the research or to withdraw their data from the research by contacting the researcher. To either access your data or withdraw from the study, please contact me or my supervisor. Contact details are at the top of this document.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) – Mary Collins (MIREC Administrator), Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Courtbrack, Limerick, V94NV26 (phone: 061- 204980 email: [Mirec@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Mirec@mic.ul.ie))

Participants are free to withdraw at any stage of the process. If you have any questions about anything, please feel free to contact me via my Mary Immaculate e-mail address - [24601361@micstudent.mic.ul.ie](mailto:24601361@micstudent.mic.ul.ie)

Yours Faithfully,

*Hoyle Rosney*

### Parental Consent Form

#### Benefits and Barriers to Exercise Participation for Autistic Post- primary Students in Ireland.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study, and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	I confirm	I don't confirm
I understand that I my child is participating on a voluntary basis and that they can withdraw from the proposal at any time without having to give a reason by emailing the researcher	I confirm	I don't confirm
I understand that my child can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.	I confirm	I don't confirm
I understand that my child can make a request to the researcher that my data from the interviews will not be used if they choose to withdraw from the study.	I confirm	I don't confirm
I understand that my child will be invited to participate in audio recorded interviews.	I confirm	I don't confirm
I understand that anonymised findings may be published.	I confirm	I don't confirm
I consent to participating in the aforementioned study.	I consent	I don't confirm
I consent that my child's data collected in this study may be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's OneDrive MIC account	I consent	I don't confirm

## **Safeguarding Statement RELEVANT<sup>1</sup> WORK**

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### **Lead Person**

Name: Aoife Rosney

E-mail Address: 24601361@micstudent.mic.ul.ie

### **Purpose of Relevant Work**

As Lead Person, the relevant work I intend to carry out involves direct contact with children / people aged under 18. The purpose of this work can be summarised as follows:

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to examine autistic teenager's experiences with exercise participation. It is hoped that rich information will be derived from this study about accommodations & resources that can be used to make exercise more inclusive for all, thus providing major benefits to the autistic community.

#### *Details*

With the permission of the Chairperson and Principal, the researcher will ask the Principal to send information about the research to the SENCO of the school. The SENCO will show a short video of me explaining my research to the potential participants. If students express initial interest, the SENCO can email me at my Mary Immaculate email address to let me know. A day and time will be arranged to conduct interviews with the students on Microsoft Teams. Questions will be sent one week in advance and visual supports will accompany these questions. Interviews will take place and participants will be asked questions previously sent to them about exercise participation. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes and students are free to remove themselves at any time. Interviews will be audio recorded on a password-protected personal laptop. Participants may have a familiar adult in the room with them during the interview process, if they wish.

### **Paramount Importance of Child Safety & Wellbeing**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Relevant' work or activity refers to initiatives undertaken that involve direct interaction with children / people under 18. Relevant work always requires a risk assessment and Safeguarding Statement in accordance the Children First Act (2015).

In accordance with the Children First Act and with the policy of MIC, I confirm that in developing a plan to carry out this work, the safety and wellbeing has been the paramount consideration. This will remain true of all aspects of the implementation of the plan to carry out this work.

### **Safeguarding Risk Assessment – Confirmation of Completion**

As part of the planning for this work, and in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act (2015), I confirm that I have carried out a satisfactory safeguarding risk assessment with due regard for all relevant safeguarding considerations.

### **Additional Measures**

I confirm that I am are familiar with the contents of the MIC Child Safeguarding Policy and the processes I am obliged to observe as an employee of the College.

It is the policy of MIC that any person interacting with children / people under the age of 18 must be cleared to do so by completion of Garda vetting by the College. I confirm that I have been Garda vetted by MIC and cleared by the College to interact directly children /people under the age of 18 in the course of my professional work as an employee of / a graduate researcher registered for study at MIC.

I have the status of 'Mandated Person' which, under the Children First Act (2015) confers particular responsibilities for safeguarding of children / people under the age of 18 upon me.

I confirm that any person working with me/us to carry out the relevant work and who will have direct engagement with children / people under the age of 18 has been Garda vetted by MIC.

In accordance with MIC policy, all Child Safeguarding Statements (inclusive of risk assessment) are reviewed and approved by the MIC Senior Safeguarding Person prior to the commencement of any relevant work.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk Type - Lack of Familiarity with Safeguarding Imperatives

*Risk Statement(s):*

Lead Person may not have sufficient familiarity with safeguarding principles and processes, including imperatives as set out under the law.

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I confirm that I have sufficient familiarity with safeguarding principles and processes through awareness of the provisions of the Children First Act (2015) and the obligations this places upon me.
- I have completed child safeguarding training / certified child safeguarding training.
- I have consulted the Senior Safeguarding Person at MIC for advice and guidance in engaging with children.
- I have consulted professional colleagues with appropriate knowledge and expertise for advice and guidance in engaging with children.
- This Child Safeguarding Statement forms part of the documentation submitted as part of the MIC Research Ethics clearance process, permitting Principal Investigators (PIs) to engage in research with human subjects.
- Other

*Risk Rating:* Low

Risk Type – Failure to Conduct Planning in Advance

*Risk Statement(s):*

There is a risk of failure to plan adequately for safeguarding dimensions of a proposed activity involving children.

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I have read the MIC Safeguarding Policy and understand the obligations this places upon me.
- I am familiar with safeguarding principles and processes as set out in the Children First Act (2015) and understand the obligations this places upon me.
- As I am a Mandated Person I fully understand my role in this regard.
- I have completed child safeguarding training.
- I have completed certified child safeguarding training.

- I have consulted the Senior Safeguarding Person at MIC for advice and guidance in planning any activity in which I will be engaging with children during the course of relevant work.
- I have ensured that all persons who will be involved in activities in which engagement with children takes place have been made fully aware of their responsibilities and relevant safeguarding protocols and procedures.
- I have ensured that all adequate, appropriate and accessible information about how the activity will be carried out and how safeguarding requirements have been taken into account is made available to all parties involved, including children / young people under 18 and their respective parents, guardians or carers.
- I have created a fit-for-purpose safeguarding response plan in the event of any safeguarding issues arising during implementation of the relevant work.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

Risk Type – Usage / Sharing of Unsuitable Materials

*Risk Statement(s):*

There is a risk of failure to ensure that any materials (including information guides / questionnaires / multimedia content, etc.) used or shared by me (*or others working /collaborating with me*) are suitable and appropriate to the age profile and needs of child participants.

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I am already familiar with best practice in interaction with children that have the age and profile of those with whom I will engage during the proposed work.
- I will consult, as necessary, so as to ensure that I am sufficiently familiar with best practice in interaction with children that have the age and profile of those with whom I will engage during the proposed work.
- I am familiar with relevant literature and best practice in respect of research design and methodologies for interaction with children that have the age and profile of those with whom I will engage for the purpose of data collection.



- I will consult, as necessary, so as to ensure that I enhance my familiarity with relevant literature and best practice in respect of research design and methodologies for interaction with children that have the age and profile of those with whom I will engage for the purpose of data collection.
- Because this work entails research with human subjects, it is subject to research ethics screening by the MIC Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) which requires prior approval of my Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Because this work entails research with human subjects, it is subject to research ethics approval which has been granted by an appropriate research ethics review board (external to the College) and this has been confirmed by approval of my Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

Risk Type – Observation of a Form of Abuse

*Risk Statement(s):*

*There is a risk of failure to act appropriately and in a timely manner following potential observation of a recognised and substantive form of abuse, including failure to meet proper reporting requirements.*

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I have familiarised myself with the characteristics of recognised and substantive forms of abuse, with reference to the Children First Act (2015) and the MIC Child Safeguarding Policy.
- I have formulated a plan for responding to observation by me of a form of abuse.
- As I am a Mandated Person, I fully understand my role in responding to and reporting any details of a form of abuse observed by me.
- I am familiar with the contact details of the Designated Liaison Person(s) appointed by MIC.
- I understand that I cannot guarantee confidentiality in circumstances where a form of abuse is observed by me.

- I understand that I cannot act as a counsellor to any person concerned in respect of a form of abuse observed by me and that I cannot make any referral to third party support or counselling services on behalf of such persons.
- Although the relevant work does not occur on MIC property and is out of College jurisdiction I have satisfied myself that appropriate child safeguarding procedures are located at the place of engagement with children.
- Although the relevant work does not occur on MIC property and is out of College jurisdiction I have confirmed that at least one of the persons responsible for child safeguarding at that location (e.g. the Designated Liaison Person) will be present at all times during the engagement with children.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

Risk Type – Disclosure (by Participants) of Abuse

*Risk Statement(s):*

- Disclosure, by a child (or person under 18 years) of their experience of a recognised and substantive form of abuse during the course of the relevant work;
- Disclosure of a person of a recognised and substantive form of abuse to which another child (or person under 18 years) has been subject.
- Retrospective disclosure by an adult of their experience of a recognised and substantive form of abuse when they were a child (or person under 18 years).
- Other

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I have formulated a plan for managing a disclosure that is not made privately by a child / young person but openly, in group setting, that preserves the right to privacy and dignity of the child, that is based on the paramount importance of the safety of children.
- As I am a Mandated Person I fully understand my role in reporting any details of a disclosure.
- I understand that I cannot guarantee confidentiality in circumstances where I receive or I am made aware of a disclosure.

- I understand that I cannot act as a counsellor to any person making a disclosure and that I cannot make any referral to third party support or counselling services on behalf of the disclosing party.
- I understand that that disclosure of a form of child abuse, including affective, sexual or physical abuse or neglect, may refer to a person other than the person making disclosure and that in such an event the same safeguarding procedures apply as otherwise.
- Although the relevant work does not occur on MIC property and is out of College jurisdiction I have satisfied myself that appropriate child safeguarding procedures are located at the place of engagement with children.
- Although the relevant work/activity does not occur on MIC property and is out of College jurisdiction I have confirmed that at least one of the persons responsible for child safeguarding at that location (e.g. the Designated Liaison Person) will be present at all times during the engagement with children.
- I am aware that disclosure may occur in written form, including during the course of any exercise that might take place as part of the relevant activity or work and I understand that the same procedures for reporting a direct disclosure apply and inform my contingency planning.
- I understand that an adult may make a retrospective disclosure about an experience that took place when they were under 18 years of age and that the same procedures for reporting a direct disclosure apply and inform my contingency planning.
- I have formulated a plan for managing a disclosure that is made by an adult that preserves the right to privacy and dignity of all individuals directly concerned and that is based on the paramount importance of the safety of children.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

Risk Type – Physical Injury to a Child

*Risk Statement(s):*

There is a risk of physical injury to a child (or person under 18 years) during the course of the proposed work or activity.

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- MIC staff are adequately insured to carry out work on behalf of the College inclusive of work that involves engagement with children or young people.
- I have ensured that any third party with whom I collaborate in the proposed activity is adequately insured to carry out work on behalf of the College inclusive of work that involves engagement with children young people.
- Any physical space utilised for engagement with children or young people is a familiar setting and is perceived by the children as a 'safe space.'
- Children or young people will be familiar with the ergonomics of any physical space utilised for engagement with them and any furniture, layout or equipment used in the space will be suitable for use by children or young people with age and physical characteristics of the focus group cohort.
- Sufficient First Aid provision on will be available at any location or premises used for interaction with children or young people and first response procedures will be established.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

Risk Type – Data Breach

*Risk Statement(s):*

There is a risk of improper management of data / information concerning children / young people generated during implementation of the relevant work.

*Action(s) to Mitigate / Eliminate Risk:*

- I have identified the need to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and have conducted a thorough impact assessment exercise
- As Principal Investigator conducting research with human subjects I have identified the need to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and have conducted a thorough impact assessment exercise which I will submit to under the process to attain a Certificate of Compliance (which will be appended to my application for ethical clearance to conduct research with human subjects).

- In the course of submitting my application for research with human subjects I will set out my data collection plan in detail and align it precisely to the methodologies used to carry out the relevant work.
- I have considered the need to carry out a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) with reference to the College's data protection guidelines and I have concluded that this is not necessary.
- I have consulted with the MIC Information Compliance Office to identify best practice and appropriate procedures for the management of all data gathered.
- In the unlikely event of a data breach I will contact the MIC Information Compliance Office immediately so that an appropriate data breach response can be put into effect in accordance with the requirements of the Irish Data Protection Commission.
- I will utilise appropriate data storage tools and manage them securely and in alignment with due and proper data retention procedures.
- I will adhere to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Irish Data Protection Act (2018) and the MIC Data Protection Policy.
- Other

*Risk Rating: Low*

### **Declaration of Undertaking**

Signed: Aoife Rosney  
Lead Person Undertaking Relevant Work

Date: 25.2.25

### **Confirmation of MIC Certification for Relevant Work:**



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Safeguarding Person

Date: 4 March 2025