

Exploring the lived experiences of young people affected by benzodiazepine-related harms.

01/02/2025-17/09/2025

Information sheet for interview participants.

My name is Fintan Holland, and I'm inviting you to take part in my research project, provisionally titled 'Exploring the lived experiences of young people affected by benzodiazepine-related harms'. I'm a master's student at UCL's Institute of Education studying applied linguistics, as well as a Policy Officer at the Benzo Research Project. My main research interests are related to the field of health communication, and exploring the links between language, health, and social, political and economic trends. Though this project will be entirely my own work, I will be working in collaboration with my colleagues at the Benzo Research Project, which is a grassroots charity that aims to support young people affected by benzodiazepine-related harms through research, reducing stigma, and advocacy.

I am hoping to explore how young people use language to construct their stories and experiences with using benzodiazepines without following prescribed medical advice. Some commonly used benzodiazepines include diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), clonazepam (Klonopin) and lorazepam (Ativan). I would very much like you to participate in this project. In this information sheet, I will try to answer any questions you may have, but if you require any further information please contact me at: fintan.holland.24@ucl.ac.uk, and I'd be more than happy to discuss this in more detail.

Who is carrying out the research?

Fintan Holland (MA Applied Linguistics student), with supervision from Dr Andrea Sunyol (lecturer at UCL Institute of Education).

Why are we doing this research?

My project aims to explore the lived experiences of young people affected by benzodiazepine-related harms, which is a significant and growing problem in the UK. As this project is to be completed as part of a master's in Applied Linguistics, my focus will be on the types of language people use when talking about different aspects of their experience- for example, through metaphor or narratives. One of the key questions I hope to answer is how to participants use language to talk about responsibility. I hope to situate my findings within the context of the wider research into the linguistic construction of lived experiences and social, political and economic trends more broadly. In answering these questions, and through an explicit focus on the language people use, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how affected individuals view their experiences, and to improve the support available to people going forwards.

Why am I being invited to take part?



You are being invited to take part as you have indicated that you have personal experience with using benzodiazepines in a way that did not follow prescriptive medical guidance. I hope that by having an in-depth conversation with you, and around 5 others, I'll be able to get a better picture of how people understand their experiences.

What will happen if I choose to take part?

You will be asked to take part in one semi-structured interview, which will take place online (over Zoom, if possible). I estimate they will last around one hour- though this is approximate, and you may indicate that you wish to take a break or terminate the interview at any point and I will be happy to facilitate this, or equally if you wish to continue, that is also not a problem. This will be the only activity you'll be asked to participate in. You will be invited to select a time slot through a Google Calendar link when you would like the interview to take place. On the call (unless you would like for someone else to be present, in which case, please let me know as soon as you are able to) it will just be me myself and you. I will be the only person who has access to the audio recordings of the call, and these will be stored digitally and securely for a maximum of 10 years following the research, after any identifiable information has been removed. The audio recordings will be transcribed (written down word for word) and pseudonymised (your name will be changed), and any identifiable information will be removed or fictionalised (details will be changed so that you cannot be identified).

The interview will be semi-structured, so while there are some general topics I'd like raise, you will be invited to share your experiences in your own words and at your own pace. One of the questions I might ask, for example, could be 'what were some of your motivations for initially taking benzodiazepines?'. There is nothing you need to do to prepare before this conversation. You will be under no obligation to answer each question, and I will be happy to move on to a different topic should you feel uncomfortable.

Will anyone know I have been involved?

Only I will know you have been involved in this research, however if I judge there to be a serious concern for your immediate welfare, I may be legally obliged to contact relevant support services. Owing to the potentially sensitive nature of your experiences, I understand you may have concerns over the confidentiality of the data you provide. I will take all steps necessary to ensure you are not identifiable in the final write-up of my research, and that no one can access the recordings or transcripts before personal information has been changed or removed. Raw recordings where your name may appear, and the data you facilitate to us will ever be shared with anyone. You will always be referred to with a pseudonym (fake name) in any publications and other academic activities where the information you have shared with us is used. Up until the point this research is published, you will also be welcome to contact me in order to read my transcriptions of our conversation, and in the case that you wish for additional information to be removed, I will ensure this happens immediately.

Could there be problems for me if I take part?

I am aware that this may be a sensitive topic to discuss, both emotionally and legally. You are welcome to request that the conversation stops temporarily or permanently at any point, or decline to answer any question that you are uncomfortable discussing. Should you indicate that you find a

topic distressing, I will stop the recording immediately and point you towards support resources. Finally, all data will be anonymised and held securely, such that there will be no way to identify you as a participant. If you wish to discuss your participation, or withdraw consent at any point prior to the submission of this project, you are free to do so without having to provide any explanations, by contacting myself (fintan.holland.24@ucl.ac.uk).

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be submitted to the Department of Culture, Communication and Media at UCL's Institute of Education as a part fulfilment of the requirements of the MA Applied Linguistics course. It may also be published and used to inform future research, or the design of support materials. With your permission, I will direct quotations from the transcript of our conversation, but your real name, or any other identifiable information, will never appear or be mentioned. You will be able to request to see a copy of the transcript, and ask for any information to be removed. These transcripts will never be shared to a third party.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is voluntary and it is entirely your choice. We hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it a valuable experience. If you do not choose to take part, there will be no negative consequences for you.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our 'general' privacy notice for participants in research studies [here](#).

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices. The lawful basis that will be used to process any personal data is: 'Public task' for personal data and 'Research purposes' for special category data. We will be collecting personal data such as: *name, age, work*.

Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

Fintan Holland, MA Applied Linguistics

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at fintan.holland.24@ucl.ac.uk or +447508603740



If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to fintan.holland.24@ucl.ac.uk by 01/06/2025.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

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