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Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to inform you about a research study funded by the Academy of Medical Sciences that is being led by researchers at Aston University. Sandra Martin, a Speech and Language Therapist and Doctoral Researcher is leading the project, supervised by Dr Jane Waite (Senior Researcher and Clinical Psychologist) and Dr Laura Shapiro (Senior Researcher). You have received this letter because your school is supporting this project by passing on information to families of autistic children who may be interested in taking part.

### What is the study about?

There is very little research focussing on the mental health needs of autistic people with learning needs/disability, particularly in schools. We are leading a body of work to inform the development of accessible interventions to reduce anxiety in autistic children and young people with a learning disability/need. During this study we are asking parent/carers (and a school staff member chosen by the caregiver) to complete a questionnaire about their child's anxiety and associated behaviours. The child must be an **autistic** young person **aged 4-15**, who has a formal plan in place to support their specific educational needs (i.e., an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Individual Development Plan (IDP), Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) or a Statement of Special Educational Needs. We will use the information we gain from the questionnaires to inform the development of the intervention and resources, which we hope to make available to schools.

### What do I need to do?

If you decide to take part, you will be able to access the study information, consent form, background questionnaire and anxiety questionnaire battery online using this link: [Anxiety Battery \(parent/carers\)](#). Please read the study information sheet carefully before deciding whether you would like to take part. The information sheet will provide details about how the research team will protect your data, as well as other important information about the study.

Once you have completed the online consent form and background questionnaire, you will be able to continue the survey to complete the questionnaire battery. The questionnaire battery explores various factors and presentations which may be associated with anxiety in autistic children with additional learning needs. This includes sensory responses, repetitive behaviours, and how well your child manages uncertainty. The questionnaire will take about **45 minutes to complete** and can be paused or stopped at any time. If you want to return to the survey at another time, you will need to finish the page you are on and press the blue arrow button to save your responses so far. If you click the survey link again within 2 weeks, you will be able to carry on the questions from where you were previously. However, this will only work if you use the same device to complete the survey, and if you avoid pressing the back button and do not delete your browser history in the meantime.

We will also ask you to forward an email onto a member of school staff who knows your child well so that we can invite them to also complete the same questionnaire battery about your child. The information provided will remain confidential, and therefore we cannot share the responses that either you or the member of staff provide. All parents and staff members who complete the online questionnaire battery will each receive a **£10 voucher** within 3 weeks of their participation.

If you are unclear about any aspect of the study or have any questions, please contact Sandra Martin [230395112@aston.ac.uk](mailto:230395112@aston.ac.uk) at Aston University. Thank you for your time and the research team look forward to hearing from you.

Sandra Martin (Speech and Language Therapist and Doctoral Researcher)

#### **Other Members of the Research Team**

Dr Jane Waite (Senior Researcher and Clinical Psychologist, School of Psychology)

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