

Supporting Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing in an Age of AI

Participant Information Sheet: Focus Group

About the Project

Artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies offer young people opportunities to gather information, learn and access wellbeing support. However, they can also pose risks to mental health. Our project uses surveys and focus groups to understand how young people are interacting with AI tools, including GenAI applications and chatbots, for companionship and mental health support. We aim to explore current AI use and needs for mental health and wellbeing among young people aged 18-25 in the UK and develop recommendations and guidance for ethical, inclusive and equitable AI development and use.

Your participation

We're asking you to share your own practices and insights on AI in a short group interview conducted online via Microsoft Teams (1 hour) with 5-7 other participants. The group interview will be audio recorded and transcribed and you may be asked to turn on cameras. We'll ask you to share how you feel about interactions with AI in response to a series of prompts from the focus group lead(s). Your responses will help us to shape project activities and gather data on AI use among young people living in the UK. We will use this information to develop policy guidance and prioritise future initiatives for research into AI and young people's mental health and wellbeing. We may quote anonymous data and comments as supporting evidence in published project materials including talks, online articles, or future funding applications. There are no direct risks involved in participating in the focus group, but we will include verbal content notes and links to support in case of distress. Participation in the focus group is voluntary and you can cease participation at any point during the activity. Please be aware of the deadline for withdrawing data after the end of the focus group, detailed below.

Compensation

We will provide each focus group participant with £15 per hour payment via Prolific as thanks for your time. You will receive this payment even if you choose to withdraw your data, in recognition of your time and input. You can only take part in one focus group for this project.

Inclusion criteria

Participants in the focus group will be aged 18-25, living in the UK, and fluent in English. This will apply to all participants.

How we will collect and use your data

The focus group interview will be recorded via Microsoft Teams, then transcribed in part or in full. Data will be collected and stored in line with EU General Data Protection Regulation

2016/679 (2018) and Data Protection Act (2018). The consent forms, audio recording and any subsequent transcription or other materials will be accessed by the Project Team and stored securely for 10 years in a digital archive at the University of Birmingham. We will ask you not to identify yourself by name in the focus group, but any identifying details will be fully anonymised for storage and evaluation. You will be able to withdraw your participation up to the deadline (below). If you have questions or would like to learn more about the outcomes and next steps you can get in touch via the contact links below.

Withdrawing your data

You can request to withdraw your data any time before the deadline by emailing d.butchard@bham.ac.uk with the subject line “Request to Withdraw Focus Group Data”. In some cases we may not be able to isolate and remove contributions from single individuals; in this instance we will invite you to share details of specific statements that you wish to withdraw. All identifiable withdrawn data will be removed from our records.

The deadline for withdrawing your data is **10 September 2026**.

Any questions? Please get in touch

If you're not sure about any aspect of this, or would like to learn about outcomes, we'll be happy to answer your questions before or after you participate in the focus groups. Please contact us by email at d.butchard@bham.ac.uk.

Further information

- How the University of Birmingham uses your data: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/privacy>
- If you have complaints you prefer to address to a third party: ethics-queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk
- You can learn more about the project, including details of the team leads, on our website: <https://imaginingwellbeing.bham.ac.uk/ai/>

Sources of support

- NHS urgent help for mental health: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>
- Contact the Samaritans 24/7 if you need someone to talk to: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>
- MIND techniques for coping with distress: <https://www.mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help/what-can-i-do-to-help-myself-cope/>
- Mental Health UK advice on using AI safely for mental health support: <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/health-and-wellbeing/artificial-intelligence-and-mental-health/>