



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
Department of Psychiatry

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Autistic VOICES



Values, Outcomes, and Inclusive
Community Engagement with Students

Participant Information Sheet Student Advisory Group

Principal Investigator

Professor Sir Simon Baron-Cohen

Corresponding Co-Investigator

Dr Kevin Matlock

Thank you for your interest in the Autistic VOICES study. Before deciding whether to take part, it is important to understand the purpose of the research and what participation will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you have any questions or concerns, please email our research team using contact details provided at the end.

What is the purpose of the study?

Our goal is to understand the experiences of autistic university students and identify unmet needs. To ensure our research is relevant and respectful, we are recruiting autistic students for a Student Advisory Group to help guide each phase of the study, from survey design to communicating results.

What will happen to me in the study?

If you consent to join the Student Advisory Group, you will be sent a survey asking about your personal background, your university degree(s), and whether you have an autism diagnosis or self-identify as autistic. You will then be invited to a focus group to discuss your experiences, including how well supports are working and areas where your experience could be improved. You may be invited to join additional focus groups or emailed follow-up questions if more input is needed.

Focus groups with about 4 students will be held online and will last around 90 minutes. We understand people have different communication needs, so you will have the option to keep your camera off and to use the chat function. Focus groups will be recorded so transcripts can be created for research purposes, and recordings will be deleted once identifying details have been removed from transcripts. Alternative means of contributing, such as one-on-one interviews or written feedback, will also be available. In addition, you will be contacted later with requests for feedback to help co-design study materials, including survey items and how results and recommendations are communicated.

Do I have to take part in the study?

You are eligible to take part if you are aged 18 or older, currently enrolled as an undergraduate or postgraduate student at university, and have either received a diagnosis of autism or self-identify as autistic. Taking part is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty.



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Why have I been invited to participate?

You may have seen information about this study shared by someone on social media, at your university, or from a community organisation that supports autistic students. In some cases, you may have been contacted directly if you previously agreed to receive information about research opportunities or if you shared information related to autism or student advocacy.

Are there possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?

The risks associated with this study are expected to be low. However, you will be asked about challenges you face as an autistic student, which may include sensitive topics such as discrimination and suicidal thoughts and feelings. For some individuals, reflecting on these experiences may cause discomfort. If at any point you feel distressed, please consider reaching out to a specialised support service:

University of Cambridge:

www.studentsupport.cam.ac.uk

London Southbank University:

www.lsbu.ac.uk/student-life/student-support

University of Leeds:

students.leeds.ac.uk/support-guidance

Community Support:

www.autismresearchcentre.com/support-organisations

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your involvement will help shape research aimed at improving support for autistic students. As part of the Student Advisory Group, any tasks you volunteer to complete will also be eligible for compensation, typically at a rate of £27.50 per hour, based on the time estimated to complete a given task.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Yes. Any identifying information you provide, such as your name or email address, will be stored separately from research data, and only members of the research team will have access to these data. Long-term storage for all data will use secure systems managed by the University of Cambridge. To learn more about the university's data protection policies, visit:

www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Findings will be presented at conferences and events and shared in journals, press releases, and reports with the aim of improving university support services. Results will generally be presented as summaries across groups. If individual quotations are shared, they will not be attributed to an identified individual.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is led by researchers in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge. Information about funding and other aspects of the study can be found on the project webpage:

www.autismresearchcentre.com/projects/the-autistic-voices-study

Does this study follow ethical guidelines?

Yes. This project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the University of Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee (PRE.2026.047).

Who do I contact for further information?

If you have any questions, please email Dr. Kevin Matlock at: km980@cam.ac.uk