

# PARENT INFORMATION PACK



## **iKids: Investigating Kids' Interaction with Digital Screens**



# Visual Summary

Sheffield  
Hallam  
University

We're looking for 3-year-old children and their parents to participate in fun and exciting research on children's development and their use (or non-use) of touchscreen devices.

## What does taking part involve?

### Parents:

15 mins



Complete a questionnaire (online or on paper)



Answer some questions (over the phone) about interactions with your child



ALL PARTICIPANTS  
Download an app on all devices your child uses to record child's usage for 1 week



IPHONE AND IPAD USERS  
Within this app, also take a daily screen shot of battery usage

### The child:

#### At nursery/preschool



Complete activities on an iPad to assess development



Have their height and weight measured



Complete a series of activities to measure their motor development

#### At home, out & about & at childcare



Wear an activity monitor for 1 week on their hip

Up to £100 to say Thank You!



You'll receive a £50 voucher now AND when we follow up with you next year!

Childcare staff:



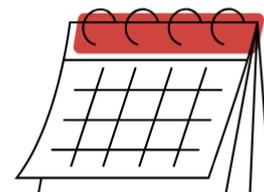
5 mins

Complete a questionnaire about each child's social development

When?

&

Now



1 year later



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## **Part 1. Introduction**

Tablets and mobile phones are common in young children's lives, but health guidance does not provide recommendations for how long young children should use these devices. Thus, policymakers, childcare providers and parents have asked for further information on their impact.

We would like to invite you and your child to take part in our research project. We are exploring children's use of smartphones and tablets and gathering information to learn about their cognitive development and health outcomes.

We will measure how long the children use their devices for and explore what types of apps they use. We will work with children when they are 3 years old and again when they are 4 years old.



Photo by Ketut Subiyanto on Pexels

Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this!



## **What is the purpose of this study?**

We are exploring children's use of smartphones and tablets and gathering information to learn about their cognitive development and health outcomes. We're aiming to improve health guidance in this area for parents and childcare professionals.

## **Who can take part?**

### **Children will be eligible for the study if**

- They are **3 years old** (between 36-47 months).
- They **do** or **do not** use tablets and/or smartphones - we're interested in all experiences!
- Both the parent and child can speak and understand English

### **Children will not be eligible for the study if**

- They have been diagnosed with a developmental delay (e.g. autism, ADHD, speech and/or language delay, motor delay etc) by a medical professional
- Both the parent and child do not speak and understand English

If you are unsure whether your child is eligible to participate, please contact the research team at [\*\*ikids@shu.ac.uk\*\*](mailto:ikids@shu.ac.uk)



## Meet the Team



**Prof Liane Azevedo**

Liane is a Professor at Sheffield Hallam University. Liane's research interest is in public health, particularly in promoting health in young children. She has worked in many studies involving interventions with children, targeting the increase in physical activity and the reduction in sedentary behaviour.



**Dr Amy Hughes**

Amy is the Trial Manager for the iKids Team. She has experience conducting research with children and primary schools. She is interested in exploring how technology can be used to support children's learning.



**Osla Campbell**

Osla is a Research Assistant at Sheffield Hallam University. She previously graduated from the University of Nottingham with an MSci in Natural Sciences, specialising in Psychology. She has experience working with ages 3-18, and is interested in physical activity and mental health.



**Emma Lake**

Emma is a Research Assistant at Sheffield Hallam University and has just completed an MSc in Developmental Psychology at SHU. She has experience working with children aged 3-11 and is interested in social and cognitive development in early years.



**Rachel Stamper**

Rachel is another of our Research Assistants and has also just completed an MSc in Developmental Psychology at SHU. She also works as a nursery practitioner and has done for several years.



**Dr Eleanor Craig**

Ellie is a Research Fellow on the iKids project. She has experience in mental health and wellbeing research, as well as in examining child protection practices. Ellie has also worked with primary school-aged children to explore issues related to isolation and loneliness.



## Part 2. What's involved?

### Rewards:

To thank you for your participation you will receive a **£50 high street e-voucher after each data collection window (one now and the second next year at follow-up), £100 in total.** Your child will be provided with a reward chart, stickers and a certificate.

### What will your child do?

We will use iPad games to assess different cognitive skills. These include vocabulary, numeracy, memory, and inhibition skills. These games take around 40 minutes.

We will measure your child's height and weight and their motor development using a series of games which measure their fine and gross motor skills. These games are estimated to take between 10-15 minutes.

Each child is offered a special "magic belt" (an activity monitor) and a superhero mask to go with it. The belt tracks when children are sitting still, moving around, or sleeping. Just to reassure you: there is no GPS in the belt. We ask that children wear the belt for **one week**, aiming for at least one 24-hour window of continuous use, but it is not a problem if a child doesn't want to wear the belt (although most children find them exciting!)

### What will you do?

After our visit to a childcare setting, you will get instructions to install an app on **all devices your child uses**. This app (called EARS Mobile Sensing) can be found in your usual app store. This app helps us **see how long different apps are used on children's devices**. You use this app for one week.

A few important things to note:

1. We only see the names of the apps and how much time is spent on them, not the content!
2. This data is not linked to children's names – it is completely anonymised.



- The individual data will never be shared with anyone – we will only look at data at the group level (i.e., hundreds of participants at a time).

Finally, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire and phone call with us (about 15 minutes).

**If your child uses an Android phone or tablet:**

The app automatically collects information about how long and frequently apps are used for each day. No extra work!

**If your child uses an iPad or iPhone**

If you have an iOS device, you will receive notifications to submit your screen time activity on Day 3 and Day 7 after installation. You do this by taking screenshots in the app. Full instructions will be given.

Please see below the type of information that the app will be recording from your device.

**Android Devices**

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Participant ID	Date	App Name	App duration seconds	tm_usagewindow_start	tm_usagewindow_end
2	101	15/11/2023	Netflix	570	15/04/2023 16:00	15/04/2023 16:09
3	101	15/11/2023	YouTube Kids	1320	15/04/2023 17:06	15/04/2023 17:28
4	101	15/11/2023	BBC iPlayer	1440	15/04/2023 19:06	15/04/2023 19:30
5	101	15/11/2023	Netflix	780	15/04/2023 19:32	15/04/2023 19:35
6	101	16/11/2023	Wolrd of Peppa Pig: Kids Games	1020	16/04/2023 09:16	16/04/2023 09:33
7	101	16/11/2023	CBeebies Playtime Island	652	16/04/2023 09:35	16/04/2023 09:46
8	101	16/11/2023	Safari	360	16/04/2023 09:47	16/04/2023 09:53
9	101	16/11/2023	Wolrd of Peppa Pig: Kids Games	120	16/04/2023 09:53	16/04/2023 09:55
10						

**Apple Devices**

	A	B	C	D
1	Participant ID	Date	App Name	Amount app used per day_seconds
2	101	14/11/2023	Netflix	1440
3	101	14/11/2023	YouTube Kids	1320
4	101	14/11/2023	BBC iPlayer	1440
5	101	14/11/2023	YouTube	780
6	101	14/11/2023	Wolrd of Peppa Pig: Kids Games	1020
7	101	14/11/2023	CBeebies Playtime Island	652
8	101	14/11/2023	Safari	360
9	101	14/11/2023	Photos	120
10				



If your child shares a device with another family member, we will ask you to complete a brief diary. In this diary, you will write 1) the start time and end time at which your child used the shared device, 2) if the device is an iPhone or iPad; and 3) the app the child used during this time. This will not take long to complete.



## **Part 3. Additional Information.**

### **How will information be collected?**

Experienced and trained researchers will take all the measurements. We will make sure that we respect the children's personalities and preferences, and we will not pressure them to take part if they do not want to. All measurements will be completed in a shared space within the childcare setting. All researchers involved in this study have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosure. If you have any concerns about the measures we're taking, please feel free to discuss them with us, and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

### **Where will the study take place?**

For the most part, data collection will take place within your child's childcare setting however we will be measuring your child's smartphone/tablet use, which we expect will mostly be in your home, as well as out and about. Your child will also be asked to wear an accelerometer for 7 days which will involve times when they are at home, in childcare and when they are out and about. We will also be asking you to complete an online questionnaire which can be completed at a time and place convenient to you.

### **How often will I have to take part, and for how long?**

You will be required to take part on two occasions, once when your child is 3 years old and at follow-up when your child is 4 years old. Prior to follow-up you will be contacted by a member of the research team to let you know when follow-up data collection will take place.

### **Are there any possible risks or disadvantages in taking part?**

You may feel uncomfortable downloading an app onto your electronic devices. Please rest assured that this app (EARS) has been designed for research purposes and is only being used to track the duration the device is used, as well as the type of apps in use. Use of the app has been scrutinised and approved by Sheffield Hallam University's Digital



Technology Services, and the study has undergone rigorous ethical review (Ethics number: ER69550320). EARS is GDPR compliant, and you will be asked to download the app through Google Play or the App Store, which also ensures additional data quality control through Apple or Google. You will be provided with clear instructions for installing and removing the app.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

By taking part in this research, you will contribute to our understanding on the use of smartphones and tablets and cognitive development. We hope that the findings will help to inform public health guidance on children's device use. You and your child will also receive vouchers for your participation.

### **Does my child have to take part?**

If your child decides they do not wish to take part after you have consented, they will not be required to do so.

### **Right to withdraw:**

If you agree for your child to take part in the study and later decide that you no longer wish your child to be involved, that is absolutely fine, and no further measurements will be collected from your child. If you wish to remove your or your child's data from the study, you can do so without question until February 2026 for the first measurement or July 2027 for the second measurement. After these dates, we will begin to analyse the data, and it will not be possible to remove your data from the analysis.





### **How will the information be used?**

During the study, only members of the research team will have access to any of your information. All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Throughout the research you will be given a participant identification number, and your name will not be used to ensure your responses remain anonymous.

The information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential, anonymised and stored on secure drive at Sheffield Hallam University. As the data is anonymous, it means that it cannot be traced back to you at any point. To maintain contact with you during the study we will require an email address and telephone number. All identifiable personal data will be kept in a separate file from the other data and destroyed in August 2027 upon completion of data collection.

At the end of the project, fully anonymised data will be securely archived in the Sheffield Hallam University Research Data Archive and kept for ten years. It is likely that this data will be of interest to other researchers in the future. Consequently, at the end of the project, fully anonymised data will also be deposited in a community recognised data repository to allow other researchers to use the data in the future.

The findings from this research will be published in scientific journals and presented at academic and relevant conferences. Additionally, the results will help to inform policy briefs for health and educational organisations. Findings will be shared at Knowledge Café events and communicated to early years settings and parents via newsletters and websites. It will not be possible to identify you or your child in any of these presentations or publications.

### **How can I find out about the results of the study?**

Upon completion of the study, we will share the study findings on the study website [www.ikidsstudy.com](http://www.ikidsstudy.com).



### Who is funding the research?

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/>. The NIHR is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to fund research that benefits the NHS, public health and social care.

### What happens next?

If you are happy for your child to participate then please complete the consent form.

If you would like more information on the study, please contact the research team by telephone or email (details below) and we will be happy to discuss the work further.

iKids Team

Sheffield Hallam University

Phone: 07917 846 358

e-mail: [ikids@shu.ac.uk](mailto:ikids@shu.ac.uk)

Website: [www.ikidsstudy.com](http://www.ikidsstudy.com)

#### **You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:**

- you have a query about how your data is used by the University
- you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately)
- you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data

[DPO@shu.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@shu.ac.uk)

#### **You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Mayur Ranchordas) if:**

- you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated

[ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk](mailto:ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk)

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB  
Telephone: 0114 225 5555

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this study.**