

## Participant Information Sheet

**Project:** Designing a Conversational Intelligent Agent for Peer Support

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**Ethics approval No:** 300230220

You are invited to participate this research project because you are a member of a Peer Support Organization (PSO) that partners with our research team. Your experiences and feedback are invaluable in evaluating the effectiveness of the chatbot in real-world settings. This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the College of Science and Engineering, University of Glasgow, with approval number 300230220.

Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand what the research will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher/s if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part, please sign the consent form or indicate your agreement on the survey questionnaire. You are still free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences or giving a reason.

### Research Summary

Our research focuses on designing and developing conversational intelligent agents, more commonly called chatbots, and other AI tools to facilitate peer support groups, most with specific mental health concerns. The chatbot may be able to act as an assistant for a PSO to reduce administrative workload, enhance the quality of interactions, and provide tailored support to individuals participating in hybrid peer support models.

To better understand how we can enhance the design of digital AI tools for PSOs, we are inviting people involved in PSOs to co-design a chatbot with us by sharing their opinions and experience on chatbots and their thoughts about the design of an AI agent in the context of peer support. We have built a web-based prototype showcasing some potential capabilities of the chatbot, by which we hope to inspire people to explore this topic together.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do two things or a survey questionnaire that serves the same function as a more flexible alternative:

- 1) **Workshop discussion:** Attend an interview individually or a workshop grouped with other users from your PSO to share your experience and ideas about the interaction with chatbots and to discuss about potential designs for future peer support tools we are in the process of researching. Attendance will be arranged with you, and you may take part in person or online. Your participation of this part is expected to take approximately 30 minutes.

- 2) **Chatbot interaction:** With the same people or individually, play with the chatbot prototype through our website application, which interactively demonstrates six scenarios where a smart agent can make a difference to peer support groups. The chatbot is a self-developed system with the core conversational function powered by Large Language Models (LLMs) from OpenAI. You will need to have role-played interactions with the chatbot, not volunteering real personal information but instead pretending to need various functions of the chatbot to get a clear idea of how it works. You will then provide feedback on your experience through interviews or/and surveys. This part is expected to take approximately 30 minutes as well.

Your participation will help us refine the chatbot's functionality and ensure it effectively meets the needs of everyone within PSOs.

## Your Rights

- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point including mid-process for any reason, particularly if you find the interaction distressing. We have two researchers available to assist you discreetly in the sessions, ensuring that you can speak with someone immediately if you feel uncomfortable, without drawing attention or disrupting the process.
- You are free to ask questions about the study at any time or express any concerns to the research team.
- Your privacy and confidentiality will be strictly protected. Personal information will not be shared with other researchers or external organizations, and any data recorded during the study will be anonymized. We commit to the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and all other relevant legislation relating to the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals. See below for more details.

## Data Protection and Confidentiality

All personal information collected during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your data will be anonymised, with identifying details like your name and address removed, ensuring you cannot be personally identified in any reports or publications. You will be identified by an ID number and referred to by a pseudonym. In cases where there is evidence of serious harm or risk, the University may be required to notify relevant authorities.

All physical data will be securely stored in locked cabinets with restricted access at the University, and electronic data will be stored on password-protected servers accessible only to the research team or authorised personnel. Your data will be securely stored for the duration of the PhD programme and destroyed at the conclusion of the project. Anonymised data may be included in academic publications or presentations, but no identifiable information will be shared without your explicit consent.

All data handling will comply with the latest version of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You have data protection rights as follows:

- The right to be informed about the collection and use of your personal data.
- The right to access and receive a copy of your personal data, and other supplementary information.
- The right to have inaccurate personal data rectified or completed.
- The right to have personal data erased.
- The right to request the restriction or suppression of your personal data.
- The right to obtain and reuse your personal data for your own purposes across different services.
- The right to object to the processing of your personal data in certain circumstances.
- The right to prevent automated processing, including profiling.

## Potential Risks and Benefits

Participating in this study may involve some risks, but we are committed to minimising them. Our design workshops and interviews may touch on sensitive topics related to your experiences on peer support, which could cause distress. You do not have to take part in the workshops or interviews and, even if you do, you do not have to discuss any topic that you dislike. You may withdraw at any time during the study and retroactively ask us not to include your data in the research. Additionally, the LLM-based chatbot you will interact with may occasionally generate inappropriate responses, though we have safeguards in place to minimize this risk.

Data collection carries the potential risk of data breaches. We adhere strictly to the responsibilities in data protection policies like the UK GDPR and take extensive measures to protect your information throughout the data handling process. All collected data, including transcripts from interactions and interviews, will be anonymised and securely stored on encrypted devices or the University's secure cloud storage services. In addition, we will further reduce the risks associated with Internet transmission, by processing data locally as far as possible. While no system is completely risk-free, we follow stringent data protection protocols to minimise risks.

The findings of this study will be used to improve our chatbot's design and functionality. The research results may be published in academic journals or the researcher's PhD thesis or presented at conferences. However, no identifying information will be included. You can obtain a copy of the published results from us and be able to access them online through publication website. If direct quotes are used in any resulting publications, we will specify it with you before submission, even if anonymised.

## More Information

You can contact the primary researcher, Wanshu Yu, for any questions via email at [w.yu.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:w.yu.1@research.gla.ac.uk).

If you have complaints about the process, you can contact the lead supervisor, Dr. Stephen Lindsay at [stephen.lindsay@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.lindsay@glasgow.ac.uk).

If you are not satisfied at any stage, you can contact the College Ethics Committee overseeing this research at [psychology-admin@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-admin@glasgow.ac.uk).

If the research project changes in any way, an updated Participant Information Sheet will be sent to you by e-mail.