We would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please read the information on this sheet carefully before deciding whether you would like to take part.

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

This study aims to understand the experience of loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, we aim to better understand the experience of loneliness in people with and without symptoms of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). The study is particularly interested in the use of social media and how it relates to loneliness during periods of worldwide social distancing measures.

**Why have I been invited? Is this study for me?**

We are inviting members of the general public who are 18 years old or above to participate in the study. We are also inviting people who may have symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of BPD, and are also 18 years old or above, to participate.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide to join the study. If you agree to help with this research, consent will be assumed through completion of the questionnaires. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason*.*

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to complete a series of questionnaires. We will ask you to think about your experience of loneliness and your use of social media since March 2020. Many questions will ask you about how much time you spend on social media and what types of activities you do on social media. The questionnaires should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete but you may complete them more quickly than this.

Your participation in this study will be anonymous and we will not ask for your name or any other information that can be used to identify you.

Once you have completed the questionnaires we will not be asking anything further of you.

**What will I have to do?**

If you decide to take part, we recommend that you find a quiet and private space to complete the questionnaires.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

We will be asking you to think about your experience of loneliness, which you may find distressing. If this occurs you are able to withdraw from the study at any time by just leaving the website.

A ‘Participant Distress Sheet’ is available on this website if at any time you feel distressed. It can also be used if you would like some support or suggestions for how to manage your distress. The 'Participant Distress Sheet' will encourage you to manage any difficult thoughts or feelings that you may have after completing the questionnaires. It will also signpost you to where you can access additional support.

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

The results of the study will help improve our understanding of loneliness and its relationship to social media use. It will also help us understand more about loneliness in people with BPD. Individuals with BPD often reported intense loneliness prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to identify how best to help to reduce loneliness in the current and future pandemics where social distancing is required, we need to better understand what is the current experience. Your responses to this study will assist us with developing this support.

We will also donate £1 to a UK mental health charity (Rethink Mental Illness) for every person that takes part and completes the questionnaires (up to a maximum of £400).

**What happens when the research study stops?**

The results of the study will be written up as part of the researcher’s dissertation for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at University College London (UCL). UCL is a university in central London. The full report of the study will be published on the study's website in September 2021. The report may also be published in relevant scientific journals. Preliminary data that could help with the immediate response to loneliness will be made available as soon as possible upon completion of the study. As previously mentioned, you will not be identifiable from these results.

**Will my information be kept confidential?**

The data from this study will be stored in accordance with the University College London Data Protection and Records Management policies.

**Part 2 of the information sheet**

**What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with this study?**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up to the final page and ‘submit’ button. As the data you provide will be anonymous, it will not be possible for us to identify and remove your data specifically once you have clicked ‘submit’ on the final page.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research has been organized by Daniel Morrissey under the supervision of Dr Janet Feigenbaum. Daniel Morrissey is a trainee clinical psychologist at UCL and Dr Janet Feigenbaum is a clinical psychologist. Dr Janet Feigenbaum is also an expert in the provision of psychological therapies for people with a personality disorder. The research is funded by University College London (UCL).

**What if there is a problem or something goes wrong?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may email the chief Investigator, Dr Janet Feigenbaum at j.feigenbaum@ucl.ac.uk. You may also contact the Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee if you feel that the problem has not been dealt with to your satisfaction. The Research Ethics Committee is contactable by emailing ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

**What next?**

By clicking ‘continue’, you confirm that you have understood the information provided above. Do you wish to proceed? If so, please click ‘continue’. If you decide not to participate please click ‘finish’.