Pathways to unusual sensory perceptions

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether to take part or not, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please 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. You do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

What is the study for?
This research is about factors which contribute to people experiencing unusual sensory perceptions (sometimes referred to as ‘hearing voices’, ‘seeing visions’ or ‘hallucinations’). Many people have these experiences at some point in their life. We want to understand more about what influences this. We will use this research to help us to understand the difficulties which are faced by victims of trauma and people who experience unusual sensory perceptions. By doing so, we aim to improve the care and support which is offered.

Who is doing the study and who has approved it?
The study is being carried out by a team from the University of Liverpool, Lancaster University and Mersey Care NHS Trust. It has been approved by the University of Liverpool’s Research Ethics Committee.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
Experiences of unusual sensory perceptions range from none at all to frequently. You have been chosen to take part in this survey because we are aiming to hear from as wide a spectrum of people as possible, irrespective of whether they do or do not experience unusual sensory perceptions.
Am I eligible to take part?
We are inviting individuals aged 18 and over and who are able to read, write and understand English. Individuals with any neurological condition (e.g. epilepsy, Parkinson’s), a significant head injury or a diagnosis of dementia are asked not to take part in the study.

Do I have to take part in the study?
No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part we will ask you to indicate that you have provided consent by ticking a box. However, you are free to stop completing the questionnaire at anytime. A decision to stop taking part or a decision not to take part will not affect you in any way.

What will taking part involve?
If you would like to participate, we will first ask you to complete an online consent form which asks if you have read and understood this information. We will then ask if you are happy to participate. A questionnaire will then be provided. The questionnaire should take no longer than approximately 25 minutes. You are free to take a break at anytime, however, it is important to leave your computer switched on, so you don’t lose the answers you have entered. The questionnaire will not have any identifying information attached to it.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, you will have finished the study. There will be no further questionnaires or any other kind of follow up in the future. At the end of the study, you will be given the option to provide your email address so that you can be entered into a prize draw to win one of six £25 Amazon vouchers. Once the study closes, the draw will take place and you will be informed by email if you have won a prize. If you would like to receive a copy of the final report you will be asked to provide your email address. If you do provide an email address, either for a chance to win the vouchers and/or to receive a copy of the final report, then this information will be kept separately from your questionnaire answers. Your email address will be deleted once the winners of the prize draw have been selected and/or you have been mailed with a final copy of the report.
**Will there be benefits of taking part?**

There are no specific benefits from taking part, besides the chance to win an Amazon voucher should you choose to enter the prize draw. However, we hope that this research may improve the care and support for victims of trauma and people who experience unusual sensory perceptions in the future.

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

The questionnaires will take time to complete (no more than 25 minutes). Questions about experiences of trauma, such as physical and sexual abuse, experienced as a child and adult will be asked. This may be upsetting to you. However, you are free to leave the study at any time should you become upset. We will provide you with information to help you access additional support from organisations such as Mind or the Hearing Voice Network. Furthermore, if any of the questions raise concerns you are advised to contact your GP for support, and/or discuss them with someone you trust.

**What will happen if I want to stop taking part?**

You have the right to stop answering the questionnaire at any point, without needing to give any explanation. Should you wish to do this, simply close the internet browser window containing the questionnaires. If you do this, your questionnaire will be withdrawn from the study and permanently deleted. Unfortunately, once you have completed the study, it will not be possible to ask for your data to be removed, as we will have no way of identifying which sets of answers are yours.

**What if I am unhappy or there is a problem?**

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been treated during this study, you can approach Christy Laganis (claganis@liv.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can contact the Research Governance Officer (0151 794 8290 or ethics@liv.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**
Yes it will. All responses will be anonymised, which means that no one will know your identity or which responses are yours. Any information which identifies you (for example, your contact details, should you wish to be entered into the prize draw) will be stored separately from questionnaire data. Your responses will only be viewed by the researchers involved in the study. All information collected for this research project will be kept safely and securely on a University of Liverpool password-protected computer for 5 years in line with the British Psychological Society’s Guidelines.

What will happen to the results of this study?
The results will form part of a Doctorate thesis in Clinical Psychology. They may also be written up for publication in academic journals and presented at research conferences. If you wish, we will be happy to send you a summary of what we have found at the end of the study (approximately July 2016). A summary of the anonymised results will also be posted on the Hearing Voices Network website.

Who can I contact for further information?
Christy Laganis (Trainee Clinical Psychologist) T: 0151 794 5102; E-mail: claganis@liverpool.ac.uk
Professor Rhiannon Corcoran (Professor of psychology) T: 0151 795 5365; E-mail: Rhiannon.Corcoran@liverpool.ac.uk
Professor William Sellwood (Clinical Psychologist) T: 01524 593998 E-mail: b.sellwood@lancaster.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this. You should keep this information sheet for future reference

Christy Laganis, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Mersey Care NHS Trust
Professor Rhiannon Corcoran, Professor of psychology, University of Liverpool
Professor William Sellwood, Programme Director, Lancaster University