



Participant Information Leaflet

Study title: Charged Spaces: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Autistic Psychotherapists' Experiences of Personal Development Groups During Training

Investigator: Caroline Horton

Welcome and thank you for your interest in this research study. I am an autistic student at the University of Warwick studying on the MSc in Psychotherapy and Counselling. I'd like to invite you to take part in my research project looking at experiences of Personal Development (PD) groups during an integrative training programme from the perspective of trainee and newly qualified psychotherapists who are autistic. (Please note that PD groups are also referred to as group process, experiential groups and encounter groups by different trainings/institutions.)

There are currently no published studies exploring neurodivergent psychotherapists' experiences of PD groups. This research begins to address this gap and contributes to the growing conversation around neurodiversity in the counselling and psychotherapy professions. The study potentially benefits trainees, educators and clients by informing more inclusive practice and offering practical recommendations for PD group facilitation and design.

About the research project

You will be invited to take part in one semi-structured interview lasting between 60-90 minutes, conducted online via Microsoft Teams. You will be sent the interview questions in advance. The interview will be audio-recorded (with your consent) and later transcribed. All data will be anonymised. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may skip any questions or stop the interview at any time. Prior to the interview, you'll be invited to a short informal conversation with the researcher to talk through the process, discuss any questions or concerns, and make any requests around access (such as regular breaks during the interview).

Who can participate?

- Trainee or newly qualified psychotherapists who are autistic (Trainee psychotherapists must be in their third year of training (or beyond) and newly qualified psychotherapists must have qualified within the last two years.)
- Participants who identify as autistic. (An official autism diagnosis is not required and participants may be multiply neurodivergent.)
- Participants who have participated in PD group for at least two academic years.
- Participants with integrative trainings to help maintain a relatively homogenous sample in terms of training context.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you meet the inclusion criteria for this study.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part, and you may withdraw at any time up to 30 April 2026 (the start date of the data analysis stage) without giving a reason

and without any negative consequences. After this point, it may not be possible to remove data that has already been anonymised, as it will no longer be possible to identify your contribution.

If you withdraw, only the minimum personally identifiable information necessary to maintain research integrity will be retained, stored securely in line with University policy.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

There are no known significant risks in taking part. However, participation may bring up thoughts or feelings related to the topic. You may benefit from reflecting on your experiences and contributing to research that may inform future practice or understanding in this field.

Should you feel distressed during or after answering the survey questions, various forms of support are available to you:

Speak to your personal therapist or supervisor

UKCP website: www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/

BACP website: www.bacp.co.uk/about-therapy/how-to-find-a-therapist/

You can also contact the Samaritans at any time of day or night: 0117 983

1000 www.samaritans.org

Data Protection and Confidentiality

We will protect the privacy of your data when collecting, analysing, and reporting this research. Although we may use your words as research data, all personally identifying information will be removed or disguised.

As this is an interview-based study, the interviewer will know your identity while speaking with you. After the interview, during transcription, the following steps will be taken:

- Your real name and any other identifying names or locations will be removed.
- Any details that might reveal your identity will be changed or omitted.
- You will be given a pseudonym (alias) for all written material.
- You will have an opportunity during the debrief to review any content you wish to disguise further.

No identifying information will be held with the interview data, and all data will be stored securely in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018).

By agreeing to take part, you give full, explicit, and informed consent for your anonymised data (your words) to be used in analysis and possibly in publications, such as journal articles, book chapters, or conference presentations.

As a publicly funded organisation, the University of Warwick must ensure that the use of personally identifiable information in research is in the public interest. The University will act as the data controller for this study and is committed to protecting your rights in accordance with data protection legislation.

Data will be collected and processed solely for research purposes and retained until the exam board meets in the summer of 2026. Research data will be pseudonymised as soon as possible after collection. Any information that could identify you will be stored separately and securely. Once anonymised, your data will no longer be identifiable.

Your rights to access, change, or move your information are limited, as the data must be managed in specific ways to preserve the reliability and accuracy of the research. The University of Warwick has robust policies in place to keep your data secure. Anonymised data may be used for future research or impact activities, but only after independent ethical review and with your consent at the outset.

The results may be presented at conferences or published in academic journals. On completion, data will be retained in accordance with the University's data retention policy. For further information, please see the University of Warwick Research Privacy Notice: <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/idc/dataprotection/privacynotices/researchprivacynotice> or contact the Information and Data Compliance Team at infocompliance@warwick.ac.uk.

Who should you contact for further information?

If you have further questions about any aspect of this study, please get in touch with me:

Researcher:

Name: Caroline Horton

Email: caroline.horton@warwick.ac.uk

Research Supervisor

This research project is supervised by Briony Martin. You can contact them to discuss this study:

Email: briony.martin@warwick.ac.uk

Ethical Approval

Any complaint should be addressed to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance

Research & Impact Services

University House, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 8UW

Email: researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk

Tel: 02476 575733

If you wish to raise a complaint about how your personal data has been handled, please contact the Data Protection Officer:

Email: DPO@warwick.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with the response, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet.