PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Hope and freedom in a changing world: the perspectives of people who have experienced domestic abuse

Date: October 2026
Version: 26/03

Study title

Hope and freedom in a changing world: the perspectives of people who have experienced domestic abuse.

We would like to hear from you

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether you wish to take part. Please ask if there is anything that is unclear, or if you would like more information.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being carried out by Dr Sara Donetto at Brighton and Sussex Medical School and Dr Anna Conolly at University of Surrey.

What is the purpose of this study?

Domestic abuse against people of any gender is a complex social problem that can include different forms of physical, emotional or psychological violence, exploitation and/or control. Developing strategies to prevent, identify and respond to domestic abuse and to violence against women and girls is a priority for UK as well as international policy. Researchers have explored domestic abuse from the perspective of its impact on people's health and wellbeing and of the services available to support people who experience it. With this study we want to explore a different perspective. We want to understand the meaning that concepts such as 'hope' and 'freedom' have for people with experience of domestic abuse. We think that exploring how people experience or think of freedom, and how they relate to and sustain hope in the context or aftermath of abuse can help us develop more effective strategies and services to support their recovery.

Why have I been invited to participate?

We are asking people with experience of domestic abuse of any kind (emotional, psychological, physical, financial, legal) to share what hope and freedom mean to them in their daily lives.

What will taking part involve?

If you decide to take part in this study, you can share your views in one or more of the following ways:

- You can choose to have an online conversation (with or without video) or phone call with a member of the research team;
- You can send the research team your thoughts in writing via email or via a web-page (on the web page, you can decide whether to provide your name or remain anonymous);
- You can use the web page to send the research team a scanned drawing, photograph, collage, painting or poem that illustrates how you feel about hope and freedom, with or without an explanation;

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do want to take part you will be asked to tick boxes on an online or printed consent form prior to sharing any information. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time during the study and without giving a reason.

For this study, **we will NOT ask you to share any details of your experience of abuse**. We want to understand what nourishes and sustains hope and what freedom looks and feels like for people with experience of domestic abuse. You are, of course, welcome to share any aspects of your story that you feel are relevant and important to you, but only if you are comfortable with this and entirely at your discretion.

How can I withdraw my data?

If you would like us to delete or not use the information you shared (including any text or artwork), please ask the research team before 28th February 2027 - after this, it will no longer be possible to withdraw your responses before the results are anonymised and used for the final report/publication. You can request deletion either via email or via the study web page (details below).

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits for you in taking part in this study. However, you may find discussing or sharing your views and feelings on hope and freedom a constructive exercise. The study will help further our understanding of how to sustain hope and support freedom for people with experience of domestic abuse in the future.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Taking part in the study will involve spending some time sharing your thoughts or producing text/artwork and submitting it and/or some communication with the research team via email or via the website. Although we will not directly ask you about your experience of abuse, it is possible that discussing hope and freedom may prove distressing and/or upsetting to you, in which case we will stop our research conversation and will stay with you (online) until you feel ok. If you become upset in the process of submitting your text/artwork anonymously, there will be links on the web page where you can ask for support.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you are considering taking part but have more questions or if you wish to take part, you can:

- Contact the research team at the email address at the end of this document; OR
- Contact the research team via the webpage (link and QR code at the end of this document);
- Share your views without having to speak to anyone by going to the study web page and following the relevant link/QR code. This will take you to a page asking you how you would like to share your views and offering you the option to write your thoughts down or upload a file (.doc, .pdf, .jpg, etc).

What will happen to the information collected about me in this study?

If you have shared your name and contact details with the research team, this information will be kept confidential, separate from the anonymised data and known only to the research team. It will be destroyed once the study is completed, unless you have told us you would not mind being contacted in the future for other research studies. The same applies to any audio recordings, if you decide to take part in an interview. If you have told us you do not mind being contacted in the future, your name and contact information will be destroyed after 5 years from completion of the study. Any other information about yourself that you choose to share with the research team (for example, your age, ethnic background, gender identity) will be treated in the same way. Should any file you upload contain 'metadata' (i.e. information about you included in it although not immediately visible), this will be removed by the research team prior to analysis.

Any other data will be anonymised. This means that it will not be possible to link your words, written text, or artwork to you. These anonymised data will be stored on secure University of Sussex servers for 10 years after completion of the study and then destroyed.

Only the study co-leads (Dr Sara Donetto and Dr Anna Conolly) will have access to non-anonymised data and any personal information (e.g. email address, phone number) you might share. Should the information you provide raise any concerns about your (or your child/children's) immediate safety, one of the researchers might need to raise these concerns with the relevant safeguarding agency (999 if we have reason to believe somebody is in immediate danger; or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) helpline if we have reason to believe there is a risk of non-immediate danger to a child). We will discuss this with you first and ask for your consent. However, we may need to report this even if we don't have your consent.

Only anonymised data will appear in presentations and/or publications from the study. If you want us not to include your submitted artwork in any or some of the study outputs, you will be able to state this at the point of submission. We may use some of your words in presentations and publications; these will be fully anonymised. This means your personal details will NOT be included and it will not be possible to identify you.

This research project involves the use of Microsoft Teams if you choose to take part in an interview. Details of the platform's privacy notice can be found here: MS Teams Privacy Policy/Zoom Privacy Policy. All data

collected will be stored securely on a University of Sussex managed system. For more information on how the University of Sussex uses your personal data, see our Privacy notice.

What will happen to the results of this study?

Findings from this study will be presented at academic conferences and in peer-reviewed journals. You can ask the research team to send you a digital copy when available. You can also ask for a summary of the findings in writing.

Who has approved this study?

This research has been approved by the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine – Brighton and Sussex Medical School Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) - Reference: 2026-2567-3611.

Who to contact for further information or if you have any questions or concerns

For further information, please contact the study team at HFproject@bsms.ac.uk or go to the study page by following this **link** or scanning the QR code below.

If you have any concerns relating to this project please contact project lead Sara Donetto at s.donetto@sussex.ac.uk and/or the Science, Engineering and Medicine: Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) Faculty Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) SEMFRECBSMS@sussex.ac.uk

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the University of Sussex Research Governance Office via: rgoffice@sussex.ac.uk.

Please see the University's Privacy Notice in relation to how personal data is processed for research purposes. If you have further questions about how your personal data will be used, you can contact Sara Donetto (s.donetto@sussex.ac.uk) or the University's Data Protection Officer.

Some of the questions or topics of discussion in this research may cause some distress. Please see below a list of resources which can offer help and support.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline: freephone **0808 2000 247**; online chat: https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/.

The Samaritans: freephone 116123; online chat https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/

Galop support for LGBTQ+ victims/survivors of abuse: freephone **0800 999 5428**; online chat at https://www.galop.org.uk/

Insurance

The Universities of Brighton and Sussex have insurance in place to cover their legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

We hope to hear from you.