Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Research Project title
Beyond betrayal: A grounded theory of older adults' experience of, and response to, relationship fraud.

Invitation paragraph
You are being invited to take part in a research project. 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.

What is the purpose of the research project?
This research study seeks to understand how older adults experience and respond to relationship fraud by conducting in-depth interviews with approximately 15 adults aged 65 and over who have been defrauded by someone they trusted (e.g. a friend, family member, partner, professional, or someone posing as such). Fraud within personal relationships can cause deep emotional harm, damaging people's confidence, trust in others, and willingness to connect socially, yet there has been little research on how it affects older adults' response and adaptation following their experience. This 24-month Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) study at the University of Leicester will explore three research questions:

1) How does relationship fraud affect older adults' sense of self and approach to relationships?
2) What processes influence how older adults respond to their experience of relationship fraud?
3) What factors appear important when supporting older adults who have experienced relationship fraud?

Interviews will be conducted in person or online, lasting no longer than 75 minutes, and all data will be written up, with all identifying information changed or removed, and analysed to produce a report focusing on overall themes and experiences.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to take part in this research because you are aged 65 or over and have experienced fraud or deception by someone you knew or had a relationship with (family member, friend, carer, professional, romantic partner or someone you believed you were dealing with through technology). The study focuses on people aged 65 or over because older adults often have unique experiences related to life changes like retirement, bereavement, or increased reliance on others, which can affect how fraud happens and how it impacts people's lives, trust, and relationships. However, very little research has explored these experiences from older adults' own perspectives.

Do I have to take part?
No, it is up to you to decide whether to participate. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used, and you will be asked to provide your consent to participate. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, by contacting the researcher. If you were invited to take part by an organisation, company,

or service and you decide to take part, your participation in this research will have no impact on your future use of the organisation, company, or service.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you agree to take part, you will be contacted to arrange a convenient time for an interview. Before the interview, you will have received this information sheet, a privacy notice explaining how your data is protected, and a consent form via email, giving you time to consider your participation and ask any questions. You will need to sign and return the consent form before the interview takes place. The interview will last up to 75 minutes, with extra time allowed to get to know one another before the interview to help you feel comfortable. You can choose where to meet, either at a neutral, safe location as agreed by you and the researcher, or online using Microsoft Teams. The interview will be audio recorded and written out with all personal information changed or removed. These recordings and written versions will be stored securely on the University of Leicester's encrypted system, accessible only by the researcher and their supervisor, and the data kept for up to six years before being destroyed. You will receive a £20 voucher as thanks for your time.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
Taking part in this research will require a time commitment of up to 2 hours, including the interview itself (up to 75 minutes) and time for conversation before and afterwards. Talking about your experience of fraud may be upsetting or distressing and may bring up difficult emotions like anger, shame, embarrassment, or sadness. You may find yourself re-living painful memories; while the researcher will check in with you regularly and you can pause or stop at any time, the experience may still be emotionally challenging and some people may also feel tired after a lengthy interview, particularly if discussing difficult topics.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
The main benefit of taking part in this research is that you will be contributing to research that could help to improve understanding and support for other older adults who experience relationship fraud, as your experience and perspective may help shape better services, interventions, and policies, since very little is known about how relationship fraud affects older adults' emotions, relationships, and sense of self. Some people find it helpful to talk about their experiences and feel valued when their story is heard, though this is not guaranteed and depends on the individual. You will also receive a £20 voucher as thanks for your time, you will be given information about support services at the end of the interview should you wish to access additional help, and, if you request it, you will also receive a one-page summary of the research findings once the study is complete.

What data will you collect about me?
The main data collected will be an audio recording of your interview, which will then be written out word for word by the researcher, in which you will be asked about your experience of relationship fraud, how it affected you, how you responded, and what support you found helpful or needed. The researcher may also keep field notes and reflections about the interview, which will be stored securely on the university system with paper notes being destroyed after transfer. Additionally, optional basic demographic and contextual information about you (e.g. age, gender, type of fraud experienced, etc) will be collected to understand similarities and differences across participants' experiences. Your

contact details (email or telephone number) will be collected so the researcher can arrange the interview and send you the necessary documents. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. This information will be stored securely, and any identifying details will be removed or changed in the final research write-up to protect your anonymity.

Will what I say in this research project be kept confidential?
All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential, subject to legal limitations. The only circumstance where confidentiality might need to be broken is if the researcher becomes concerned about your safety or the safety of another person. In such cases, the researcher would discuss this with you first, wherever possible, and would notify their supervisor and help you to contact appropriate services such as the national mental health helpline or emergency services. Your name and identifying details will be removed and changed in all research materials. You will be assigned a false name so that you cannot be identified in the final research report, presentations, or publications. All audio recordings and transcripts will be stored securely on the University of Leicester's encrypted R Drive, accessible only to the researcher and their supervisor. For online interviews using Microsoft Teams, although both video and audio are recorded, the video file will be deleted immediately after the interview, and only the audio will be kept. If the researcher makes any paper notes during or after the interview, these will be transferred to the secure university system and then destroyed. All data will be stored for up to six years as required by university policy, after which it will be permanently deleted.

How will you look after the data you collect about me?
We need to ensure that you understand what will happen to the data we collect about you, as well as your legal rights. This document may be accompanied by a separate Privacy Notice providing further details. Please request this from the researcher if you would like further information.

Your normal rights under the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation apply. However, we need to manage your records in specific ways for the research project to be reliable, meaning that we won't always be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you. All audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the University of Leicester's encrypted R Drive. Your name and any identifying information will be removed or changed in all transcripts and research materials. Data analysis will be completed on NVivo software licensed by the University of Leicester, and the data will be kept for up to six years after the study is completed, as required by university policy. After this period, all data will be permanently and securely destroyed, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018) approved by the EU parliament on 14 April 2016 and passed into UK law with effect from 25 May 2018.

You can withdraw from this study at any time, without giving a reason, and without any negative consequences. If you decide to withdraw before or during the interview, you can simply tell the researcher, and the interview will stop immediately. If you decide to withdraw after the interview has taken place, you can contact the researcher using the details provided on this information sheet. If you withdraw from the study within 7 days of your interview, you can request that your data be removed and destroyed. However, after 7 days, it will not be possible to withdraw your data. This is because the researcher will have written up your interview and begun analysing it alongside other participants' data. Once your personal information is removed and integrated into the overall analysis, it will be impossible to identify which information came from you and, therefore, cannot be removed. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the University of Leicester or the researcher. You will still receive the £20 voucher if you complete the interview, even if you later decide to withdraw your data within the 7-day timeframe.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The results will form part of the researcher's thesis for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) at the University of Leicester (completed by September 2027). They will be presented at a research conference at the University of Leicester in September 2027, where other researchers, clinicians, and professionals will hear about what was discussed. The researcher also hopes to publish the findings in a peer-reviewed academic journal so that the research can reach a wide audience of professionals, service providers, and policymakers. If you indicate on your consent form that you would like to receive a summary of the findings, you will be sent a one-page executive summary via email once the research is complete, which will explain the key findings. In all presentations, publications, and summaries, your identity will be protected, with all names and identifying details being removed, and you will not be recognised from the published results.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you are interested in taking part in this research, you can express your interest by contacting the researcher directly using the contact information provided in the poster, on the consent form or on this participant information sheet. Once contacted, the researcher will answer any questions and provide you with the consent form, information sheet and privacy notice, giving you up to two weeks to read through all the information carefully, think about whether you wish to participate, and discuss it with others if you wish. If you wish to proceed, a convenient date, time, and location for your interview will be arranged. You will need to sign and return the informed consent form via email before the interview takes place, which allows you to opt in to a variety of research options by putting your initials in the Yes or No box. This confirms that you understand how your data will be processed, protected and reviewed for research purposes. There is no pressure to take part, and you can change your mind at any time before or during the interview without giving a reason.

Who is organising and funding the research project?
This research project is being conducted by a DClinPsy Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Leicester. It is being supervised by Professor Noelle Robertson from the university's DClinPsy programme, who will oversee the study design, data collection, and analysis to ensure it meets ethical and academic standards. The research meets the requirements of the University of Leicester and was reviewed and approved by the

university's Research Ethics Committee (PREC) before participants were recruited. The university is responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted safely, ethically, and in accordance with the UK data protection laws and professional guidelines for psychological research.

What if something goes wrong?
In the very unlikely event of you being harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

Who has reviewed the research project?
This research project has been approved by the University of Leicester Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information
For further information on the study, **please contact Shannon Edwards, Trainee Clinical Psychologist, by email at se220@leicester.ac.uk.**

Advice/guidance cannot be given as part of this study. To raise any concerns or queries about the way in which this research project has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@le.ac.uk.

If you require more GDPR data protection information, then you can access this via the University's Information Assurance Services:

Information Assurance Services
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester
LE1 7RH
T: +44 (0)116 229 7945
E: dpo@le.ac.uk
W: https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ias

Thank you
Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research. Your willingness to share your experience is greatly valued and could make a real difference in helping to improve understanding and support for others who have been through similar situations.