



Department  
for Education

**Growing** **Up**  
in the 2020s

# Young person memory and thinking tasks



The Growing up in the 2020s study aims to understand young people's experiences and development as they go through secondary school, and beyond. **In addition to answering questions in the interview, to get a fuller picture we would like the young person to do two activities involving memory and thinking skills.** These tasks should take around 15 minutes to complete in total.

The young person's participation in these activities is **extremely valuable for the study.** Adolescence is a crucial stage of the lifespan. The two tasks in this study will help researchers understand more about how brain development during adolescence interacts with their experiences and support at school and elsewhere, and how this leads to different outcomes and levels of wellbeing. Our interviewers have been given special training to carry out these tasks.

This leaflet explains more about these activities.



# What are the tasks?

## 1. Memory task

This activity looks at the young person's memory skills. The interviewer will read out a list of numbers and then ask the young person to repeat the numbers, but backwards.

The length of the number sequence gets longer as the activity goes on.

## 2. Colour-word task

This task measures the ability to ignore information that is not relevant to the task at hand (called 'cognitive inhibition'). The interviewer will show the young person images that contain either coloured squares or colour words and will ask them to either name the colours or to read the words out loud as fast as they can. Sometimes, colour words will be printed in a mismatching ink colour (e.g. the word "red" will be printed in green ink instead of red ink), and the young person will be asked to ignore the word and name the colour of the ink.

**Please note that these tasks are not administered as diagnostic tests and the young person's performance cannot be used for diagnostic purposes.** The tasks have been developed for and are widely used in research with young people. **They are intended to be an engaging and positive experience for young people.**

# How the tasks will be done

These tasks will take about 15 minutes.

**Ideally, they should be carried out in a quiet and well-lit room, away from distractions and disruptions.** If possible, the interviewer would like to sit at a table with the young person to carry out the exercises.

In order to get a true reflection of young person's ability, **we would ask parents or carers to avoid interrupting the task or prompting the young person for an answer**, so that the response we record is their own. It is important that the tasks are carried out in a standard way so we can compare results across all the young people in the study.



## Feedback

Our interviewers cannot give specific feedback about how the young person is doing. This is because these tasks are designed to measure the range of skills that all young people around that age have, rather than the ability of each individual.

## Can all young people take part?

We would like all young people in the study to take part in these activities should they wish to. However, one or both tasks may not be appropriate or may be particularly challenging for young people who have

impaired vision or hearing ability (one task requires young people to respond to images and recognise colours; the other requires them to listen to numbers being read out by the interviewer).

**Your interviewer can explain more. Please ask them if you have any questions or concerns.**

## Does the young person have to take part?

No, the young person does not have to take part. With their parent's or carer's permission, the interviewer will ask the young person if they are happy they take part.

**Doing the activities is voluntary and they can change their mind at any time.** If they start the tasks, they can choose to stop at any point, without giving any reason. Each one is relatively short, and if the young person finds it too difficult, the interviewer will stop the exercise.



## Contact

If you have any questions, please ask your interviewer. If you have questions after they have left, you can get in touch with the research team by calling on freephone **0800 652 4574** or email **gu2020s@natcen.ac.uk**. You can also visit our website **growingupinthe2020s.org.uk** where we have a section with Frequently Asked Questions.

