We have been busy on the study finishing off the age 9-10 year assessment wave. We’ve really enjoyed seeing so many of our First Steps families here in our Centre in Birkenhead, with some of you travelling far and wide to visit us. Other families have welcomed us into their homes or completed postal questionnaires for us. We’ve had such a fantastic response from mothers, fathers, children and teachers and we are incredibly grateful to you all for your time and efforts!

We have completed 14 waves of the assessment so far, all funded by the UK Medical Research Council. Your children are now turning 11 and 12 years old and making the incredibly exciting—but also sometimes stressful—transition from primary to secondary school. With this in mind, we have secured local funding to run a brief postal/online questionnaire phase during this time. This will allow us to get an update on how your children are progressing during this very important time in their lives. We hope to get funding to see your child again in adolescence and it would be great to hear from you about the issues that are concerning you.

We will be sending questionnaires to First Steps mothers/primary caregivers, and we are hoping that the study children will also complete a brief set of questionnaires for us. The children have shown us that they can do this in their age 9-10 assessment and they will receive their own £10 voucher to thank them for their efforts. You and your child can opt to complete the questionnaire by post or we now have the option to fully complete it online (and you don’t have to both choose the same method). The child online version questionnaire has audio recorded instructions to reduce the burden of reading, or if you feel that your child will have difficulty completing the questionnaire due to language, reading difficulties or any other issues, then we can arrange to support them to complete it. A member of the team can visit you at home or support them completing it over the phone. We will be contacting families to check if you are happy to take part and find out your postal or online preference, so please do let us know if we don’t have your up to date contact details, especially email addresses.

Our team, led by Professor Helen Sharp, will use the video-recordings of WCHADS parents and their baby when he/she was 6 months old to create an observational measure of mother-infant interaction which is brief and reliably predicts some aspects of child development. We will be able to tell which aspects of the interaction are most relevant to record depending on how highly they are associated with data collected from WCHADS families in the follow up visits at ages 1 and 5, such as their children’s emotional and behavioural development.

The First Steps study is going to help the NHS!

We are very excited to let you know about a new project we are involved with.

Why? Mental health difficulties in pregnancy or the year after childbirth are a major public health concern. NHS England recently invested £365 million to improve parents’ access to specialist perinatal care. In those specialist teams they need to reliably assess the early parent-infant relationship.
A time of change in your lives
All of the first steps children are now turning 11 and 12 years old and making the move to secondary school!
Around half of you will have started secondary school this September 2019, and the second half will have just moved up to year 6.
Most of you are the eldest child in your family and the first one to start secondary school!

Exciting opportunities in secondary school:
- More after school activities and clubs
- More subjects and something for everyone (e.g. separate sciences, design & technology, languages, drama, cooking)
- Making new friends
- More freedom and independence

Starting secondary school can feel scary as well as exciting. Just remember, it is new for everyone and many children will be finding it stressful, even if they don’t show it.

First steps study
Your age 9-10 assessment with us
We saw over 700 of you whilst you were aged 9 or 10 for an assessment, either in our study base in Birkenhead or in your home.
We asked you questions about how you spend your spare time, took height and weight measurements and asked you to complete some different computer games.

We are so grateful for your time and all your hard work, thank you so much!

What’s next?!
Now that you are aged 11 or 12 we would like you to answer some more questions for us. This time we’re asking you to do this on your own from home, by either filling in a paper questionnaire or filling it in online on a computer/tablet/mobile. Your parent can help you decide which is the best way for you. Of course, if you have any questions or need help from us then we can speak to you on the phone or come out to help you.

You’ll receive a £10 shopping voucher to thank you for taking part! And we’ll look forward to seeing you again in the future for an assessment with us in adolescence.

KIDS COMPETITION TIME!
We think it’s about time we had a new logo for the First Steps Study! It’s been a long time now since you were babies and we’d like to change our logo to something more grown up and relevant to you becoming teenagers. So we’re holding a competition for the First Steps children to design a new logo for us.

The winning entry will receive £30 in shopping vouchers! Good luck & we look forward to seeing your designs!

Competition top tips
- Use bright colours
- Make the logo relevant to our study on child development—something about growing up or becoming teenagers
- The competition deadline is 21st December and we’ll decide the winner over Christmas

Paper has been provided for you to create your designs on (or you can use your own). Send back either via post or scan or send a photo of the picture to our email. Don’t forget to include your name and address!

Getting in touch
Don’t forget to help us stay in touch with you by letting us know of any change in address, phone number or email address. You can call us on 0151 650 5490, text us on 07956297412, email us at first.steps@liv.ac.uk or write to us at First Steps Study, The Lauries Centre, 142 Claughton Road, Birkenhead, CH41 6EY.

Don’t forget to look at our website: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/institute-of-life-and-human-sciences/schools-and-departments/department-of-psychological-sciences/research/first-steps/about/