At this point in the study, we are still interested in how the children react to new situations and new people, now that they are a bit older. To study this, we would like to invite you to another birthday party. As before, two other parents in the study and their two-year-olds will be there as well. The parents will be able to stay with their children at all times.

We are going to hold the party in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University, where you came last year. Once again, we will introduce some games and activities that will allow us to find out how children at this age react to new situations. We are particularly interested to see whether some two-year-olds find new situations more difficult to cope with than others do, and so we have introduced a few challenges into the situation. Just like last year, your child will meet new people and will be asked to play games with the researchers. Some of the toys and games may be slightly challenging. In general, though, we expect the birthday parties to be happy, festive occasions.

The Playroom

We have tried to make the playroom as comfortable and safe as possible, and we have redecorated the small rooms to be more suitable for two-year-olds. There will be a number of different toys for your child to play with.

What Happens During the Party

As before, you can either drive to the School of Psychology or come in a taxi that we book for you. Members of our research team will take you to one of the small rooms to begin with, where we can tell you more about this part of the study. We will start out by playing some games with each child individually, to see what sort of skills the children have learnt by the time they are two years old. Then we will bring all three families together in the playroom. This year’s party has an ‘Animals’ theme and once
again our special friend Big Ted will be making a brief visit to the party. The children will be shown different toys and asked to play some games. We will finish up with a Lucky Dip and a snack.

How We Study Your Child’s Reactions to the Birthday Party

We will be watching a birthday party through a one-way window. Once again, if your partner or any other member of your family or friend wants to come along, they are very welcome. One of our researchers will be in the playroom with you, giving you instructions and getting the children to try out different toys and play some games. We are very interested in how the children react to this new situation, on the inside as well as the outside. Some toddlers take things in their stride, but others might find birthday parties more challenging.

To get a better idea of how different children react to new situations, we are once again going to record their heart rate, using the Actigraph monitors. We are also going to see whether some children are more likely to produce the kinds of hormones that help them deal with challenging situations. As before, we will collect samples of your child’s saliva, which can then be analysed for the hormones that help people cope with new situations. It is important to measure heart rate and saliva as well as simply observing the babies’ behaviour, because even two-year-olds cannot always tell us what they are experiencing. It is important to try to find out how they might be feeling on the inside.

We expect that the children will find the parties to be enjoyable occasions. However, if you feel at any point that your child is getting upset, we can stop, and take a break, or end the party at any point. We will end the party with a snack and presents, so that every child goes home on a happy note. Please bring a snack that your child will like to have at the end of the party. We do hope that you enjoy the birthday party, and enjoy meeting some of the other parents and children who are taking part in the study.

If you want any more information, please do not hesitate to contact Professor Dale Hay, School of Psychology, Cardiff University on 02920 876191 or 02920 876503 (CCDSteam@cardiff.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. We hope that you will continue to help us with this important study.