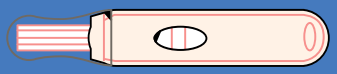
# Research Update

## DIGITAL DC DEC 25



It has been a busy year for the Digital Donor Conception study. In 2025, Leah, and the project, moved institutions from The University of Sheffield to Manchester Metropolitan University. In the summer, we had to say goodbye to our brilliant researcher, Lexie Davis, who has taken up a new position at Goldsmiths but who continues to collaborate with Leah on publications. Over the year, we have moved from the data collection phase of the research to a focus on analysis and knowledge exchange. As always, we are grateful for the support and collaboration of a wide range of individuals and organisations - without whom the research would not be possible. If you would like to know more about what we have been able to do this year with your support, read on!

### Research Progress

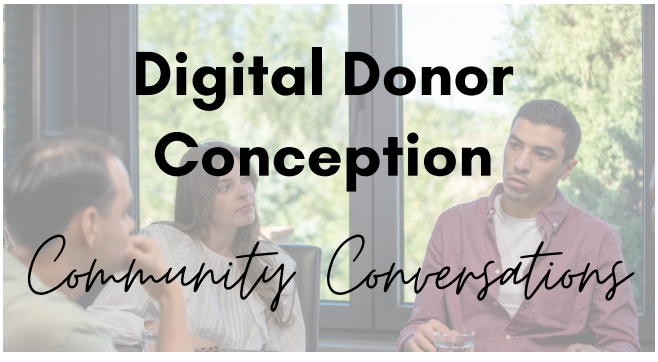
Data collection and initial analysis is now completed for phases 1, 2 and 3. This includes interviews with 14 professionals & 30 (intended) parents and 19 donors via informal donor conception (IDC). Interviews were supplemented with questionnaire responses from 9 additional donors and 17 (intended) parents. We also analysed how IDC was described on the websites of 12 UK fertility clinics and 8 other organisations with a remit relating to donor conception. In addition, we conducted 'walk through' analysis of 3 websites and 5 apps used for IDC and observed 3 public Facebook groups which facilitate sperm donations in the UK.

We are currently focussed on phase 4 of the research which involves developing the theoretical and practical implications of our findings. As part of this, we aim to share our findings with communities and organisations with an interest in IDC, to gather their feedback and responses and take account of this in our analysis, outputs and recommendations.

### Digital DC Community Conversations

As part of phase 4 of the project, Leah is organising a series of (mostly online) conversations with individuals who can help us to interpret our findings and translate them into useful outputs and actions.

Currently we are focussed on speaking with donor conceived adults, particularly but not only those with LGBTQ and/or solo parents. We will open these up to other groups in time.




You can read more about the conversations here or email Leah for more information.

*If you know anyone who might like to take part, please do share this advert with them.*

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# DIGITAL DC UPDATE DEC 25

## Move to Manchester Metropolitan University

In February, Leah took up a new post in the School of Sociology and Criminology at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Here, she is international lead for, and member of, the research group *Contemporary Intimacies, Sexualities and Genders* and co-leads the second year undergraduate module, *Intimate Relationships and Personal Life*.






## Presentations and Conferences

This year, Leah and Lexie have presented findings from the project at:

- DCUK's Annual Meet up (London)
- International Symposium: Queer Kinship Studies (Manchester)
- 'Courage calls to courage': A one-day collaborative conference on women's rights and a just future for women (Manchester)
- Bringing Men into the Spotlight: Men, Masculinities and Reproduction (Brocher Foundation, Geneva,)
- Third party assisted reproduction: Making connections across borders (Manchester)
- British Sociological Association Annual Conference (Manchester)

Please reach out if you are interested in Leah and/or Lexie sharing our research at your event or organisation.

## Research Findings

The research has produced a huge and rich dataset which will take time to fully analyse . However, some key findings are:

- Informal donor conception encompasses a very wide range of practices, from donation to close friends up to quasi-anonymous arrangements.
- Motivations for using IDC over clinical routes are also very varied and are not limited to financial reasons.
- Experiences shared with us included those which were highly positive and negative. However, more often, experiences were complex, nuanced and could change over time.

Some areas which we explore in our developing outputs and discussions are:

- The different ways in which donors and recipients come to know each other in IDC and how digital platforms shape this process.
- Interactions between clinical and informal practices of donor conception.
- How donors and (intended) parents experience the legal framing of IDC in the UK.

## Publications and Outputs

Gilman, L. and Davis, A. (accepted) 'Donor profiles, spreadsheets and video calls: Un/known donor conception in the digital age'. *Human Fertility.* Available open access soon.

Submission to NHS England Evidence Review on LGBT Health (available here)

Gilman (June 2024) 'Moving beyond a "just say no" approach to informal donor conception' *Bionews*. Available here.

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