Experiences of Online Sperm Donation

Information for Participants: People who are looking for sperm online

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About the Project

This project seeks to understand more about online sperm donation, including the experiences of people who are looking for sperm donors online. The research has two broad aims:

1. First, we want to explore the relationships in online sperm donation, what influences people's experiences and what the impacts are
2. Based on these findings, we would then like to explore the imagined ideal futures of those involved in online sperm donation and work with them to create the changes that are important to them

The research is led by Dr Rhys Turner-Moore at Leeds Beckett University and is a collaboration with researchers at Universities of Manchester, Sheffield, Sussex and West of Scotland, and Pillowfort Productions. The project has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. This research builds upon our previous work on people's experiences of online sperm donation.

Please read the information on this sheet carefully before deciding to take part. A brief, audio-visual, version of this information sheet can be found on our website www.aiconfidential.co.uk

Who should take part?

We are looking for people who are searching for a sperm donor using websites (e.g. Pride Angel, Pollen Tree, Donor Daddy) or social networking sites (e.g. sperm donation groups on Facebook) in the hope of becoming pregnant.

We are looking for people aged 18+ who are living in the U.K and have started, or are thinking about, looking for a sperm donor online (i.e., are within three months of looking for a donor online and not currently pregnant).

If you are looking for a donor online but intend to be treated with the sperm in a clinic, or if you are going to be using a known donor (e.g. friend or family member and not someone found online) then this project is not suitable for you to take part in.

I have a partner, can they take part in your research?

Yes! If you feel comfortable with us doing so, we would really like to hear about the experiences and perspectives of your partner too. If your partner would like to take part in the research then they can contact Lauren Smith for more information:

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l.m.smith@leedsbeckett.ac.uk. More details about what would be asked of them are detailed below in the **'What will it involve section'**.

Can the donor that I/we conceive with (i.e., the person who donated sperm us to become pregnant) take part in your research?

Yes! If you feel comfortable with us doing so, we would really like to hear about the experiences and perspectives of the donor that you conceive with as well. We can speak to you more about this at the end of the first interview if you decide to take part. If the donor would like to take part in the research then they can contact Lauren Smith for more information: l.m.smith@leedsbeckett.ac.uk. More details about what would be asked of them are detailed below in the **'What will it involve section'**.

What will it involve?

So that we can get an in-depth insight into your journey, we would like you to be involved in the project for two years.

Over this time, if you are the person who plans to carry the child you will be interviewed three times by the research team (Francesca and/or Georgie): the start, mid-point and end of the two years. If you are the partner of the person who plans to carry the child, we will interview you twice: once at the start and once at the end of the two years.

If you conceive with a donor, and feel comfortable with us doing so, we will interview them twice: once shortly after conception and again at the end of the two years.

We will travel to you to conduct the first interview. This will be at a mutually convenient location (e.g., at your home, somewhere local to you). After that, the interviews will be online.

The interview will take up to 1.5 hours and comprise two parts. First you will be invited to share your life story, talking the researcher through your life up to the point of the first interview (or since the previous interview). The researcher will then ask you follow-up questions about topics covered in your life story. Whilst these follow-up questions will be led by your story, we may cover topics such as families, parenthood, how/when online sperm donation became important in your life, the ups and downs of online sperm donation for you so far, and the impacts of these.

Second, we will explore who or what has influenced your online sperm donation journey so far. To help with this, we will ask you to write these onto a visual image which covers individual, relationship, community, and social influences, and then talk through this with you. We do not expect you to share personal information about other people in your interviews. Rather, we are interested in the types of people/relationships in general that have influenced your journey.

Donor interaction logs

We will also ask you to write down your interactions with online sperm donors from the start of the two years until you conceive. We will provide you with a template to record anonymous information about these interactions. For example, the date of the interaction, mode of interaction (e.g., online chat/phone/in-person), and a summary of what happened (with the option of saying more, if you want to). This is to help us understand how people

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looking for sperm and people donating sperm make and build connections with each other. We do not expect you to share identifying information about donors as part of your interaction log.

Facebook Group (optional extra)

We want to set up a secret Facebook group which only the researcher and the other participants can see and have access to. We will use this group to keep in touch with you throughout the project and you might like to use it to connect with other people who have sourced sperm online to become pregnant who are taking part in our project.

Whatever is posted in the group will remain entirely confidential and will not be shared beyond the group. It will be a place where people who are all going through a similar experience can talk to and support each other, without having to worry about other people who might not understand.

Once the project comes to an end, the researcher will 'unfriend' the participants and leave the Facebook group. If the participants wish for the group to remain active, the researcher will hand over the moderation of the group to the participants.

Should you choose to take part, more information will be provided on the guidelines and confidentiality policy for the Facebook group. You can request this by emailing l.m.smith@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

If, after reading the guidelines and confidentiality policy for the Facebook group, you don't want to be part of the Facebook group but still wish to take part in the research, then you can remain anonymous to the other participants. You do not have to join the Facebook group in order to take part in the research.

Project workshops (optional extra)

At the end of our project, we will invite you, and your partner if you have one, to take part in four one-day workshops. In the first workshop, we will share our research findings with you. This will be done through a set of comics and drawings produced by a graphic artist. We will ask you to reflect on these research findings and think about the 'ideal future' for online sperm donation and what changes are important to you. In the remaining workshops, we will plan and do activities that will hopefully lead to this change, and log what changes happen.

The four workshops will take place over approximately seven months. The first workshop will be in Leeds; the remaining workshops will be in Leeds or online. We will provide you with more detailed information, such as the dates and times of these workshops, at a later date if you choose to take part.

Will I be reimbursed for my time?

You, your partner (if you have one) and the donor that you conceive with (if they are interviewed) will receive £20 each per interview as a thank you for your contribution. We will also reimburse any childcare costs up to £30 per interview (with receipts).

We will give each person who takes part in the optional project workshops £40 per workshop as a thank you for their contribution. We can also provide reimbursement for childcare, up to £60 per workshop day, travel, up to £100, and one overnight stay if needed (up to £80) (with receipts).

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Will I remain anonymous and will my data be treated confidentially?

At the first interview, you will be asked to choose a fake name which will be used in any write-up of the interviews so that you cannot be identified.

Each interview will be audio-recorded and a typewritten account of what was said will be made: you will only ever be referred to by the fake name you have chosen, and any identifiers (location etc.) will also be changed so that nothing you say can be traced back to you. The recordings you have produced will be stored electronically in a password protected folder and deleted at the end of the project. The visual image/drawing you have produced and your consent form will be stored in a locked cabinet at Leeds Beckett University and scanned and uploaded as a PDF to a password-protected folder on our OneDrive. The interaction logs that you have completed will be stored electronically in a password protected folder and deleted at the end of the project. If you have completed these by hand, the interaction logs will be stored in a locked cabinet at Leeds Beckett University and scanned and uploaded as a PDF to a password-protected folder on our OneDrive.

All the information that you provide to us will be kept strictly confidential. The only time that we would reveal anything to an appropriate authority would be if you divulged information that we feel could potentially put you or another person at risk of serious harm, or if you divulged information about previously having seriously harmed someone and you provided identifying information about that person. We would decide as a research team if this needed to be done or not, and we would let you know first if we needed to speak to someone else about what you have said and why.

How will my data be used?

Summaries of the overall findings are likely to be shared in a variety of ways, such as our project and institutional websites, newsletters and blog; media articles and podcasts; and short reports for key stakeholders. Many of these will be available via our project website, so that you can read them if you would like.

The findings from the research may also be presented at seminars and conferences and published in academic journals and books. At no point will participants be referred to by their real name and where direct quotations or the visual image from the interviews are used, any identifying information will be changed so that these also remain anonymous.

The anonymised findings overall (not for you specifically) may also be shared with members of our consultation group, made up of people who have been through the same process of online sperm donation. We might ask them for their feedback and interpretation on our findings before they are written up for journal articles.

Your interview recording, anonymised typewritten account of what you said, and visual image that you produce may also be shared with our graphic artist who will produce visual representations of our research findings. The graphic artist will be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement, meaning that they will be prohibited from sharing your data with anyone outside of the research team.

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Finally, it is a requirement of our funder (the Economic and Social Research Council; ESRC) that we archive your anonymous research data with the UK Data Service. You will not be identifiable when we archive this data and researchers outside of the research team will have to ask the permission of our Principal Investigator, Dr Rhys Turner-Moore, before accessing it. No personal information (e.g., names or contact details) will be archived with the UK Data Service. It is possible to opt out of data archiving for your individual data, if you want to.

Is taking part voluntary and can I change my mind?

Yes - taking part is completely voluntary and you can choose to stop taking part at any time. You can also choose to not answer any question without providing a reason. You will be reminded at every interview that you can choose to stop taking part in the study at any time, and that you have the right to withdraw your data for up to 3 months after each interview.

If you wish to stop taking part at any time, then you should email Lauren Smith (l.m.smith@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) to let them know.

Prior to each interview, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form which states that by signing the form and taking part in the interviews, you are agreeing to your data being used in the project.

If you wish to withdraw your data from the project, then you should email Lauren Smith with the fake name you chose and let them know which parts of your data you wish to withdraw – the typewritten accounts of the interviews, your visual image of who or what has influenced your online sperm donation journey, your donor interaction logs, or all of these. Lauren will then delete the data that they have pertaining to that fake name.

Will there be any other opportunities to get involved in your research in the future?

Yes! If you would like to be contacted about future research opportunities, you can tell us on the consent form.

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