

## CHILDREN'S VOICES IN SURROGACY LAW



**We are asking you if you would allow your child to be involved in a research project which will listen to the views of children born through international surrogacy!**

### **What is the project?**

Children's Voices in Surrogacy Law is a project which collects and analyses the views of children aged 8-18 on surrogacy law and reform. Two phases of this research have been completed. It is organised by Dr Katherine Wade (University of Bristol), Professor Kirsty Horsey (University of Kent) and Dr Zaina Mahmoud (University of Liverpool).

Phase 1 spoke to children with experience of surrogacy in the UK (children born through surrogacy and children of surrogates). Phase 2 involved children from schools who did not have experience of surrogacy.

### **What is next?**

The team are now recruiting for Phase 3, which will speak to children born through international surrogacy who are living in the UK, since the views of this group of children have not been included in the debate! To participate, children must have been born via surrogacy in a country outside the UK, and be aged between 8 and 17 years old.

### **Why is this research being done?**

This research aims to bring the views of children into the ongoing debates about surrogacy law reform both in the UK and internationally. Sometimes assumptions are made about how children experience surrogacy or how it impacts them. There has been a recent trend to include the views of those with lived experience into reform agendas in the UK through listening to surrogates, intended parents and surrogacy organisations but traditionally, the views of children have been overlooked.

### **What has happened with the research?**

The previous two phases of this research were successful in reaching a wide audience and having impact. Phase 1 was cited in the Law Commissions' 2023 Report on Surrogacy, which made recommendations to the government for new surrogacy laws. It was also cited in a Nuffield Briefing Paper on Surrogacy (2023). The team are established academic researchers at leading UK Universities, with strong backgrounds in using empirical methods in law reform and were able to disseminate this report to a very wide international audience, using contacts at the government, the APPG on Surrogacy, the Council of Europe and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. They also disseminated the findings at two major international conference in Copenhagen and Sierre in 2023 and at several national conferences. They released their research on their website in report form and also as a Digital Art Wall, animation, blogs and podcasts. All of these are available here: [Children's Voices in Surrogacy Law | \(bristol.ac.uk\)](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/childrens-voices-in-surrogacy-law/).

### **What does it involve?**

Phase 1 and 2 of the research involved 49 children and involved focus groups of 2-5 children at a time within a 2-year age range. Data was collected using bespoke playing cards games and artwork. The

themes discussed were legal parenthood, acceptable contributions to surrogates and access to origin information, as well as general questions about what surrogacy means to them and how they navigate the topic in their everyday lives.

Phase 3 will involve either focus groups or individual/sibling group interviews with similar methods and themes.

**Funding and ethics approval:**

The first parts of the project were funded by the Institute of Medical Ethics (£10,000) and a Research England participatory research grant (University of Leicester, £12,000). Phase 3 is funded by an Impact Development Fund (Division of Law, Society and Social Justice, University of Kent, £2,000) and a Research England Participatory Research Fund (University of Bristol, £11,500). Phase 3 has ethical approval from the Kent Law School Research Ethics Group of the University of Kent (ref no KLS1101/2023).