

Discovering Our Donor Conception as Adults

A Sisters' Selfhood Dialogue

Fiona Darroch & Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

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Why This Story Matters

- Personal stories reflect broader global lived experiences.
- Emotional, ethical, and legal implications for donor-conceived individuals.
- Highlights the importance of identity, transparency, and child-centred family law.

Brief History of Donor Conception

- First donor insemination: UK (1790s).
- First reported pregnancy: USA (1850s).
- Rapid advances in the 20th century: sperm/egg donation, freezing, surrogacy.
- Historically secretive and unregulated; donor anonymity prioritised.

The Shift – Moving From Secrecy to Transparency

- Rise of DNA testing & online support reshaping the landscape.
- Donor-conceived people advocating for access to identity and relationships.
- Some countries now require open donor information (e.g., Sweden, UK, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Australia).

Relearning Family Relationships

- New definitions of family: inclusive of genetic ties and emotional bonds.
- Building new sibling relationships requires effort, patience, and respect.

Ethical and Legal Complexities

- Disclosure still varies by jurisdiction and is often left to parental discretion.
- Ongoing tensions: child's right to know vs. parental privacy.
- Need for consistent, ethical legal frameworks that prioritise children.

So What? Now What?

- Donor-conceived people: Seek community, share your story in safe spaces.
- Professionals: Listen deeply; avoid assumptions.
- Families: Early, transparent, and supportive disclosure and ongoing discussion.
- Language Matters:
 - Words shape meaning and relationships.
 - Terms like “donor” can diminish genetic connections.
 - Advocate for precise, respectful language: “genetic parent,” not “donor.”

The Need for Systemic Change

- Centralised donor registers and regulated fertility industry practices.
- The right to medical history, genetic identity, and relationships with genetic family are human rights.
- A call for international cooperation, especially in cross-border donor conception.

Concluding Thoughts

- Adult discovery of donor conception brings lifelong identity and selfhood challenges.
- Children's rights to identity, transparency, and family relationships must guide family law reforms.
- Our stories are offered to support others navigating similar paths.

Reference: Darroch, F., & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2025). Discovering our donor conception as adults: A sisters' selfhood dialogue. In *Children's Right to Identity, Selfhood and International Family Law* (pp. 75-84). Edward Elgar Publishing.