



Surrogacy UK

Welcome to Surrogacy UK: for Surrogate Mothers

A **very warm welcome** to Surrogacy UK. We have put together this guide to explain our organisation and to describe how Surrogacy UK can support you through every stage of a surrogacy journey.

We hope that you find it useful, and that it may be the first step on your journey towards making a couple's **dreams come true**.

You'll find full details on how to **join** Surrogacy UK, and there are contact details at the end. **Please get in touch** with us if you have any questions you'd like to ask.



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First things first!

We hope you enjoy reading this, and that it helps you work out whether surrogacy, and Surrogacy UK, are for you. Meantime, we’d love to hear from you! If you would like to have a confidential chat about Surrogacy UK, the support we can offer you, and our joining process, then **please contact Jayne or Sarah**. Both are **experienced surrogate mothers** and would love to talk things through with you.

Contact Jayne on 05601 491 284 and jayne.frankland@surrogacyuk.org, or contact Sarah on 01772 462 660 and sarah.wisniewski@surrogacyuk.org



About Surrogacy UK

Thank you for taking the time to think about joining Surrogacy UK and **becoming a surrogate**. You are thinking of embarking on a journey that we know can be wonderful and joyous for everyone involved. We also know that this journey requires a good understanding of the **emotional, legal and financial implications**, and is best done with the peer support of people who know what to expect.

This is where Surrogacy UK comes in; our aim is to provide social events and an on-line community that **allow surrogates and intended parents to get to know each other**.



We also provide a **network of peer support** that helps you to handle the ups and downs that are an inevitable part of any surrogacy journey.

You are thinking about doing something extraordinary in order to make a couple's dreams come true. Our aim is to support you through that process so that **your surrogacy journey** is as wonderful as it can, and should, be.

Who are we?

Surrogacy UK was founded in September 2002 by two Surrogate Mothers, **Carol O'Reilly and Liz Stringer**. They wanted to create an organization that reflected their values and which allowed them to share their experiences of surrogacy with others: the pitfalls as well as the joys. Both are still active within the organisation. All Surrogacy UK members, past and present, and the many children born as a result of Carol and Liz's vision and compassion, owe them a deep gratitude for the enormous contribution that they have made.

Surrogacy UK is a not for profit organisation, run by its members - each year we elect a committee to run the organisation and help it move forward. All the membership fees are used within the organisation for running the website, organising workshops, providing peer support, visiting surrogates and so on.

Some terms explained

You'll find some terms used throughout the guide. "**Surrogates**" are women who are interested in helping IPs fulfil their dreams to become parents by carrying a child for them. "**Intended Parents**" (also called "**IPs**") are couples who have not been able to have a child themselves, and who are considering surrogacy as a way to complete their family.



Why Surrogacy UK?

- ✓ **Our motto is ‘families through friendship’:** we believe that the smoothest surrogacy journeys are those that are based on friendship. In our experience a surrogacy journey has the very best chance of being a wonderfully positive experience for those involved if they invest the time to get to know each other, and to discuss issues that may crop up during their journey.
- ✓ **We are founded and run by people with experience of surrogacy.** Our members are also the people who run the organisation, so we are constantly evolving to support new members in the best possible way.
- ✓ **We ensure that all our members – Surrogates and IPs – have a full understanding of what surrogacy involves and the legal background to surrogacy.** All our members have to undertake checks, criminal and medical, to become Members. We also require all potential Members to attend a Surrogacy UK information session.
- ✓ **Surrogacy UK offers advice and peer support:** Over the years Surrogacy UK has built up a vast amount of knowledge about surrogacy, and a trusted peer support structure: you can feel confident that in coming to Surrogacy UK you are in good hands. As a Surrogacy UK member you will receive the support and understanding of your fellow members, and will benefit from their wide experience through:
 - **Peer Support Workers:** Members have access to a peer support worker who understands the ups and downs of a surrogacy journey, and will be able to help you through it. Your peer support worker will herself be a surrogate who has worked with intended parents to make their dreams come true.
 - **Information Sharing:** We take every opportunity to host workshops and information sharing sessions on topics of interest during the Spring Conference and the October AGM. Workshops throughout the day offer support and advice for surrogates and their partners.
 - **Mediation Service:** Should a surrogacy arrangement run into difficulties, Surrogacy UK offers a mediation service. The aim is to help everyone involved to understand the others’



Jen’s story: “Why did I decide to become a surrogate? This is actually a really difficult question to answer! Surrogacy has been a subject that has interested me for a number of years. We had our first child in 2002, parenthood was such a fantastic experience, we treasured every moment. When we decided to try for a second child, we struggled to conceive. After many inconclusive tests and about 4 years later we finally succeeded. Those were 4 very difficult years of not knowing if we would ever be able to have any more children. That is when the subject of surrogacy first entered my mind. Knowing what we went through, and knowing that so many people are in the same situation.

We have since gone on (very easily) to have a third child. We have now completed our family, and are very happy. We feel it is now the right time to help others’ dreams of children become a reality. I can understand the difficulty that some couples/families go through to become parents, having been in that situation. I feel that everyone deserves the right to experience the completeness that a child brings. Everyone deserves the opportunity to experience the joys of parenthood. This is my reason for wanting to be a surrogate.

Other people may have their own reasons but ultimately it is all about wanting to help others who, for whatever the reason, cannot carry their own child. After all, I am 28, I have had my family, my uterus is no longer of use to me, so why not let someone else use it?! For me it is not an amazing thing to do, it’s just the right thing to do. Our Intended Parents are so important to us, they are our best friends and family, and this makes our journey together that much more special.” (Jen)



point of view, and help them to come to a mutually agreeable resolution, fully understanding their rights and responsibilities towards a child and each other.

- **Message boards:** You don't have to be a member of Surrogacy UK to join the message boards but Members have access to dedicated areas to discuss their surrogacy journey in private.

Surrogacy UK is recognised by the Department of Health, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) and the British Medical Association. All information held by Surrogacy UK is held in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Starting at the beginning: about surrogacy

What is surrogacy?

Surrogacy is when a woman carries a baby for a couple who are unable to conceive or carry a child themselves.

Usually the intended mother cannot conceive, or else carry a child to term, due to a **medical problem**. Common reasons why Intended Parents may look at surrogacy are:

- Recurrent miscarriage in spite of all possible treatment
- Repeated failure of IVF treatment
- Premature menopause often as a result of cancer treatment
- A hysterectomy, or an absent or abnormal uterus

Since April 2010 it has been possible for **same-sex couples** to undertake surrogacy in the UK, and Surrogacy UK immediately reflected this legislative change in our membership rules.

Is surrogacy legal in the UK?

Yes, but:

- No third party should be involved on a commercial basis – i.e receive fees for 'brokering' a surrogacy arrangement
- Advertising for a surrogate is not allowed, nor is advertising to be a surrogate
- The surrogate can only receive payment to cover her expenses



What are the types of surrogacy?

There are two types of surrogacy, 'straight' and 'host'.

Straight (or traditional) surrogacy

Eileen's story: "We joined SUK after having several miscarriages and stillbirths. My hospital was very anti surrogacy so encouraged us to keep trying ourselves and we were so incredibly lucky to eventually have a child after our sixth pregnancy. But then we tried to have a second child and had two more pregnancies both of which ended in still births. After the last one, which was twins, I was extremely ill myself so was told that I couldn't carry another pregnancy. It was at that stage we turned to surrogacy and found SUK.

What I realise now is that we would have been accepted for surrogacy earlier because of all our losses. In many ways I wish I had realised that sooner but we are so fortunate to have our little daughter and so there can be no regrets. She is our world.

I have found SUK to be such a wonderful friendly group. It is so comforting at times to be amongst others who truly understand the pain of infertility. I joined hoping to find a surrogate and we have been blessed in meeting a wonderful lady who is helping us now. But I have also met so many people who have become such good friends too. It is just a lovely place to be and I am so happy that I found SUK." (Eileen)

womb of the surrogate mother

The fertilised egg can be transferred to the surrogate either 'fresh' or frozen. For a fresh egg transfer the monthly cycles of the surrogate and the egg donor must be synchronised, and this is done using hormone medications. In cases where embryos have been frozen

Straight surrogacy is the simplest and least expensive method. Also known as **artificial insemination**, the surrogate mother uses an insemination kit to become pregnant using the intended father's semen. The baby will therefore be conceived using the surrogate's egg.

Some people prefer to use a clinic for inseminations, but it can also happen at home and can therefore seem a more natural and less 'medical' way of becoming pregnant than host surrogacy. It can, however, be harder emotionally for both the surrogate and the intended parents.

Insemination kits can be purchased through Surrogacy UK.

Host (or gestational) surrogacy

Host surrogacy is when IVF is used, either with the eggs of the intended mother, or with donor eggs. The surrogate mother therefore does not use her own eggs, and is genetically unrelated to the baby. It is physically more complicated and considerably more expensive than straight surrogacy, (although some IPs may be able to have some costs covered by the NHS) and treatment always takes place in a fertility clinic.

Some Surrogates prefer this method as they may not be comfortable with using their own eggs in surrogacy.

What exactly is involved in host surrogacy?

In essence, there are three stages:

- Egg donation: the female IP, or the egg donor, undergo special procedures to extract a number of eggs
- Fertilisation: the egg is fertilised with semen in the laboratory
- Transfer: the fertilised egg is transferred into the

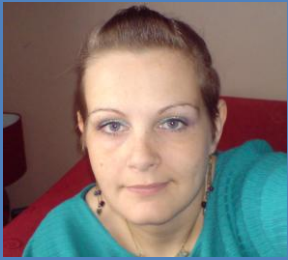


already, only the surrogate mother will need to be ‘prepared’ for a transfer, again using hormone medications to get her womb ready.

All clinics vary in practice but below is an example of a cycle where the intended mother is the egg donor, and there is a fresh egg transfer.

When	What happens
Day two or day twenty-one of the surrogate mother’s menstrual cycle	The Surrogate Mother’s natural hormones are “down regulated” with hormone medication
Twelve days later	Down regulation of the surrogate mother is confirmed by a vaginal ultrasound scan
After this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The egg donor starts daily injections to boost egg production • The Surrogate Mother starts daily oestrogen tablets to build up the lining of her womb
When both the surrogate mother and the egg donor are ready - usually twelve to fourteen days after the step above	All suitable eggs are collected and fertilised with the quarantined sperm.
Two to five days later	Up to two embryos are placed into the uterus of the Surrogate Mother. Any remaining embryos that are of suitable quality will be frozen for use, if needed, in future attempts.
Ten to fourteen days later	Pregnancy may be confirmed
Six weeks after a positive test result	Viability scan takes place: if you are lucky, you may even see a tiny heartbeat. The clinic will inform your GP and the pregnancy will then be treated as any other pregnancy with care being given by the surrogate mother’s local NHS team.
If the treatment has been unsuccessful	The Surrogate will be advised to stop all medication and a heavier than normal period will start a few days later. You should also be offered a follow-up consultation where further options will be discussed. If all parties involved decide to try another transfer, you will need to wait for at least another month before treatment can continue, and most clinics suggest two periods occur after IVF before trying again.

The fertility clinic may require the surrogate mother to undergo a “mock transfer” to ensure she is physically capable of being a surrogate. This is no more painful or uncomfortable than the usual cervical smear.



Michelle's story: "I joined SUK two years ago after thinking about surrogacy for years. I knew there were many people out there who couldn't have children and, although I had finished having children for myself, everything still worked and that I could help someone have a family of their own. My husband was, at first, a bit reluctant but when my son climbed on his lap and said "Daddy, I love you" he looked at me and said that he would be behind me 100%, so we had a good look around and eventually decided that the "Friendship First" basis of SUK was what we wanted so we set off on the job off trying to help "bake someone's bun in our oven" (host surrogacy).

We have been very fortunate to have made some fantastic friends here and although our first partnership didn't have the blessed outcome, we now have firm friends for life and wouldn't have had that without SUK." (Michelle)

Counselling

Host surrogacy requires IVF, which requires the services of a fertility clinic. Clinics will vary, but some will insist that their **ethics committee** approves your case before allowing treatment to commence. If you have not received surrogacy implications counselling the fertility clinic may require you to see one of the clinic's independent counsellors.

Screening and preparing for surrogacy treatment

The clinic will require all parties involved in the surrogacy arrangement to undergo a number of checks or procedures. These will vary, and your clinic will advise you which ones are required.

Because of the long incubation period for HIV, your fertility clinic will usually require that the semen used has been frozen for six months prior to use.

Some common questions

Is surrogacy for me?

You are considering doing **one of the most amazing things** that one human being can do for another. But, it is important to be upfront: being a surrogate mother is an emotionally and physically demanding task. It is important that a woman considering this option has the backing of a partner, family or friends to provide emotional support and practical help throughout and after the pregnancy. **Surrogacy is not something to enter into lightly.** Careful consideration must be given to the medical, emotional, legal and practical issues, and to the implications of surrendering the child at birth. Thought must also be given to the effect on any existing children, the potential surrogate mother's partner, family and friends.

Will I be out of pocket?

Absolutely not. While it is illegal for a surrogate to receive payment, it is perfectly legal (and expected within Surrogacy UK) that the IPs will pay you for **any reasonable expenses that you incur**. This might cover loss of earnings; the cost of maternity clothes; the travel costs that you and your family incur when you visit the IPs; and the travel and accommodation costs for attending any fertility clinic or hospital appointments. Childcare costs to look after your own children if you're away from home will also be paid.



At Surrogacy UK it is also expected that IPs pay for any **counselling or professional support, in connection with surrogacy**, that you may need during pregnancy and after birth. Surrogacy UK's full rules and policies are set out in a separate document – Rules and Policies. Please make the time to review this important document.

Are there any criteria for becoming a surrogate?

A potential surrogate mother must be in good overall health and be able to undergo a pregnancy with the minimum amount of risk to her own health. Some medical conditions will prevent a woman becoming a surrogate mother, for example if there are any known medical problems which could lead to complications with the pregnancy, or put the surrogate at risk.

As the risks of illness and problems are much higher in the first pregnancy, **it is strongly recommended that surrogates should have borne at least one child previously**, and preferably have completed her own family. Only in very exceptional cases should a woman who has not had a child herself consider becoming a surrogate mother. Surrogacy UK does not have an upper age limit for surrogates, however, as the risks of pregnancy increase with age, any woman over 35 should give careful consideration before offering to become a surrogate mother. We have a **lower age limit of 23**, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Death in pregnancy and childbirth is not common but it does happen. 1 in 10,000 pregnancies result in the death of the pregnant woman.

How do I choose which Intended Parents to work with?

Surrogate Mothers often feel guilty because they feel that they are playing God with someone's life. A Surrogate Mother can't help everyone, but if she decides to help just one couple, **she will have changed that couple's life forever and have given the most extraordinary gift.**

Your choice of which Intended Parents to work with can only be a decision for you and your family, but below we have tried to think of a number of points you may want to bear in mind:

- What sort of surrogacy relationship are the Intended Parents looking to enter into: Straight or Host?
- Are they of an age that you feel comfortable with?
- Do they already have children as a couple?
- Are they within easy travelling distance? (Boring and practical we know – but it is important!)
- Do you have similar interests?
- Does your family like them?

Surrogacy is very much about personalities and you will be spending a lot of time together before, and probably after, the baby is born. At Surrogacy UK we very firmly believe that friendship should come first and surrogacy second. If you find a couple that you like, and who you trust as friends, then you will have a strong foundation for a Surrogacy Arrangement.



How long will it take?

There is no 'usual' time frame for finding the couple that is right for you. Some Surrogate Mothers find a fantastic couple straight away; others may meet two or three couples before they find the right ones. The most important thing is that you and your family are totally comfortable with your choice. If you do not take time to get to know one another before becoming pregnant, nine months can seem a very long time!

Can I be a member of Surrogacy UK and another surrogacy organisation?

Surrogacy UK does not restrict you from joining another organisation - after all, the point of Surrogacy UK is to allow families to be created.

At the same time **we do firmly believe that the Surrogacy UK way of doing things is the best way**, and that there are avoidable risks in other ways-of-doing things. It is for this reason that once a Member enters a surrogacy arrangement with a Non-Member, it is not possible for them to maintain Member status. We would, though, welcome the Non-Member to join us if they wished.

How Surrogacy UK works

Getting started

Both Surrogates and IPs start out in Surrogacy UK as '**Non-Members**' who have access to some sections of the on-line message boards (referred to as 'the boards'), and who can attend any of the social events and conferences. In this way you can meet Surrogacy UK IPs and other surrogates even before you become a Member, as well as get to know a bit more about Surrogacy UK. This would be a great next step for you to dip a toe in the water!

'The boards'

The boards provide an online community for Members and Non-Members to get to know one another. Non-Members can access only a small part of the boards, but enough to get a flavour of the organisation and to start making friends. **Once you become a Member, the rest of the boards open up to you, along with dedicated private areas that only Surrogate Mothers can access.**

The boards are a place to share your journey, and to make and support new friends. They are a mine of factual information about surrogacy: practically any surrogacy question you can think of will be answered there! But more importantly, they allow you to access a uniquely understanding group of people, and we believe this level of peer support is part of what makes Surrogacy UK so special. On the boards there are also dedicated private areas for Surrogates.

Most IP Members and many Surrogate Members **choose to keep an online diary**, like a blog. The diaries allow Members to share their personalities, and talk about what they've



been up to. IPs' diaries can help Surrogate Mothers choose who to get to know and who to help.

Intended Parents (IP) profiles

Intended Parents who are Members write a "profile" of themselves that only Surrogate Members can access. The IPs' profile explains what has brought them to Surrogacy UK, and why they want to have a child through surrogacy. This allows potential surrogates to get to know a little bit about the IPs in the organisation, and it allows the IPs to share their personalities and stories.

Surrogacy UK events



Surrogacy UK holds social events **throughout the year** – big and small, throughout the UK, and always child-friendly. These are always well attended and really good fun - the most telling thing is that time after time even people who have completed their surrogacy journeys return to the socials. They are a great opportunity to form lasting friendships, to be reminded that Surrogacy UK really works, and to put faces to names on the boards!

Our two big events are the spring conference and the Annual General meeting in October. Again, these are an opportunity to make new friends and have some fun, but we also make sure that they provide another way for sharing information and providing support. You'll find workshops, expert talks, games, raffles and above all the chance to meet others and have fun.

Becoming a member

You may already have taken the first step and joined the organisation as a Non-Member. This gives limited access to the Boards, and allows you to attend our social events. **The next step is to become a Member!**

This is a straightforward process, and our friendly and **experienced surrogates Jayne and Sarah can give you all the support you need**. Their contact details are at the start and the end of this Welcome document.

The Application Pack

First of all, get hold of our **Application Pack for Surrogate Mothers**. If you have a printer you can download this from the website at http://www.surrogacyuk.org/Downloads/SM_Application.pdf

If you'd like us to send you a copy in the post, just email Karla at membership.secretary@surrogacyuk.org and she'll mail one out to you.



The Application Pack asks about your reasons for wanting to be a surrogate mother, and there are also some questions about your family life and current circumstances. There are questions about your interests, your hopes and expectations for a surrogacy relationship, and your health. There's also a section which your partner should fill out if you have one.

GP medical report

We need a **medical report from your GP** before you can become a Member. Don't worry if you have any medical conditions: some will have no impact at all on whether or not you can be a surrogate mother. Your GP will indicate if any health problems are relevant to surrogacy, and if necessary can arrange an appointment with a specialist for further advice.

To make things easier, **you'll find a letter in the Application Pack that you fill out and give to your GP**. The letter explains to your GP what information is needed so they can write the report. GPs sometimes do this for free and sometimes they charge; if they do ask for a fee, don't worry: we'll cover the cost. Just send us their invoice, and we'll either refund it to you, or pay the bill directly with the GP: whichever you prefer.

BMI

On the application form we ask for your **height and your weight**. This is because obesity can increase the risks of complications in pregnancy, and some IVF clinics are reluctant to provide treatment for host surrogates with a high BMI (Body Mass Index). Your BMI is your weight in kilos, divided by your height in meters squared. **A BMI higher than 30** may be problematic for host surrogacy, though clinics vary.

For straight surrogacy there are no hard-and-fast rules, so it would be up to individual IPs and Surrogate Mothers to make a decision about whether to proceed. Please get in touch if you want to discuss this further.

Criminal records checks

Surrogate Mothers and their partners (if they have one) are **required to provide criminal records checks**. You may have had one for your work (usually via the Criminal Records Bureau or CRB) and a CRB certificate less than 12 months old will be accepted for your membership. If you don't already have a CRB certificate, you can obtain a new criminal records check from Disclosure Scotland. We can send you the forms, and we'll pay the fee on your behalf – just ask Jayne or Sarah. Alternatively forms can be downloaded at www.disclosurescotland.co.uk or requested by telephone on 0870 609 6006. The type of form you need to ask for is a 'basic disclosure'.

Please send us the original document: we will note that it has been seen and return it to you.

Sexual Health Checks

If you are only considering Host Surrogacy, you don't need to organise sexual health checks at this stage: the IVF clinic that you and your IPs use will sort all this out.



However if you are considering **Straight Surrogacy**, you'll need to organise sexual health checks before you join. Getting the tests done is easy, and there are three ways available:

- At your local Sexual Health / GUM clinic
- At your GP's surgery (some but not all will be able to do this)
- Using a home-test kit that is sent to The Doctors' Laboratory

We'll cover any costs involved, and if you want to use the home-test kit, please contact Jayne or Sarah.

Here are the tests we'll need:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- Syphilis
- HIV
- Genital herpes

Tests for genital herpes are not always available, **so we ask you to let us know** if you have ever had an outbreak of the infection in the past. This is very important.

Depending on how much time passes between these tests and starting to work with your IPs, **the tests may need to be repeated before you start inseminations**. At that point it may also be agreed that your partner (if you have one) should be tested. These decisions will be discussed at your agreement session.

The Information Session

Once we've received your completed Application Pack, **we'll get in touch to arrange your face-to-face Information Session**. You can have this at your own home, or somewhere else if you'd prefer, and it's a chance to talk everything through with one of our experienced Surrogate Members.

Forming a surrogacy friendship

Contact being made – the phone call!

Once a Surrogacy UK surrogate has decided that she would like to get to know a particular couple in more depth then she will contact her support worker. Someone from Surrogacy UK will then approach the couple on her behalf – **this has become known to Surrogacy UK Intended Parents as 'getting the phone call'**. If the Intended Parents agree then contact details will be exchanged and the 'getting to know you' stage will begin. As you can imagine this is a wonderful period in the surrogacy journey for both parties – full of joy, excitement and hope.



The 'getting to know you' stage

It is very important that a surrogate and her Intended Parents get to know one another well before they go ahead with any arrangements. Surrogacy is very much about personalities, and you will be spending a lot of time together before and probably after the baby is born. Taking the time to get to know each other properly is essential, and Surrogacy UK insists that **this period takes at least three months**. If, at the end of three months, the relationship does not feel completely 'right' it would be a mistake to continue.

In the getting to know you stage take some time to talk through the details of surrogacy. There may be certain things you want or expect from one another. Would you be happy to have extra tests for abnormalities? Are there circumstances in which you would consider terminating the pregnancy? These topics can be difficult to talk about, but it is important to address them.

The agreement session

Surrogacy UK does not negotiate or initiate surrogacy arrangements; however we expect our members to **make a formal surrogacy agreement**, in the presence of a Surrogacy UK representative. The purpose of the agreement is to make sure that every relevant point relating to the journey ahead has been discussed and understood.

After the agreement session, and once all the details have been formally agreed, then the IPs and the surrogate are ready for the next steps: trying to have a baby!

Our stories

One of the best ways to get a feel for Surrogacy UK is to understand the stories that have led people to become Surrogacy UK members. Some of these are scattered throughout the document, but here are some more.

Fiona's story



"When I'd been dating Andy for about 4 months, I finally plucked up courage to tell him that I have MRKH (www.mrkh.org.uk) and therefore can't carry children and that the only way I could have babies would be if someone else did it for me. Luckily for me, he didn't run the other way fast and we started looking into surrogacy a few months later. Like most people these days, I started by googling surrogacy, came across SUK and started by joining the message board.

Within weeks our evenings were transformed as, instead of watching telly or chatting over dinner, I'd be on the boards learning about how surrogacy works and bantering on msn with the friends I'd made there. The dramas and gossip were unbeatable (who needs Eastenders) and I was shocked to find that I was thoroughly enjoying myself. More importantly, at our first SUK conference, we met Kate and Dennis; Andy had a few beers and a bit of a laugh with Dennis when they were in the same quiz team on the Saturday night. When I logged on after the conference, I was v. excited to find that Kate



wanted to be my friend on msn. Six months and a thousand hours on msn later, we were all together in a country park just before our wedding and Kate gave us a hand-embroidered picture which she'd been working on for weeks. It was just typical of her kindness and it's a treasured symbol of our friendship..... but even that paled into insignificance when they gave



us their other gift.... the offer to help us start our family. As someone who had expected to grow old without becoming a parent, I will never be able to thank them enough for the experience of going through my wedding knowing that I had every chance of being a mum within the first few years of marriage. It was a delicious secret which we kept to ourselves for a long time.

Eight months later, we started treatment and were lucky first time using embryos which we had frozen ahead of time. Hannah Christie was born eighteen months after we were married and has been hilarious and utterly adored ever since. I think the moment it hit home that I really was a mum was when she was about 9 weeks old and we were at a baby music class; I found myself singing "the wheels on the bus" in the middle of a church hall with tears streaming down my face because I had just absorbed the wonder of our good luck.

She's 18 months old at the time of writing and just loves the time we all spend with Aunty Kate, Uncle Dennis and their children – we are now an extended family and we don't know whether to be more happy to have them in our lives or to be a family due to their kindness. That's it, other than to say that the whole experience can't have been too bad for Kate and Dennis either, because they offered to help us again and (fingers crossed) we're now expecting a second baby in October 2010." (Fiona)

Mark and Charlie's story



““We started talking about having children 5 or 6 years ago. Like many people in SUK we looked at adoption first of all, but it didn't feel right for us, and after a bit of research we heard about SUK. We had read that the law was about to change so that gay couples could become parents through surrogacy, and we'll never forget that first conversation with Jayne when she told us that SUK would welcome us as members!

We joined in early 2009 and have met the most amazing people: intended parents, surrogates, and all around us the families that have been created through SUK. We've made some true and close friendships, and have shared so much over the past months.

Most importantly we've made friends with Dawn, Sian and Soo, and with their amazing families. Soo donated her eggs for us in early 2010, and this allowed us to create embryos that we froze. We can't begin to say how wonderful this felt, or how grateful we are for Soo's friendship. Sian then made the incredible offer to be our Surrogate Mother but very sadly medical problems got in the way of our plans. She is now our official "Cheerleader"! Since then we have been lucky enough to meet and become close friends with Dawn, and we are now going through the next stages of our journey: trying to have a baby!



We were at the clinic recently, where they do a lot of surrogacy IVF for people from all over the country. The nurse said to Dawn: "Oh, surrogacy. It's nice that you know your IPs." We were totally stunned: the idea that you could go through all this without a deep and lasting friendship feels completely wrong. The motto "Surrogacy Through Friendship" seems to us the only way." (Mark and Charlie)

Jayne's story



"Our first child, Abi was born via straight surrogacy after 10 long years of failed fertility treatment thanks to our special friend Susan. The years of infertility were firmly in the past and we were enjoying life to the full. We hoped to have another child via surrogacy but despite 13 attempts of treatment with 2 different surrogate mothers it was not to be. However, a miracle happened and I became pregnant myself - not once but 3 times!

I joined Surrogacy UK in 2002 as a founder member to give support to other couples considering surrogacy. At the back of my mind I wondered if I could be a surrogate myself. One day, our daughter, Abi, who was born via surrogacy also suggested it, and this was just the push I needed to get started. Having my family at long last I just wanted to "pay back the gift".

A few months later a couple, Lynne and Richard, who already had a child via surrogacy joined Surrogacy UK. I prefer to help couples who already have children as it is very fulfilling help the child have a brother or sister as well as helping the intended parents have a much wanted second child.

It took 5 attempts of treatment to conceive Isaac, Lynne and Richard's boy. The pregnancy was uneventful. Everything went to plan and we had a wonderful surrogacy arrangement. Lynne and Richard came to all the scans and Lynne attended all the midwife appointments with me. We also met up socially at least one a month during the pregnancy, at SUK socials or in each other's homes. This is so important as it allows the intended parents to bond with their baby and the surrogate to bond with the intended parents.

Lynne was crying with happiness as baby Isaac came into the world. The midwife then asked her to cut the cord and she was handed her baby boy. It felt so good to see her joy. Isaac was born on Tuesday, 9th November, at 11.17 am, weighing 8lb 12 oz. Soon afterwards Richard was invited into the labour room to meet his baby son. We had pictures taken of us all and then I was handed Isaac so I could have a picture taken with him. After the birth I received cards and flowers from friends and family and everyone said "what a wonderful thing I had done". I never thought I would experience pregnancy, and not only have I been able to experience it for myself, I've been able to experience it for someone else too.

I've since helped another couple have a much wanted baby. Hector was born on the 6th January 2006.



Sadly I then went on to have 2 miscarriages while helping a 3rd couple. At this point I decided to retire from surrogacy. I spent the next 2 years supporting others going through surrogacy and also had another baby of my own, Scarlet.

After Scarlet's birth, surrogacy was in the back of my mind again but I tried to resist and concentrate on my own family. However, I found I could not stand back and watch people struggle while there was a chance I could help them.

In 2009 I offered to help a 4th couple via a host surrogacy arrangement but sadly it did not lead to pregnancy. At the beginning of 2010 I offered to help another couple have a child via host surrogacy. So watch this space!"(Jayne)

Learning more and joining Surrogacy UK

As we said above, the next step is to think about becoming a "Non-Member" so you can start using the message boards. Registration is free. You'll be able to access all the 'non-member' parts of the online community, and you'll immediately benefit from the enormous experience and understanding of our members. You can ask questions, pick people's brains, and start making friends. To register, just follow the link below and click on 'register' in the top right-hand corner:

<http://www.surrogacyuk.org/forum/>

Remember that membership of Surrogacy UK is **completely free of charge** to potential Surrogates.

We very much hope to hear from you!

Surrogacy UK contact details

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