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## **Childbirth Experiences in First-Time Mothers**

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring mothers' experiences of labour and childbirth. The study involves completing a questionnaire and possibly taking part in an interview. Before deciding if you would like to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please contact me at any time if you would like any more information.

### **Who is carrying out this research?**

I am a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at Royal Holloway, University of London. The research is supervised by two Clinical Psychologists (based at Royal Holloway and the University of Sheffield), and a Senior Lecturer at the University of York (Mother and Infant Research Unit).

### **What is the research about?**

The study is looking at childbirth experiences, how mothers think and feel about this event and their emotional well-being in the first postnatal year.

### **Why is it important?**

Mothers respond to their labour and childbirth experiences in different ways. Some may find the experience uplifting and rewarding, and others may find it difficult or upsetting. A small percentage of women find unpleasant thoughts about the birth last into the first few months or years of parenthood. By taking part in this study you will be providing important information about the emotional experiences of new mothers, which may help improve future care for new parents.

### **Who is being asked to take part?**

Any first-time mothers who had their baby within the last year, and who found the labour and childbirth difficult, upsetting or traumatising.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No. Taking part is voluntary and entirely up to *you*. You can decide not to take part without providing any reason. If you do take part, you do not have to answer all the questions and you will be free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. This will not affect any care you receive.

### **What does the study involve?**

If you are interested in taking part, I will post you a questionnaire and a stamped addressed envelope. The questionnaire should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete.

I will contact a small number of mothers to ask if they are happy to take part in the next stage of the study: an interview with me. You will be under no obligation to take part in the interview. The interview would be at a time and place convenient for you, and will last approximately an hour. I will be able to reimburse any reasonable travel expenses. The interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. The interview will ask more about your labour and childbirth experiences, how you have been feeling since, and if this has impacted on you and your relationships with others.

If you are interested in taking part please contact me using the details on this information sheet. Please provide your name and telephone number so I can contact you to discuss the study further. I will then send you a consent form and questionnaire in the post.

### **What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?**

Previous studies have found that people like to be offered the opportunity to discuss their birth experiences. Your involvement in the study may give you satisfaction that you have contributed to important research, which may affect the care offered to new parents in the future.

This study does not involve any direct risks. Some mothers may find it hard to talk about their feelings, especially if they have upsetting memories of the labour and birth.

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All your details and responses will be kept highly confidential, and will only be seen by myself and the research supervisors. All data will be stored securely and will be coded with a number, so you will not be identifiable. The signed consent form will be stored separately from your responses. A report will be written at the end of the study, but all participants will remain anonymous. I may contact you at this stage to check if you are happy with the data and themes which have emerged from the research, and to ensure you are happy for me to use any quotes you have provided.

As in any piece of research, if information is disclosed which clearly shows that you or a child is currently at risk, confidentiality could not be maintained. In these cases I would be obliged to discuss this with your GP or the appropriate services. I would try to discuss this with you first.

### **What if you are concerned about my responses?**

This study is concerned with *your* emotional well-being, and what is best for you. If your questionnaire data or the information discussed during the interview suggests that you are experiencing symptoms of emotional distress, I will suggest that you speak to your Health Visitor or GP. If you are worried about your health at any time, please contact your Health Visitor or GP.

### **What will happen to the results of this study?**

The results may be published in academic journals, and presented at conferences. Participants will not be identifiable in any reports. Once the study is complete all data will be destroyed.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and approved by Royal Holloway University of London Department of Psychology Ethics Committee.

### **Contacts for further information**

If you would like any further details about the study or you would like to take part please do not hesitate to contact me

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the project with the supervisors please feel free to contact:

- Dr. Helen Pote, Clinical Psychology, Royal Holloway, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX. 01784 443851.
- Professor Pauline Slade, Clinical Psychology Unit, University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TP. 0114 222 6568.
- Helen Spiby, Department of Health Sciences, Area 4, Seebom Rowntree Building, The University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD. 01904 321825.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this!**