# Nursing Children and Young People

# Supported by Royal College of Nursing Research in Child Health Community (RiCH)

# Research Award Abstract

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| **PART A** | | **Reference no** |
| **Title of project** | | |
| Different constellation and shining stars: Lesbian parents’ voices on accessing healthcare for their adopted children | | |
| **Proposed conference details (including dates)** | | |
| International Conference for Adoption Research – Milan, July 7th-11th 2020  Nightingale2020 – London, October 27th and 28th 2020 | | |
| **CONTACT DETAILS** | | |
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| **PART B** | **Reference no** |
| **Title of project** | |
| Different constellation and shining stars: Lesbian parents’ voices on accessing healthcare for their adopted children | |
| **Abstract (maximum 350 words)** | |
| **Introduction**:  The past few decades have seen significant changes in family demographics. It is now more common for parents to be lesbians, which may be due to increased social acceptance and the dissolution of legal barriers to parental responsibility.  Adoption transforms the lives of some of the most vulnerable children. In 2019, 1 in 7 children in England were adopted by same-sex parents. Adopted children have an increased incidence of additional health care needs and therefore dental and medical appointments in comparison to children who remain with their biological parents.  **Aim:**  This doctoral study sought to hear the experiences of lesbian mothers accessing healthcare for their adopted children in England and the rhetoric and language they encountered.  **Method:**  A small scale qualitative study, using a narrative inquiry approach. The study population gained by purposive sampling was of six lesbian adoptive parents. A combined data analysis tool was utilised which used critical incident recall (Webster and Mertova, 2007) and broadening, burrowing, storying and re-storying (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). A composite character couple was created to ‘re-story’ their experiences in healthcare and to maintain anonymity.  **Results:**  Emergent themes were: navigating heteronormativity and managing healthcare consultations, challenges associated with adoption and ‘hidden history’, professional expectations and reflective imagery. Self-imposed strategies instigated by the parents to strengthen and protect their familial identities were also discovered.  **Discussion:**  The needs and challenges of lesbian adoptive families may be different to those of heterosexual and biological families and the participants experienced positive and negative interactions with healthcare professionals, including children’s nurses.  There was an undercurrent of discriminative practice, shown by various healthcare professionals, and a lack of understanding of the adoption process, knowledge surrounding the child’s history and legal stance with regards to parental responsibility.  **Recommendations:**  Children’s nurses and all healthcare providers should be aware of the adoption process in England, diversity of the population in which they practice and should deliver inclusive services through the use of appropriate terminology, positive representation of adoption and same-sex parents and also offer sensitivity to their patients and families as children will attend healthcare settings with their parent/s. | |
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