

## **INFORMATION FOR BIRTH RELATIVES OF PEOPLE ADOPTED IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

### **1. What are my rights if I am a birth relative of someone adopted in England or Wales?**

Since 30 December 2005 birth relatives of an adopted adult have the legal right to ask a local authority, adoption agency or adoption support agency that has registered as an intermediary agency to approach the adopted relative and let him/her know of their wish for contact. Although some adoption agencies have provided intermediary services for many years, the availability of the services offered has been something of a post code lottery. The changes in legislation mean that now birth relatives have a means of arranging contact with an adopted relative regardless of which part of the country the adoption was arranged.

There is no legal requirement for adoption agencies to provide an intermediary service to birth relatives, but there is a requirement on those who hold adoption records to provide information to intermediary agencies. The intermediary is not allowed to give a birth relative identifying information about the adopted person, but can use the information to locate the adopted person and make an approach to ask if the person is willing to receive information or be put in touch with the relative. Agencies that provide intermediary services must give priority to those adoptions that took place on or before 12 November 1975.

Note that most agencies charge fees for their intermediary services, often seen by clients as quite substantial, as the cost of providing these is not being covered by the British Government.

### **2. Is it just birth parents who can ask for a service?**

No. Siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles can also ask for the service. However, if you are requesting a service independently of the birth mother (and birth father, if known), it is important that you discuss the implications this may have for them.

### **3. What choices do I have in engaging an intermediary service?**

You are entitled to choose which intermediary agency you ask to assist you. Some people prefer to contact the agency that arranged the adoption, particularly as they still hold the records and often these are very helpful for getting in touch with the adopted person. It is also possible that information from the adopted person for a birth relative may be held on file.

On the other hand, it may not be possible to contact the agency that arranged the adoption for example because it has closed or you don't know the name of the agency, or you may prefer not to use the agency for whatever reason.

Many Adoption Agencies have merged or closed. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering has produced a book showing where the records of closed agencies are now held, called *Where to Find Adoption Records*, compiled by Georgina Stafford, and now available online on NORCAP's website (see below).

In most cases (but not all) where an agency has arranged the adoption, records will exist. In situations where the adoption was arranged privately, it is less likely that records have been kept. In the absence of records, there is always information kept at the General Register Office which enables links to be made between an adopted person's birth name and their adoptive name.

A number of agencies are listed at the bottom of this information sheet which could offer an intermediary service or advise about where intermediary services are available.

#### **4. Can I place my name on a contact register?**

Yes. The Adoption Contact Register allows birth family members and adopted people to leave messages for each other, and is located at the General Register Office. If both the adopted person and the birth relative register, the adopted person will be supplied with the name and address of the birth relative. Birth relatives will not be given the adopted person's name and address and will only be told that their name and address have been sent to the adopted person. Birth relatives are able to leave a "care of" address. Since the end of 2005, it is also possible to apply for no or specific contact.

NORCAP hosts a separate adoption contact register, which actually has more entries than the official Contact Register. NORCAP also accepts registrations from people who wish to record that they do not want contact as well as those who are seeking contact.

#### **5. Do I have to give proof of identity?**

Yes. The agency providing services to you will need copies of documentation verifying your identity and relationship to the adopted person.

#### **6. What services might I be offered?**

Intermediary services are likely to include the opportunity to:

- a. receive support and advice throughout the process of search and contact
- b. receive information from the records which would not identify the adoptive family but would help answer some of your questions
- c. find out if the adopted person has registered a qualified or absolute veto on contact

- d. leave information to be kept on the adoption file, should the adopted person ever ask for it
- e. ask for a search to be made for the adopted person. This is likely to involve a substantial fee as the search may be conducted separately by a specialist agency.
- f. request that the intermediary approach the adopted adult

## 7. Could PARC have a role in the process?

PARC is able to offer counselling, in person or over the phone, to assist in the preparation for contact or in coming to terms with the past. Some agencies may require that you attend a counselling interview in Australia before they begin working with you, and PARC is one of the agencies able to provide this. Note that we do charge fees for our counselling services whilst aiming to make them affordable.

## 8. What are some of the support organisations in the UK?

The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) keep the most comprehensive and up-to-date list of organisations at [www.baaf.org](http://www.baaf.org). These are:

**AAA-NORCAP** (Adults Affected by Adoption - National Organisation for the Counselling of Adoptees & their Parents)

[www.norcap.org.uk](http://www.norcap.org.uk)

112 Church Road

Wheatley

Oxfordshire OX33 1LU

Ph. 001144 1865 875000

[enquiries@norcap.org](mailto:enquiries@norcap.org)

### Post Adoption Centre

[www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk](http://www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk)

5 Torriana Mews,

London. NW5 2RZ

001144 2072 840555

[advice@postadoptioncentre.org.uk](mailto:advice@postadoptioncentre.org.uk)

### After Adoption

[www.afteradoption.org.uk](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk)

After Adoption London

001144 2076 283443

[london@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:london@afteradoption.org.uk)

After Adoption Yorkshire

001144 1132 302100

[info@afteradoptionyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:info@afteradoptionyorkshire.org.uk)

After Adoption Liverpool

001144 8000 568578

[merseyside@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:merseyside@afteradoption.org.uk)

After Adoption North East

001144 1914 788396

[northeast@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:northeast@afteradoption.org.uk)

After Adoption North West

Manchester Office

001144 1618 394932

or

Lancashire Office

001144 1772 258893

[preston@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:preston@afteradoption.org.uk)

After Adoption Wales

001144 2920 666597

[southwales@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:southwales@afteradoption.org.uk)

The Benevolent Society

ABN 95 084 695 045

**Natural Parents Network**

[www.n-p-n.co.uk](http://www.n-p-n.co.uk)

18 Bishops Way  
Stradbroke, Eye  
Suffolk. IP21 5JR  
001144 8454 565031  
[administrator@n-p-n.co.uk](mailto:administrator@n-p-n.co.uk)

**South West Adoption Network**

[www.swan-adoption.org.uk](http://www.swan-adoption.org.uk)

The Park, Daventry rd  
Knowle, Bristol. BS4 1QD  
001144 8456 012459  
[admin@swan-adoption.org.uk](mailto:admin@swan-adoption.org.uk)

**Adoption Support**

[www.wasgap.org/wmpas](http://www.wasgap.org/wmpas)

Albany House,  
Hurst St  
Birmingham. B5 4BD  
001144 1216 666014  
[adoptionsupport@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:adoptionsupport@tiscali.co.uk)

**Birthlink**

[www.birthlink.org.uk](http://www.birthlink.org.uk)

21 Castle St  
Edinburgh. EH2 3DN  
001144 1312 256441  
[mail@birthlink.org.uk](mailto:mail@birthlink.org.uk)

**Nottingham After Adoption Support**

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk)

County Hall  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham. NG2 7QP  
001144 1159 787376  
[Support.afteradoption@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:Support.afteradoption@nottsc.gov.uk)

Post Adoption Resource Centre  
PO Box 239  
Bondi NSW 2026  
T 02 9365 3444  
F 02 9365 3666  
E [parc@bensoc.org.au](mailto:parc@bensoc.org.au)  
[www.bensoc.org.au](http://www.bensoc.org.au)

The Benevolent Society  
ABN 95 084 695 045