

Information for UK adoptees and birth relatives wanting to search

1. Rights to Information

Adoptees

Adopted people have the right to access information from their birth record, which includes the name of their birth parent/s. They can also approach the agency that facilitated the adoption for access to their adoption file. Adoptees can use an intermediary (the adoption agency or an adoption support agency) for help with searching and to assist them to make contact with birth relatives, or can search and make contact independently.

Birth parents

Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, birth parents can seek to establish contact with the adoptee through an intermediary. This means that an Intermediary Service will approach the adoptee and find out if they are open to contact. Intermediary services can be provided by the adoption agency who handled the adoption, by an adoption support agency (NORCAP, After Adoption) or sometimes through the local authority.

Other relatives

Relatives other than birth parents can also approach the UK adoption agency for assistance in searching for adoptees.

2. Obtaining access to Birth Records

If an adopted person does not have any information about their adoption, such as their birth name, the name of a birth parent, or the adoption agency who was involved, they can apply for this information through the General Register Office. The information that they obtain will enable them to apply for their original birth certificate.

There is a specific form for adopted people who are applying from outside the UK. PARC / PASQ can provide you with the application form or it can be downloaded from the following website:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Registeringlifeevent/s/Birhandadoptionrecords/Adoptionrecords/DG_175567

The General Register Office is part of Identity & Passport Services. They can be contacted on +44 151 471 4830. The form should be returned to:

Adoptions Section
Room C202
General Register Office
Trafalgar Road
Southport PR8 2HH
United Kingdom

Alternatively it can be faxed to +44 151 471 4755.

People who were adopted before 12th November 1975 are required to attend an interview with an approved adoption advisor prior to receiving their birth record information. For adoptions after this date, interviews are recommended but optional. PARC and PASQ are approved agencies to conduct these interviews, which can be done in person or by telephone if you are unable to attend the Sydney or Brisbane offices. If you wish to nominate us to provide this support, you can name PARC or PASQ on the application form. Note that there will be fees for this service based on a sliding scale according to your income. Contact us for more information.

After processing your application, the General Register Office will send your adoption information to PARC / PASQ, and we will contact you to arrange an appointment. We will be able to provide you with your original name, the name of your birth parent/s, and the court that was involved. After this, you will be able to apply for your original birth certificate, and apply to the court for more information, including the name of the agency or Local Authority who placed you for adoption.

What if I already know this information?

If you already know your original birth name, you can apply directly to the Registrar General for a copy of your original birth certificate. If you know the agency or local authority who organized the adoption, you can approach them directly.

3. Accessing Adoption Files

Information about your adoption may be available from a number of sources. There is a comprehensive database available to search on the Adoption Search Reunion website. This database is an extensive listing of mother and baby homes, adoption agencies and local authorities, and provides contact details and the current location of records. Some of the main agencies are The Children's Society, Action For Children (formerly NCH) and Barnardos.

Not all agencies will have kept their records. Some records are very brief and may not contain the information that you were hoping to find. If the adoption was privately arranged, information is likely to be unavailable or minimal, however it is worthwhile to contact both the court and local authority to see if any information is held.

Adoption agencies and Local Authorities vary in their processes for providing file information. In general they require the applicant to attend their office in order to support them through the process. Where the adopted person lives overseas they will usually request that a local adoption counselling service is involved. PARC and PASQ can provide local support at the Sydney and Brisbane offices, or telephone support for people outside these areas. If you choose to nominate PARC or PASQ as the local agency to support you, files will be sent directly to us and we will arrange a time to talk with you about them, and pass them on. There is a fee for this service. Please advise us if you have named us on your application so we can be ready to receive your file.

4. UK Adoption Contact Register

The Registrar General holds the Adoption Contact Register, which allows birth family members and adopted people to register their wish for contact, or leave messages for each other. Messages are passed on only if both parties have registered. It is also possible to register your wish for “no contact”.

In addition to this register, AAA-NORCAP holds similar register. Registration can be done online: www.norcap.org.uk

5. Searching and Making Contact

Many adoptees and birth relatives wish to search for and contact their relatives. Adoptees are entitled to search and make contact themselves, or can use an intermediary. Under the legislation, birth relatives need to use an approved intermediary service to contact the adopted person. An intermediary is an experienced neutral party who will talk with you about your wishes before making an approach to the other person on your behalf, remaining involved as long as required to support both sides.

Many adoption agencies provide a search and intermediary service for their own clients. Alternatively, another approved intermediary service may be used. A comprehensive list of adoption services in different areas of the UK can be found on the Adoption Search Reunion website listed at the end of this information sheet. Some of the more established intermediary services in the UK are NORCAP and AFTER Adoption (details at the end).

Information on family history resources to search for relatives in the UK can be found on Information Sheet 33 “British Births Deaths and Marriages Information in Australia”

6. Assistance from PARC / PASQ

PARC and PASQ are able to act as intermediaries for you if you wish, although it is generally better to use a mediator in the same country as where

the person being sought is living. Searching and reunion can be emotionally challenging or distressing. PARC / PASQ can assist UK adoptees and birth relatives with advice or professional counselling if required. Our resource library, bookshop and group meetings are also available.

7. Useful Sources of Information

Adoption Search Reunion

The Adoption Search Reunion website is the official and up-to-date source of information for UK adult adoptees and birth relatives. It contains useful and detailed information, including the database of adoption file records, and extensive listing of UK organizations who can assist.

www.adoptionsearchreunion.co.uk

Directgov

Directgov is an official resource website which has extensive information about adoption searches, including the application forms for birth records.

www.direct.gov.uk/en/governmentcitizensandrights/registeringlifeevents

AAA-NORCAP

NORCAP is a well-established not for profit organization to support adults separated by adoption. It holds a contact register for people seeking contact, and provides search and intermediary services.

www.norcap.org.uk

After Adoption

After Adoption is a well-established independent organization that provides a range of services relating to adoption. They provide a search and mediation service for adoptees and birth relatives.

www.afteradoption.org.uk, follow the links to “our services” and then “adoption services”

Please phone us if you wish to talk further about any issues raised in this information sheet.

NSW/ACT

Post Adoption Resource Centre
Locked Bag 6002
Hurstville NSW 1481
T 02 9504 6788
F 02 9570 2699
E parc@bensoc.org.au
www.bensoc.org.au/postadoption

QLD

Post Adoption Support Queensland
Brisbane, QLD 4000
Tel.: 1 300 914 819
Email: pasq@bensoc.org.au
www.bensoc.org.au/postadoption