



Information for
adoptive parents
whose adult sons
and daughters are
thinking of tracing
their birth parents

For further information, please contact:

Senior Adoption Practitioner – Post Adoption
Adoption Matters Northwest
14 Liverpool Road, Chester, CH2 1AE

Tel: 01244 390938 • Fax: 01244 390067
E-mail: info@adoptionmatters.org
Website: www.adoptionmatters.org

Adoption Matters Northwest, a company limited by guarantee incorporating Blackburn Diocesan Adoption Agency and Chester Diocesan Adoption Services • Registered in England (No 1617324) • Registered Charity No 512892
Approved as an Adoption Society by Ofsted

Tel: 0151 471 4830 Website: www.statistics.gov.uk

BAAF Adoption and Fostering – Skyline Huse, 200 Union Street,
London, SE1 0LX

Website: www.baaf.org.uk

Post Adoption Centre – 5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue, London,
NW5 2RZ

Tel: 0207 284 0555 Website: www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk

Useful publications

‘Searching Questions, Identity, Origins and Adoption’ by Julia
Feast and Terry Philpot (BAAF 2003)

**‘The Adoption Triangle Revisited: A Study of Adoption, Search
and Reunion Experiences’** by John Triseliotis, Julia Feast and Fiona
Kelly (BAAF 2005)

‘The Adoption Reunion Handbook’ by Liz Trinder, Julia Feast and
David Howe (Wiley 2004)

understanding of themselves and their own identity..

Looking after yourselves

Many adoptive parents understand the need to search for more information and are sympathetic and supportive. Despite this, the experience of a daughter or son searching for birth parents can be a threatening and sometimes a painful experience.

Seeking professional advice and support from Adoption Support Agencies may assist you. Talking about your feelings with your son or daughter will give them confidence to include you in their search. Try to build insight into the journey your son or daughter is taking by reading about search and reunion experiences. Talking to other adoptive parents may also provide some support.

Sources of help:

Your local Social Services Department's Post Adoption Support Services

The Adoption Agency involved in your adoption.

Talk Adoption – Tel: 0808 808 1234.

Website: www.talkadoption.co.uk

For people under 26 who have an issue with adoption:

Norcap, 112 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LU

Tel: 01865 875000 Fax: 01865 875686 Website: www.norcap.org.uk

Registrar General England and Wales – GRO Office, Adoptions Section, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 2HH

Legal context

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, adopted people have the legal right to apply for a copy of their original birth certificate and adoption records at the age of 18.

Adopted people aged 18 and over have the right to ask for help in obtaining further information about their adoption and to make contact with their birth relatives.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 introduces support provisions for search and reunions for adopted adults and their birth family with effect from December 2005.

The Act also provides birth relatives with the right to ask the adoption agency to provide an intermediary service so the adopted person can be informed of the birth relative's interest and wish for contact. It is then up to the adopted person to decide how they wish to proceed, if at all.

Guidance and further information on these changes in the law are available from the agency.

Adopted people and birth relatives can also register their choice not to be contacted and have any information shared. Details of how to register with NORCAP or with GRO Southport Contact Register Service are available from the agencies concerned. Their addresses are provided in this leaflet.

Obtaining birth record information

Those adopted before 12 November 1975 in England and Wales and before 18 December 1987 in Northern Ireland who want information about their birth records and who don't already know their birth name have to have a meeting with a social worker (counsellor) at a social

services department, or at the voluntary agency which arranged the adoption, or, in England and Wales, at the General Register Office. People adopted after those dates can choose whether to see a counsellor or not. This gives them an opportunity to talk things over as well as get some facts – such as their original name – which will enable them to get a copy of their first birth certificate.

Searching

Adopted people often need to search for information about their birth family. This is not a negative reflection on your care as adoptive parents. It is a natural urge to explore origins and identity. Recent research suggests that the majority of adopted people will wish to search at some stage of their lives.

Life events that may trigger a search/reunion

- ◆ Coming of age
- ◆ Marriage and birth of children
- ◆ Health concerns
- ◆ Loss of an adoptive parent or sibling
- ◆ A sibling who has searched or who has had contact from their birth family
- ◆ Contact from a birth relative

This search may involve the following issues:

- ◆ **Roots** – Where am I from? Who am I like physically?
- ◆ **Relationships** – Do I have birth relatives?
- ◆ **Reasons** – Why was I adopted?

Mixed emotions

Adopted people may struggle with the mixed emotions of curiosity and worry about what they may discover and the fear of hurting you. They may assume you will feel betrayed or threatened by their decision to search for further information about their birth family. They may fear your distress, anger and the possibility of your rejection.

Although most of those who search for their birth families have a good relationship with their adoptive parents, they may still find it difficult to talk to them about their birth parents and their decision to try and find them.

Many adopted people are torn between wanting to confide in their adoptive parents and wanting to protect them.

It is helpful if adoptive parents can offer them support, both practically and emotionally, but it is generally not a good idea for anyone other than the adopted person to take the initiative for searching.

Try to create an atmosphere in which adoption and the possibility of searching are open topics.

Respect the young person's right to privacy and personal choice.

Advise them of professional sources of advice and support that are available.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are perhaps in more need of parental support and guidance as they may be less able to accept the uncertainty and outcome of a search and contact with their birth family.

Research says few adopted people regret a reunion with their birth family, even if the end result is of minimal contact, as it has helped them to integrate the past events. It had also provided a more realistic