



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

## **SERVICES FOR BIRTH RELATIVES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

- **Information on contacting adopted adults whose adoption was before 30th December 2005**
- **Other services for birth relatives offered by Support After Adoption**

## **Services for birth relatives**

Nottinghamshire's Support After Adoption team offers support, advice, information and counselling to adopted people and birth relatives of any age and at any stage of the adoption.

We understand that losing a child to adoption has a long term impact upon many people. Often there was no support for birth parents at the time of the adoption. Brothers and sisters may have found out more recently about a birth sibling who was adopted. The feeling of loss can be substantial, especially if the birth relative has no information about the adopted child.

From our work with birth relatives we have learnt about:

- The feeling of unresolved loss
- The desire for news and information
- The needs of brothers and sisters separated by adoption
- The challenge of facing up to what happened in the past, for example where children were removed from birth parents

Our social workers are qualified and registered and have extensive experience of adoption. We can offer:

- Telephone and email advice and support
- Understanding of and support for the grief and loss you are feeling and support in living with this
- An appointment with a social worker to discuss your situation
- Sharing non-identifying information from records. This does not identify the adoptive family but can help to answer some questions a birth relative may have
- Support in tracing and reunions (known as an intermediary service)
- Ongoing contact with our service via our mailing list and newsletter if requested
- Support for black and minority ethnic service users
- Reading material and useful websites for information

## **What is an intermediary service?**

If you and your adopted relative are both over the age of 18, you have the legal right to ask an Adoption Agency or Adoption Support Agency to provide an intermediary service, so that if the Adoption Agency agrees you can let your relative know you would like to make contact.

Nottinghamshire County Council is an Adoption Agency and can provide an intermediary service, however we will only take up applications where both parties are over the age of 25.

An intermediary service is a go-between and a mediator between the birth relative and the adopted person. The intermediary can ask the adopted person whether they want identifying information about themselves to be passed to a birth relative.

## **Who is this service for?**

This service is for:

- People who are aged 25 or over
- Are resident in Nottinghamshire
- Who have a birth relative over the age of 25 who was adopted before 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005
- Any younger related siblings adopted into the same family must be over 18, unless there are exceptional circumstances

NB We operate a prioritisation system – see under 'Priorities and Waiting Times'

Due to our limited capacity we can only offer Intermediary Services to direct birth relatives eg: birth parents, siblings or grandparents. This means if you are a cousin for example of an adopted adult we are not able to offer you a service but we can offer you advice on how to request this through a private agency.

### **What if I've had a Letterbox?**

If indirect contact was set up at the time of the adoption (known as a Letterbox arrangement) and has been ongoing, we will be able to help arrange direct contact if the adopted person wishes this after they have reached the age of 25. It is also possible to continue the Letterbox arrangement from 18 - 25 if the adopted person feels this would be best for them.

### **What happens when I apply?**

When you apply for this service we will meet with you and talk to you about your request and listen to your concerns.

If we are able to offer you an intermediary service, we will give advice about how to prepare for contact and support with issues raised. We will help you to consider the possible impact on the adopted person, and whether an approach at this time is likely to be in everyone's interests.

In some cases we will not be able to offer an intermediary service, but may be able to help in

other ways. You will still be able to leave information on adoption records.

If we agree to provide an intermediary service, we will establish the current identity of the adopted adult. We have a range of information sources we can use. After this we will try to trace and contact them. Although we may be able to find out quite a lot about the adopted person you are seeking we cannot by law, share any 'identifying' information with you. For example we cannot tell you their name, address, name of partner or job without their permission. We can however, gather this information and use it for tracing purposes.

If the adoption was arranged by Nottinghamshire but you live elsewhere, you will need to apply to your local post adoption service or another adoption support agency near to you.

### **What about the adopted person I am trying to contact? Will you help them?**

When we have contacted the adopted person, they may themselves need counselling and might request information about their own background from our records of their adoption. This can be particularly sensitive where children were removed from their family on grounds of abuse or neglect. Therefore the adopted person may need time before they can consider contact with their birth relative.

If this is the situation we will discuss it with you as the birth relative, including your feelings now about what happened many years ago.

In some cases an adopted person may have registered a 'veto'. This means they have said in writing that they do not wish us to contact them under any circumstances, or only in certain circumstances. We would be bound to respect their wishes, but we may still be able to provide you with some limited information which does not include any details which might disclose their identity.

The Support After Adoption team have experience of working with the emotional impact of being traced and the need for support in some reunions.

### **How do I apply for the service?**

If you would like to apply for this service, contact:

Support After Adoption Team

Postal address: County Hall, Loughborough Road,  
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP

Telephone: 0115 8041125

Email: [support.afteradoption@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:support.afteradoption@nottscc.gov.uk)

We will ask you to complete an application form. The information you give us will help us to find the records of the adoption. We cannot proceed with your request without receiving this form and if we

remind you about this and do not hear back from you we will close your case. This is due to limited capacity.

We may also ask you to register with the Adoption Contact Register if you haven't already done so. This is important as it may show that the adopted person has already registered a wish for contact, or perhaps for no contact.

When we receive your application we will offer you an appointment to discuss it. We will ask you to bring evidence of your age and identity (preferably photo identification such as a passport or driving licence) and evidence of your relationship to the person you want to approach (e.g. birth or marriage certificate). If you are a birth father, please note that you will have to be named in our records if you are not named on the original birth certificate.

### **Priorities and Waiting Times**

There is a high demand for this service and there is likely to be a waiting time of several months.

We are bound by government regulations to prioritise adoptions made before 1975 or where applicants are very elderly or terminally ill.

### **How much does it cost?**

At the present time we do not charge for counselling or advice, or for accessing information from records



held by Nottinghamshire County Council. This may change in the future. Other agencies may charge us for providing information we need from records they hold, and this will be discussed with you.

Costs which will be passed on to you may include:

- Up to £30 fees to the Registrar General if we need information from them to identify the adoption agency or the identity of the adopted person
- £20 fee may be charged if information has to be obtained from a court
- If the person you are seeking is very difficult to find we may recommend a private tracing report which will cost around £150

Once details of the adopted person's new identity have been established, we need to find where they live.

We may be able to ask one of our own volunteers to do some of this work, and in this case the only charges to you will be the costs of purchasing birth, marriage or death certificates needed to confirm current names and addresses. If your relative proves difficult to find we may need to ask you to pay for a private researcher to trace on our behalf.

## **Other information**

### *Equal Opportunities*

Nottinghamshire County Council tries to be fair and to work within an ethos of equal opportunity and respect for everyone regardless of racial, religious or cultural heritage, language, sexual orientation, gender, age and ability/disability.

### *Special Needs*

We will try to provide an appropriate service to service users with special needs, e.g. larger print, translated or Braille copies of our written material can be provided on request.

People who use wheelchairs can get into our office.

### *Feedback and Complaints*

We try to provide services of a high standard and welcome your comments and participation towards achieving this aim.

You have a right to complain if you are not happy with the service you have received.

## **Useful organisations**

The following organisations may be useful for birth relatives:

**[www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk](http://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk)** - for information and advice about adoption, search and reunions.

### **Registrar General (Office of National Statistics)**

General Register Office, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road, Southport PR8 2HH

Website: [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk)



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## **Contact Us**

For further information, including suggested reading material, please contact us at:

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