



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

SERVICES FOR ADOPTED ADULTS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

- **Information about access to records and intermediary services for adopted adults whose adoption was before 30th December 2005**
- **Other services for adopted adults offered by Support After Adoption**

Nottinghamshire's Support After Adoption team offers support, advice, information and counselling to adopted people and birth relatives.

We understand that being adopted has an impact throughout someone's life. From our work with adopted adults we know about the need to have the opportunity to talk to someone about:

- Feeling different
- Growing up in an adoptive family
- The need for information from adoption records to understand the reasons for the adoption
- Advice about searching for birth relatives
- Worries about upsetting adoptive parents
- Emotional support before, during and after a reunion
- The disappointment and frustration of not finding your relative or not having a reunion
- The need to meet other adopted adults
- The impact of sexuality, gender, race and disability on adoption issues

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

- Telephone and email for advice, information and support, including how to apply for access to birth records
- Individual support on any adoption related matter (e.g. loss and grief, identity etc)
- Information packs which give advice about tracing birth relatives
- Help to access adoption agency records
- An intermediary service to make contact with birth relatives
- Support in reunions with birth family
- Practical advice and emotional support, particularly counselling about the complexities of reunions
- Support for black and minority ethnic service users
- Reading material and useful websites for information
- Inclusion on our mailing list

Access to Records – who is this service for?

This service is for people who want information from their records about their background, who may or may not want to go on to trace and contact their birth relatives.

You must be:

- Aged 18 or over
- Adopted before 30th December 2005
- Resident in Nottinghamshire

For people whose adoption records are held by Nottinghamshire County Council but who live elsewhere, we will advise you to contact your local post-adoption team in the area where you live.

What information am I entitled to?

Adopted adults have the right to apply for information to enable them to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate.

If you were adopted before 12th November 1975, this information must be shared with you by an adoption advisor.

If adopted after that date, you can choose whether you would like to see an advisor or not, but it may help as they will be able to offer practical advice and guidance, as well as support and counselling about the effects tracing birth relatives may have on you, your adoptive family and your birth relatives.

You also have the right to ask the court which made the adoption order to name the agency which holds your records. Adoption records have more

information about the circumstances of your adoption.

You have the right to request an intermediary service if you want to contact a birth relative.

How do I apply?

If you do not know your original birth name or which agency has your records, you can apply to the General Register Office. (The address is on page 5).

If you know which adoption agency has your records you can apply directly to the agency. If Nottinghamshire County Council holds your records you can contact Support After Adoption (see page 5) and we will discuss your request.

How do I find out more information about my background?

Adoption Agencies can give information to adopted adults from their adoption records.

Nottinghamshire County Council, as an adoption agency, keeps case records and other pieces of information about the adoptions it has arranged.

If another agency has arranged your adoption we can request these records for you.

If you want information from your records, we will arrange a meeting for you with a qualified social worker experienced in adoption work. This information is highly confidential and you will be asked to provide proof of your identity at the

meeting (preferably photo identification such as passport or driving licence).

We will give you a written summary of the information from the case record, which will include background information about your family of origin, the reasons for the adoption and can include identifying information such as names and addresses. The information may include some original correspondence and copies of original documents. The amount of information recorded on case files varies enormously and in some cases is sparse.

How do I trace birth relatives?

We recommend that you request information from your records before you decide to trace your birth relatives. We recognise that many adopted people benefit from doing their own search and we can provide information about how to trace birth relatives using public records. Please ask for a free tracing pack. If you have difficulty in accessing public records information we may be able to help with your search.

What if I've had a Letterbox?

If indirect contact was set up at the time of the adoption order (known as a Letterbox arrangement), and has been ongoing, we can help arrange direct contact, discuss continuing the Letterbox or other contact options.

What is an intermediary service?

Nottinghamshire County Council is an adoption agency and you can request an intermediary service.

An intermediary is a go-between and a mediator between the adopted person and their birth relatives. Once you have found the birth relative you have been looking for you can ask us to make an initial contact with them on your behalf. We strongly recommend that the first approach is made by an intermediary. This is because we can offer support, advice and counselling to both parties if needed. We can also receive and forward letters until such time as both of you feel ready to exchange addresses.

How do I arrange a reunion meeting?

The impact of reunions can be very powerful and preparation for reunion is important. We can help both parties prepare for a reunion meeting and can provide somewhere to meet if required. At Support After Adoption, we have a lot of experience of working with the emotional impact of tracing or being traced and are aware of the long-term need for support in some reunions.

What about the relative I'm trying to contact? Will you help them?

Once the birth relative you are looking for is contacted, they may themselves need counselling. They may want to discuss their feelings now about what happened many years ago, and how to share

the news of the contact with their family, particularly where the adoption has not been talked about openly. They may need time before they can consider contact, and in some cases, sadly, may never feel able to take that step. If your birth relative does not feel able to have direct contact we can often pass on to you information about their current circumstances with their consent.

How will I know whether my birth relative wants me to contact them?

Some birth relatives may have put their names onto a contact register. The purpose of a contact register is to put adopted people and their birth relatives in touch with each other where both parties have registered that this is what they want.

Relatives can also leave details to say they don't want to be contacted.

There is an Adoption Contact Register administered by the General Register Office (see p.5). Others may have left up to date details on adoption records held by the adoption agency.

Birth relative's rights

Since December 30th 2005, birth relatives can ask for an intermediary service to trace and contact their relative who was adopted. They cannot be given details which could identify you without your consent.

What if I don't want to be contacted?

You can use contact registers to record a wish for contact or for no contact, and you can also register a 'veto' with the adoption agency. This may be an 'absolute' veto (which means you do not wish us to contact you in any circumstances) or a 'qualified' veto (which means we would only contact you in circumstances which you have specified).

Registering a veto has many consequences and so involves a detailed discussion with the adoption agency first. If you wish to register a veto we can discuss this with you further. You will be asked to complete a 'veto' form.

Priorities and waiting times

By law we have to give priority to cases where the adoption order was made before 12th November 1975, or where you or your relative may be very elderly or terminally ill. Beyond this we will prioritise according to whether:

- Where Nottinghamshire arranged the adoption and thus holds the records
- Where sisters and brothers have been separated by adoption.

This means there will be a waiting time of several months for some people.

How much does it cost?

There is no charge to adopted adults for advice or for accessing information from records held by Nottinghamshire. At present there is no charge for

an intermediary service. Many people want to do their own search, but where this presents difficulty, we may be able to offer the help of a volunteer. In this case you will be expected to pay for the purchase of birth, marriage or death certificates needed to confirm current names and addresses. Applicants can opt to have the tracing undertaken by private researchers if they wish.

Other information

Equal Opportunities

Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services tries to be fair and to work within an ethos of equal opportunity and respect for all 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 access 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 addresses and websites may be helpful for adopted people:

www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk

For information and advice about adoption, search and reunions, including a guide to tracing which can be downloaded.

Registrar General (Office of National Statistics)

General Register Office, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road,

Southport PR8 2HH

Website: www.gro.gov.uk



Contact us

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

Support After Adoption Team

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Website:

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