



## **Information on Counselling in Search of Origins: For Adoptive Parents**

Information about support available to adoptive parents whose children want information about their origins.

We offer a Counselling in Search of Origins service to adoptees and people “looked after” and “accommodated” (brought up in care) in the past.

We offer support to all adoptive parents, at any time as your child is growing up and particularly if your adopted son or daughter is interested in exploring their origins and decides to find out more about their birth family.

This can be a difficult and threatening time for members of the adoptive family and the support of counselling staff could be of value to you.

### **Adoptees Rights**

People adopted in Scotland have the right of access to their birth information from the age of 16 years. While many do not show any interest in this until they are older (on average 20-25 years), there is a growing number of younger people enquiring about how to obtain information and perhaps to trace birth family members.

### **Telling and Sharing**

It is of the utmost importance that you tackle the question of telling your child of his or her adoption from as early as age as possible. Be prepared to talk to them and share with them the information given by the agency concerning their background and birth family in as sensitive and kindly way as you can, while he or she is growing up.

They should always be able to feel comfortable at raising these issues with you when they wish to do so, without feeling it is a taboo subject in the household.

### **The Need to Know**

Many adopted people have a natural curiosity about their adoption and origins. Signs of interest in this should never be taken as a criticism of your care and upbringing of them, nor should you think this interest and the outcome will threaten your relationship. It is clear from experience that where openness and support are offered by adoptive parents, the eventual tracing and finding of birth family members strengthens the relationship between an adoptee and his adoptive family, rather than threatening, or weakening it.

### **Updating and Tracing**

The counselling in Search of Origins service offers assistance, not only in locating and sharing any initial information on the background and adoption, but in updating that information and tracing the present whereabouts of birth family members.

It is also usual to use our counselling staff as an intermediary at the stage a birth family member's whereabouts have been established, to make the initial approach and to arrange, where appropriate, a meeting.

This can be a worrying time for adoptive parents and the support of a member of our counselling staff can be reassuring and helpful, throughout this process.

For more information call us on 01294 311505

### **Sharing of Information**

As your child is growing up, it is possible for you to share information on how she or he is progressing. By using the "letterbox" system you can share information with his or her birth parents/families, through this or another agency, and you can receive regular updates from birth families about what is happening in their lives. The "letterbox" is a confidential service where information is passed on by counselling staff.

This sharing of information is without doubt helpful to all concerned – the child growing up with a realistic and up-to-date picture of her or his birth family and, in particular, the birth mother receiving the assurance of how her child is developing.

If you are interested in making available such information on your child and receiving periodic reports on the birth family members please contact the agency who arranged the adoption of your child or any of the addresses below:

North Ayrshire Council  
Social Services  
Children & Families Services  
47 West Road  
Irvine, KA12 8RE  
Telephone: 01294 311505  
Fax: 01294 274525

BIRTHLINK  
21 Castle Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 3DN  
Telephone: 0131 225 6441  
Fax: 07070 780579

Birthlink maintains a confidential computerised Adoption Contact Register for Scotland. The purpose of the register is to put adopted people and their birth parents, or other birth relatives, in touch with each other when both parties want this to happen.

On contact, Birthlink will answer your questions and send you a registration form. There is a fee to register. On registering your information is entered into the Adoption Contract Register for Scotland. It will be cross referenced against all existing entries and also against future registrations.

If a match is made they will contact you and act as a go-between to arrange a meeting or exchange news. If you want to call a halt or pause the process at any time the decision is yours.

### **Who can register?**

- Adopted people over the age of 16 years, whose birth or adoption took place in Scotland.
- Birth mothers, birth fathers and any other birth relatives, where the adopted person's birth and/or adoption took place in Scotland.
- Adoptive parents on behalf of a child under the age of 15 years, where the child birth and/or adoption took place in Scotland.

### **SCOTTISH ADOPTION ADVICE SERVICE**

Suite 5/3, Skypark SP5  
45 Finnieston Street  
Glasgow  
G3 8JU  
Tel: 0141 248 7530  
Email: [saas@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:saas@barnardos.org.uk)

They are a voluntary agency funded by Barnardo's and are specialised in the field of adoption counselling and post adoption support.

They can help:

- Adoptees – with counselling and searching for birth relatives,
- Adoptive parents – with advice and counselling about the adoption process and post adoption support to assist parents in dealing with difficult or challenging behaviour or with issues about “telling” children about their adoption or coping with their own feelings.
- Birth parents and relatives – who may grieve for many years for the child who has been placed for adoption. Counselling is offered as well as guidance to make it as easy as possible for the child to know their birth parents or relatives are interested in contact.
- Adults – who may have grown up “in care” and step parents enquiring about adoption.

They do not charge a fee but accept donations.