

Adoption

# Information for Adopted Adults



## **Introduction**

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 allows adopted adults and their birth relatives to apply to an Adoption Support Agency for an Intermediary service.

An Adoption Support Agency is an agency providing counselling, advice, support and an intermediary service to adopted adults and birth relatives wanting to make contact.

Adopted adults can view their files, trace relatives and/or seek a reunion. On reaching the age of 18, the adopted person can apply to the Registrar General for the information needed to obtain a certified copy of their record of birth and can approach the placing agency for information about their background.

## **I am an adopted adult – what can I do?**

### **How can I obtain a service?**

You can obtain a service by contacting the Permanency and Adoption Support Team in Tower Hamlets. You will be given information on how to begin the process of finding out about your past. This can include helping you to access your adoption file. Tower Hamlets provides intermediary services for adopted adults and birth relatives. If you wish to trace and meet your birth relatives we can help you with this.

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

- If you have reached the age of 18; you can apply to the General Register Office for information to obtain a copy of your original birth certificate. This will be sent to the Permanency and Adoption Support Team in the area in which you live or to the named link person from an Adoption Support Agency of your choice. The Registrar will provide your birth mother's name, your original name, date of birth and the area in which your birth was registered. This will enable you to obtain a copy of your original birth certificate.
- If you know the name of the agency or local authority that placed you for adoption, you can contact them directly for access to your adoption records. These records now have to be held for 100 years.
- You can request an Intermediary service from an Adoption Support Agency (ASA.)
- You can put your name on Part 1 of the Adoption Contact Register which is held at the General Register Office. This register is set up to link adopted adults with their birth relatives. Relatives can register a wish to contact you on Part 2. When you apply for information to get your birth certificate you will be sent information about the register.
- You can register a wish for No Contact with the General Register Office or a Veto on contact with the agency that placed you for adoption

- If your adoption was private; an Adoption Support Agency may be able to help you to get information.

## **How can I find out about my adoption?**

If you know the name of the adoption agency that arranged your adoption, you can contact them directly to ask to see your file. Adoption Agencies are now required to keep files for 100 years, previously they were held for 75 years. If you do not know the agency, then you should contact the General Register Office for an application form to apply for your birth records.

If you were adopted through Tower Hamlets it is likely that we hold your adoption files. If you do not know the agency that placed you, we can help you to locate them. When your file is found we will arrange to meet with you to share the information. We may need to see you several times depending on the size of the file and the sensitivity of the information it contains. We have to remove third party information, which is information that does not directly relate to you or to your adoption.

## **I do not live in Tower Hamlets, how can I access my file?**

We cannot post the file directly to you. If you cannot come to our offices we can arrange to send your file to an Adoption Support Agency in your area. You would need to give us your written permission to do so by completing a form that we will give to you. They will then contact you to make arrangements for you to see the file.

If you live overseas we can arrange to send a copy of your file to an approved agency in the country in which you reside. However you must be aware that adoption agencies outside the UK may operate under different legislation.

## **What will be in my adoption file?**

Files will vary in size and volume. In the past files were smaller as agencies did not collect a large amount of information. Generally, files contain information about the circumstances of your adoption, medical and health matters. There may be letters on the file or photographs.

Many adopted adults find it helpful to see the file before starting to trace. Seeing the file for the first time can be an emotional experience. The records may not always be written sensitively and can be judgmental or upsetting. Your social worker will be available to support you. Adoption agencies can exercise some discretion when sharing the records with you. Tower Hamlets will share all information we hold about you and the circumstances of your adoption unless we are concerned about your welfare or the welfare of others.

We usually give you a copy of your file notes to take with you. We will give you the originals of photographs, letters from birth relatives or certificates but will always keep a copy on the file. You will not be able to see information

relating to other people, which may be held on your file. This could include reports on your adopters or medical reports that are not about you.

### **Do I need to have counselling?**

If you were adopted before November 12<sup>th</sup> 1975 you must see a counsellor (normally an Adoption Support Social Worker) to receive the information you need to obtain a copy of your birth certificate. If you wish to trace birth relatives the adoption support social worker can help you to do this and to think about how tracing and meeting birth relatives will affect you, your adoptive family, your birth relatives and their family. Talking with a post adoption worker can help you to explore ways of searching and managing a reunion and prepare you for the outcome.

If you were adopted after November 12<sup>th</sup> 1975 but before 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005 you do not have to see a counsellor. However, we will offer this service to you.

### **Will there be a cost?**

You will need to pay for the purchase of your birth certificate. If you decide to trace and cannot do this yourself, you may wish to use the services of our family researcher and there will be a charge. Should you decide to put your name on the Adoption Contact Register there is charge. There may be other charges for obtaining information from the Registry Office or from the Court that granted your adoption order. Your social worker can advise you of these costs. Before we can offer you a service you will need to provide the following:

- Proof of identity if you are applying for access to your adoption records, e.g. Passport or photo driving licence.

If you are seeking an intermediary service, as well proof of your identity you will need to provide proof of your relationship to the person you want to trace.

### **Can Tower Hamlets help me to trace my relatives?**

We can offer a limited tracing service. We can advise you about searching from public records and direct you to reputable tracing agencies. We have an experienced family researcher who can trace on your behalf. However, there is a charge for this service.

Some adopted people like to carry out their own search and your social worker can discuss this and any other options for tracing with you. If you locate your birth relative we can act as an intermediary and write a sensitive letter to your relative to tell them of your interest.

During this period we will continue to support you irrespective of whether your reunion is successful or not. If your relative is deceased, or your request is met with rejection we will support you as much as we can. You may need additional services and we can provide information on other sources of help.

## **I do not wish to be contacted by my birth relatives. What can I do?**

- **Registering No Contact**  
As an adopted adult if you do not wish to be contacted by your birth relatives there are several ways to prevent this. You can register a wish for No Contact. You can specify the relatives that you do not wish to have contact with. This is done via the Adoption Contact Register.
- **Registering a Veto**  
If you do not wish to have any contact with birth relatives you can register a veto with the adoption agency that placed you. There are two types of veto:
  - **An Absolute Veto** - this would prevent an intermediary service from making an approach to you regardless of the circumstances.
  - **A Qualified Veto**  
You can state that you would accept an approach from named birth relatives. An intermediary agency would only approach you if contacted by these relatives. It is important that you fully understand the implications of putting any of this into place. The adoption support social worker will help you to think about this so that you can make an informed decision. It is important to know that although you may have registered a veto, if your relative has been able to obtain information they could make a direct approach to you. Because of this, we think that it is important to review these options and we will probably approach you periodically to see if your views have changed.

## **What if I am not happy with the service I receive?**

If you are dissatisfied with the service you receive you can contact the Adoption Team Manager who will try to resolve the problem.

Should this not be possible we can advise you on how to take your concerns further through our complaints process.

## **How can I contact the Permanency and Adoption Support Team?**

You can write telephone or email the team for a service.

The address for contact is:  
Permanency and Adoption Support Team  
Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent,  
London, E14 2BG  
Tel: **020 7364 5431**  
Email: **adoption@towerhamlets.gov.uk**

## **Useful website**

CoramBAAF Search and Reunion  
**[www.corambaaf.org.uk/adoption-search-reunion](http://www.corambaaf.org.uk/adoption-search-reunion)**