

Adult Adoption Counselling Service

'Adoption is more than a one-off event. It is an evolving life-long process for all those involved.'

DCSF guidance

What is the Adult Adoption Counselling Service?

Many adopted people decide, at some point in their lives, to find out more about the circumstances which led to their adoption and to seek information about their birth families.

The Devon Adoption Team offers a counselling service to adults who were adopted and now want information about their birth history. If you are over 18 years of age and living in Devon, or if Devon holds your adoption records, you can contact us to get help accessing your records. We can also act as intermediaries between you and any birth relatives you want to contact.

How do I find my birth relatives?

At the age of 18 people who have been adopted have the legal right to apply to get a certified copy of their birth records, held by the General Register Office (GRO).

If you want to get a copy of your original birth certificate you should write to the GRO at Trafalgar Road, Southport PR8 2HH phone **0151 471 4830** or visit www.gro.gov.uk

You will need to state in your letter that you are an adopted person and the GRO will send you an application form.

If you were adopted before 12 November 1975 you will have to attend a counselling session with an adoption counsellor before the GRO releases your birth details. A relative or friend can attend the appointment with you if you want their support.

If you were adopted after 12 November 1975 you do not have to have counselling, but it can be helpful.

What happens then?

Adoption social workers will try to track down information about the circumstances of your adoption and any available details of original birth families. This information comes from any files that may still be held by adoption agencies such as Devon County Council, or other local authorities, adoption charities, or the relevant courts.

This service is funded by Devon County Council so is free for Devon residents, however we are limited in how far we can search for you.

We will have a meeting with you to go through any further information. In situations where adopted adults are affected by issues stemming from adoption, some counselling may also be provided.

Can I search for my birth relatives by myself?

We can support and encourage you in searching for your birth parents yourself. However we would strongly advise you to use our support when making contact with a birth relative.

What if a birth relative wants to contact me?

You may have been contacted unexpectedly by a post-adoption worker on behalf of a birth relative who wants to make contact with you. You can contact us if you want to talk this through with someone and decide whether you want to respond and how you should do it.

We don't provide an intermediary service for birth relatives who want to contact adopted adults. This service is provided by registered adoption support agencies. We may make exceptions to this for young people under 25 who have been through the care system.

What if I don't want to contact my birth family?

You can decide whether you want to communicate with your birth relatives and if they can receive, or provide, any information.

A 'veto' can be placed on adoption records saying how much contact is wanted from a relative through an intermediary. The veto may outline certain circumstances when contact would be wanted, such as when important medical information has come to light.

How long will it take?

There is a high demand for this service so we have a waiting list of between five and six months. It can also take another two to three months for agencies to send us the documents that we need. We do always try to provide a service as swiftly as possible and prioritise cases of urgent need.

Where can I find out more?

Devon County Council Adult Adoption Counselling Service phone **01392 386665**, **01392 386645** or **01392 388076**

National organisation for counselling adoptees and their parents (NORCAP) phone **01865 875 000** or visit www.norcap.org.uk

Natural Parents Network (NPN) phone **0845 456 5031** or visit www.n-p-n.co.uk

Post Adoption Centre phone **0870 777 2197** or visit www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk

BAAF www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk

The Independent Review Mechanism - can provide support if your application for information about your adoption is turned down. www.irm-adoption.org.uk