



Frequently Asked Questions

For adults adopted after 30th December 2005 who are seeking their adoption records and/or contact with birth family members

I'd like to access my adoption records. Where do I start?

From the age of 18, you can request your adoption records from the agency which arranged your adoption. If your adoption was arranged by one of these Local Authorities below, you can contact us at Adopt Thames Valley to request your records:

- Oxfordshire County Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Swindon Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

You can contact the Adults Affected by Adoption Team to make a referral via email:
ATV.PermanenceSupport@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Or by phone:
01865 323121

What if I don't know the name of the agency that arranged my adoption?

You can get this information from the General Register Office. You will need to fill out form 'PC2' which you can get from the Adoption section on their website, or we can provide you with a copy of the form if needed.

What happens when I contact Adopt Thames Valley to make a referral for my adoption records?

You will be asked to complete a referral form with details such as your name, date of birth, contact information, your birth name, birth parents' names, adoptive parents' names and the date of your adoption. We only ask for these details to help us locate your adoption records in our archives.

A member of our team will then aim to get in touch with you within 10 working days in order to arrange an appointment with you and get the process started.

What happens at this appointment?

This can take place via a video call, or it can be in person at one of our offices if you prefer. We will need to verify your identity via a passport, driving license or other form of photo ID.

We will also talk with you about your reasons for accessing your adoption records and what you already know about your adoption so that we can try and locate all the necessary information for you. We'll also ask whether you have any support needs so we can make sure information is shared with you in the most helpful and supportive way.

This appointment is also a good opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have, and to voice any worries or concerns.





What information can I have about my adoption?

You have the right to ask for any information and documentation which was given to your adoptive parents when you were adopted. You can also request information to help you obtain a copy of your original birth certificate and Court documents about your adoption.

The information given to your adoptive parents at the time of your adoption usually includes:

- Child's Permanence Report - A report written by the Social Worker who worked with you prior to your adoption. It provides information about you, your birth family and your early experiences.
- Life Story Book – A book written by your Social Worker to help you understand your early life experiences and your journey to adoption.
- Adoption Medical Report – A summary of your medical information and that of your birth family members.
- Later Life Letter – A letter written by your Social Worker to help explain decisions made in your early years and provide more information about your early life.
- Adoption Support Plan – A document which sets out the kind of help and support you and your adoptive family needed when you moved to live with them.
- Adoption Placement Report – A document that explains why your adoptive parents were chosen as the right match for you.
- Adoption Placement Plan – A document detailing the practical planning for you to move to your new adoptive family.

Is there any reason I would not be able to have the information my adoptive parents were given?

Only in exceptional circumstances, for example if sharing information could place you or another person at significant risk of harm. In that case, we would need to apply to the High Court for an order to withhold information to safeguard your safety and wellbeing. The High Court must be convinced that the circumstances are exceptional.

How long will it take for me to get my adoption records?

The timing largely depends on the number of requests we are dealing with at the time. The team works through requests for records in the order in which they are received, unless there is an exceptional circumstance which requires priority. It can take several weeks to review your records, identify the documents you are entitled to receive, and prepare your summary. We aim to have your records ready for you within 12 weeks of your referral, however it can occasionally be longer if we have had a large volume of requests.

How will you give me my adoption records?

A member of our team (preferably the same person you met for your initial appointment) will arrange to meet with you to share your adoption records.

As adoption records can be lengthy and difficult to interpret, we will prepare a summary containing the key information about your birth family members, your early care and the reasons and events leading to your adoption. You can also have copies of the records themselves, but it is often helpful to start with the simplified summary to understand the basics before moving onto the more detailed documents.





We will work with you to understand how you need this information to be shared. It can be done gradually over several sessions to help you process the information without feeling overwhelmed. If you require additional emotional support, your adoption records can be shared within, or alongside, sessions with a therapist. Therapy can be funded via the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund if you qualify for funding. See this website for eligibility criteria: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adoption-support-fund-asf#funding-eligibility>

Once your records are shared with you, they are yours to keep.

I currently live far away from the Adopt Thames Valley area. How can I receive my records from such a distance?

In some cases, it might be appropriate for us to meet virtually to share your adoption records. However, our preference would always be for you to be able to meet your worker in person to receive your records, so you have thorough support.

In this case, if you would like us to, we can liaise with your Local Authority Adoption Support Team and send your adoption records to them so they can meet with you in person and share your records with you.

How will accessing my adoption records affect me?

It is impossible to know how anyone will feel when they see information about their adoption and birth history. It depends on many things, such as, how much information you already know, the reasons you were adopted, how you feel about your adoption, your relationship with your adoptive family, your feelings about your birth family, and your general health and wellbeing. You may experience a wide range of emotions, so it is important that you have some support around you. You can always talk to your allocated worker who can give you the support and advice you may need.

I already have the documents that my adoptive parents were given when I was placed with them, but I would like more detailed information about my adoption or birth relatives, or other specific reports or paperwork from my file. Can I have more information?

We understand how important it is for adopted people to have all the information about their family background and why they were adopted. However, we also have a duty to protect the wellbeing and privacy of all the people involved in your life before you were adopted. If the additional information you are asking for relates only to you, we may be able to share this with you where appropriate.

If the additional information you are asking for is about other people, such as your birth family members, we can only share this additional information with their consent. We would therefore need to try and contact those individuals to seek their consent. Naturally, in doing so, some birth family members may then enquire about having contact with you, so it is important to consider your feelings about this before we take this step.

Can you refuse to give me additional information about my adoption and birth family (beyond what my adoptive parents were given)?

Yes, if we believe that the information could negatively affect you or other people involved. If that is the case, we will explain our reasons for this decision. You have the right to ask for an independent review of the decision within 40 days of the date you were informed. We can give you information about how to do this.





Supporting the early stages of contact:

We help you get things started. It can be difficult to know what to say, how to ask sensitive questions about your history, or how to move things forward. We will determine what each of you wants from contact and help to find a path and a pace that suits you both.

Sometimes our involvement as an intermediary can be very brief, if both parties decide they are happy to exchange contact details early on and it is appropriate to do so. For others, we may remain involved longer to assist with relationship building.

Is contact always successful?

Not always.

It is never our role to pressure anyone into pursuing contact. We can offer support, advice and information but ultimately, if someone does not wish to proceed, then that is their choice, which we must respect. In these cases, we would always suggest that they keep our contact details should they change their minds in the future.

Even when contact with a birth relative does proceed, sometimes it does not turn out the way you might hope. Some adoptees and birth relatives are curious as to the initial approach, but then may feel that it is not for them and therefore stop responding. Some may find they do not have as much in common with their birth relative as they had hoped and find it difficult to get along with them. Some can feel disappointed by meeting their birth relative. We will support you, and your birth relative, whatever the outcome. If you need additional support beyond what we can provide, we will signpost you for further help.

Here are some things to consider in making contact with a birth relative:

- How might your request for contact affect other people in your family?
- What are your expectations? Are you hoping for information only, or are you seeking ongoing contact and a relationship with your birth relative? Remember that they might want something very different.
- If you feel it has all gone wrong and turns out nothing like you had hoped, will you be able to manage this? Have you got enough support around you to help you?
- Making contact with a birth relative can take up a lot of emotional energy. Do you have other major pressures or life events happening at the moment that could make this harder to manage?

Can a birth relative make contact with me or ask for information about me?

Yes, a birth relative, or any other person connected with your adoption, has the right to approach the Agency which arranged your adoption to request information from your adoption file or support with making contact with you. However, no information about you can be shared with your birth relative without your direct consent.

If a request for information about you or contact with you is made by a birth relative or anyone else connected with your adoption, such as foster family members, we will try and contact you to see what you think about this. You are free to say no if this is not something you want or feel ready for.





In most cases, your birth relatives will not be aware of your adopted name or contact details, so they must approach an Adoption Agency to explore the possibility of making contact with you. However, it is good to be mindful of your privacy settings on Social Media accounts because it can be easy to locate people online with just a few details about them.

If a birth relative were to approach you directly, you can contact us for advice and support with managing this. Equally, if you have reached out directly to a birth family member and now need help or advice around that contact, please do contact us and we will assist.

If you have any additional questions, or would like to discuss a referral, please contact the Adults Affected by Adoption Team.

Email:

ATV.PermanenceSupport@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Phone:

01865 323121

Website:

<https://adoptthamesvalley.co.uk/>



www.rbwm.gov.uk

