



Frequently Asked Questions

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

I was adopted BEFORE 12th November 1975. How do I access my adoption records?

If you were adopted prior to 12th November 1975, and you **do not** know your birth name, you will first need to contact the General Register Office to request your original birth certificate. You can do that via this link: [Getting your birth certificate information before adoption - GOV.UK](#)

The General Register Office will send the details about your birth certificate to your Local Authority Adoption Support Team. You will then need to arrange to meet with a Social Worker from the team to receive your birth certificate information and start the process of accessing your adoption records.

This meeting is referred to as 'Birth Records Counselling' however the word 'counselling' can be misleading and sometimes raises people's anxieties. Essentially it is a consultation, where information, advice and support are offered. It is a chance for you to talk to someone who is experienced in adoption and learn what to expect about the process of accessing your records.

If you were adopted prior to 12th November 1975, and you **do** already know your birth name, Birth Records Counselling is not required in order to obtain your birth certificate, you can order it directly from the General Register Office if needed. You can follow the steps below in order to access your adoption records.

I was adopted AFTER 12th November 1975 (or if adopted before then, I already know my birth name). How do I access my adoption records?

You will need to approach the Adoption Support Team in the Local Authority where you are currently living to request your adoption records. If you live within these areas 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 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.





If you do not know these details, you can find them on your original birth certificate and adoption certificate, both of which you can obtain from the General Register Office website -

<https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate>

A member of our team will then aim to get in touch with you within 10 working days 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.

It is an opportunity for us to better understand your motivation to pursue access to your records, and any knowledge you may already have about your birth history. It is also a space, if required, for you to talk through any anxieties you may have, or any questions about the process and possible outcomes. It is part of our duty of care to ensure that you are 'in the right place' to pursue your adoption records, which can be an emotional and challenging process. Our role is to help you understand some of the complexities of this journey and support you where needed.

Where are my adoption records and how long will it take to get them?

If your adoption was arranged by one of the Local Authorities in the Adopt Thames Valley region, we should be able to locate and retrieve your records from our archives. We aim to have these records prepared and ready to share within 3 months of your referral. This can vary depending on how many requests for records we are dealing with at the time.

If your adoption was arranged by another Local Authority out of area, or a Voluntary Adoption Agency, we will contact the relevant agency to request copies of your adoption records. This can often take much longer. If you do not already know which agency arranged your adoption, we will need to make enquiries with various agencies and perhaps the court to determine where your records may be held. Other agencies sometimes have waiting lists to search for, and prepare, adoption records. It is not uncommon for this process to take 6-12 months. It is important that you are aware of the possible timescales from the start, as this is a considerable challenge for many who have waited for the right time to pursue their records.

What information can I have about my adoption?

Adoption records differ based on the circumstances of your adoption, the year it took place, and the recording processes of the agency at the time. There can be instances where adoption files do not contain key basic information such as a birth parent's name or date of birth. On the other hand, there can be adoption files which include letters, photographs, medical history and detailed background information. We cannot guarantee what any file may contain, and whether the specific information you may require will be available.

Is there any information in my adoption records that I cannot have?

Yes, there may be some details within the file which need to be redacted as it is considered '3rd party information'. This includes sensitive information about adoptive parents such as their assessment reports, references or medical details, as well as confidential information about siblings, information about other unrelated children, friends or neighbours, or court ordered reports. If there is important information within court reports, which is not detailed elsewhere in your file, we can seek consent from the court to release it. We must do all we can to balance your right to know about your background with other people's right to privacy and must carefully consider sensitive information within your records if sharing it could cause harm to you or others.





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.

We will work with you to understand how you need this information to be shared. If needed, it can be done gradually over several sessions to help you process the information without feeling overwhelmed.

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

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.

How do I make contact with a birth relative?

The service which provides support in contacting birth relatives is called an intermediary service. Unfortunately, we do not offer intermediary services for people adopted prior to 30th December 2005 here at Adopt Thames Valley. There are however voluntary intermediary agencies which can support you to explore contacting birth relatives.

See the PAC-UK Family Connect website for details of registered intermediary agencies:

[Adoption Directory - FamilyConnect](#)

Some new Intermediary Services funding grants have been made available by Adoption England for those affected by adoptions that took place in 1976 or earlier. You can submit an expression of interest form for a funding grant via this website: <https://www.familyconnect.org.uk/intermediary-service-referral-form/>

You can also sign up to the Adoption Contact Register via the following link to express your wish to contact birth relatives: <https://www.gov.uk/adoption-records/the-adoption-contact-register>. If your birth relative also signs up to the register, their last known contact details will be sent to you.

What do I need to consider before making contact with birth relatives?

It may be helpful to think about the following:

- How might your request for contact with birth relatives 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? Be mindful that your birth relative might want something 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?





- We hope your birth relative is well and living a stable and comfortable lifestyle. There is however a possibility that members of your birth family could be unwell, struggle with issues around substance misuse, poor mental health or involvement in criminal activity. They may have moved abroad, which could make it difficult to locate them, or they may have passed away. These are just a few scenarios to consider prior to making an approach.
- Contacting 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?
- It can be tempting to make contact with birth relatives directly if you have managed to locate their contact details. We would always recommend using an intermediary service to approach a birth relative, not only to provide you with support and advice throughout the process, but also to allow your birth relative to be supported and receive advice when they are approached. Contacting birth relatives can sometimes be very successful and bring wonderful new connections. Sometimes, it can be a disappointing or unexpected outcome. Your intermediary will be able to support you with any challenges which arise throughout the process.

How do I make contact with an adopted relative?

You would need to request support with this via an intermediary service, so please refer to the link above with PAC-UK Family Connect. As a relative of a person who has been adopted, you are likely to only have the birth name of the person who has been adopted, and in order to progress tracing this person, we would need to establish their adopted name. Your intermediary will need to check your adopted relative's adoption records to see whether they have ever accessed their adoption file and/or placed a veto (see below) on their file.

If it is appropriate to do so, your intermediary can then proceed to establish the whereabouts of your adopted relative and gain their views about having contact with you.

How can I pass on information about a medical condition I have which is hereditary?

The NHS provides a service where medical information about an existing hereditary medical condition can be exchanged between the GP of an adopted person and the GP of their birth family.

Provided the adopted person and birth relative can be identified from the information available and is currently registered with a GP in England, Wales or the Isle of Man, medical information about existing hereditary conditions can be passed on.

The service is subject to the consent of both GPs involved and only information relating to an existing medical condition which is hereditary will be passed on. The service does not include the facilitation of any contact between the adopted person and birth relative. For more information, follow this link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/adoption-registration-service/hereditary-medical-conditions>

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

Yes, in most cases, your birth relatives will not be aware of your current name or contact details, so they must approach an intermediary service 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 your birth relative were to approach an intermediary service and request contact with you, that intermediary agency would attempt to write to you to gain your views about this. You are free to say no if this is not something you want or feel ready for. No information about you can be shared with your birth relative without your direct consent.





You have the right to place a 'veto' on your adoption records, should you feel certain you would never want to be approached by an intermediary service on behalf of a birth relative seeking contact.

There are two types of veto – an Absolute Veto or a Qualified veto:

Absolute – this prevents an intermediary agency from proceeding with an approach from a birth relative in any circumstances.

Qualified – this restricts the circumstances in which the intermediary can proceed, so for example you can specify certain people you would or would not want to be contacted by, or the circumstances in which you are contacted for example only in the case of the death of a birth relative or to pass on information about an hereditary medical condition.

You can approach your local Adoption Support Team or the agency which arranged your adoption to request a veto is placed on your file.

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/>

