



ADOPTION
NORTH LONDON

Now you are 18

Your rights as an adopted adult



At eighteen the law considers you to be an adult and you acquire certain rights under the Adoption Act 2002.

Access to your birth and adoption records

At age 18 you can apply for a copy of your original birth certificate from the General Register Office. If you already know your birth name you can do this online at <http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates> (follow the links to births and adoption)

You can also request access to your full adoption records which are held by the local authority adoption team that arranged your adoption. You can arrange an appointment to see an adoption support social worker at your local adoption support agency and they will request your files and meet you to go through the records with you.

Letterbox contact/Information exchange

When you were placed for adoption your parents, birth parents or other birth relatives, may have been offered the opportunity to keep in touch with each other by exchanging letters and photos through the adoption team's letterbox contact/information exchange service. You may have seen the letters and photos exchanged between your parents and birth relatives and you may have contributed to the exchange by writing a card or adding some artwork.

Now that you are 18 you can choose if or how you want the exchange to continue. The letterbox/exchange co-ordinator may already have contacted you or your parents about this. If not, they will be happy to discuss the options with you.

What to do if you want contact with your birth family

Many people who have been adopted feel at some time in their lives that they would like to get in touch with birth parents or other relatives. Now that you are 18, you can request an intermediary service from an adoption support social worker to approach an adult birth relative on your behalf to see if they would like to have contact or a reunion with you. If you or your adoptive parents have had recent letterbox contact, you should contact the letterbox contact co-ordinator or the adoption support social worker who facilitates your contact, as they may have current contact details and some knowledge of your birth relatives. If not, you can approach the adoption support team of the agency that arranged your adoption, or an adoption support agency in the area where you live. Experienced staff will discuss the process with you and help organise, manage and support the reunion for you.

If you have your original birth certificate or adoption records, you already have the information you need to enable you to trace and contact your birth relatives by yourself. Reunions can, however, invoke strong and potentially disruptive feelings and we strongly advise you to

use a professional intermediary service if you want to make contact.

What to do if you don't want contact with your birth family

You can choose if and when you would like to make contact with your birth relatives. Some adopted adults choose not to have any contact with birth relatives. Others want to leave it until they are older and/or more settled in life. For more detailed information, you can discuss it with an adoption support social worker or visit the website www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk

What if a birth relative wants to contact me?

Birth relatives can also request an intermediary service through an intermediary agency to make contact with their relative who was adopted. This means there is a possibility, now you are 18, you may receive an approach from your adoption agency or another intermediary agency to ask if you would like contact with a birth relative. The adoption support agency is legally required to protect your confidentiality and is not allowed to pass on your adopted name. This means your birth relatives cannot be given your adopted name, so they cannot contact you directly. They can only ask an intermediary agency to approach you on their behalf so that your privacy is protected. It would then be up to you to decide if you would like contact or how much, if any, information you wished to give them about yourself.

Oh no! I really don't feel ready to hear from my birth family...

If you don't want an intermediary agency to approach you about possible contact you have no need to worry. You are legally entitled to block any such approach by registering a veto. All adopted adults are entitled to register a veto.

What is a veto?

There are two kinds of veto.

An **Absolute Veto**. This says that you do not wish to be contacted by an intermediary agency under any circumstances.

A **Qualified Veto**. This says there are circumstances in which you would or would not want an intermediary agency to contact you. For example, you could say that you want to be contacted only if there is some important medical information to be passed on to you. Or you could say that you do not want to be contacted until you are 25, or have finished university.

How vetoes work

If you want to register a veto you have to do it with the adoption agency through which you were adopted. Although your birth relative can ask any intermediary agency to contact you on their behalf, the law forbids that intermediary agency from contacting you without first checking with your adoption agency. If your adoption agency informs them that you have registered an Absolute Veto, the

intermediary agency is not allowed to approach you in any circumstances. If you have registered a Qualified Veto they are allowed to contact you only in the circumstances you have set out.

How to register a veto

If you would like to discuss the possibility of registering a veto, please contact your adoption support team.

Is there anything else I can do to make my wishes about contact clear?

The General Register Office (GRO) runs an Adoption Contact Register. Adopted people and birth relatives over the age of 18 can use this register to indicate whether they do or do not wish to have contact with each other. Your adoption support team will be happy to give you further information about this or you can visit the GRO website at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/adoptions/adoptioncontactregister

I'm not sure what I want...

If you would like to consider all the options and their implications, you are very welcome to contact your local adoption support team. In fact they would welcome hearing from you if you would like to talk over anything to do with your adoption.

Support for adopted adults

Adoption North London has a support group for adopted adults, which meets bi-monthly in Islington. It is run by adopted adults with some support from the adoption support teams.

If you are interested, please contact one of the North London Adoption Support Contacts.

North London Adoption Support Contacts

London Borough of Barnet

Judith Ellis, Debbie Fossey, Jenny Coyle and Liz Segal
Adoption Team, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP
Tel: **(020) 8359 5705**
Email: adoption@barnet.gov.uk

London Borough of Camden

Valerie Forrest, Sheila McInnes, Sara Bonner, Eleni Christodoulou and Sue Bineham
Adoption and Permanence Team, 1st Floor, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD
Tel: **(020) 7974 3082**
Email: adoption@camden.gov.uk

London Borough of Enfield

Morris Linton, Natalie Salaman and Nita Patel
Adoption and Permanence Team, Triangle House, 305-313 Green Lanes, Palmers Green, London N13 4YB
Tel: **(020) 8379 8490**
Email: adoption@enfield.gov.uk





London Borough of Haringey

Edna Thomas and Marlene Joseph
Adoption Team, First Floor, River Park
House, 225 High Road, Wood Green,
London N22 8HQ

Tel: **(020) 8489 3706**

Email: Edna.Thomas@haringey.gov.uk

Marlene.Joseph@haringey.gov.uk

London Borough of Hackney

Vicky West

Adoption Services, Hackney Service
Centre, 1 Hillman Street E8 1DY

Tel: **08000 730 418**

Email: Vicky.West@hackney.gov.uk

London Borough of Islington

Jo Gordon and Jo Mendel
Islington Adoption Services, 3 Elwood
Street, London N5 1EB

Tel: **(020) 7527 4400**

Email: adoption@islington.gov.uk

PAC-UK provides a counselling and
support service for adopted adults.
For details of their services check their
website at www.pac-uk.org

The following book is often
recommended by many adopted adults:

Howe, D & Feast, J (2003) **Adoption
Search and Reunion: The Long-term
Experience of Adopted Adults.**

BAAF. ISBN 189978330X

This is an accessible book about a
large research study on searchers and
non-searchers together with short-term
and long-term outcomes. The website
www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk
also provides detailed information for
adopted adults including an extensive
reading list.



 Visit: www.adoptionnorthlondon.co.uk

 Freephone: 0800 694 0101

