



Helpful Information if your son/daughter is thinking about searching

Although most agencies accept enquires from adopted people aged 18 years and over, adoption agencies are very open to enquire from adoptive parents while their son or daughter is under 18 years of age.

The possibility of your son/daughter looking for information about and wanting to trace his/her birth mother, birth father and or other birth relatives may be something that has always been at the back of your mind. Hearing that your son/daughter is considering taking this step may be something that you have expected or it may come as a surprise and or shock to you.

Some adopted people may wish to find background information and/or medical history about themselves, but do not necessarily have a wish to search for and to meet birth family members. For others, their goal may be to trace and have a reunion with birth family members. There are many reasons why an adopted person might decide to trace his/her birth family. Some of these reasons are outlined in this leaflet.

You may ask yourself what information you can give your son/daughter to help begin the search. You may also wish to have a greater understanding and insight into the steps involved in making an enquiry. This leaflet outlines information that may help to answer some of your questions.

You may wonder what support is available to your son/daughter and what support is available to you. Leaflet No. 2 in this series will aim to address these questions and look at the possible impact of a search on adoptive parents.

Why do adopted people search?

Everyone's experience of adoption is unique. For some adopted people curiosity about their origins may begin in childhood and continue into adulthood. For others it may be an interest that is sparked following a significant transitional event, for example, when moving away from home, getting married, the birth of a child, the death of a parent or moving into middle/late adulthood. This wish to have more information and/or to consider searching is experienced by many people who have been adopted.

Your son/daughter's wish to learn more about his/her birth family may be influenced by many factors, including;

- A wish for information including medical information
- A wish to have more understanding and insight into the reasons why he/she was placed for adoption
- Having unanswered questions about his/her identity
- Having a sense of belonging to more than one family
- When and how he/she was told/found out about being adopted

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- His/her experience of being adopted
- His/her experience of growing up as an adopted person
- His/her family experience

Your son or daughter's decision to request information about his/her background and search for birth family members will not have been taken lightly. He/she may wish to involve you actively in the search and talk to you openly during this time. On the other hand he/she may wish to search independently and may keep his/her feelings private. Your son/daughter's motivations and attitudes towards seeking information and tracing birth family members may shift and change over time.

First steps in searching for information about an adoption

The following information may be of help to you if your son/daughter has made the decision to search for information about his/ her adoption.

You may be able to share some information with your son/daughter about the time when he/she was placed with you, for example the name of the adoption agency involved.

All agencies and the Adoption Authority of Ireland accept enquires from those aged 18 and over.

Your son or daughter can write to the adoption agency involved in his/her adoption. If you do not know or remember the name of the agency, this information will be available from: The Adoption Authority of Ireland, Shelbourne House, Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: 01-2309300 Freephone 1800 309 300. Email: info@aai.gov.ie.

Your son/daughter's letter or email to the Adoption Authority or to the agency should include the following information:

- His/her full name and any previous name
- His/her date of birth
- His/her current address and contact details including phone number
- Your full names and address at the time the adoption order was granted
- A photocopy of some form of photo identification, for example; a photocopy of his/her passport or driver's licence.

Your son/daughter should also state what information he/she would like to obtain. The Adoption Authority and adoption agencies welcome enquiries, all of which are treated confidentially.

National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR)

The NACPR was established in 2005 by the Adoption Board, now known as the Adoption Authority of Ireland. The NACPR facilitates contact between an adopted person and a birth mother, a birth father, a sibling or other birth relatives. Participation is voluntary and contact through the NACPR will only be initiated where both an adopted person and a birth relative register and wish to have contact. It is advisable that your son/daughter places his/her name on this register if he/she wants to obtain information or have contact with a birth relative.

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The NACPR allows an adopted person or a birth relative to choose whatever level of contact he/she wishes to have. It also includes an option to have no contact with other parties to the adoption if this is his/her wish. Those who register on the NACPR can indicate their preference about the level of contact and this ranges from:

1. Willing to meet
2. Contact via telephone
3. Contact via email
4. Exchange of letters/information
5. No contact but willing to share medical information
6. No contact but willing to share background information
7. No contact at the moment

The operation of the NACPR is confidential and once a match is made through the Register the adopted person and the birth family member will be informed by the Adoption Authority. For further information contact the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

The application form for the National Adoption Contact Preference Register can be downloaded from the Adoption Authority website: www.aai.gov.ie or from the adoption agency.

What can the adoption agency offer?

Background information

Adoption agencies may provide non-identifying information dating back to the time of the adoption. The Adoption Authority of Ireland and the adoption agencies must follow legal requirements to uphold rights to privacy. In view of this, the adoption agency involved in your son/daughter's adoption cannot provide identifying information which includes your son/daughter's original surname, the birth parents' surnames or addresses.

It is important to remember that past adoption practice did not envisage the need of adopted people to receive information as adults, therefore, the importance of keeping detailed information was not recognised. It is often the case that there is, in fact, very little information recorded. The accuracy of the information will need to be confirmed in due course. It is also important to remember that there may not be any up to date information on record.

Counselling

Your son/daughter may wish to avail of the counselling services provided by his/her adoption agency. Counselling offers your son/daughter time and space to:

- Explore issues that are important to him/her
- Explore the possible effects of the search process on him/her and those close to him/her
- Explore the best time to actively pursue the search
- Explore the possible outcomes of the search

During this time the adopted person will obtain information about the search process and he/she may also wish to receive non-identifying information.

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Ideally, a professional relationship based on mutual trust will develop between the social worker and your son/daughter. Issues discussed between the social worker and your son/daughter will remain confidential.

A counselling and support service may be available to adoptive parents from the adoption agency. As an adoptive parent you may find it helpful to speak about your feelings regarding your son/daughter's wish to have contact with birth relatives. It may be useful to have an opportunity to talk through any concerns you might have in relation to this contact and to discuss the possible impact on your son/daughter, on you and on your family. Issues discussed between you and your social worker will remain confidential and will only be discussed with your son/daughter if this is your wish.