



### **Mothers who have placed more than one child for adoption**

If you have placed more than one child for adoption, you are one of many women in Ireland who have done so. This leaflet may be of help to you but should be read alongside the other leaflets for birth parents. See details at the end of this leaflet.

#### **Impact on you as a birth mother**

Many birth mothers have great difficulty in talking about the experience of placing their child for adoption and for those that have placed more than one child it can be even more difficult to talk about this. Mothers have spoken about their feelings of shame and about their fear of being criticised and judged by others. This affects their ability to talk or confide in anybody.

In the course of writing this leaflet we asked some mothers in this situation about what their thoughts and feelings were and one mother stated that she felt *'terrified even to mention more than one baby...'* Therefore the *'secret continues and is overwhelming'*. Another mother encouragingly said that *'there are other women in your situation and you will meet them in time and see how they cope and move on'*.

#### **Difficulties remembering the adoptions**

It is a common for some women to find it difficult to remember detailed information about the adoptions of their children. Sometimes the mixture of emotions can feel overwhelming and there can be confusion regarding certain facts, for example each child's date of birth and the adoption agencies involved.

#### **Seeking further information**

If you decide to seek further information about the adoptions of your children you can contact the adoption agencies involved if they are known to you. Alternatively you can contact the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) who will provide you with any information they can about their adoptions and the name of the placing agencies. You can register your wishes for contact or no contact with the AAI's National Adoption Contact Preference Register. See information at the end of this leaflet.

#### **Birth Fathers**

There are many different situations regarding birth fathers. They may not be the same for each of your children. They may or may not have been told about their children. Depending on the particular circumstances, they might or might not have been involved in the adoption process. The nature of the relationship between you and each birth father will have varied. There may have been love, abuse, abandonment or any number of aspects to the relationships and which still affect you today. Whatever the circumstances, adoption agencies will offer you help and you can discuss matters in confidence with them. They are very aware of the very many different situations, past and present, faced by birth mothers in relation to the fathers of the children. They have the experience and expertise to assist you in relation to your children and their birth

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fathers today. You will be offered help and guidance about agency procedures should your child or children request contact with their birth fathers and in relation to your own wishes regarding contact or no-contact with their birth fathers.

### **When you contact the adoption agency**

Consider the questions you would like to ask, write them down, send them to the adoption agency and/or bring them with you to your appointment. It is important to bring any information you already have with you. You may wish to have a support person to assist you through this process.

### **At the first appointment**

- Ask whether it is possible to confirm or update any information you have.
- Explain what you would like now: for example, any background information, whether or not it is possible to search for your adult child or children. Discuss any queries you may have with the social worker.
- Ask about the agency's policy and practice in relation to information and tracing.
- Ask about the agency's waiting list. Consider putting your name on the waiting list even if you are uncertain about your wish to proceed as you can always withdraw or defer your enquiry.
- Ask some or all of the following questions with regard to the search process:
  - How is a search usually carried out?
  - Is counselling offered to everyone involved in the search process?

### **How siblings may learn about each other**

You may not have considered that your children would ever search for you or each other. In all cases where siblings seek contact with each other the adoption agencies involved will first make efforts to contact and consult you as a birth mother.

### **Your children can learn about each other in a number of different ways:**

- They may be told by their adoptive parents.
- They may be informed by the adoption agency when they make an enquiry.
- A sibling may undertake their own search through social media, internet or public records and may discover information.
- If siblings register on the National Adoption Contact Preference Register they will be matched with each other. They will be informed of the match and efforts will be made to contact you and you will be offered the opportunity of becoming involved.

### **Impact on an adopted person**

You may be concerned about how your children will react to learning that they have other siblings placed for adoption. For some adopted people learning that their birth mother has placed other children for adoption may come as a shock or surprise. It may trigger a mixture of emotions. Some adopted people may find it difficult to understand why their birth mother made an adoption decision on more than one occasion or why they were not placed in the same adoptive family. At the same time an adopted person may be curious and pleased to learn more about his/her siblings. Adoption agencies can offer support to siblings to help them understand the issues involved in these situations.

### **Support**

The adoption agency will offer you counselling and support. You can choose to have contact with one agency which liaises on your behalf with the other agencies involved, or you can contact each agency that placed your children for adoption.

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It can be helpful to talk to someone else who is in a similar situation to yourself. The adoption agency may be able to arrange this for you either on a one-to-one basis, or refer you to a support group.

### **Possible outcomes of contact**

A birth mother's relationship will differ with each child she placed for adoption as with any parent and child. Relationships will also be influenced by who began the search and the circumstances of how the contact was made.

When there is a possibility of contact with more than one of your adult children at the same time, it will inevitably be practically and emotionally demanding for you and for everyone involved. Ideally it is best to take time to get to know one at a time.

The relationship between siblings will vary. Sibling relationships like all relationships require patience and attention and respect for each other's needs. Support will be offered to all involved.

### **Further Information**

- We recommend you look at the other leaflets for birth parents which are available from <http://councilofirishadoptionagencies.com> or from your adoption agency
- Also see: Child and Family Agency Adoption Services: <http://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/adoption-services/>
- Adoption Authority Website: <http://www.aai.gov.ie/> for an application form for the National Adoption Contact Preference Register and the booklet called 'Your Questions Answered' on the National Adoption Contact Preference Register.

### **Note:**

- With thanks to the colleagues in other adoption agencies and the birth mothers in the Barnardos' groups for providing their views on this Leaflet.