

Adoption Support Services



This factsheet is for you if you live in Kingston and are an adopted child or adult, an adoptive parent or a birth relative of an adopted person

Kingston Adoption Team provides a comprehensive Adoption Support Service offering adoption support assessment of need, counselling, advice and support to children, adoptive parents, birth relatives and any Kingston resident who has been – or may be - affected by adoption. As part of the South West London Adoption Consortium with neighbouring boroughs Merton, Richmond and Sutton and Action for Children, a voluntary adoption agency, some of our services are offered jointly.

Support for adopted children and their families

This service is for individual children, brothers and sisters, adoptive parents and other family members. We can also talk to you about how to access other services that the council provides.

Social workers are available during office hours to discuss any areas of concern (including arrangements for contact between the adopted child and their birth family).

We manage a Letter Box Service to allow indirect contact between birth families and adoptive parents on behalf of adopted children and we also manage, support and supervise direct contact arrangements.

Children and young people

If you are under 18 and would like to talk to an adoption social worker, you or your parents can contact us by calling 020 8547 5004 or emailing adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk.

We run two groups which allow adopted children the opportunity to socialise and share experiences.

- Children's group for 4-10 year olds meets three times a year
- Youth group for secondary school age children and above meets three times a year

If you are interested in joining one of the groups please contact us as above.



There is also a national helpline run by the charity, **After Adoption**, which young people can ring: 0800 0568 578. Calls are free and confidential and you can speak to people who know all about adoption. For more information visit www.afteradoption.org.uk

Parents

Together with other consortium members, we run the following groups for adoptive parents:

- Regular drop-in group which pre-school children are welcome to attend
- Termly Supporting Education drop-in session run by the Kingston Adoption Support Services Advisor and an educational psychologist
- Bi-monthly Adoption Advice Surgery (offered by Kingston Adoption Support Services Advisor and an adoption therapist)
- Daytime and evening training and support meetings

Each summer we hold a family fun day allowing adoptive families from across the Consortium to get to know each other and offer mutual support.

If you are an adopted adult

If you are over 18 and do not know your birth name, we can help you gain access to your records. If you have found your birth family, we also offer a limited Intermediary Service, helping you to get in touch while protecting the interests of everyone involved.

There are five key stages in the discovery process:

- Finding out about your birth records
- Finding out about your adoption records
- Searching for your birth relative
- Using our intermediary service to help you contact a birth relative
- Meeting your birth relative

Initially you may only want to investigate one or two stages, or you may wish to take time out to reflect before deciding to move further through the process.

A useful website is www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk

If you are over 18 years, you may like to attend our **group for adopted adults** – contact us on 020 8547 6042 or email www.kingston.gov.uk/adoption to find out more.

Step 1 Finding out about your birth records

Adopted adults' birth records are held by the General Register Office (GRO - www.gro.gov.uk). Once you are 18, you can contact the GRO for an application to apply for your original birth certificate. Your birth certificate will usually give your birth name, where you were born, your mother's name, her address at the time of your birth, her occupation and who registered the birth. It may not give your birth father's name.

Depending on when you were born, the information from the GRO will either be sent directly to you or will be sent to your adoption support social worker. They will also send you details of the Adoption Contact Register (see below).

If you were adopted before 12 November 1975

If you were adopted before 12 November 1975 you are legally required to attend a counselling interview with an adoption support social worker before receiving your birth



records, which the GRO will forward on. Prior to this date it was understood that children being adopted would never be able to find out their original names or the names of their birth parents. The counselling interview helps adopted people to understand and prepare for how this change in the law could affect those they wish to contact. You may apply for counselling to any borough you choose. The interview is free of charge but you will need to show some form of identification such as a driving licence or a passport.

If you were adopted after 12 November 1975

The GRO will send your birth details to you directly. Counselling is not a requirement but is highly recommended.

The information the GRO will send out will include a form for you to complete in order to apply for your original birth certificate, a form giving details of the court where you were adopted, plus advice on writing to them to request the name of the adoption agency involved, a leaflet explaining about the Adoption Contact Register and an application form.

Step 2 Finding out about your adoption records

You may write to the court where your adoption order was made to find out which adoption agency arranged your adoption. You or we can then approach the adoption agency.



If your records are held by us, you may apply to us. To protect the confidentiality of others involved, the law requires us to remove third party information from the file before it is shared with you.

If you would like your birth relatives to be able to contact you, we can put the details of your enquiry on your adoption file, making this known to any birth relative who may make contact with us in the future. If you don't want any contact from birth relatives, there is a way of preventing this from happening – it is known as placing a veto.

Placing a veto

If you do not wish to have contact from your birth relatives you can place a veto on your adoption records. There are two kinds of veto: an **absolute veto**, which prevents contact under any circumstances and a **qualified veto**, which allows certain circumstances under which you may be contacted. Vetos may be registered with the agency which was originally involved with the adoption, known formally as the Appropriate Adoption Agency. If the

original agency has closed or if you have trouble finding it, see

www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk

For more information, see our factsheet: ***What is a veto?***

Step 3 Searching for your birth relative

If you decide to try and trace your birth relatives, you may wish to discuss your decision with an adoption support social worker from our team. They will go through the information sent by the GRO with you and help you to decide what to do. We advise people who want to make contact with their birth relatives to put their details on the Adoption Contact Register (see below for further information about this).

The counsellor will also talk to you about what you are hoping to gain from your search and how this might affect both your adopted family and birth relatives.

We can give you advice on searching, but we can't trace on your behalf. There are registered adoption support agencies that may be able to help you trace your relatives but they will make a charge for the service. You'll find their details below.



The Adoption Contact Register

Adopted adults (over 18) and birth relatives of adopted adults can register an interest in contacting each other or not by registering in two places - the National Adoption Contact Register at the General Registrar Office and NORCAP, an adoption support agency. There is a fee for registering. See details of these agencies below.

Part 1 of the register is for adopted adults

- Adopted adults can register their wish for contact with a birth relative or they can indicate their wish for no contact, or that they should be contacted only in specific circumstances, such as in order to find out about their medical records.

Part 2 of the register is for birth relatives

- Birth relatives can record whether they wish to be contacted or not.
- If both parties, ie the adopted adult and a birth relative, register their wish for contact, then the Registrar General will send the birth relative's name and address to the adopted person, with details of the relationship. It is up to the adopted person to decide if they want to make contact.

Step 4 Using our limited intermediary service to help you contact a birth relative

Kingston offers a limited intermediary service to adopted people who have found their birth relatives, received counselling from Kingston and would like to make contact with them. We can offer you advice and support and one of our adoption support social workers can write the first letter to your birth relative on your behalf. We will help you prepare for the response and deal with possible outcomes.

Step 5 Meeting your birth relative

If you and your birth relative both say that you would like to make contact, we can help you to prepare for getting in touch. We suggest that you exchange letters first and then swap photographs, allowing you to get to know each other gradually before meeting up.

Free post-reunion support is offered to Kingston residents. Adoption Support Agencies will also provide this service for a fee.

If you are a birth parent or relative of an adopted person

We offer a counselling service to birth parents or relatives who live in the borough of Kingston or if your birth relative's adoption was arranged by us. ('Relative' is defined as 'a birth parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt whether full or half blood or by marriage.' We can also advise you on specialist counselling services for birth relatives or others who are affected by adoption. You may be able to leave a letter on the adoption file for your adopted relative.

Birth parents may be interested in attending our monthly **birth parents' support group** which gives birth parents the opportunity to meet each other in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

At this stage you may also wish to contact the **Natural Parents Network (NPN)**, a self-help organisation for birth parents and relatives who have lost children to adoption (see contact details below).



Searching for an adopted adult relative

Kingston Adoption Support Service does not usually offer intermediary services to help put birth relatives in touch with an adopted adult relative.

If you would like to find out about an adopted adult relative, we can discuss this with you. If we are in touch with the adopters, or the adopted adult, we may be able to help. If we are not in touch with them, we can tell you how to contact registered adoption support agencies who will be able to help. They will charge for this service.

Free post reunion support is offered to Kingston residents. Adoption Support Agencies will also provide this service for a fee.

Useful addresses and contact details

GRO

Adoptions Section, General Register Office, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road, Birkdale, Southport, PR8 2HH. Phone: 0151 471 4830.

E-mail: adoptions@ons.gov.uk. Website: www.gro.gov.uk

Adoption UK—a useful organisation for adopters

55 The Green, South Bar Street, Banbury, Oxon OX16 9AB. Phone: 01295 752240 (9am—5pm)

Helpline: 0844 8487900 (10am—4pm)

Email: admin@adoptionuk.org.uk. Website: www.adoptionuk.org

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N 8TS Phone: 020 7421 2600.

Email: mail@baaf.org.uk. Website: www.baaf.org.uk

BAAF runs a website: www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk which provides information for people who are thinking of searching for birth and adopted relatives.

ASART (Adoption Support Agency of Registered Therapists) - support for adopters

Email: kunugordon@yahoo.co.uk. Website: www.asartcounselling.com

Parentline Plus

CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London N1 6AH

Helpline: 0808 800 2222; General Enquiries: 020 7553 3080

Website: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Natural Parents Network (NPN) – self-help organisation for birth parents and relatives who have lost children to adoption.

18 Bishops Way, Stradbroke, Eye, Suffolk, IP21 5JR

Help line 0845 456 5031 (Mon- Fri 9.30am -11.30am)

Email: administrator@n-p-n.co.uk Website: www.n-p-n.co.uk

Registered Adoption Support Agencies

After Adoption – voluntary adoption agency offering support services

Unit 5, Citygate, 5 Blantyre Street, Manchester M15 4JJ

General number: 0161 839 4932

ActionLine: 0800 0 568 578

Website: www.afteradoption.org.uk

Post Adoption Centre (PAC) - agency providing information, support and counselling for everyone affected by adoption.

5 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue, London, NW5 2RZ Phone: 0207 284 0555

Website: www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk.

AAA NORCAP Adults Affected by Adoption - An Adoption Support Agency for adopted adults and their birth and adoptive families.

112 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LU Phone: 01865 875000

Email: enquiries@norcap.org. Website: www.norcap.org.uk

Ariel Bruce—Adoption Support Agency

Flat 10, Rodmell, Regent Square, London, WC1H 8HX

Phone: 020 7209 8966

Email: arielbruce@aol.com. Website: www.arielbruce.com

Recommended Reading for adopters:

Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew by Sherrie Eldridge.

ISBN: 0-440-50838-X

Contact us:

The Adoption Team

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High Street

Kingston KT1 1EU

Telephone: 020 8547 5004

Email: adoption@rbk.kingston.gov.uk



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Children & Young People's Trust
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