



from our traditional roots... their future blossoms

Intermediary Services for Adoptees and Birth Relatives



working together



Who are Faith in Families?

Faith in Families is a children's charity specialising in Adoption and School Social Work, across the East Midlands. The Agency began in 1948 and has a long history of adoption. We have over 25 years' experience of providing Intermediary Services, to both adopted adults and birth relatives.

What is an Intermediary Service?

An intermediary is an individual, a person or an organisation that acts as a go-between for two or more people. In relation to adoption, an intermediary service usually means the role played by an agency when a request is received from an adopted person or their birth relative to approach the other party. This can be with a view to passing on or requesting information, and may lead to indirect or direct contact.

Making contact with a birth relative can be emotional so we always advise using an intermediary as they can mediate between all parties and offer support.

When it is the birth relative of an adopted person who is requesting an intermediary service, the intermediary agency is not allowed to give the birth relative any information that will or might identify the adopted person, but the intermediary agency can use the information to locate the adopted person and make an approach to establish if the adopted person is willing to agree to the relative having any information or to be put in contact with the relative.

Will I have to pay?

Yes; the costs are detailed in a separate sheet enclosed with this leaflet.

Who can apply for an Intermediary Service?

All adopted adults over the age of 18. All birth relatives of adopted adults over the age of 18. In the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the definition of a birth relative is any person who is related to the adopted person by blood, including half blood or marriage. If you were adopted before 1975, you will need to access

your records through a process called “Birth Records Counselling”. If you were adopted after 1975 we would strongly recommend that you access your background information **before** applying for an Intermediary Service.

In order to access your adoption records, you will need to contact the Local Authority or organisation which was involved in placing you or your relative for adoption.

Who can provide an Intermediary Service?

Intermediary services may be provided by Local Authorities, Adoption Agencies and Adoption Support Agencies. If you are approaching an agency other than this one, it is important to ask the service you approach if it is registered as an Adoption Support Agency and able to provide an intermediary service. It will be important to establish what you will be charged for the services they provide.

How do I choose an Agency?

Some people prefer to contact the agency that arranged the adoption, as they should still hold the records and often these are very helpful for getting in touch with the person being sought.

However, for some people, this is not always possible. For example:

- you would prefer not to be back in touch with the agency that arranged the adoption;
- you may live a long way from the agency;
- your local authority may not provide Intermediary Services

If these situations apply to you, then Faith in Families can offer you an Intermediary Service.

If you live abroad we would usually suggest that you contact an appropriate agency where you live and we can help you with this if necessary. We will liaise with your local agency and send the information they need to carry out a search for you on your behalf.

What is included when accessing an Intermediary Service?

- The opportunity to discuss your situation with a qualified and experienced social worker and to explore the various potential outcomes of renewed contact with the person sought.
- Non-identifying information – the intermediary agency is allowed to provide information from the records which would not identify the person in question but would help to answer some of the questions you may have.
- The opportunity for birth relatives to find out if the adopted person has registered a qualified or absolute veto.
- The opportunity for you to provide information to be kept on the adoption file and passed on if and when the adopted person or birth relative contacts the placing authority or agency.
- The opportunity to apply for a search to be made for the person you seek.
- If the search is successful in locating the person sought you will then be able to ask the Agency to make an approach to them.
- Support and advice following contact and reunion for all those involved.

How long will it take?

It is not possible to determine how long it will take to make contact with your relative due to the length of time that has elapsed since the adoption. It will also be dependent on how much information is available on the adoption record.

Could I be refused an Intermediary Service?

Yes. There is no obligation on an Intermediary Agency to provide a service. Sometimes an Agency that has taken up your application may decide not to continue if they learn that to do so may put certain people or yourself at risk or if information is discovered that indicates it would be unwise to make contact with the person sought.

Your social worker will make you fully aware of these procedures should the agency be minded not to proceed with an Intermediary Service on your behalf.

Can people always be found?

Not always. Sometimes it may be impossible to find somebody. The agency will tell you if they cannot take the search any further and may in some cases suggest another agency with additional resources that might be able to make further enquiries. It is important to appreciate that whenever a search is made it may result in you learning that the person sought has died or is very unwell. Your social worker will discuss such possibilities with you.

At any point if you feel you would like to withdraw from the service or take a break, please inform your Social Worker.

What is a veto?

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 provides adopted adults with a new right to register a Veto with the Agency that placed them for adoption. This is in recognition of the fact that an adopted adult may not wish to be contacted on behalf of a birth relative.

There are two types of Vetos available to an adopted person in the event that they do not wish to be contacted on behalf of a birth relative.

- An absolute veto means that the adopted person does not want to be contacted under ANY circumstances on behalf of any of his/her birth relatives. Once in place, the absolute veto prohibits the adoption agency from making contact with the adoptee on behalf of his/her birth family for any reason.
- A qualified veto means that the adopted person can specify the only circumstances they wish to be contacted for. For example he / she may wish to receive up to date medical information regarding a birth relative. The adopted person can also specify if there is a particular person they would welcome contact from.

Birth relatives have not been given the same right to register a Veto, but can express a wish for 'no contact' to be registered on the Adoption Contact Register, with the General Register Office.

If you are an adopted person and would like more information on vetoes, please call and ask to speak to your social worker.

What if I change my mind about having contact with my relative?

It is important that you keep your social worker fully informed about your wishes and feelings throughout the process, as you will need to determine the pace at which you wish to proceed.

What can I do if my relative does not want to have contact with me?

If your relative is located, their consent will be sought to share up-to-date information about themselves with you and they will be asked if they wish to have contact. If they refuse, it can be very distressing particularly if you have been longing for contact for many years.

Your social worker is there to help you to understand the various reasons why they may have come to this decision.

Will I have access to counselling?

Yes. The Agency will provide counselling to an adopted person or birth relative upon request. All of the social workers providing adoption support services on behalf of this agency are fully qualified social workers who are trained and experienced in this type of work and have a thorough understanding of the issues involved. Counselling is defined in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 as the act of 'giving information, advice and support'.

Does the Agency have an equal opportunities policy?

Yes. The Agency works to the policy that it makes no distinction on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin or on the grounds of religion, gender, age, marital status or physical disability. If you require services to meet your specific needs, please approach your social worker who will be happy to make the appropriate arrangements.

If I want to access an Intermediary Service - what do I do now?

You should contact the Agency by contacting Emma Jodie:

emma.jodie@faithinfamilies.org
07785 629 843 - 0115 9558811

You will be asked to fill out and return an application form and send Part A of the fee with this form. There is likely to be a waiting list before your case can be allocated. Timescales will be discussed when you return your application form. Once your case is allocated you will meet with a social worker to talk through the implications of the journey you are about to embark on.

You will need to bring along photographic evidence of yourself and any relevant papers you may have concerning the adoption to the application interview. Examples of photographic evidence include; a passport, driving licence with photo or student ID card. At your application interview, you will be asked to write a letter of introduction to the person sought which gives some up-to-date information about yourself and your reasons for wanting contact. The social worker will use the information from the application interview to make an assessment and decision about whether to proceed with an intermediary service if you are requesting contact be made with a relative.

What if I am not happy with the service I receive?

Faith in Families is committed to providing a high standard of service, but recognises that sometimes the users of the Agency may not be happy with the way the services have been provided, or may have a suggestion on how to improve them. The Agency has therefore established procedures to provide a forum for people having complaints or suggestions.

A separate leaflet outlining the procedures for making a complaint or suggestion about the Agency's services is usually sent with this leaflet. If you have not received a copy, one can be sent to you on request.

The General Register Officer

If you would like more information about the services offered by the General Register Office, please contact them directly:

General Register Office
Smedley Hydro
Southport
PR8 2HH

Tel: 0151 471 4830

adoptions@ips.gsi.giv.uk

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