

# Information Guide

For adults adopted on or after 30 December 2005

## Guide to accessing records about your adoption

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*This guide has been written for adults adopted as children who want to see the records relating to their adoption. It answers questions often asked by people adopted as children.*

### **What are my rights?**

At the age of 18 years you have the right to ask for:

- information to help you get a copy of your original birth certificate
- information given to your adoptive parent(s) at the time of your adoption

You can also apply to the court for certain documents related to the adoption, providing they do not contain any 'protected information' about other people who were involved. 'Protected information' is defined in [The Adoption and Children Act 2002](#).

## **GETTING YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

### **Where can I get a copy of my original birth certificate?**

#### ***If you know your birth name***

You can get a copy of your original birth certificate from the [General Register Office \(GRO\)](#). This is the government office that holds records of people's official documents (for example, birth, marriage, and death records).

#### ***If you don't know your birth name***

You should contact your Appropriate Adoption Agency (AAA), which is the local authority or the adoption agency that arranged your adoption. The name of the AAA should be on the Child Permanence Report (CPR) (or the Child Adoption Report (CAR) in Wales). In some circumstances, your AAA may not

have a record of your birth name. If this is the case, they should request the information from the GRO. You cannot get this information directly from the GRO yourself.

### **What is an Appropriate Adoption Agency (AAA)?**

Your Appropriate Adoption Agency (AAA) is the organisation that arranged your adoption. This is usually the local authority where you lived at the time you entered care or before you were adopted.

### **What if I don't know the name of the AAA that arranged my adoption?**

If you don't know the name of your AAA, you can get this information from the [GRO](#). You will need to print, fill out and post form PC2, which you can request by emailing [adoptions@gro.gov.uk](mailto:adoptions@gro.gov.uk).

### **How do I prove who I am?**

You will have to attach a document (like a bank statement, a gas bill, or an electricity bill) that has your current address, as well as some form of photo ID (like your passport, driving licence or travel pass).

### **Does everyone get a copy of their original birth certificate?**

It is extremely unusual, but the AAA can decide not to give you the information you need to apply for a copy of your original birth certificate or information about your birth. It is unlikely to happen unless the AAA is seriously worried about how this information will affect you.

## **GETTING THE INFORMATION GIVEN TO YOUR ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

### **What information did my adoptive parent(s) get when I was adopted?**

When you were adopted, your adoptive parent(s) should have been given a copy of your Child Permanence Report (CPR) or Child Adoption Report (CAR), which contains information about your birth family and background as well as the reasons for your adoption. They should also have been given your life story book and your later life letter (a letter from your social worker explaining why you were adopted).

### **What's in the documents and am I allowed to see them?**

Yes, you have a right to have the information that was given to your adoptive parent(s) at the time of your adoption. These documents have information about your birth family, your family background and the reasons why you were adopted. If your adoptive parent(s) haven't given you this information, you can get it from your AAA.

### **How do I get other information about my adoption?**

You can get more information about your adoption from your AAA. To see your records, it's likely they will ask you to put your request in writing (via email or by letter).

### **How long are my adoption records kept?**

Your AAA must keep the adoption records for at least 100 years from the date of your adoption order.

### **How will the AAA give me my information?**

It is likely that you will get a copy of your original birth certificate without meeting someone from your AAA. However, it is normal practice for someone from your AAA to meet you face-to-face to discuss the information from your records. It is good to meet with an adoption worker or advisor as they understand how finding out more about your life before you were adopted may affect you. They can also offer you support and advice.

### **How will finding more information about my life before adoption affect me?**

It is impossible to know how anyone will feel when they see information about their adoption and birth history for the first time. It depends on many things, such as how much information you already know, the reasons you were adopted, how you feel about your adoption, your relationship with your adoptive family, your feelings about your birth family, your general health and wellbeing and your own current family circumstances. It may be that you experience a range of emotions and feelings, so it is important that you have some support around you. You can always talk to your AAA adoption worker or advisor who can give you the support and advice you may need. Information on other support services can be found in the Resources spreadsheet that accompanies this guide.

### **What other information can I get from my AAA?**

You have a right to have the information given to your adoptive parent(s) at the time of your adoption. However, it is up to the AAA to decide what other information they give you. All AAAs understand how important it is for adopted people to have all the information about their family background and why they were adopted. However, AAAs have to protect the wellbeing of all the people involved in your life before you were adopted. Your AAA might decide not to give you information if they think that this will badly affect another person.

### **Can I get information about my birth relatives, like their names and addresses?**

The AAA can only give you that kind of information about people in your life before you were adopted if those people told the AAA that it was okay to do so.

### **What if my AAA does not have permission from my birth relatives?**

If your AAA has no record of permission being given, you can make a **section 61 application** to your AAA to give you more information. Your AAA will need to find that person and ask for their permission to pass their details on to you.

### **Can my section 61 application be turned down?**

Yes, if the AAA decides that making contact will severely affect the physical, mental, and/or emotional health of the people involved.

### **What happens when the AAA agrees to take forward my request?**

Your AAA will try to find your birth relative(s) for their permission to give you their contact details. However, it's worth remembering that it's not always possible to find people; for example, if they have moved address many times or moved abroad.

### **What happens if my AAA turns down my application?**

If your AAA decides not to get permission for you to have further information or contact details, they must tell you in writing together with their reasons why.

You have the right to ask for an independent review of your AAA's decision. To do this, you have to make an application within 40 days of the date you were informed of the AAA's decision. Your AAA should tell you how to do this in their decision letter. If you don't make an application for an independent review, then the AAA will continue with the decision it has made.

### **Do I have to pay?**

You do not have to pay any fee to get the information you have a right to have. However, you may be charged for any additional information you have asked for from your AAA, if it costs them to take more action.

### **How can I get more support?**

Sometimes seeing information about your adoption can leave you with a range of emotions and feelings. It might help to have some counselling or another type of support to help you understand and handle your thoughts and feelings.

You can talk to your adoption worker in your AAA as well as your GP about how to get this.

### **What other ways are there to find and contact my birth relatives?**

The accompanying **Guide to finding and contacting birth relatives** explains the steps to take to find and make contact with birth relatives. The guide encourages you to think about what can happen when looking for, finding and contacting your birth relatives, and gives you details of where you can get support and information to help you.

## **GETTING YOUR COURT DOCUMENTS**

### **What information can I get from the court about my adoption?**

You have a right to a copy of the following information from the court that made your adoption order (an adoption order is the agreement made by the court for you to be adopted):

- (a) the application form for your adoption order;
- (b) the adoption order itself and any other decisions by the court about your adoption; and
- (c) the court's decisions about who could have contact with you after the adoption order was made.

You can also have:

- (a) any written record of the court's decision; and
- (b) any reports given to the court by your Cafcass guardian and local authority.

### **How do I get the court records about my adoption?**

If you know the court that made your adoption order, you can contact them directly. It is worth making contact with your AAA for support and advice before doing this, as the court won't offer this. Your AAA will know which court issued your adoption order if you don't have that information.