



# Adoption Support in Enfield

A guide for adopted adults,

adoptive families and birth relatives.



## Introduction

The Adoption and Children Act which came into force on the 30th December 2005 represents the most radical overhaul of adoption law for 26 years, replacing the outdated Adoption Act 1976 and modernising the entire legal framework for domestic and inter country adoption. It has also brought in many changes that are intended to help improve adoption services for adopted families and their children, adopted adults and birth relatives. Adoption is a major event that has lifelong implications for all parties. Anyone whose life has been affected by adoption may need help and support to adjust to the changes, which it can bring. The London Borough of Enfield is an adoption agency that is required to provide a range of adoption support services to meet the needs of people affected by adoption. This includes adopted adults, adoptive families and birth relatives. The Regulations also make provision for the support of contact arrangements between adopted children and their birth relatives.

## Who can ask for Adoption Support?

- Adoptive families living in the London Borough of Enfield.
- Adults and young people placed for adoption through Enfield Children Services.
- Adopted adults living in Enfield who want access to their birth records even if another agency was involved at the time of their adoption. Or adopted adults who may now be living elsewhere but Enfield was involved in their adoption.
- Enfield residents who are birth relatives of adopted people.

## What kind of support is available?

- Counselling, advice and information
- Support with contact arrangements
- Support groups for all linked with adoption
- Training and workshops
- Financial Support
- Assessment of adoption support needs
- Therapeutic service for adoptive families



## **A guide to support services for Adopted Adults**

### **What rights do adopted people have?**

Since 1975, adopted people have had the right to apply for information that will enable them to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. Under Schedule 2 of the Adoption and Children act 2002, adopted people continue to have this right.

### **What do I have to do to obtain the information to get a copy of my original birth certificate?**

Arrangements vary depending on when you were adopted. If you were adopted before the 12 November 1975, and do not already know your birth name, then you need to apply to the Registrar General for birth records counselling and they will send us the paperwork that you will need so that you can receive the necessary information to enable you to obtain a copy of your birth certificate. If you were adopted after the 12th November 1975 and before the 30th December 2005, then you do not have to see a birth records adviser before you obtain a copy of your birth certificate, but this will be offered and is likely to be helpful to you. On locating your records, they will be discussed with you in confidence.

Whether or not your adoption was carried out in Enfield, and whether as an adult you are now living in Enfield or elsewhere, if you wish to find out more about your origins or the circumstances surrounding your adoption, we can assist in the search for your adoption records, provided you have some connection to Enfield. Should we find your records, we can make arrangements to provide you with a summary and will arrange for you to view them, or we can arrange to send them to an appropriate adoption support social worker in your area. Your adoption records may contain sensitive information about the circumstances of your adoption. Hearing about your history, may provoke emotions that make you feel anxious, excited or scared. We will support you when you read information from your records and take things at your pace. Our role is to support and give advice and discuss the right course of action for you. You may also wish to bring a friend to support you.

## Access to an Intermediary Service

Under the new legal framework, adopted adults and also their birth relatives now have the right to apply for an Intermediary Service. As an adopted person, you can ask us to assist you in tracing a birth relative and establishing contact should it be welcomed by the birth relatives. Birth relatives can also apply for the same service where they are wishing to have contact with their birth child. However, The London Borough of Enfield Adoption Support Team will provide appropriate safeguards to protect all parties concerned. As an intermediary agency we can then ask the person you are wishing to locate, for their views and consent to being identified to you and their thoughts about having contact with you.

If they are in agreement with contact taking place, we can then help you to get in touch with each other and provide any advice and support that might be needed. This includes:

- Preparing you for the impact of renewed contact with your relative.
- Offering advice and support on how to go about locating your birth relative and finding out their thoughts and views on being contacted by you.
- Making contact with your birth relatives and offering them support and assistance.
- Assisting you with any exchange of information agreed with your birth relative and supporting the renewed contact, which is agreed between you and your birth relative.
- Assisting with any reunion (by agreement) and offering after reunion support or links with local and national services providing support groups as appropriate.



## **I do not want my birth family to contact me. How can I prevent this?**

The new law recognises that not all adopted people want to have contact with their birth relatives or have their details passed on. Birth relatives have no legal rights to information about you and there are steps you can take to protect your privacy if that is what you want. When we meet with you we can give you more information about this procedure.

## **Will I see qualified and experienced staff?**

Yes. All Enfield staff providing Intermediary Services have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by adopted adults. The service is confidential but very exceptionally a situation may arise which gives cause for concern about someone's health and safety. We can explain the policy and procedures in relation to confidentiality. If you want to keep private the fact that you are receiving a service (for example, you may not want correspondence sent to your home address), this can be arranged.

## **Adopted children and young people**

If you are under 18 years of age, you are entitled to ask for an Assessment of your Adoption Support Needs. You might wish to do this if you wanted to talk about contact arrangements for example, or wish to discuss this with your adoptive parents. When you are 18 you will be entitled to see your adoption file.

## A guide to Adoptive Families

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 states that all local authorities have a duty to assess the support needs of service users and where appropriate to provide adoption support services. This includes children and adults who are adopted, birth relatives and adoptive families. Some services are also available to Step parents and Inter Country adopters. Where a local authority has a child in their care that is placed for adoption, the placing authority will remain responsible for providing adoption support for the first three years following the adoption order being made, regardless of where the adoptive parents live. After three years, the local authority where the adoptive family resides will be responsible for providing adoption support assessments of need and appropriate services.

### **Adoption Support Services are available for the following:**

- Adoptive parents.
- Adopted children.
- Birth children of adoptive parents.
- Birth relatives of adopted children in relation to support with contact arrangements.
- Adopted adults.

## How we can help:

- With telephone advice and support which may lead to a formal assessment of adoption support needs.
- With planning your individual support package.
- With advice and guidance about “telling” your child about adoption and what this means for him/her and other family members.
- With advice, guidance and signposting where there are difficulties in parenting an adopted child.
- With guidance and support in planning for all forms of contact between an adopted child and his/her birth family. With advice and support for adopted adults who are seeking information or searching for birth family members. Adoptive parents are also able to access support at this time.



## **London Borough of Enfield Adoption Support Team currently offers the following services:**

- A team of experienced adoption social workers available for advice, guidance and support on the full range of adoption support issues.
- Links with our local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) who provide services for families whose children have emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The services of The Post Adoption Centre, providing support for children, adoptive families and birth families.
- Post-box service, enabling birth families and adoptive families to exchange information and maintain confidentiality of addresses.
- Support for adopted adults in seeking out information about their birth history and advice with search and reunion issues.
- An annual event for adoptive families and their children.

## **Adoption support needs may change over time**

All services provided are subject to a review process. The frequency of the review will be dependent on the type of support being provided. New requests can be made at any time.

## Contact Arrangements

### There are different types of contact:

All contact arrangements are usually agreed before an Adoption Order is made, with a signed agreement outlining the type and frequency of contact and with whom.

#### Letterbox Contact

This enables indirect contact to be maintained between adopted children and their birth families through the exchange of written information between you and your child's birth relatives. Letterbox contact could include photographs, birthday cards, letters. This is a confidential service, which is managed by Enfield's Adoption Support Service.

#### Direct Contact

This is face-to-face contact between your family and your child's birth family. Enfield Adoption Support Service helps in preparing all parties for contact, and with practical arrangements like providing places to meet, supervision of contact if required. There is also a mediation service if there are disputes, or changes in contact need to be agreed.

## Support Groups

Enfield Adoption Support Service has a Support Group for adoptive parents living locally. Events are held that provide an opportunity for you to meet other adoptive families and staff. We would also suggest that you meet others by joining the local group of Adoption UK who have a programme of events for adoptive families, and British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) have a support group for black adopters. If you would be interested to find out more, please refer to our contact details at the back of this leaflet.

## Training and Workshops

Enfield is a member of the North London Adoption Consortium and refers adoptive parents to training opportunities sponsored by the consortium. In addition, adoption support social workers can advise on training provided by other agencies such as the Post Adoption Centre to which all boroughs in the consortium belong. If you would like to receive more information, this can be arranged through Enfield's Adoption Support Team.

## A guide for Birth Relatives after Adoption

### What is adoption?

Adoption provides permanent families for children who can no longer live with their parents or any member of their birth family. A child becomes adopted when an Adoption Order is made. This means that the legal rights and responsibilities which birth parents have are permanently transferred to the child's new adoptive parents. Adoption is permanent and so significant that only a court may make an Adoption Order.

### What support will I receive?

Under the Adoption & Children Act 2002, The London Borough of Enfield Adoption Support Team is able to assess the support needs of birth parents whose child has been placed for adoption.

### This includes:

- Counselling, advice and information to enable birth relatives to deal with the range of feelings and emotions connected to the child being adopted.
- Help with all aspects of contact with the child, letterbox or face to face, where this was planned, and is in the child's best interest.
- Support can also be given to provide information from you for the child, which might be needed in later life, such as information about their birth and early life history, or medical details.



## Contact arrangements between the Birth and Adoptive Family

As your child grows up in their adoptive family, it is important that he/she understands their origins. If you have been able to give information about yourself to the child, it will help them to have an increased understanding of events leading to the adoption from your perspective. All adoptive parents are offered training on the importance of talking to the adopted child about their origins and supporting any contact that has been arranged. All contact arrangements, if any, between a child and their birth family need careful consideration, but the priority is always to make plans which are in the child's best interest. You may be able to receive information from the adoptive parents and, in certain situations, from the child about their general progress and development.

### Contact Arrangements

All contact arrangements are usually agreed before an Adoption Order is made, with a signed agreement outlining the type and frequency of contact and with whom. There are different types of contact:

- If you have a written agreement for a letterbox contact with an adopted child and need help in writing a letter you can contact the adoption support service for guidance. There is no waiting list for this service. If you have not received your expected letter or photograph, you can contact us and we will follow this up on your behalf.
- If any mail cannot be forwarded for any reason (if you or the adopted family have moved) it will be held confidentially on a letterbox file in Enfield. Please ensure you that you keep us informed of any change of address.

## **Direct Contact**

If you have an agreement for direct contact with your adopted child which involves the adoption support service, they will contact you to make the necessary arrangements about the date, place and time that the contact is due to take place.

## **Support with Contact**

If you are a birth relative of a child who has been placed for adoption, you can ask the Adoption Support Service to offer you support with the contact you have with your child.

## **If you have no contact with your adopted child and would like to...**

You can contact the Adoption Support Service and give us the names and dates of birth of the children with whom you would like contact. The Adoption Support Service social worker will look at information in the child/children's adoption files before making contact with the adoptive parents at their last known address.

It may not be possible to make contact with the adoptive family if they have moved or do not reply to letters or phone calls. Adoptive families are only obliged to maintain contact with their child's birth family members through the Local Authority if the judge made a Contact Order when the Adoption Order was granted. If the adoptive family does not agree to contact, you can send letters, cards and photographs, which will be kept on the child's file. The child will receive these if he or she decides to access their birth records after the ages of 18.

## Tracing adopted children over the age of 18

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 allows birth family members to apply to the London Borough of Enfield Adoption Team to identify information about a young person if they had been adopted and have now reached the age of 18 years.

Adopted adults are also entitled to apply for identifying information about birth family members or others involved in their adoption, for example previous foster carers, but their consent would need to be given.

Although birth family members can ask for information about the adopted adult, there is not an automatic right to receive any identifying information. But an adopted adult has a right to obtain the information needed from the agency, for example to get a copy of their original birth certificate.

Careful consideration will be given to these sensitive issues, including consulting the person who would be identified – before deciding if it is appropriate to disclose their identifying information and support any planned reunion. Every case will be different and will be considered on the individual circumstances of everyone involved.

We recognise that after years of separation, making contact is often a difficult, emotional experience. In every situation there can be benefits and drawbacks, and it is important that you have had the opportunity to consider these with an experienced worker. All Enfield staff who provide Intermediary Services have a good knowledge and understanding of adoption, search and reunion and can support you through this process.



## Where can I find out more?

**Enfield Adoption Support Service**

**020 8379 8490**

**Email: [adoption@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@enfield.gov.uk)**

**[www.enfield.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.enfield.gov.uk/adoption)**

## Who else can help?

Enfield works with a range of external service providers to ensure that comprehensive packages of adoption support are available. This includes After Adoption, The Post Adoption Centre, the Inter-Country Adoption Centre and Adoption UK.

## North London Adoption Consortium

This includes the neighbouring boroughs of Barnet, Islington, Haringey and Camden as well as two independent agencies – Norwood and Parents for Children. Consortium members work in close partnership to ensure that the changing and developing needs of adopted children and their families within this area of North London are met.

**[www.adoptionnorthlondon.org](http://www.adoptionnorthlondon.org)**

## Post Adoption Centre

This well established centre offers a confidential specialist service, covering counselling and family work for anyone who has been involved with adoption.

### Post Adoption Centre

**5 Torriano Mews**

**London NW5 2RZ**

**020 7284 0555**

**[advice@postadoptioncentre.org.uk](mailto:advice@postadoptioncentre.org.uk) | [www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk](http://www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk)**

PAC also provide a surgery for Enfield residents affected by adoption.

Sessions in Enfield can be arranged via the PAC Advice Line counsellor on **0870 777 2197**.

## Adoption UK

Adoption UK provides independent support, information and advice to all concerned with adoption. In particular, this organisation offers a wealth of relevant experience and peer support from other adoptive families.

**46 The Green**

**South Bar Street**

**Banbury**

**Oxfordshire OX17 1LH**

**0844 848 7900 (10am - 4pm)**

**[helpdesk@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@adoptionuk.org.uk) | [www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)**

## **Post Adoption Online**

This is an innovative and creative way for anybody who has been affected by adoption to access adoption support information. The site offers a confidential advice service online, access to a post adoption adviser via interactive advice sessions and information about post adoption services and where they are located.

**7a Southern Court  
South Street  
Reading  
Berkshire RG14 4QS**

**0118 938 7600**

**[postadoption@pactcharity.org](mailto:postadoption@pactcharity.org) | [www.postadoptiononline.com](http://www.postadoptiononline.com)**

## After Adoption

After Adoption is the largest national provider of independent adoption support services. They are a registered charity, staffed by workers with personal and/or professional experience of adoption. Their services are aimed at anyone who has been affected by adoption, whether they are adopted people, birth parents and relatives or adoptive families.

**St Luke's Centre**  
**90-92 Central Street**  
**London EC1V 8AJ**

**020 7014 3194**

**[information@afteradoption.org.uk](mailto:information@afteradoption.org.uk) | [www.talkadoption.org.uk](http://www.talkadoption.org.uk)**

## NORCAP

(National Organisation for the counselling of Adopted Adults and Birth Parents) a self-help group supporting adopted adults, their birth and adoptive families affected by adoption.

**Adults Affected by Adoption – NORCAP**  
**112 Church Road**  
**Wheatley**  
**Oxfordshire OX33 1LU**

**01865 875 000**

**[enquiries@NORCAP.org](mailto:enquiries@NORCAP.org) | [www.norcap.org.uk](http://www.norcap.org.uk)**



## The General Register Offices for England & Wales

In order to obtain a birth or adoption certificate or if your adoption took place before the 12th November 1975, please contact:

**Adoptions Section**

**Room C202**

**General Register Office**

**Trafalgar Road**

**SOUTHPORT PR8 2HH**

**0151 471 4830**

**[queries.clerk@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:queries.clerk@ons.gsi.gov.uk) | [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk)**

## London Metropolitan Archive

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) is the largest local authority archive in the UK. They have a range of services that you can access online, including holding many thousands of records of children who were in care and/or adopted before 1965. We can advise you on how to access these records.

**40 Northampton Road**

**London EC1R 0HB**

**020 7332 3820**

**[ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk) | [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)**

## Recommended further reading

### **The Adoption Experience**

By Ann Morris  
Published in association with the  
Daily Telegraph and Jessica Kingsley  
Publishers for Adoption UK  
ISBN: 1853027839

### **Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting the Adopted Child**

By Holly Van Gulden  
& Lisa M. Bartels-Rabb  
Published by Crossroads  
Publishing Co (USA)  
ISBN: 0824515145

### **Talking Adoption to Your Adopted Child**

By Prue Chennells  
& Margaret Morrison  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 1873868553

### **First Steps in Parenting**

The Child Who Hurts  
By Caroline Archer  
Published by Jessica Kingsley  
ISBN: 1853028010

### **Adopting or Fostering a Sexually Abused Child**

(Child Care Policy and Practice  
(BAAF)) By Catherine Macaskill  
Published by Free  
Association Books  
ISBN: 0713467606

### **The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child**

By Nancy Verrier  
ISBN: 0963648004

### **Adopted Children Speaking**

By Caroline Thomas, Verna Beckford  
with Nigel Lowe and Mervyn Murch  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 1873868782

### **Related by Adoption**

By Heidi Argent  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 1903699398

### **Attachment handbook for Foster care and Adoption**

By Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek

### **Blue Eyed Son – The Story of Adoption**

By Nicky Campbell  
ISBN: 0330433067

### **The Nutmeg Series**

This series of engaging children's books follows Nutmeg, a small red squirrel, on his adoption journey. Designed to be read to or with children by their own social worker, their current carers or adoptive parents, they encourage children from a wide age range to explore their own stories and to make sense of their experiences.

### **Whose Child?: An Adoptee's Healing Journey from Relinquishment through Reunion ... and Beyond**

By Kasey Hamner  
ISBN: 0967414504

### **Searching Questions:**

Identity, origins and adoption  
By Julia Feast and Terry Philpot  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 1903699 479

**Adoption, Search and Reunion:  
The long-term experience  
of adopted adults**

By David Howe and Julia Feast  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 1903699533

**Directory of Intermediary Support  
Services in England and Wales  
for Birth Relatives**

By Julia Feast and Marion Hundleby  
Published by BAAF  
ISBN: 903699665

**The Adoption Reunion Handbook**

By Liz Trinder, Julia Feast  
and David Howe  
Published by John Wiley and Sons Ltd  
ISBN: 047009422 2

**Half a Million Women: Mothers who  
lose their Children by Adoption**

By David Howe, P. Sawbridge  
and D. Hining



