

# Further Information for Those Thinking About Reuniting With Family Members



[www.afteradoption.org.uk](http://www.afteradoption.org.uk)

0800 0 568 578

We know how important the ReUnite service is to you; the following advice is based on feedback from staff and service users experienced in intermediary/reunion work.

Please take some time to consider the following information and share this leaflet with other family members on whom your reunion may impact.

## For the Applicant (the Person Searching)

- We cannot offer guarantees of success; it is important to consider the range of possible outcomes of the search. Your relative may be in the middle of a significant life event such as a change of job, divorce, bereavement or may be unwell, physically or mentally, or may be caring for dependants. You have chosen a time to initiate the search which is good for you but it may not be a time they would have chosen. The other party may feel that, because you initiated the search, they have lost an element of control of their life. Respect their wishes.
- We all take different lengths of time to process and deal with information, this may affect the timescale of the service you receive – usually before embarking on an intermediary service you will have given the matter a great deal of thought. In addition to this you will have had the opportunity to meet with an Adoption Support Worker to discuss the process and any concerns you have. The person you ask us to trace deserves this opportunity and time, they may not be ready to progress at the pace you are, they may wish to access information about the adoption, they may need time to tell their family members or due to other life events cannot prioritise reunion at this time.

## For the Subject (the Person Who Has Been Found)

- The role of the Adoption Support Worker is to assist both parties, not just the person who initiated the search. Make use of the support available. If you would prefer a separate worker, please ask. This may not always be possible but if we can arrange this we will do so.
- The worker will respect your confidentiality. If you share information with the worker which you do not wish to be passed on to your relative at this stage, do specify this.
- You may need time to consider your response, access information from the adoption file or request counselling for yourself. It is better to explain you need time/ support, rather than leave the other party wondering what is happening.
- The 'applicant' is expected to provide sufficient information about themselves for you to make an informed decision about contact. Remember however that as an intermediary agency we are largely dependent upon the information they provide about themselves.
- 'Contact' can take many forms in terms of method and frequency, ranging from a one-off exchange of non-identifying information through to an ongoing, face to face relationship.
- If you do not want contact, you have the right to express your views formally about this in order to discourage a future approach. Birth relatives and adopted people can register their wish for contact/ no contact with the General Register Office (Adoption Contact Register). Additionally, adopted people can register a veto, partial or absolute, with the agency which arranged their adoption.

Your worker or the helpline can provide more information.

## For Both Parties

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- Even the most positive reunion can be a stressful process bringing challenges. Although you may feel that you have a profound connection to the person you wish to trace it is important to remember that you are essentially strangers. Relationships and trust take time to build - take things slowly. Give yourself time to process things - factual information about the other party and your emotional responses.
- Remember to look after other important relationships in your life and don't neglect those around you. It is not unusual to feel this new relationship is out of proportion or taking over your life, for good or bad, if so talk to your worker.
- On the other hand, don't be surprised if you do not feel a connection to the other person. There is no 'right' way to feel, although there are common themes, every situation is unique.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY MESSAGE

After Adoption is limited in the range of background checks we are legally able to conduct - we are only able to check the identity documents of service users and ascertain risks known to the agency responsible for the adoptive placement. After Adoption is not able to conduct routine police checks, nor are we able to know or assess risks posed by other people with whom your relative is associated.

Once you have disclosed your current name and contact details to the other party (or supplied information which could enable the other party to work this out) your worker's ability to manage your contact is reduced/minimised. (Please note: birth relatives of adopted adults should be aware that the adopted adult is entitled to information which enables them to trace you via public records)

Adoption affects everyone differently - be sensitive. Don't make assumptions about another's experience

Reunions do not happen in isolation, they may impact on others in your lives and the lives of your relative - positively or negatively. If you would like to talk things through with one of our staff please contact your worker or our Helpline.

AFTER ADOPTION ACTIONLINE 0800 0 568 578