



South East Wales Adoption Service
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Gwasaneth Mabwysiadu Deddwyrain Cymru
Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd I

Information for Adopted Adults

Support and guidance for adults who
have been adopted.



The South East Wales Adoption Service
North Wing, Block B, Mamhilad house, Mamhilad
Park Estate, Pontypool, NP4 0HZ
Adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
01495 355766

Information for Adopted Adults

Deciding to look into your birth and adoptive history can be one of the biggest decisions of your life. The final outcome is unknown and the journey can, in some cases take a long time. It can be emotional and at times challenge information you believed to be true. It can also be frustrating and exhausting, both physically and emotionally. It is therefore important to start your enquiry at a time that is right for you, to go at your own pace and to have appropriate support.

We advise adopted people to find out more about their family history and early life before they decide whether to try to contact a birth relative or not.

Access to Birth Information

Adopted adults who were adopted before 30 December 2005 and are aged 18 or over can apply for the information required to buy a copy of their original birth certificate from the General Register Office (GRO) / Identity and Passport Service (IPS).

You will need to complete a BIBA form (Birth information Before Adoption) which can be accessed via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-or-access-to-birth-records>

If your adoption was prior to 12th November 1975, you are required to receive the information from an approved adoption advisor. The information will be sent to the agency that you indicate on the form.

For adoptions granted before 12 November 1975 birth parents and adoptive parents believed that an adopted person would never be given the information which would enable them to trace their birth family.

When the law changed in 1975, it was considered that birth details should only be given to an adopted person by an adoption advisor. This is an important part of the Access to Birth Records process as the adoption advisor can offer support and guidance regarding the effects of accessing information and tracing may have on you, your adoptive family and your birth relatives.

You will be given information about your birth name, birth parent(s) name(s) and your district of birth with which you can apply for a certified copy of your original birth entry.



Access to Birth Information (cont.)

If an adoption agency or local authority was involved in your adoption the advisor will have this information. If not, the advisor will have the details necessary to make an application to the court for the name of the adoption agency or local authority.

Once you have received the name of the organisation involved in your adoption you or your advisor will be able to contact them to see if your adoption file still exists. If it does you may be allowed to access some of the information it contains.

If your adoption took place on or after 12th November 1975 and before 30th December 2005 you are able to choose whether you would like to see an approved adoption advisor or have the information sent directly to you (If you choose to see an adoption advisor)

You will be given information about your birth name, birth parent(s) name(s) and your district of birth with which you can apply for a certified copy of your original birth entry.

If an adoption agency or local authority was involved in your adoption the advisor will have this information. If not, the advisor will have the details necessary to make an application to the court for the name of the adoption agency or local authority.

Once you have received the name of the organisation involved in your adoption you or your advisor will be able to contact them to see if your adoption file still exists. If it does you may be allowed to access some of the information it contains.

If you choose not to see an Adoption Advisor

The information detailed above will be sent directly to you. You will also receive a covering letter explaining the next steps to follow.

Adopted adults who were adopted after the 30th December 2005 and are aged 18 or over can gain access to their birth details through the agency or social services that dealt with their adoption.

If the name of the agency or social services is not known any adult (including the adopted adult) at his/her request may contact the General Register Office to obtain information to assist him/her to make contact with the appropriate adoption agency or social services that dealt with their adoption



Access to Adoption Records

In accordance with adoption legislation, adoption agencies have discretion whether to share information from their adoption records with adopted adults.

SEWAS has a responsibility to consider third party information and to consider the impact of sharing this information on all parties involved. This includes a responsibility to ensure that no major harm will come to anyone by any disclosure of information.

If you know your birth name, birth mothers name and the name of the adoption agency that arranged your adoption then **you can make a request for information from South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) if:**

You currently reside in Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Caerphilly or Newport (if another agency has arranged your adoption we can request these records for you)

...Or

If one of the above adoption agencies arranged your adoption (this includes the previous Gwent County Council as please note county boundaries may have changed over the years)

If you do not live in one of the 5 SEWAS authority areas you can contact your local adoption agency who will make the necessary arrangements to access your records on your behalf. Accessing your local adoption agency will offer direct support and knowledge of local services for adopted adults.

If you seek information from your records, you will be asked to provide photographic evidence of identity as well as evidence of any change of name by marriage, divorce or deed pole if applicable, before any information can be shared.

The sharing of records can raise complex, sensitive and emotional issues and you could be unprepared for the impact they may have on you. The social worker will explore the following areas prior to sharing any information:

- The reason for your enquiry at this point
- Your current circumstances (e.g. marital status, children, employment, general health)
- The age you were informed of your adoption
- Any information you already have regarding your birth family and circumstances leading to your adoption

(Continued on next page)



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Access to Adoption Records (cont.)

- Your experience of adoption
- Your support networks
- Your hopes, concerns and expectations

It may also help if you have:

- An adoption certificate
- A birth certificate or the information from the GRO
- Your date of adoption and the court who granted the adoption order
- Any additional information relating to your adoption

It is not possible to know what information adoption files contain as each case is different. There may be a great deal of information about your birth parents and the details surrounding your adoption, but there may also be very little.

If your adoption file still exists it will be held by the social services adoption team or adoption agency/society that arranged your adoption or its successor. Whether a file still exists depends upon a number of factors, including how the adoption was arranged. Up until the 1980s, adoptions could be arranged through an adoption society, or the social services, or could be agreed privately via a doctor, solicitor, friend or the mother herself. Additionally some children were adopted by grandparents or other relatives, such as step-parents.

Details of adoptions were not always well documented in the past and records were not kept indefinitely. Also, where an adoption was arranged privately, it can be difficult to locate any records.

In a limited number of cases, records may not be found or may have been destroyed.

If information is limited or we are unable to locate any records from the agency that placed you for adoption, an application can be made to the court. The court may charge for this service.

We can also ask the agency in the area where the Adoption order was made if they have any records.

Please note within adoption records there may be information included which indicates the wishes of the birth family in relation to contact. This may include a wish for no contact.



Access to Adoption Records (cont.)

As an adopted adult you can place a veto on the adoption file if you choose.

This means that you can specify

- If you do not wish to be contacted by an intermediary agency in relation to an approach by a birth relative **or**
- If you only wish to be contacted under specified circumstances or by specified persons

You must notify the appropriate adoption agency (the agency that arranged your adoption) in writing if you wish to place a veto on the adoption file.

The appropriate adoption agency must keep a record of the veto and ensure that it is made known to any intermediary agency that contacts it.

Where an intermediary agency is aware that a veto applies, it must not proceed with the application.

You can amend your veto in writing at any time.

Although registering a veto prevents an intermediary approach being made, a veto does not prevent the appropriate adoption agency from making contact with an adopted person where it considers it appropriate to do so.

THE ADOPTION CONTACT REGISTER

The General Register Office (GRO) / Identity and Passport Service (IPS) holds the Adoption Contact Register.

How it works:

- Adopted adults register on Part 1.

Adopted adults can formally register a wish for no contact, for contact with or no contact with specific adult birth relatives.

- Birth relatives register on Part 2.

Birth Relatives can formally register a wish for no contact or for contact with a Specific Adopted Adult.

- An adopted adult who has birth siblings who have also been adopted will need to register on Part 1 and 2.

- If an adopted adult and a birth relative have both registered for contact, an automatic link is made and the birth relative's name and address, with details of who made the contact are sent to the adopted adult and the birth relative is told that this has been done.



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Access to Adoption Records (cont.)

The Adoption Contact Register (cont.)

- It is for the adopted adult to decide whether they want to make contact with the birth relative.

The GRO charges a fee to register on the Adoption Contact Register or to amend that registration. <https://www.gov.uk/adoption-records>.

INTERMEDIARY SERVICES (Tracing and Contact)

Currently, SEWAS is not offering an intermediary service, but we are recording any interest made by adopted adults who wish to search for their birth family. We can also offer information regarding registered intermediary agencies who offer this service, however in most cases there will be a charge.

You may want to contact the agency that placed you for adoption (if it is not SEWAS) as in some cases they may offer this service even if you do not currently live in their area. In some cases this may be free of charge or at a reduced fee.

SEWAS CONTACT DETAILS

South East Wales Adoption Service
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2nd Floor, Block B,
Mamhilad House,
Mamhilad Park Estate,
Pontypool,
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Email: Adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Telephone Number: 01495 355766

An adoption social worker is available Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm to assist with your enquiry.



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