



Adult Adoptee Movement Response to

The JCHR Report:
Violation of Family Life:
Adoption of Children of
Unmarried Women
1949-1976

October 2022



House of Commons House
of Lords
Joint Committee on Human Rights

**The Violation of Family
Life: Adoption of
Children of Unmarried Women 1949–
1976**

Third Report of Session 2022–23
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Executive Summary

We have come together as a group of adoptees. We welcome the report and its recommendations specifically in relation to challenging the Government's denial of responsibility for the practice of forced adoption, and many of the recommendations made.

We have participated in the inquiry and wish to ensure the best possible outcome to support everyone affected. However, so far, the focus has been on the unmarried women, rather than the adoptees.

We do not represent all adoptees and would urge policy makers to listen directly to the full range of lived experience.

The brief

"This inquiry looks at the experiences of unmarried women and their children who were adopted during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. We wanted to understand the situation faced by unmarried mothers whose children were adopted without them having a meaningful choice."

We are concerned that the 200,000 babies who were adopted are still seen as 'infants'. We are now all adults, some of us parents, and some of grandparents. The trauma we have faced has not been fully examined or appreciated, and we face a chronic lack of support.

As adoptees we would welcome a further inquiry into the challenges faced by us and our children. Under UNCRC (The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) Article 8 we have a right to an identity. This was taken away by the state.

We do however feel vindicated to an extent that the report:

- identifies the "injustice" suffered by the mothers and the children, now adult adoptees, and that the injustice is "ongoing"
- recommends an apology for the mothers and urgent changes now for adult adoptees
- starts with a focus on recommendations.

The report requires change and action for what "remains painful" which will, anyway, only "... go some way towards positive change for all those affected..."

Our concerns

We believe that there is still insufficient understanding of the impact of forced adoption on adoptees and their families. As adoptees we would welcome an inquiry into the challenges faced by us, our children, and our wider families.

To support the inquiry, we have further commented on the key areas of the report that affect adult adoptees and made our recommendations. Comments are consensual group opinions and highlighted with lived experience, including from the published evidence. The JCHR Report was focussed on domestic adoptions, and we draw its attention to adoptees whose parents no longer live in the UK, and also to those affected by inter-country adoption.

Key recommendations

We want to ensure that our trauma is acknowledged, and appropriate support is offered. Furthermore, we wish to ensure that the cycle of trauma does not pass down to our families and future generations.

An apology can never make up for past events, but we wish to ensure that the trauma we face in our daily lives is never repeated. The Government should acknowledge and apologise for the way we were treated. It should set new standards and legislation to protect adoptees.



Adoptee Response – Our 14 Key Recommendations

Full details are in the [Adoptee Full Response Section](#) of this document.

Adoptee Recommendation 1: Issue a full apology

- The Government should issue a full apology which fully recognises not only the harm done to the birth mothers but also the harm done to the adoptees

[Section 1 point 5 evidence sessions]

Adoptee Recommendation 2: An inquiry into the experiences and the effects of adoption on adoptees

The Government should undertake an inquiry into the experiences and the effects of adoption on adoptees for the purposes of:

- understanding the lived experiences of adoptees
- examining the effects of adoption on adoptees
- informing adoption legislation, policy, and practices
- exploring options to specifically recognise the separation, loss, and grief of adoptees

[Section 1 point 6 historic adoption]

Adoptee Recommendation 3: A research study on past adoption practices

The Government should fund a research study on past adoption practices. We propose that the study should:

- have a public awareness campaign to reach as many participants as possible
- seek perspectives from people affected by historical forced adoptions, including adoptees, mothers, fathers, children of adoptees, extended family and adoptive parents
- explore issues relating to separation trauma and abandonment, severance and displacement, loss and disenfranchised grief, identity, relationship dysfunction and intergenerational effects
- be an ongoing research project into the impact of adoption on the adoptee

[Section 1 points 9-11 numbers]

Adoptee Recommendation 4: Change the narrative of adoption

- The prevailing narrative has adoption as an unqualified social good, adoptive parent as saviours and adoptees as 'lucky'. This flawed view is the root cause of many adoption issues and a barrier to implementing the Inquiry's recommendations. We should change the narrative to put the burden of gratitude where it belongs: on adoptive parents.

[Section 3 point 86 abuse]



Adoptee Recommendation 5: Access to records to both in the UK and abroad

The Government should provide:

- quick and easy access to our medical and family history and identity information.
- adoptees throughout the UK should be entitled to their full adoption file.
- proper support for any adoptee wishing to search for birth families, free and easy to access regardless of where in the UK you live.
- better regulated (not, as currently, often prohibitively expensive, profiteering) tracing and intermediary services.
- all inter country adoptees should be entitled to funding for travel to their country of birth and given additional support if they wish to search. The government should look to end inter country adoptions. Practices may have improved here but many of the countries we adopt from still have archaic rules and laws.

[Section 3 point 87 the impact on identity]

Adoptee Recommendation 6: Intermediary services and support for all parties involved

- Intermediary services and support for all parties involved, including extended family members
- Support services need to be available for adoptees and their families, separated by borders

[Section 3 point 88 the experience of other family members]

Adoptee Recommendation 7: Access to trauma and adoption-informed counselling

- Access to trauma- and adoption-informed counselling. Despite government assertions, there is no access to this for adult adoptees via the NHS
- Proper, easily accessible, therapy, free from the constraints of Ofsted. Open ended, trauma informed and funded
- Funding for peer support networks and funding to train and support peer support workers

Section 3 points 90 - 93 therapeutic support

Adoptee Recommendation 8: Extending the access to the Adoption Support Fund for all adoptees

- Extending the access to the Adoption Support Fund for all adoptees, regardless of age. This support fund could be used for access to birth records, tracing services, intermediary services, and trauma-informed counselling

[Section 3 point 93 therapeutic support, access to records]



Adoptee Recommendation 9: Allow annulment of adoptions in line with current guardianship practices

- Adoptees should be able to annul their adoptions, easily and without undue delay or question, to move in line with current practises around legal and special guardianship
- Governments must allow adoptees the legal right to integrate birth certificates with adoption status. That these be issued on request and that they be legal proof of identity, of equal status to other birth certificates, and be shown as such in archives and within government held data
- Furthermore, any adoptees after 18+ should have the right to leave adoptee status and return to Birth Identity legally, this matter should be simplified on a “no fault basis” and “no claims basis” and at no charge to the Adoptee
- This right to revocation, annulment, discharge will restore overdue Human Rights to an identity they feel comfortable living in as adoptees revoking their adoptee status

[Section 3 point 93 therapeutic support, capacity to revoke adoption]

Adoptee Recommendation 10: Access to screening for genetic conditions

- Adoptees should automatically have access to screening for conditions which may be hereditary...i.e., breast cancer, Huntington's, glaucoma etc. as we don't have comprehensive medical histories. Often if we ask, we are denied access to tests.

[Section 3 points 100 – 103, medical history]

Adoptee Recommendation 11: Access to visas

- The legal status of adoptees needs to be addressed and further research carried out to explore how visas can be issued promptly for adoptees, whose biological roots and/or families are in different countries.
- Access to free legal advice and representation to acquire citizenship where reunion has been made impossible due to border controls.

[Section 3 point 104]

Adoptee Recommendation 12: Research into best practice for intermediaries

- Further research should be carried out to better understand the extent that intermediaries help in the process and to develop best practice guidelines for intermediaries

[Section 3 points 106-108, intermediaries]



Adoptee Recommendation 13: Access to notification of death of birth parents

- A system needs to be implemented for adoptees to find out if their birth parents have died
- This could be further extended to include births/deaths of biological siblings

[Section 3 points 109-110, knowing your child has died]

Adoptee Recommendation 14: All parties should disclose their roles and issue an unconditional apology

- All parties involved in the historic should disclose their roles in the practice of historic forced apologies and issue an unconditional apology
- All parties must commit to ensuring that this can never happen again
- An assurance that adoption today will change, the government will work harder to keep families together. No more forced adoptions, no more splitting up of sibling sets, proper exploration of kinship care. The use of special and legal guardianship encouraged.

[Section 3 points 122-126, recommendation for an apology]



Adoptee Full Response to JCHR Report Sections 1, 3 and 4

The following sections of the report directly affected the adult adoptee community.

JCHR Report Section 1 – Introduction and Evidence Sessions

JCHR Report section 1: Introduction to our inquiry, point 5, evidence sessions

5. We received 142 written evidence submissions, 105 of which we were able to publish. We had over 260 respondents to a survey we conducted. We held three oral evidence sessions and heard from eight witnesses. We held a roundtable discussion with over 40 participants, who were either mothers or adoptees. We thank each and every one who contributed to this inquiry, in whatever form. We recognise that, for some, this is the first time they have shared their story, and we thank them for their bravery. We acknowledge that there will be many who did not share their story but may have wanted to.

Adoptee response to point 5 evidence sessions

Sharing my story at the round table event was incredibly hard. However, I came away feeling listened to, and the overwhelming sense of relief that for the first time I was not alone.

We are however concerned, that not all evidence was published, and that errors were made regarding the anonymisation of records. We have therefore compiled a written summary of evidence, which can be found in [Appendix 1 - Published Evidence](#)

Adoptee Recommendation 1: Issue a full apology

- The Government should issue a full apology which fully recognises not only the harm done to the birth mothers but also the harm done to the adoptees

[Section 1 point 5 evidence sessions]



JCHR Report section 1: Introduction our inquiry, point 6, historic adoptions

6. This inquiry is unusual in that it looks at practices that occurred some decades previously, before many of our current human rights laws, and at a time when our knowledge and understanding of the impact of policies and practices was also different. It is not typical of the work of select committees (although not unknown) whose work is usually contemporary, scrutinising current policy and legislation, and lending our voice and expertise to ensure human rights are respected and upheld through current Government policy. This inquiry is not a detailed examination of adoption policy, either current or historic, and we do not seek to pass judgement on adoption more widely.

Adoptee response to point 6 focus on historic adoption

We request that our own experiences as adoptees born between the years 1949 and 1976 are acknowledged and addressed. By listening to the experiences of those who are affected by historic adoptions and addressing our ongoing needs the Government could gain insight to inform current practice.

Adoptee Recommendation 2: An inquiry into the experiences and the effects of adoption on adoptees

The Government should undertake an inquiry into the experiences and the effects of adoption on adoptees for the purposes of:

- understanding the lived experiences of adoptees
- examining the effects of adoption on adoptees
- informing adoption legislation, policy, and practices
- exploring options to specifically recognise the separation, loss, and grief of adoptees

[Section 1 point 6 historic adoption]

JCHR Report section 1: Introduction our inquiry, points 9-11, numbers

9. We have tried throughout the inquiry to ascertain the number of mothers and children affected by these practices during the period. Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that the total number of adoptions in England and Wales was approximately 500,000 between 1949–76.

10. In the BBC's 2021 documentary 'If You Love Your Baby... The Story of Forced Adoptions', journalist Duncan Kennedy spoke of half a million babies being put up for adoption between 1945 and 1976 and stated that "hundreds of thousands" of women were pressurised to place their babies for adoption.

11. This broad figure of half a million babies includes many different types of adoption. For example, in her written evidence, Judith Masson, Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of Bristol, describes how: "stepparent adoption by the mother and her new husband (not the baby's father) was common until officially discouraged by the Children Act 1975 ... In 1950, 29 per cent of all adoptions were step-parent adoptions [and in] 1976, two-thirds of all adoptions were by a parent and step-parent ..."

Adoptee response to points 9 - 11 the calculation of numbers

500,000 babies were put up for adoption between 1949 and 1976 To put these figures in context – enough babies to equal the population of Liverpool which as 486,100 or the county of Wiltshire 510,400

If you take the conservative estimate of 185,000 being forced adoptions that is equivalent to the population of the New Forest of 175,000 or Warrington at 210,900, according to the latest census figures.



Adoptee Recommendation 3: A research study on past adoption practices

The Government should fund a research study on past adoption practices. We propose that the study should:

- have a public awareness campaign to reach as many participants as possible
- seek perspectives from people affected by historical forced adoptions, including adoptees, mothers, fathers, children of adoptees, extended family and adoptive parents
- explore issues relating to separation trauma and abandonment, severance and displacement, loss and disenfranchised grief, identity, relationship dysfunction and intergenerational effects
- be an ongoing research project into the impact of adoption on the adoptee

[Section 1 points 9-11 numbers]



JCHR Report section 1: Inquiries in other jurisdictions, points 14 – 24

Inquiries in other jurisdictions

14. Our work echoes inquiries and investigations around the world, and we set out some of these below. While each country will have its own unique situation, such as the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland and Northern Ireland, or federal governance structures, such as in Australia and Canada, we saw many similar themes that emerged from these inquiries in our work. Each country, and its citizens, has its own story to tell, and many have done and continue to do so with investigations, reparations, and redress schemes.

Australia and Canada

15. In November 2010, the Australian Senate referred an inquiry into former forced adoption policies and practices to the Community Affairs References Committee. The Committee's inquiry resulted in a report on the *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices*, which was published in February 2012. The Committee had to seek two extensions to its work due to the volume of submissions and complexity of the subject.

16. The report was followed in March 2013 by an apology by the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard on behalf of the Australian Government to those affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices:

Today, this Parliament, on behalf of the Australian people, takes responsibility and apologises for the policies and practices that forced the separation of mothers from their babies, which created a lifelong legacy of pain and suffering.

17. This is the apology that has been referred to most frequently in the evidence we have received. The Australian Government also provided financial assistance for support for those affected. Currently the Department of Social Services (DSS) funds seven organisations to provide coordinated specialist support services across Australia. The governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have also issued apologies and the Northern Territory Government has expressed support for the national apology.

18. In 2018, the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology carried out an inquiry into the issue of “the common practice, in the decades immediately following World War II of forcing Canadian ‘unwed mothers’ to surrender their babies to adoption, that was carried out.” It reached similar conclusions to the Australian Senate inquiry and recommended that the Government of Canada issue a formal apology on behalf of all Canadians to the mothers and their children who were subjected to those practices in the years following World War II. However, no apology has been forthcoming.

Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland

19. Ireland's Government established a Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes in February 2015 in order to establish what happened to the women and children who lived in the Mother and Baby Homes between 1922 and 1998. Unlike our inquiry, adoption was one of several issues that the Commission looked at. Other issues included vaccine trials and deaths in Mother and Baby Homes, as well as the investigation of specific institutions.¹⁶ On 30 October 2022, the Commission reported that two main issues raised by former inhabitants of the Mother and Baby Homes were problems with the information and tracing systems and redress, and these were two of the focuses of its recommendations.¹⁷ On 13 January 2021, the Taoiseach apologised in the Dáil: “for the profound generational wrong visited upon Irish mothers and their children who ended up in a mother and baby home or a county home.”¹⁸ Archbishop Eamon Martin, the leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland also apologised.¹⁹ In November 2021, the Irish Government announced a Payment Scheme and published an action plan for survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home institutions.²⁰

20. In 2017, the Northern Ireland Executive commissioned research about the operation of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries between 1922 and 1999.²¹ This was published in January 2021, and, following its publication, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to establish an independent investigation and a Truth Recovery Design Panel was established to design the inquiry. Following the Panel's November 2021 report, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to a public inquiry.²² The Panel's report also made a number of other recommendations, including formal apologies, compensation payments, and access to rehabilitation services.

21. In June 2021 the Scottish First Minister committed to considering the issue of historical adoption,²⁴ and the Minister for Children and Young People in Scotland told us that she had met with Scottish representatives of Movement for an Adoption Apology and other campaigners and was



planning further engagement. The online questionnaire inviting views from anyone affected by historical adoption in Scotland closed in April 2022 and work on analysing the responses continues. Other inquiries

22. In 2016, the House of Representatives in New Zealand was petitioned for “a broad and full inquiry into the practice of ‘forced adoption’ in New Zealand during the 1950s to the 1980s”,²⁵ however while the Social Services Committee considered the petition, it did not recommend an inquiry.²⁶ In August 2020, the Social Services and Community Committee initiated a briefing as it was interested in what the petitioners thought an inquiry would achieve.²⁷ Its subsequent report recommended that the Government should consider “the concerns that exist about the practice of forced adoption in New Zealand from the 1950s to the 1980s and the actions it could take in response to these concerns”.²⁸

23. In the Netherlands, the WODC (Research and Documentation Centre), part of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, commissioned the Verwey-Jonker Institute to undertake research into adoption between 1954 and 1984, including the role of organisations and the social environment.²⁹

24. In 2015, an official apology was issued by the government and parliament of Flanders to the victims of the adoptions that took place in the region between the 1950s and 1980s.

Adoptee response to points 14-24 Inquiries in other jurisdictions

Beyond the points that the Committee makes, there are other improvements made recently in other jurisdictions that should be considered for the UK:

- Following a Parliamentary Inquiry into Historical Forced Adoption, adoptees in Victoria, Australia will have the right to an integrated birth certificate which lists both sets of parents.
- It is also possible to discharge adoptions under Victoria law



JCHR Report Section 3 – The effects today

JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 86, abuse

86 Some adoptees had experienced abuse—emotional, physical, and sexual—by their adopters and by others, the impact of which was ongoing. We heard written evidence of many adoptees who had felt the impact of their adoption on their subsequent adult relationships.

Adoptee response to point 86 abuse

In addition, the report mentions that some adopted adults experienced “emotional, physical, sexual abuse by their adopters and others...”

I am one of those abused adoptees and there are many of us. I was emotionally abused by my adoptive mother as a child and I continue to be emotionally abused by my adoptive mother at the age of 55, all because, as for many adoptees from 1949 to 1976, I was plan B for an infertile couple, and my adoptive mother demands my continuing gratitude (and servitude) for being ‘rescued.’

The limited nature of the vetting and absence of follow up resulted in inadequate safeguarding, allowing children to be placed in abusive families without redress at any point.

Adoptee Recommendation 4: Change the narrative of adoption

- The prevailing narrative has adoption as an unqualified social good, adoptive parent as saviours and adoptees as ‘lucky’. This flawed view is the root cause of many adoption issues and a barrier to implementing the Inquiry’s recommendations. We should change the narrative to put the burden of gratitude where it belongs: on adoptive parents.

[Section 3 point 86 abuse]

JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 87, identity

87 We have heard much around the question of identity, including when adoptees had lost the cultural links of their original parents. At our roundtable event, we heard how those with mixed heritage felt they were left alone to “acclimatise” themselves to the fact and its implications.

Adoptee response to point 87 the impact on identity

Adoptees from 1949 to 1976 had closed government-regulated and enabled adoptions without any medical information, family history, and no support; we are suffering life-long identity erasure, and trauma.

How can adoptees form their own identities, when their birth identity was erased, and they were then expected to conform to an identity given to them by their adoptive parents? Adoptees were expected to assimilate a role to meet with the expectations of their adoptive families.

Transracial adoptees

Many transracial adoptees not only highlight the difficulty of growing up in a family without colour but also an entire community. Access to cultural diversity can be non-existent in such communities thus increasing the adoptees feelings of aloneness.

Add to this the rampant racism often running through these communities during the period we are talking about, and you get very marginalised people with no identity and no way of forming one.

Something which some may think unimportant for example haircare is vital to people of colour, not having anyone else of colour in your community also means that facilities like black hairdressers are also unavailable locally. Music, food, even how people worship is radically different from community to community and to deny



adoptees full and free access to such things is to deny any feelings of belonging or worth and so lessening our self-esteem and diminishing our feelings of self.

Basic identity questions

This does not even begin to cover the real struggle adoptees face around identity. Put aside for a moment the real struggle transracial adoptees face and focus on the struggle all adoptees face.

Genetic mirroring is an important aspect of our ability to form an identity.

Basic questions, all things which a child raised in their biological family will have access to, are left unanswered - sometimes with adverse medical implications. Many of these come to the fore during puberty, pregnancy, menopause, ill-health:

- How tall will I be?
- Who do I look like?
- Why am I the only left-handed person in the family?
- Why have I got different colour hair to everyone else?
- When did my mother start her periods?
- When did my mother start the menopause?
- What genetic conditions am I or my children at risk of?

Coregulation issues

Adoption is rooted in trauma and loss for the adoptee and many of us suffer with the long-term effects. Many of us were taken from our mothers at days or weeks old (something society looks down on for household pets but not children it seems). We often spend much of our time in fight/flight/freeze/fawn responses to the detriment of our personal relationships and professional lives. This is the case even for those who had ostensibly good adoptions and were loved. These responses are so ingrained that many of us do not realise until later in life that this has been our practice. We have become experts at carrying other people's shame, prioritizing the feelings of others, and diminishing ourselves to stay safe.

Illegitimate

You start your life as illegitimate. The dictionary definition being

"Not authorized by the law; not in accordance with accepted standards or rules."

Which in turn became to mean

(Of a child) born of parents not lawfully married to each other.

The state used this terminology to describe the children of unmarried mothers. The term stays with you for the rest of your life. When my adoptive father passed away, other family members questioned the legality of my inheritance – I was subsequently paid off with £400 for what should have been 50% of a property.

"I never fit in"

As an adopted person, I feel I never fit in. I always feel on the periphery of things.

The impact of having my own children

Seeing my children for the first time, was the most amazing gift – the first time I had ever met anyone who I was related to.

Pregnancy was fraught with "what's your family history....", for my first pregnancy the female consultant was very empathetic and consented to a 20-week scan (which wasn't standard where I lived). The male consultant for my second child (the following year) wasn't so empathetic and refused access to a 20-week scan.

Every time you are asked "What's your family history" – why is this not on our medical records?

I was fiercely protective of my children and could not bear the thought of putting them in nursery until they were pre-school. My children will also face the same challenges when asked about family history.



The impact on our children

Adoption hasn't just robbed me of my cultural identity, it has also robbed my children of theirs.

Our children have not had the opportunity to grow up with their cousins and extended family.

Decisions on being a parent

I never wanted children, and I had a fear of pregnancy and childbirth, I think this was in part as I never had anyone to talk to about these things, as my mother hadn't given birth to me.

I was so traumatised by my adoption, that I couldn't trust enough to enter into relationships.

Adoptee Recommendation 5: Access to records to both in the UK and abroad

The Government should provide:

- quick and easy access to our medical and family history and identity information.
- adoptees throughout the UK should be entitled to their full adoption file.
- proper support for any adoptee wishing to search for birth families, free and easy to access regardless of where in the UK you live.
- better regulated (not, as currently, often prohibitively expensive, profiteering) tracing and intermediary services.
- all inter country adoptees should be entitled to funding for travel to their country of birth and given additional support if they wish to search. The government should look to end inter country adoptions. Practices may have improved here but many of the countries we adopt from still have archaic rules and laws.

[Section 3 point 87 the impact on identity]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 88, the experience of other family members

88 We heard some evidence about the experience of other family members. One wrote: “I think my husband had it right when he said to me ‘The point is that you not being allowed to raise your first child has affected all of us.’” Some mothers described the impact on the children they later went on to have: “he was and still is a very sensitive person, who himself suffers from depression as a result of my effect on him.”

Adoptee response to point 88, the experience of other family members

When I contacted my birth siblings, they had no idea about the trauma their mother had been through. However, they were all shocked, but not surprised, as it explained many things that had affected their childhood. It was also hard for them to understand the potential role their grandparents may or may not have had in this. Again, their identity has also been affected by this.

There is no support for the complexity and shift of established patterns of familial relationships when first families meet adopted families. For example, families could gain a whole new extended family.

Adoptee Recommendation 6: Intermediary services and support for all parties involved

- Intermediary services and support for all parties involved, including extended family members
- Support services need to be available for adoptees and their families, separated by borders

[Section 3 point 88 the experience of other family members]

JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 89, the experience of reunions

89 We heard evidence of the experience of reunions between mothers and grown children, who were often well into adulthood. Some had built happy relationships. “I’ve reunited with my son, and we have a wonderful relationship”, wrote one. “We have not looked back since”, said another. Many are tinged with regret. In the words of one mother: “The man is returned to me, but not the child. The lost child is forever lost.” Many felt unable to continue the contact. “I no longer have any contact with my daughter or grandchildren”, wrote one mother.

Adoptee response to point 89, the experience of reunions

My mother had dealt with the adoption, by closing it out of her mind. I reached out to her in 2012 and she wrote back, but the pain was so glaringly obvious, I didn’t pursue it as I didn’t want to cause any more pain. I was diagnosed with cancer in 2017 and decided that my health was the most important thing, I needed to know my family history, so I reached out to my biological siblings via social media. They were amazing, and have been nothing but supportive, despite it being a strange situation for all of us. The first time we met was so powerful, the feeling of being ‘whole’ for the first time but tinged with sadness as you realise what you have missed out on, and again you are on the ‘edge’ of their lives.

JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, points 90-93, therapeutic support

90 Many mothers and adoptees have accessed therapy and counselling to help them with the long-lasting effects following the adoption. A number spoke of the support they had received from the Post Adoption Centre (PAC), National Association for Reuniting Adoptees and their Parents (NORCAP) and the Natural Parents network (NPN), though noting with regret that NORCAP is no longer in existence and the NPN on Facebook only. While some of the counselling provided was free of charge, most is self-funded. At our roundtable on 27 April 2022, we heard of the difficulties some had had in accessing therapy, and of the shortage of qualified therapists available.

91 Under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, adoption support agencies provide help and support to adopted children and adults, including counselling. Ofsted’s document *Introduction to adoption support agencies: A children’s social care guide to registration* explains that a counsellor needs



to register as an adoption support agency if they provide an adoption-related service to people requiring counselling for adoption-related issues. However, if an adoption-related issue arises after counselling has begun and it is not the primary reason a person is undertaking counselling, registering is not necessary.

92 We heard that this requirement to register to provide adoption support acted as a disincentive to many counsellors, and that there was a shortfall in the number of counsellors available to undertake this work as a result. In his oral evidence, Nadhim Zahawi, the then Secretary of State for Education, acknowledged this “barrier to adult adoptees accessing and receiving support”, and said that he wanted to “get rid of any bureaucratic barriers” to “improve service delivery” while being “careful that we do not sacrifice quality”. He went on to say:

We will consult very shortly on removing the requirement for providers of support services for adult adoptees having to register with Ofsted. In practice, that should make it much easier, and also more cost effective, for these providers to run their businesses. It will mean that support is more accessible for the adults who need it.

93. There is a shortage of counsellors able to provide post-adoption support and the existing process for Ofsted regulation is one barrier to counsellors working in this area. The Government should consider as a matter of urgency how to make sure that the necessary regulations to protect standards do not prevent mothers and adult adoptees getting the support they need.

Adoptee response to points 90 - 91, therapeutic support

There is no central department for adults who were adopted as children. It is hard to navigate the agencies that are available and understand what support is available to you. I have spoken to my GP about counselling who suggested I contact the local social services department; they refused as I was an adult, and they could not point me in the direction of support. I feel as though I am being bounced from pillar to post. No-one had ever mentioned the requirement for Ofsted registered counsellors. I had seen one counsellor, who had absolutely no idea about the trauma brought about by adoption—again I was left feeling alone and let down.

This is the response I received from an adoption support worker at PAC UK *‘Each local authority adoption service or regional adoption agency decides which services to fund, and I’m afraid that funding for counselling adult adoptees is very scarce across the UK as it’s not a statutory service. There is funding for therapeutic support for adopted people aged up to the age of 21, or 25 if there is an educational statement, but beyond that I’m afraid there is very little provision. I know that some London authorities do offer up to 6 sessions for adult adoptees, and we provide this on their behalf, so if you send me your postcode I can let you know if we have any contracts in your area to provide this service.*

There is a self-funded service by Barnardos – they can send you a list of counsellors in your area but they charge around £45 per session. They can be contacted on link.referralhub@barnardos.org.uk

Adoptee response to point 92, therapeutic support - counselling

The meeting for adoption support was not really counselling—it was more about prepare yourself for the worst, you might be a product of rape. Again, this reinforces the “you have been lucky to be adopted” narrative.

Adoptee response to point 93, therapeutic support – Ofsted regulation

Ofsted regulation is one barrier, but there is no clear signposting for how to access trauma-informed counselling. As an adoptee you cannot search for ‘adoption’ on the BACP website—they have removed this search field, as Government guidance was too confusing for counsellors to know who they could work with.

It is a postcode lottery when working with social services to access support. Leicestershire Council does not offer support for adopted adults. Many GPs are also unable to signpost adoptees for support.

Many adoptee-competent therapists practising in the UK today specialise in working with children, not adults.

Many adoptees access support ‘accidentally’ when other events have occurred in their lives.



Growing up as an adoptee you are told that you were lucky to have been adopted. Trauma is rarely mentioned, and often adoptees are completely unaware that their issues are due to adoption. If this had been made clearer, the mental health of adoptees could have been better supported.

Adoptee Recommendation 7: Access to trauma and adoption-informed counselling

- Access to trauma- and adoption-informed counselling. Despite government assertions, there is no access to this for adult adoptees via the NHS
- Proper, easily accessible, therapy, free from the constraints of Ofsted. Open ended, trauma informed and funded
- Funding for peer support networks and funding to train and support peer support workers

Section 3 points 90 - 93 therapeutic support

JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, points 94-96, access to paper records

94 While adoptees have had a right to access their adoption records since 1976, we heard of the huge disparities in the length of time this took. In his written evidence, one social worker described how access to information helped many of his clients, but that the timescales “vary hugely between a couple of months to one or two years.” At our roundtable event we heard how, having decided they wanted to investigate their adoption, adoptees felt frustrated at the unnecessary delays they met in their efforts to access their records.

95 Others also expressed consternation at the uneven provision of support services by local authorities since 2002, when the right to access records was extended, and local authorities were given a discretionary power to establish intermediary services.

96 There are huge disparities in the timeliness of the responses of local authorities to requests for access to adoption records, to which adoptees have had a right since 1976, leading to unnecessary stress and frustration for those individuals who have decided to seek out family members. *The Government should monitor and publish compliance by local authorities with adherence to the guidance that sets down deadlines for responses to requests for adoption records.*

Adoptee response to point 93, therapeutic support – access to records

Access to records is often met with barriers when different agencies interpret regulations differently. Due to time constraints our commentary only refers to England. All links have been detailed further in Appendix 2 – Regulations on Intermediaries and Access to Records in England

The default scenario referred to in most of the legislation and guidance is a domestic UK adoption. The difficulties and complexities of tracing and contact in cases of cross border and intercountry adoption are addressed briefly in chapter 8 of the [Practice Guidance](#) (pages 94 – 101).

Adoptees [have the right to obtain information](#) that would give them access to their birth records and also court documents from the court that made the adoption order.

Beyond this there is no automatic right to access adoption files or records. Personal data in adoption records is exempt [under data protection laws](#) so do not have to be supplied in response to a Subject Access Request.

In practice, adoption agencies generally provide access to information and documents where they can, but this process can be very slow, and experiences differ between agencies and regions.

For the generation of forced adoptees concerned in this report, this means that we are nearly always charged for these services.

[PAC-UK](#) a charity who provides specialist therapy, advice, support counselling and training for all affected by adoption mentions fees for adopted adults. Geographically they only cover London and Leeds.



Further examples can be found:

[Family Action](#) has information on obtaining adoption records, for adoptions prior to 30th December 2005 as does [Family Connect](#)

The problems are highlighted in the [Explanatory Memorandum to the Disclosure of Adoption Information \(Postcommencement Adoptions\) Regulations 2005 \(2005 No. 888\)](#) which states that the adoption agency is considered to be best placed to disclose sensitive identifying information, to seek the views of interested parties and to arrange counselling

Local authority tracing service example: [Southend Borough Council \(2016\)](#) provides guidance on tracing and contacting for adopted adults

DNA testing is becoming more accessible and is often the cheapest option for an adoptee, but means they are embarking on contact and potential reunion without any support.

Adoptees are charged £15.00 to add themselves to the Adoption Contact Register.

Adoptee Recommendation 8: Extending the access to the Adoption Support Fund for all adoptees

- Extending the access to the Adoption Support Fund for all adoptees, regardless of age. This support fund could be used for access to birth records, tracing services, intermediary services, and trauma-informed counselling

[Section 3 point 93 therapeutic support, access to records]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, points 97-99, transparency on birth certificates and adoption orders

97 We heard of the distress and the impact on sense of identity caused by the disconnect between the birth certificate and adoption order and of the need for a single piece of paperwork in order to make the identity of the individual clear before and after adoption and aid tracing.

98 In his oral evidence, the Secretary of State emphasised the importance of not routinely adding adoptive names to birth certificates to protect children, but said that processes had been introduced: to aid tracing where both parties want this to happen, including for mothers and children from this period. Adoptive children over 18 and birth parents can add themselves to the Adoption Contact Register, which is held at the General Register Office. The Registrar-General may disclose that information from the Adopted Children Register and the Adoption Contact Register to the adopted-out adult in order for them to obtain a certified copy of their birth certificate.

99 Birth and adoption certificates contain different names, with no connection made between the two. The Government should explore ways of ensuring a transparent link for those adoptees who wish it between both certificates, so that it is clear that they relate to the same person.

Adoptee response to point 93, therapeutic support – capacity to revoke adoption

As discussed at the round table, many adopted persons would like to have the opportunity to revoke their adoption. This has not even been mentioned in this report.

We could easily avoid having to use a name, that we didn't consent to, with traumatic associations.

Adoptee Recommendation 9: Allow annulment of adoptions in line with current guardianship practices

- Adoptees should be able to annul their adoptions, easily and without undue delay or question, to move in line with current practises around legal and special guardianship
- Governments must allow adoptees the legal right to integrate birth certificates with adoption status. That these be issued on request and that they be legal proof of identity, of equal status to other birth certificates, and be shown as such in archives and within government held data
- Furthermore, any adoptees after 18+ should have the right to leave adoptee status and return to Birth Identity legally, this matter should be simplified on a “no fault basis” and “no claims basis” and at no charge to the Adoptee
- This right to revocation, annulment, discharge will restore overdue Human Rights to an identity they feel comfortable living in as adoptees revoking their adoptee status

[Section 3 point 93 therapeutic support, capacity to revoke adoption]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, points 100 - 103, medical history

100 Many adoptees told us of their frustration and embarrassment at not knowing their own medical history. Medical appointments were “a challenge and embarrassment which makes me reluctant to seek medical help”, wrote one adopted person.¹⁸⁶

101 As well as the discomfort unwittingly caused by questioning by medical professionals, this had clear practical implications. In her oral evidence, Liz Harvie described a genetic condition that had been “discovered too late for me to have been able to manage it properly”.

102 Adoptees face serious practical difficulties in putting in place plans for preventative medical care because they do not have access to their parents’ medical histories. The disadvantages include a lack of access to benefits reliant on those details, for example free eye tests for those with a family history of glaucoma.

103 A system should be established so that a parent can pass on medical information that could be relevant to their child. This system would need to comply with data protection and privacy laws given that it would be dealing with sensitive personal data relating to health. However, this would facilitate adopted children being put in the same position as other children, whose parents can more readily choose to share sensitive relevant medical information with them.

Adoptee response to points 100 - 103, medical history

Adoptees should have access to tests, as if these conditions were pre-existing in our family. Currently when we state that we do not have access to our medical history, doctors take this to mean there is no risk.

We are all approaching the time in life when other people will have access to cancer, glaucoma checks etc.

Adoptee Recommendation 10: Access to screening for genetic conditions

- Adoptees should automatically have access to screening for conditions which may be hereditary...i.e., breast cancer, Huntington’s, glaucoma etc. as we don’t have comprehensive medical histories. Often if we ask, we are denied access to tests.

[Section 3 points 100 – 103, medical history]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 104, ability to travel overseas

104 At our roundtable event, we heard of the practical difficulties faced by adoptees in travelling to see birth relatives overseas, particularly during the pandemic.

105 The restrictions during the covid-19 pandemic highlighted the barriers faced by people wishing to visit, often to support, members of their family. *The Government should put in place rules and processes that allow adoptees to identify themselves as a relative for the purposes of foreign travel and that mirror the requirements for foreign travel and visas that apply to other family members. The Government should encourage other States to adopt a similar approach in their own visa rules.*

Adoptee response to point 104, ability travel overseas and visas.

Due to the vast scale of the adoptions, many adoptees have parents who are in different countries, either through natural origin or relocation. Travel and visa restrictions means that it is not always possible for adoptees to obtain the necessary documentation to visit their biological family. The law does not recognise biological family relationships of adoptees for visa applications.

It should be possible to have one combined certificate showing both the birth parents and adoptive parents, and both names as applicable. The arrangements made to put a child into a new family should not create a legal fiction which disrupts attempts to get and stay in contact with birth families.

Adoptee Recommendation 11: Access to visas

- The legal status of adoptees needs to be addressed and further research carried out to explore how visas can be issued promptly for adoptees, whose biological roots and/or families are in different countries.
- Access to free legal advice and representation to acquire citizenship where reunion has been made impossible due to border controls.

[Section 3 point 104]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 106, intermediary services

106 We heard evidence of the great range in quality of service by those employed, again at the expense of the individual, to trace relatives. One mother wrote of “an amazing social worker who was tireless in her attempts to contact my daughter.”¹⁸⁸ At the roundtable event on 27 April 2022, some participants expressed concern about the quality of some intermediary work, and a strong feeling that intermediaries should not simply make contact with the relatives, but facilitate contact, for example by leaving contact details with relatives in case they changed their mind about making contact. In his evidence, the Secretary of State said: “Intermediary services provide a valuable role, but I expect them to be helpful, to respond quickly and to focus on easy access to support. I want to know if they are not doing these things and we will absolutely act on it. Whatever recommendations your committee makes around intermediary services, I will absolutely look at that.”

107 There is a wide range in quality of service by those employed, often at the expense of the individual, to trace relatives. While many were excellent, some were not, and some people were frustrated at the inefficacy of the complaints system for intermediaries. *The Government should re-visit the complaint systems for intermediaries, and ensure that those systems are easily accessible and sufficiently promoted.*

108 There is currently a missed opportunity for intermediaries to facilitate future contact between family members, without compromising on the importance of the rights of family members who do not wish to be contacted. *The Government should reassess the rules for the way in which intermediaries operate, with a view to enabling them to offer advice to family members who do not wish to be contacted on the routes and support available to them should their views change in the future.*

Adoptee response to point 106-108, intermediaries.

The government says there is “help available” for adoptees, but that is totally misleading and in practice untrue. For example: there are no funded tracing and intermediary services, and those that are available are often prohibitively expensive with profiteering prices (e.g., £1000 to write a letter to a birth family member); there is no NHS adoption-informed counselling.

There needs to be well publicised central register of intermediaries. Adoptees who are tracing their identity should not have to pay for this service. We should have free access to certificates.

How can agencies such as Father Hudson’s, who were responsible for arranging so many adoptions, charge people for finding their families? It is unethical.

Adoptee Recommendation 12: Research into best practice for intermediaries

- Further research should be carried out to better understand the extent that intermediaries help in the process and to develop best practice guidelines for intermediaries

[Section 3 points 106-108, intermediaries]



JCHR Report Section 3: The effects today, point 109 - 110, knowing your child has died.

109 We heard many stories of the perpetual concern of mothers about the whereabouts and lives of their children. Particularly poignant were the descriptions of mothers simply wishing to know whether or not their child was still alive, and the examples we heard of when a child had tragically died young. When asked what process might be put in place to at least notify mothers of the death of their child, the Secretary of State explained how: “[s] having information of this nature in any structured or ordered fashion will be extremely difficult” but undertook to look at any practical suggestions that were made.

110 One of the most enduring and painful questions for mothers without contact with their child is whether or not they are still alive. *The Government should explore the options for alerting mothers (who wish to be so notified) to the death of a child that has been adopted.*

Adoptee response to point 109 - 110, knowing your parent has died.

Many birth mothers are now reaching their 70s and 80s. Their children are searching for them, not knowing if they are alive or dead.

There is a complete lack of support for finding out your parents have died. The implications are huge, you may be contacting siblings who have no idea that you existed.

After my cancer diagnosis, I contacted my biological siblings via Facebook, as my birth mother had moved, and I had no contact details for her. My biological siblings facilitated a dialogue between us, but my birth mother was still very hurt by everything, and I did not have the strength to face rejection. My birth mother sent me a lovely text me prior to my operation and I really wish I hadn't delayed visiting her, as she died of cancer a year later. I went to her funeral – that was the first time I 'saw' her.

Adoptee Recommendation 13: Access to notification of death of birth parents

- A system needs to be implemented for adoptees to find out if their birth parents have died
- This could be further extended to include births/deaths of biological siblings

[Section 3 points 109-110, knowing your child has died]



JCHR Report Section 4 – An apology

JCHR Report Section 4: An apology, points 111- 115.

111 There have been calls for the UK Government to issue an apology to unmarried mothers and their children for the treatment they endured during this period.¹⁹¹ Liz Harvie, an adoptee, told the Committee:

would very much welcome an apology to be given to the birth mothers, the birth fathers, to the adoptees, even to the children of adoptees who are still affected by that forced missing link in their ancestral line. Please, an apology to all of us. We are sorry, but we want those words to carry the recognition of our trauma, our distress, our sadness, our grief, which, even though decades old, is still very raw and painful to us.

112 In his evidence to the Committee, Secretary of State for Education Nadhim Zahawi expressed “deep regret” for what happened and went on:

just want to say that these practices were simply wrong and I am sorry that this was the case, and more generally for what happened. I recognise the hurt and the pain that occurred and I am deeply sorry that so many went through this ordeal. I acknowledge the profound and lasting impact that this had on them, on their sons and daughters, and in some cases the fathers of their children. I am deeply troubled that they were not only so pervasive but that they persisted for so long. It is particularly distressing to see something so joyful and precious as parenthood being treated as something shameful which must be kept secret, despite those involved having done nothing at all wrong.

113 In 2016, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, apologised for the role the Catholic Church played in these adoption practices:

“We apologize for the hurt caused by agencies acting in the name of the Catholic Church ... Sadly for unmarried mothers, adoption was considered to be in the best interests of the mother and child because of the associated stigma and the lack of support for lone parents.”

114 While the Church of England has not issued a formal apology for their involvement in these adoption practices, a spokesperson also expressed regret in the same year: “What was thought to be the right thing to do at the time has caused great hurt. That is a matter of great regret.”

115 We welcome the Secretary of State’s detailed remarks, his acknowledgement that these practices were “simply wrong” and for saying that he was sorry for what had happened. He did, however, stop short of agreeing an official apology was necessary because “the Government were not actively engaged”, continuing:

I have expressed my deep, deep regret, very publicly and repeatedly, as I do again today, but I genuinely feel that the whole of society failed these women and children.

Adoptee response to points 111-115, an apology.

Quite simply the words fail us as to why organisations cannot issue an apology.

The Catholic Church has issued an apology, but the Church of England can only refer to the practice of forced adoption as a deep regret.

We do not understand how the Secretary of State can deny that the Government was not actively engaged. Local councils, state-run mother and baby homes and NHS were all part of the mechanism that resulted in the forced adoptions.

JCHR Report Section 4: An apology, points 122- 125.

122 There are a number of instances of the UK Government making apologies for occurrences of the past, which caused pain and suffering and in which the State had some involvement and that were clearly and emphatically wrong.

123 In this instance, many thousands of mothers have had a lifetime of pain and suffering because their babies were taken for adoption. This suffering was compounded by the subsequent branding of them as feckless and uncaring for having irresponsibly “given their child away”. These untruths, the hurtful words implying that women “gave up” their babies for adoption, along with the secrecy and shame that have surrounded their histories for so long have intensified the pain of separation for mother and child.



124 What happened shouldn't have happened and continues to cause pain today. A State should be ready to hold itself to account, to acknowledge wrongdoings of the past, and express regret for the actions and acts of omission that enabled them.

125 An apology by the Government and an official recognition that what happened to these mothers was dreadful and wrong, backed up by the other actions recommended in this Report, would go some way to mitigate the pain and suffering of those affected.

126 There are some things that only a government can do, and it falls on the Government to make this apology

Adoptee response to points 122-126, recommendation for an apology.

We urge everyone concerned to take note of the above points and take responsibility and accountability for the ill-treatment of everyone concerned.

Adoptee Recommendation 14: All parties should disclose their roles and issue an unconditional apology

- All parties involved in the historic should disclose their roles in the practice of historic forced apologies and issue an unconditional apology
- All parties must commit to ensuring that this can never happen again
- An assurance that adoption today will change, the government will work harder to keep families together. No more forced adoptions, no more splitting up of sibling sets, proper exploration of kinship care. The use of special and legal guardianship encouraged.

[Section 3 points 122-126, recommendation for an apology]



Appendix 1 – Published Evidence

Published written evidence	Adoptee focus?	Referenced?
Anonymised (ACU0001)	Birth mother evidence.	Ref 32,33,34, 73, 76, 78, 82, 85, 143, 179
Anonymised (ACU0020)	Adoptee evidence. Impact on adopted siblings. Wider family not accepting of adoptees, wider community shame. No support to search. NHS records destroyed.	
Anonymised (ACU0021)	Birth mother evidence. Son adopted by unsuitable people and abused.	Ref 65, 69, 83, 118, 162
Anonymised ACU0022	Not available but referenced in the report	Ref 42, 45, 46, 47, 49, 71, 89, 111. 115, 132, 163
Anonymised (ACU0029)	Adoptee evidence. Abused by adopted parents. No proper screening process other than social class.	Ref 186
Anonymised (ACU0030)	Adoptee evidence. Impact of guilt, shame and adoptive mother saying it “would destroy her” on being able to seek contact with birth family. Adoptive parents not able to acknowledge the adoption – blindly buying into narrative of a “blank slate”.	Ref 137
Anonymised (ACU0035)	Birth mother evidence.	Ref64, 92, 167
Anonymised (ACU0038)	Adoptee evidence. Lifelong impact, never being able to have relationships or children. Abused by adopted parents. No proper screening process. Never allowed to tell anyone she was adopted. Note that in 1998 did a student film with a social worker who said they still do not vet adoptive parents properly.	Ref 158
Anonymised (ACU0039)	Adoptee evidence – LDA. Impact including medical of not knowing and being kept a secret.	
Anonymised (ACU0043)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoptive family. Infertility being a precursor to abuse, abuse increasing with the birth of natural sibling. Fundamental issue with adoption therapy regulation – adoptive parents being therapists and those who blindly endorse the grateful narrative. Plenary adoption legitimises the inhumane reactions and attitudes of people who have benefited from the culture of stigma and shame.	
Anonymised (ACU0041)	Birth mother	Ref56, 57, 62, 93, 129
Anonymised (ACU0044)	Birth mother	Ref 10, 140, 170
Anonymised (ACU0045)	Adoptee evidence – abusive/unstable adoptive family. Promotion of adoption over other	



	alternatives – through advertising. Post natal depression with the birth of own children.	
Anonymised (ACU0046)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoptive family. No proper screening process – reliant on social class and financial status. Post natal depression with the birth of own children.	
Anonymised (ACU0048)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoptive family. Shame surrounding adoption – not being able to discuss it in public – “family secret”. Promotion of adoption over other alternatives – through advertising	Ref 151, 152, 159
Anonymised (ACU0049)	Adoptee evidence – impact of adoption as a secret. Left home as soon as possible, and searched for birth family. Needed acknowledgement of the wounding caused by adoption which did not occur until huge amount of therapy undertaken.	
Anonymised (ACU0060)	Birth mother	Ref59
Anonymised (ACU0068)	Birth mother	Ref 128, 178
Anonymised (ACU0069)	Birth mother	Ref 39
Anonymised (ACU0072)	Birth mother	Ref55, 99, 120, 124, 168
Anonymised (ACU0074)	Adoptee evidence – impact of forced secrecy around being adopted. Emotionally abused by adoptive parent. Concerns about poor selection process for adoptive parents. Isolated from wider adoptive family. Estranged from both families as an adult. Plea for transparency and the maintenance of family ties in all adoption. *	Ref 161
Anonymised (ACU0077)	Birth mother	Ref 80, 98, 220
Anonymised (ACU0081)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoption. The importance of family contact in adoption. Bmother had tried to find her but had not been allowed to do any more than leave a letter on her file. Parents and families are not interchangeable *	Ref153, 160
Anonymised (ACU0082)	Adoptee evidence - abusive adoption – no counselling to parents who had lost their birth child and facing infertility.	
Anonymised (ACU0085)	Birth mother - I had always felt it was not my place to search, but to wait in hope for him to look for me. I was told that without knowledge of my child’s adopted name, there was no chance of locating records. And also, many records from now extinct Adoption Agencies had been microfiched and moved around and potentially lost in the system	Ref 110, 145, 175
Anonymised (ACU0086)	Adoptee evidence – adoption not addressed within the family meant as an adult there was no retention of a family – all estranged. Impact of adoption as a child leading to expulsions from school.	Ref156
Anonymised (ACU0087)	Adoptee evidence – impact of not being able to have contact with siblings.	
Anonymised (ACU0088)	Birth mother	
Anonymised (ACU0089)	Birth mother	Ref 94



Anonymised (ACU0093)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoption. Also birth mother. Abusive afamily led me on to a life on the streets drugs and prostitution when at the age of fourteen I was pregnant and sent to a mother and baby home.	Ref 36, 101, 121, 127, 131
Anonymised (ACU0094)	Birth mother	Ref50, 67
Anonymised (ACU0099)	Birth mother	Ref 114
Anonymised (ACU0100)	Adoptive parent.	Ref 154
Anonymised (ACU0102)	Birth mother – wrote letter to son when he was 23 – given to adoptive parents who told him it would destroy them if he replied. So he did not. Their reunion was delayed decades.	Ref 91, 104, 105
Anonymised (ACU0104)	Child Care Officer - There were adoptive parents available, mostly wanting white babies. Mixed race or black babies often remained in a nursery followed by a children's home.	
Anonymised (ACU0107)	Birth mother – her son effected by alcoholism due to the primal wound.	Ref 174
Anonymised (ACU0108)	Birth mother – daughters adopted parents died young	Ref 37,38, 52, 72, 188
Anonymised (ACU0110)	Birth mother	Ref 98, 102, 119, 123
Anonymised (ACU0111)	Adoptee evidence - A child born to children used to fix the broken childless couple, A life of platitude and complicated gratitude, Obliged as I writhed under the weight of others' choices	
Anonymised (ACU0112)	Birth mother – commented on the impact of the secrecy of being adopted on her son, his alcoholism and attachment disorder.	
Anonymised (ACU0113)	Birth mother – struggled to come to terms with that her son was adopted into an abusive home	Ref108
Anonymised (ACU0114)	Adoptee evidence – third party adoption through consultant that adopted parents were taking their son with Downs Syndrome to. Aparents wouldn't have been allowed to adopt now. Isolated childhood. Attempted suicide at 14. Tracing bmother cost £4000. Bmother died 2 weeks after sending the first letter.	Ref 148
Anonymised (ACU0115)	Birth mother	Ref 48
Anonymised (ACU0117)	Birth mother	Ref 113, 122, 141
Anonymised (ACU0118)	Adoptee evidence – discrimination and mistreatment when trying to trace. Aparents refused to talk about adoption and destroyed the records. Rejected by wider afamily. Impact on ability to have future relationship due to need for a family	
Anonymised (ACU0129)	Adoptee evidence – lifelong adverse effects on mental health even when not adopted by abusive aparents. Severed from cultural identity – Irish.	



	Recognition that adoptees are the experts on the lived experience of being adopted and could help inform current adoption practices and children who are being adopted today	
Anonymised (ACU0130)	Evidence of birth mother's kept son	
Anonymised (ACU0132)	Evidence of ex-husband to deceased birth mother who was also an adoptee herself	
Anonymised (ACU0133)	Irish adoptee - I was ignored by my wider adopted family all through my life even after I got married.	
Anonymised (ACU0134)	Adoptee evidence – LDA. Birth mother traced but adoptee rejected her as did not know she was adopted. By the time she attempted contact again bmother was deceased.	
Anonymised (ACU138)	Irish adoptee evidence	
Anonymised (ACU140)	Transracial adoptee evidence - Abusive adoptive family. Abused by neighbour as a child. Racially abused, and parents were not equipped to support or parent. Attempted suicide as a child. Impact of severance with Indian cultural identity – not acknowledged or nurtured in any way. Discrimination of social services. A number of admission to psychiatric inpatient care as an adult. *	
Anonymised (ACU141)	Child of adoptee – talks of abusive adoptive family. Agrandfather sexually abused her mother and her. Not been able to find her mother's bmother -despite attempts. Highlighting unsafe vetting practices of aparents .	
Judy Baker (nee Lawrence) (ACU0018)	Birth mother - I never believed I had any right to search for her, or to disrupt the 'wonderful life'. My daughter was offered counselling - but only to prepare her for seeing her records, nothing more - and all I got was patronising advice from the social worker who was more interested in her forthcoming holiday than in offering real help or support. So we struggled on by ourselves, writing and sending taped messages back and forth before we met in person a couple of months later. And in all that time, the trauma of what had happened to us was resurfacing for us both.	Ref68
Barnardo's (ACU0062)	Adoption agency	
Harry Barnett (ACU0091)	Adoptee evidence – adoption was not talked about.	
Linda Burgess (ACU0066)	Birth mother	
Ms Clare Cater (ACU0004)	Adoptee evidence - my adoption has left me with long lasting scars that made it difficult to trust and maintain lifelong relationships. Importance of knowing someone who bears family resemblance. it could be made more accessible for families to reconnect. I believe if I had had the support and	



	advice earlier my life could have been very different, and perhaps my suffering would have ended sooner	
Timothy Chambers (ACU0061)	Adoptee evidence – positive experience of adoption	
CoramBAAF (ACU0116)		Ref 209
Lynne Cowley (ACU0023)	Adoptee evidence - my adoptive parents told me they 'were promised' that I would never be able to discover my origins and that 'I was theirs'. So I was never told anything about where I had come from. Since 2002 LAs have had the power to provide services for adoptees and bparents to reconnect. Some chose to but funding cut during austerity. Costs are prohibitive. I would like to see restoration of this funding being recommended by this enquiry.	
Miss Julie Anne Davies (ACU0010)	Evidence of birth mother's kept daughter. Talks of adoptee who sent regular letters to bmother to social services. Social services did not pass on or store the letters.	
Felicity Davies (ACU0027)	Birth mother	
Diana Defries (ACU0008)	Birth mother	Ref54, 63, 77, 79, 88, 116, 117, 130
Alice Diver (ACU0126)	Canadian adoptee and UK based lecturer in law. opened records and formal apologies are often not enough to encourage women who relinquished their children - and their legal motherhood - to permit some form of contact many years later with their lost children, as seen in various jurisdictions where shaming and stigma were normative. A wider rights-analysis is needed - beyond that of 'respect for family life' - to underscore that the severance of one's original ties can often spark irreversible and intergenerational harms. Such harms are perhaps better understood or categorised as instances of degrading and/or discriminatory treatment, in addition to how they negate family life rights.	
Anna D (ACU0083)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoptive family - poor scrutiny and safeguards of amother – despite recorded allegations of abuse.	
Penny Elliott (ACU0121)	Birth mother	
Julia Feast OBE (ACU0125)	Social worker - We also need to consider what services and resources need to be available for people who have lost relatives via adoption and have been deeply affected. For example, providing intermediary services for adoptees and birth relatives who would like to find if the person they are seeking would be open to contact. Since the implementation of section 98 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, we are seeing the provision of intermediary services diminishing. It is not a statutory service, it has become a service for those	



	who can afford it causing huge inequalities for those who cannot. [NHS death registration service]	
Eddie Gadd (ACU0137)	Adoptee evidence – Talks of the profound life long impact of the primal wound and inability to attached. Internalised the pain of separation very early in life, grew up isolated and confused, and sought pain relief from drink and drugs. Talks of the need for accessible life long therapy and access to records.	Ref 172
C T Goldring, Psychologist (ACU0042)	Adoptee evidence - made a suicide attempt at 12 years old. Talks of the need for accessible therapy.	Ref157
Mrs Eileen Griffiths (ACU0006)	Birth mother	Ref 125
Mr Nick Guy(ACU0025)	Adoption Social Worker at Mid and West Wales Adoption service – highlights the significant issues in accessing intermediary services. A serious postcode lottery of access to these services. Thus some Local Authority Adoption services provide a free and speedy service, others have long waiting lists, and others do not provide these services. Then the only alternative are Registered Adoption Support organisations (eg the charity PAC -UK) or several private organisations, which charge between £800 -- £3,000 for an Intermediary service, which is often out of reach of Birth Mothers. [NHS Death registration service helps tracers find out if elderly birth parents are alive].	Ref 184
Mrs Liz Harvie (ACU0014)	Adoptee evidence – no genetic mirror, creation of a false self, - placed with an adoptive family and given no follow up support throughout my childhood. No government body was concerned for my welfare or mental health. I had nobody, no organisation, to turn to for help as I tried to process the feelings I had surrounding my adoption.	
Pamela Hodgkins MBE, Founder and former CEO, NORCAP (ACU0032)	Adoptee evidence – Calling for appropriate service provision in the form of the full funding of support, counselling and intermediary services for the adults living with the impact of prior adoption practice and ensuring availability of service for each and every person who needs it. To ensure the benefits meet those in this cohort it is essential that the funding is ring fenced and not added to generic adoption support funding as this would result in the focus moving from these elderly adults to children in need. To facilitate the cost effective provision of intermediary services, and avoid unnecessary delay the essential revisions to the Intermediary Service regulations to simplify and streamline the service need to be accepted and implemented. For many there is only a short window of time in which to offer this support, women who parted with their baby in the 1950s will now be reaching the end of	Ref 139



	<p>their lives, even their children will be of retirement age.</p> <p>Whilst adoptees have a right to access identifying details of their birth parent without the consent of that birth parent, birth relatives have no reciprocal right. They are limited to the right to ask for an intermediary service – if they can find one they can afford – and will only gain identifying information about their relative who was adopted if the adopted person consents. A birth mother cannot simply seek out her child, she has no right to know his/her name after adoption, please look at the heartfelt pleas on web pages such as ‘Adopted in the UK’ and recognise the pain and suffering of these women, the unfocussed grief, listen to the cry of ‘I do not even know if s/he is alive or dead’.</p>	
Richard Hart (ACU0120)	Adoptee evidence- identity of his bmother who was an “aunty” was kept from him until he discovered from someone outside the family at her funeral.	
Hodgkins, Pam MBE (ACU0124)	The evidence is not available via the link	
Mary Husted (ACU0092)	Birth mother – was unable to trace but son found her.	Ref 66, 177
Anne M Jones (ACU0079)	Social worker	
Bernadette Kane (ACU0127)	Birth mother	
Ann Lloyd Keen (Fox) (ACU0034)	Birth mother – son did not find out he was adopted until 27. Described adoption as a traumatic experience. His adoptive parents divorced when he was 3.	Ref 31, 35
Florence Keaton (ACU0057)	Birth mother	Ref 40
Dr Michael Lambert (ACU0024)	Academic historical sociologist of the welfare state and social policy in twentieth century Britain specialising in governance and policy processes	Ref 95, 206, 207, 208, 217
Mrs Lorraine Le-gate (ACU0005)	Birth mother It has forced adoptees to feel unwanted and discarded and dirty little secrets who feel so grateful and guilty to their adoptive parents they dare not look for their biological parents till the death of their adoptive ones. No one should have to feel this way. Adoptive parents often not coming to terms with their infertility and loss of their expectation of a child cannot bear their adoptive child to look for their first parents and feel betrayed. The loss and grief between them all is insurmountable.	Ref 87, 138,218
Margaret Lindsey (ACU0098)	Birth mother - once I learned of the change in the law at the end of 2005 to allow birth parents to seek to initiate contact, I took steps to register with one of the accredited intermediary agencies, NORCAP,	



	and in late 2008 I heard from them that my daughter had given permission for me to contact her via email, which I did.	
Judith Masson, (ACU0053)	Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Bristol	Ref 4
Rosann Miller (ACU0097)	Birth mother - When the Children Act 2004 was introduced, things changed, birth mothers of adopted children were helped and through an intermediary, a letter was sent to my daughter. At the same time, my daughter had contacted the General Registrars Office and obtained my details and we have not looked back since.	Ref 43, 84, 176
Betty Mills (ACU0063)	Birth mother – describes immense difficulties with the tracing/intermediary process – 5 interviews, 3 years.	Ref60, 107
Origins Scotland (ACU0037)	Birth mothers group	Ref 10
Origins Supporting People Separated by Adoption Incorporated, Australia (ACU0009)	Birth mothers group - Adoptees cannot be re-instated to their original family without legal action and cannot access their rightful identity, ancestry and inheritance rights.	
Margaret Pannett (ACU0052)	A kept child born in the period to an unmarried mother.	
Adrian Parker (ACU0056)	Adoptee evidence – abusive adoptive family. It was as if the commitment made to my adoptive parents was that society would do everything within its power to make me as close a ‘simulation’ to a ‘real child’ of theirs as humanly possible, by in effect erasing my natural parents – as though without that I would be a poor ‘second best’ to the real thing. Badly ill-judged, this treats the child like a mere possession. Only able to search for bmother when amother died.	
Peter Partington (ACU0075)	Adoptee evidence – grateful adoptee.	
Professor Rebecca Probert, University of Exeter (ACU0065)	Legal historian specialising in the history of marriage and cohabitation	
Members of the Andrew and Virginia Rudd Research and Professional Practice Programme, University of Cambridge (ACU0071)	There is a section – paragraph 5.1 on the impact on the adoptee (child) “Evidence indicates that whilst there is substantial variation in outcomes, adoptees are more vulnerable to mental health difficulties (such as emotional or behavioural difficulties) and academic problems compared to their non-adopted peers (Brodzinsky, 1993; Rushton et al., 2020; Sehmi et al., 2020). Adoptees experiencing closed adoption may be particularly vulnerable. Indeed, much of the evidence suggests negative consequences of closed adoption, with adoptees reporting difficulties with self-esteem, mental and physical health, academic adjustment, as well as a much higher incidence and	



	<p>wider variety of severe psychopathology in comparison with non-adoptees (Demick & Warner, 1988; Rosenberg & Groze, 1997; Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, 2013). Those who lack understanding of events surrounding their adoption (typical in closed adoption), also report poor outcomes such as lower self-esteem and depression, whereas those with a better understanding of their adoption reported higher self-esteem and lower levels of depression (Brodzinsky, 1993)."</p> <p>At paragraph 7.2 there is a summary of recommendations from international government reports and inquiries in respect of redress for adoptees.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledgement and recognition of impacts 2. Specialist mental health supports and counselling 3. Support accessing information about families of origin 4. Adoptees identify a need for access to original birth certificates 	
Professor Julie Selwyn (ACU0012)	Social worker	
Ursula Shannon (ACU0058)	Irish adoptee	
Veronica Ann Smith (ACU0031)	Birth mother - I would like to see investment into Post Adoption Centres or similar to be in every main town with outreach workers, where there is access to readily available free information, free counselling, free help with access to adoption records, and free workshops. My daughter and I have been reunited since 2004 and she has definitely been damaged by her adoption experience.	Ref70, 135, 180
Karen Southon (ACU0047)	Adoptee evidence – dissatisfaction with intermediary services and processes for tracing. Difficulty contacting brother who was adopted to another family. No information about ethnicity – DNA discovered 100% Irish.	
The Salvation Army (ACU0051)	Provider of mother and baby homes?	Ref 97
Caroline Tims (ACU0128)	Adoptee evidence – talks of a profound impact of adoption, sense of loss and having no familial ties. Talks of second rejection of finding bmother but it being too much for bmother to continue contact.	
Dr Charles Twining (ACU0007)	Adoptee evidence - good experience of adoption in the main, but laments being able to have had earlier contact with bfamily.	Ref 147
Bernadette Wallman (ACU0026)	Birth mother	Ref 44, 74, 81, 86, 90, 164



Jane Westacott, (ACU0103)	Social Worker – different approaches tried in the 90s - We tried to promote adoption with ongoing contact. All potential adopters were prepared for this from the start. If children know how their parents are and have ongoing contact it can prevent that adolescent blip about ‘who am I and where do I come from’, which disrupts so many adoptive families at the crucial time when adolescents need them most. If they don’t have to choose between birth and adopters they can focus on being themselves. If forced to choose they will always choose birth family. (It saddens me that in intervening years adoption has reverted to a ‘cut off’ again. Not least because in our age of social media and easy tracing, teenagers can find their parents and recently there was a sad case where 3 children found their birth family and their adoptive family crashed). Further, only a few weeks ago, I heard an announcement of a Coram/ BAAF training session which would address the issue of adoption with contact as a new idea... but I digress. plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.	
Dawn Young (ACU0016)	Birth mother	Ref 112, 173, 219



Appendix 2 – Regulations on Intermediaries and Access to Records in England

The default scenario referred to in most of the legislation and guidance is a domestic UK adoption. The difficulties and complexities of tracing and contact in cases of cross border and intercountry adoption are addressed briefly in chapter 8 of [the Practice Guidance \(pages 94 – 101\)](#).

Adoptees have the [right to obtain information](#) that would give them access to their birth records and court documents from the court that made the adoption order.

Beyond this there is [no automatic right to access adoption files or records](#). Personal data in adoption records is exempt under data protection laws so do not have to be supplied in response to a Subject Access Request.

In practice, adoption agencies generally provide access to information and documents where they can, but this process can be very slow, and experiences differ between agencies and regions.

Chapters 10 and 11 of the [DfE Statutory Guidance on Adoption \(July 2013\)](#) set out the procedures in some detail, see paragraphs 10.4 – 10.12 on pages 186 – 188

[Government guidance on procedures for adoption agencies/local authorities](#)

Following the 2002 Adoption and Children Act, for adoptions made since 30 December 2005 [adoption agencies may not charge fees to an adopted person for accessing birth records or associated counselling](#). (The Disclosure of Adoption Information (Post-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005)

However, for pre-commencement adoptions, [intermediary services may charge fees for the processing of an application and for the provision of counselling services](#). An adoption agency or an adoption support agency may provide intermediary services. (The Adoption Information and Intermediary Services (Pre-Commencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005)

For example, PAC-UK mentions fees for adopted adults:

<https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/adopted-adults/>

Further information

Family Action

<https://www.familyconnect.org.uk/obtaining-adoption-records-if-you-were-adopted-before-30th-december-2005/>

<https://www.familyconnect.org.uk/accessing-your-birth-certificate-if-you-were-adopted-on-or-after-30th-dec-2005/>

Explanatory Memorandum to the Disclosure of Adoption Information (Postcommencement Adoptions) Regulations 2005 (2005 No. 888)

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/888/pdfs/ukxiem_20050888_en.pdf

Local authority tracing service example: Southend Borough Council (2016)

<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/2344/bric-schedule>

