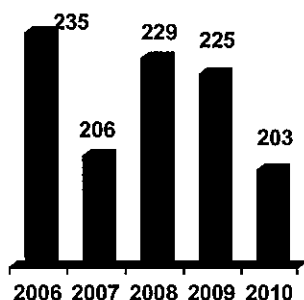


BIRTHLINK BULLETIN

Editorial

The Birthlink Team is fresh from an exciting get-together when we discussed our hopes and ideas for the future and looked back at our performance over the last twelve months. A number of plans were discussed not the least of which was our Centenary celebration to prepare for (see elsewhere in this Bulletin). Bulletin readers might be interested in some statistics that were provided.

■ Adoption Contact Register registrations (2006 - 2010)



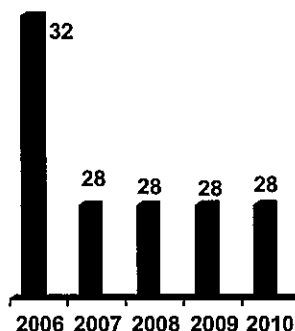
What we think

ACR registrations have declined in recent years and the Register seems to be suffering from a lack of publicity. We decided that we would have a publicity campaign that included getting information packs into local services such as libraries and a press release targeted at local free newspapers. This would especially be aimed at encouraging birth parents and other birth relatives to register given that this group constitute the smaller proportion of those already registered.

What we think

This is a small but important service that is growing - possibly by virtue of the fact that more people outside of Edinburgh are requesting that we obtain this record.

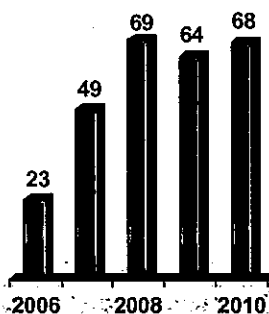
■ Accessing Court Process (2006 - 2010)



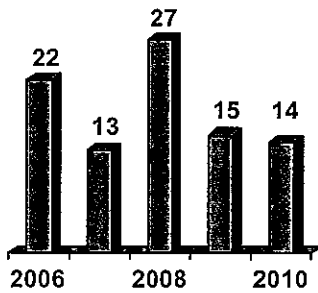
What we think

Demand for access to Court Process papers has not changed over the past four years and although potentially an important building block in assembling information about one's adopted past, there seems to be little sign of demand increasing. However, we thought that a step-by-step flow chart depicting a process of searching for records might be helpful in seeing what exists and the value of these.

■ Accessing Original Birth Entries (2006 - 2010)



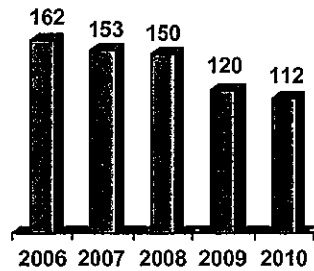
■ Non-Disclosure Agreements (2006 - 2010)



What we think

Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) are when Birthlink and an adoption-record holder enter into an arrangement whereby we are provided with identifying details of an adopted person and seek to find them on behalf of a birth parent or birth relative such as a brother or sister. The number of NDAs has fluctuated over the years but we think that more ought to be made of this service and that, if birth relatives and adoption records holders were better aware, there would be greater up-take and no longer would birth parents receive inadequate responses along the lines of 'you can leave a letter in their file'.

■ Mediation (2006 - 2010)

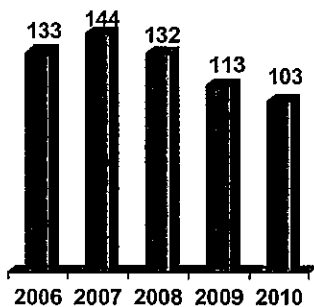


What we think

Our mediation service is one of the best value services in the UK. For £40 we will contact and mediate between people, shuttling back and forth with letters and cards for many weeks. Should this process be prolonged, it is only after some months before we request additional payment. As noted above, we intend to publicise this service better. Something along the lines of 'Think you've found who you are looking for?' 'Wondering what to do next?'. Talk to us.



■ Searches (2002 - 2010)



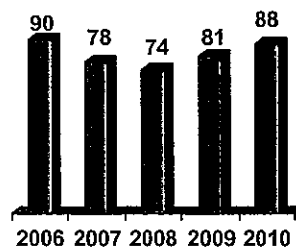
What we think

Search requests have declined and may continue to do so because of greater use of the Internet. We felt that this is inevitable but that we ought to better foreground our mediation service for the times when a search has been successful and the searcher is undecided about how to proceed



with contact.

■ Links - total (2006 - 2010)

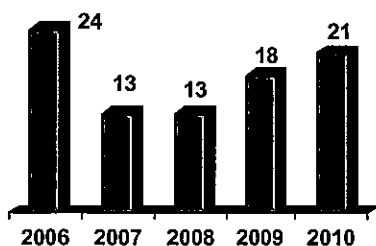


What we think

The number of people and families being brought together with our help has begun to increase after a bit of a dip two years ago. It should be borne in mind that the 88 links last year represent one link behind which is a whole process which involves at least two people and often many more when partners, children and families are introduced to each other



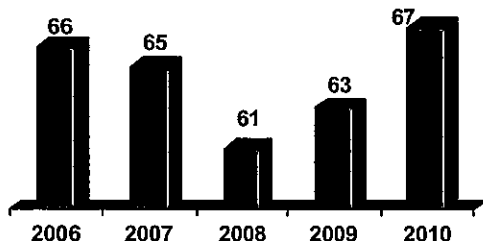
■ Links (Adoption Contact Register) 2006 - 2010



What we think

After a poor couple of years, ACR links are climbing again towards an average of two per month. When the numbers registering are factored in, then the odds of a registration resulting in a link are as good as one out of every ten registrations.

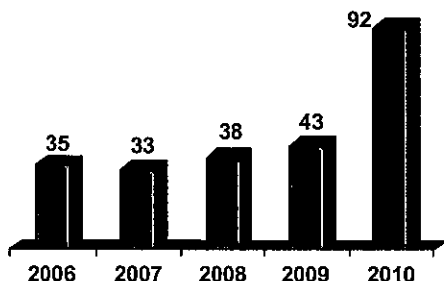
■ Links (non-Adoption Contact Register) 2006 - 2010



What we think

These links are those that are mostly derived from our search activities and the numbers show a healthy increase to the best in five years.

■ Care Connect service (2006 - 2010)



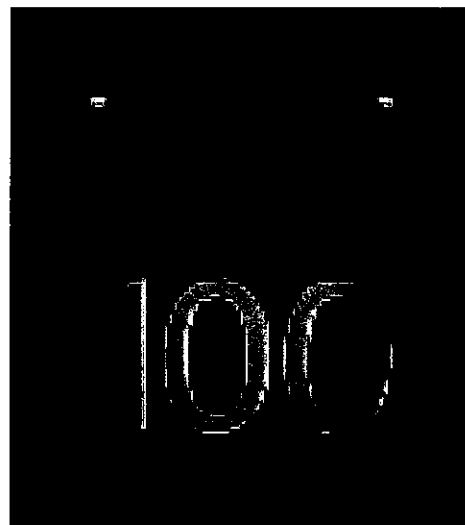
What we think

Our Care Connect service for people who have been in care has taken off in the past two years. This because of

increased referrals to the service that we provide to a local authority but there is also an increasing number of members of the public contacting us for advice in how to access their care records. This is an area for major development and we are actively seeking grant funding to enable us to widely publicise the service.

Centenary

2011 will mark the 100th year since the roots of who we are today were put down. Beginning with the Eastern Branch of the National Vigilance Association, moving on to the Guild of Service (1941) then Family Care (1978) to the 21st century and Birthlink, we think that there's something to celebrate in terms of helping families and responding to various need. We're thinking of at least one big event... but watch this space and by all means help us with your ideas, time or both.



Staff Changes

Audrey Darling arrived in March as our Birthlink Administrator and boo, hoo, Winnie McGillivray, 21 years as fantastic back-up and friend to all of us, the one that introduced bell-ringing on logging an ACR registration



form and getting a match, and the person who's ridden out the ups and downs of the agency with equanimity and a smile, is leaving. But. She's signed up as a Friend of Birthlink... so it's out one door and in the other we hope. For now, let's just say we're going to miss you terribly Winnie.

Executive Officer, Linda Powell left in January.

Book reviews

Something that never went away: reflections on adoption, being in care and searching for family members, Harris, P. ed. (2009), Oxfordshire: NORCAP.



This is a collection of poetry, art, memoir and autobiography that brings together birth mothers, adopted children, adopted adults, people who have grown up in foster and residential care and adoptive mothers. There's even a birth father included too.

Here members of the public mix with celebrities such as Gok Wan and Tracy Emin and all combine to produce a quite unique collection of sixty-five contributions offers something for every one.



Adoption Separation: then and now, Robinson, E. (2010), South Australia: Clova Publications.

This new book from Evelyn Robinson continues her drive to get the stories of birth mothers out into the public domain. It includes many powerful accounts of women in Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Scotland and provides a brief but useful round-up of the present position regarding after-adoption services in these and other countries such as Ireland.

Evelyn concludes by highlighting Australian moves to offer official, Government-level, apologies for past adoption policies.



The Invisible Men of Adoption, Coles, G. (2010), Vermont South: Mermerus Books.

The jacket of this book sets out its aim: 'to question the birth father stereotype: the callous man who abandoned the mother and is forever detached from his child'. *Invisible Men* adds to the small but growing set of works that highlight birth fathers' experiences of adoption. It builds upon Gary's two previous works and powerfully conveys the message that birth fathers are rarely unscathed by the adoption of their children and are a vital factor in the process of change and development that is brought on by contact and reunion.