



Adults Affected by Adoption

BIRTHLINK BULLETIN

Autumn 2015



Welcome to the Birthlink Bulletin for Autumn 2015

This edition of our Bulletin offers updates on the work that we've been doing over the last six months. As will be seen much has happened and much is happening. One thing we are very pleased with is the increase in Adoption Contact Register for Scotland registrations (already the greatest for five years) and the consequent rise in number of people we've been able to link with each other. Which is what it's all about.

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Publicity round-up

The Scottish media continue to feature our work with brothers and other siblings being re-united via the Contact Register and our search service (Sunday Post, The Herald Daily Record and Radio Scotland all in May). 'Family Finders' aired on BBC on 25th June involving two separate sibling reunion stories and interview with our consultant Gary Clapton about the work of Birthlink. In Ireland in July the Irish Mirror featured a story of dying birth mother seeking contact with her son that referred to us. And our regular column in the Friends of the Scotsman pages continued with two pieces by our Intern, Nick Lawson (May) and Gary Clapton in September.

Movement for Adoption Apology (Scotland)



This is a campaigning group of birth mothers who would like a Government apology in connection with past adoption practice. After publicity in Spring, the Scottish Minister for Children and Young People Aileen Campbell has indicated a willingness to discuss the campaign with a spokeswoman acknowledging on her behalf that: "The experience of single mothers whose babies were adopted in these circumstances was often traumatic".

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/they-tore-baby-out-arms-5419714>

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/real-life/scots-mum-who-made-aussie-5586403>

In July the Acting Children's Minister Fiona McLeod said: "This Government have a great deal of sympathy for those women whose experiences clearly show them to be victims of the prevailing moral and social behavior of their time." This movement is based on a similar movement which has been successful in Australia:

<http://www.actusa.org/p/scotland-could-face-a-torrent-of-human-rights-cases-over-its-forced-adoption-policy-between-the-1940s-and-80s/>

Mission statement for the Movement for an Adoption Apology

We seek recognition and acknowledgement of the pain and grief suffered by many birth parents and their children because of the unethical adoption practices of the past. We believe that this can only be achieved by a full Parliamentary apology with cross-party support.

Explanation: For many years, until at least the 1980s, pregnancy outside marriage was severely frowned upon, and frequently young women who found themselves in this situation were given little choice but to give in to the strong pressures which were exerted on them by the authorities to have

their babies adopted. They were not given information about the welfare services, including housing and financial help, which were available at the time. There was no question of these women being found to be unfit mothers; they were simply prevented from becoming mothers at all.

This experience so traumatised many of these women that they have suffered years of mental and/or physical ill health ever since, and many were unable to have more children. In some cases, fathers also, even when wishing to help, were refused a say in their child's future, because the child was classified as illegitimate, and thus these fathers also became unwilling parties to these adoptions.

It is possible that a government enquiry will be needed to reveal the full extent of the unethical practices and the damage suffered by these birth parents. However we recognise that such an enquiry would take time to set up and therefore we ask for a start to be made now, with a parliamentary statement of intention to examine all the facts.'

For further details see www.movementforanadoptionapology.org

Dangers of hasty adoption



In October the tragic account of how a couple lost their baby after a misdiagnosis of neglect came to the fore. A salutary reminder of the dangers inherent in the current emphasis on early adoption.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/heart-goes-out-cleared-couple-6600155>

Adoption Contact Register for Scotland

By August our ACR website was up and running with on-line registration and payment. This has led to an immediate increase in registrations and links. At the time of writing, we have reached 200 registrations already (better than many – full – years) and our links are best ever, presently 28. So with two and half months to go we should achieve a best ever year for linking people via the Register, maybe three links a month?? Just another eight to go.

Funds and Grants

We continue to receive generous one-off donations and a sterling effort of bag-packing at Tesco's on Saturday 12th September brought in over £220.



In summer, the Edinburgh branch of Inner Wheel generously donated £500 following a talk from our Sally Lynch. The photograph below shows our searcher Anne Coulson receiving Inner Wheel's fabulous donation.



As for the official support from the Scottish Government, we have an application for a continued subsidy for the Adoption Contact Register. Fingers crossed.

Departures

We were sorry to see Nick our Intern go in the summer and wish him all the best in his chosen career. We hope that working with us has been a springboard for a successful working life. One of our leading searchers, Vivienne Triseliotis, has retired. Wife of well-known adoption expert John Triseliotis who died in 2012, Vivienne was and is a specialist in her own right. Her wisdom and expertise will be sorely missed. Kirsti also leaves us in November and we are keen to find someone else who will undertake the valuable work she did in promoting us on social media.



A huge loss that is extremely difficult to announce is that of Jennifer B. Jennifer has been a mainstay of the agency for twelve years and throughout this time, she has been an incredible source of support to colleagues and delivered a first class, caring and empathic service, as her many testimonials and letters of praise show. Good luck in this next phase of your interesting life Jennifer.



Arrivals



A big welcome to our new searcher Kirsty Wilkinson and new Board member Alasdair MacDonald. Both, interesting enough are genealogists with Alasdair having a special interest in DNA.

Featured Link



As this Bulletin was being written, in keeping with the big upturn in links this year, the Birthlink bell sounded. This bell rings every time there's a link between two people who have registered on the Adoption Contact Register. In this case a cousin in his 60s had registered with us eleven years ago. His cousin's registration was what triggered the match. She was adopted 68 years ago. The forms indicate that they live less than five miles apart. We wish them all the best in this next stage of their lives.

Year of the Dad

Year of the Dad 2016 is planned as a celebration of fatherhood and the importance of fathers in child development and parenting. Birth fathers are under-served in after-adoption services and we have been thinking that in keeping with the Year of the Dad initiative we could specifically target this category of people affected by adoption. We plan to run special features with the latest research etc on our web-site and other social media, make tailored appeals through the media as a whole (to highlight birth fathers' needs and their potential contribution, encourage contact and registration with us etc) and target local authorities etc with information and advice and so on. If there are any birth fathers out there who would like to help with this, please get in touch. Find out more about Year of the Dad at www.yearofthedad.org



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Website

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