

Editorial

Welcome to our Spring 2017 Bulletin.

In this issue you will find evidence of our constant determination to promote the interests of adopted people and birth parents. News of our work and services can be found via 'Humans of Edinburgh' on Facebook, in training sessions for practitioners, in the mainstream media and we've even popped up as Xmas elves. We've submitted evidence to the British Association of Social Workers' enquiry into the role of social work in adoption and we have submitted a proposal for a workshop at the forthcoming Social Work Scotland's June conference. We've got a marathon runner, a lively bunch of folk running our charity shops, and we've passed our most recent Social Work Inspectorate inspection with flying colours. So, lots to be proud of. Read on to hear more about us.



**Adults Affected
by Adoption**

Birthlink staff as humans...



(of Edinburgh)

Lara on Castle Street, outside our Office.

See next page for 'Humans of Edinburgh'.

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BIRTHLINK BULLETIN

'Humans of Edinburgh' is an idea with a simple message: "Edinburgh, one story at a time" and consists of a growing Facebook gallery of photographs taken on the streets of the city. "We tell the tale of 500,000 Edinburgh inhabitants, one human at a time". Behind each one is, yes, a story. Some stories are brief to the point of mysterious ("These days...People don't know what it takes to be an elf.") others are lengthier. We have decided to post photographs of ourselves with a comment. Those who have been helped by our service have also volunteered. New staff member Lara was one of the first to be posted. Her photograph comes with a caption of her most recent work helping a 70 year old woman, adopted as a baby, have contact with her family of origin.

Go to
<https://www.facebook.com/officialhumansofedinburgh/>
for more



Our Thrift Shop staff are brilliant. I think the last Bulletin said something similar. But here they are again, always on the look-out for ways to boost the income and promote the work. This latest wheeze speaks for itself.

Remember we are always in need of volunteers to help in the Thrift shops, even if it was only an hour, every minute helps. Just pop into one of the shops, call 0131 225 6441 for an application form or send a message via our website and our staff will be happy to assist.



Next page for our submission to BASW's Adoption Enquiry.



The Role of the Social Work in Adoption: neglect of understanding of adoption as a 'life-long process' : Birthlink Submission

Introduction

Adoption has a long history as a way of providing a new family for a child that cannot live with their family of origin by transferring parental rights from one set of parents to another. Sometimes this has been an informal arrangement and at other times it has been covered by legislation. In Scotland, adoption was made legal by the Adoption Act 1930 (1926 in England and Wales).

In Scotland, between 1930 when official records began and 1996 when a child adopted in that year would now be an 20 yr old adult, there have been nearly 90,000 adoptions. This means that if each adopted person and two birth parents are counted, then there are over ¼ million adult people in Scotland who are directly affected by adoption. If other birth relatives are added, this figure rises to such an extent that it has been calculated to be as many as one in ten of the Scottish population. If adoptive family members are included then, the figure is even higher. The numbers may be multiplied for the greater amount of adoptions that have taken place in England and Wales, however one in ten adults affected by adoption in the UK can be a working estimate. Despite this, statutory adoption services are generally focussed on one aspect of adoption – effecting the transfer of a child from birth families to adoptive families. The result is a neglect of the understanding that adoption is for life and has long-term repercussions for children who grow up to become adults and the adults involved in the initial adoption process, especially birth parents. Specifically, in any meaningful way, the statutory social work role does not stretch to work with the latter. This is manifest in the general lack of provision for adults, leaving any support to the third sector which is vulnerable to the caprices of local authority grant funding.

In 2013 a survey of Scottish local authorities' publicity for provision for adults in adoption was undertaken. This showed that mention of such services was absent in more than half of the local authority web-sites. This is attached. We doubt this has changed. We also believe that if similar research was undertaken in England, the same lack of provision would be found.

Readers wishing the full submission and accompanying attachment detailing the lack of local authority publicity for services for adults affected by adoption should contact Kate here at Birthlink.

ADOPTION IN THE NEWS

Have a read of this from the Daily Record of 15th February 2017 ('Mum spent almost 50 years looking for the baby she gave up as a teenager to find she was living just 11 miles away') . It can be found at:

www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/family-relationships/moira-spent-50-years-looking-9821089

We had a hand in this reunion; Susan adopted as a baby is in the middle, birth mother Moira on the right and sister Laura on the left.



And Alan Jenkins' detailed story in The Observer of 12th March is also very moving (Allan Jenkins's Plot 29: 'Gardening has been my therapy'): <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/12/allan-jenkins-plot-29-gardening-is-my-therapy-extract-fostering>

Film Review



Five year old Saroo gets lost on a train which takes him thousands of miles across India, away from home and family. Saroo must learn to survive alone in Kolkata, before ultimately being adopted by an Australian couple. Twenty-five years later, armed with only a handful of memories, his unwavering determination, and a revolutionary technology known as Google Earth, he sets out to find his lost family and finally return to his first home.

This film will speak to anyone who has a heart but it is especially moving for those of us who are affected by adoption. It's about loss, feeling like a fish out of water, yearning for something that is often impossible to put into words and distance. It is also about searching hopefully then hopelessly, then the joy of re forging a connection with roots. A must see.

Research

Birthlink is funding research into the long-term outcomes of reunions that have taken place via the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland (ACR).

Dr Gary Clapton, with the help of Birthlink searcher and supporter Jennifer McNiven, has begun to look at ACR reunions from 20 years ago up until ten years ago so as to capture as many accounts of reunions and contact that are at least ten years old. We have now compiled a list of over 400 people. Letters go out next. By the next Bulletin we ought to have some interesting stories to report.

Birthlink registered in Scotland (SC078854). Registered Charity (SC013007)

Birthlink · 21 Castle Street · Edinburgh, Scotland EH2 3DN · United Kingdom